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Trinidad and Tobago

February 20 - March 1, 2015 Trip Report

Dave Ramlal, main guide; Roodal Ramlal, Gladwyn James, Desmond, guides; Dodie Logue Caligo host
Participants: Margie & Fred, Lorinda and Ed, Sharon & David, Linda & Joe, Dora and George, and Lynn.

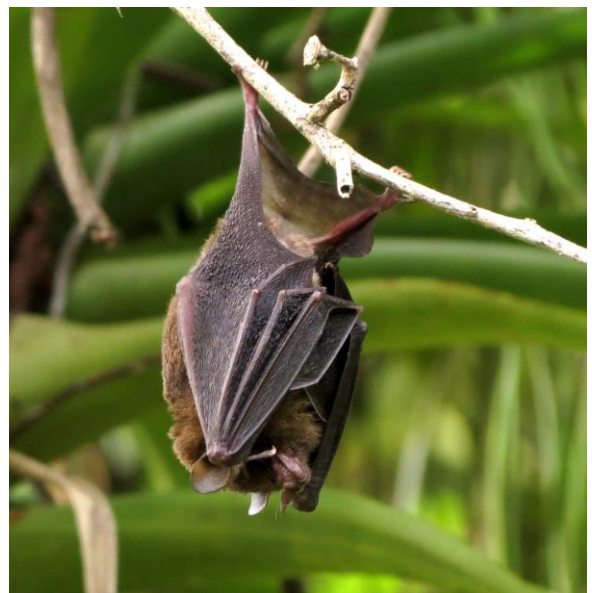
Friday, February 20

Arrivals at Asa Wright Nature Centre.



This morning there was a nature walk at 8:30 with Naturalist Barry; Dodie, Linda and Dora and Charles were able to attend. Highlights were both White-bearded and Golden-headed Manakins, great looks at Bearded Bellbirds, a soaring White Hawk, and skulking Rufous-breasted Wren. After lunch, those who were already at the centre relaxed and settled in - as many were on a red-eye the previous night, maybe

naps?! The rest of the group arrived in the afternoon; Margie and Fred, Sharon and David, Lorinda and Ed, and Linda and Joe. Naturalist Brandon was on the deck late afternoon/evening. He got a White Hawk in the scope, and some of us good looks at at Ruby Topaz Hummingbird getting nectar from the "Powder Puff" mimosa. We were all amazed at



the number of hummingbirds and colorful Honeycreepers.

Brandon then led a nature walk as the light was dimming.

After dinner some of us joined him on a night walk where we saw an opossum, crabs, a scorpion, a variety of bugs, and heard two owls: Tropical Screech, and Ferruginous Pygmy. We also saw a White-bearded Manakin and Green Honeycreeper roosting.

Saturday, February 21

This morning a Barred Antshrike made an appearance at the feeders, and we all enjoyed the Red-rumped Agoutis who were underneath them. The Crested Oropendulas put on a good show leaving their nests and displaying. Naturalist Caleb got a Double-toothed Kite in the scope.

After breakfast we all met as a group and guide David went over some information and the schedule with us. During the orientation a White-lined Sac-wing bat was spotted hanging right next to the veranda looking just like a dead leaf! Then we went on a couple-hour nature hike around the grounds where we

learned about some of the plants and biology of the area. We got great looks at a Collared Trogon, as well as a White-bellied Antbird (one of my personal favorites). We also saw a Streaked-throated Spinetail, and heard and saw some Bearded Bellbirds.



After an afternoon break we met up at 4 pm to go and see some night birds. We drove down to the Arima Valley and went to the Aripo Livestock Station. Here we found a bunch of new birds including Yellow-chinned Spinetail, a female White-headed Marsh Tyrant, a Yellow-bellied Elaenia, and Smooth-billed Ani. We have some good raptors including many Black Vultures, two Yellow-headed Caracaras, an Aplomado Falcon, and a Merlin. Later, after rum punch, a picnic dinner, and the ascent of darkness, we saw a roosting Peregrine Falcon on a snag. Other night birds included a Tropical Screech Owl, two roosting Common Potoos, and many good looks at both Common Parakeet and White-tailed Nightjar.

Sunday, February 22 Blanchisseuse Road / Trinidad's Northern Range / Brasso Seco
Lunch

Up early this morning, breakfast at 6 am and on the road by 6:30 in order to try and see the endemic Trinidad Piping Guan. Our first stop was the Scatter Station along the way up the Blanchisseuse Rd. As many of us were looking at a Squirrel Cuckoo, our guide David found a guan in a tree - we all rushed over and good looks and photos were had by everyone! Along with a Streaked Flycatcher, White-winged Swallow, and Scaled Pigeon, we had some interesting insects here including a Harlequin Beetle, and a huge Rhinoceros Beetle. We continued our drive up the mountain, making various stops at pullovers to



listen and look for birds. Some of the birds along the way included a Golden-crowned Warbler, Chestnut Woodpecker, a White-necked Thrush, Green-backed and Collared Trogons, and a well-worked for Black-faced Ant Thrush - which we kept hearing the rest of our way over the mountain! The day was very mercurial and it rained lightly a few times, but

never lasted long and the sun was always out again soon.

