

## **Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2001-01**

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-01) for 5th January 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication amongst resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region.

The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Until further notice, reports should be sent to Martyn Kenefick at (868) 674-7609 or by Email at [martynkenefick@netscape.net](mailto:martynkenefick@netscape.net).

The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see website above and end below) for species indicated with an asterisk

PHOTO GALLERY: Photos of an immature Franklin's Gull (3rd for Trinidad) and an immature male Ruff (7th for Trinidad) are now posted at the SCBA website.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Barbados, the Christmas Bird Count held on January 1st totalled 65 species, a new CBC record. Highlights include a first winter RING BILLED GULL at Six Mens Bay; 22 LITTLE EGRETS islandwide (compared with 40 SNOWY EGRETS ) showing just how penetrating their range expansion has become; an immature CLIFF SWALLOW and 3 BANK SWALLOWS at St Lucy; single BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER and PROTHONOTARY WARBLER in Turner Hall Woods, St Andrew; single GREY HERONS at both Golden Grove, St Philip and Graeme Hall; PEREGRINES at Bridgetown Harbour and (two) at Graeme Hall; an AMERICAN COOT at Chancery Lane with two more at Golden Grove; a female AMERICAN WIGEON, 3 RING NECKED DUCKS and a LESSER SCAUP at Chancery Lane and a total of 22 CARIBBEAN MARTINS roosted in Bridgetown.

In Guadeloupe, up to 8 different CAPE MAY WARBLERS have been found this winter. The latest additions being a 1st winter female near Abytes airport on 31st December; a 1st winter female, 1st winter male and adult male all at Grande Anse on 3rd January.

On 22nd December, 4 RING BILLED GULLS (3 x 1st winter and 1 x 2nd winter) were found on the Riviere Salee, with 2 x 1st winter birds still present on 3rd January. A PEREGRINE was also present on 3rd January

In Trinidad, the records for the Christmas Bird Count held on 30th December are still being collated and will, hopefully, be summarised in the next Bird Alert. However, one group censussing the Lopinot valley photographed a "mystery warbler" which, following careful study of the resultant pictures, is reported to be a CHESTNUT SIDED WARBLER \* ( no previous authenticated records for T&T)

Whilst birding the Caroni Rice Project is concentrated during the late summer and autumn months, regular visits outwith the known migration season remains fruitful. On 28th December a BOBOLINK \* (1st winter record for T&T) was seen amongst a mixed party of Blackbirds and Cowbirds; and a GLOSSY IBIS \* was feeding in the westernmost corner before flying off towards the mangrove swamp.

Elsewhere, on the East coast, a male WHITE WINGED BECARD was canopy feeding at the base of Brigand Hill on 3rd January.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: In 2000, one hyperactive birder tallied 304 species of birds in T&T while another tallied 295. The current record is 320 species, set in 1998. How many species are possible in a year ? In 2001, we need your help to keep track of the total number of birds seen by anybody throughout T&T.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: The method used for censussing birds must be tailored to the taxonomic/ecologic group being censussed and its habitat. Migrating seabirds, waterbirds and raptors may be counted from a fixed point as they fly by. To facilitate subsequent statistical analyses, it is best to count birds during 10 minute intervals. Non migrating raptors are often censussed along road transects (road counts), which require relatively slow driving. In this case counts should be conducted along 10 kilometre intervals.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary; Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd, Carapichaima, Trinidad & Tobago; fax 868-673-0373; Email "g-white@tstt.net.tt"

## **Southeastern Caribbean Bird Alert - No. 2001-02**

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-02) for 12th January 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication amongst resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>.

Until further notice, reports should be sent to Martyn Kenefick at (868) 674-7609 or by Email at [martynkenefick@netscape.net](mailto:martynkenefick@netscape.net).

The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details (see website above and end below) for species indicated with an asterisk

PHOTO GALLERY: Photos of an immature Franklin's Gull (3rd for Trinidad) and an immature male Ruff (7th for Trinidad) are now posted at the SCBA website.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Belated news from the Lesser Antilles as follows :- On St Lucia, a WHITE BREASTED THRASHER was found in the dry forest along the Fox Grove Inn trail on 6th December. On St Vincent, up to 6 WHISTLING WARBLERS and 3 LESSER ANTILLEAN TANAGERS were called in from trails in the Vermont Forest Reserve on 8th & 9th December. Highlights of a 4 day stay by experienced observers on Dominica were a single ANTILLEAN EUPHONIA feeding in mistletoe at Syndicate Estate on 11th December ; up to 3 IMPERIAL PARROTS in the same area on both 11th and 12th December ; 3 FOREST THRUSHES at Emerald Pool on both 12th and 13th December ; and at Canefield a GREAT BLUE HERON , a 2nd year HERRING GULL and 10 EURASIAN COLLARED DOVES on 13th December. In Barbados, a 1st winter LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL was photographed at Six Men's Bay on 7th January.

Late news from Trinidad where on 24th December a BLACKPOLL WARBLER was found on Mt St Benedict and a RUFOUS CRAB HAWK was reported from Carli Bay. On 27th December, a "petrel sp" considered likely to be LEACH'S PETREL was watched from the inter island ferry about 30 minutes "out" from Scarborough. The GLOSSY IBIS previously found on Caroni ricefields in late December was still present on 8th January. In the northern range, up to 4 YELLOW LEGGED THRUSHES were seen perched in a matchwood tree at Las Lapas on 9th January and a SCALED ANTPITTA was heard calling from forest close to the Morne Bleu TSTT station on 12th January. Also seen at Morne Bleu were single COLLARED TROGON, CHESTNUT WOODPECKER, juvenile BROAD WINGED HAWK and at least 7 SPECKLED TANAGERS.

Of more general interest an all yellow "albino" ORANGE WINGED PARROT is regularly seen at roost in a tall tree at Boissiere village, Maraval just south of the northernmost gas station. Its plumage is , in the main, pale yellow with bright orange yellow chest, red patches on the undertail and red eyes. There is no orange in the wing. To view, stand on the opposite side of the main road beside the pet shop or TTARP building and look across at a large tree where parrots congregate after 5.00 pm. The workers in the pet shop see the bird most evenings.

In Tobago, the WESTERN REEF HERON \* continues to frequent the seaward end of Buccoo marsh. On 7th January, it was seen perched atop trees bordering the goat racing track.. Also present were 12 WHITE CHEEKED PINTAILS and a BLUE WINGED TEAL. Elsewhere on 7th January, the highlight of a census at Lowlands sewage ponds was a MANGROVE CUCKOO \* (very scarce in Tobago), together with 22 BLUE WINGED TEALS, 4 WHITE CHEEKED PINTAILS, 8 BLACK BELLIED WHISTLING DUCKS, 4 LEAST GREBES, a single SORA RAIL and at least 6 WILSON'S SNIPE.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: The method used for censusing birds must be tailored to the taxonomic/ecologic group being censused and its habitat. Landbirds in terrestrial habitats are best censused by transect or point count methods. The fixed-radius point count is currently the most frequently used method for censusing terrestrial birds in North America and the Caribbean. The recommended standard for North America is a radius of 50 metres and a duration of 5 minutes (C.J.Ralph et al; 1995, Monitoring bird populations by point counts. US Dept of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station, General Technical Report PSW-GTR-149). The recommended standard for the Caribbean is a radius of 25 metres and a duration of 10 minutes (J M Wunderle,1994,Census methods for Caribbean land birds. US Dept of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Forest Experiment Station, General Technical Report SO-98). To facilitate comparisons among studies in the Caribbean, the standard recommended by Wunderle (1994) should be maintained.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary; Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd, Carapichaima, Trinidad & Tobago; fax 868-673-0373; Email "[g-white@tsst.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tsst.net.tt)"

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-03) for 24 January 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

PHOTO GALLERY: Photos of the Black-tailed Godwit (Trinidad), Kelp Gull (Trinidad), Western Reef-Heron (Tobago) and Ruff (Tobago) are now posted (or will be shortly) at the SCBA website.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Birders scrutinising waterbird flocks along Trinidad's west coast (see directions in SCBA 2000-44 and 2000-47) on 21 January enjoyed one of the island's most memorable birding days ever. After eluding detection for more than three months, the adult BLACK-TAILED GODWIT\* (1st for T&T and South America) suddenly reappeared at Orange Valley on 21 January. It was first seen with a large flock of LAUGHING GULLS on a mudflat and then joined a group of WILLETS, GREATER YELLOWLEGS and LESSER YELLOWLEGS in the first cove north of Orange Valley. A new jetty is under construction at Orange Valley; currently it extends about 100 metres out into the Gulf of Paria, thus facilitating views of the mudflats to the north. Presumably the godwit has been wintering in the area and is best found at low tide. The white in the wing is no longer visible when the bird is standing. A 3rd-winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL\* and two ROYAL TERNS were present among 780 LAUGHING GULLS on 21 January.

Although previously ignored by birders until this winter, San Fernando, Trinidad, is turning out to be a Mecca for rare gulls and can legitimately claim title to the gull capital of the Caribbean region. On 21 January, birders were stunned to find an unprecedented five species of gulls, including the adult KELP GULL\* (1st for T&T), a 1st-winter FRANKLIN'S GULL\*, a 1st-winter RING-BILLED GULL\* and four LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (two 1st-winter, one 3rd-winter and one adult) among 637 LAUGHING GULLS. The following day, 22 January, an immature PARASITIC JAEGER was seen as well as the KELP GULL\*, two different 1st-winter FRANKLIN'S GULLS\* (one with some dark speckles on the forehead) and two LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (2nd-winter and adult); the Ring-billed Gull could not be relocated. An estimated 250 NEOTROPIC CORMORANTS were also seen off San Fernando. The Kelp Gull has been present for more than six months and is observed most consistently at San Fernando, where it was recorded during seven of 18 trips to San Fernando by local birders. It has finally completed its wing moult; only two white-tipped primaries extend beyond the tail, whereas three extend beyond the tail in the Lesser Black-backed Gull.

At Waterloo, two more LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (2nd-winter and 3rd-winter) were noted among 1567 LAUGHING GULLS and a GULL-BILLED TERN on 21 January, providing a record high of seven for the day. At least four LAUGHING GULLS were in full breeding plumage. Three GREAT BLUE HERONS were noted on the mudflats, a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN was seen in the Brickfield Ponds, and a GRAY KINGBIRD was noted molting its outer rectrices (a third grown on each side) at an unusual time of the year. On 22 January, two LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (2nd-winter and adult), a GULL-BILLED TERN, five ROYAL TERNS and a FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER were tallied.

In the Caroni Swamp, a COMMON POTOO and 50 BLUE-WINGED TEAL were noted on 21 January.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET\*, five LEAST GREBES and five BLACK-NECKED STILTS were tallied at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 14 January. A non-breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET\* was seen among 30 SNOWY EGRETS and 80 GREAT EGRETS at Orange Grove on 20 January. In the Caroni Rice Fields, two adult PEREGRINE FALCONS, 20 LEAST SANDPIPERS and a SOLITARY SANDPIPER were noted on 22 January. On 20 January, a dozen COMMON WAXBILLS\* (high count for the rice fields) were noted along the road just north and east of the runway on 20 January; other birds included four LIMPKINS, a SOLITARY SANDPIPER and a COMMON GROUND-DOVE.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a seemingly lost LIMPKIN was observed walking along the road in Tucker Valley, Chaguaramas Peninsula, on 21 January. A WHITE-COLLARED SWIFT was seen in Maracas Valley on 21 January. The nearly forgotten T&TFNC birding trip to Heights of Aripo on 14 January was attended by seven participants, who tallied 53 species of birds including two GRAY-HEADED KITES, a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER, a YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSH, two RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPERS and a TRINIDAD EUPHONIA.

In Tobago, the WESTERN REEF-HERON\* (1st for Tobago, 2nd for T&T and South America) continues to be seen in the marsh just south of the Buccoo beach facilities, where it was last reported on 16 January. Also on 16 January, an apparently nesting GRAY-THROATED LEAFTOSSER\* was flushed from a bank cavity above Runnemeade. WHITE-TAILED SABREWINGS can be leisurely observed at three lek sites along the Gilpin Trail. From the lower main entrance, listen and look for displaying males about 100 metres in and around the corner beyond the second bridge; from the upper entrance behind the forestry hut, they may be viewed about 200 down the trail where it turns sharply to the right. A GREAT BLACK-HAWK was seen along the Main Ridge on 18 January. At Little Tobago, both light- and dark-phased RED-FOOTED BOOBIES were noted on 14 January and a RED-EYED VIREO was reported on 18 January.

In Barbados, the GARGANEY\* (2nd for Barbados) was finally relocated among a hundred BLUE-WINGED TEAL, five 1st-winter RING-NECKED DUCKS and a male AMERICAN WIGEON at Marshall's Pond, St. Philip, on 21 January. A RUFF was present at Congo Road on 21 January. The 1st-winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (3rd for Barbados) continues to haunt Six Men's, St. Peter, where it was last reported on 22 January.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: As with all sampling methods, various sources of bias may affect the accuracy of census data, and should be minimised as much as possible. The acuity, alertness, experience, knowledge and number of observers may affect census results. Censusing should be limited to experienced observers capable of identifying essentially all local birds both visually and vocally. Proper training as well as testing the visual and hearing acuity of potential observers can minimise observer variation in census data.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-04) for 5 February 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** Along the west coast of Trinidad, a record five species of gulls were once again noted among a 'guesstimated' 1000 LAUGHING GULLS at the San Fernando Public Fish Market on 27 January. These included the adult KELP GULL\* (1st for T&T), a 1st-winter FRANKLIN'S GULL\* (3rd for T&T), a 1st-winter RING-BILLED GULL\* and four LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (two 1st-winter, one 3rd-winter and an adult). One of the 1st-winter Lesser Black-backed Gulls also seen last week appeared slightly paler than the other, with more contrasting dark secondaries and paler inner primaries; it appeared to be identical in size with the other and could represent a Yellow-legged Gull (potential 1st for T&T and South America), whose identification is challenging. Because up to five jet skis were spooking the gulls, photographs could not be obtained. Also unusual was a SNOWY EGRET swimming on the water about 100 metres from the jetty. On 29 January, only a 1st-winter FRANKLIN'S GULL\*, a 1st-winter RING-BILLED GULL\* and an adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL\* were noted among about 200 LAUGHING GULLS, but one of the Laughing Gulls possessed red legs and an aluminum band!

Efforts to relocate the elusive BLACK-TAILED GODWIT\* (1st for T&T and South America) at Orange Valley on 27 and 31 January were fruitless; although the last sighting was on 21 January, it presumably remains in the area and may spend most of its time in the mangroves of Caroni Swamp. At Waterloo, three LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (2nd-winter, 3rd-winter and adult with a smudge of black in upper bill in front of red spot) were seen among a thousand LAUGHING GULLS and a ROYAL TERN on 27 January. Once again, a record high of seven Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted on 27 January and a record high of at least nine different Lesser Black-backed Gulls appear to be wintering along the west coast. A RING-BILLED GULL\* and an adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL\* were reported from Waterloo on 31 January. At Cacandee, a probable MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULET was noted on 31 January. We neglected to mention last week that exactly 100 SOUTHERN LAPWINGS (highest count for T&T) were noted at a small pond at Brechin Castle on 20 January.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, we received a second-hand report of the CRANE HAWK (1st for T&T) seen for a second time at Wallerfield within the past few weeks. At Orange Grove, three LITTLE EGRETS\*, including two non-breeding and one breeding plumaged individuals, were noted among 93 SNOWY EGRETS, 63 GREAT EGRETS and four LITTLE BLUE HERONS on 4 February. The only shorebirds present included 17 LEAST SANDPIPERS, a SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER and a SPOTTED SANDPIPER. At Trincity, the first YELLOW-BILLED TERN of the season turned up on 4 February; other birds present included five LEAST GREBES and seven BLACK-NECKED STILTS. In the Caroni Rice Fields, four BANK SWALLOWS\* (tied high count for T&T) were noted among roughly 500 BARN SWALLOWS on 2 February; other birds noted included two PEREGRINE FALCONS chasing and actually hitting a white ROCK DOVE that managed to escape, and 20 COMMON WAXBILLS\* (high count for the rice fields). At the Aripo Livestock Station, an adult COCOI HERON was noted on 24 January and again on 3 and 4 February.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, noteworthy bird reports include: two BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTILAS heard along the Paria Waterfall Trail on 4 February; a BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTILA seen and a COMMON POTOO heard along the Maracas Waterfall Trail on 3 February; and a LEAST GREBE noted on a pond at Maracas on 2 February. At Caribbean Union College, a colour-banded polygynous trio of TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRDS is reusing the same nest in a tree for the fourth consecutive time, spread out over two different seasons. Another trio in which the sex of a third unbanded individual remains unknown is reusing for the second time a nest built and used earlier by a monogamous trio. Reuse of nests appears to be far more common in the Tropical Mockingbird than in the Northern Mockingbird and usually occurs after successful fledging during the preceding attempt.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, we expressed concern several times last year when the RED-BELLIED MACAWS ceased roosting at a traditional site in Royal Palms just north of Kernahan Trace. However, more than a hundred were noted roosting at this site on 1 February, suggesting that their absence was temporary, perhaps due to human disturbance such as hunting.

In the foothills of the Central Range of Trinidad, a ZONE-TAILED HAWK, two WHITE-SHOULDERED TANAGERS and a FOREST ELAENIA topped the list of birds seen during a brief excursion along Todd's Road on 2 February.

In Tobago, the elusive WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD\* (presumably same as 2nd for T&T) was seen once again in January (no date provided).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** As with all sampling methods, various sources of bias may affect the accuracy of census data, and should be minimised as much as possible. Variation in terrain, composition of vegetation and structure of vegetation may affect census results. To minimise such variation, censuses should be conducted in relatively uniform, comparable habitats. The density, flocking behavior, intraspecific detectability (varying by age, sex, season and time of day), interspecific detectability (varying by colour, body size, habitat, behaviour and movements), social behaviour, breeding season, and vocalisations of birds may also affect census data. However, these are more difficult to control.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tsstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tsstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-05) for 13 February 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** Persuasive evidence of two different Kelp Gulls in Trinidad provide further confirmation of their unprecedented expansion into the region. On 10 February, an adult KELP GULL\* (1st for T&T) leisurely viewed through telescopes as it swam with a raft of other gulls only 50 metres off the pier at San Fernando, Trinidad, clearly lacked the conspicuous white-tipped primary feathers present on what appears to be a second adult KELP GULL (2nd for T&T) seen on 21 and 27 January. Although the individual with white-tipped primaries may represent the same bird present in Barbados during 6-10 December 2000 (see SCBA 2000-48), there is evidence that two different birds have been present in Trinidad since September 2000. An adult Kelp Gull carefully studied and photographed at Waterloo from 8-10 July 2000 and at San Fernando on 7 October and 10 November 2000 clearly lacked white-tipped primaries on the folded wing and had green-tinged yellowish legs; however, an adult Kelp Gull at San Fernando on 18 September 2000 possessed white-tipped primaries and yellow-tinged greenish legs (see SCBA 2000-39). Birders observing Kelp Gulls in the future should pay particular attention to the wingtip pattern and leg coloration, as well as eye coloration (dark in African race, recently recorded in Barbados, and pale in Western Hemisphere race), in an effort to distinguish between individual birds.

For the third time this winter, five species of gulls were noted at San Fernando on 10 February. In addition to the Kelp Gull, a 1st-winter FRANKLIN'S GULL\* (3rd for T&T), a 1st-winter RING-BILLED GULL\* and five LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (three 1st-winter, one 2nd/3rd-winter and one adult) were seen among a 'guesstimated' 1000 LAUGHING GULLS. The Franklin's Gull consistently 'limes' (associates) with the Laughing Gulls just offshore of the Public Fish Market at San Fernando, where it often swims on the water, perches on the anchored boats and routinely flies along the shoreline, snatching fish fragments from the water's edge. The Ring-billed Gull often perches on the anchored boats. The more aloof Kelp Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gulls usually associate with rafts of Laughing Gulls swimming beyond the pier.

An effort to relocate the adult Black-tailed Godwit\* (1st for T&T and South America; last reported on 21 January) at Orange Valley on 10 February was unsuccessful. At Waterloo, three LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (2nd-winter, 3rd-winter and adult) were noted among 2580 LAUGHING GULLS on 10 February, providing a record high of eight different Lesser Black-backed Gulls seen for the day. Other recent sightings from Waterloo include two GREAT BLUE HERONS on 10 February and an adult BLACK-HEADED GULL\* on 3 February and 22 January. Late reports from Waterloo include a MARBLED GODWIT (carefully distinguished from the Black-tailed Godwit; apparently both are wintering in the area, but rarely seen) on 6 January and the elusive EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE\* (1st for T&T) on 18 November. Two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were seen and a STREAKED-HEADED WOODCREEPER was heard at Pointe-a-Pierre on 10 February.

In southwestern Trinidad, 97 ROYAL TERNS (highest count for T&T?) were tallied at Cedros on 12 February and 84 on 11 February. Disappointingly no Common Terns were present in an area that provided a major wintering population up until the early 1980s. At Fullarton Swamp, recent observations include a dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER mobbed by YELLOW-HOODED BLACKBIRDS, two GRAY-HEADED KITES (one giving a wing-trembling display with legs extended while in flight and both mobbed by a SHORT-TAILED HAWK), a GREATER ANI and two SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHERS on 12 February, and 37 BLUE-WINGED TEAL, 18 BLACK-NECKED STILTS, six GRAY-NECKED WOOD-RAILS, two GREATER ANIS and two SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHERS on 11 February. At Pitch Lake, six OSPREYS, four LEAST GREBES and three GREATER YELLOWLEGS were noted on 11 February.

In northeastern Trinidad, two male CARIBBEAN MARTINS\* (3rd for Trinidad) were seen with five presumed GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS at Galera Point on 11 February. A 0.5 hour seabird watch at Galera Point on 11 February produced 20 BROWN PELICANS, one MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD and four COMMON TERNS; less expected was an adult YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA straying out to sea to chase an immature MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD clutching a fish. A TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* was briefly observed in flight on 11 February at Grande Riviere, where at least six different birds are reportedly present in the area. About 15 WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS were noted at Matura on 11 February. The first PIRATIC FLYCATCHERS of the season were noted at Grande Riviere on 11 February.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a LESSER ELAENIA was reported from the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 23 January and a GREAT BLACK-HAWK was reported from Las Lapas on 9 January.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the COCOI HERON was seen at the Aripo Livestock Station on 12 February. Nothing unusual turned up at Wallerfield, Aripo Savannas, Cumuto and Orange Grove on 11 February.

