

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2002-03) for 24 January 2002. 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 TTFNC are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>; our photo gallery is accessible at <http://www.geocities.com/secaribbirds>.

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 TT Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

PHOTO GALLERY: New photos of the following birds have been added to the SCBA website: Caspian Tern (Guadeloupe), Forster's Tern (Guadeloupe), Aplomado Falcon (Guadeloupe), Variegated Flycatcher (Trinidad), Bobolink (Guadeloupe), Wilson's Phalarope (Guadeloupe), Palm Warbler (Guadeloupe) and Fork-tailed Flycatcher (Guadeloupe).

TTRBC NEWS: A tentative 'Official Bird List' for Trinidad and Tobago, which includes a total tally of the species recorded from the country, has now been posted at the TTRBC website.

HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS: In Guadeloupe, the immature FORSTER'S TERN (2nd for Guadeloupe) was relocated at Grand Cul de Sac Marin on 19 January. An adult MASKED BOOBY flew past the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre on 14 January.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, an OLIVE-STRIPED FLYCATCHER\* was found on a hike about halfway between Loango Village and the summit of El Tucuche on 20 January. Other upper montane forest birds observed along the summit ridge of El Tucuche on 20 January include two ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSHES (plus three heard), two YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSHES (plus three heard), five BLUE-CAPPED TANAGERS, three SPECKLED TANAGERS and a pair of HEPATIC TANAGERS. Once again no Band-tailed Pigeons were noted; this species formerly inhabited high elevations of Trinidad's Northern Range but has not been reliably reported since 1976. None were seen nor heard during eight hikes by an experienced ornithologist to four of the five highest summits (Cerro del Aripo twice, El Tucuche four times, Chaguaramal once and Morne Bleu once) during the last 8 years, suggesting that it may be extirpated in Trinidad.

Elsewhere in the Northern Range, a GRAY-THROATED LEAFTOSSER, STREAKED XENOPS and FUSCOUS FLYCATCHER were noted at Mt. St. Benedict on 22 January, and a RINGED KINGFISHER was spotted in lower Maracas Valley on 18 January.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a second-winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL--apparently the same individual seen repeatedly in San Fernando in December--turned up among 1,435 LAUGHING GULLS at Waterloo on 19 January. LARGE-BILLED TERNS are arriving earlier than usual, with 10 tallied at Waterloo and two at Orange Valley on 19 January. A RINGED KINGFISHER was seen at Pointe-a-Pierre on 19 January.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, 12 participants attended the TTFNC birding trip on 20 January and tallied 73 species of birds. The highlights were a GRAY-HEADED KITE and 13 BLUE-HEADED PARROTS in Wallerfield, and two BAT FALCONS in Cumuto. We neglected to report last week that the immature SNAIL KITE\* was still lingering in the Caroni Rice Fields on 15 January.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, an AZURE GALLINULE was noted in Nariva Swamp and a YELLOW-HEADED PARROT at Plum Mitan on 23 January.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: In 2001, an unprecedented three birders observed more than 300 species of birds in Trinidad and Tobago during the year. One observer saw 311 species (plus three heard), another 308 (plus five heard), and a third (at the age of 10!) saw 302 (plus five heard); these totals include two established exotics, the Rock Dove and Common Waxbill. The record, set in 1998, was 314 (plus seven heard), which included only one exotic, the Rock Dove.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: Given the inherent flaws of the biological species concept (BSC), numerous alternative concepts have been proposed. The phylogenetic species concept (PSC) is widely embraced by taxonomists--including some prominent ornithologists--who define a species as the smallest aggregation of populations (sexual) or lineages (asexual) diagnosable by a unique combination of character states in comparable individuals (semaphoronts). A unique combination of characters may demonstrate that a lineage is phylogenetically distinct, thus a 'real' entity. An advantage with this concept is that it is based on pattern rather than process. Next week we will discuss some of the PSC's flaws.

BIRD BRAINS: Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-15) for 12 April 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfncc>; our photo gallery is accessible at <http://www.geocities.com/secaribbirds>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TT 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, a 'MYSTERY SWALLOW', described as being bluish-black with a white rump, no white on the wings and no white superciliary, was carefully studied at Fort George, Plymouth, on 7 April. This description tantalizingly resembles that of HOUSE MARTIN\* (potential 1st for T&T and South America). There are two previous records from the region, both from Barbados in October and November (see SCBA 1999-41, 1999-42, 2000-44).

Elsewhere in Tobago, an adult male HOOK-BILLED KITE\* (3rd for Tobago) was well observed as it soared over Blue Waters Inn on 1 April.

Along the east coast of Trinidad, the incredibly elusive CRANE HAWK\* (1st for T&T), possibly accompanied by another of the same species, was found in Nariva Swamp on 27 March. Obviously it is wandering about the island. An adult CRESTED CARACARA\* was also seen in Nariva Swamp on 27 March.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a WHITE-TAILED KITE\* was seen at the Waterloo High School on 8 April. A brief survey of birds in the tiny, seldom visited Five Islands on 7 April produced four new bird species for the archipelago, including MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD on Caledonia and Craig Islands, SPOTTED SANDPIER on Lenagan Island, LAUGHING GULL on Pelican, Caledonia and Lenagan Islands, and BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER on Caledonia Island. Several other species were new for individual islands. Most surprising was a concentration of 30 foraging COMMON TERNS at Pelican Island.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, an ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH, a YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSH and an AMERICAN REDSTART were seen at Morne Bleu on 10 April. An adult male BAY-BREASTED WARBLER\* in partial breeding plumage was seen near Blanchisseuse on 26 March. At Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, a polygyandrous quartet (two males, two females) of TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRDS is currently raising young in a single nest in which the first of five eggs hatched on 12 April.

In Guadeloupe, a two-hour seabird watch at the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre on 7 April produced three MANX SHEARWATERS, three WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS, two LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS, a MASKED BOOBY, a BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE, a POMARINE JAEGER, a PARASITIC JAEGER, 22 unidentified seabirds and two unidentified whales.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, will be sponsoring a Birdwatching / Birding Guide Certificate Programme. Scheduled for Monday and Wednesday evenings at 5-8 pm from 6-22 May, the programme will include a series of evening lectures by local ornithologists/birders/tour guides plus two 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:** Continuing with our theme of species concepts, the pluralist species concept states that a variety of species concepts are necessary to adequately capture the complexity of variation patterns in nature. Thus, species would be non-comparable among groups and a definition of species would be taxon-specific.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2002-16) for 19 April 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>; our photo gallery is accessible at <http://www.geocities.com/secaribbirds>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TT Rare Bird Committee requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see SCBA website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**PHOTO GALLERY:** Photos recently added to the SCBA website include a White-tailed Tropicbird (Little Tobago), Cliff Swallow (Trinidad) and Laughing Gull with deformed bill (Trinidad). In addition, a new "Mystery Bird" photo and the answer to the last "Mystery Bird" photo have been added.