We stopped at Brasso Secco for a fantastic lunch and home-made Cocoa ice cream; a female Rufous-tailed Jacamar made an appearance just after we finished. After lunch we got back in the vehicles and drove up into the town to see side-by-side Crested Oropendula and Yellow-rumped Cacique nesting colonies. A Masked Tityra made an appearance as we were comparing the nests. Driving back over the mountain some of us saw a Gray-lined Hawk at close range; and we had a few Speckled Tanagers. We returned to the center around 3 pm, which gave everyone the afternoon to relax and clean up. We met over rum punch at 6:30 pm to go over the checklist.



Monday, February 23 Manzanillo / Nariva Swamp / Waller Field

Today we were able to have a leisurely breakfast and headed out in two vans at 8:30 am. - this time with Guide Roodal (David's father). Our first stop was the Aripo Livestock Station again, to pick up the activity of the day birds. Some of our great finds were both the Pied Water Tyrant and the White-headed Marsh Tyrant; Grassland Yellow Finch, and wonderful looks at a hunting Savannah Hawk. We saw some repeat birds from two days ago, giving us some better looks and a chance to really learn the birds.

From here we made our way down to the East coast and a picnic lunch at the beach by Manzanilla - we made a brief stop to look at a female Black Mango hummingbird on a nest on the electric wire right next to the road! At the beach a few of us took our shoes off and did a bit of wading. Lunch was brief though as we had to get on the road to make it to Nariva Swamp. En route we stopped and found a Black-crested Ant Shrike, and some got brief looks at an American Pygmy Kingfisher and Bicoloured Conebill. A Striated Heron put on a good show, and a Green Kingfisher also zipped by. After this we made our way along the palm-lined road we saw a Yellow-headed Caracara and a Magnificent Frigatebird before entering the swamp area. Here we slowly drove the road while we scanned the grasses, picking up a Streaked Cuckoo, Blue-black Grassquits, and a Wattled Jacana with two fuzzy chicks trailing. After we left the swamp we had a bit of a drive back up towards the Aripo Valley where we made a stop at the abandoned airstrip. Shortly after we got out of the vehicles we heard a dry clattery sound and a bunch of Tent-making Bats flew out from under a broken palm-frond and surprised us! As the twilight



came on we got good looks at Sulphery Flycatchers and Fork-tailed Palm Swifts. Just before leaving two Red-bellied Macaws landed in a palm tree and our guide Roodal got them in the scope. A long but good day of birding! We got back just in time for 7pm dinner.

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| Tuesday, February 24 Aripo Savanna / Arena Forest |
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An early morning, we left the center at 6:30 am to try and get some of the species we hadn't seen yet. Before we were even in the vehicles our guide David had found our first Trinidad Motmot (recently split off from the Blue-crowned Motmot), and a male Great Ant Shrike which some of us had good looks at. We worked our way down the road, at one point stopping to look at a mixed flock that had all three honey creepers, Dacnis, 4 species of tanagers, some hummingbirds and a few other species. Getting down to the savannah areas, we made various stops getting looks at some Trinidad Euphonia, a Rufous-browed Peppershrike, little Blue Heron, a soaring Zone-tailed Hawk, and a Green-rumped Parrotlet peeking out a hole in a bar. We had good looks of some already-seen birds, and picked up a Tropical Pewee and a Variegated Flycatcher.

It was a really hot day, and our picnic lunch under a pavillion at the Arena Forest was welcome. A Striped Cuckoo and a Rufous-tailed Jacamar both put in good appearances during lunch. We made our way back to the center in time to cool off and relax at the center.

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| Wednesday, February 25 Yerette Hummingbirds / Caroni National Park |
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We got to have a very leisurely morning and left the Centre at 10:30 for Yerette, home of the Hummingbird. On our way a few stopped to pick up some local Roti to sample with lunch. It was a wonderful time and the owner, Theo, was very gracious and informative. Eleven species of humming birds were seen, and we got to enjoy a picnic lunch on the patio with hummers buzzing all around.

After a narrated slide show by Theo, we loaded into the vans and headed off to Caroni Swamp, stopping along the way to look for Long-winged Harrier which was seen by a few before disappearing into the grass. Many Osprey were seen as well as a distant Savannah Hawk.

Once we got to Caroni and into our boat we saw a Green-throated Mango Hummingbird and some Green-rumped Parotlets, a Straight-billed Wood Creeper, a roosting Tropical Screech Owl, and a coiled Corn Boa on a branch on the edge of the canal before heading out into the main swamp area.

Here we saw many Little Blue Heron, Tri-colored Heron, and Snowy Egret. Before the main feature we dashed down another side canal to see a roosting Common Potoo. Finally we got our boat settled and poured our rum punches as the Scarlet Ibis were coming in - a wonderful sight! On our way back in the dark (with the help of a flashlight) we saw a pair of roosting Grey-necked Wood-Rails.