In Tobago, the WESTERN REEF-HERON\* (1st for Tobago, 2nd for T&T and South America) and a LITTLE EGRET\* were seen at Buccoo on 23 January. An immature SWAINSON'S HAWK\* (6th for Tobago) was noted above Blue Waters Inn, Speyside, on 28 January. Three COMMON BLACK-HAWKS\* were noted about 2.5 kilometres south of the Speyside Overlook on 26 January. An aberrant, partially leucistic BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK with a white throat patch and a whitish orbital ring extending over the base of the the forecrown was seen at the Hilton Hotel on 28 January. At Plymouth/Turtle Beach, an immature BROWN BOOBY, up to 13 SANDWICH TERNS (nine 'Sandwich' and four 'Cayenne') and eight ROYAL TERNS were noted among 300 LAUGHING GULLS on 26 and 28 January. At Arnos Vale Hotel, three RUBY-TOPAZ HUMMINGBIRDS were feeding at the feeders on 28 January. On 29 January, the nesting GRAY-THROATED LEAFTOSSER\* and two GREAT BLACK-HAWKS (one a begging juvenile) were noted above Runnemeade on 29 January. GREAT BLACK-HAWKS, MERLINS and PEREGRINE FALCONS were reported daily from Blue Waters Inn, Speyside, as well as a RUDDY TURNSTONE with a green flag above the left knee, white band above a red band on the left foot, and a green band on the right foot. Another remarkably tame RUDDY TURNSTONE had a deformed bill with a longer lower mandible; its predisposition to feed from humans suggested that it was less efficient than the other birds at feeding naturally.

In Barbados, single GREY HERONS turned up at Congo Road, St. Philip, and at Golden Grove, St. Philip, on 10 February. Five 1st-winter RING-NECKED DUCKS were seen at East Point, St. Philip, and two males at Chancery Lane, Christ Church, on 10 February. A male AMERICAN WIGEON and a CARIBBEAN COOT carrying nesting material (nesting first recorded in 1999) were noted at East Point on 10 February. At Graeme Hall Swamp, the LITTLE EGRETS and SNOWY EGRETS have begun nest construction.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** A lek is an arena where displaying males compete with each other in a bid to attract and mate with females (previously summarised by tidbits in SCBA 2000-1 to 2000-9). In a recent study of the genetic structure (based on microsatellite DNA) of White-bearded Manakin leks in Trinidad, Lisa Shorey et al. (2000. Fine-scale genetic structuring on Manacus manacus leks. Nature 408:352-353) demonstrated that two leks were composed of clusters of related kin. They proposed that males establish themselves where they find relatives to such an extent that they form groups within leks. Such behaviour supports the hypothesis that kin selection (rather than individual selection) is involved in lek evolution and supports a shift away from the model that leks are primarily arenas for intrasexual competition.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tsstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tsstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-06) for 23 February 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** Although whale watching has become a popular ecotourism attraction in Dominica, birders seldom take advantage of a splendid opportunity to observe seabirds. On 18 February, a whale watching trip off the west coast produced (in addition to a mother and calf Sperm Whale) six POMARINE JAEGERs and a PARASITIC JAEGER. An earlier trip off the southwest coast on 7 February produced (in addition to three Sperm Whales) seven POMARINE JAEGERs, a PARASITIC JAEGER and a RED-FOOTED BOOBY.

Elsewhere in Dominica, three IMPERIAL PARROTS were noted at Syndicate Parrot Lookout on 8 and 15 February. At Cabrits Swamp, a LEAST BITTERN was flushed from the reeds on 17 February and a female AMERICAN REDSTART was seen on 17 and 18 February. On 16 February, a nighttime search for Black-capped Petrels on the north and northwest slopes of Morne aux Diabes, which hosted the last known nesting site on the island in 1882, was unsuccessful. On 12 February, an influx of 20+ CARIBBEAN MARTINS was noted at Penville and a singing bird was noted at Calibishie on 18 February. Up to six BROWN PELICANS were noted daily at Anse de Mai and smaller numbers elsewhere north of Portsmouth. A pair of RINGED KINGFISHERS was regularly seen between Woodford Hill Beach and Woodford Hill River.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a singing and displaying TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* was seen throughout the day (9:45 am to 4:40 pm) at the TSTT's Morne Bleu communication station on 22 February. To our knowledge this record provides only the second in Arima Valley in the last half century and may be a herald of an expanding population recovering from excessive hunting. Other birds noted at the station included a dead BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO\* (possibly flew into a guy wire), an OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER and two male and one female HEPATIC TANAGERS (a pair was apparently carrying food to a nest, which was not observed).

Elsewhere in the Northern Range, a SCALED ANTPITTA\* was heard calling high up the steep slopes above the Blanchisseuse Road between Las Lapas and Brasso Seco Junction on 18 February. A BROWN VIOLETEAR was seen and a SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER was captured in a mistnet at Paria Springs on 18 February.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a possible WHITE-TAILED KITE\* was seen near the Waterloo Secondary School on 17 February. At Waterloo, four species of gulls were noted among about 750 LAUGHING GULLS on 17 February, including an adult BLACK-HEADED GULL\*, a RING-BILLED GULL\* (age not reported) and three LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (two 3rd-winter and one adult). Five RED KNOTS and a GULL-BILLED TERN were also noted. Sightings at Waterloo on 19 February included two adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\*, a LARGE-BILLED TERN (1st for the year), a YELLOW-BILLED TERN, a COMMON TERN, a SANDWICH ('Cayenne') TERN, four ROYAL TERNS, six RED KNOTS, a SORA and four FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS.

In the Caroni Plain, three LITTLE EGRETS\* (two breeding plumaged, one non-breeding plumaged) were seen at Trincity on 18 and 19 February. On 19 February, a BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO\* was carefully studied at Arena Forest and a COCOI HERON was seen at San Rafael. Two COCOI HERONS were present at the Aripo Livestock Station on 16 February. In the Caroni Rice Fields, six LIMPKINS and a dozen COMMON WAXBILLS were noted on 19 February.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an APLOMADO FALCON was noted at Nariva Swamp on 18 February. Apparently no Dickcissels have been noted in Nariva Swamp this year, though many have been seen between Freeport and Waterloo on the west coast.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the west coast of Trinidad on Sunday, 11 March, led by Graham White. The primary objectives of the trip are to search for rare gulls, including Kelp Gull (1st for T&T), and the elusive Black-tailed Godwit (1st for T&T and South America). If you wish to participate, please contact Graham White by phone (673-4585, evenings) or e-mail ([g-white@tsst.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tsst.net.tt)). We will be meeting by the south entrance to the University of the West Indies at 7:00 am, or by the Hindu Temple at Waterloo at 7:30 am.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Birds exhibit a variety of mating systems. The most common mating system is monogamy, in which one male and one female mate and bond with each other during a breeding season. Variations on the theme include serial monogamy, in which a different mate is acquired each season, and life monogamy, in which a pair is mated until one individual dies. An estimated 90% of bird species are thought to be predominantly monogamous. Monogamy is considered to be more prevalent in birds than in mammals because male birds can participate in the incubation of eggs and provisioning of the young, whereas in mammals both of these activities are performed almost exclusively by females.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tsst.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tsst.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-07) for 2 March 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/tfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the solitary TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* continues to be seen beside the TSTT communication station near Morne Bleu, just off the Blanchisseuse Road, where it was reported on 22, 23 and 26 February. Birders are requested not to approach it too closely. Hopefully it will remain in the area, providing birders with an unprecedented opportunity to observe it. Two different BLACK-WHISKERED VIREOS\* have now been found dead at the Morne Bleu station: the first on 22 February and the second on 23 February. Presumably both vireos crashed into the structures while migrating over the ridge at night--a phenomenon rarely reported in the region for any species of bird and, in this case, providing evidence for nocturnal migration of Black-whiskered Vireos through Trinidad.

Elsewhere in the Northern Range, a CRIMSON-CRESTED WOODPECKER was seen north of Brasso Seco on 26 February and several large flocks of small, brownish birds thought to be DICKCISSELS were seen flying south through Maracas Valley in the morning of 2 March.

A complete census of the colour-banded TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD population at Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, revealed that nine of 14 (64%) adult males and 12 of 17 (71%) adult females survived from last year's breeding season. Adult annual survivorship during the 4-year study is 74% for males (34 bird-years) and 73% for females (51 bird-years). The same territory is defended from one year to the next by 64% of males (33 bird-years) and 65% of females (51 bird-years); only a small percentage of individuals move from one territory to another. Obviously these demographic parameters do not differ between the sexes.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, a TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* was noted along remote Warden Trace, just east of the Madamas River, on 28 February. The feathers of a dead TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* believed to have been the victim of a natural predator (rather than a human hunter) were found along the trail to Lakatan Waterfall, near Grande Riviere, on 26 February. At the 'Pawi Site' 1 km south of Grande Riviere, TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS\* are being observed sporadically, though they were routinely observed during July-December; one was briefly seen in the morning of 1 March. A male BELTED KINGFISHER, possibly the same individual seen for the fourth consecutive spring, was seen perched on wires hanging over the ocean east of San Souci on 1 March. A nest-building BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTILA was noted at Warden Trace on 28 February and another was heard calling a few kilometres to the east the same day. On 27 February, a pair of RED-AND-GREEN MACAWS\* (presumably escapees) was noted building a nest overlooking the ocean near the top of a hill between La Filette and Las Cuevas. Several 'firsts' for the season include two SWALLOW-TAILED KITES at Grande Riviere on 28 February, a PLUMBEOUS KITE at Warden Trace on 28 February, and (for Trinidad only) a singing RED-EYED VIREO near Grand Tacarib on 27 February.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, four LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (two adults and two 2nd-winter) and a 1st-winter RING-BILLED GULL\* were noted among roughly 300 LAUGHING GULLS at San Fernando on 25 February.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, a pair of CRIMSON-CRESTED WOODPECKERS was noted nesting in a tree north of Matura on 1 March.

In Tobago, a WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD\* (2nd for T&T assuming it is one of up to two birds seen irregularly since 1 April 1998) put in a rare appearance by the first seabird overlook atop Little Tobago on 27 February. Its landing maneuvers resembled those of nearby RED-BILLED TROPICBIRDS arriving at their nests, leading an observer to suspect it may have been nesting. Nesting RED-FOOTED BOOBIES were also noted at Little Tobago on 27 February and an AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER was seen in its nest on 25 February. Efforts to relocate the Western Reef-Heron\* (1st for Tobago, 2nd for South America) at Buccoo on 26 February were unsuccessful, but 97 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS and 17 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS were tallied. An additional 30 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS were noted in the large pond beside the Claude Noel Highway on 28 February. Waterfowl are clearly benefitting from the numerous small, artificial ponds created within the past decade in southwestern Tobago.

Elsewhere in Tobago, recent sightings include: a GREAT BLUE HERON along the Goldsborough River on 28 February; a GRAY-THROATED LEAFTOSSER\* along the Niplig Trail (across the paved road from Gilpin Trace) on 28 February; a female WHITE-TAILED SABREWING entering vegetation for prolonged periods, but no nest found, near the lower (main) entrance to Gilpin Trace on 28 February; the colour-banded RUDDY TURNSTONE lingering at Blue Waters Inn; and a second-hand report of a VIOLACEOUS TROGON (1st for Tobago, unless an aberrant Collared Trogon?) along the Davison Trail (where is this?) on 17 January and seen responding to a calling COLLARED TROGON along the Roxborough-Parlatuvier Road roughly 2 miles south of Gilpin Trace about 2 weeks ago.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the west coast of Trinidad on Sunday, 11 March, led by Howard Kenefick (pending his approval; the other three veteran gull watchers will be tied up elsewhere!). The primary objectives of the trip are to search for rare gulls, including the Kelp Gulls (1st and 2nd for T&T), and the elusive Black-tailed Godwit (1st for T&T and South America). If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks by phone (622-8826). We will be meeting by the south entrance to the University of the West Indies at 7:00 am, or by the Hindu Temple at Waterloo at 7:30 am.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Birds exhibit a variety of mating systems. Although most species are monogamous, in many species an individual will mate with (and is often bonded to) two or more partners during one (or more) breeding season(s). This is known as polygamy, which occurs in two forms. Polygyny, the more frequent form, occurs when a male mates with two or more females. Polyandry occurs when a female mates and bonds with two or more males.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-08) for 9 March 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

PHOTO GALLERY: A more recent photo of the Black-tailed Godwit (Trinidad) and a new "Mystery Bird" photo, along with the answer for the last "Mystery Bird" photo, are posted at the SCBA website (see address above).

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Barbados, the GIANT COWBIRD (1st for the West Indies) first reported last year (see SCBA 2000-11) was noted again along the south coast on 5 March. LITTLE EGRETS and SNOWY EGRETS were noted nesting at Graeme Hall Swamp on 4 March. Two CARIBBEAN COOTS at Graeme Hall on 4 March were the first of the spring influx. At Chancery Lane, a male RING-NECKED DUCK and an immature BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON were noted on 3 March. A YELLOW WARBLER thought to represent the Nearctic 'aestiva' race was seen at Bailey Hill on 28 February. During the last week of February, BLACK-WHISKERED VIREOS were noted calling with greater regularity, suggesting the arrival of recent migrants.

A few correspondents inquired whether the two Black-whiskered Vireos recently found dead at Morne Bleu, Trinidad (22 and 23 February; see last week's alert), were collected. Unfortunately they were not, but both were photographed together. Observers finding recently dead birds should always attempt to preserve them by placing them in a freezer and later donating them to a relevant collection for preparation as scientifically useful specimens.

In Guadeloupe, a breeding pair of AMERICAN COOTS (1st breeding record for Lesser Antilles) with two chicks estimated to be 5-7 days old was discovered in a reservoir at Gachet (Port-Louis) on 26 February; three other adults were present. Also noted were an immature male and two female AMERICAN WIGEONS and a male MASKED DUCK. At Pointe Beautiran (Petit-Canal), Nearctic migrant landbirds tallied on 26 February included a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, an AMERICAN REDSTART, an OVENBIRD and a dozen NORTHERN WATERTHRUSHES. The first CARIBBEAN MARTIN of the season was noted on 27 February at St. Francois.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two SWALLOW-TAILED KITES were noted at Brasso Seco on 14 February, earlier than the 'first' reported in last week's alert (28 February).

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the immature RING-BILLED GULL\* and five LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (one 1st-winter, two 2nd-winter and two adults) were noted among 250 LAUGHING GULLS at San Fernando on 8 March. Only two LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (3rd-winter and adult) turned up among 1,420 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo on 3 March. Other birds noted at Waterloo's mudflats on 3 March included an immature GULL-BILLED TERN, a ROYAL TERN and four RED KNOTS; in the reed ponds at Brickfield, a single STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN was well observed. A CLAPPER RAIL was seen at Cacandee on 3 March. The NEOTROPIC CORMORANT is rarely noted in the Chaguaramas Peninsula of northwestern Trinidad, where one was noted flying west past Westmoorings on 4 March. Two WHITE-WINGED BECARDS were noted at La Brea on 1 March.

In the Caroni Rice Fields, a CLIFF SWALLOW\* was noted among hundreds of BARN SWALLOWS in the morning of 3 March, but only one BARN SWALLOW was present in the early afternoon.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, two well described RED-AND-GREEN MACAWS\* (presumably escaped) were noted at Blanchisseuse on 4 March. The observer investigated the reported nest site and failed to find any direct evidence of nesting. Both birds tended to associate with ORANGE-WINGED PARROTS. Further discussion with residents of the area revealed that three birds were present earlier, but one was found dead, apparently of natural causes. Undoubtedly these are the same birds (up to three) reported earlier in the area as Scarlet Macaws (see SCBA 1999-40, 1999-47, 2000-04, 2000-16).

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: The T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the west coast of Trinidad on Sunday, 11 March, led by Howard Kenefick. The primary objectives of the trip are to search for rare gulls, including the Kelp Gulls (1st and 2nd for T&T), and the elusive Black-tailed Godwit (1st for T&T and South America). If you wish to participate, please contact Courtenay Rooks by phone (622-8826). We will be meeting by the south entrance to the University of the West Indies at 6:30 am (NOT 7:00 am), or by the San Fernando Fish Market (NOT the Hindu Temple at Waterloo) at 7:30 am.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: There are three major hypotheses for the evolution of monogamy. In the male assistance monogamy hypothesis, a male assists his mate by providing useful parental care and benefits by improving his offspring's chances of survival. When females are widely dispersed and difficult to find, the mate guarding monogamy hypothesis postulates that males benefit by defending a female from other competing males and by gaining increased certainty of paternity. The female enforced monogamy hypothesis postulates that a female keeps other females away from her male and benefits by having all of her male partner's assistance in rearing offspring; the males, which are forced to comply, do not benefit.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-09) for 16 March 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Barbados, the GIANT COWBIRD (1st for the West Indies) first reported last year (see SCBA 2000-11) was noted again along the south coast on 5 March and photographed at Palm Beach on 6 March.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the CRANE HAWK\* (1st for T&T) continues to be seen sporadically at Waller Field, where it was last reported on 14 March. When seen it has been found perched within the patch of Moriche Palms during mid-morning or near the western entrance to the racetrack. Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, four LITTLE EGRETS\* (two breeding plumaged and two non-breeding plumaged) were noted at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 16 March.

The T&TFNC birding trip along the west coast of Trinidad on 11 March was attended by only five participants. At San Fernando, three species of gulls were tallied including an immature RING-BILLED GULL\* and five LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* (one 1st-winter, two 2nd-winter and two adults). In South Oropouche Swamp (an unplanned destination), the highlights included a light-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER, a GREEN-THROATED MANGO, several GREATER ANIS and two SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHERS\*. At nearby Penal, a GREEN HERMIT was captured inside a house on 10 March.

A weekend trip to Chacachacare during 9-11 March produced the usual Bocas Islands specialties, including several BLUE-TAILED EMERALDS, many WHITE-FRINGED ANTWERNS, many MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULETS and many STREAKED SALTATORS. No Rufous-necked Wood-Rails or Black-faced Grassquits were noted. On 10 March, a RUFIOUS NIGHTJAR was heard calling at dawn and a WHITE-TAILED NIGHTJAR was seen and heard at dusk the same day near the Nuns' Quarters. Three COMMON GROUND-DOVES were seen along the road to the lighthouse on 10 March. Two PEREGRINE FALCONS soared over La Tinta on 10 March. A LITTE BLUE HERON stalked the rocky shoreline near Salt Pond on 11 March.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* continues to be seen, though not daily, by the guard booth at TSTT's Morne Bleu communications station, where it was last reported on 15 March. Inquire with the security guards for the latest update. Although an hour's search on 16 March failed to find it, a hike to the summit of Morne Bleu was extremely productive. The best birds included a SCALED ANTPITTA\* heard to the north (the same bird often heard above the Blanchisseuse Road), an unidentified QUAIL-DOVE heard, a BLACK-FACED ANTTHRUSH seen and several others heard, a WHITE-BELLIED ANTBIRD, two ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSHES seen and several others heard, several YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSHES heard, three BLUE-CAPPED TANAGERS and a SPECKLED TANAGER. A pair of HEPATIC TANAGERS was noted by the guard booth. A BLUE-CAPPED TANAGER at the guard booth on 12 March was at an unusually low elevation.

Elsewhere in the Northern Range, a DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE was seen flying over the large Christophene plantation in Arima Valley on 16 March. At Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, two DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITES were seen on 14 March and one on 15 March, and a RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPER was seen on 15 March.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** There are several hypotheses for the origin of polygyny in birds. According to the female defense polygyny hypothesis, a male defends a cluster of females, monopolizing access to the group. Presumably this occurs most frequently when females occur in defensible clusters, in which males compete for access to the clusters. The females may be clustered for defense, or because males cluster them and it is too costly to fight males. The females would likely produce more offspring in monogamy than when in a group, but perhaps would produce more young over a lifetime if within the safety of a group of females.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-10) for 23 March 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/tfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the Trinidad Piping-Guan could not be found at Morne Bleu on 21 March but a breeding plumaged adult BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER\* and a male SWALLOW-TANAGER provided consolation.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the elusive Crane Hawk\* (1st for T&T) could not be found at Wallerfield on 17 or 22 March but three RED-BELLIED MACAWS and three SULPHURY FLYCATCHERS were noted on 17 March and a MORICHE ORIOLE\* and seven flocks of DICKCISSELS were noted on 22 March.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, noteworthy observations from the South Oropouche Swamp on 17 March included two PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS, four YELLOW WARBLERS, a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, a female AMERICAN REDSTART and two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS. At Point Gourde, three MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULETS were carefully distinguished from a NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER and several SOUTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANNULETS on 18 March.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** There are several hypotheses for the origin of polygyny in birds. The resource defense polygyny hypothesis postulates that males defend clumped resources that receptive females come to exploit. According to the polygyny threshold hypothesis (a form of the resource defense hypothesis), polygyny occurs as a function of differences in territorial quality among males. A female has two options: sharing a high quality territory with one or more females or becoming the only mate of a male in a poor quality territory. Because females may be able to produce more young with a polygynous male in a rich territory than with a monogamous male in a poor territory, the occurrence of polygyny should increase as the differences in territorial quality among males increases.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative in nature. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-11) for 30 March 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

PHOTO GALLERY: New photos posted at the SCBA website include Giant Cowbird (Barbados), Kelp Gull (Trinidad), Red-and-green Macaw (Trinidad), Chestnut-sided Warbler (Trinidad) and Ring-billed Gull (Trinidad).

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Tobago, the immature WESTERN REEF-HERON\* (1st for Tobago, 2nd for T&T and South America) last reported from Buccoo on 26 January was relocated at the Bon Accord Sewage Ponds on 26 March. At the same locality, an AMERICAN COOT\* (2nd for Tobago, 3rd for T&T) was found on 24 March. On 24 March, six LEAST GREBES and eight WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS were seen whereas on 26 March, 15 GREAT EGRETS, 20 BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS, a GREAT BLUE HERON, 17 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL, a BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK and a BLUE-WINGED TEAL were seen. A mystery seed-eating finch, described as being grey above and paler below with a massive, pinkish bill but no white wing speculum, was also seen at Bon Accord on 26 March.

Elsewhere in Tobago, we received a second-hand report of a SWALLOW-TAILED KITE\* (3rd for Tobago) recently observed in the Main Forest Reserve, but no details have been provided. A GREAT BLUE HERON and a BELTED KINGFISHER were reported from Lowlands on 25 March. Although Buccoo Swamp is currently unproductive due to the severe drought throughout Trinidad and Tobago, 18 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS and a COMMON SNIPE were spotted on 26 March. Along Gilpin Trace, birds seen on 25 March included a at least five WHITE-TAILED SABREWINGS, a mating pair of GOLDEN-OLIVE WOODPECKERS, a mating pair of PLAIN ANTVIREOS, and a WHITE-THROATED SPADEBILL.

In Little Tobago, the elusive WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD\* (2nd for T&T, presumably one of the same two birds seen periodically since April 1998) checked in on 24 March but was absent as usual on 25 March. An AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER chick estimated to be a week old was seen in a burrow by the jetty on 25 March. At least two pairs of dark-morph RED-FOOTED BOOBIES were attending nests on 14 March and at least five chicks were seen on 25 March. A single white-morph RED-FOOTED BOOBY and a VENEZUELAN FLYCATCHER were seen on 14 March.