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** Along the North Coast of Trinidad, two BLACK HAWK-EAGLES\* were noted somewhere between Sans Souci and Toco on 12 April.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a YELLOW-BREASTED CRAKE was seen at Waterloo on 17 April and two BANK SWALLOWS were at Waterloo on 14 April. The only unusual bird noted at San Fernando on 14 April was the LAUGHING GULL with a deformed bill among 45 conspecifics and two COMMON TERNS. At Cacandee, a COCOI HERON, a CLAPPER RAIL, a MANGROVE CUCKOO, a NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER and a MOUSE-COLORED TYRANNULET were tallied on 12 April. Also on 12 April, two GREATER ANIS, a GREEN-BREASTED MANGO and three RED-CAPPED CARDINALS were noted in Caroni Swamp.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two YELLOW-OLIVE FLYCATCHERS were reported from Las Lapas on 10 April.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, will be sponsoring a Birdwatching / Birding Guide Certificate Programme. Scheduled for Monday and Wednesday evenings at 5-8 pm from 6-22 May, the programme will include a series of evening lectures by local ornithologists/birders/tour guides plus two 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:** In concluding our theme of species concepts, N. K. Johnson, J. V. Remsen, Jr. and C. Cicero (1999. Resolution of the debate over species concepts in ornithology: a new comprehensive biologic species concept. Pp. 1470-1482 in Proc. 22nd Int. Ornithol. Congr., Durban. BirdLife South Africa, Durban) recently proposed a "comprehensive biologic species concept" that synthesizes valid aspects of other species concepts: "An avian species is a system of populations representing an essentially monophyletic, genetically cohesive, and genealogically concordant lineage of individuals that share a common fertilisation system through time and space, represent an independent evolutionary trajectory, and demonstrate essential but not necessarily complete reproductive isolation from other such systems."

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-17) for 24 April 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**CRIME WARNING:** Because of two recent incidents involving birders, we urge all birders to exercise caution when visiting Wallerfield and to remain either within or close to their vehicles at all times.

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Trinidad, land-based seabirding is most productive at Galera Point, at Trinidad's northeastern tip, where a 1 hour seabird watch at Galera Point on 20 April produced two white-morph RED-FOOTED BOOBIES\* (3rd for Trinidad), 39 LAUGHING GULLS, two ROSEATE TERNS and nine unidentified gulls/terns. A 1.75 hour seabird watch at Galera Point on 21 April produced another white-morph RED-FOOTED BOOBY\* (4th for Trinidad), four LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS, eight LAUGHING GULLS and three unidentified gulls/terns. All seabirds were migrating northward, as well as two BARN SWALLOWS on 21 April. Farther south, along the east coast of Trinidad, 20 LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS were tallied flying north past Manzanilla on 16 April. A WHITE-TAILED GOLDENTHROAT was seen at Kernahan on 16 April.

Also at Galera Point, a possible hybrid CARIBBEAN X GRAY-BREASTED MARTIN was studied as it associated with five GRAY-BREASTED MARTINS on 21 April; it resembled a male Caribbean Martin, appearing distinctly darker and larger than the Gray-breasted Martins, but had a paler breast than expected. During the past 3 years, one or two seemingly pure male Caribbean Martins were seen repeatedly at this time of year at Galera Point, and may well have mated with a Gray-breasted Martin.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER\* turned up (for the fourth consecutive spring, indicating it is a rare but regular spring migrant) on 19 April in the first field west of the police station beside the east entrance of the Caroni Rice Fields; it was associating with 59 SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS, five LESSER YELLOWLEGS and 20 LEAST SANDPIPERS. The Buff-breasted Sandpiper could not be relocated on 21 April, but the leucistic SEMIPALMATED PLOVER was relocated among 113 other conspecifics in the same field. The SNAIL KITE\* continues to be seen irregularly in the rice fields, where it was last seen on 19 April. Single PEREGRINE FALCONS were noted in the rice fields on 19 and 21 April. A possible GREEN X STRIATED HERON hybrid (with a neck coloration scored as 5 on Payne's scale of 1-9) was carefully studied at the west end of the runway on 19 April.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, two CLIFF SWALLOWS\* and the first FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER of the season turned up at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 20 April, but were not relocated the following day when a YELLOW-BILLED TERN turned up surprisingly for the first time this year at Trincity. At Wallerfield, two MORICHE ORIOLES and three SULPHURY FLYCATCHERS were noted at Wallerfield in the evening of 18 April; after dark, a TROPICAL SCREECH-OWL, a BARN OWL, a COMMON POTOO, three PAUQUES and 20 WHITE-TAILED NIGHTJARS were spotlighted. A COCOI HERON at the Aripo Livestock Station was seen from the Eastern Main Road on 16 April.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, the SCARLET TANAGER\*--a rare but regular spring migrant in T&T--staged an invasion in mid-April with single males (presumably representing different individuals) reported from Mt. St. Benedict on 18 April, Maraval on 17 April, the Kapok Hotel in Port of Spain on 16 April, and the Asa Wright Nature Centre on 14 April. A late YELLOW WARBLER was found along the Lower Blanchisseuse Road on 15 April. Two HEPATIC TANAGERS were noted at Morne Bleu and a SWALLOW TANAGER at Las Lapas on 15 April.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a tour of Caroni Swamp on 20 April produced a BOAT-BILLED HERON, a PEREGRINE FALCON, three GREATER ANIS and two GREEN-THROATED MANGOS. At Waterloo, four YELLOW-BILLED TERNS (surprisingly the first along the west coast since 28 January) and two apparently nesting GREEN KINGFISHERS were noted on 17 April. A NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER was the only noteworthy bird seen at Cacandee on 17 April.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, will be sponsoring a Birdwatching / Birding Guide Certificate Programme. Scheduled for Monday and Wednesday evenings at 5-8 pm from 6-22 May, the programme will include a series of evening lectures by local ornithologists / birders / tour guides plus two 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:** Where does the Caribbean Martin winter? The Caribbean Martin is resident from January to October in the Greater Antilles (except Cuba), Lesser Antilles, and Tobago, and is thought to migrate to South America from October to December, though small numbers winter in Barbados. It is a regular migrant in Curacao and Bonaire, occurring only during fall (8 September to 13 October) and spring (7-30 May), suggesting that it passes through the islands on its way between the Greater Antilles and South America. Vagrants have been reported from the southern Bahamas and Cayman Islands. Although there are sight records from coastal Guyana, there are no other records from South America except from the continental island of Tobago, 118 km from the mainland, where it is resident from January to October. Thus, the wintering destination of Caribbean Martins remains a mystery. Stay tuned next week for a few recent clues.

This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2002-18) for 30 April 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In northeastern Trinidad, 40 distant storm- petrels, suspected to be WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS\* (2nd for T&T), were seen foot-paddling (Leach's Storm-Petrels seldom foot-paddle) in the vicinity of a Leatherback Turtle at dawn off Galera Point on 30 April. Other seabirds noted during a 2.25 hour seabird watch on 30 April include three LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS, ten BROWN BOOBIES, two POMARINE JAEGERS\*, nine PARASITIC JAEGERS and 17 ROSEATE TERNS (plus hundreds of distant, unidentified terns).