Thursday, February 26 Oilbird Cave / On to Tobago

This morning after breakfast we headed down the trail to visit the resident Oilbird "Grotto". While not really a proper cave, this crevasse in the rocks with a stream flowing through it hosts one of the most accessible Oilbird colonies in the world. We were able to stand near the entrance and hear and see these majestic birds, some peeking down at us from ledges, and some screeching and flapping ahead of us. A treat to see!



Then it was packing and showers before the airport, where many of got "Doubles", a Trini treat. Our travels went easy and before three we were at our home for the next few days, Cuffie River Nature Retreat. On our way we stopped at a pullover next to the Atlantic Ocean and saw some Royal Terns, Semi-Palmated Plovers, Laughing Gulls, and some of the colorful Pirogue boats with the high fronts that the fisher- men use. Peaceful and private would describe Cuffie; we had the afternoon to enjoy and many of us

relaxed with a drink on our private verandah, or sat by the pool, enjoying views of Rufous-vented Chachalacas and Motmots close by. It turned into a rainy afternoon and we all were able to have some quiet time.

Friday, February 27 Cuffie River

This morning we were woken by loud chachalaca calls; some of us were also up in the night hearing Common Potoo and White-tailed Nightjar. And as it was getting dark last night, a few of us heard some very strange barking-like calls; Lorinda went on line and found that they were quite like the Striped Owl?! We had seen an owl like shape fly over right after the calls, and this morning talking to our guide Desmond, he confirmed that he too had heard the calls and it had been a Striped Owl, a somewhat rare occurrence. Cool!

Before breakfast some of us found a pair of White-winged Becards building a nest on the grounds, and a Red-

crowned Woodpecker came to visit the hummingbird feeders right outside the breakfast



room. Motmots abounded on the grounds and some Smooth-billed Anis were hanging around as well. After breakfast, we all headed off with Desmond for a birding walk. It was humid and sometimes muddy, hilly and slippery. But most of us managed to see our target Gray-throated

Leaftosser - a nest with chick and one of the parents coming to feed with a bug. On the way up Desmond saw something that he poked - a Whip Scorpion or a Vinagaroon, one of the coolest bugs we saw, and it took some sleuthing to figure out what it was. On the way back down we saw a male Blue-backed Manikin near a lekking area.

We heard Yellow-legged Thrushes but never got to see one. When we returned to our lodge many of us had to hose off our muddy foot-wear, and while sitting on the picnic table out front a White-tailed Sabrewing visited the feeders! After a lunch of vegetable lasagne and coconut ice cream, we had the afternoon off to swim, nap, bird, take photos, etc.



Saturday, February 28 Little Tobago Island & Gilpin Trace Tobago Main Ridge

Up and off to Blue Waters and our boat trip to Little Tobago. At Blue waters we were told



that we were lucky as the water was a bit calmer than it had been the previous week, and we all seemed to do okay - the roughest part was debarking on Little Tobago, but the crew had it down to a timing-art and we all made it safely ashore. There was a short hike

to an overlook, and en-route "Z", our guide, pointed out a burrow-hole that was a nest of an Audubon's Shearwater, as well as the abode of a Trap-door spider which was really cool! At the top we were rewarded to a view of soaring Red-billed Tropicbirds, and nesting Brown and Red-footed Boobies. There was a large Tropicbird chick right next to the viewing platform, and we also were able to see an adult on a nest at close range. Back on the boat we did a little tour to check out the reef, but as the water was churned up a bit, so the visibility was not great. Overall a fun trip to see some cool birds!

After lunch as we were driving the northern route back, we stopped at a pullover to see a Black-throated Mango nest with two chicks - almost too large for the nest - on an exposed branch. Next we hiked in the forest at Gilpen Trace, which is the oldest forest preserve in the western hemisphere, protected since 1776. We were all feeling sluggish from the heat and lunch, but once we were in the forest we perked up. It was cold and moist, and right away we saw a Yellow-legged Thrush. Our guide Gladwyn pointed out four different nests of various humming birds, and we had wonderful views of a male Blue-backed Manakin taking a bath in the creek. Just as we were getting back on the bus to return to Cuffie, a Venezuelan Flycatcher made an appearance. A good ending to our last day. That evening we enjoyed an Indian meal at our lodging and had fun discussing some of sightings and discoveries.

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| Sunday, March 1 Departures |
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This morning we all departed Cuffie at various times. We gathered in front of the lodge for a group photo, and we wished each other well. it was a fun group, very interested and interesting - as host of the group I enjoyed you all! Thank you for helping to make this trip what it was! And thanks to our guides for all their hard work in finding birds and making the trip run smoothly.



Trip Report and all Photos: by Dodie Logue

Veranda View from Asa Wright, White-line Sac-wing Bat, White-Bellied Ant Bird, Trinidad Piping Guan, Group looking at Guan, Road to Nariva Swamp, Ruby Topaz Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin, Caroni Swamp boat ride, Moth on Couch, Group passing cows, Hawaiian Torch Flower, Relaxing over drinks, Rufous-vented Chachalaca.