

Thanksgiving in Trinidad & Tobago

November 22 – December 1, 2025

Species List with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by Naturalist Journeys tour host Stephen Grace with local guides Dave Ramlal, Lester Nanan, Josh Bajnath, Caleb, Sabira and Mukesh Ramdass on Trinidad; Jason Radix and William Trim on Tobago; and Zolani Frank on Little Tobago. Our 8 clients included Jennifer, Chris, Libby, Steve H, Anne, Jim, Russ and Linda.

Our 10-day Trinidad & Tobago tour sampled lowland forest, montane rainforest, dry forest, savanna, coastal wetlands, mangroves, and offshore island habitats—yielding an exceptional cross-section of the region’s avifauna. In total we recorded 211 species across 58 families, including island endemics, regional specialties, austral migrants, and Nearctic–Neotropical migrants.

We began at Hacienda Jacana, where early birding around ponds, second-growth, and purple vervain hedges set the tone. Common Neotropical edge species were abundant, including Orange-winged Amazon, Crested Oropendola, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Blue-gray Tanager, and Palm Tanager. Cocoa Thrush and the Great Kiskadee look-alike Boat-billed Flycatcher showed beautifully at close range. Flyovers of Red-bellied Macaws and Lilac-tailed Parrotlets added excitement—both species vocal, fast-moving, and detected thanks to sharp spotting by guide Faraaz Abdool.

The vervain hedge delivered excellent views of White-necked Jacobin, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, Little Hermit, White-chested Emerald, Blue-chinned Sapphire, and Black-throated Mango, followed by prolonged study of Tufted Coquette, with both a female and an adult male repeatedly visiting flowers and perching for extended looks. A very early immature Ruby-topaz Hummingbird and a stunning adult male were notable seasonal records, likely early arrivals from South America. Green Hermit was also seen on the property.

Around the lodge we also recorded Blue-black Grassquit, Black-crested Antshrike, Southern Lapwing, Purple Gallinule, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Black-tailed Tityra, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Green-backed Trogon (male), Guianan Violaceous Trogon (male), and Wattled Jacana—prompting discussion of their reversed sex roles. Roadside woodland added Streaked Xenops, Euler’s Flycatcher, and multiple Common Squirrel-Cuckoos. A large, social group of Smooth-billed Anis allowed prolonged study and discussion of their cooperative breeding system.

An excursion to Caroni Swamp and surrounding lowlands highlighted wetland and mangrove specialists. At Millennium Park and adjacent wetlands we recorded Ringed Kingfisher, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Black-necked Stilt, Anhinga, Caribbean Grackle, and Saffron Finch. Marshes and mangroves produced Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Green-throated Mango, immature Scarlet Ibis in brown plumage,

and naturalized populations of Common Waxbill and Tricolored Munia. Entering the mangroves of Caroni, we added Greater Ani, Straight-billed Woodcreeper (heard well, briefly seen), Little Cuckoo (heard), Spotted Sandpiper, and a hunting Peregrine Falcon. The evening roost spectacle of thousands of adult Scarlet Ibises, with American Flamingos and mixed herons/egrets, was a trip highlight. After dusk, spotlighting from the boat produced Boat-billed Heron, Common Pauraque, and Common Potoo.

A day in the Aripo–Nariva region provided coverage of savanna, mangrove, and freshwater swamp habitats. Open country held numerous Ruddy Ground Doves, Red-breasted Meadowlarks, and Tropical Kingbirds, along with Savanna Hawk, Gray-lined Hawk, and Yellow Oriole. Magnificent Frigatebirds were frequent along the Atlantic coast. Nariva Swamp and associated mangroves yielded Bicolored Conebill, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Lineated Woodpecker, Common Black Hawk, and an exceptional encounter with multiple Rufous Crab-Hawks—a scarce regional specialist of mangrove edges. The standout rarity was a Pinnated Bittern feeding openly beside the road. The drive back produced Crested Caracara and repeated views of Yellow-headed Caracara—prompting discussion of their surprising placement within the falcon family and their reputation for intelligence and opportunistic behavior.

An early departure to Grand Riviere produced one of Trinidad’s signature targets: Trinidad Piping-Guan (endemic, Critically Endangered). We observed at least three birds perched in treetops, with prolonged scope views showing bare white facial skin and blue wattles.

At Bajnath Estate Hummingbird Sanctuary, the feeders were highly active. Three new hummingbirds for the tour—Brown Violetear, Long-billed Starthroat, and Rufous-breasted Hermit—showed well.

From there we transitioned to Asa Wright Nature Centre, which provided concentrated observation of forest and feeder birds. The verandah offered daily views of Channel-billed Toucan, Silver-beaked Tanager, White-lined Tanager, Purple Honeycreeper, Green Honeycreeper, Bay-headed Tanager, Turquoise Tanager, and Barred Antshrike, along with continuous hummingbird activity. Blue-headed Parrots were also observed from the verandah with good opportunities for scope study.

Forest trails at Asa Wright provided superb views of lekking manakins—Golden-headed and White-bearded at active display sites. We then tracked down Bearded Bellbird, with a male calling at close range, its metallic song carrying astonishing power for such a compact cotinga.

Dunston Cave delivered a major highlight—Oilbird. We observed several at close range on ledges and in flight, their calls reverberating through the dark. That night, those same birds fed on fruit from *Manicaria saccifera* (manac palm) trees grown from seeds they passed inside the cave and that Mukesh Ramdass collected 25 years ago—an act of stewardship come full circle.

A full day along Blanchisseuse Road in Trinidad’s Northern Range added key forest and raptor species. Highlights included Collared Trogon, Black-faced Antthrush (eventually seen well), White-bellied Antbird (also seen well after patient work), Golden-olive Woodpecker, Broad-winged Hawk, White Hawk, and a Zone-tailed Hawk exhibiting classic aggressive mimicry of Turkey Vultures. The standout surprise was a small flock of Swallow Tanagers—austral migrants unusually late for the season—offering prolonged scope views of males glowing blue-and-white. Additional species along this route included Northern Tropical Pewee, Variegated Flycatcher, American Redstart, and Tropical Parula.

While driving to the airport in a rainstorm, guide Dave Ramlal spotted a Pearl Kite on a wire, and we stopped for excellent views of this tiny raptor. A short flight then took us to Tobago, where sewage ponds and coastal wetlands quickly produced a new suite of birds. Around Bon Accord and Centre Street Ponds we recorded Greater Yellowlegs, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Willet, Green Heron, Blue-winged Teal, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, White-cheeked Pintail, American Wigeon (local rarity), Sora (unusually in the open), Least Grebe, Barn Swallow, multiple Lesser Black-backed Gulls (uncommon here), and a Semipalmated Sandpiper.

At Cuffie River Nature Retreat, early mornings featured loud but initially elusive Rufous-vented Chachalacas—later seen well. Palm Tanager, Blue-gray Tanager, and Orange-winged Amazon were regular, while the feeders delivered a strong hummingbird assemblage highlighted by White-tailed Sabrewing—a key Tobago specialty otherwise shared only with parts of coastal Venezuela. Sabrewings appeared repeatedly at close range alongside Copper-rumped Hummingbird and White-necked Jacobin. A memorable behavior note came from Red-crowned Woodpeckers feeding at hummingbird feeders—a Tobago/mainland species absent from Trinidad. Forest birding added Scrub Greenlet (Tobago subspecies of taxonomic interest—potential future split) and excellent views of Great Black Hawk soaring overhead.

Adventure Farm added excellent close views of Trinidad Motmot, Spectacled Thrush, and heavy hummingbird activity. New species for the trip included Fuscous Flycatcher and Red-rumped Woodpecker.

Later at Fort James, coastal birding produced Brown Pelican, Royal Tern, and Black Skimmer. Adjacent parkland offered outstanding views of both male and female Rufous-tailed Jacamar, along with Black-faced Grassquit—another Tobago/mainland species not occurring naturally on Trinidad.

On the Main Ridge, led by guide Jason Radix, we focused on Tobago's key forest targets. Blue-backed Manakin—Tobago's flagship forest specialty, found here and in parts of mainland South America but absent from Trinidad—was eventually located at a lek, where several red-capped males showed well despite limited display activity. We also documented Venezuelan Flycatcher and Olivaceous Woodcreeper—both species found on Tobago and mainland South America but not Trinidad—reinforcing Tobago's biogeographic affinity to the continent. Collared Trogon, Plain Antvireo, and Yellow-legged Thrush rounded out a productive morning in primary rainforest.