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK\* was found along the Blanchisseuse Road on 24 April.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, waterbird numbers in the Caroni Rice Fields are clearly increasing, with locally breeding populations augmented by northbound Nearctic shorebird migrants and intratropical migrants from South America. Recent sightings include: a PINNATED BITTERN on 25 July; two WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 25 April; six FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 27 April; the SNAIL KITE\* as recently as 28 April; single light-and dark-morph LONG-WINGED HARRIERS on 27 April, plus a light-morph on 25 April; a late PEREGRINE FALCON feeding on a dead CATTLE EGRET (presumably killed by the falcon) on 25 April; a late MERLIN on 25 April; a COLLARED PLOVER on 25 April; up to 200 SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS on 27 April (highest count for rice fields); up to 120 LEAST SANDPIPERS on 25 April; up to 100 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS on 27 April; four WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS on 25 April; a PECTORAL SANDPIPER (5th spring record) on 25 April; up to 11 FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS on 25 April; and 100 late DICKCISSELS on 25 April. Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN was flushed at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 25 May.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET, three 1st-winter LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS, about 450 LAUGHING GULLS and 25 COMMON TERNS were tallied during high tide at San Fernando on 25 April; at the same locality, a GREAT BLUE HERON, an adult light- morph PARASITIC JAEGER, only seven LAUGHING GULLS and 25 COMMON TERNS were tallied during low tide on 28 April. Farther north, an immature BROWN BOOBY, 10 RED KNOTS, 1170 LAUGHING GULLS, six ROYAL TERNS, three COMMON TERNS, a ZONE-TAILED HAWK and a SAVANNA HAWK were seen at Waterloo on 28 April.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** On Sunday, 12 May, the TTFNC Bird Group will be hosting a birding trip to Fort George to search for seasonal forest specialties of northwestern Trinidad such as Blue-tailed Emerald, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet and Streaked Saltator. We will be meeting at the corner of Mucurapo Road and Foreshore Highway (on the Mucurapo side) at 6:30 am. If you wish to participate in this field trip, please call the leader, Courtenay Rooks, at 622-8826 (home) or 678- 9737 (cell).

The Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, will be sponsoring a Birdwatching / Birding Guide Certificate Programme. Scheduled for Monday and Wednesday evenings at 5-8 pm from 6-22 May, the programme will include a series of evening lectures by local ornithologists / birders / tour guides plus two 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:** Where does the Caribbean Martin winter? Migrating Caribbean Martins may be expected to pass through Trinidad along a potential migratory pathway connecting its breeding range in the Caribbean and its postulated winter range in continental South America. In a paper titled "First records of Caribbean Martin (*Progne dominicensis*) for Trinidad, with comments on its supposed migration to South America" (Pitirre 14:61-62, 2001), W. L. Murphy and F. E. Hayes report single males observed at Galera Point, Trinidad, 14-15 May 1999 and 9 April to 27 May 2000, and two males during 11 February to 7 April 2001. Searches elsewhere in Trinidad were unfruitful.

Because these observations occurred only at Trinidad's closest point to Tobago, within a narrow range of dates and without any evidence of courtship or nesting, the martins were probably non-breeding individuals merely wandering across from their nearest known breeding locality in Tobago. There is no substantial evidence that the Caribbean Martin migrates through Trinidad and its winter range still remains a mystery.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-19) for 9 May 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the recent flooding of many rice fields in Caroni created a bonanza of habitat attracting the largest assemblage of shorebird migrants ever recorded inland in spring. Within the past week, 14 shorebird species were recorded in the rice fields. The highlight was a long-anticipated CURLEW SANDPIPER\* (1st for T&T), half moulted into breeding plumage, seen intermittently in the southwestern sector from 1-5 May but not subsequently. Noteworthy shorebird counts included up to six COLLARED PLOVERS on 5 May, two SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS on 4 May, single STILT SANDPIPERS (different individuals) on 2 and 4 May and up to 27 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS on 5 May. Other noteworthy shorebirds observed earlier in the rice fields included a BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER\* on 19 April and a PECTORAL SANDPIPER on 25 April, bringing the total observed inland this spring to 16 species.

Also in the rice fields, five unfamiliar whistling-ducks seen from 2- 4 May were eventually identified as juvenile WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS, the first juveniles seen in Trinidad. The SNAIL KITE\* continues to be seen as recently as 8 May. Other noteworthy bird sightings from the rice fields include: a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN on 5 May; a LITTLE EGRET on 5 May; a possible hybrid LITTLE BLUE HERON X SNOWY EGRET on 5 May; up to seven WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 4 May; up to seven FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 8 May; up to 15 WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 5 May; up to four BLUE-WINGED TEAL on 8 May; a COMMON GROUND-DOVE on 4 May; and a PLAIN-BREASTED GROUND-DOVE on 5 May.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, two lingering 1st-summer LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS accompanied 275 LAUGHING GULLS and 30 COMMON TERNS at San Fernando on 8 May; one of the LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS was kleptoparasitized (fish stolen) by two marauding MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS. At Waterloo, 13 species of shorebirds, including 25 RED KNOTS and two WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS, plus 24 ROYAL TERNS, were tallied on 8 May.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two BLACK-FACED ANTTHRUSHES, four YELLOW-LEGGED THRUSHES and three BLUE-CAPPED TANAGERS were tallied at Heights of Aripo on 8 May.

In Tobago, an adult STRIPED OWL\* and its juvenile were noted in the Main Ridge on 2 May.

In Barbados, a 4-hour pelagic trip cruising 25 km offshore on 28 April produced only a 1st-summer PARASITIC JAEGER, a LAUGHING GULL and about 20 dark-backed terns thought to be SOOTY TERNS. Previous observations from shore and a few earlier pelagic trips off Barbados have inexplicably failed to produce substantial numbers of seabirds, in stark contrast with those observed in Guadeloupe.

In Guadeloupe, recent Nearctic landbird migrants noted at the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre include a male BLACKPOLL WARBLER on 7 May and a female YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER on 3 May.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** Due to scheduling conflicts, the T&TFNC birding trip to Fort George on Sunday, 12 May, has been postponed to Sunday, 9 June. We will be meeting at the corner of Mucurapo Road and Foreshore Highway (on the Mucurapo side) at 6:30 am. If you wish to participate in this field trip, please call the leader, Courtenay Rooks, at 622-8826 (home) or 678-9737 (cell).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Does the Little Egret breed in Trinidad and Tobago? The Little Egret is an Old World species first recorded in the New World on 16 April 1954, when a breeding plumaged adult female was collected at Graeme Hall Swamp, Barbados. The first breeding colony of Little Egrets in the New World was established in December 1994 at the same locality, where they nested with Snowy Egrets. The first Trinidad record was on 13 January 1957, when a bird was shot in Caroni, and the first Tobago record was on 4 January 1990, when a dark-morph immature was photographed. All pre-1992 records from T&T were summarized by: Murphy, W. L. 1992. Notes on the occurrence of the Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) in the Americas, with reference to other Palearctic vagrants. Colonial Waterbirds 15:113-123. Stay tuned next week for a more recent summary and clues for the answer to our question.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-20) for 17 May 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Barbuda, more than a dozen singing male BARBUDA WARBLERS plus a late PRAIRIE WARBLER were encountered on 27 April in the vicinity of an excavated wetland on the right side of the road about 3 km south of the Coddington Airport. At the nearby Coddington Lagoon, about 7000 pairs of MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS are currently nesting.