In the Bocas Islands, located between Venezuela and Trinidad, a weekend birding trip to Chacachacare was much more productive than a similar trip two weekends ago. A grey-morph adult HOOK-BILLED KITE\* (1st for Chacachacare and Bocas Islands) soared overhead and a COMMON GROUND-DOVE was seen along the road to the lighthouse on 24 March. A GREATER YELLOWLEGS (1st for Chacachacare and Bocas Islands) was spotted at La Tinta on 23 March and three more foraged at Salt Pond on 25 March. An immature night-heron (presumably Yellow-crowned; 2nd for Chacachacare and Bocas Islands) flew over Chacachacare Bay on 23 March. At least two RUFIOUS NIGHTJARS and two WHITE-TAILED NIGHTJARS were heard at dawn on 24 and 25 March. Two ORANGE-WINGED PARROTS flew into a tree at the lighthouse on 24 March and seven more flew over Salt Pond on 25 March. A PEREGRINE FALCON patrolled La Tinta on 24 and 25 March. Because most of the trees have lost their leaves, landbirds are especially easy to observe at this time of the year. The common 'Bocas specialties' were conspicuous, including BLUE-TAILED EMERALD, WHITE-FRINGED ANTWREN, MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULET and STREAKED SALTATOR. However, no seed-eating finches were encountered, providing further evidence of seasonal movements in the region.

A large 'tooth' in the notorious Dragon's Mouth between Venezuela and Trinidad, Chacachacare can be visited by hiring a water taxi from the Island Property Owners Association (tel., 634-4331), located on the Chaguaramas Peninsula of northwestern Trinidad. The minimum cost is TT\$300 (US\$50), but more may be requested (e.g., as the number of passengers increases). An additional TT\$15 (US\$2.50) is required for parking. Request to be dropped off at La Tinta and arrange a time to be picked up. From the jetty, follow the paved road across the narrow isthmus to La Tinta Bay and then northward to the top of the island. The road passes through littoral forest along the coast, seasonal forest along the slopes, and anthropogenic grasslands at the summit where a lighthouse is located. The lighthouse provides magnificent views of the region. The trees and shrubs in the vicinity of the lighthouse should be scrutinized for vagrants.

Birders wishing to spend the night on Chacachacare may do so freely and safely. A former leper colony, Chacachacare is uninhabited (except for a few men stationed at the lighthouse), with two abandoned 'ghost towns': the leper colony on the north shore and the Nuns' Quarters (NQ) on the south shore of Chacachacare Bay. Camping is recommended in the lower building of the NQ, which provides shelter and spectacular views. Take plenty of drinking water. A small coral reef is worth exploring by mask and snorkel. A trail from the NQ leads westward to a paved road with overgrown vegetation. From the trail/road junction, heading left (south) takes you to the Salt Lake (normally birdless; a 30 min hike from NQ); heading right (north) takes you downhill, eventually skirting a wooded beach and the edge of a rocky bluff to reach the pier at La Tinta (a 30 min hike from NQ).

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a survey for gulls on 28 March produced 2,250 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo, 250 at Orange Valley and 200 at San Fernando, but no other gull species were observed--which is quite remarkable considering the record numbers of gulls recorded during the winter. Other noteworthy birds at Waterloo on 28 March included a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN, 97 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS, 85 BLACK SKIMMERS and four LARGE-BILLED TERNS. A SANDWICH TERN ('Cayenne' race) was noted at Orange Valley the same day. An early morning hike at Cacandee on 28 March produced three CLAPPER RAILS, two RINGED KINGFISHERS, two PYGMY KINGFISHERS and a LITTLE CUCKOO. At Caroni Swamp, 50 BLUE-WINGED TEAL were seen in the lagoon where SCARLET IBISES roost on 27 March.

Late reports from the west coast of Trinidad include an adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL\*, a breeding plumaged YELLOW-BELLIED TERN and a non-breeding plumaged GULL-BILLED TERN at Waterloo on 10 March. At South Oropouche Swamp, three PYGMY KINGFISHERS, a PROTHONOTARY WARBLER and two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were tallied on 17 March. At Caroni Swamp, four STILT SANDPIPERS were reported on 9 March and a COCOI HERON, 200 NEOTROPIC CORMORANTS and two COMMON POTOOS were tallied on 8 March. A RUFIOUS-NECKED WOOD-RAIL\* and a TRINIDAD EUPHONIA were seen at Cacandee on 5 March.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, recent reports include: a male WHITE-NECKED JACOBIN at Mt. St. Benedict on 27 March; single OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS were noted at Brasso Seco Junction and at Morne Bleu on 6 March; and five SPECKLED TANAGERS and a female HEPATIC Tanager at Morne Bleu on 6 March.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a COCOI HERON was seen at San Rafael on 7 March. At Wallerfield, a search for the elusive Crane Hawk\* (1st for T&T) on 7 March was unsuccessful, but six LEAST SANDPIPERS (roosting on runway after dark), 45 RED-BELLIED MACAWS, a COMMON POTOO, five WHITE-TAILED NIGHTJARS, two WHITE-TAILED GOLDENTHROATS and three SULPHURY FLYCATCHERS were tallied. Two COCOI HERONS and a PINNATED BITTERN were noted at the Aripo Livestock Station on 5 March. We also understand that the Crane Hawk has been observed at the Aripo Livestock Station.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, we received a second-hand report that up to seven TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS\* have been appearing regularly at the usual site along the Monte Video Road 1 km south of Grande Riviere. A PROTHONOTARY WARBLER and a SILVERED ANTBIRD were seen along Cocos Bay Road on 12 March. Up to seven SWALLOW-TAILED KITES soared above Rampanalgas on 12 March. Seven WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS were noted at Galera Point on 11 March. At Balandra, chicks were heard calling from a nest of CRIMSON-CRESTED WOODPECKERS on 11 March.

In Guadeloupe, the reservoir at Gachet (Port-Louis) produced remarkable numbers of waterbirds on 18 March, including 160 BLUE-WINGED TEAL, four GREEN-WINGED TEAL, 80 MASKED DUCKS, a female RUDDY DUCK and 14 AMERICAN COOTS. The first LAUGHING GULL of the season appeared on 22 March at Baie-Mahault and the first LEAST TERN of the season turned up at Petite-Terre.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: As mentioned last week, the resource defense polygyny hypothesis postulates that males defend clumped resources that receptive females come to exploit. According to the deception hypothesis (a form of the resource defense hypothesis), a male defends two (or more) territories, each with a female. However, each bonded female does not realise that its male has a second female. Although females produce fewer surviving offspring than they would if their male was monogamous, males enhance their reproductive success by producing young with two (or more) females.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-12) for 6 April 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Barbados, a breeding plumaged adult GREY HERON unexpectedly turned up at Chancery Lane on 2 April. All previous records of Grey Heron in Barbados were of immatures. However, it remains uncertain whether this represents a new, third individual on the island or one of the two immatures seen earlier in the year that has now moulted into adult plumage. A SORA was also noted at Chancery Lane on 2 April. At East Point, St. Philip, an unprecedented three RUFFS (two males and a female) were seen amongst a flock of GREATER YELLOWLEGS, LESSER YELLOWLEGS and STILT SANDPIPERS, plus a pair of CARIBBEAN COOTS with a chick, on 2 April. A nesting LITTLE EGRET with three chicks was noted at Graeme Hall on 2 April.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, an immature RUFESCENT TIGER-HERON\* was reported daily during mid-afternoon beside the stream beyond the "swimming pool" at the Asa Wright Nature Centre from 14-20 March. Given the odd locality for this species, the bird could be an immature Fasciated Tiger-Heron (potentially 1st for T&T), which is extremely similar to an immature Rufescent Tiger-Heron but prefers montane forest streams. High quality photographs would be desirable to confirm the identification of either species. An ORNATE HAWK-EAGLE was seen in flight at the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 3 April. At Morne Bleu, the TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* continues to be reported irregularly by the security guards, but could not be found on 30 March when other birds found included a SCALED ANTPITTA\* heard, a PLUMBEOUS KITE, a flock of eight CHANNEL-BILLED TOUCANS, a CHESTNUT WOODPECKER, an OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER, a male YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSH and two BLUE-CAPPED TANAGERS.

Elsewhere in the Northern Range, noteworthy bird sightings include: an ORNATE HAWK-EAGLE, a MERLIN, about 30 OILBIRDS, three GRAY-THROATED LEAFTOSSERS, an ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH, several YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSHES, a BLUE-CAPPED TANAGER, a SPECKLED TANAGER and--well, not quite a bird but certainly the highlight of the day--a COLLARED PECCARY seen and another heard (plus others smelled!) during a hike to Aripo Cave on 4 April; a female SUMMER TANAGER\* and a SWALLOW TANAGER at Las Lapas on 3 April; a LITTLE TINAMOU seen at Mt. St. Benedict on 3 April; a pair of SWALLOW TANAGERS and a female RUFOUS-BREASTED HERMIT feeding two large chicks (in a nest just above the road sign) at Brasso Seco Junction on 30 March; two BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTILAS heard, a LITTLE TINAMOU seen and a GRAY-THROATED LEAFTOSSER along the Madamas Road on 30 March; and a CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER\* at Morne La Croix on 24 March.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, two LITTLE EGRETS\* (one breeding plumaged with two long head plumes and one in non-breeding plumage) were noted among roughly 30 SNOWY EGRETS at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 30 March. The parched Caroni Rice Fields produced a PINNATED BITTERN, a dark LONG-WINGED HARRIER, 14 LIMPKINS and two BANK SWALLOWS among a few hundred BARN SWALLOWS on 31 March.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, thousands of DICKCISSELS were noted flying over the Plum Mitan Rice Fields in the morning and evening of 3 April. Other birds noted included a PINNATED BITTERN, a LIMPKIN, a SOLITARY SANDPIPER and a PEREGRINE FALCON.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, two TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS\*, four WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS and two nest-building BLACK-TAILED TITYRAS were tallied along the Monte Video Road south of Grande Riviere on 2 April. At Galera Point, a male CARIBBEAN MARTIN\* (3rd for Trinidad) and a male RED-LEGGED KITTIWAKE were noted on 2 April. Galera Point provides the best land-based vantage point for observing pelagic seabirds in Trinidad. However, the only interesting seabirds recorded during a 45-minute seabird watch were two ROYAL TERNS. In recent years peak numbers of seabirds were recorded during mid-April.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a CLAPPER RAIL, two PYGMY KINGFISHERS and three AMERICAN REDSTARTS were seen at Cacandee on 31 March. After dark, two COMMON POTOOS were heard in the mangroves at Cacandee and two more were seen perched and hawking for insects in a dry field about 100-200 metres from the forest edge east of the swamp. Four WHITE-TAILED NIGHTJARS were also noted after dark in the fields east of Cacandee.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** A lek is an arena where displaying males compete with each other in a bid to attract and mate with females. Although we have previously discussed leks and studies of lekking in T&T birds in previous tidbits (SCBA 2000-01 to 2000-09, 2001-05), two competing hypotheses for the evolution of lek polygyny have not been discussed. The first is the 'hot spot' hypothesis, which postulates that dominant males select the best (central) territory while losers set up as close as possible to the superior central position. The second is the 'hotshot' hypothesis, which postulates that the most attractive, dominant males select a territory that is most convenient for females, while the subordinate males seek to be seen by females by setting up near the hotshot and intercepting females on their way to the hotshots. (Incidentally, it was these two hypotheses that inspired our SCBA section heading "hotshots in hot spots".)

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-13) for 13 April 2001.

Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

We begin with an apology to our subscribers for the long delays in issuing alerts in recent weeks. Our primary compiler has been burdened with a heavy load of academic work this semester.

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In northeastern Trinidad, two male CARIBBEAN MARTINS\* (3rd for Trinidad) but no GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS were seen at Galera Point on 7 April; the following day, 8 April, five GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS but no CARIBBEAN MARTINS were seen. Other landbirds seen included two EARED DOVES on 7 April, a COMMON GROUND-DOVE on 7 April, and six LILAC-TAILED PARROTTETS on 7 and 8 April.

Although seabirding from Galera Point has been highly productive in April during the past several years, this year has been disappointing thus far. A 1.5 hour seabird watch from Galera Point on 7 April produced only 20 MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS, nine BROWN PELICANS, a COMMON TERN, four ROYAL TERNS and, most intriguingly, a ROCK DOVE that flew northward toward Tobago and eventually disappeared from view through a telescope. The following day, 8 April, a 0.5 hour seabird watch produced only two MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS, four BROWN PELICANS and two ROYAL TERNS.

At Grande Riviere, up to seven TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS\* have been seen in recent months 1 kilometre south of Grande Riviere, but none could be found on 8 April. However, four TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS\* were noted about 1.2 km S of Grand Tacarib Bay on 10 April. At Grande Riviere, a BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTILA was heard and a group of five BLACK-TAILED TITYRAS was seen on 8 April. At Montevideo, two WHITE-SHOULDERED TANAGERS, two FOREST ELAENIAS and a RUBY-TOPAZ HUMMINGBIRDS were seen on 7 April. Two WATTLED JACANAS were noted at Toco on 8 April.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL\* was noted among thousands of LAUGHING GULLS, five YELLOW-BILLED TERNS, eight LARGE-BILLED TERNS and a ROYAL TERN at Waterloo on 12 April. A PINNATED BITTERN, a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN and a CLAPPER RAIL were noted at Waterloo on 5 April, but surprisingly no unusual gulls were seen.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, at least 2,000 DICKCISSELS were noted in the southern sector of the Caroni Rice Fields in the late evening of 11 April. Other birds noted in the rice fields on 11 April included three PINNATED BITTERNS, 20+ LIMPKINS, two light-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIERS, two (possibly three) PEREGRINE FALCONS, four SOLITARY SANDPIPERS and three GREATER YELLOWLEGS.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two LONG-BILLED STARTHROATS, a RED-RUMPED WOODPECKER, a SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER, a WHITE-THROATED SPADEBILL, a FUSCOUS FLYCATCHER, a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER and a male YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSH were seen at Morne Bleu on 13 April. A BLUE-CAPPED TANAGER, a male HEPATIC TANAGER and a SOOTY GRASSQUIT were noted at Morne Bleu on 4 April.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, thousands of DICKCISSELS and a RINGED KINGFISHER were noted at the Plum Mitan Rice Fields on 7 and 9 April. A BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO\* was observed at Brigand Hill on 6 and 9 April. At Bush-Bush, two BAT FALCONS mauled a TURKEY VULTURE attempting to perch on their roost--which may have been a nest site--on 6 April. A PEREGRINE FALCON was noted at Brigand Hill on 6 April.

In Tobago, two kettles of BROAD-WINGED HAWKS, the first of 140 individuals and the second of 150, soared northeastward over Crown Point between 9:30 and 10:00 am on 9 April. We received a tantalizing report of several extreme rarities, though all observations were brief and unverified; these include a COMMON GROUND-DOVE\* (potentially 1st for Tobago) at Store Bay in April (date not provided), a possible PLUMBEOUS KITE (potentially 1st for Tobago) and a possible TROPICAL PARULA\* (purportedly known only from a few old specimens) near Cuffie River Resort on 11 April.

**CORRIGENDA:** The Red-legged Kittiwake reported from Galera Point, Trinidad, in last week's alert was actually a Red-legged Honeycreeper. The birds (and mammals) reported from Heights of Aripo, Trinidad, in last week's alert were actually observed on 1 April, not 4 April.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Check back later.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-14) for 20 April 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Guadeloupe, a FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER (1st for Guadeloupe) and an AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER turned up at La Pointe des Chateaux on 17 April; the FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER was still present on 19 April. A YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER and a BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER were noted at the Natural Reserve of Petite-Terre on 16 April. A 1.5 hour seabird watch at La Pointe des Chateaux on 19 April produced spectacular numbers of jaegers, including 37 POMARINE JAEGERs (23 in one flock) and five PARASITIC JAEGERs.

In Trinidad, seabirding at Galera Point seemingly improved over the weekend. Highlights of a 40-minute seabird watch on 16 April included a presumed LEACH'S STORM-PETREL, 30 BRIDLED TERNS (an unusual number; some Sooty Terns may have been present, but the closest birds all appeared to be brown-backed, white-tailed adult Bridled Terns), three ROYAL TERNS and a LAUGHING GULL. However, a 1 hour seabird watch on 19 April produced nothing more unusual than a LAUGHING GULL and a flock of 30 unidentified terns that passed by just after the telescope had been packed up.

Landbirds noted at Galera Point on 16 April included seven GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS (no Caribbean Martins among them) and two RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPERS. Unfortunately a birder's car was broken into while it was parked in an adjacent field. We admonish birders not to leave vehicles unattended in lonely areas where the vehicle is out of sight; it is always best to park within view of a house or other building.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, a first-spring male SCARLET TANAGER\* and a BLACK HAWK-EAGLE\* were seen along the Nariva Extension Road, a potentially productive site seldom visited by birders, on 18 April. While driving to Manzanilla from Sangre Grande, turn right onto the Nariva Road just before reaching the sea. The road deteriorates after about 3 kilometres, but continues as the Nariva Extension Road well beyond the junction of the Pierre Road. At Plum Mitan, thousands of DICKCISSELS, at least 20 LIMPKINS and a BELTED KINGFISHER were noted in the rice fields on 18 April.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, no unusual gulls were found among 2,300 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo and 210 LAUGHING GULLS at Orange Valley on 14 April. At Waterloo, three LARGE-BILLED TERNS and a ROYAL TERN were noted on 14 April.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the solitary TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* continues to be seen, though irregularly, beside TSTT's communication station at Morne Bleu, where it was last reported on 15 April. On 20 April, three SWALLOW-TAILED KITES were noted along the Blanchisseuse Road south of Morne La Croix. On 13 April, a flock of roughly 100 ORANGE-WINGED PARROTS was feeding in a fruiting tree and a CHAPMAN'S SWIFT was noted at Mamoral.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, an adult GREEN HERON\*, two YELLOW WARBLERS (latest date for T&T), a GREATER ANI, a GREEN KINGFISHER and a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH were noted along the stream running through the southern sector of the Caroni Rice Fields on 18 April. Several thousand DICKCISSELS were noted in the southern sector of the Caroni Rice Fields on 13 April. The following day, 14 April, none were seen in the rice fields but between 5:35 and 5:45 pm, roughly 2,000 were noted flying southward over the rice fields to an unknown roost site. At least 200 were still present on 18 April. Two PEREGRINE FALCONS were reported from the rice fields on 13 April. An attempt to relocate the Crane Hawk\* (1st for T&T) at Wallerfield on 13 April was unsuccessful, but a PEREGRINE FALCON was noted.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Check back later.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-15) for 27 April 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** Regretably the past week was peppered with reminders that not all is well with the region's marine environment, perhaps attributable to the climatic conditions currently concocting a severe drought in the region.

In Barbados, an ill subadult MASKED BOOBY (fewer than 10 records for Barbados) landed on a cliff near Sam Lord's Castle (east coast) on 22 April; it was subsequently captured and is currently responding well to a diet of flying fish and oral antibiotics. SCARLET TANAGERS have staged an unprecedented invasion of Barbados, with a female at Bailey Hill, St. Thomas, on 22 April and a male (possibly a second male) and a female at Springhead, St. Andrew, also on 22 April. Curiously more than a dozen Trinidad and Tobago records were all males.

In Trinidad, a mini-pelagic trip to Soldado Rock (courtesy of the T&T Coast Guard), off the Icacos (southwestern) Peninsula, on 22 April produced four presumed LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS and a subadult PARASITIC JAEGER. Soldado Rock, an isolated outcrop about 10 kilometres west of Icacos Point, is well known for its large breeding colonies of Sooty Terns (up to 5000) and Brown Noddies (up to 3000) and occasional breeding of other seabirds in small numbers (Magnificent Frigatebird, Royal Tern and Sandwich Tern). However, the breeding seabird colonies had not been surveyed by an ornithologist since 1982. The only seabirds tallied at Soldado Rock on 22 April included about 120 MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS, 95 BROWN BOOBIES and 40 BROWN PELICANS. Surprisingly no terns were recorded and no seabirds were nesting, suggesting either that this is an anomalous year with an inadequate food supply for breeding seabirds or that the rock has been completely abandoned by seabirds as a breeding site. We're curious to know whether Brown Noddies and Sooty Terns have arrived and begun nesting off eastern Tobago on Little Tobago and St. Giles Islands; apparently both species were still absent during the first week in April. Other birds noted on Soldado Rock on 22 April included four BLACK VULTURES (1st for Soldado), a SPOTTED SANDPIPER and about 25 GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS.

Elsewhere in the Icacos Peninsula of Trinidad, noteworthy birds tallied on 22 April include: two YELLOW-CROWNED PARROTS, a GREATER ANI and a PYGMY KINGFISHER in desiccated Fullerton Swamp; two SANDERLINGS (rare on west coast) on the beach at Cedros; a TURKEY VULTURE nest on the ground with one egg at the base of a Coconut Palm (latest breeding record), a ZONE-TAILED HAWK, 10 LAUGHING GULLS, a ROYAL TERN, two GRAY-NECKED WOOD-RAILS, two RUBY-TOPAZ HUMMINGBIRDS and two STREAKED-HEADED WOODCREEPERS at Icacos; and at least six SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHERS seen plus others heard at Fullerton Swamp and Icacos, including a group of four in a leguminous tree in a parched Coconut Palm plantation at Icacos.

The seldom-birded Icacos Peninsula merits further ornithological exploration. To reach the peninsula, drive southward along the Uriah Butler/Solomon Hochoy Highway until it ends on a left-curving ramp near San Fernando. Turn left on Tarouba Road and proceed 0.9 km to a stoplight; turn left at the light and proceed southward on the Southern Main Road 0.2 km to a roundabout. Take the second exit on the roundabout and continue 3.4 km to a bridge; continue straight beyond the bridge, bypassing exit ramps on the sides, 1.1 km to a stoplight with a McDonald's restaurant on the left and Gulf City Mall on the right.

Proceed straight across this intersection to a causeway between the mangroves of South Oropouche Swamp on the left and the Gulf of Paria on the right; coastal waterbirds may be scanned by pulling off on the shoulder along this causeway. After 6.7 km pass over the Mosquito Creek bridge and proceed another 4.1 km to a fork; turn right at the fork (sign points toward La Brea/Pitch Lake/Point Fortin), continue another 8.3 km to another fork and turn left (toward Pitch Lake/Point Fortin/Cedros). After 0.9 km, the parking lot for Pitch Lake is on the right. The marshes on the east side of Pitch Lake can be highly productive for birds, though beware of guides who may insist that you pay them a hefty fee.

At a roundabout 10.5 km south of Pitch Lake, take the 2nd road toward Cedros (bypassing crowded Point Fortin on the right) and proceed 5.8 km to a T-junction; turn right and then immediately left at a fork. After 16.1 km, you may opt to turn left onto the Austin Road South, which skirts the northern fringes of Los Blanquizontales Lagoon. The road passes through a mosaic of secondary forest growth and small-scale agriculture, crosses several small streams and ends 2.4 km later at a T-junction; from this point you may turn right and drive several km further on a deteriorating road, or turn left and drive 1.2 km to reach the Southern Main Road.

>From the junction of the Southern Main Road and Austin Road South, continue 5.2 km to the town of Cedros (labelled as Bonasse in most maps) on the coast of the Gulf of Paria. The beach, jetty and open sea should be scanned for coastal waterbirds. From this point, turn left and proceed 3.3 km to Fullerton (spelling on road sign) or Fullarton (spelling on maps) Junction; turn left and continue 0.4 to a fork.