Little Tobago supplied the offshore seabird component of the tour. On the boat crossing we recorded Osprey and Brown Booby—several birds nesting low in coastal vegetation. From the cliff-top lookout, continuous flights of Red-billed Tropicbirds swept past at eye level, long streamers bright in the wind, while Magnificent Frigatebirds harassed them for stolen meals—classic kleptoparasitism, tropicbirds dropping fish mid-air under pressure. Guide Zolani Frank pointed out Red-footed Boobies in three morphs—white, brown, and white-tailed brown—with multiple individuals seen well in flight and nesting in trees.

We concluded back at Cuffie River Nature Retreat with excellent final views of Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Trinidad Motmot, Barred Antshrike, and Violaceous Euphonia.

Across both islands, the tour delivered key endemics (Trinidad Piping-Guan and Trinidad Motmot), regional specialties including Oilbird, Bearded Bellbird, White-tailed Sabrewing, and Blue-backed

Manakin, a strong selection of raptors and seabirds, and broad representation of Neotropical families—an excellent overview of Trinidad & Tobago birdlife in late November.

BIRDS: 211 species were recorded, of which 2 were Endemic, 3 were Introduced, and 11 were Heard Only.

The eBird link below details the 211 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Thanksgiving in Trinidad and Tobago | Nov. 22 Nov – Dec. 1, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and other taxa we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

BIRDS

E = Endemic **I** = Introduced **H** = Heard Only

TINAMOUS — Tinamidae

Little Tinamou *Crypturellus soui* (**H**) — Heard rather than seen—soft descending whistles at Hacienda Jacana and Asa Wright. Tinamous are among the most ancient lineages of living birds, retaining primitive traits such as glossy, vividly colored eggs and a preference for running rather than flying when alarmed.

DUCKS, GEESE & SWANS — Anatidae

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis* — Observed in wetland habitats including Nariva Swamp and Bon Accord ponds. A tree-perching duck with unusually long legs and strong, grasping toes that aid in perching on branches; highly social, often vocalizing with a bright whistled call.

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors* — A long-distance migrant wintering widely in the Neotropics. Pale blue wing patches flash in flight.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana* — Rare on Tobago; a surprise at Bon Accord ditch. Known for kleptoparasitism—stealing vegetation from diving ducks at the surface.

White-cheeked Pintail *Anas bahamensis* — Common in coastal lagoons. Handsome with white cheek and red bill base. Tolerates brackish water via well-developed salt glands. Seen well at Bon Accord.

CHACHALACAS, GUANS & CURASSOWS — Cracidae

Trinidad Piping-Guan *Pipile pipile* (**E**) — Endemic and Critically Endangered; observed at Grand Riviere with good scope views. Fewer than a few hundred survive, making each encounter a window into an older, wilder Trinidad. Locally known as Pawi. Birds feed heavily on nutmeg fruits and disperse the seeds, planting the forest, helping sustain the very trees they depend upon.

Rufous-vented Chachalaca *Ortalis ruficauda* — Common voice of Tobago dawn. Eventually seen well at Cuffie River. One of Trinidad and Tobago's national birds, often feeding on fruit around lodges.

PIGEONS & DOVES — Columbidae

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* (**I**) — Urban feral form of a bird domesticated by humans for millennia. Common in developed areas of Trinidad and Tobago.

Pale-vented Pigeon *Patagioenas cayennensis* — Seen in forest edge habitat; deep cooing carries impressively far at dawn.

Scaled Pigeon *Patagioenas speciosa* — Seen from Asa Wright verandah perched in tree canopy. A rich chestnut forest pigeon with copper scaling.

Ruddy Ground-Dove *Columbina talpacoti* — Small, abundant, frequently in lawns and along road edges. Rapid wing whirring is often heard before the bird is seen.

White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi* — A shy ground dove of understory leaf litter; explosive flush when approached. Encountered on Tobago at Adventure Farm and Cuffie River.

Gray-fronted Dove *Leptotila rufaxilla* (H) — Heard only at Hacienda Jacana. Heard more often than seen on forest trails; prefers dim understory with minimal movement.

Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata* — Observed in Tobago. Caribbean counterpart to the Mourning Dove. The “eared” part of the name refers to the small dark crescent-shaped mark on the side of the neck/head, which looks like an ear patch.

CUCKOOS AND ALLIES — Cuculidae

Greater Ani *Crotophaga major* — Seen well in Caroni. Glossy blue sheen with pale eyes; larger than Smooth-billed Ani and has longer tail. Forms large cooperative breeding groups, with multiple pairs sharing a nest and jointly incubating eggs and feeding young.

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani* — Common and social in pasturelands and second growth. Recognized by its hatchet-shaped, curved bill. Also a cooperative breeder, with several females often laying in one communal nest and group members sharing parental care.

Little Cuckoo *Coccyua minuta* (H) — Heard clearly in mangroves of Caroni Swamp but stayed hidden. A tiny cuckoo of dense vegetation.

Common Squirrel-Cuckoo *Piaya cayana* — Seen bounding through trees near Hacienda Jacana with long rufous tail trailing behind. Builds its own nest—unlike brood-parasitic Old World cuckoos and the Striped Cuckoo of Trinidad and Tobago.

NIGHTJARS AND ALLIES — Caprimulgidae

Short-tailed Nighthawk *Lurocalis semitorquatus* — Seen at Asa Wright—fast hunter weaving under and above canopy at dusk.

Common Pauraque *Nyctidromus albicollis* — Observed from the Caroni boat in spotlight; white wing flashes when flushed. Also seen roosting on road near Hacienda Jacana. A defining nighttime voice of the Neotropics.

White-tailed Nightjar *Hydropsalis cayennensis* — Seen near Cuffie River entrance roosting on the road and flying after insects around streetlamp, white tail and wingbars flashing in the light.

POTOOS — Nyctibiidae

Common Potoo *Nyctibius griseus* — Caroni night-birding highlight. Perched like a broken branch, giant yellow eyes glowing in spotlight. Masters of camouflage; during day their body lines align perfectly with tree bark.

OILBIRD — Steatornithidae

Oilbird *Steatornis caripensis* — Exceptional sightings at Dunston Cave—birds on ledges and circling overhead, voices echoing. The world’s only flying nocturnal frugivore with bat-like echolocation navigation. Seen at night at Asa Wright feeding on manac palm trees grown from seeds Mukesh Ramdass planted decades ago—forest renewal in motion.

SWIFTS — Apodidae

Gray-rumped Swift *Chaetura cinereiventris* — Small swift. Flickering flight high over clearings. Swifts feed, bathe, and even sleep on the wing.

Short-tailed Swift *Chaetura brachyura* — Common in open sky. Broad wings appear pinched at the base, providing distinct silhouette, along with short tail. Roosts communally in tree cavities or buildings, sometimes by the thousands.

HUMMINGBIRDS — Trochilidae

White-necked Jacobin *Florisuga Mellivora* — A constant feeder presence. Males flashed brilliant white neck patch and tail while dominating nectar access.

Rufous-breasted Hermit *Glaucis hirsutus* — Seen well at Bajnath's Estate on perch near feeders. Follows a set trap-line through Heliconia routes like a nectar commuter.

Green Hermit *Phaethornis guy* — Shimmering bronze-green bird of deep forest shade. Males display in leks with buzzing courtship flights. Males and females seen well at Asa Wright feeding on eye-catching blooms of Torch Ginger.

Little Hermit *Phaethornis longuemareus* — Frequent at Hacienda Jacana vervain hedge. Tiny and bee-like, with a soft wing hum as it darts flower-to-flower.

Brown Violetear *Colibri delphinae* — Seen well at Bajnath's Estate and Asa Wright feeders. Males have violet ear patches used in display, and often join multi-species hummingbird swarms.

Ruby-topaz Hummingbird *Chrysolampis mosquitus* — Early-season immature male and stunning adult male at vervain hedge. The gorget flashes golden and the head blazes fire-red only at the correct angle—striking example of structural color rather than pigment.

Black-throated Mango *Anthracothorax nigricollis* — Frequent at feeders and flowering trees. Sexes differ strongly—female shows bold white belly with black stripe.

Green-throated Mango *Anthracothorax viridigula* — Mangrove specialty seen at Caroni. Throat shines emerald-green in good light. Patchily distributed and easily missed away from swamp edges.

Tufted Coquette *Lophornis ornatus* — One of Trinidad's signature hummingbirds. Showstopper males sport orange head tufts and spangled gorget. Among the smallest birds on Earth.

Long-billed Starthroat *Heliomaster longirostris* — Noted at Bajnath and Asa Wright feeders. Named for its remarkably long bill used to reach deep tubular flowers.