In Tortola, British Virgin Islands, a WHITE-WINGED DOVE (1st for British Virgin Islands) and a BALTIMORE ORIOLE were found between the airport and Beef Island Guest House on 29 April.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, a TRINIDAD PIPING-GUAN was seen along the Monte Video Road 1 km south of Grande Riviere on 12 May and an adult SCARLET IBIS was seen from the main bridge as it foraged in the river on 11 May.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, waterbird numbers continue to increase in the Caroni Rice Fields. On 15 May, a MALLARD\* (3rd for T&T, but natural origin doubtful), thought to be an immature male, was seen flying with a flock of FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS of which up to 23 were seen. Up to a dozen WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS were noted on 11 May. A PINNATED BITTERN was flushed on 15 May. The SNAIL KITE\* continues to be seen as recently as 11 May. An adult SNOWY EGRET with yellow lores and abnormally coloured greenish legs was found on 11 May. Two STILT SANDPIPERS were noted on 15 May and a STILT SANDPIPER and SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER were seen on 11 May. Two BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOWS, the first of the year, were spotted with a lingering flock of BARN SWALLOWS on 15 May.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, two colour-banded male TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRDS in a polygynandrous quartet were found dead at Caribbean Union College, Maracas Valley, on 14 May. One bird had been banded on 9 May 1997 and the other on 6 May 2001. An investigation into the potential causes of death concluded that they most likely consumed rat poison while foraging inside--ironically--the College Health Foods factory. An unbanded male appears to be staking a claim on the territory and is currently courting the two banded females, but one of the females is flirting with a monogamous male whose mate is incubating eggs in an adjacent territory. At least two other adults banded in 1997, a male and a female, continue to defend their territories.

On 16 May, a pair of HOUSE WRENS was found feeding young, including a large SHINY COWBIRD, in an old Tropical Mockingbird nest under the eaves of a building at Caribbean Union College. However, the wrens were being constantly harassed by up to four PALM TANAGERS, of which one was incubating an egg (presumably laid recently) in an adjacent old Tropical Mockingbird nest less than a metre away.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Does the Little Egret breed in Trinidad and Tobago? In a paper titled "Status of the Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) in Trinidad and Tobago" (Pitirre 14:54-58, 2001), F. E. Hayes and G. L. White summarized data for at least 33 records of the species for Trinidad and 17 for Tobago from 1959 to 2001. It has been recorded during each month of the year on each island, with no marked seasonal variation, though the highest monthly totals are from the first few months of the year. High counts include five for Trinidad and two for Tobago. Breeding is expected, but has not been documented and may not occur yet because there has not been a population explosion paralleling that of Barbados where the breeding population rapidly increased to several dozen birds within a few years.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-21) for 22 May 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Guadeloupe, the highlight of a 1.25 hour seabird watch from the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre on 13 May was an intermediate morph SOUTH POLAR SKUA; other seabirds tallied include five MANX SHEARWATERS, the first CORY'S SHEARWATER of the season, 18 WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS, a LEACH'S STORM-PETREL and four PARASITIC JAEGERs. On 14 May, a SOOTY SHEARWATER was seen in the channel between Petite-Terre and la Pointe des Chateaux. On 15 May, at least three ANTILLEAN NIGHTHAWKS were found at Belle-Plaine; another at Destrelan on 15 May was first noted on 23 April.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, about 50 ROSEATE TERNS were found nesting on a vegetated islet off Petite Tacarib Bay on 11 May, providing the 1st nesting record for Trinidad.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, recent sightings in the Caroni Rice Fields include: a LEAST BITTERN, two STRIPE-BACKED BITTERNS, two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (dark and light), eight FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, 35 SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS, 93 COLLARED PLOVERS, 57 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 11 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS, ten STILT SANDPIPERS, 29 GREATER YELLOWLEGS, seven LESSER YELLOWLEGS and 49 LARGE-BILLED TERNS. The immature SNAIL KITE was seen on 18 May.

Along the south coast of Trinidad, a nesting pair of SPOTTED TODDY- FLYCATCHERS was found at the edge of mangroves beside the beach at Erin on 17 May. The band of a COMMON TERN was recovered several km off Chatham in the Columbus Channel on 17 May; the USFWS number was 1182-49399.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a COCOI HERON, two GREATER ANIS, two NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHERS and a BRAN-COLORED FLYCATCHER were tallied at Cacandee on 16 May. A GREEN-THROATED MANGO was seen in Caroni Swamp on 16 May. A tally of 52 ROYAL TERNS at Orange Valley on 18 May was surprisingly high for so late in the season.

Finally, a COCOI HERON was seen in Nariva Swamp, along Trinidad's east coast, on 13 May.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Does the Swainson's Hawk migrate across the Caribbean? Although this species breeds in North America, the vast majority of individuals migrate through Central America and winter in southern South America. However, a few individuals winter in southern Florida, from where they may potentially migrate southward across the Caribbean. According to W. Hoffman and H. Darrow (1992. Migration of diurnal raptors from the Florida Keys into the West Indies. Hawk Migration Association of North America Migration Studies Oct.:7-14), most Swainson's Hawks in the Florida Keys are immatures, whose numbers peak in late October and November; although some winter, most apparently retreat northward to winter on the mainland of southern Florida. Stay tuned next week to further clues.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-22) for 31 May 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Tobago, one of the two WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRDS\* (2nd for T&T) was seen at Little Tobago on 24 May.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an apparent GREEN HERON\* (though possibly a hybrid Green X Striated Heron) with a neck colour score of 6 was found along with two COCOI HERONS at Fullarton Swamp on 26 May.

A pair of PYGMY KINGFISHERS was found at Icacos on 26 May. In Cedros, four of six non-breeding plumaged ROYAL TERNS (appearing to be 1st- summer immatures) were banded on the right leg.

Farther north, two first-summer LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS continue to linger at San Fernando, where they were noted on 24 and 26 May. An immature BROWN BOOBY and a dark morph PARASITIC JAEGER were also seen at San Fernando on 24 May. At South Oropouche Swamp, five PINNATED BITTERNS, two late BLUE-WINGED TEAL, two PYGMY KINGFISHERS, two GREATER ANIS, three SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHERS and a NORTHERN SCRUB- FLYCATCHER feeding a fledgling were tallied on 28 May. A COCOI HERON turned up among roosting herons and ibises in Caroni Swamp on 28 May.

Finally, a non-breeding plumaged LEAST TERN with a dark bill was noted among YELLOW TERNS at Waterloo on 16 May.

In the Caroni Rice Fields, the apparent hybrid GREEN X STRIATED HERON with a neck colour score of 5 was relocated on 30 May. Other noteworthy birds seen on 30 May include 13 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS, two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS and a pale-morph LONG-WINGED HARRIER.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC Bird Group is sponsoring a birding trip to Fort George on Sunday, 9 June. We will be meeting at the traffic lights along the Fore Shore Highway just east of Thomas Peake at 6:30 am. If you wish to participate, please call the leader, Courtenay Rooks, at 622-8826 (home) or 756-2355 (cell).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Does the Swainson's Hawk migrate across the Caribbean? Although none have been seen flying southward toward the Caribbean from the Florida Keys, there is one autumn sight record from the Caribbean at Jamaica on 15 October 1974 (Bond, J. 1976. Twentieth supplement to the Check-list of birds of the West Indies (1956). Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia), providing the only direct evidence (if correctly identified) that this species may migrate southward across the Caribbean during autumn. Stay tuned next week for further clues.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-23) for 5 June 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, the SNAIL KITE\* continues to be seen in the vicinity of the runway, where it was seen as recently as 2 June. The apparent hybrid GREEN X STRIATED HERON was relocated just west of the runway on 2 June.