If you proceed straight at the fork, you will pass through a small mangrove swamp bordering a stream (good place to look for birds) and after 2.0 km arrive at Columbus Bay, where coastal waterbirds may be observed. If you veer left at the fork, you will soon see patches of open water in a marsh on the right and then cross through the marsh with a small bridge 2.6 km beyond the fork. This is an excellent place to search for reclusive species of marsh birds. About 0.9 km beyond this bridge the road passes through Fullarton Swamp, with mangroves, marshes and open water providing excellent habitat for a variety of birds, including Spotted Tody-Flycatchers. About 2.9 km beyond this you will reach cross a small bridge (a dependable site for Gray-necked Wood-Rail) in the town of Icacos. About 0.6 km beyond the bridge you will reach a cross road paralleling the beach; rapidly eroding Icacos Point is reached by turning right and proceeding 2.8 km.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a 1st-winter FRANKLIN'S GULL\* (3rd for T&T and latest date) moulting into 1st-summer plumage and a worn 1st-winter RING-BILLED GULL\* lingered among about 200 LAUGHING GULLS, two immature COMMON TERNS, a ROYAL TERN and a LARGE-BILLED TERN at San Fernando (see directions in SCBA 2000-44) on 22 April. Disappointingly no Lesser Black-backed Gulls\* or Kelp Gulls\* were present, though at least 1000 LAUGHING GULLS were flying about two large fishing trawlers well offshore. A dehydrated and emaciated LEACH'S STORM-PETREL missing a foot and an eye was picked up from the sea (locality unreported, though presumably from the northern Gulf of Paria) on 21 April; it later died despite an effort at rehabilitation. A morning walk at Cacandee on 21 April produced an adult GREEN HERON\*, an immature BOAT-BILLED HERON, two RINGED KINGFISHERS, two PYGMY KINGFISHERS, a CLAPPER RAIL and two RED-RUMPED WOODPECKERS.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two FUSCOUS FLYCATCHERS with a fledgling were noted at Grande Riviere on 26 April. Somewhat enigmatic was a description from a local naturalist of a bird seen with visiting birders that was identified as a LANCE-TAILED MANAKIN\* (potentially 1st for T&T), but an effort to relocate it on 26 April was unsuccessful.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC will be sponsoring a morning birding trip to Upper St. Anns on Sunday, 13 May. If you wish to attend, please contact the leader, Courtenay Rooks, by phone at 622-8826. We will be meeting at CIC Pembroke Street side at 6:30 am.

The Society of Caribbean Ornithology now has its own listserv service. To subscribe, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SocietyCaribOrnit>. After you have signed up for the listserv, you can either have messages delivered directly to you and/or simply read the messages on the yahoogroups.com website. To do the latter, you will need to register with yahoogroups.com, but once you have done that (and saved your user ID and password), then every time you go to yahoogroups.com it will automatically bring up the SocietyCaribOrnit website.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Polyandry, in which a female mates with two or more males during a breeding season, is unusual among birds but is the normal mating system in many species of shorebirds breeding in arctic latitudes. In these species the females are larger and more aggressive than males, females arrive first on the breeding ground, females always lay a clutch of four eggs, females lay several clutches each of which is incubated by a male, the young are precocial (i.e., able to care for themselves) and food is ephemeral (superabundant). Some tropical shorebirds, such as the Wattled Jacana, are also polyandrous. Female jacanas often commit "ovicide" by destroying eggs of other females incubated by males, to induce the males to mate with them and incubate their own eggs.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-16) for 3 May 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

PHOTO GALLERY: A photo of Masked Booby (Barbados) and a new mystery bird photo, plus the answer to the last mystery bird photo, have been added to the SCBA website.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Although the open ocean, seldom visited by birders or ornithologists, still remains the last frontier of birding in the southeastern Caribbean, much can be learned about seabird migration through the region from strategic vantage points on land. In Guadeloupe, a 3 hour seabird watch at the Natural Reserve of Petite-Terre on 25 April produced staggering numbers of seabirds including five AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS, 245 WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS (the observer is experienced with Leach's Storm-Petrel but all appeared to be Wilson's Storm-Petrels), six POMARINE JAEGERs and two PARASITIC JAEGERs. Similar observations from Trinidad and offshore from Barbados (surprisingly few seabirds are ever seen from land in Barbados) within the past few years suggest that peak numbers of certain seabird species such as storm-petrels and jaegers pass through the region in April. We encourage other birders in the region to routinely participate in seabird watches. On 25 April, a PALM WARBLER dropped in at the Natural Reserve of Petite-Terre.

In Barbados, shorebird migration is in full spring with a CURLEW SANDPIPER (1st spring record for Barbados) found at Congo Road on 1 May and a WHIMBREL of the European race (1st spring record for Barbados) at Chancery Lane on 28 April. Northward bound Nearctic songbird migrants are also turning up, with yet another male SCARLET TANAGER at Gregg Farm, St. Andrew, on 26 April, a singing male YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER at Graeme Hall on 28 April with two reported earlier in the week, and an INDIGO BUNTING (1st spring record for Barbados) at Graeme Hall on 1 May.

In St. Christopher, we received a late report of a GREATER FLAMINGO at Great Salt Pond on 21 March, a WESTERN SANDPIPER and a SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER at Frigate Bay Salt Pond on 17 March, a RING-BILLED GULL and one or two 1st-winter BLACK-HEADED GULLS at Basseterre on 17 March, three AMERICAN COOTS at Frigate Bay Salt Pond (date not given), and a PRAIRIE WARBLER at Caribelle Batik on 22 March. Although more than a year late, the following records from 2000 are worth reporting: two PIED-BILLED GREBES at South Friar's Bay Salt Pond on 23 February; an adult male NORTHERN SHOVELER at South Friar's Bay Salt Pond on 20 February; three adult male, one 1st-winter male and two female RING-NECKED DUCKS at South Friar's Bay Salt Pond on 23 and 26 February; two female LESSER SCAUPS on Great Salt Pond on 23 February; four AMERICAN COOTS at South Friar's Bay Salt Pond on 23 February; a COMMON SNIPE at Cockleshell Bay on 20 February; four SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS at South Friar's Bay Salt Pond on 20 and 23 February; and two HERRING GULLS at Basseterre during 18-24 February.

In Antigua, a late report of birds seen on 19 March include: a female RUFF on salt ponds at Runaway Bay on 19 March; two WESTERN SANDPIPERS at Dark Wood Beach and three at Runaway Bay on 19 March; and 20 RUDDY DUCKS, a MALLARD, a WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL, 18 RING-NECKED DUCKS, a PEREGRINE FALCON, 30 CARIBBEAN COOTS and a 2nd-winter HERRING GULL at Potsworks Reservoir.

In Trinidad, we regret to announce the closure until further notice of two prime birding localities: the Aripo Livestock Station (also known as the Agricultural Research Station) in an effort to contain the spread of foot and mouth disease, and the Trincity Sewage Ponds purportedly due to an incident with local youths.

In northwestern Trinidad, a hike from Teteron Bay to Scotland Bay on 30 May produced a possible VENEZUELAN FLYCATCHER\* (potential 1st for Trinidad), a STREAKED SALTATOR, a BLUE-TAILED EMERALD and a BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO\*.

In northeastern Trinidad, seabird counts from Galera Point remain disappointingly unproductive. A 40-minute seabird count on 1 May produced good numbers of BROWN PELICANS but the only larids seen were three LAUGHING GULLS; surprisingly no terns were seen, though their numbers seem lower than usual in T&T this year. Landbirds seen at the point included 28 LILAC-TAILED PARROTLETS (overdue in Tobago?) and two RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPERS. The two male CARIBBEAN MARTINS\* (3rd for Trinidad) present earlier in the year appear to have departed (last reported on 7 April).

The cloud forests atop the highest peaks of the Northern Range in Trinidad remain yet another birding frontier in need of further exploration. An early morning hike to the summit of Cerro del Aripo on 29 April produced two RUDDY QUAIL-DOVES (plus several unidentified quail-doves), two OLIVE-STRIPED FLYCATCHERS\*, perhaps a dozen singing ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSHES of which at least four were seen, several YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSHES, a BLUE-CAPPED TANAGER and a SPECKLED TANAGER along the highest ridges. Disappointingly no Scaled Antpitta or Band-tailed Pigeons, whose status is poorly known, were heard or seen. The Scaled Antpitta formerly inhabited the Heights of Aripo area but none have been seen or heard during three early morning hikes by an experienced ornithologist to the summits of nearby ridges (Chaguaramal and Aripo Caves) during the past year. The only recent records are from the Asa Wright Nature Centre (1998) and Morne Bleu (1999-present). The Scaled Antpitta formerly inhabited high elevations but has not been reliably reported since 1976; none were seen nor heard during six hikes by an experienced ornithologist to the three highest summits (Cerro del Aripo twice, El Tucuche thrice and Morne Bleu once) during the last 7 years. Two WHITE-THROATED SPADEBILLS and three SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHERS were noted well below the ridges.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a male SCARLET TANAGER\* turned up in Arena Forest on 2 May. Two MORICHE ORIOLES\* were noted at Wallerfield on 2 May. The Arena Reservoir produced a NEOTROPIC CORMORANT, 70 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS and two LARGE-BILLED TERNS on 2 May. An abnormally plumaged CATTLE EGRET seen in the Caroni Rice Fields on 29 April just might have been the "mystery heron" reported near Cumuto on 10 May 2000 (see SCBA 2000-18). It was described as having a "face biscuit brown", "crown and especially nape dark ginger - mid section of nape almost black", mantle "with much more dark biscuit color feathering", "side neck and breast dark ginger" and "underparts and wings predominantly whitish but with sporadic biscuit color feathers". On 2 May, the Caroni Rice Fields produced four PINNATED BITTERNS, 21 LIMPKINS and two BARN OWLS. On 29 April, highlights included a PINNATED BITTERN, 26 LIMPKINS, a light-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER capturing a YELLOW-HOODED BLACKBIRD that subsequently escaped, four GREATER ANIS, a FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER and two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, disappointingly few coastal birds were present during low tide on 28 April, with only 300 LAUGHING GULLS (many mating) at Waterloo and 13 at Orange Valley. Three RED KNOTS were at Waterloo on five more at Orange Valley. Tern numbers seem lower than usual, with two ROYAL TERNS and a LARGE-BILLED TERN at Waterloo and six LARGE-BILLED TERNS at Orange Valley. In Cacandee, two CLAPPER RAILS were noted on 2 May. In southwestern Trinidad, a second egg was found in the TURKEY VULTURE nest (latest nesting date for T&T) near Icacos Point on 28 April and two GREATER ANIS were seen at Fullarton Swamp.

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ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: At least four hypotheses have been postulated to explain the evolution of polyandry in birds. The fertility insurance polyandry hypothesis predicts that a female benefits by the fertilization of a higher proportion of her eggs. The better sperm polyandry hypothesis postulates that a female benefits by acquiring genetically diverse sperm. The more material benefits polyandry hypothesis proposes that a female receives nuptial gifts or other resources from more than one male partner. Finally, the more parental care polyandry hypothesis predicts that a female benefits by having two or more males provide parental care for her young. Bear in mind that these hypotheses may not necessarily be mutually exclusive; more than one may explain polyandry and one hypothesis may be more relevant to one species than another.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-17) for 9 May 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Guadeloupe, the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre is establishing a reputation as the premier land-based seabirding site in the region. On 2 May, a 1.5 hour seabird watch produced an AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER and 13 WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS. On 3 May, a 1.25 hour seabird watch produced a MANX SHEARWATER (1st or 2nd for Guadeloupe), five WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS, a LEACH'S STORM-PETREL, two PARASITIC JAEGERS and six unidentified seabirds. On 4 May, a 1.75 hour seabird watch produced a CORY'S SHEARWATER and three unidentified seabirds. Landbirds seen at the same locality included a lingering PALM WARBLER and a female YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER on 4 May, plus a CAPE MAY WARBLER on 3 May.

In Trinidad, few birders ventured into the field over the weekend. In the Northern Range, a hike to the Aripo Cave on 5 May produced a LITTLE TINAMOU, a BLACK-FACED ANTTHRUSH, an ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH and two SPECKLED TANAGERS, all seen on the way to the cave, plus about 35 OILBIRDS at the entrance to the cave. Again no Trinidad Piping-Guans (recently reported), Band-tailed Pigeons or Variegated Antpittas were noted.

At Caribbean Union College in Maracas Valley, Trinidad, researchers have been frustrated this spring by the slow pace of breeding in the colour-banded population of TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRDS, presumably due to the severe drought conditions. However, over the weekend researchers documented a territory defended by two males (one dominant, present for the last five breeding seasons; the other recently appeared on the territory but could not be relocated on 9 May) and two females, with each female incubating eggs on separate nests. Although cooperative breeding has now been well documented in this species (see Ornithological Tidbits section below), this represents the first time two females have nested simultaneously within the same territory; usually one or both females lay eggs in a single nest. Earlier in the season a female from a polygynous trio laid eggs in a nest just as the nestlings fledged from an earlier, different nest. Currently another polygynous trio is incubating a clutch of five eggs, laid by both females, in one nest.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC will be sponsoring a morning birding trip to Upper St. Anns on Sunday, 13 May. If you wish to attend, please contact the leader, Courtenay Rooks, by phone at 622-8826. We will be meeting at CIC Pembroke Street side at 6:30 am.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Are tropical birds kinkier than their closely related temperate counterparts? Although species are often classified as representing a particular breeding system (e.g., monogamous, polygynous or polyandrous), variation typically occurs within any given species. The Northern Mockingbird is almost invariably monogamous, though there is one report of serial polyandry by females within a single breeding season and a few reports of polygyny in which a male was mated to two females and simultaneously cared for offspring in two nests on separate territories. The closely related Tropical Mockingbird, however, appears to be much more flexible and cooperative in its mating systems. Of 12 territories at Caribbean Union College last year, five were defended by monogamous pairs, four by polygynous trios (both females laying eggs in the same nest with all three adults feeding young), two by polyandrous trios (both males and the female feeding young, but did the female mate with both males?), and one by a trio in which the sex of the third individual (all three fed young) was never determined (complicated by three different females that were sequentially banded, nested and disappeared), but was thought to be a male since it never incubated or laid eggs. If indeed tropical birds are kinkier, why?

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-18) for 18 May 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**MYSTERY SOLVED:** Well, not exactly. Videotape footage of the "mystery seed-eating finch" at Bon Accord, Tobago, on 26 March (see SCBA 2001-11), revealed a grey seedeater that was darker in the face and possessing a pale bill, a white wing speculum (not noted in the field), and a pale belly gradually merging with the grayer breast and sides. The bird appears to have been a male GRAY SEEDEATER\* (1st for Tobago), though a distinct white patch on the left malar region (absent on the right) suggests it may have been the 'ring-necked' variety initially described as a subspecies of the Gray Seedeater (*Sporophila intermedia insularis*), later synonymized with the nominate race of the Gray Seedeater (*S. i. intermedia*) and currently suspected of representing a distinct, cryptic species--the Ring-necked Seedeater (*S. insularis*), based on unpublished studies currently in progress. However, the origin of the Tobago bird is suspect. In Trinidad, the Gray Seedeater and perhaps the Ring-necked Seedeater as well were formerly common but now appear to be extirpated; to our knowledge the last record of Gray Seedeater was from 1994. But many are imported from Venezuela and sold in local pet shops; undoubtedly some escape, which may explain the appearance of the seedeater in Tobago.

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** We received a late report from Grenada of a EURASIAN WIGEON\* (1st for Grenada), which arrived with a flock of 41 BLUE-WINGED TEAL, at La Sagesse from 24 January to 15 February; it left when the majority of the teal departed. Previous records from the region include one in Barbuda and three in Barbados. A LEAST GREBE\* (1st for Grenada and southern Lesser Antilles) was also present at La Sagesse from 20 March to 1 April.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the TTFNC field trip to Upper St. Ann's on 13 May produced 50 species of birds, including CHESTNUT WOODPECKER, STREAKED XENOPS, SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER and TRINIDAD EUPHONIA. A hike to the Salybia Waterfall and beyond on 13 May turned up a BEARDED BELLBIRD (heard only), a singing BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTILA (heard only), a COLLARED TROGON and several WHITE-NECKED THRUSHES; this site may represent the lowest elevation in Trinidad for the bellbird, trogon and thrush.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a hike into the mangrove swamp at Cacandee on 12 May produced an adult COCOI HERON, a CLAPPER RAIL, a RINGED KINGFISHER, an incubating or brooding EARED DOVE and at least three lingering NORTHERN WATERTHRUSHES. The highlights of a hike along the edge of Teteron Bay on 10 May included three BLUE-TAILED EMERALDS, a STREAKED XENOPS, three MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULETS and about ten STREAKED SALTATORS (this appears to be the only Trinidad locality where this species has been recorded in recent years).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** In a recently published paper titled "Breeding biology of the White-tailed Sabrewing at Tobago, West Indies" (*Journal of Field Ornithology* 71:597-605, 2000), F. E. Hayes, N. A. Trimm, B. Sanasie and R. P. French summarised data based on observations at seven nests. Breeding occurred during the dry season from February-April. Nests were placed 1.75-11 m high in small dicot trees, bamboo and palms in the forest interior, usually near streams. Two white eggs were laid in bulky (7-35 cm high), cup-shaped nests; one nest contained spines from a palm. The camouflaged nestlings were quiet. During the late nestling period, a female made 1.27 feeding trips/hour (10.25 hours of observation) to the nest; feeding sessions averaged 0.93 minutes with an average of 2.0 regurgitations/nestling, and recesses off the nest averaged 44.26 minutes. The female fed on arthropods and nectar, and vigorously defended the nestlings.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-19) for 25 May 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Guadeloupe, the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre is developing a reputation as a premier landbird vagrant trap as well as a seabird watch site. Recent landbird sightings include a TENNESSEE WARBLER (1st for Guadeloupe) on 11 May, a MAGNOLIA WARBLER and a RED-EYED VIREO on 14 May, and two PALM WARBLERS on 16 May. Meanwhile seabird watches continue to be productive. A 1-hour seabird watch on 8 May produced a WILSON'S STORM-PETREL, a probable MANX SHEARWATER and a POMARINE JAEGER. Another 1-hour seabird watch on 9 May produced 174 AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS and two CORY'S SHEARWATERS. A half-hour seabird watch on 15 May produced a single WILSON'S STORM-PETREL and an unidentified STORM-PETREL.

In Tobago, two LARGE-BILLED TERNS\* (1st for Tobago), including an adult and an immature, were noted at the large pond beside the Claude Noel Highway in Lowlands from 15-21 May. A SAVANNA HAWK\* (2nd for Tobago) was seen at Fort George (curious locality) on 5 May and relocated in Lowlands on 21 May. The WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD\* (2nd for T&T) continues to be seen sporadically at Little Tobago, where it was last reported on 10 May. Five BLACK-NECKED STILTS\* (3rd for Tobago) were noted in Bon Accord Lagoon on 16 May. A CARIBBEAN COOT\* was at Buccoo Swamp on 21 May. A dozen MASKED BOOBIES\* were noted at St. Giles on 29 April.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, an unidentified Streptopelia dove, either a RINGED TURTLE-DOVE\* (potential 2nd for T&T) or a EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE\* (potential 1st for T&T, predating Waterloo record in late 2000; see SCBA 2000-20, 2000-39), was reported once again in Valley View, Maracas Valley, during the 2nd week of May. Observers who stumble across a Streptopelia dove are urged to listen for its call, comprising two (Ringed Turtle-Dove) or three (Eurasian Collared-Dove) syllables, and to search for the coloration of the basal half of the tail (pale in Ringed Turtle-Dove, dark in Eurasian Collared-Dove), which is best seen when the bird spreads its tail when it turns or just before it lands, or from below when it is perched above.

Elsewhere in the Northern Range, a hike along the Lalaja-Paria Trace on 20 May produced a LITTLE TINAMOU (seen), a RED-RUMPED WOODPECKER, two ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSHES (heard only) and a male SWALLOW TANAGER. Three SWALLOW-TAILED KITES were seen along the Lalaja Road.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, an adult RUFESCENT TIGER-HERON\* and two BAT FALCONS, one eating a bird, were noted at Bush Bush, Nariva Swamp, on 7 May.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, numbers of LAUGHING GULLS have declined sharply in recent weeks, with only about 100 at Waterloo, one at Orange Valley and about 150 at San Fernando on 19 May, with no rare gulls noted. Meanwhile, numbers of terns are rising, with 67 LARGE-BILLED TERNS, 44 YELLOW-BILLED TERNS and two ROYAL TERNS at Waterloo and ten COMMON TERNS and two LARGE-BILLED TERNS at San Fernando on 19 May. Shorebird numbers at Waterloo and Orange Valley were unimpressive, though a breeding-plumaged RED KNOW was at Waterloo on 19 May. Elsewhere, two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were noted at Pointe-a-Pierre on 19 May and the TURKEY VULTURE nesting at Icacos Point still had two eggs on 19 May (latest date).

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a few of the Caroni Rice Fields have finally been flooded, with six BLACK-NECKED STILTS and 23 LIMPKINS joining the usual herons and egrets on 22 May. A mixed flock of YELLOW-HOODED BLACKBIRDS and SHINY COWBIRDS exceeded 1000 individuals and a MASKED YELLOWTHROAT was also noted. We predict that increasing numbers of waterbirds will be attracted to the fields in the upcoming weeks.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, a search for TRINIDAD PIPING-GUANS\* at Grande Riviere on 8 and 9 May was unsuccessful, though the local resident continues to see them regularly. Five SWALLOW-TAILED KITES were seen at Montevideo on 9 May.

Although not birds, we decided to include reports of two recently stranded PILOT WHALES along the west coast of Trinidad, providing further evidence that not all is well with the marine environment. The first blundered its way up the Madame Espanol River on 7 May and died despite a herculean rescue attempt. The second was found dead and partially butchered at McDerm Beach, 3 kilometres to the north on 8 May.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** A recently published paper titled "Grenada Hook-billed Kite (*Chondrohierax uncinatus mirus*) surveys and nesting activity" by R. Thorstrom, E. Massiah and C. Hall (Pitirre 13:92, 2000), reports an estimated 15 individual kites found during surveys from 22-28 February and 2-10 August 2000, mostly in the southwestern section of the island. In August, two nests were located 2.7 km apart, 15 and 17 metres high in *Ceiba pentandra* and *Erythrina micropteryx* trees, respectively. Of 156 prey items carried to a nestling in the first nest, 133 were identified to species (all snails); of these, 55% were *Drymaeus dominicus*, 34.6% were *Orthalicus undatus*, and 9.8% were *Pleurodonte perplexa*. The male delivered 46.8% and the female 53.2% of the snails.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-20) for 1 June 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Tobago, the WESTERN REEF-HERON\* (1st for Tobago, 2nd for South America) continues to be seen, but has become quite elusive. On 24 May it was relocated in the small patch of mangroves just south of the Buccoo Beach Facility parking lot, but it quickly flew deep into Buccoo Swamp. Simultaneously a breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET\* was stalking fish at Buccoo Beach. Efforts to find both species on 25 May were unsuccessful, though a YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA\* was glimpsed flying over Buccoo.