White-tailed Sabrewing *Campylopterus curvipennis* — Flagship Tobago species. Large, powerful hummingbird present only on Tobago and small areas of Venezuela. Males have broad thickened flight feathers ("sabres") used in wing-buzz displays.

Copper-rumped Hummingbird *Saucerottia tobaci* — Most abundant hummingbird at feeders. Shows bright green plumage and white "stockings" on its legs.

White-chested Emerald *Chrysuronia brevirostris* — Common around vervain hedges. Gleaming white belly aids quick field separation from other species.

Blue-chinned Sapphire *Chlorestes notata* — Regular at feeders and flowers. Glittering blue throat shows best in shade. A widespread but always eye-catching Neotropical species.

RAILS, GALLINULES AND COOTS — Rallidae

Gray-cowled Wood-Rail *Aramides cajaneus* — Skulky forest rail heard well at Hacienda Jacana and glimpsed once walking in the open. Loud calls at dawn are a classic sound of the Neotropics.

Sora *Porzana Carolina* — Rare sighting standing fully in the open at Bon Accord—uncharacteristically cooperative for this secretive marsh rail.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata* — Distinctive with red shield and yellow-tipped bill. Juveniles brown and far subtler.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinicus* — Vibrant purple with a turquoise sheen and bright yellow legs—like a neon bird stepping across lily pads. Despite its marsh lifestyle, it's a capable flier that can cross long distances, even reaching islands by overwater dispersal.

LIMPKIN — Aramidae

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* — Seen in marshland of Nariva. Specializes on large snails using a subtly curved bill matching spiraled shells.

STILTS AND AVOCETS — Recurvirostridae

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* — Wader with improbably long pink legs. Feeds by sweeping for small invertebrates in shallow water; nests on bare ground.

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS — Charadriidae

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis* — Common in pastures and open fields. Bold crests and piercing alarm calls. When defending nests or chicks, adults aggressively dive-bomb intruders and will strike using the sharp bony spurs on their wings.

JACANAS — Jacanidae

Wattled Jacana *Jacana jacana* — Wetland specialist walking across floating vegetation on extra-long toes that act like lily-pad snowshoes. Notable reversed sex roles—females larger and polyandrous (one female mates with multiple males), males incubate eggs and carry chicks under the wings. Not surprisingly, jacanas were seen especially well at Hacienda Jacana.

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES — Scolopacidae

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus* — Shorebird with long decurved bill for probing crabs. Migrates across hemispheres—arctic to tropics. Observed near Bon Accord water treatment.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* — Common on mud edges; tail teeters continuously. Breeding adults spotted, nonbreeding plain.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* — Seen in Trinidad in roadside wetland from the van. Unusual among shorebirds—nests in trees in old songbird nests instead of on ground.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* — Graceful forager with clear, ringing “tu-tu-tu” call.

Willet *Tringa semipalmata* — Large grayish shorebird with explosive black-and-white wingflash when flushed—a dramatic transformation in flight. One bird seen near Bon Accord on Tobago.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* — Taller, louder cousin of Lesser—sharp piercing call. Seen well near Bon Accord.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* — Wind-up toy behavior—runs with waves, never letting surf catch it. Observed at Grand Riviere.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* — One bird at Bon Accord. Partially webbed toes were visible in a photo of this small sandpiper standing on concrete—classic ID feature, though usually difficult to see when the bird is in mud or shallow water.

GULLS AND TERNS — Laridae

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* — Multiple birds at Centre Street Ponds—uncommon here. A rapidly expanding wintering species in the Western Hemisphere.

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* — Observed at Fort James. Lower mandible longer than upper; skims water surface to catch fish by touch.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* — Common coastal species, seen well at Fort James. Elegant plunge-diver with orange bill.

FLAMINGOS — Phoenicopteridae

American Flamingo *Phoenicopeterus ruber* — Brilliant pink flocks at Caroni roost. Color from carotenoids—diet-derived, like Scarlet Ibis.

GREBES — Podicipedidae

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus* — Tiny dark grebe with bright yellow eye. Often vanishes with sudden submarine-style dive.

TROPICBIRDS — Phaethontidae

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* — Showstopper at Little Tobago—tropicbirds swept past the overlook at eye level, white wings gleaming and long tail streamers trailing like ribbons. Adults nest on cliff ledges and return year after year to the same site. They are constantly harassed in flight by Magnificent Frigatebirds trying to steal their fish.

PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS — Procellariidae

Sargasso Shearwater (formerly known as **Audubon's Shearwater**) *Puffinus lherminieri* — Found in a burrow on Little Tobago—visible only when camera ISO was raised, revealing the bird's eye in darkness. A small warm-water shearwater associated with Sargasso Sea currents and tropical pelagic zones.

FRIGATEBIRDS — Fregatidae

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* — Common overhead along all islands. Never lands on water and steals fish mid-air from tropicbirds (classic kleptoparasitism). Inflatable red throat sac in males used during courtship displays—one male seen displaying at Grand Riviere.

BOOBIES AND GANNETS — Sulidae

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* — Seen well on Little Tobago. Three color morphs present in the colony: white, brown and intermediate (brown with white tail). The most arboreal of the boobies, frequently nesting in trees, where pairs raise a single chick.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* — Seen from boat and Little Tobago overlook. Streamlined plunge-diver, entering the water like a spear after hovering briefly to aim for fish.

ANHINGAS — Anhingidae

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* — Observed in wetlands including Nariva and Millennium Park. Often seen perched with wings spread to dry, as unlike most waterbirds its feathers are not waterproof—a strategy that allows it to dive efficiently and spear fish underwater with its sharp bill, earning the nickname “snakebird” when its long neck shows above the surface.

IBISES — Threskiornithidae

Scarlet Ibis *Eudocimus ruber* — Caroni spectacle—thousands returning to roost at dusk. Vivid red plumage comes from carotenoid-rich crustaceans they eat.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* — Seen in Nariva and Bon Accord. Iridescent sheen visible in good light. Cosmopolitan traveler with near-global range.

HERONS, EGRETS AND BITTERNS — Ardeidae

Boat-billed Heron *Cochlearius cochlearius* — Seen at night in Caroni. Nocturnal heron with big eyes and oversized scoop-shaped bill adapted for grabbing fish and crustaceans in darkness.

Pinnated Bittern *Botaurus pinnatus* — Rare, excellent roadside encounter at Nariva—cryptic marsh bittern that freezes with bill pointed skyward, mimicking reeds.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nyctanassa violacea* — Often observed at mangroves and coasts; specializes in crabs, a favorite prey item.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* — Seen at wetlands several times. Stocky, red-eyed heron, most active at dusk and night.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* — Both adults and white juveniles recorded. White juvenile plumage believed to reduce aggression from other egrets.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* — A slender, energetic hunter that often rush-feeds through shallow water, darting and stirring with its feet rather than patiently stalking like many other herons. Seen at Caroni and Bon Accord.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* — Golden “slippers” (yellow feet) help stir prey from mud or vegetation. Encountered multiple times on the tour.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* — Small mangrove heron. Known to use bait—one of few birds documented tool-using for fishing.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* — Similar to Striated but with rufous instead of gray neck. Seen on Tobago. Also uses “lures” for fishing, dropping food or other objects in water to attract prey.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* — Frequently with livestock—follows animals to catch flushed insects. Many were observed around a piece of construction machinery churning the earth and presumably stirring up insects.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* — Tall white heron with slow deliberate stalk; widespread in wetlands.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* — One sighting near Bon Accord. Largest North American heron, scarce in the Caribbean.

PELICANS — Pelecanidae

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* — Seen along Tobago coast near Fort James and around Little Tobago. Often flew in tight lines just above the waves, using dynamic soaring to save energy. A plunge-diving specialist—folds its wings and drops from height to scoop fish into its expandable throat pouch.

NEW WORLD VULTURES — Cathartidae

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* — Common scavenger on Trinidad; highly social, often roosting communally and feeding in groups.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* — Soars with wings in a shallow dihedral (V-shape) and rocks or teeters in flight. Exceptional sense of smell for locating carrion, and famously mimicked in flight by Zone-tailed Hawks.

Note: Both species occur on Trinidad only—Tobago has no resident vultures.

OSPREY — Pandionidae

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* — Fish specialist with reversible outer toe for grasping prey. Several observed at Millenium Park carrying fish; one seen flying near Little Tobago.

HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES — Accipitridae

Pearl Kite *Gampsonyx swainsonii* — Tiny savanna raptor; mouse-sized with falcon-like behavior. Spotted by Dave Ramlal on powerline in rainstorm as we drove to Piarco airport.

Long-winged Harrier *Circus buffoni* — Seen quartering marsh habitat at Nariva. Facial disk aids sound localization, similar to an owl.

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis* — Bill uniquely shaped for extracting apple snails. Immature bird observed at Nariva wetlands.

Common Black Hawk *Buteogallus anthracinus* — Mangrove hunter; often takes crabs along tidal edges. Seen perched at Nariva.

Rufous Crab Hawk *Buteogallus aequinoctialis* — Local and uncommon; seen well at Nariva, surprising Dave Ramlal. Feeds almost entirely on mangrove crabs.

Savanna Hawk *Buteogallus meridionalis* — Tall, long-legged raptor of open grasslands; frequently preys on snakes. Seen well perched on pole at Aripo Savanna, and also seen at Nariva.

Great Black Hawk *Buteogallus urubitinga* — Seen soaring low at Cuffie River with legs extended. Heavy-bodied forest species known to prey on chachalacas.

White Hawk *Pseudastur albicollis* — Striking white plumage. Known to follow monkeys to capture flushed prey. Specializes on snakes and lizards. Seen at close range perched along Blanchisseuse Road.

Gray-lined Hawk *Buteo nitidus* — Forest-edge perch hunter; fine barring visible at close range. Seen well perched at Nariva Swamp.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* — Compact forest buteo. Northern birds form massive fall migration kettles. Seen well perched next to Blanchisseuse Road.

Zone-tailed Hawk *Buteo albonotatus* — Mimics Turkey Vultures in flight to ambush prey—textbook aggressive mimicry. One bird seen flying very low at Blanchisseuse Road, revealing telltale field marks that separate it from Turkey Vulture: white-banded tail and yellow legs and cere.

Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* — Seen overhead at Blanchisseuse Road and Asa Wright. Stoops rapidly on birds from high altitude.

OWLS — Strigidae

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum* (H) — Heard repeatedly (no visuals). A vocal, day-active owl common in open woodlands; rapid whistled call often betrays its presence.

TROGONS — Trogonidae

Green-backed Trogon *Trogon viridis* — Male with emerald mantle and blue eye-ring seen eating a fat caterpillar at Hacienda Jacana. Sits motionless, then sallies for insects.

Guianan Violaceous Trogon *Trogon violaceus* — Regular at Hacienda Jacana and rainforest around Blanchisseuse Road; purple sheen and yellow eye-ring of male striking in good light.

Collared Trogon *Trogon collaris* — Completed our “trogon trifecta” with excellent views of a male along Blanchisseuse Road. Also observed in Tobago’s Main Ridge—only trogon on Tobago. Notable features: bright red belly, clean white breast band, and green upperparts. Similar in appearance to Elegant Trogon (*T. elegans*) and Coppery-tailed Trogon (*T. ambiguus*), which was recently split from Elegant Trogon and occurs in Arizona/New Mexico.

MOTMOTS — Momotidae

Trinidad Motmot *Momotus bahamensis* (E) — A highlight at Adventure Farm and seen well again at Cuffie River. The species’ racket-tipped tail is created through natural feather wear and selective preening, then used in display, often swung like a pendulum.

KINGFISHERS — Alcedinidae

Ringed Kingfisher *Megaceryle torquata* — Large, crow-sized fisher; deep “klek-klek-klek” call. Male seen exceptionally well perched on a branch over a creek at Millenium Park.

American Pygmy Kingfisher *Chloroceryle aenea* (H) — Tiny jewel of forest streams—heard but not seen at Caroni.

JACAMARS — Galbulidae

Rufous-tailed Jacamar *Galbula ruficauda* — Neotropical classic. Iridescent green with rufous belly and tail. Male has clean white throat; female has buff-colored throat. Sits still and then snaps insects mid-air. Seen well several times on both islands.

TOUCANS — Ramphastidae

Channel-billed Toucan *Ramphastos vitellinus* — Daily verandah species at Asa Wright. Loud croaking voice carries through forest. The oversized bill looks heavy but is surprisingly light—built from a lattice of hollow bone and keratin—allowing the bird to reach fruit on thin branches, regulate heat, and occasionally raid nests for eggs and nestlings.

WOODPECKERS — Picidae

Red-crowned Woodpecker *Melanerpes rubricapillus* — Regular at Tobago hummingbird feeders, taking nectar—species occurs on Tobago/mainland South America but absent from Trinidad.

Red-rumped Woodpecker *Veniliornis kirkii* — Adventure Farm sighting—present on Trinidad but we missed this little woodpecker species there.

Lineated Woodpecker *Dryocopus lineatus* — Large species. Loud drum rolls echo through forest. Seen well at Nariva. Parallel white lines on its back tell it is Lineated, not Crimson-crested (white lines on back make V), which we didn't see on this tour.

Golden-olive Woodpecker *Colaptes rubiginosus* — Encountered when we walked in rainforest near Blanchisseuse Road. Olive body with golden scaling. Often excavates in Cecropia.

FALCONS — Falconidae

Crested Caracara *Caracara plancus* — Roadside scavenger. Highly intelligent, walks as much as flies. Glimpsed in flight and on the ground at Nariva.

Yellow-headed Caracara *Milvago chimachima* — Frequently seen around livestock eating ticks and carrion—ecological janitor. Excellent views at Nariva; also seen on Tobago.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* — Compact falcon built for speed. One flyby noted at Hacienda Jacana.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* — Caroni hunter slicing overhead. Fastest animal on Earth—stoops at more than 200 mph.

PARROTS — Psittacidae

Lilac-tailed Parrotlet *Touit batavicus* — Uncommon and often elusive. A fast-moving flock was detected by ear by Faraaz Abdool at Hacienda Jacana—tiny canopy parrotlets best found by their sharp flight calls as they whip overhead in tight groups.

Blue-headed Parrot *Pionus menstruus* — Seen from the verandah at Asa Wright and along Blanchisseuse Road. Recognized by soft wheezy calls and distinctive purple-blue head—quieter and gentler in voice than the louder amazons.

Orange-winged Amazon *Amazona amazonica* — Widespread daily species. Loud, social, and a familiar sight in boisterous roost flights at dawn and dusk.

Green-rumped Parrotlet *Forpus passerines* — Seen at savanna/lowlands—tiny parrot often perched on wires or seed-bearing grasses. Observed at close range at Blue Waters Inn on Tobago.

Red-bellied Macaw *Orthopsittaca manilata* — Communal roosting species dependent on Moriche Palm for nesting. Seen flying over Hacienda Jacana.

ANTBIRDS AND ALLIES — *Thamnophilidae*

Black-crested Antshrike *Sakesphorus canadensis* — Seen well at Hacienda Jacana—bold crest and barring. Males and females look very different but equally beautiful. Males duet with females in antbird-style pair territory defense.

Barred Antshrike *Thamnophilus doliatus* — Common at Asa Wright. Male black-and-white barred (“jailbird”), female rich rufous. Classic Neotropical species—featured on the cover of “The New Neotropical Companion.”

Plain Antvireo *Dysithamnus mentalis* — Subtle understory antbird; flicks wings nervously while foraging. Observed in rainforest of Main Ridge.

White-flanked Antwren *Myrmotherula axillaris* — Pairs forage closely together in mixed flocks—tiny, quick, high-energy. Only in Trinidad, not Tobago. Seen on Blanchisseuse Road.

Northern White-fringed Antwren *Formicivora intermedia* (H) — Scrubby-edge species—male black with white wing spots, female warm buff. Only in Tobago, not Trinidad. Heard only near Cuffie River.

White-bellied Antbird *Myrmecoiza longipes* — Shy understory skulker eventually seen after persistent effort on walk near Blanchisseuse Road—often heard long before spotted.

Black-faced Antthrush *Formicarius analis* — Ground-dwelling bird walking like a tiny chicken through the leaf-litter; took patience but finally seen well on walk near Blanchisseuse Road.

OVENBIRDS AND WOODCREEPERS — *Furnariidae*

Olivaceous Woodcreeper *Sittasomus griseicapillus* — Small plain woodcreeper with quiet wheeze call. Only on Tobago, not Trinidad. Seen at Main Ridge.

Cocoa Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus susurrans* — Deep-forest species; long bill, rich brown tones. Seen near Blanchisseuse Road flying back and forth and hitching up a tree.

Straight-billed Woodcreeper *Dendroplex picus* — Heard well in Caroni mangroves and glimpsed. Slender bill ideal for probing bark and roots.