Waterfowl numbers continue to increase, with up to 22 WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS, 27 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS and two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS tallied on 2 June. Lingering Nearctic migrants include 19 GREATER YELLOWLEGS, eight LESSER YELLOWLEGS and a very late BARN SWALLOW on 4 June. A dark-morph LONG-WINGED HARRIER was also noted on 4 June.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a WHITE-TAILED KITE\* continues to be reported intermittently from St. Mary's, just east of the Waterloo High School, where it was seen in the late afternoon of 31 May and 1 June. Although a concerted effort to find it on 2 June was unsuccessful, an evening flight of 11 LARGE-BILLED TERNS heading southward was unexpected.

Along the north coast of Trinidad, a male WHITE-WINGED BECARD and a FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL were seen in forest north of the Tucker Valley Golf Course on 2 June.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER:** The T&TFNC Bird Group is sponsoring a birding trip to Fort George on Sunday, 9 June. We will be meeting at the traffic lights along the Fore Shore Highway just east of Thomas Peake at 6:30 am. If you wish to participate, please call the leader, Courtenay Rooks, at 622-8826 (home) or 756-2355 (cell).

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Does the Swainson's Hawk migrate across the Caribbean? In a recent article titled "First sight records of Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) for Trinidad and Chacachacare Island, with comments on its status and trans-Caribbean migration" (Pitirre 14:63-65, 2001), F. E. Hayes reports a light-morph adult Swainson's Hawk from Trinidad on 16 and 17 May 1998, and a light-morph immature at Chacachacare, Bocas Islands, from 29 October 1999 to 13 January. Several previous records from Tobago are further reviewed. Most T&T records are from late spring to summer on the northeast coast of Trinidad and Tobago, suggesting that they may be lingering prior to migrating northward across the Caribbean. The Chacachacare immature comprises the only autumn record. The origin of T&T birds is uncertain: they may have flown southward across the Caribbean in autumn, eastward from Panama in autumn, or northward from southern South America in spring. Stay tuned next week for a final clue.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-24) for 14 June 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Trinidad, an adult male COMB DUCK\* (5th for T&T) was found on 14 June in the Caroni Rice Fields, where it foraged in a flooded field just north of the runway. Other waterfowl seen on 14 June include six BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, nine FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS and three WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS.

In northwestern Trinidad, the highlights of a TTFNC birding trip (with seven participants) to Fort James on 9 June included a CHANNEL-BILLED TOUCAN, a male RUBY-TOPAZ HUMMINGBIRD and a STREAKED SALTATOR.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the two 1st-summer LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS last reported at San Fernando on 26 May could not be relocated among 225 LAUGHING GULLS on 8 June. Several dozen ROYAL TERNS continue to linger between Waterloo and Orange Valley.

In southwest Tobago, four Butorides herons with neck coloration within the range of variation of STRIATED HERON\* (scores of 2-4) were noted among many GREEN HERONS (scores of 6-7) plus an apparent intergrade GREEN X STRIATED HERON (score of 5) in the Bon Accord Sewage Ponds on 11 June. Another apparent intergrade GREEN X STRIATED HERON was noted in a stream just south of Turtle Beach on 10 June. Two 'CAYENNE' TERNS were seen off Crown Point on 10 June.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Are specialist birds more neophobic--afraid of novel situations and stimuli--than generalists? Dietary generalists exploit a larger variety of food types than specialists and presumably are more likely to encounter novel stimuli associated with food. In Barbados, S. J. Webster and L. Lefebvre (2000. Neophobia by the Lesser Antillean Bullfinch, a foraging generalist, and the Bananaquit, a nectar specialist. Wilson Bull. 112:424-427) conducted field tests on Lesser Antillean Bullfinches and Bananaquits with an artificial nectar source. The bullfinches, which are dietary generalists and readily exploit food left by humans, arrived first at the feeding stations and fed more quickly than did the Bananaquits, which specialize on a diet of nectar and insects. These observations fit the predictions of ecological theory. Stay tuned next for another similar study in Barbados.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-25) for 21 June 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Barbados, a HOUSE MARTIN (3rd for Barbados and West Indies, and 1st summer record) was present at St. Bernard's Village, St. Joseph, during 9-11 June. It seems highly probable that this was the same individual reported from Plymouth, Tobago, on 7 April (see SCBA 2002-15).

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, the adult male COMB DUCK\* (5th for T&T) was seen repeatedly northwest sector of the Caroni Rice Fields from 14-16 June, but has not been seen subsequently; however, it almost certainly is lingering somewhere in the Caroni Swamp area.

Other noteworthy bird sightings from the rice fields include: a LITTLE EGRET with a short head plume on 16 and 20 June; the immature SNAIL KITE\* as recently as 20 June; up to two LONG-WINGED HARRIERS (dark, light) on 16 June; up to four WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 19 June; up to six BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 14 June; up to 28 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 19 June; up to five WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 20 June; the first three BLACK-NECKED STILT fledglings of the year on 20 June; up to 75 COLLARED PLOVERS on 19 June; a BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER on 16 June; up to two SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS on 19 June; up to seven STILT SANDPIPERS on 16 June (all Nearctic migrant shorebirds in non-breeding plumage); a pair of PLAIN-BREASTED GROUND-DOVES in the southeastern sector on 16 June and one on 15 June; an adult male GREEN-THROATED MANGO on 19 June; and two COMMON WAXBILLS on 20 June.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a 1st-summer LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL turned up among 170 LAUGHING GULLS and a surprisingly high tally of 18 COMMON TERNS at Waterloo on 15 June. About 15 ROYAL TERNS were still lingering at Orange Valley on 15 June.

Along the east coast of Trinidad a PINNATED BITTERN and a pair of PLAIN-BREASTED GROUND-DOVES were seen at Kernahan and a SWALLOW- TAILED KITE near Fishing Pond on 16 June.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a PLUMBEOUS KITE was noted at Morne Bleu and a DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE in lower Arima Valley on 16 June.

Finally, we urge birders to keep an eye out for ELEGANT TERNS within the region. Elegant Terns nest in western North America and winter southward to Chile, but have been turning up with increasing frequency in western Europe and eastern North America. Given the paucity of birders in the southeastern Caribbean, they could easily be overlooked among the local 'Cayenne' Terns (yellow-billed race of Sandwich Tern) and Royal Tern. Elegant Tern is intermediate in size between Cayenne and Royal Tern with a long, thin, orangeish bill that is often yellowish and drooped downward at the tip. However, some Cayenne Terns apparently have orangeish or reddish coloured bills, and could be nearly indistinguishable from Elegant Tern; some have speculated that such individuals may even represent hybrids with Elegant Tern in the Dutch West Indies. We just learned of recent sight records of Elegant Tern at Waterloo in March 1998 and March 1999. Given the difficulties in distinguishing these two taxa, any potential sightings of Elegant Tern should be documented with detailed descriptions and photographs.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Are there taxonomic differences among birds in their neophobia and ability to solve problems? In Barbados, recent studies by S. J. Webster and L. Lefebvre (2001. Problem solving and neophobia in a columbiform-passeriform assemblage in Barbados. *Animal Behaviour* 62:23-32) explored neophobia and problem solving in the Zenaida Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Lesser Antillean Bullfinch, Carib Grackle and Shiny Cowbird. Habituation to a new food patch, willingness to feed near a novel object, and the ability to obtain food from a new apparatus were studied both in the wild and in captivity. The passerines, especially Carib Grackles, were far more innovative and successful in problem solving than the doves, providing evidence of taxonomic differences among birds in these aspects of behaviour. Stay tuned next week for yet another similar study in Barbados.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-26) for 4 July 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Guadeloupe, a 1.5 hour seabird watch from the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre produced a SOOTY SHEARWATER, 49 GREATER SHEARWATERS, a WILSON'S STORM-PETREL and an unidentified SKUA (South Polar?) on 22 June. A nesting pair of BLACK-NECKED STILTS incubating four eggs was discovered on 23 June, providing the first nesting record for the Nature Reserve.