Elsewhere in Tobago, an adult STRIATED HERON\* and an immature GREAT BLUE HERON were found at the large pond beside the Claude Noel Highway in Lowlands on 24 May; presumably the same STRIATED HERON\* was relocated the following day in the Bon Accord Sewage Ponds. At least 111 ROSEATE TERNS were tallied at a breeding colony on a small rock just offshore from Fort James, Plymouth, where two chicks were observed on 24 May. In the Main Ridge Forest Reserve, the forest birds are busily breeding in anticipation of the wet season. A nesting GRAY-THROATED LEAFTOSSER\* was seen near the south entrance to Gilpin Trace on 25 May. Further nesting activity seen along Gilpin Trace on 25 May include one BLUE-CROWNED MOTMOT, one OCHRE-BELLIED FLYCATCHER, one BLUE-BACKED MANAKIN, two STRIPE-BREASTED SPINETAIL and four RED-EYED VIREO nests. An active WHITE-TAILED SABREWING nest was found earlier in the year.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, an adult LITTLE EGRET\* and a RINGED KINGFISHER were seen at Trincity on 30 May. The Caroni Rice Fields continue to attract more waterbirds as predicted last week, especially in the recently flooded southwestern sector. The star attraction was a subadult female SNAIL KITE\* seen on 26 and 27 May, often perched on the small patches of bamboo southwest of the runway. Other highlights included a PIED-BILLED GREBE both days, two PINNATED BITTERNS on 27 May, a GREAT BLUE HERON on 26 May, a light-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER on 26 May, a minimum of 39 LIMPKINS (highest count for T&T; previous high was 37) on 27 May, a high of 20 COLLARED PLOVERS on 26 May, four STILT SANDPIPERS on 26 May, 20 LARGE-BILLED TERNS on 27 May, a BLACK SKIMMER on 26 May and three MASKED YELLOWTHROATS on 26 May.

A rather bizarre incident occurred in the rice fields on 27 May when a heavy black object suddenly slammed into a plowed field about 50 metres from a carload of birders. Several startled CATTLE EGRETS flew away from the object, but quickly returned to investigate it. The object turned out to be a BLACK VULTURE whose torso and secondary flight feathers had been severed by an aircraft's propeller (Liat flight #303) moments earlier. Although the aircraft's crew reported flying through birds during their final approach to Piarco International Airport, they did not report an actual bird collision, indicating that such incidents are under reported. Fortunately such incidents are extremely rare and have yet to cause a human fatality in T&T (but have elsewhere). However, an aircraft's windscreen was recently smashed by a bird during a collision over Trinidad.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a hike at Cacandee on 27 May produced a RINGED KINGFISHER, a PYGMY KINGFISHER, two NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHERS and two dallying NORTHERN WATERTHRUSHES (latest date for T&T).

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, five ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSHES were seen and several others heard along Lalaja-Paria Trace and along the ridge leading westward toward Morne Bleu on 30 May. Other birds seen in the vicinity include a LITTLE TINAMOU, two SWALLOW-TAILED KITES, a PLUMBEOUS KITE, three RED-RUMPED WOODPECKERS, a BLACK-FACED ANTTHRUSH, a WHITE-BELLIED ANTBIRD and a few YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSHES.

In Barbados, three BLACK SWIFTS were noted at Melvins Hill, St. Joseph, on 27 May.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** In the "Forty-second supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds" (Auk 117:847-858, 2000), the taxonomy of several birds in the southeastern Caribbean were changed. One such change is the Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*), which has now been split into three distinct species based on an analysis of plumage, morphology and hybridization published by C. J. Dove and R. C. Banks (1999. A taxonomic study of Crested Caracaras (Falconidae). *Wilson Bulletin* 111:330-339). The three species are SOUTHERN CARACARA (*Caracara plancus*) of South America (including Trinidad, where it is very rare), CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*) of North America, Central America and Cuba, and the extinct GUADALUPE CARACARA (*Caracara lutosa*) of Guadalupe Island (Mexico). Stay tuned for further taxonomic changes.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-21) for 8 June 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Guadeloupe, remarkable numbers of migrating seabirds continue to be reported from the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre. A 3-hour seabird watch on 25 May produced eight AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS, three MANX SHEARWATERS, two SOOTY SHEARWATERS, two CORY'S SHEARWATERS, 48 WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS, three LONG-TAILED JAEGERs harassing a BROWN NODDY and SOOTY TERNS, a POMARINE JAEGER and a PARASITIC JAEGER. On 26 May, a 2.25 hour watch produced 23 WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS, a GREATER SHEARWATER, two AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS, an unidentified white BOOBY (probably RED-FOOTED BOOBY), an unidentified SKUA harassing a SANDWICH TERN, a POMARINE JAEGER and a PARASITIC JAEGER. On 3 June, a 0.75 hour watch in calm seas failed to produce any birds; however, similar conditions during a 0.5 hour watch on 4 June produced a WILSON'S STORM-PETREL and an unidentified SHEARWATER.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, further flooding of the Caroni Rice Fields continues to attract impressive numbers of waterbirds, including the tail end of shorebird migration. On 1 June, a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER\* (4th spring record for T&T in 4th consecutive year; obviously overlooked previously) materialized in the southwestern sector and was relocated on 2 June (latest date for T&T), but not afterward. The SNAIL KITE\*, now thought to be an immature based on its pale legs and bill, continues to be seen regularly up through 7 June. Other noteworthy bird sightings from the rice fields within the past week include: a LEAST BITTERN on 2 June; two ANHINGAS on 7 June; up to 25 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS; up to six WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS; a LONG-WINGED HARRIER (dark morph) on 5 June; up to nine STILT SANDPIPERS; up to nine WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS; up to two SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS; up to 40 GREATER YELLOWLEGS; up to 20 LESSER YELLOWLEGS; and up to 65 LARGE-BILLED TERNS. We neglected to report last week a SOUTHERN LAPWING nest with two eggs on 27 May (later flooded) plus three additional nests with eggs found on 29 May.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, one good tern deserved another at San Fernando, where a BROWN NODDY, two SANDWICH TERNS (one 'Sandwich' and one 'Cayenne'), 15 COMMON TERNS, five LARGE-BILLED TERNS and a YELLOW-BILLED TERN were tallied on 2 June. The presence of Brown Noddy and 'Cayenne Tern' suggests that the breeding colony at Soldado Rock may be active now. In contrast with terns, gull numbers have declined sharply, with LAUGHING GULL numbers estimated at 120 at San Fernando, none at Orange Valley and 80 at Waterloo on 2 June. At Pointe-a-Pierre, a COMMON MOORHEN nest with three eggs and a STRIATED HERON nest with a single egg on 2 June indicated that waterbirds are breeding now that the wet season has begun. A seemingly bewildered WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL sat in a flock of several hundred BLACK SKIMMERS on a mudflat at Waterloo on 2 June. A pair of WHITE-WINGED BECARDS and four RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were also noted at Pointe-a-Pierre on 2 June and a pair of RED-CAPPED CARDINALS was seen in Caroni Swamp on 3 June.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, an OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER reported from Las Lapas on 1 June would be amazingly late (previous late date was 26 April) if correctly identified. At Morne Bleu, noteworthy birds tallied on 5 June included four COLLARED TROGONS, a STRAKED XENOPS, a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER, an ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH, a YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSH, a SPECKLED TANAGER, two HEPATIC TANAGERS and an adult male SWALLOW TANAGER.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, a LONG-WINGED HARRIER (dark morph) was noted in the Biche area of Nariva Swamp on 29 May.

In northeastern Trinidad, a TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* was seen and others heard and a SHORT-TAILED PYGMY-TYRANT\* was seen at Grande Riviere on 1 June.

In Guadeloupe, a singing ANTILLEAN NIGHTHAWK has been present since 27 April at Destrelan (Baie-Mahault), where it was recorded last year.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** In the "Forty-second supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds" (Auk 117:847-858, 2000), the taxonomy of several birds in the southeastern Caribbean was changed. The 'skuas' of genus Catharacta (rarely recorded within region) are now merged into the 'jaegers' of genus Stercorarius based on studies of molecular genetics, behaviour and parasite faunas. The English name of Gygis alba (recorded once in Tobago) has been changed from Common White-Tern to White Tern. Stay tuned next week for further changes.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-22) for 13 June 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Barbados, an immature WESTERN REEF-HERON (6th for Barbados), possibly the same bird that spent the winter in Tobago, turned up along with a GREY HERON at Graeme Hall on 7 June. However, it could not be relocated over the weekend though a GREAT BLUE HERON was noted on 9 June. Three BLACK-NECKED STILTS at Graeme Hall on 6 June provided the first record in 7 years and the first record of multiple birds. Elsewhere, four ROSEATE TERNS were noted at Oistins on 10 June.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, further flooding of the Caroni Rice Fields continues to attract growing numbers of waterbirds including unexpected rarities. On 9 June, an extraordinarily late female (possibly immature?) NORTHERN PINTAIL\* (1st for T&T) showed up among a bevy of South American ducks including up to 22 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, eight WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS\* (three on 9 June, eight on 13 June) and 16 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS in the southwestern sector. It was not relocated the following day, but was seen again on 11 and 13 June. The bird is slightly smaller than the Fulvous Whistling-Ducks and notably larger than the White-cheeked Pintails with which it associates. Previously recorded from Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname, its occurrence in T&T is long overdue. It is best seen at dawn in a flooded field where the ducks congregate at night; later in the morning it is difficult to see as it forages in the plowed fields.

Other noteworthy birds seen in the Caroni Rice Fields include: the immature SNAIL KITE\*, which eluded birders over the weekend but reappeared on 13 June; a breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET\* on 10 June; a PIED-BILLED GREBE on 13 June; a LONG-WINGED HARRIER (light morph) on 13 June; a fledgling SOUTHERN LAPWING on 9 May; and an assortment of lingering Nearctic migrant shorebirds, including three WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS (tied latest date for T&T), eight STILT SANDPIPERS and two SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS on 13 June.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, six WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS\* and two WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS were tallied in the recently flooded Valsayn Rice Fields on 9 June, two WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS\* and a LEAST GREBE on 10 June, and four WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 13 June.

In southwestern Trinidad, a WHITE-TAILED HAWK\* was carefully studied as it flew over cane fields along Timitall Trace, between San Francique Road and Pluck Road, Penal, on 6 June.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, researchers at Caribbean Union College (CUC), Maracas Valley, were busy over the weekend documenting a new twist in the kinky mating systems of the TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD. At one nest, two adult males (both colour banded) and two adult females (one colour banded) were seen provisioning three (subsequently reduced to two) offspring at a nest in which a single clutch of three eggs was laid and incubated by an unbanded female. During 36 trips to the nest, the dominant male present on the territory for at least five breeding seasons made only three trips but was the most defensive against humans and avian intruders; in contrast, the surprisingly helpful second male (possibly a parent?) made 17 trips. The incubating female made 12 trips and the assisting female contributed four trips. The same foursome earlier produced two clutches in separate nests simultaneously (see SCBA 2001-17), but unfortunately neither clutch hatched. The benefits and costs of cooperative breeding in mockingbirds remain a ripe subject for research.

Despite more than a thousand hours of observation of TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRDS at CUC, an event of predation was never observed until 12 May, when a DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE picked off one of four noisily begging fledgling mockingbirds in a tree. The fledglings were from two different broods of a highly successful monogamous pair, demonstrating that reproductive success can have negative repercussions, in this case attracting the attention of deadly predators.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** In the "Forty-second supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds" (Auk 117:847-858, 2000), the taxonomy of several birds in the southeastern Caribbean was changed. The Adelaide's Warbler (*Dendroica adelaidae*) has now been split into three distinct species based on genetic, plumage and morphological differences (Lovette, I. J., and E. Bermingham. 1999. Explosive speciation in the New World *Dendroica* warblers. Proceedings of the Royal Society of London Series B 266:1629-1636; Lovette, I. J., E. Bermingham, G. Seutin, and R. E. Ricklefs. 1998. Evolutionary differentiation in three endemic West Indian warblers. Auk 115:890-903). The three species are ADELAIDE'S WARBLER (*D. adelaidae*) in Puerto Rico, the BARBUDA WARBLER (*D. subita*) in Barbuda, and the ST. LUCIA WARBLER (*D. delicata*) in St. Lucia.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-23) for 22 June 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

PHOTO GALLERY: Additional photos of the Kelp Gulls in Trinidad and Barbados are posted along with details of the initial Trinidad record at Bob Lewis's Gull Site on the web at <http://www.bway.net/~lewis/birds/trind/trindkl.html> HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Tobago, a small yellow bird whose "chest was bright yellow, the eyes black and the head a deep orange or golden colour" was observed to be "very active foraging among the leaves of the Saman Tree for insects" while giving "several short series of calls (each series about 2 seconds long)... at intervals ranging between 10-90 seconds". Based on this description, taken at Goldsborough on 19 June, we suspect the bird was a YELLOW WARBLER\* of the Barbados race (potentially 1st for Tobago). Obviously confirmation is desirable, but this observation adds toward the solution of a few earlier mysteries. Several years ago a nesting YELLOW WARBLER was reported from Grafton Estate. More recently, a singing male YELLOW WARBLER was found at Crown Point on 3 July 1997, but the experienced observer was unable to obtain clear views of the bird's head; efforts to relocate it were futile. Birders should be alert for Yellow Warblers in Tobago during the summer and should check the head orange tones, which would distinguish Lesser Antillean birds from Nearctic migrants. We also request further details on distinguishing Barbados birds from those elsewhere.

Elsewhere in Tobago, a STRIPED OWL\* was heard at night on 9 June at Goldsborough; presumably the same bird was seen in January. On 3 June, a few dozen PALM TANAGERS were noted at a communal roost in a tree infested with Mistletoe along the Windward Main Road at King's Bay and a few dozen VIOLACEOUS EUPHONIAS were seen preparing to rest in a Cordia tree along the Windward Main Road at Speyside.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the female NORTHERN PINTAIL\* (1st for T&T) in the Caroni Rice Fields has not been seen since 13 June. However, the flooding of additional fields is attracting more waterbirds, including an assortment of lingering Nearctic migrant shorebirds. Recent sightings include: the immature SNAIL KITE\* last reported on 14 June; a LONG-WINGED HARRIER (light morph) on 19 June; a GREAT BLUE HERON on 14 June; two BOAT-BILLED HERONS on 14 June; a YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON on 19 June; up to 15 BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS on 16 June; up to 31 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 19 June; up to eight WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS\* on 14 and 19 June; up to 29 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 16 June; up to three SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS on 19 June; two breeding-plumaged RUDDY TURNSTONES on 19 June; up to 45 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS on 19 June; up to two LEAST SANDPIPERS on 16 and 19 JUNE; up to six STILT SANDPIPERS on 19 June; up to three WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS on 14 June with one on 19 June (latest date for T&T); up to three SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS on 16 June; and up to four MASKED YELLOWTHROATS on 14 June.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, extensive flooding of the Valsayn Rice Fields is also attracting waterbirds. Sightings on 16 June include a PINNATED BITTERN, ten LIMPKINS, four BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS and a WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL (thus 30 for the day including Caroni records above; highest count for Trinidad). A PIED-BILLED GREBE was noted among ten LEAST GREBES at Trincity on 17 June. A BAT FALCON was seen at Cumuto on 17 June. About 17 COMMON WAXBILLS were noted at Orange Grove on 17 June.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a STREAKED SALTATOR and two MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULETS were noted along the road to Fort George on 20 June. In the upper Guanapo Valley, an extraordinarily large lek of BEARDED BELLBIRDS was discovered on 13 June, with an estimated 12 calling males (at least eight different birds seen) of which several were immatures. A SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER was also seen and five SWALLOW-TAILED KITES were noted along the Lalaja Road.

In southwestern Trinidad, a possible RUFOUS-NECKED WOOD-RAIL\* was briefly noted at Pitch Lake on 16 June. At Sudama Teerath, near Penal, four RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were noted along the banks of the Oropouche River on 18 June. On 16 June, six LIMPKINS were mobbed when flying low by about 30 YELLOW-HOODED BLACKBIRDS and a dozen WHITE-HEADED MARSH-TYRANTS near Debe.

In Barbados, a pelagic trip to about 10 kilometres offshore on 16 June produced an AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER, a MASKED BOOBY, at least eight RED-FOOTED BOOBIES and about 50 SOOTY TERNS including at least one juvenile. Lingering Nearctic shorebird migrants at Congo Road on 17 June include a few SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS, seven GREATER YELLOWLEGS, an injured SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER and a RUDDY TURNSTONE. At St. Bernard's Village, a BLACK SWIFT and two (possibly three) unidentified Chaeturna Swifts, thought to be SHORT-TAILED SWIFTS, were noted on 17 June. There are only two previous records of positively identified Short-tailed Swifts, one in June and one in August; furthermore, there are two June observations of unidentified Chaetura swifts and an October 1999 invasion of Chimney Swifts plus a few unidentified swifts.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: In the "Forty-second supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds" (Auk 117:847-858, 2000), the taxonomy of several birds in the southeastern Caribbean was changed. The GIANT COWBIRD (*Scaphidura oryzivora*) has now been merged into the cowbird genus *Molothrus*, based on genetic studies by S. M. Lanyon (1994. Polyphyly of the blackbird genus *Agelaius* and the importance of assumptions of monophyly in comparative studies. *Evolution* 48:679-693), S. M. Lanyon and K. E. Omland (1999. A molecular phylogeny of the blackbirds (Icteridae): Five lineages revealed by cytochrome-B sequence data. *Auk* 116:629-639), and K. P. Johnson and S. M. Lanyon (1999. Molecular systematics of the grackles and allies, and the effect of additional sequence (cyt B and ND2). *Auk* 116:759-768). Thus, the new scientific name is *Molothrus oryzivora*.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-24) for 29 June 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

PHOTO GALLERY: Photos of the Curlew Sandpiper and Whimbrel (Eurasian race) in Barbados, Snail Kite in Trinidad and Little Egret in Tobago have been added to the SCBA website (see address above).

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: Although seabirds may be beleaguered by environmental threats in the region, a recent rat eradication programme on the offshore islets of Antigua appears to have had a positive effect on nesting seabirds, which are returning to the islands to breed and should be monitored more closely. A visit to 3 hectare Rabbit Island on 18 June yielded a variety of nesting seabirds including roughly 20 BROWN PELICANS, 40 LAUGHING GULLS, five BROWN NODDIES and 15 SOOTY TERNS. Other noteworthy birds included 11 WEST INDIAN WHISTLING-DUCKS and two WHITE-CROWNED PIGEONS. A visit to 40 hectare Green Island on 26 May produced about 20 nesting RED-BILLED TROPICBIRDS, five MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS and ten CARIBBEAN MARTINS. Other seabirds reported breeding recently on other offshore islands include ROSEATE TERNS, LEAST TERNS and possibly BRIDLED TERNS.

In Tobago, a remarkably late adult male GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER\* (1st for Tobago, 3rd for T&T) was seen and well described by well credentialed observers along the King's Bay Trail on 20 June.

In Barbados, YELLOW WARBLERS have turned up recently in odd places where they had never been recorded previously, presumably in response to the most severe drought conditions in four decades. For the first time in 18 years one was noted in St. John while another was reported from East Point for the first time in about 45 years. Vagrancy during environmental stress may explain the report of a possible YELLOW WARBLER\* of the Barbados race at Goldsborough, Tobago, on 19 June. Birders in Tobago should be aware that the Barbados race is distinguished from Nearctic races by a rufous crown in breeding males, extensive black in the wings and tail, and a brighter golden colouration; the rufous crown is reduced in females and non-breeding males.

Other birds noted in Barbados include six BLACK SWIFTS at St. Bernards Village, St. Joseph (a reliable spot for swifts, observed during four consecutive trips), on 23 June, and a very late but wild, freely flying BLUE-WINGED TEAL at Hope, St. Lucy, in mid-June.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the immature SNAIL KITE\* continues to be seen in the Caroni Rice Fields, where it has moved into fields adjacent to the runway; our last report is from 28 June. Other birds seen in the rice fields on 28 June include two WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS\*, 24 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, eight WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS, a BAT FALCON, a RUDDY TURNSTONE, a WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER (latest date for T&T), 52 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 17 GREATER YELLOWLEGS and four LESSER YELLOWLEGS (Greater Yellowlegs outnumber Lesser Yellowlegs in spring and vice versa in autumn). Also noteworthy was a Butorides heron intermediate between STRIATED HERON and GREEN HERON (scored as a five on Payne's hybrid scale of 1-9; see Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club 94:81-88, 1974). On 14 June, a PECTORAL SANDPIPER (4th spring record for T&T, latest date) was seen in the rice fields but inadvertently omitted from earlier alert.

In southern Trinidad, five BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOWS, the first of the year, showed up Mora Reservoir (near Syne Village along Reyes Trace, just off the SS Erin Road) on 27 June, coinciding with the first day of consistently heavy rainfall for the year. Five PLUMBEOUS KITES were also noted.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a GREAT BLUE HERON and two RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were seen at South Oropouche Swamp on 26 June. At San Fernando, no gulls or terns were noted at dawn on 26 June, but in the afternoon of 23 June at least 40 LAUGHING GULLS, three COMMON TERNS and three LARGE-BILLED TERNS were noted during a brief visit. A SHORT-TAILED HAWK soared over San Fernando Hill on 23 June. At Pointe-a-Pierre, a STREAK-HEADED WOODCREEPER (heard only), two SAFFRON FINCHES and two adult and two begging juvenile RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were noted on 23 June. The nests of COMMON MOORHEN and STRIATED HERON reported on 2 June have failed. We inadvertently omitted an earlier report of four late BARN SWALLOWS along with 14 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 20 GREAT EGRETS at La Romaine on 2 June.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a CHESTNUT WOODPECKER, five COLLARED TROGONS and two SWALLOW TANAGERS were tallied at Morne Bleu on 24 June. After a slow start to the breeding season presumably due to severe drought conditions, TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRDS at Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, are frantically breeding later than normal, with five currently active nests on 11 territories and several others under construction. On 29 June, a remarkable double-shelled eggs was found abandoned in a nest. It was abnormally long, with half the egg tightly encased within half of another egg and may have contained two undeveloped embryos. It represented the fifth clutch of the year for a prolific pair that had already fledged at least six offspring from three different broods. Little wonder something went amiss! On another TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD territory defended by a colour-banded polygynous trio, a fourth unbanded bird of unknown sex joined the trio earlier during the year. Since then one female moved into an adjacent territory recently vacated by the banded monogamous male, where she appears to have defended alone a nest with at least one fledgling, but hasn't been seen in over a week. Meanwhile a new female, banded as a fledgling in a nearby territory on 17 April 1998 but never seen subsequently, recently turned up and is nesting at the same time as a second banded female nearby; the unbanded male, clearly a new arrival though perhaps present for several months, is assisting with both nests and one female was seen feeding young in the other nest.