Streak-headed Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes souleyetii* — Observed at Hacienda Jacana. Follows mixed flocks; rapid bark-climbing typical.

Streaked Xenops *Xenops rutilans* — Charismatic feeder activity—upturned bill, behaves like a miniature woodpecker - nuthatch hybrid. Seen near Hacienda Jacana entrance.

Yellow-chinned Spinetail *Certhiaxis cinnamomeus* — Seen well near Caroni; but yellow chin is hard to discern even with a close look in good light. Its rattling voice is the anthem of the marsh.

Stripe-breasted Spinetail *Synallaxis cinnamomea* (H) — Dry-edge foliage creeper. Heard on Gilpin Trace trail in rainforest at Main Ridge.

MANAKINS — *Pipridae*

Blue-backed Manakin *Chiroxiphia pareola* — Main Ridge highlight—males with red caps observed in primary rainforest lek. Perform cooperative courtship dances in small display courts.

White-bearded Manakin *Manacus manacus* — Active lek at Asa Wright; dramatic ground-leaps and wing-snaps audible like firecrackers.

Golden-headed Manakin *Ceratopira erythrocephala* — Brilliant electric-yellow crown on males. Seen performing “moon walk” display at Asa Wright.

COTINGAS — *Cotingidae*

Bearded Bellbird *Procnias averano* — Males at Asa Wright observed calling—one of the loudest birds on Earth. Wattled throat vibrates as metallic “BONG!” rings through forest.

TITYRAS AND ALLIES — Tityridae

Black-tailed Tityra *Tityra cayana* — Observed at Hacienda Jacana and Asa Wright. Striking pale bird with black cap and tail, red facial skin, and red-based bill. Feeds on fruit and large insects, helping regulate fruit-feeding caterpillars around forest edges.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS — Tyrannidae

Ochre-bellied Flycatcher *Mionectes oleaginous* — Small olive flycatcher in shadowy forest midstory; a frugivorous tyrannid—unusual for the family. Spotted at Asa Wright and Cuffie River.

Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant *Myiornis ecaudatus* — One of the world's smallest passerines; tiny, quick, often detected by high thin calls—heard by Caleb at Asa Wright and observed high in the canopy. Virtually tailless.

Ochre-lore Flatbill *Tolmomyias flaviventris* — Flat broad bill; specializes in aerial hawking. Heard and seen at Cuffie River.

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet *Camptostoma obsoletum* — Active canopy sprite; constantly flicks wings, often in mixed flocks. Seen near entrance to Hacienda Jacana.

Forest Elaenia *Myiopagis gaimardii* — Heard and seen near Hacienda Jana entrance; soft two-note call diagnostic. Lacks crest typical of Elaenias.

Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster* — Common open-country elaenia; ragged crest, white wingbars, and buzzy call. Observed at Blue Waters Inn.

Euler's Flycatcher *Lathrotriccus euleri* — Dave Ramlal identified it by nervous tail-flicking behavior—a great field lesson in recognizing subtle tyrant flycatchers. Seen near Hacienda Jacana entrance.

Northern Tropical Pewee *Contopus cinereus* — Seen along Blanchisseuse Road. Sputtering burst of a song; mournful descending “pee-wee” call.

Fuscous Flycatcher *Cnemotriccus fuscatus* — Seen at Adventure Farm on Tobago. A small, plain forest flycatcher with pale wingbars and eyebrow. Sharp call and flicking behavior while foraging.

Northern Scrub-Flycatcher *Sublegatus arenarum* — Denizen of dry forest and mangrove edges. Bushy crown. Observed at Nariva.

White-headed Marsh Tyrant *Arundinicola leucocephala* — Striking black-and-white wetland specialist; often perches on reeds. Seen at Caroni and Nariva.

Pied Water-Tyrant *Fluvicola pica* — Wetland bird similar to the species above but patterned inversely. Also seen at Caroni and Nariva.

Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus* (H) — Calls heard from verandah at Asa Wright. Large, powerful flycatcher.

Venezuelan Flycatcher *Myiarchus venezuelensis* — Tobago specialty—replaces Dusky-capped Flycatcher on that island. Rich wheezy call.

Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus* — Present on both islands; we saw this *Myiarchus* species at Cuffie River. Loud “wheep!” voice.

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus* — Bold yellow belly and black mask. Heard constantly shouting *kis-ka-dee!* Classic Neotropical species.

Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua* — Very similar to Great Kiskadee, but larger bill and different voice and lacks rufous on wings and tail. Observed at Hacienda Jacana.

Streaked Flycatcher *Myiodynastes maculatus* — Bold streaking below. Snatches insects and fruit. Observed at Cuffie River.

Variegated Flycatcher *Empidonomus varius* — Austral migrant—uncommon, appeared along Blanchisseuse Road.

Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus* — Abundant throughout open country; aggressive aerial pursuer of hawks and kites. Seen daily. Known as TK.

Gray Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis* — Coastal counterpart to TK. Common on Tobago, often seen perched on wires. Similar to Eastern Kingbird but lacks white terminal band on tail. High-pitched twittering calls.

VIREOS — Vireonidae

Rufous-browed Peppershrike *Cyclarhis gujanensis* — Canopy foliage-gleaner with loud musical song. Thick hooked bill and bold rufous brow. Heard several times and seen at Grand Riviere.

Scrub Greenlet *Hylophilus flavipes* — Tobago subspecies potentially split-worthy; dry-edge flocks. Glimpsed at Cuffie River.

Golden-fronted Greenlet *Pachysylvia aurantiifrons* — High canopy forager with bright yellow-green tones. Seen at Nariva.

SWALLOWS AND MARTINS — Hirundinidae

White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer* — Frequently seen over ponds and coasts. Broad white wing patches flash in flight.

Caribbean Martin *Progne dominicensis* — Large, colorful martin species. Seen circling over coastal areas of Tobago.

Gray-breasted Martin *Progne chalybea* — Common urban and open-country martin of Trinidad, often perched on wires.

Southern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* — Distinguished from Northern by its tawny throat. Several seen well perched on wires at Brasso Seco.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* — Northern migrant; forked tail and graceful flight. Seen at Bon Accord and Centre Street Ponds.

GNATWRENS — Polioptilidae

Long-billed Gnatwren *Ramphocaenus melanurus* — Long thin bill. Tiny insect-hunter that weaves through vines. Seen at Hacienda Jacana.

WRENS — Troglodytidae

Southern House Wren *Troglodytes musculus* — Commonly heard and seen around buildings and gardens throughout the tour. Slightly warmer brown than Northern House Wren, but most easily separated by voice: the song is more musical and varied, less harsh and mechanical, though with the same high-energy, rapid cadence of the species familiar to birders in the US.

Rufous-breasted Wren *Pheugopedius rutilus* — Rich song in shady understory. Often skulky but was seen well near Hacienda Jacana entrance.

MOCKINGBIRD — Mimidae

Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus* — Daily species in open areas and gardens. A versatile singer that often mimics other birds. Slim, long-tailed silhouette distinctive, and white outer tail feathers flash boldly in flight or during tail-flicking.

THRUSHES — Turdidae

Yellow-legged Thrush *Turdus flavipes* — Main Ridge specialty. Glossy black male with bright yellow bill/legs/orbital rings seen in primary rainforest on Gilpin Trace trail.

White-necked Thrush *Turdus albicollis* — Forest thrush with pale chest. Seen multiple times along Blanchisseuse Road.

Cocoa Thrush *Turdus fumigatus* — Plain brown bird with beautiful voice. Observed at Hacienda Jacana.

Spectacled Thrush *Turdus nudigenis* — Common thrush with distinctive yellow eye-rings that resemble eyeglasses. Tolerates gardens well. Seen often and well on both islands.

WAXBILLS — Estrildidae

Tricolored Munia *Lonchura malacca* (I) — Introduced, now well-established in wet pasture edges. Seen at Caroni.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* (I) — Another introduced species—thin red bill and tinkling calls. Also seen at Caroni.

FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS — Fringillidae

Violaceous Euphonia *Euphonia violacea* — Seen well at Asa Wright feeders and foraging on berries at Cuffie River. Males are striking: deep violet with a bright yellow forehead and underparts. Primarily frugivorous and an important seed disperser in Neotropical forests.

NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS — Icteridae

Red-breasted Meadowlark *Leistes militaris* — Savanna and pasture species; males show vivid red breast visible at long distance. Seen well at Aripo Savanna.