In Antigua, a surprisingly large flock of 22 WEST INDIAN WHISTLING- DUCKS was found on 26 June at Rabbit Island, which is now rat-free thanks to the efforts of the Environmental Awareness Group (EAG).

Only a dozen were spotted at the same spot a year ago, suggesting that they may be nesting there or on a nearby islet. For the second consecutive year and for the second brood this year, a docile ZENAIDA DOVE is nesting in a windowsill only a metre from a desk in the EAG office building in St. John's.

In St. Kitts, a GREATER FLAMINGO that has apparently been present since early 2001 was seen at Great Salt Pond on 27 June; it is banded with a greenish metallic ring on its right tibia, with at least two black numerals ('98') that are visible. Other birds tallied at Great Salt Pond on 27 June include 24+ BLACK-NECKED STILTS, 20+ WILSON'S PLOVERS, a SEMIPALMATED PLOVER, 12 RUDDY TURNSTONES, a SANDERLING, 10 SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, 16 ROSEATE TERNS and 8+ LEAST TERNS (nesting). A RED-TAILED HAWK was noted at Brimstone Hill Fort on 28 June.

In the southwestern peninsula of Trinidad, an immature MUSCOVY DUCK\*, almost certainly a natural vagrant from Venezuela, was seen flying eastward along the south coast of Trinidad at Chatham on 23 June. A probable POMARINE JAEGER\* was seen off Vesigny on 26 June. Other birds noted in the area on 23 June include: a LIMPKIN, three RED- BELLIED MACAWS and a SCALED PIGEON at Chatham Forest; a ZONE-TAILED HAWK south of Chatham Junction; two COCOI HERONS at Los Blanquizaes Lagoon and a LITTLE CUCKOO a few kilometres to the north of the lagoon; 34 COMMON TERNS (one breeding-plumaged, all others immatures), one ROYAL TERN, five LARGE-BILLED TERNS and a nest- building pair of SPOTTED TODY- FLYCATCHERS at Columbus Bay; and a nesting pair of LEAST GREBES with a single egg on a floating nest, 16 BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS, a COMMON TERN (1st inland record), 137 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 34 BLACK SKIMMERS at Pitch Lake.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, the WHITE-TAILED KITE\* was spotted again as it flew and hovered over a residential area adjacent to fields just east of the Waterloo High School on 1 June. At San Fernando, only 30 LAUGHING GULLS and nine COMMON TERNS were present during an afternoon high tide on 23 June.

In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, the SNAIL KITE\* continues to be seen in the vicinity of the runway, where it was last reported on 25 June. An intrepid birder wading into a few marshes on 25 June spooked up four STRIPE-BACKED BITTERNs, two LEAST BITTERNs, a GRAY- BREASTED CRAKE, three YELLOW-BREASTED CRAKES, and a STRIPED CUCKOO fledgling being fed by a busy pair of YELLOW-CHINNED SPINTETAILEDs. A blue-loreD LITTLE EGRET with a partial head plume was seen on 23 June. A WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCK, 15 FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS and two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS--but not the Comb Duck\* last reported on 16 June--were tallied on 25 June.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a possible lek of four singing BROWN VIOLETEARS was found at Paria Springs on 26 June. At Fort George, two STREAKED SALTATORS and a BRAN-COLORED FLYCATCHER were noted on 26 June.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Can innovative behaviours be transmitted culturally by birds? A famous example is that of tits throughout mainland Britain learning to pilfer milk by opening the cardboard caps of bottles. In Barbados, S. M. Reader, D. Nover and L. Lefebvre (2002. Locale-specific sugar packet opening by Lesser Antillean Bullfinches in Barbados. J. Field Ornithol. 73:82-85) first noticed Lesser Antillean Bullfinches opening packets of sugar in the grounds of the Colony Club hotel on 16 May 2000. The subsequent placement of sugar packets at 40 sites in 10 west coast areas revealed that only those in the vicinity of the Colony Club opened the sugar packets.

Inquiries at other hotels and restaurants revealed that the Colony Club was the only open-air establishment serving sugar in packets, suggesting that this innovative behaviour would be unlikely to spread to other bullfinch populations.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2002-27) for 19 July 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In the Northern Range of Trinidad, 19 participants joined the TTFNC Bird Group's outing to Arima Valley on 14 July. The highlight of the trip was the SCALED ANTPITTA\* which, unfortunately, was heard only by two participants. Other highlights included a flock of a dozen BLUE-HEADED PARROTS, a flock of about 15 WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS, a WHITE-THROATED SPADEBILL and a DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER.

In the Caroni Plain of Trinidad, a 'MYSTERY EGRET' resembling a breeding-plumaged Little Egret but with distinct grey tones scattered throughout the plumage (from the top of the head to the thighs and on both sides) was found in the Caroni Rice Fields on 6 July. The possibility of it representing an intermediate-morph Western Reef- Heron\* is being considered. Another egret with a few dark markings and a pale basal half to the bill was initially thought to possibly represent a hybrid Snowy Egret X Little Blue Heron, but is now thought to be a dirty Snowy Egret with clay soils on the bill. An obvious question is how can one distinguish between dark feathering and dark grime on feathers in a white egret/heron without capturing or killing the bird? Other noteworthy bird sightings from the Caroni Rice Fields include: a non-breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET on 6 July; two BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS on 8 or 9 July; up to nine FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 6 July; two WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS on 8 or 9 July; the immature SNAIL KITE\* on 8 or 9 July; up to two BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS from 8-13 July; a WILLET on 13 July; an immature LAUGHING GULL on 6 July; an apparently dying BLACK SKIMMER missing its lower jaw on 6 July; and up to three PLAIN-BREASTED GROUND-DOVES on 8 or 9 July.