Elsewhere, the polygamous quartet of two males and two females reported earlier have successfully fledged two young from a nest. Currently a single clutch is being incubated in a new nest and the second female appears ready to lay a clutch in the previous nest in which the two nestlings were just fledged. Are tropical birds kinkier? Tropical Mockingbirds surely are! ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: In a recently published study, J. S. Hunt, E. Bermingham, and R. E. Ricklefs analysed the "Molecular systematics and biogeography of Antillean thrashers, tremblers, and mockingbirds (Aves: Mimidae)" (Auk 118:35-55, 2001). The Tremblers formed three strongly differentiated clades: (1) GRAY TREMBLER on St. Lucia, (2) BROWN TREMBLER on St. Vincent and Dominica, and (3) BROWN TREMBLER on Montserrat and Guadeloupe. The closer relationship between BROWN TREMBLERS on Montserrat and Guadeloupe, rather than between Guadeloupe and Dominica, was surprising. The disjunction between Guadeloupe and Dominica requires either long-distance dispersal over St. Lucia, or stepping-stone colonization between the islands with subsequent disappearance on St. Lucia. The possibility of a recent introduction from Dominica to St. Vincent was considered highly unlikely since both populations were genetically distinct. Stay tuned next week for further results.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868-673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tstt.net.tt).



This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-25) for 4 July 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>.

Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

MYSTERY BIRD QUIZ: A new mystery bird photo along with an answer to the last mystery bird photo are now posted at the SCBA website (see above).

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Guadeloupe, a seemingly tired 1st-summer ARCTIC TERN (1st for Guadeloupe) whose identity was only recently confirmed was photographed at the amazingly productive Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre on 9 May 2001. Surely this species migrates through the region more frequently than the few records suggest. On 1 July, an EARED DOVE (3rd for Guadeloupe) was seen at La Desirade Island.

A recent trickle of migrant shorebirds into the region suggests that autumn migration has arrived, though at this time of the year it is extremely difficult to determine which individuals are late northbound migrants, early southbound migrants or summering birds.

In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, a non-breeding plumaged AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (3rd summer record) showed up in the southwestern sector on 1 July and was relocated on 4 July. This is the 3rd consecutive summer one has appeared in late June or early July. A breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET\* with a single plume was found in the rice fields on 2 July. The immature SNAIL KITE\* continues to be seen in the vicinity of the runway up through 3 July. WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL numbers have increased dramatically, with 47 tallied on 1 July and 51 on 4 July (highest counts for T&T). Other duck sightings include up to nine WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS\* and 17 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 1 July. The Northern Pintail\* (1st for T&T) last reported on 13 June appears to have sought a cooler climate. On 1 July, the following shorebirds were tallied: five RUDDY TURNSTONES, 110 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 66 GREATER YELLOWLEGS, 8 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, a WESTERN SANDPIPER, two STILT SANDPIPERS and a SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER. A PINNATED BITTERN was seen on 1 July and a YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON on 4 July. Several juvenile BLACK-NECKED STILTS were seen on 4 July. Two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS were noted on 1 July and one on 4 July.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a light-phased PARASITIC JAEGER was seen recently at Waterloo, but no date was supplied. On 30 June, a LONG-BILLED STARTRHOAT was seen in mangroves at South Oropouche Swamp and about 50 LAUGHING GULLS were noted at San Fernando.

In Barbados, three SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, a LEAST SANDPIPER, a STILT SANDPIPER, a SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER and a LESSER YELLOWLEGS were noted at Congo Road and a LESSER YELLOWLEGS at Packer's on 1 July. A BARN SWALLOW at Mangrove on 1 July appears to be enjoying a tropical summer holiday. One correspondent has suggested that YELLOW WARBLER numbers on the island have increased and spread within the last decade, suggesting that Tobago could well be colonised in the near future--if not already. When the last hurricane hit Barbados in 1955 (Hurricane Janet), only about 15 pairs were thought to be present.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: In a recently published study, J. S. Hunt, E.

Birmingham, and R. E. Ricklefs analysed the "Molecular systematics and biogeography of Antillean thrashers, tremblers, and mockingbirds (Aves: Mimidae)" (Auk 118:35-55, 2001). The SCALY-BREASTED THRASHER was represented by two fairly distinct clades: (1) Martinique and St.

Lucia and (2) Guadeloupe, Dominica and Montserrat. The PEARLY-EYED THRASHER was represented by three weakly differentiated clades, with some islands represented by more than one clade. Stay tuned next week for further results and conclusions.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-26) for 10 July 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/tfnc>.

Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, further flooding of about 30-35 fields has spread out the waterbirds. The immature SNAIL KITE\* remains the highlight; it is best seen in fields adjacent to the runway, where it was last reported on 8 July.

Nearctic migrant shorebird numbers continue to climb, with an unprecedented mid-summer high of three AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS on 8 July but only one was relocated the following day. A thorough shorebird survey on 9 July produced a RUDDY TURNSTONE, 350 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 47 GREATER YELLOWLEGS, a SOLITARY SANDPIPER, two SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, four STILT SANDPIPERS and 130 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS.

Duck numbers have inexplicably declined, with just six each of FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK and WHITE-FACED WHISTLING DUCK and a single WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL on 9 July. A BARN OWL was noted on 8 July.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a hike up Fort George on 4 July produced another well described STREAKED SALTATOR and two MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULETS. The reports of Streaked Saltators at this site has engendered some discussion on the distinction between Streaked Saltator and juvenile Grayish Saltator, which is also streaked on the breast. The latter is greenish above but distinctly larger, with an entirely dark bill (often, though not always, tipped yellow in Streaked Saltator) and a yellowish superciliary (white in Streaked Saltator).

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a CLAPPER RAIL, three GREEN KINGFISHERS and a NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER were the highlights of a foray into mosquito-infested Cacandee on 8 July. Birders visiting Cacandee in the near future are urged to take along insect repellent.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, noteworthy birds seen on 7 July include: a PINNATED BITTERN during a torrential downpour at Nariva/Bush Bush; 40 PLUMBEOUS KITES, two COLLARED PLOVERS and two GREATER ANIS at Plum Mitan; and a STREAKED-HEADED WOODCREEPER along the road from Mt. Harris to Sangre Grande.

In southern Trinidad, a GREAT BLUE HERON and a SOLITARY SANDPIPER (earliest date for T&T), but no Blue-and-white Swallows, were at Mora Reservoir on 6 July. Along Murray Trace near Siparia, a flock of 15 PLUMBEOUS KITES was noted on 1 July.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to observe forest birds along the Arima-Blanchisseuse Road on Sunday, 15 July. We will be meeting at CIC Pembroke Street at 6:30 am and at the south entrance to UWI at 7:00 am. If you wish to attend, please contact the leader, Martyn Kenefick, by phone (674- 7609) or e-mail ([martynkenefick@netscape.net](mailto:martynkenefick@netscape.net)).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** In a recently published study, J. S. Hunt, E.

Birmingham, and R. E. Ricklefs analysed the "Molecular systematics and biogeography of Antillean thrashers, tremblers, and mockingbirds (Aves: Mimidae)" (Auk 118:35-55, 2001). The NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD was represented by two distinct clades: (1) the Bahamas and (2) the Greater Antilles. The TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD was represented by three distinct clades: (1) Lesser Antilles, (2) Trinidad, and (3) Venezuela; of these, the Lesser Antillean birds were more similar to those of Trinidad. The lack of differentiation among Lesser Antillean island populations suggests recent colonisations from an older population center within the Lesser Antilles. Results for the tremblers and thrashers were discussed in earlier tidbits. Stay tuned next week for the implications of these results.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-27) for 20 July 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>.

Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In the Northern Range of Trinidad, eight participants in the T&TFNC birding trip to Arima Valley on 15 July observed 79 species of birds. The highlights included two ORNATE HAWK-EAGLES over Arima Valley, 16 SWALLOW-TAILED KITES over Arima Valley and another seven (different birds) over Morne Bleu, two CHANNEL-BILLED TOUCANS, two SPECKLED TANAGERS and two HEPATIC TANAGERS at Morne Bleu, and an amazing 40+ RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPERS at Las Lapas.

At the Asa Wright Nature Centre, a YELLOW-OLIVE FLYCATCHER was observed attending a hanging nest on 14 July along the Discovery Trail about 6 metres uphill from its junction with the Bellbird Trail. The lack of communication from visiting birders is well illustrated by a number of noteworthy bird records reported this year in the centre's logbook but not to the SCBA (though each year the number of such reports is increasing). These include: a male RUFOUS- SHAFTED WOODSTAR\* on 22 June; a CHESTNUT-COLLARED SWIFT nesting at Dunston Cave on 15 June; a BLUE GROUND-DOVE on 14 June; a male BALTIMORE ORIOLE\* on 18 May; a census of 105 OILBIRDS plus one egg at Dunston Cave on 18 May; a BLACK HAWK-EAGLE at Wallerfield on 11 February; a CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER at mile 18, along the Blanchisseuse Road, on 9 February; a BAY-BREASTED WARBLER at Wallerfield on 22 January; and a purported immature HERRING GULL (easily confused with immature Lesser Black-backed Gull) at Waterloo on 22 January.

Elsewhere in the Northern Range of Trinidad, a mixed flock of ten SWALLOW-TAILED KITES and two COMMON BLACK-HAWKS was noted, along with some WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS, at Paria Springs on 11 July. At Fort George, three adult STREAKED SALTATORS, including one feeding a fledgling, were seen on 13 July; other birds noted include two BRAN-COLORED FLYCATCHERS and a RED-EYED VIREO nest with two large nestlings. The recently discovered Fort George population of Streaked Saltators is well east of the only other known Trinidad population at Teteron Bay; surprisingly none have been seen just east of Teteron Bay at Pointe Gourde during numerous visits in recent years. A male WHITE-WINGED BECARD was seen in Tucker Valley on 10 July.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a MYSTERY HERON thought possibly to be a light-morph WESTERN REEF-HERON\* (potential 3rd for T&T and South America) with a strongly curved bill was seen at the Trincity Sewage Ponds (reopened to birders) on 13 July; its identity will be discussed next week based upon an analysis of several photographs.

Although there have been several records of Western Reef-Heron in the Caribbean and one in North America, all have been dark-morph birds, which predominate on the west coast of Africa. Because of its similarity to Little Egret, confirmation of a light-morph Western Reef-Heron will likely require either detailed photographs, tissue samples or a specimen.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, recent sightings from the Caroni Rice Fields include: the immature SNAIL KITE\* in the vicinity of the runway as recently as 13 July; up to two PINNATED BITTERNs on 13 July; up to 15 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, six WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS, 54 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS (highest count for T&T) on 13 July; a dark-morph LONG-WINGED HARRIER on 13 and 14 July; an astounding concentration of 242 SOUTHERN LAPWING (highest count for T&T) in a single field on 12 July; and increasing numbers of migrant Nearctic waders including 110 GREATER YELLOWLEGS, 300 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 63 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 34 LEAST SANDPIPERS, four STILT SANDPIPERS and a SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER on 13 July.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, which is currently infested with more mosquitos than normal, recent sightings include: a GREAT BLUE HERON at Cacandee on 18 July; two WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS flying through Caroni Swamp on 18 July; a LITTLE CUCKOO was seen at Carlsen Field on 30 June; a pair of MOUSE-COLORED TYRANULETS and three STRAIGHT-BILLED WOODCREEPERS at Felicity on 16 June; and a light-phased PARASITIC JAEGER at Waterloo on 14 June.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, a one-hour seabird watch at Galera Point on 12 July produced ten ROSEATE TERNS (including two juveniles), seven COMMON TERNS, six unidentified ROSEATE/Common Terns, four BROWN NODDIES, 11 BROWN PELICANS, four MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS and nine WILLETS. On 13 July, a solitary TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN\* was leisurely observed for over an hour at Grande Riviere, where other noteworthy birds included about ten BLUE-HEADED PARROTS and a flock of about 50 WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS. At Las Cuevas, two RED-AND-GREEN MACAWS\* (reported as Scarlet Macaws but surely the same Red-and-green Macaws photographed earlier in year; see photo at website address above) were seen on 9 July.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, a STREAKED-HEADED WOODCREEPER was seen between Mount Harris and Brigand Hill and several flocks (up to 16 in a flock) of PLUMBEOUS KITE were noted at Plum Mitan on 6 July.

A birding excursion aboard the ferry (M. V. Beauport) between Trinidad and Tobago on 15 July produced six species of birds. The highlights were a probable POMARINE JAEGER\* (though possibly a skua sp.) seen in poor light about 10 km southwest of Crown Point, Tobago, a SOOTY TERN off northern Trinidad, a SOOTY BRIDLED/TERN south of Scarborough, Tobago, and four GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS in the Gulf of Paria near Huevos Island.

In Tobago, the WESTERN REEF-HERON\* continues to be seen at Buccoo, where it is probably best observed at dusk when it returns to roost with CATTLE EGRETS and other herons in a small clump of mangroves just south of the Buccoo Beach parking lot. On 16 July, it was observed at both dawn and dusk. Its presence in Tobago indicates that the Western Reef-Heron at Barbados on 7 June (see SCBA 2001-22) was almost certainly a different bird (a brief round-trip visit to Barbados by the Tobago heron is highly unlikely).

Elsewhere in Tobago, four different STRIATED HERONS\* (highest count for Tobago; neck colour scores of 2-3) were observed simultaneously with more than a dozen GREEN HERONS (scores of 6-7) and one intermediate individual (score of 5) at the Bon Accord Sewage Ponds on 17 July; on 16 July, two different STRIATED HERONS\* and a YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA\* were seen in the sewage ponds. During both days, up to six TRICOLORED HERONS, two GREEN HERONS and one BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON were observed swimming in the water while capturing fish, which were immediately flown to the edge of a pond before being consumed; such behaviour has been previously reported for all three species but is rarely observed. We received a report without details of three YELLOW-HEADED CARACARAS\* (highest count for Tobago) seen simultaneously at Lambeau a few weeks ago. A COLLARED PLOVER was noted on the airport runway at Crown Point on 16 July. Up to two WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRDS\* (2nd for T&T) continue to be seen irregularly at Little Tobago, where one was reported as recently as last week. On 16 June, a TROPICAL PARULA\*, known only from three old specimens whose provenance is suspicious, was reported from Gilpin Trace.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, will soon be sponsoring a Birdwatching / Birding Guide Certificate Programme. The programme will include a series of evening lectures by local ornithologists/birders/tour guides plus three field trips in Trinidad. For further details, please contact Claudelle McKellar (tel. 634-1314, e-mail: [claudemckellar@hotmail.com](mailto:claudemckellar@hotmail.com)).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** It's been a hectic week; check back later.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-28) for 27 July 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>.

Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** Based on an analysis of photographs by several experienced birders, the Trinidad 'mystery heron' reported in last week's alert, which was initially thought to possibly be a white-morph Western Reef-Heron, turned out to be either an immature SNOWY EGRET or LITTLE EGRET\* (identity still uncertain) with a deformed bill curved well beyond the normal range of variation in any Egretta species. It was briefly seen again at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 21 July.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the immature SNAIL KITE\* is still lurking in fields near the runway, where it was last reported on 23 July. Other birds noted on 23 July include eight PINNATED BITTERNs (highest count for T&T), nine FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, four WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS, four BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, 29 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS, 17 LIMPKINS, an AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER, 300 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 60 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 400 LEAST SANDPIPERS, a WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER (earliest date for T&T), two PECTORAL SANDPIPERS (earliest date for T&T), 30 STILT SANDPIPERS, seven SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS and two BARN OWLS. On the campus of the University of the West Indies, a pair of PEARL KITES has been nesting near the top of a tall tree beside the greenhouses, just west of the Frank Stockdale Building.

Few gulls have lingered along the west coast of Trinidad this summer, in contrast with last summer when three species of gulls were present. At low tide on 21 July, only one LAUGHING GULL was noted at Waterloo and seven at Orange Valley. Birders visiting the Icacos Peninsula, southwestern Trinidad, over the weekend were disappointed to find little water in Fullerton Swamp, which is still recovering from dessication and fire during the dry season. The best birds noted were two GRAY-NECKED WOOD-RAILS at Fullerton Swamp on 21 July and a ZONE-TAILED HAWK at Icacos on 21 July.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, recent bird records from Morne Bleu include: a SCALED ANTPITTA\* heard at 7:20 am on 20 July; 14 BLUE-HEADED PARROTS on 20 July; three COLLARED TROGONS on 21 July; a BROWN VIOLET-EAR on 20 July; two LONG-BILLED STARHROATS on 21 July; a CHESTNUT WOODPECKER on 20 and 21 July; four RED-RUMPED WOODPECKERS on 21 July; a BLACK-FACED ANTHRUSH on 20 July; a SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER on 21 July; two DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHERS on 21 July; four SPECKLED TANAGERS on 21 July; and a SWALLOW TANAGER on 20 July. At Las Lapas, two SWALLOW-TANAGERS were noted on 21 July and a RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE was seen at the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 21 July. A RINGED KINGFISHER flew over lower Maracas Valley on 27 July.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, will soon be sponsoring a Birdwatching / Birding Guide Certificate Programme. Tentatively scheduled for 20 August to 8 September, the programme will include a series of evening lectures by local ornithologists/birders/tour guides plus three field trips in Trinidad. For further details, please contact Claudelle McKellar (tel. 634-1314, e-mail: [claudemckellar@hotmail.com](mailto:claudemckellar@hotmail.com)).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** It's been another hectic week; check back later.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tsst.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tsst.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-29) for 10 August 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>.

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**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Tobago, efforts to find the WESTERN REEF- HERON\* (1st for Tobago, 2nd for South America) at Buccoo during the early morning and late evening of 2 and 3 August were unsuccessful, suggesting that the bird has either departed from Tobago or mysteriously relocated elsewhere on the island; our last reliable report is from 25 July. At Mount Irvine, two WHITE-WINGED SWALLOWS\* (1st for Tobago)--presumably the same birds present last year in Speyside and Little Tobago (see SCBA 2000-35 to 2000-47)--were noted flying along the beach on 4 and 7 August; a guide subsequently reported that they had been perching regularly on anchored boats at Mount Irvine for more than a month.

STRIATED HERONS\* have either invaded Tobago or were previously overlooked; a high count of five was tallied on 2 August, including three at the Bon Accord Sewage Ponds and two at Buccoo. Whether they actually breed in Tobago remains unknown, though individuals with neck scores ranging from 1-8 recorded on 2 and 3 August suggest that intermediate individuals result from genetic recombinations.

Four immature YELLOW-HEADED CARACARAS\* (highest count for Tobago) were foraging along the runway at Crown Point International Airport on 7 August, providing further evidence of a rapidly expanding population (nesting was first noted in 1997). An adult was seen well inland along the Orange Hill Road on 2 and 7 August and we received a report of at least two sightings from Goldsborough (easternmost locality for Tobago) earlier this year. Perhaps this will be the next South American species to colonize Grenada or Barbados, though the Southern Lapwing seems more likely...

At Scarborough, Tobago, four ROSEATE TERNS, five SANDWICH TERNS (four 'Sandwich' and one 'Cayenne') and three ROYAL TERNS were seen at the pier on 1 August. Noteworthy birds seen at Buccoo include a breeding- plumaged adult LITTLE EGRET\* with a single plume on 2 and 7 August, a PECTORAL SANDPIPER on 2 and 7 August, and an early BARN SWALLOW on 2 August (earliest date for T&T). On 8 August, researchers recaptured a female WHITE-TAILED SABREWING that had been banded on 24 March 1997-- nearly 4.5 years ago--at Centre Hill; several other banded sabrewings were recaptured at Centre Hill and Gilpin Trace, providing important data on adult annual survivorship of an endangered species.

In the Caroni Plains of Trinidad, an adult RUFESCENT TIGER-HERON\* was found at Cumuto on 1 August, in the same locality where one has been seen sporadically in the past (last observed on 27 December 1998; see SCBA 1998-39). From the Forestry Division's Cumuto Nursery on the northern outskirts of Cumuto, turn east off the paved road onto an unpaved road and proceed 1.9 kilometres to a small bridge (between electrical poles 72 and 73 on the left). Other birds observed in the vicinity include a pair of BAT FALCONS, four CRIMSON-CRESTED WOODPECKERS and six SULPHURY FLYCATCHERS.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an early YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO was noted at Waterloo on 8 August (earliest date for T&T). A hike to Scotland Bay on 2 August produced an adult male YELLOW-BELLIED SEEDEATER\* and an unidentified female seedeater (presumably of the same species), three BLUE-TAILED EMERALDS, a STREAKED XENOPS, a MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULET and two STREAKED SALTATORS. Farther south, impressive numbers of waterbirds were recorded along the seldom- birded mudflats (exposed during low tide) along Gulf View Drive, San Fernando, on 9 August, including 350 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 50 WESTERN SANDPIPERS, three STILT SANDPIPERS, five SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS, ten SCARLET IBISES, 50 LAUGHING GULLS, 20 YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS and a BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON.

Migrant Nearctic shorebird numbers continue to increase in the Caroni Rice Fields. Tallies on 28 July include: 40 GREATER YELLOWLEGS, 200 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, two SOLITARY SANDPIPERS, 200 LEAST SANDPIPERS, two PECTORAL SANDPIPERS and 15 STILT SANDPIPERS. Tallies on 4 August include: 450 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, eight SOLITARY SANDPIPERS, 350 LEAST SANDPIPERS, 25 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS and 43 STILT SANDPIPERS. Tallies on 8 August include: 32 GREATER YELLOWLEGS, 650 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 10 SOLITARY SANDPIPERS, 15 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, two WESTERN SANDPIPERS, 600 LEAST SANDPIPERS, 30 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS, 110 STILT SANDPIPERS and 87 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS.

Other noteworthy bird sightings from the Caroni Rice Fields include the immature SNAIL KITE\* as recently as 1 August; up to three PINNATED BITTERNS on 1 August; an APLOMADO FALCON\* hunting shorebirds on 28 July; a YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON on 8 August; up to 33 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 28 July; up to six WHITE-FACED WHISTLING- DUCKS on 4 August; up to seven BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 28 July and 4 August; up to 38 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 4 August; up to 26 PURPLE GALLINULES on 28 July; and eight early BARN SWALLOWS on 4 August.

On 1 August, an interisland ferry trip from Trinidad to Tobago produced only one unexpected sighting: a quartet of SNOWY EGRETS flying westward just south of Huevos Island (1st for Bocas Islands and Huevos).

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, regrettably decided to postpone the Birdwatching / Birding Guide Certificate Programme initially scheduled from 20 August to 8 September).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** In a recently published study, J. S. Hunt, E.

Birmingham, and R. E. Ricklefs analysed the "Molecular systematics and biogeography of Antillean thrashers, tremblers, and mockingbirds (Aves: Mimidae)" (Auk 118:35-55, 2001). The phylogeography of extant mimids suggests that colonization of the Lesser Antilles by the ancestor(s) of the endemic genera must have occurred through the Greater Antilles, though no extant tremblers or thrashers are endemic there and Pearly-eyed Thrasher in Puerto Rico is clearly derived from the Lesser Antilles. Assuming divergence through allopatric (geographic) separation of populations on different islands, the West Indian mimids apparently persisted on several islands in the Lesser Antilles, occasionally undergoing periods of expansion (up to 16 phases of island colonization) followed by species formation and extinction of island populations.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-30) for 21 August 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>.