Crested Oropendola *Psarocolius decumanus* — Large canopy blackbird with a bright yellow tail and pale blue eye. Known for its bizarre bubbling, gurgling display call—like wet mechanical chatter. Builds long hanging nests in colonies, often dozens draped together in one tree.

Yellow-rumped Cacique *Cacicus cela* — Common around Hacienda Jacana and Asa Wright. Bright blue eyes. Colonies often nest near wasp nests for protection.

Yellow Oriole *Icterus nigrogularis* — Seen in the Aripo–Nariva region. Weaves deep pendant nests from plant fibers, often suspended in palms or open branches. A vivid splash of yellow against the green treescape.

Carib Grackle *Quiscalus lugubris* — Widespread in towns, settlements, and coastal areas; bold and adaptable. Adults have a piercing yellow eye, and males often perform tail-fanning or wing-spreading displays during social interactions. Seen well at the shopping mall at Millenium Park.

Yellow-hooded Blackbird *Chrysomus icterocephalus* — Seen in wetlands and marsh edges; males striking black with yellow head. Nests low in reeds over water.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* — Common lowland brood parasite. Often associated with human-modified habitat. Rapidly expanding its range in the Neotropics.

Giant Cowbird *Molothrus oryzivorus* — Seen in flight at Nariva and on ground near Grand Riviere. A brood parasite specializing on oropendola colonies.

WARBLERS — Parulidae

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis* — A wintering migrant of mangroves and swampy edges, constantly tail-wagging as it forages along muddy margins. A Nearctic–Neotropical migrant—breeds in northern North America (the Nearctic) and spends the non-breeding season in the Neotropics, including the Caribbean, Central America, and northern South America.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* — Active flasher of orange (or yellow in young/female) patches, using wing-fanning to startle insects. A Nearctic–Neotropical migrant, wintering widely in the Caribbean and tropical Americas.

Tropical Parula *Setophaga pitayumi* — Tiny high-canopy warbler, often gleaning among epiphytes. Resident Neotropical species, filling the ecological role of Northern Parula (*S. americana*) in the tropics.

Northern Yellow Warbler *Setophaga aestiva* — Seen in wetland habitats. Part of a complex species group with many island subspecies; Mangrove Yellow Warbler was recently elevated to a full species (*Setophaga petechia*) in some taxonomies.

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata* — Long-distance Nearctic breeder that undertakes one of the longest nonstop migrations of any songbird, crossing the Atlantic to winter in South America. Observed along Blanchisseuse Road.

Golden-crowned Warbler *Basileuterus culicivorus* (H) — Heard along Blanchisseuse Road. A resident Neotropical warbler, typically in understory tangles and thickets.

CARDINALS AND ALLIES — Cardinalidae

Hepatic Tanager *Piranga flava* — One bird identified on Blanchisseuse Road by Dave Ramlal and Lester Nanan as Hepatic Tanager. Males of the South American form of Hepatic show clean, brighter red plumage without the dusky gray wash typical of the North American subspecies. However, a photograph of the bird shows no dark lores, a feature that leans toward Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*), which is uncommon but regular in Trinidad as a migrant. The photo also shows other features that suggest Summer: peaked head shape (rather than rounded of Hepatic), yellowish bill (rather than gray or silver of Hepatic), thick bill (rather than narrower bill of Hepatic) and lack of cheek patches (rather than grayish cheek patches on Hepatic). Identification remains suggestive but not definitive without closer photographic detail.

Taxonomy note: The North American “tanagers” (Hepatic, Summer, Scarlet, Western) are not true tanagers—genetically they belong to the Cardinalidae family (Cardinals and Allies) rather than Thraupidae, where the true Neotropical tanagers reside (see below).

TANAGERS AND ALLIES — Thraupidae

White-lined Tanager *Tachyphonus rufus* — Regular at feeders. Males glossy black; females warm cinnamon. The pale “white lines” on the wings are typically invisible when perched, flashing into view only in flight or during wing-flick displays.

Silver-beaked Tanager *Ramphocelus carbo* — Common fruit feeder. Deep velvet-maroon males striking. Bill glints silver in direct light.

Blue-gray Tanager *Thraupis episcopus* — Very common but uncommonly beautiful. Known locally as “Blue Jean.”

Palm Tanager *Thraupis palmarum* — Yard species nearly everywhere. Common around buildings, gardens, and palms—named for its habit of nesting and foraging in palm crowns.

Turquoise Tanager *Tangara mexicana* — Beautiful color-splashed forest tanager—looks like a work in progress, not quite complete. Seen well at Asa Wright.

Bay-headed Tanager *Tangara gyrola* — Observed at Asa Wright and on Blanchisseuse Road. Prefers fruiting midstory shrubs. Stunning green / blue body with reddish head.

Swallow Tanager *Tersina viridis* — Unexpected austral migrant flock high in canopy at Blanchisseuse Road. Males vivid turquoise and white, females green.

Blue Dacnis *Dacnis cayana* — Tiny fruit feeder with electric-blue males. Often travels in mixed flocks.

Purple Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes caeruleus* — Frequent feeder bird. Long decurved bill for nectar. Males vivid purple; females streaky green.

Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus* — Rarely seen at feeders. Red legs distinctive. In breeding plumage, males glow blue with turquoise cap. Seen at Cuffie River.

Green Honeycreeper *Chlorophanes spiza* — Common at Asa Wright fruit trays. Male vivid blue-green with black mask and banana yellow beak, female softer green.

Bicolored Conebill *Conirostrum bicolor* — Estuary specialist in mangroves. Small blue-gray tanager with pointed bill. Seen at Nariva.

Saffron Finch *Sicalis flaveola* — Seen in parking lot at mall in Millenium Park. Widespread and increasing its range.

Grassland Yellow-Finch *Sicalis luteola* (H) — Grassy savanna specialist. Nomadic with seeding cycles. Heard but not seen at Aripo Savanna.

Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina* — Common “Johnny Jump-Up” display flights—males leap repeatedly to advertise territory. Males wear glossy blue-black plumage in breeding season; females streaky brown.

Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola* — The “ubiqui-quit”—a ubiquitous nectar feeder with curved bill. Over 40 recognized subspecies across Caribbean and S. America.

Black-faced Grassquit *Melanospiza bicolor* — Found in Tobago dry scrub. Not on Trinidad. Thick bill for grass seeds. Seen well at Fort James park.

Sooty Grassquit *Asemospiza fuliginosa* (H) — Scarce. Heard but not seen near Hacienda Jacana.

Olive-gray Saltator *Saltator olivascens* — Edge and garden bird. Seen at Aripo with its short white eyebrow glowing among the tree shadows.

MAMMALS: (11)

Common Opossum / Southern Opossum *Didelphis marsupialis* — Seen on night walk at Asa Wright. A flexible omnivore and important seed disperser; young ride on the mother’s back like passengers on a bus.

Silky Anteater / Pygmy Anteater *Cyclopes didactylus* — Spotted on our Caroni Swamp tour, curled like a golden puff in the mangroves, hardly larger than a human fist. The smallest anteater on Earth—nocturnal, slow-moving, and specialized on tree-dwelling ants.

Red-tailed Squirrel *Sciurus granatensis* — Observed in both Trinidad and Tobago. A canopy acrobat feeding on fruits, seeds, and flowers; by carrying and caching food, it helps move seeds through the forest and contributes to regeneration.

Red-rumped Agouti *Dasyprocta leporine* — Seen around the grounds at Asa Wright. A keystone seed disperser—often buries nuts and fruits for later, forgetting some and inadvertently planting the next generation of trees.

Buffalypso (*Bubalus bubalis* × cattle lines) — Trinidad’s own tropical superstar of domestication. A cross between Asian Water Buffalo and local cattle, bred for heat, mud, and island attitude. Hardy, strong, and milk-rich—Caribbean innovation wearing horns and wagging its tail.

Greater Sac-winged Bat / White-Lined Sac-Winged Bat *Saccopteryx bilineata* — Often seen flying in daylight on Trinidad. A social species with high-pitched chatter; males defend small harem territories on vertical surfaces. “Sac-winged” refers to scent pouches on the forearms, filled with secretions and fanned toward females during courtship and used to mark territory.

Jamaican Fruit Bat *Artibeus jamaicensis* — Seen flying at dawn and day-roosting at Cuffie River. A major disperser of fruit—especially figs—and a key architect in shaping Neotropical forest diversity.

Proboscis Bat *Rhynchonycteris naso* — Seen roosting in a tight row on a log at Caroni. Slender and delicate with a small projecting “nose-leaf,” they roost in visible daylight lines, relying on stillness and cryptic coloration to appear like knots on wood.