Elsewhere in the Caroni Plain, three incredibly late and apparently summering BARN SWALLOWS mingled with about 25 WHITE-WINGED SWALLOWS at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 14 July (latest date for T&T). Also at the sewage ponds were three carefully studied juvenile SNOWY EGRETS feeding with an adult; one juvenile had pale yellow lores, another had greyish-yellow lores and the third had blackish lores-- thus resembling a Little Egret.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, an unseasonably high count of roughly 100 COMMON TERNS (highest west coast count in at least 5 years) associated with about 300 LARGE-BILLED TERNS and 300 YELLOW-BILLED TERNS-- but surprisingly no Royal Terns--at Waterloo on 13 July.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Do Striated Heron and Green Heron ever hybridize? A thorough analysis of geographic variation by R. B. Payne (Bull. Brit. Ornithol. Club 94:81-88, 1974) concluded that hybridization occurred. However, a reanalysis by B. L. Monroe, Jr., and M. R. Browning (Bull. Brit. Ornithol. Club 112:81-85, 1992) concluded that "there is no substantial evidence that there is interbreeding, and certainly if it occurs at all, it must be at a low level." In a recent reanalysis of Payne's data titled "Geographic variation, hybridization, and taxonomy of New World Butorides Herons" (North American Birds 56:4-10), F. E. Hayes demonstrated a concerted increase in variability and intermediacy--the signature of hybridization--in populations where the two taxa meet in southern Central America, the southern Caribbean and coastal northern South America. Stay tuned next week for further conclusions.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2002-28) for 26 July 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**PHOTO GALLERY:** Photos from Trinidad of Black Skimmer (missing lower bill), Comb Duck, White-faced Whistling-Ducks (juveniles), Little Egret and Lesser Black-backed Gull are now posted at the SCBA website. A new 'Mystery Bird' photo, along with the answer to the last 'Mystery Bird' photo, are also posted at the SCBA website.

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Guadeloupe, a remarkably early or perhaps summering CLIFF SWALLOW turned up at La Pointe des Chateaux, but not date was provided.

In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, a breeding-plumaged adult AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (4th consecutive summer with June or July records) turned up on 20 July. Other noteworthy bird records include: a non-breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET, a STRIPE-BACKED BITTERN and a PINNATED BITTERN on 20 July; a juvenile SCARLET IBIS on 21 July; up to five FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 21 July; a light-morph LONG-WINGED HARRIER on 20 and 21 July; up to three SOLITARY SANDPIPERS on 20 July; at least 100 GREATER AND LESSER YELLOWLEGS on 20 July.

Elsewhere in Trinidad, a lingering BARN SWALLOW (1st summering record) was still present at the Trincity Sewage Ponds on 26 July and 20 COMMON TERNS were noted at San Fernando on 21 July.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Are Striated Heron and Green Heron distinct species? No according to R. B. Payne (Bull. Brit. Ornithol. Club 94:81-88, 1974), who believed extensive hybridization between the two taxa provided evidence of free interbreeding. Yes according to B. L. Monroe, Jr., and M. R. Browning (Bull. Brit. Ornithol. Club 112:81- 85, 1992), who concluded hybridization was nonexistent or rare. In a recent reanalysis titled "Geographic variation, hybridization, and taxonomy of New World Butorides Herons" (North American Birds 56:4- 10), F. E. Hayes concluded that the presence of seeming 'pure' phenotypes of both parental forms within the hybrid zone suggested that assortative mating occurred, providing evidence that the two taxa should be treated as distinct species.

**BIRD BRAINS:** Do we believe what you see? We want to! Many of the identifications reported in the SCBA are tentative. The TT 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 TTRBC 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 (2002-29) for 1 August 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**TRAGEDY:** We are deeply saddened by the news that Jamaican/English ornithologists Robert and Ann Sutton of Marshall's Pen, Jamaica, were attacked by bandits in their home on 22 July. Tragically Robert was killed while Ann was injured. Those who knew the Suttons and wish to send condolences may contact Ann at [asutton@cwjamaica.com](mailto:asutton@cwjamaica.com). The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds will be establishing a memorial fund to honour Robert. For further information on Robert's life, see the eulogy at: <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20020731/cleisure/cleisure2.html>

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** Nearctic shorebird migration is now in full swing within the region. In the Caroni Rice Fields of Trinidad, shorebird numbers increased dramatically within the past week, with the following changes noted on 28 and 31 July: 30-50 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS; 30-100 STILT SANDPIPERS; 0-10 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS; and c. 250-500 YELLOWLEGS (mostly LESSER). The breeding plumaged AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER was relocated on 31 July. Other noteworthy bird records include: a non-breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRET on 31 July; a juvenile SCARLET IBIS on 28 July; five WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAILS and five FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCKS on 28 July; an immature SNAIL KITE\* on 28 July; and two YELLOW-BREASTED CRAKES on 28 July.

Along the west coast of Trinidad, a WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL, a STILT SANDPIPER and two PECTORAL SANDPIPERS were noted among the usual seabirds, waders and shorebirds at Waterloo on 28 July. Four STILT SANDPIPERS were at Waterloo on 31 July. Roughly 65 COMMON TERNS were at Waterloo and 20 at San Fernando on 28 July.

In the Northern Range of Trinidad, a bird resembling a BLUE-BACKED MANAKIN\* (potential 1st for Trinidad) was briefly seen, along with six WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS, at Morne Catherine on 25 July. In recent years there have been a few tantalizing but unsubstantiated reports of Blue-backed Manakin from Trinidad. The similar Lance-tailed Manakin, which is a common bird in the Paria Peninsula of Venezuela, may be equally if not more likely to wander to Trinidad and should be considered by anybody lucky enough to see a genuine manakin of the genus *Chiroxiphia* in Trinidad.

In Guadeloupe, the remarkably early or perhaps summering CLIFF SWALLOW at La Pointe des Chateaux was seen during 19-21 July.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** In a recent article titled "The status of the West Indian Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*) in St. Kitts--Nevis, January-February 2000 (Pitirre 14:107-112, 2001), R. B. Childress and B. Hughes report on the results of an exhaustive survey of West Indian Whistling-Ducks in wetlands of St. Kitts and Nevis from 11 January to 1 March 2000. To their dismay, none were seen or heard on either island. Furthermore, they report that there is no suitable habitat remaining on Nevis and only one suitable pond on St. Kitts.

Apparently the last reliable record was reported by a hunter who claimed to have seen them in St. Kitts 15-20 years ago.

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This is the SOUTHEASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2002-30) for 9 August 2002. Sponsored by the TT 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 TTFNC, TT Rare Bird Committee and photo gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Floyd Hayes by phone at 662-9327 (H) or 645-3232 x2206 (W), or by e-mail at [floyd\\_hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:floyd_hayes@hotmail.com). The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and 'BIRD BRAINS' below).

**HOTSHOTS IN HOT SPOTS:** In Tobago, at least three RED-BREASTED BLACKBIRDS\*, including two displaying males and a female, were discovered in grassland adjacent to the east end of the runway at Crown Point International Airport on 7 and 8 August. To observe these birds, drive toward the east end of the Store Bay Local Road and turn right down several short roads extending to the airport perimeter from the eastern end of Store Bay Local Road. From the fenced perimeter, scan the grasslands and listen for the singing males, which occasionally fly upward in a conspicuous display flight. It remains uncertain whether these birds represent recent arrivals from Trinidad or a small, breeding population persisting since at least 1974. To our knowledge the only other Tobago record since 1980 was from Bon Accord, where one was reportedly seen in a marsh adjacent to the sewage ponds in autumn 2000.