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**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** During 16-17 August, Tropical Storm Chantal roared through the region and caused local flooding (especially in southern Trinidad), but unfortunately we have not received any reports yet of storm-blown birds. Although one outstanding bird (see below) was found in Trinidad after the storm, it clearly was not blown in by the storm.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an immature MAGUARI STORK\* (1st for T&T) was found along the beach at Orange Valley on 17 August and was still present as of 19 August. The bird is moderately oiled with yellowish stains on its head and neck and a darker patch in the breast; such oil stains suggest that it has been in Trinidad a while or in an oil-producing area of Venezuela. Although its relative tameness (allowing approach within 10 metres) suggests it might be an escapee, such tameness could also be explained by its apparent ill health (it may well be dying of oil ingestion). Its young age (evidenced by scattered black wing coverts and dull soft part coloration) and poor choice of habitat (a captive presumably would be seeking handouts from humans), combined with its widely scattered distribution in Venezuela and occurrence during the late wet season when South American waterbirds often visit Trinidad, suggest a wild origin. Local villagers report that it has been present for about 3 weeks though it was missed by visiting birders on 11 August.

To search for the stork, drive southward on the Uriah Butler/Solomon Hochoy Highway from the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway intersection.

After 18.8 km, veer left onto the 0.5 km long Freeport exit and turn right at its end; follow this road 1.0 km to a stoplight on the Southern Main Road and continue straight across the light for 2.0 km (passing the new Waterloo High School on the left) to a T-junction.

Turn left onto Orange Field Road and proceed 4.4 km, and turn left just before reaching the parking lot of a Hindu temple built at the end of a causeway jutting out into the Gulf of Paria. Proceed southward 2.1 km to the next village (Orange Valley) and turn right on Bay Street (first paved road). Continue 0.6 km to the coast where a recently constructed causeway stretches a few hundred metres out into the gulf. The stork usually forages along the mudflats just north of the causeway but may be hidden behind boats or a small patch of mangroves along the shoreline; it has also been seen south of the causeway and once flew northward halfway to the Hindu temple.

Other noteworthy bird sightings from the west coast of Trinidad include: an immature GREAT BLUE HERON at Gulf View Drive, San Fernando, on 15 August and another at Waterloo on 11 August; a MARBLED GODWIT\* at Waterloo on 11 August (earliest date for T&T); 25 RED KNOTS at Waterloo on 11 August; up to 12 GULL-BILLED TERNS (highest count for T&T) at Orange Valley on 17 August; two adult LEAST TERNS at Orange Valley on 17 August and an immature at Gulf View Drive, San Fernando, on 10 August; and increasing numbers of LAUGHING GULLS, including many juveniles, with tallies of up to 225 at Waterloo on 11 August, 30 at Orange Valley on 11 August, 50 at the San Fernando Public Fish Market on 10 August, and 200 at Gulf View Drive, San Fernando, on 10 August.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, recent sightings from the Caroni Rice Fields include: the elusive immature SNAIL KITE\* on 15 August; an APLOMADO FALCON\* on 17 August; up to six WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 17 August; up to two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 12 and 17 August; up to 8 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 17 August; up to 11 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 17 August; and an adult YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON well inland in the east-central section on 17 August.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, a search for the Rufescent Tiger-Heron (see last week's alert) near Cumuto on 19 August was unsuccessful, but a quail-dove thought to be a RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE was clearly heard calling repeatedly from thick swamp-forest. There are no records of this species outside of the Northern Range except for an old record from Soldado Rock, indicating that some long-distance dispersal occurs. Other birds seen nearby include a BAT FALCON, five RED-BELLIED MACAWS and several SULPHURY FLYCATCHERS, and at Wallerfield another six RED-BELLIED MACAWS and a SULPHURY FLYCATCHER. The Trincity Sewage Ponds now appear to be permanently open to birders, who simply need to pull up on a piece of metal to open the gate (and should properly close it when leaving; the guard booth is no longer manned). However, birders traversing the central dike should be careful not to fall into two deep, wide holes currently hidden by tall grass, which recently happened with painful results to two forgetful birders who knew better. On 19 August, two puzzling egrets with dark ceres appeared to be a juvenile LITTLE EGRET\* and a juvenile SNOWY EGRET, or possibly even hybrids, but unfortunately they were not seen side-by-side with nearby SNOWY EGRETS.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** How are LEAST TERN and YELLOW-BILLED TERN best identified? In a recent article titled "Identification of Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* and Yellow-billed Tern *S. superciliaris*, with a sight record of Yellow-billed Tern from Tobago, West Indies" (Cotinga 15:10-13, 2001), F. E. Hayes pointed out that bill coloration should be a reliable field mark for distinguishing between these two species, contra comments in several field guides. In breeding plumage (black cap with narrow white supercilium), Least Tern usually has a dark-tipped yellow bill and Yellow-billed Tern has a wholly yellow bill. In non-breeding and immature plumages (white cap with black stripe extending across nape from eyes, dark carpal bar on immature), Least Tern usually has a black bill and Yellow-billed Tern has a mostly yellow bill with a dark tip and dark patch around the nostrils. In addition, Yellow-billed Tern averages larger and usually has a proportionately larger bill.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-31) for 28 August 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Trinidad, an immature GREY HERON\* (2nd for Trinidad, 3rd for T&T, 5th for South America) was found in the Caroni Rice Fields on 26 August (earliest date for T&T). This Old World species is rarely recorded in the New World, with previous records from Montserrat (once), Martinique (once), Barbados (many), Trinidad (once), Tobago (once), Amazonian Brazil (once) and French Guiana (once). Possibly assisted in a trans-Atlantic crossing by Tropical Storm Chantal (or a ship!), the heron was found in a muddy impoundment south of the runway on 26 August but could not be relocated later in the day. On 28 August it was relocated with a flock of 35 GREAT EGRETS in marshes just east of the western entrance to the rice fields (by the Caroni Swamp flyover).

Given the extensive wader habitat in the area we anticipate that the Grey Heron will stick around for the winter, but will wander considerably and may be very elusive. The bird resembles a Great Blue Heron but is smaller (about the size of a Great Egret), has a plain grey crown with a black lateral crown stripe that is most pronounced on the hind crown (more diffuse in the face, which is generally darker than normal; entire crown is black in immature Great Blue Heron), plain grey neck, back and wings, pure white patches on the bend of the forewing ('epaulettes', usually rufous in Great Blue Heron) and white thighs (usually rufous in Great Blue Heron).

Other noteworthy birds recently observed in the rice fields include: an immature SNAIL KITE\* consistently seen in the vicinity of the runway as recently as 28 August; up to 10 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS (28 August), six FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS (28 August) and one WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCK (23 August); a dark-phased LONG-WINGED HARRIER on 26 and 28 August; two AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS on 23 August; a BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER on 28 August; three WESTERN SANDPIPERS on 23 August; and a GULL-BILLED TERN on 23 August. Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, a presumed LESSER NIGHTHAWK and two BLACK SKIMMERS were seen flying by Mid-Centre Mall, Chaguanas, on 25 August, and an estimated 15 presumed LESSER NIGHTHAWKS were seen foraging above the Charlieville exit along the Solomon Hochoy Highway on 25 August.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the immature MAGUARI STORK\* (1st for T&T) continues to be seen at Orange Valley, where it consistently forages on mudflats north of the causeway (see last week's alert for directions) and appears to be thriving; our last report is from 26 August, when it was joined by an early MARBLED GODWIT\*, presumably the same seen at Waterloo on 11 August. Other noteworthy birds seen along the west coast on 25 August include a WILSON'S PLOVER, seven RED KNOTS and 420 LAUGHING GULLS at Orange Valley on 25 August, and two GREAT BLUE HERONS, two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, two WILSON'S PLOVERS, 11 GULL-BILLED TERNS and 210 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo on 25 August.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a singing male YELLOW-BELLIED SEEDEATER\* was found in appropriate habitat in hills above St. Joseph, lower Maracas Valley, on 22 August. The only recent (since 1990) records of this species from Trinidad are from Teteron Bay, at the western tip of the Chaguaramas Peninsula, northwestern Trinidad. The status of this and other gravely threatened species of seedeaters in T&T urgently needs further study.

In Tobago, two WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRDS\* (2nd for T&T, presumably the same birds seen intermittently since 1998) were seen at Little Tobago on 18 August and a breeding-plumaged LITTLE EGRET\* with a single head plume was noted at Tobago Plantations, Lowlands, on 18 August.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC's Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the Caroni Rice Fields, Waterloo and Orange Valley, led by Floyd Hayes on Sunday, 16 September. We will meet at CIC Pembroke Street at 6:10 am or at the south entrance of the University of the West Indies at 6:30 am. If you wish to participate, please contact Floyd Hayes by phone at 645-3232 x2206 (day) or 662-5918 (evening).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Can an undergraduate course in ornithology change the attitudes of West Indian students toward birds? In a recent study of the "Impact of an undergraduate course in ornithology on the attitudes of West Indian students toward birds" (Pitirre 18:52-56, 2000), F. E. Hayes used a questionnaire to assess the attitudes of 34 students taking an ornithology course at Caribbean Union College, Trinidad. Students were most interested in learning about the ecology and behaviour of birds, and least interested in learning about their origin and evolution. Their interest in watching and learning about birds and their interest in studying birds as a hobby increased, though not significantly (based on statistical tests). Few students expressed an interest in studying birds for a career, though three of 144 students taking the course since 1994 have studied birds for a master's degree. Academic achievement in the course was significantly correlated with the overall attitude toward birds at the end of the course.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-32) for 5 September 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Grenada, CHANNEL-BILLED TOUCANS (1st for Grenada and West Indies) were found recently in four separate locations bordering the Grand Etang Natural Reserve: one on the west side of Mt. Sinai at about 450 metres on 15 and 23 August; one (heard only) at Annandale Estate at about 365 metres on 16 August; one at Cocoa Hall Estate at about 365 metres on the west side of Mt. Qua Qua on 19 August; and one at Concord Valley at about 180 metres on 24 August. Did this species successfully colonise Grenada from an overseas dispersal from the South American mainland? According to a forestry officer who saw one in the mid-1990s, toucans were released from a Guyanese bird dealer's collection in the early 1990s; this is the probable source of what appears to be a successful introduction.

ORANGE-WINGED PARROTS reportedly have also colonised certain forest areas on the island. Though surely the presence of these gaudy species will be welcome news to many, the potential negative impact on native species merits close monitoring.

Researchers studying the threatened endemic race of the HOOK-BILLED KITE from 11-25 August found about 12 pairs in dry forest and even in rain forest up to about 400 metres in elevation, indicating that the species is not confined to xeric areas and occupies a greater diversity of habitats than previously recognised. A male MASKED DUCK (1st for Grenada) was noted at Palmiste Lake on 24 August. Four breeding-plumaged TRICOLORED HERONS (1st for Grenada) and two male RUDDY DUCKS (West Indian race with dark feathers in a white face) were seen at Levera Pond on 18 August. At Mt. Hartman, a moulting male RUFF (few records for Grenada) was found on a dungpile on 12 August and 20 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS turned up on 25 August. A flock of 25 WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS buzzed over southeast Grenada near Requin Estate on 18 August and a lone bird was spotted at La Sagesse on 20 August. An estimated 35-50 FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS were noted daily in southwest Grenada, where they roosted opposite Cool Runnings Apartments at Prickly Bay, near the coast guard station at True Blue.

In Trinidad, the immature GREY HERON\* (2nd for Trinidad, 3rd for T&T, 5th for South America) continues to be seen consistently--contrary to our initial expectations--in marshes adjacent to the western end of the runway in the Caroni Rice Fields, where it often associates with GREAT EGRETS. Our last report was on 5 September. On 1 September, it foraged until about 6:30 pm, well after sundown, when it flew northeastward toward the Northern Range and disappeared; surprisingly it did not fly westward along with the thousands of herons and egrets that roost in mangroves of the Caroni Swamp Bird Sanctuary. The immature SNAIL KITE\* has now become a reliable fixture in the vicinity of the buildings beside the runway, where it was last reported on 5 September.

Nearctic shorebird migrant numbers are steadily increasing, with the following high counts from the Caroni Rice Fields: six AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS on 5 September and five on 31 August; 19 RED KNOTS on 1 September; and 2000 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 500 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS, 500 STILT SANDPIPERS, 250 LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 200 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS and 100 RED KNOTS on 31 August. Other noteworthy birds seen in the rice fields include: up to three WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS, four FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, 12 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS and two WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 1 September; a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN on 1 September; a PINNATED BITTERN on 29 and 31 August; an adult YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON on 31 August and several after dark, indicating nocturnal movements inland, on 1 September; an adult SCARLET IBIS on 1 September; a BLUE-WINGED TEAL on 31 August (earliest date for Trinidad; there is an earlier record for Tobago); a LONG-WINGED HARRIER on 5 September; an APLOMADO FALCON\* harassing the shorebirds on 29 and 31 August; up to six BARN OWLS after dark on 1 September; and two GULL-BILLED TERNS on 29 August.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the immature MAGUARI STORK\* (1st for T&T) appears to be thriving along the mudflats at Orange Valley, where it was last reported on 1 September. Two LESSER NIGHTHAWKS were noted at Carli Bay on 1 September.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a fledgling PALM TANAGER was found dead in the grasp of a snake (*Leptophis ahaetulla*) in Maracas Valley on 2 September. The status of YELLOW-CROWNED PARROTS in Trinidad is poorly known. Two are being seen routinely at San Juan (as recently as 30 August) and two were noted at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, in late August.

In Tobago, a NACUNDA NIGHTHAWK\* (2nd for Tobago, 1st in more than a century), 54 WHIMBRELS and 12 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS were tallied on 27 August and four AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS were noted on 24 August at Crown Point International Airport. Large numbers of FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS at the airport have reportedly caused problems for aircraft. At St. Giles Islands, three MASKED BOOBIES\* were observed on 19 August.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC's Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the Caroni Rice Fields, Waterloo, Orange Valley and Carli Bay, led by Floyd Hayes on Sunday, 16 September. Scheduled at the optimal time of year for fall Nearctic migrants from North America and intratropical migrants from South America, we anticipate seeing a wide diversity of birds in coastal and inland wetlands, including two incredibly rare birds: the Grey Heron and Maguari Stork. We will meet at CIC Pembroke Street at 6:10 am or at the south entrance of the University of the West Indies at 6:30 am. If you wish to participate, please contact Floyd Hayes by phone at 645-3232 x2206 (day) or 662-5918 (evening).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Is the GIANT COWBIRD dispersing northward into the West Indies? In a note titled "Giant Cowbird (*Scaphidura oryzivora*): a new bird for Barbados and the West Indies" (Pitirre 13:389, 2000), Martin Frost reports an observation of a Giant Cowbird in Barbados on 9 March 2000 (and later photographed; see SCBA website). The Giant Cowbird is an obligate brood parasite in Trinidad and Tobago and most of northeastern South America, where its density is generally linked to its hosts: oropendolas and caciques. It was first reported from Tobago in 1937 and is now well established.

Though it may be dispersing northward, it is unlikely to establish itself on any of the Lesser Antilles unless it is preceded by successful colonization by one of its preferred hosts.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tsst.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tsst.net.tt).



This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-33) for 14 September 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, a SHORT-EARED OWL\* (2nd for T&T) was found sitting in a short-grass rice field in the seldom-birded southeastern sector, where it was carefully studied from 3:50-4:50 pm on 12 September. The following morning, 13 September, two individuals--possibly representing a breeding pair--were found a few hundred m to the south in a weedy non-rice field at the extreme southeastern edge of the rice fields. To search for these birds, enter the rice fields from the east entrance beside the police station along the Southern Main Road. Proceed straight along the road, crossing a bridge and passing a pumping station on the left, until the road ends at a T-junction; turn left and search for the birds in the first field on the right, where they were last seen on 13 September. About three fields beyond the bridge a road on the left heads east to the Southern Main Road; on 12 September, an owl was seen along this road in the third field on the left. These birds may be expected to move about and could be found on any of the fields in the area.

Regretably the GREY HERON\* (3rd for T&T) appears to have vanished from the rice fields. Attempts to locate it on 8, 9 and 12 September were unsuccessful; our last report is from 5 September. The immature SNAIL KITE\*, however, continues to be seen consistently in the vicinity of the runway, where it was last reported on 12 September. The APLOMADO FALCON\* turned up in the southwestern sector on 13 September. A remarkable concentration of 82 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS (highest count for T&T) was noted on 9 September, but much smaller numbers subsequently. Other noteworthy sightings include: up to two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (dark and light) on 9 September; up to one WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCK (12 September), six BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS (8 September), ten FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS (12 September), nine BLUE-WINGED TEAL (12 September) and 18 LIMPKINS (13 September); and, on 13 September, two BARN OWLS, a BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER and a GULL-BILLED TERN.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the MAGUARI STORK\* (1st for T&T) could not be found at Orange Valley on 7 September, though it could have wandered southward to Carli Bay; our last report is from 1 September. At Waterloo, a MARBLED GODWIT\* and a WILSON'S PLOVER were found on the mudflats and a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN was flushed from the reed ponds on 7 September. At Cacandee, a CLAPPER RAIL, a GREATER ANI and two AMERICAN REDSTARTS--the first for the season--were noted on 7 September.

In Tobago, one of the two elusive WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRDS\* (2nd for T&T) at Little Tobago was seen again on 6 September and a leucistic CARIB GRACKLE with white primaries on both wings was seen at an unreported locality on 5 September.

In Guadeloupe, a WILSON'S PHALAROPE was found at La Grande Saline de la Pointe des Chateaux with at least 600 other shorebirds and an adult LITTLE EGRET was present at the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre from 24 August to 3 September.

In Barbados, local environmentalists were disturbed to find a massive fish kill of more than 3000 adult Tilapia at Graeme Hall Swamp about a week ago. The potential impact on the only breeding colony of LITTLE EGRETS in the Western Hemisphere could be devastating. Obviously the situation requires close monitoring.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC's Bird Group will be sponsoring a birding trip to the Caroni Rice Fields, Waterloo, Orange Valley and Carli Bay, led by Floyd Hayes on Sunday, 16 September. Scheduled at the optimal time of year for fall Nearctic migrants from North America and intratropical migrants from South America, we anticipate seeing a wide diversity of birds in coastal and inland wetlands. We will meet at CIC Pembroke Street at 6:10 am or at the south entrance of the University of the West Indies at 6:30 am. If you wish to participate, please contact Floyd Hayes by phone at 645-3232 x2206 (day) or 662-5918 (evening).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Where do ANTILLEAN NIGHTHAWKS migrate during winter? This species breeds primarily in the Greater Antilles, Bahamas, US Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands, and presumably migrates southward to its wintering range in South America. Specimens have been taken from Curacao, in the Netherlands Antilles, in September and April, suggesting seasonal passage through this continental island. However, there are no records from the South American mainland except for an apparently unconfirmed report from Colombia. Furthermore, until recently there had been no confirmed records from the Lesser Antilles south of the Virgin Islands. Stay tuned next week for more recent information on its status in the Lesser Antilles.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Graham White, Bungalow 16, Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Rd., Carapichaima, Trinidad and Tobago; fax, 868- 673-0373; e-mail, [g-white@tstt.net.tt](mailto:g-white@tstt.net.tt).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-34) for 20 September 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at [www.wow.net/ttfnc](http://www.wow.net/ttfnc). Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and end below).

PHOTO GALLERY: Photographs of the MAGUARI STORK (1st for T&T), YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA (1st documented for Tobago), TRINIDAD PIPING- GUAN (Trinidad), double-shelled TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD egg (Trinidad) and BLACK VULTURE carcassee resulting from an aircraft collision are now posted at the SCBA website (see address above).

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: The T&TFNC birding trip on Sunday, 16 September, was a spectacular success in which all 14 participants leisurely viewed the MAGUARI STORK\* (1st for T&T) at Orange Valley and two SHORT-EARED OWLS\* (2nd for T&T), an immature GREY HERON\* (3rd for T&T) and an immature SNAIL KITE\* in the Caroni Rice Fields. A total of 81 species were seen plus two heard. Further details are supplied below.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the MAGUARI STORK\* (1st for T&T) last reported on 1 September reappeared at Orange Valley on 15 and 16 September. Two MARBLED GODWITS\* were noted at Waterloo on 9 and 14 September and at Orange Valley on 15 September. A third godwit, described as smaller, paler and shorter-billed with a mostly dark bill, joined the two MARBLED GODWITS at Waterloo on 14 September; suspecting it may have been a BAR-TAILED GODWIT\* (potential 1st for T&T), birders unfortunately were unable to relocate it subsequently. Other noteworthy bird sightings at Waterloo include: a GREAT BLUE HERON on 14 September; a LONG-WINGED HARRIER on 14 September; three UPLAND SANDPIPERS\* on 14 September; up to four WILSON'S PLOVERS on 9 September; and four COMMON TERNS, three ROYAL TERNS and two GULL- BILLED TERNS on 16 September. A single WILSON'S PLOVER was noted at Orange Valley on 15 and 16 September.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the Caroni Rice Fields have been spectacularly productive within the past week. The two SHORT-EARED OWLS\* (2nd for T&T) near Warren, in the southeastern extremity of the Caroni Rice Fields, were seen again on 16 September, but efforts to relocate them on 15, 18 and 19 September were unsuccessful. The field in which they were seen on 13 and 16 September has been subjected to intense disturbances by local farmers. The immature GREY HERON\* (3rd for T&T) had eluded birders nearly every day since 5 September, but reappeared on 16 September in a marsh near the western end of the runway. A PAINT-BILLED CRAKE\* (3rd for T&T) was seen along the road near the southwestern entrance to the rice fields on 13 (afternoon) and 16 September (before dawn), but searches for it on 18 and 19 September were unsuccessful. An UPLAND SANDPIPER\*, a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER\* and a WHIMBREL were noted in the southeastern sector on 19 September. The SNAIL KITE\* continues to be seen daily in the vicinity of the runway as recently as 19 September. An elusive APLOMADO FALCON\* was seen on 13 and 15 September. The first PEREGRINE FALCON of the season checked in on 19 September. A CLIFF SWALLOW\* (earliest date for T&T) and eight BANK SWALLOWS (highest count for T&T) were noted among several hundred BARN SWALLOWS on 19 September. Other noteworthy birds seen in the Caroni Rice Fields include: up to nine WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL on 19 September; up to nine BLUE-WINGED TEAL on 14 and 15 September; up to 16 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 15 September; up to five FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 16 September; up to four LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (two light, two dark) on 19 September; up to 39 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS on 14 September; 8 BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS on 19 September; 10 WILLETS (rare inland) on 15 September; up to 26 RED KNOTS on 19 September; up to 58 PECTORAL SANDPIERS on 15 September; and up to four GULL-BILLED TERNS on 15 September.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, an AZURE GALLINULE and four PINNATED BITTERNs were reported from Nariva on 29 August. In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER, a WHITE-THROATED SPADEBILL and a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER were spotted at Morne Bleu on 9 September.