Greater Bulldog Bat / Fishing Bat *Noctilio leporinus* — Observed at Caroni after dark, skimming the water surface in the spotlight beam. A large, powerful bat that hunts fish using echolocation to detect ripples—dragging oversized feet across the surface to snatch prey like a raptor of the night.

Bat species identified acoustically using an Echo Meter 2 device:

Sinaloan Mastiff Bat *Molossus sinaloensis* — A fast, high-flying insect eater that hunts on open air highways above the canopy.

Velvety Free-tailed Bat *Molossus molossus* — Rapid pursuit flier; often roosts in buildings, bridges, or hollow trees. Roosted behind picture on wall of Cuffie River dining room.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS: (19)

Spectacled Caiman *Caiman crocodilus* — Eyeshine detected in Caroni Swamp canals at night; one individual later seen out of water at Centre Street Ponds. Named for the bony ridge between the eyes that resembles a pair of spectacles. Common and adaptable, thriving in both fresh and brackish waters.

Grenada Tree Anole / Richard's Anole *Anolis richardii* — Observed at Adventure Farm, with both a mature adult and an immature lizard sighted. A large, introduced anole on Tobago, often seen basking or patrolling trunks and branches in gardens and forest edges. Males display a bright orange dewlap and can shift color from green to brown.

Tropical House Gecko *Hemidactylus mabouia* — Introduced; now common on buildings around lights where it hunts insects at night.

Wiegmann's Striped Gecko *Gonatodes vittatus* — Seen at Hacienda Jacana; small diurnal gecko active on walls and tree trunks.

Ocellated Gecko *Gonatodes ocellatus* — A Tobago endemic, seen well on Little Tobago. Named for the ocelli—tiny eyespots along the flanks—that likely aid in communication or serve to distract predators. A small, elegant diurnal gecko, often found low on trunks and walls in sun-flecked patches.

Northern Turnip-tail Gecko *Thecadactylus rapicauda* — A large nocturnal gecko with a distinctive swollen, “turnip-shaped” tail; known to vocalize with sharp squeaks when disturbed. Observed at Hacienda Jacana by Russ. Adheres to walls and trees with broad toe pads, hunting insects after dark.

Trinidad Ameiva *Ameiva atrigularis* — A fast, sun-loving runner seen at Hacienda Jacana, Asa Wright, and Cuffie River. Juveniles flash bright green heads; adults patrol trails and road edges in search of insects and other small prey, occasionally taking fallen fruit.

Audubon's Multicolored Lizard *Polychrus auduboni* — Slender arboreal lizard with variable green-brown coloration; relies on camouflage and slow movement in foliage. On Trinidad only.

Green Iguana *Iguana iguana* — Observed basking near water at Hacienda Jacana. Strong swimmer capable of diving to escape predators.

Cryptic Golden Tegu *Tupinambis cryptus* — Robust ground-foraging lizard seen at Hacienda Jacana and Asa Wright. Omnivore of fruit, eggs, and small vertebrates.

Ruschenberger's Tree Boa *Corallus ruschenbergii* — Seen coiled above water in Caroni Swamp and stretched across branches on the Asa Wright night walk. Like other boids, it has heat-sensitive facial pits that assist in nocturnal hunting. A true arboreal boa, it has a prehensile tail for gripping branches and a slender body built for climbing, unlike heavier terrestrial boas, which are stockier and more ground-oriented. Tree boas strike from perches, ambushing bats, birds, and small mammals that pass within reach.

Ashmead's Banded Cat-eyed Snake *Leptodeira ashmeadii* — Found by Russ at Hacienda Jacana on porch at night. Specializes in frogs. A mildly venomous rear-fanged snake; its fangs sit toward the back of the mouth, delivering venom through grooved teeth to subdue prey. Generally harmless to people.

Guianan Blind Snake *Typhlops reticulatus* — Tiny fossorial (underground) snake found wriggling on the patio at Bajnath's Estate, easily mistaken for a worm. Smooth, shiny scales and reduced eyes are adaptations for life underground.

Rattle-voiced Tree Frog *Boana xerophylla* — Heard on Asa Wright night walks; distinctive rapid “rattling” call carries far through rainforest after dark.

Veined Tree Frog *Trachycephalus venulosus* — Observed at Asa Wright; large treefrog with adhesive toe pads for climbing smooth vegetation.

Lesser Antillean Whistling Frog *Eleutherodactylus johnstonei* — Abundant nighttime caller at lodges; direct developing with no tadpole stage.

Robber Frog *Pristimantis* sp. — Seen on night hikes at Asa Wright. A leaf-litter specialist with direct development and no tadpole stage. The origin of the name is uncertain—possibly a reference to their elusive, vanish-on-contact behavior. Some herpetologists suggest the name may be onomatopoeic,

linked to the sound of their calls.

Yellow-throated Frog / Trinidad Stream Frog *Mannophryne trinitatis* — Endemic to Trinidad; males guard streamside territories and eggs, later carrying tadpoles to water. Observed closely near Dunston Cave at Asa Wright.

Cane Toad *Rhinella marina* — Common at Asa Wright; native locally but one of the world's most damaging invasive species where introduced.

FISH

Jumping Guabine *Anablepsoides hartii* — Observed in a stream in Main Ridge rainforest of Tobago. A small killifish famed for leaping between pools when streams shrink; capable of gulping air to survive low-oxygen conditions, an advantage in seasonal forest waters.

Reef Fishes — Angel Reef revealed a classic Caribbean assemblage beneath the glass-bottom boat, including Parrotfishes (Scaridae), Blue Tang (*Acanthurus coeruleus*), several Wrasses (Labridae), Butterflyfishes (*Chaetodon spp.*), and Trumpetfish (*Aulostomus spp.*). We also viewed an enormous brain coral—likely *Colpophyllia natans*—locally said to be among the largest in the world.

CRUSTACEANS

Manicou Crab *Eudaniela garmani* — Mountain stream crab commonly seen at Asa Wright. Females brood eggs and young under the abdomen, releasing miniature crabs rather than marine larvae.

Mud Crab *Uca* / *Cardisoma sp.* (undetermined) — Seen in roadside ditches at Bon Accord, Tobago; typically wave claws to signal and feed on detritus in brackish margins.

Mangrove Tree Crab *Aratus pisonii* (likely) — Observed climbing Red Mangrove prop roots at Nariva; agile and semi-arboreal, often feeds on leaves and algae at high tide.

Caribbean Hermit Crab *Coenobita spp.* — Common on Little Tobago. Many small individuals were active along the shoreline, and one very large hermit crab was encountered at the lookout bluff. Terrestrial scavengers that retreat to the sea only to release larvae; important recyclers and seed dispersers in coastal ecosystems.

ARACHNIDS

Pink-toed Tarantula *Avicularia sp.* — Seen on Trinidad. Arboreal tarantula with pink-tipped legs.

Chevron Tarantula *Psalmopoeus cambridgei* — Found on pipe railings at Asa Wright at night. Large, fast-moving species.

Golden Silk Orb-weaver *Trichonephila clavipes* (formerly *Nephila*) — Females spin exceptionally strong golden silk and often recycle their webs by consuming the silk to recover nutrients. Large, long-legged, and conspicuous in sunlit forest edges and trails. Seen well in daylight on Blanchisseuse Road and on night walk at Asa Wright.

Brazilian Wolf Spider *Ancylometes sp.* (probable) — Large, fast cursorial hunter seen on a night walk at Asa Wright; hunts prey by pursuit rather than webs and was large enough to be mistaken for a tarantula.

Harvestmen (Daddy Longlegs) *Opiliones*—Seen in numbers on Asa Wright night walks, glowing under UV. Spiderlike but not true spiders—no venom, no silk, and a single unsegmented rounded body. Slow-moving scavengers that pick their way through the forest understory.

Scorpions (likely Buthidae / Chactidae) — One tiny and one large individual observed on Asa Wright night walks; all fluoresced bright blue-green under UV, as scorpions universally do. In Trinidad and Tobago, small slender forms are typically Buthidae, while larger, more robust species are usually Chactidae.

Whip Scorpion (Vinegaroon) *Thelyphronida* — Seen in a burrow on night walk; possesses a sensory whip-

like tail and can spray a mild acetic acid mist for defense. Not a true scorpion—lacks venom and a stinger, and uses chemical spray instead of venom to deter predators.

ONYCHOPHORA

Velvet Worm *Onychophora sp.* — Not a true worm. A living relic of an ancient lineage with Cambrian roots, in its own phylum and evolutionarily allied with arthropods and tardigrades. Soft-bodied and nocturnal, firing adhesive slime to capture insect prey. Observed on our Asa Wright night walk.