Elsewhere in Tobago, noteworthy bird sightings include: single non-breeding plumaged LITTLE EGRETS at Buccoo Beach on 7 August and Tobago Plantations on 8 August (different birds based on feet colour); single immature GREAT BLUE HERONS at Bloody Bay on 5 August, Goldsborough on 6 August and Bon Accord Sewage Ponds on 7 August; single adult STRIATED HERONS at Tobago Plantations (neck score of 2) on 6 and 8 August, Bon Accord Sewage Ponds (neck score of 2) on 7 August, and Crown Point International Airport (neck score of 3) on 7 August; possible STRIATED HERONS or GREEN X STRIATED HERONS with neck scores of 4 at Speyside and Kendall on 5 August and two at Bon Accord Sewage Ponds on 6 and 7 August; a mottled subadult LITTLE BLUE HERON with a long head plume at the Bon Accord Sewage Ponds on 7 August; two YELLOW-HEADED CARACARAS (adult and immature) at Buccoo Swamp on 7 August; a dozen STILT SANDPIPERS, a PECTORAL SANDPIPER and two COLLARED PLOVERS at Tobago Plantations on 8 August; five SANDWICH TERNS (two 'Sandwich', one 'Cayenne' with a pure yellow bill, one 'Cayenne' with some dark markings on bill, and one possible Sandwich X Cayenne hybrid with black basal half and yellow distal half of bill) at Crown Point on 7 and 8 August; a singing MANGROVE CUCKOO at Bon Accord Lagoon on 8 August; and an early BARN SWALLOW at Crown Point International Airport on 7 August that was joined by a second on 8 August.

Off eastern Tobago, four adult MASKED BOOBIES were seen from Flagstaff Hill, northeast Tobago, as they flew about Marble Rock, St. Giles Islands, on 5 August. To search for these birds from Flagstaff Hill, locate the two islets behind the left end of the largest island (St. Giles) and focus on the right islet, where the birds often perch and apparently have been nesting in recent years. Because there are many (thousands?) of white-morph RED-FOOTED BOOBIES flying about the islands, spotting the Masked Boobies usually requires some patience. The black tail, which distinguishes Masked from Red-footed Booby, can only be observed when the birds bank at a certain angle.

The only noteworthy bird sighting from an inter-island ferry between Trinidad and Tobago on 4 August was a pair of SOOTY TERNS off Trinidad's north coast.

In Trinidad, a GRAY-HEADED KITE and three WHITE-WINGED BECARDS (male, female and juvenile) were noted at South Oropouche Swamp on 9 August. In the Caroni Rice Fields, 105 STILT SANDPIPERS and 71 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS (high count for rice fields) were tallied on 7 August.

With regard to last week's report of a blue-backed Chiroxiphia manakin from northwestern Trinidad, a correspondent informs us that G. D. Smooker collected eggs from two nests of LANCE-TAILED MANAKIN in Aripo Savanna in April and May of 1939. Although the nest site and structure seem typical of the genus, the eggs appear to be too small. Further investigation may shed further light on this intriguing (albeit dubious) claim.

In Guadeloupe, a PURPLE-THROATED CARIB (very rare in Guadeloupe) was seen with an ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD and a GREEN-THROATED CARIB at la Pointe des Chateaux on 30 July.

**ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT:** Can populations of the Greater Flamingo be restored to islands where none exist? In an article titled "Restoration of the Greater Flamingo (Phoenicopterus ruber) to Anegada, British Virgin Islands" (Pitirre 14:113-114, 2001), J. Lazell reports on the trial establishment of seven Greater Flamingoes on Guana Island, British Virgin Islands, in 1987, followed by the trial establishment of 18 on Anegada in 1992. The Guana Island population never reproduced. However, the Anegada birds nested successfully in 1995 and, by 2001, the flock had increased to 63 individuals including 11 fledglings. The Greater Flamingo now appears to be successfully reestablished on an island where it was extirpated more than half a century ago.

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This is the SOUTH EASTERN CARIBBEAN BIRD ALERT (2002- 47) for 17th December 2002 Sponsored by the T&T Field Naturalist 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 TTFNC, T&T Rare Birds Committee and Photo Gallery are accessible at <http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>. Reports should be sent to Martyn Kenefick by phone at 674-7609 or by Email at "[martynkenefick@hotmail.com](mailto:martynkenefick@hotmail.com)" The TTRBC requests details for species indicated with an asterisk (see website above and RARE BIRD REPORTING below).

Undoubted highlight of the last few weeks is from Guadeloupe where a mystery raptor first seen briefly on 11th Nov was subsequently identified as a MARSH HARRIER (probably 1st for the New World). It was last seen on 14th Dec on the Grand Cul de Sac Marin. Shorebirds found on the island include a PIPING PLOVER present from 30th Nov - 12th Dec at least and a WILSON'S PHALAROPE on 29th-30th Nov. Both were at the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre. A KILDEER was present at la Grande Saline from 17th Nov - 14th Dec at least, and a SHORT BILLED DOWITCHER at "La Pointe des Chaateaux" also on the 14th.

In St. John, US Virgin Islands, a RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (1st for Virgin Islands), thought to be an immature male, was carefully studied at Francis Bay on 4 December. There are only two previous records east of Puerto Rico, from Vieques and Antigua. Also on 4 December, a male LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH was seen in humid forest 215 m above sea level and two PRAIRIE WARBLERS, an OVENBIRD, a NORTHERN PARULA and a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH were seen along the trail to Europa Bay Salt Pond.

In St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, the male RING-NECKED DUCK and AMERICAN COOT continue to be seen under the ""bridge to nowhere"" at Turpentine Run. On 28 November, a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER was foraging in palms at Sapphire Bay and 22 BLUE-WINGED TEAL, four BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS (season-high), 25 YELLOWLEGS (mostly LESSER), five STILT SANDPIPERS and a LEAST SANDPIPER were tallied at Compass Point Pond.

In the northern range of Trinidad on 3rd Dec, 2 YELLOW THROATED WARBLERS\* (1ST for T&T) were found at Morne Bleu. On the same day YELLOW LEGGED THRUSH, SPECKLED and HEPATIC TANAGERS we seen at Brasso Seco junct.

On the west coast, on 5th Dec, a MARBLED GODWIT\* (first for the year) was found at Waterloo. On the 8th, a BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER\* was seen at the entrance to Roussilac swamp, and birds found at Oropouche included CLAPPER RAIL, SPOTTED TODY-FLYCATCHER and RED CAPPED CARDINAL .

In Tobago on 5th Dec, 2 CARIBBEAN COOTS \* and an AMERICAN WIGEON\* together with single BLACKPOLL\* and PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS were found at Buccoo marsh. On the same date, 3 LEAST GREBES were at Lowlands where a nest with one egg was also found.. On 10th Dec, a BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER\* was on Gilpin trace and on the 16th, a VIOLACEOUS TROGON \* was found beside Bloody Bay Rd.

From Dominica, a PIED BILLED GREBE and 2 AMERICAN WIGEONS were found at the Beduplan river estuary on 7th Dec, the latter still present until 10th Dec at least.

ORNITHOLOGICAL TIDBIT: The following abstract is from: Cuffy, G. C. 2002. Ecological changes and their impact on avian use of marshes in Caroni Swamp, Trinidad. Department of Life Sciences, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Occasional Paper 11:45-53. Avian species were inventoried at four marsh sites at Caroni, Trinidad, as part of a baseline study assessing the current value of the marshes to birds. Data were sought in light of recent ecological changes to the area and a restoration project that sought to recreate former freshwater conditions within the area. Seventy-two species of birds were recorded. Comparison with earlier inventories revealed that about half of the previously recorded swamp species still occur in the marshes. Migrants comprised 30% of all marsh species. Restoration of the marshes involving the exclusion of seawater via impoundments will likely improve on avian species diversity and population sizes, and enhance the ecological value of the wetland habitat.

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