In Tobago, two WHITE-WINGED SWALLOWS\* (1st for Tobago) are still lingering at Mt. Irvine, where they were last reported on 17 September. One of the elusive WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRDS\* (2nd for T&T) was seen at Little Tobago on 13 September.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Where do ANTILLEAN NIGHTHAWKS migrate during winter? In last week's tidbit we discussed its breeding and hypothetical winter range. However, its status in the Lesser Antilles is poorly known. Although nighthawks have been noted during autumn migration in the Lesser Antilles, the birds are invariably silent and cannot be safely identified. Single specimens from Barbados (29 September 1887) and Martinique (16 October, year unknown) represented COMMON NIGHTHAWK. In a recently published note titled "An observation of Antillean Nighthawk (*Chordeiles gundlachii*) on Barbados" (Pitirre 13:90, 2000), Martin Frost reported one uttering distinctive vocalizations as it flew over Barbados on 17 May 2000. Thus, this observation provides the first evidence that this species may migrate through the Lesser Antilles (and possibly through Trinidad and Tobago); alternatively, it could have been a vagrant. The possibility of identifying a nighthawk in the Lesser Antilles is greatest in spring and early summer when calling is more likely. Stay tuned next week for news of a recent range extension elsewhere in the Lesser Antilles.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The T&T Rare Bird Committee, formed in 1995, requests details for all rare birds observed (see Species Review List at our website). Please submit details to the T&TRBC Secretary: Martyn Kenefick, 36 Newalloville Ave., San Juan, Trinidad and Tobago; e-mail: [martynkenefick@netscape.net](mailto:martynkenefick@netscape.net).

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-35) for 27 September 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Barbados, a brightly plumaged male ORANGE BISHOP (1st for Barbados) turned up at Harrison Point on 23 September, presumably as a vagrant from the resident(?) feral population on Martinique. Other noteworthy birds at Harrison Point on 23 September include two CLIFF SWALLOWS and a BANK SWALLOW among 60 BARN SWALLOWS and 20 CARIBBEAN MARTINS. A dead jaeger, thought to be a PARASITIC JAEGER, was found dead on the west coast on 24 September.

A census of CARIBBEAN MARTINS at their traditional Bridgetown roost on 22 September produced 620 individuals.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the immature MAGUARI STORK\* (1st for T&T)--which now appears healthier--continues to lurk along the mudflats of Orange Valley but apparently wanders out of sight at times; our last report was from 23 September, when it was seen spiralling down from the sky and landing on the beach south of the causeway. A MARBLED GODWIT\* and a WILSON'S PLOVER were also noted at Orange Valley on 23 September. The first LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS\* of the season turned up at Waterloo, where an adult was noted among increasing numbers of LAUGHING GULLS on 23 September and a 2nd-winter immature on 26 September. Other noteworthy birds at Waterloo include a GREAT BLUE HERON on 26 September, an adult LEAST TERN on 23 September, a MARBLED GODWIT\* on 23 and 26 September, and up to four WILSON'S PLOVERS on 26 September. Farther south, an adult STRIATED HERON was seen picking up a piece of bread--presumably to be used as bait for fishing--from a feeder at the Pointe-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust on 24 September. Unfortunately the heron flew across the pond and out of sight when spooked by a passing group of students.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the two SHORT-EARED OWLS\* (1st for T&T) at Warren have not been relocated since 16 September. However, the elusive immature GREY HERON\* (3rd for T&T) reappeared in a marsh near the west end of the runway in the Caroni Rice Fields on 23 and 26 September. The immature SNAIL KITE\* continues to lurk in the vicinity of the runway, where it was last seen on 23 September. An immature female RUFF\* turned up in a marsh east of the runway on 23 September. The UPLAND SANDPIPER\* in the southeast sector of the rice fields remained from 19-26 September. BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER\* numbers in the southeastern sector have increased with up to six noted on 22 September. AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER numbers declined inexplicably from three on 21 September to one on 23 September. Duck numbers seem to have increased, with up to 25 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 21 September, up to 12 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 23 September and up to eight FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 23 September. Up to 11 GULL-BILLED TERNS were tallied on 21 September. Most unusual was a female BLUE-TAILED EMERALD on 21 September. A BANK SWALLOW was noted among many BARN SWALLOWS on 21 September.

We neglected to mention that the first YELLOW WARBLER of the season was reported from the rice fields on 14 September. The first NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH of the season was heard in Caroni Swamp on 23 September.

At the Trincity Sewage Ponds, a LITTLE EGRET and a RINGED KINGFISHER were seen on 22 September and two BANK SWALLOWS at the same locality on 23 September. A BAT FALCON, 20 RED-BELLIED MACAWS and two SULPHURY FLYCATCHERS were tallied at Cumuto on 23 September.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the SCALED ANTPITTA\* was heard once again along the road between Las Lapas and Brasso Seco Junction on 23 September; earlier in the week two different birds were heard calling. In the early morning of 23 September, a SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWK, a LONG-BILLED STARHROAT, a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER, two female AMERICAN REDSTARTS, two SPECKLED TANAGERS and a female HEPATIC TANAGER were seen at the Morne Bleu communications station and a WHITE-THROATED SPADEBILL was heard just inside the forest east of the station.

In Tobago, a BLACK VULTURE\*--presumably the same individual wandering about the island for many years--was seen flying over Goldsborough on 25 September.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** On 23 September, three resident birders tallied 177 species of birds (172 seen by all; total includes naturalised Rock Dove) seen or heard in Trinidad within a single day, breaking the previous 'Big Day' record of 167 species set last year on 7 September [published in *Birding* 33(3, supplement):31, 2001]. Their itinerary, which began at 3:00 am and ended at 6:40 pm, included the following locations: Maracas Valley (before dawn), Caroni Rice Fields (before dawn), Wallerfield (before dawn), Morne Bleu, Brasso Seco Junction, Las Lapas, Asa Wright Nature Centre, Trincity Sewage Ponds, Caroni Rice Fields, Orange Valley, Waterloo, Caroni Swamp, Cumuto and Aripo Savannas. Highlights (see above) included Grey Heron, Maguari Stork, Snail Kite, Upland Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Ruff, Lesser Black-backed Gull (3rd Eurasian vagrant of the day), Least Tern, Short-tailed Nighthawk, Scaled Antpitta and Bank Swallow. Biggest misses included White Hawk, Common Black-Hawk, Savanna Hawk, White-tipped Dove, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Short-tailed Swift and Turquoise Tanager.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** What is the status of the ANTILLEAN NIGHTHAWK in the Lesser Antilles? In last week's tidbit we mentioned a recent sight record from Barbados on 17 May 2000, reported by Martin Frost (Pitirre 13:90, 2000). In another article titled "Premiere mention de L'engoulement de Gundlach (*Chordeiles gundlachii*) en Guadeloupe" (Pitirre 14:7-8, 2001), Anthony Levesque reported hearing and seeing an individual near Baie-Mahault on Basse Terre, Guadeloupe, on 21 and 25 June 2000. On 16 July 2000, two birds were observed together, suggesting that they may have been nesting. Recent colonization of Guadeloupe might be attributed to the extensive habitat destruction in Hispaniola resulting from Hurricane George in 1998. Apparently these sightings represent the only reliable records from the Lesser Antilles.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-36) for 5 October 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/tfnc>.

Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

PHOTO GALLERY: Photos of the Short-eared Owl (Trinidad) and Grey Heron (Trinidad) are now posted at the SCBA website (see address above).

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the elusive SHORT-EARED OWL\* (2nd for T&T) was relocated once again in a dry, grassy field in the extreme southeastern corner of the Caroni Rice Fields on 1 October. Large numbers of migrant shorebirds are still present in the rice fields, with recent sightings including the female RUFF\* on 28 September, the UPLAND SANDPIPER\* up through 5 October, two BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS\* on 1 October, the first two HUDSONIAN GODWITS of the season on 5 October and up to 62 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS on 1 October. Other noteworthy bird sightings include: the immature SNAIL KITE\* as recently as 5 October; the APLOMADO FALCON\* on 5 October; ten BOBOLINKS\* on 28 September, with roughly 25, including a few singing birds, tallied on 5 October; a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN on 27 September; an immature SCARLET IBIS flying eastward on 5 October; two WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS and up to 20 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 27 September; up to 12 BLUE-WINGED TEAL on 28 September and 5 October; and two COMMON WAXBILLS, one carrying nesting material (1st direct evidence of nesting, though breeding has long been assumed), on 1 October.

Though the immature GREY HERON\* (3rd for T&T) has not been observed in the Caroni Rice Fields during the past week, it dropped in at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 27 September. Other noteworthy birds at the sewage ponds include a LITTLE EGRET (no longer a review bird) on 27 September and 4 October, and a LEAST BITTERN on 4 October. We inadvertently neglected a report of two BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOWS at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, on 13 September.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, birders failed to relocate the MAGUARI STORK\* (1st for T&T) at Orange Valley on 27 September and 5 October. Recent noteworthy sightings from the coast include: a CLIFF SWALLOW\* at South Oropouche Swamp on 5 October; a COCOI HERON and BELTED KINGFISHER at Caroni Swamp on 5 October; roughly 100 LAUGHING GULLS but no other gull species at San Fernando on 5 October; 20 BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOWS at Orange Valley on 29 September; and a GLOSSY IBIS\* at Waterloo on 28 September.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, 30 BLUE-HEADED PARROTS, ten WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS and a WHITE-WINGED BECARD were noted at Brasso Seco on 3 October. Farther west, an OILBIRD was found on a porch at Fairways, Maraval, on 4 October.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, a search for Nearctic migrant landbirds at Galera Point on 4 October produced a YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO\* and a BELTED KINGFISHER, plus a COMMON GROUND-DOVE and a TRINIDAD EUPHONIA. A 1.25 hour seabird watch produced four BROWN BOOBIES, nine BLUE-WINGED TEAL, an astonishing 284 BROWN NODDIES obviously migrating, 25 COMMON TERNS, 14 LEAST SANDPIPERS perched on offshore rocks and six FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS arriving from the sea.

Farther west, a BLACK TERN was seen off Blanchisseuse on 23 September.

In Tobago, two WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRDS\* (2nd for T&T) briefly flew over Little Tobago on 29 September. Two WHITE-WINGED SWALLOWS (1st for Tobago), presumably the same wandering pair observed previously at Speyside, Little Tobago and Mt. Irvine, was noted flying over Dwight Yorke Stadium in Bacolet on 19 September. In Buccoo Swamp, a SORA was flushed on 4 October and a STILT SANDPIPER was noted on 28 September.

In Barbados, a WILSON'S PLOVER (8th for Barbados) turned up at Chancery Lane on 29 September. An early SORA was noted at East Point, St. Philip, on 29 September. At Harrison Point, two YELLOW BILLED CUCKOOS were seen and a BOBOLINE was heard on 30 September.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Check back later...

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-37) for 12 October 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Tobago, the WESTERN REEF HERON\* (1st for Tobago, 2nd for T&T and South America) and a non-breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET were relocated at Buccoo on 8 October. The reef-heron had been seen sporadically in the vicinity of a clump of mangroves near the beach facility/goat racing track, but had not been reported since 25 July. An unusually pale 'EURASIAN' WHIMBREL\* (4th for T&T) was found along the mouth of a tidal stream near the southwest end of Turtle Beach on 8 October. Two MASKED BOOBIES\* were perched atop 'Marble Rock', St. Giles Islands, on 8 October. An adult STRIATED HERON was seen at Englishman's Bay on 8 October.

Elsewhere in Tobago, noteworthy birds seen on 8 October (a remarkably noteworthy day) include: a banded RUDDY TURNSTONE with a green flag above the 'knee' and a blue band below on the left leg, and an aluminum band above the 'knee' and a green band above a red band below the knee on the right leg (all colours appeared dark) at Blue Waters Inn; a SORA, six STILT SANDPIPERS, five WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS and a YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO at the Lowlands Sewage Ponds; and a GREAT BLACK-HAWK, three WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS and a COMMON SNIPE at Louis D'Or.

On 7 October, birders aboard an interisland ferry between Trinidad and Tobago recorded 17 BROWN BOOBIES (highest count from ferry), four BLACK TERNS off Trinidad's north coast (still no records from Tobago), three adult and one immature SOOTY TERNS, an immature BRIDLED TERN, four COMMON TERNS and an unidentified white tern, and an unidentified HUMMINGBIRD.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the immature GREY HERON\* (3rd for T&T) reappeared at the Caroni Rice Fields on 12 October. Other noteworthy birds reported from the rice fields include: three BLUE-WINGED TEAL, six FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, 21 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, an APLOMADO FALCON\*, two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS, three recently hatched WATTLED JACANA chicks, an immature HUDSONIAN GODWIT, 33 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS and distantly heard BOBOLINKS\* on 12 October.

At the Trincity Sewage Ponds, a COMMON SNIPE, a RINGED KINGFISHER and a CLIFF SWALLOW\* were noted on 6 October.

In northeastern Trinidad, two BLACKPOLL WARBLERS--the first of the season--were seen along with 15 LILAC-TAILED PARROULETS at Galera Point on 11 October. A 2.5 hour seabird watch at Galera Point on 6 October produced an immature BROWN BOOBY, 72 white terns of which seven were identified as ROSEATE TERNS and 40 as COMMON TERNS, four LAUGHING GULLS, 102 unidentified shorebirds, and a SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER and a RUDDY TURNSTONE perched on offshore rocks. No unusual landbirds were observed. Farther south, three SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWKS circled the road at Balandra at dawn on 11 October.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** On 8 October, four resident and one visiting birders tallied 113 species of birds (110 shared by all; total includes naturalised Rock Dove) seen or heard in Tobago within a single day, breaking the previous 'Big Day' record of 100 species set last year on 16 October [published in *Birding* 33(3, supplement):31-32, 2001]. Their itinerary, which began at 4:40 am and ended at 7:30 pm, included the following locations: Northside Road (before dawn), Bloody Bay Village, Niplig Trail, Gilpin Trace, Roxborough-Parlatuvier Road, Speyside, St. Giles Islands, Little Tobago, Louis D'Or, Studley Park, Lowlands, Crown Point International Airport, Bon Accord, Buccoo and Turtle Beach. Highlights (see above) included Masked Booby, Little Egret, Western Reef-Heron, Striated Heron, 'Eurasian' Whimbrel (not counted as a separate species), Sora, Common Snipe and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Biggest misses--none of which were easy--included Western Sandpiper, Black-throated Mango, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Venezuelan Flycatcher and Fork-tailed Flycatcher.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Check back later...

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-38) for 18 October 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Barbados, an overwintering GREY HERON was noted at Graeme Hall on 12 October and the WILSON'S PLOVER (8th for Barbados) was relocated at Chancery Lane on 12 October. Nearctic landbird migrants noted at Harrison Point over the weekend included an adult female 'tundrius' PEREGRINE FALCON on 14 October, at least eight YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS on 13 and 14 October, a BLACKPOLL WARBLER on 13 October and two on 14 October, and a BOBOLINK on 13 October and three on 14 October.

In seldom-birded southern Trinidad, a BLACK HAWK-EAGLE\* was found at Palo Seco on 13 October and two were relocated in the same area, along with a YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO, on 14 October. To search for these birds, take the Uriah Butler Highway south to San Fernando, continuing across the Cross Crossing Overpass and take the 'Siparia- Erin Road' exit. Proceed south along this road passing through Debe, Penal and Siparia, eventually arriving Palo Seco Junction (Palo Seco Food Mart is an obvious landmark). Proceed southward from the junction 7.4 km to Carapal Road (passing a sign to Los Irois Beach, a church, a school and a mosque) and turn right. After 1 km, turn right onto Carapal Extension Road (the frame of a sign is there but the sign is missing). After 1.8 km, veer right at a fork (the left fork is gated), ignore a turn-off at 2.9 km (continuing straight/right), pass a settlement at 3.9 km, and turn left at 4.0 km by a large and noisy oil pump. Continue another 0.3 km to Petrotrin's gathering station no. 10. The hawk-eagles should be searched for in the nearby clearings.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, an adult male RUFF\* and two HUDSONIAN GODWITS were found in the Caroni Rice Fields on 14 October.

However, shorebird numbers had declined markedly by 18 October, when one of the HUDSONIAN GODWITS was relocated. The cause of the annual decline in shorebird numbers in mid-October remains an enigma given the availability of prime shorebird habitat, though we've often wondered whether the increasing numbers of falcons at this period may be a contributing factor. Two PEREGRINE FALCONS and an APLOMADO FALCON\* were patrolling the fields on 18 October, flushing the skittish shorebirds which sought shelter along the grassy edges of the impoundments. A small crane, presumably the PAINT-BILLED CRAKE\* (3rd for T&T) last seen on 16 September, was briefly seen hurtling across the road just east of the southwestern entrance at 10:00 am on 17 October.

Other noteworthy birds seen recently in the rice fields include: an ANHINGA on 18 October, 13 BLUE-WINGED TEAL and two FULVOUS WHISTLING- DUCKS on 18 October, the immature SNAIL KITE\* as recently as 18 October, up to four LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (three dark, one light) on 14 October, two SAVANNA HAWKS on 14 October, a BANK SWALLOW\* among several hundred BARN SWALLOWS on 18 October, and four BOBOLINKS\* seen and heard flying over the rice fields on 18 October.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a ROCK DOVE landed on the back of a boat in Chaguaramas on 16 October and died a few hours later. Its leg had a band with the inscription 'TPC 3575'. If anybody knows the origin of this bird, please let us know as well as Kathy Kay, whose e-mail address is [ladyk\\_98\\_98@hotmail.com](mailto:ladyk_98_98@hotmail.com). A LESSER NIGHTHAWK and several hundred SCARLET IBISES were noted in South Oropouche Swamp on 17 October.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the first MERLIN of the season was reported from Maracas Valley on 15 October. On 17 October, four SPECKLED TANAGERS and a female HEPATIC TANAGER were seen at Morne Bleu and a SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER at Las Lapas.

We received a request that birders pay closer attention to the subspecific identity of TRICOLORED HERONS in the region. The North America/Caribbean race 'ruficollis' has a whitish chin and line down the neck, which is replaced by dark chestnut in the South American race 'rufimentum'. Please let us know which races are being observed in T&T.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Check back later...

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2001-39) for 26 October 2001. Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalists' Club, our aim is to promote birding and ornithology in the southeastern Caribbean by fostering communication among resident and visiting birders regarding the study of birds in the region. The SCBA and information about the T&TFNC are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.wow.net/ttfn>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-5918 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The T&T Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**PHOTO GALLERY:** A new website, the Southeastern Caribbean Birds Photo Gallery (<http://www.geocities.com/secaribbirds>), has been launched in conjunction with the SCBA and T&TRBC to present documentary photographs of rare birds in the region and to provide further information on bird identification. We request birders to submit photos of rare birds throughout the region for posting at this site.

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** Along the west coast of Trinidad, a gull thought to be an adult KELP GULL\* (potential 2nd for T&T or one of last year's gulls returning for a second consecutive winter), described as having a "deep black back" and a head that was "pure white with just a little black dot behind the eye", was observed at Waterloo on 20 October. However, it was not seen the following day, 21 October, when 550 LAUGHING GULLS were counted at Waterloo, 600 at Orange Valley and 450 at San Fernando. Birders should be on the lookout for this species as well as other rare species of gulls during the upcoming weeks, but should be aware that adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls can look quite dark in poor light conditions. An adult Kelp Gull should be larger with a relatively heavier bill than a Lesser Black-backed Gull and lack dark feathering on the head.

At South Oropouche Swamp, a dark-morph LONG-WINGED HARRIER, a BANK SWALLOW and two PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS were noted on 20 October. Noteworthy sightings from the west coast on 21 October include a WILSON'S PLOVER, a GREAT BLUE HERON and ten RED KNOTS at Waterloo, two WILSON'S PLOVERS at Carli Bay, a dozen COMMON TERNS at San Fernando and 22 AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS at La Romaine.

In southern Trinidad, a LEACH'S STORM-PETREL (earliest date for T&T) was studied as it foraged with a flock of about 100 COMMON TERNS just offshore of Erin on 18 October. On 20 October, an attempt to relocate the two BLACK HAWK-EAGLES seen on 13 and 14 October in forest north of San Francique, near Palo Seco, was unsuccessful. Other noteworthy raptor sightings include a GREAT BLACK-HAWK\* along the Cunapo Road, near the Ecclesville Forest Reserve, on 21 October, and a PEREGRINE FALCON at Mora Reservoir on 20 October.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, Nearctic migrant shorebird populations in the Caroni Rice Fields have diminished greatly as expected at this time of the year. However, an immature male RUFF\*, apparently the third different individual of the season, was found on 19 October in the southeastern sector. In the Trincity Sewage Ponds, a non-breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET was noted on 21 October.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, three HEPATIC TANAGERS, including a pair and a juvenile, were noted along with a male AMERICAN REDSTART at Morne Bleu on 21 October.

In Tobago, the elusive WESTERN REEF-HERON\* (1st for Tobago, 2nd for T&T and South America) turned up along the coast at the west end of Turtle Beach on 14 October. A correspondent informed us that the colour flagged/banded RUDDY TURNSTONE at Blue Waters Inn, Speyside (see SCBA 2001-37), was banded between 9 and 17 May 2001 along the Delaware Bay, New Jersey, USA.

In Barbados, we neglected to mention a few reports from the first weekend in October, when Tropical Storm Jerry passed just south of the island on 7 October but failed to produce any significant vagrant birds. Nearctic landbird migrants trickling through Harrison Point over the past weekend include three YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS on 20 October and two on 21 October, three BLACKPOLL WARBLERS on 20 October, a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH on 21 October and a BOBOLINK on 20 October. Landbird migrants noted at Harrison Point earlier in the month include three YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS on 7 October, a RED-EYED VIREO banded on 6 October and a BOBOLINK seen on 6 October; at Bailey Hill, another YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO was noted on 8 October. Nearctic waterfowl migrants noted recently in local wetlands include a GREEN-WINGED TEAL among three BLUE-WINGED TEAL at Mangrove on 19 October and another fifty BLUE-WINGED TEAL at East Point on 21 October.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** On Sunday, 11 November, the T&TFNC Bird Group is sponsoring a birding trip to Tucker Valley in the Chaguaramas Peninsula of Trinidad, led by Courtenay Rooks. We will meet by Pier 1, Chaguaramas, at 6:30 am, and spend the morning searching for birds in a mosaic of grass and forest habitats. Those who wish may search for gulls and other waterbirds along the west coast in the afternoon. If you wish to attend, please contact Courtenay Rooks by phone at 622-8826.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** In a recent publication titled "Translocation of the Blue and Gold Macaw *Ara ararauna* into its historical range on Trinidad" (Bird Conservation International 11:129-141, 2001), D. A. Oehler and eight coauthors provide a summary of their attempts to reintroduce this extirpated species in Nariva Swamp, Trinidad. Six males were released on 15 December 1999, two males and five females on 13 January 2000, and two of unstated sex on 15 March 2000. From June to August 2000, at least ten of the 15 birds, including a western group of four and an eastern group of six, were regularly observed within 16 km of the release site. One bird was found dead of an undetermined cause.

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