INSECTS

Stick Insects *Phasmatodea spp.* — Seen on night walks at Asa Wright; twig mimicry enhanced by slow “breeze-sway” movements that mimic vegetation in the wind and help them evade predators.

Velvet Ant *Mutillidae sp.* — Brilliant red-and-black wingless female encountered at Asa Wright; actually a solitary wasp with a notoriously painful sting. Larvae parasitize the brood of ground-nesting bees and wasps.

Blue Tarantula Hawk *Pepsis / related sp.* — Striking metallic blue wasp seen at Cuffie River, famous for an extremely painful sting. Females hunt large spiders, delivering a paralyzing sting and dragging the still-living host to a burrow as food for a single developing larva.

Azteca Ants *Azteca sp.* — Observed in carton nests in trees, often in association with Cecropia. Colonies aggressively defend their host trees from herbivores. At Asa Wright we found fresh excavation where a trogon had begun hollowing out an Azteca nest to create its own nest cavity.

Arboreal Termites *Nasutitermes sp.* — Large brown carton nests high in trees at multiple sites. Workers feed on wood and plant detritus, while soldiers defend the colony with chemical sprays rather than biting. These above-ground mounds provide soft material and internal chambers, often excavated by trogons, woodpeckers, and other cavity-nesting birds.

Leafcutter Ants *Atta spp.* — Endless trails of workers carrying leaf fragments to underground fungus gardens—an advanced agricultural system that evolved some 50–60 million years ago, tens of millions of years before human farming.

Beetles (Coleoptera)

A few striking encounters highlighted just how diverse this order is. There are more species of beetles on Earth than of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians combined, comprising roughly a quarter of all known animal species. Scientists have named over 400,000 beetle species, with many more undescribed. Evolutionary biologist J. B. S. Haldane famously remarked that nature must have “an inordinate fondness for beetles.”

We noted a large metallic purple beetle on Blanchisseuse Road on a tree trunk—identity uncertain, but impressive in size and color—and a rhinoceros-type scarab (Dynastinae) seen later, reminding us how spectacular tropical beetles can be. Species-level ID is challenging in this group without collection or close photography—a single family can contain thousands of similar forms—but every sighting felt like opening a drawer in nature’s endless cabinet of wonders.

Butterflies and Moths (Lepidoptera)

Monarch *Danaus plexippus* — Bold orange-and-black milkweed specialist; stores toxic chemicals from host plants, rendering adults unpalatable to predators.

Scarlet Peacock *Anartia amathea* — Common in sunny openings; males defend small territories and chase rivals.

White Peacock *Anartia jatrophae* — Pale with striking eyespots; often puddles for minerals at wet edges.

Malachite *Siproeta stelenes* — Lime-green patches like stained glass; frequently feeds on fermenting

fruit rather than nectar. The individual we saw near Hacienda Jacana was very pale green.

Postman *Heliconius melpomene* — Red-banded wings; one of the few butterflies that digests pollen, enabling exceptionally long adult lifespans.

Cattleheart *Parides sp.* — Black with scarlet and white accents; larvae feed on *Aristolochia* (pipevine) species and sequester toxic acids, retaining chemical defenses into adulthood.

Flambeau / Julia *Dryas iulia* — Slender, bright orange flier; males patrol vigorously for mates.

Owl Butterfly *Caligo spp.* — Huge, brown, dusk-active; owl-eye hindwings and a taste for rotting fruit. Observed flying at Hacienda Jacana and perched on fruit table at Asa Wright.

Blue Morpho *Morpho menelaus* — Iridescent structural blue in flight; cryptic brown undersides when closed. Iconic butterfly of the Neotropics.

Silver King Shoemaker *Archaeoprepona demophoon* — Metallic blue-violet forest shimmer; attracted to fruit, dung, and carrion for salts. Seen well at Brasso Seco—stunning in the sun.

Pierid Whites / Sulphurs / Yellows (Pieridae) — Numerous fast-flying whites, sulphurs and yellows, often puddling along wet paths. Especially abundant and visible at Brasso Seco.

Skippers (Hesperiidae) — Small, rapid fliers with hooked antennae; frequent at forest edges and flowering hedges. Especially abundant on purple vervain hedge at Hacienda Jacana.

Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum sp.* — A day-flying sphinx moth hovering at Hacienda Jacana vervain like a hummingbird, with a long proboscis for deep tubular flowers. Shows a white abdominal band that gives a hummingbird-like impression in flight—reminiscent of the rump flash of a Tufted Coquette.

PLANTS

Bromeliads (multiple genera) — Abundant epiphytes in both islands. Collect water and nutrients in leaf “tanks” that support frogs, insects, and whole miniature ecosystems.

Old Man’s Beard *Rhipsalis baccifera* — Epiphytic cactus draping in long, threadlike strands. Commonly called mistletoe, though it’s a cactus, not a true mistletoe. Native to the Neotropics and uniquely the only cactus naturally found in the Old World (Africa/Madagascar/Sri Lanka), probably spread across the Atlantic by birds, with human-assisted transport also proposed.

Ceiba / Kapok / Silk-cotton Tree *Ceiba pentandra* — Towering emergent of mature rainforest; buttressed roots and a massive crown make it a living scaffold for canopy life. We paused at Tobago’s largest specimen along a coastal road—a true titan, a tree of life.

Torch Ginger *Etlingera elatior* — Brilliant inflorescences at Asa Wright, favored by hermit hummingbirds.

Shampoo Ginger *Zingiber zerumbet* — Pinecone-like flower heads exude fragrant liquid traditionally used as a hair rinse.

Beehive Ginger *Zingiber spectabile* — Distinctive honeycomb bracts; a showy ornamental of the wet tropics.

Hot Lips *Psychotria poeppigiana* — Red, lip-like bracts surrounding small tubular flowers; an iconic Neotropical understory shrub whose bracts help attract hummingbird pollinators.

Monkey Ladder *Entada gigas* — Massive woody lianas forming natural “rungs”; enormous buoyant seeds (“sea hearts”) disperse long distances by sea.

Wild Guava *Psidium spp.* — Common forest fruiting trees attracting tanagers, parrots, and other frugivores.

Miconia *Miconia spp.* — Berry-rich understory shrubs that manakins frequently feed on, especially around leks; in turn, manakins help disperse their seeds through the forest—a classic fruit-disperser partnership. Broad, soft leaves are field-famous as “forest toilet paper.” Easy to identify by the three bold, parallel veins running from the leaf base, visible even at a glance.

Heliconia *Heliconia spp.* — Nectar plants for hermit hummingbirds; long, curved flowers matched by the birds’ decurved bills in a tight pollination partnership.

Cardinal's Guard *Pachystachys spicata* — Dark red, bracted flower spikes popular with hummingbirds in gardens and forest edges.

Ficus (Strangler Fig and Fig Trees) *Ficus spp.* — Keystone genus with an obligate pollination mutualism: most fig species are pollinated by a single specialized fig wasp species. Fruit crops attracted trogons, tanagers, and manakins throughout our tour.

Flame Flower Tree / Immortelle *Erythrina poeppigiana* — Brilliant coral-red flowering tree introduced as a shade tree on cocoa plantations; now widespread in Trinidad. Blooms attract hummingbirds and honeycreepers and light the canopy like fire. A few seen flowering near Grand Riviere.

Chaconia *Warszewiczia coccinea* — National flower of Trinidad and Tobago; its brilliant scarlet sprays often burst into bloom around Independence Day (August 31), symbolizing endurance and national spirit. We noted this species flowering at Asa Wright.

Autograph Tree / Pitch Apple *Clusia rosea* — On Main Ridge, Tobago, we found ripe fruits split open on the forest floor like woody stars. Thick, leathery leaves are stiff enough to carve into—signatures remain visible for months, giving the tree its name. A hemiepiphyte that can begin life high in the canopy like a strangler fig or grow rooted directly in soil. Insects are often trapped in its sticky latex resin, which the plant uses as a chemical defense rather than active carnivory, though the effect can appear carnivorous to observers.

FAVORITE BIRDS OF THE TOUR

Russ — Trinidad Motmot

Jim — Pinnated Bittern

Anne — Scarlet Ibis (American Flamingo and Tufted Coquette as backups)

Libby — Oilbird

Linda — hummingbirds (manakins as backup)

Jennifer — Purple Honeycreeper (Channel-billed Toucan as backup)

Chris — “Camaraderie of the group!” (White Hawk as backup)

Steve H. — Brown Violetear