

Trinidad and Tobago



28 February-14 March 2000

Participants:

Peter & Gill Dishart

Ruth Ibbotson

Sue Jones

David & Kay Ryves

Stuart & Gillian Stanniland

John & Sheila Wagstaff

Brian & Terry Warhurst

Picture: Red-billed Tropicbird

Leaders:

Vaughan Ashby, Kenny Calderon & Martyn Kenefick

Day 1: We left Heathrow an hour late on British West Indian Airways, stopped in Barbados for about an hour and arrived in Trinidad still an hour late at 19.30. Because of the large number of flights for carnival, immigration took a little longer than usual but as soon as we cleared customs Martyn Kenefick met us for the thirty-minute transfer to PAX guesthouse. Despite our late arrival, we were met by Gerard & Oda who manage the guesthouse and treated to a rum punch and buffet dinner.

Day 2: A pre-breakfast walk started at the hummingbird feeders where we saw Copper-rumped Hummingbird, White-chested Emerald and Black-throated Mango with the more familiar site of a Merlin flying over! On the bird tables were numerous Blue-grey & Palm Tanagers, Great Kiskadees and Bare-eyed Thrushes together with smaller numbers of Silver-beaked & White-lined Tanagers, Ruddy Ground-doves and Bare-eyed Thrushes and a White-tipped Dove skulking on the ground. Following breakfast at 07.30, we walked up the road towards one of the trails. This proved rather slow going due to the number of new birds! Boat-billed Flycatchers with their massive bills dwarfed the tiny Bananaquits. Three Rufous-browed Peppershrikes gave uncharacteristically good views whilst two Orange-winged Parrots obligingly landed on an Immortelle Tree where Yellow Orioles were positively glowing in the sunshine. Other common birds included Smooth-billed Ani, Tropical Kingbird and Tropical Mockingbird whilst Short-tailed Swifts defied gravity overhead. A Chivi Vireo was seen with 4 Golden-fronted Greenlets at the beginning of one trail before turning back to another trail where a Rufous-breasted Wren showed well whilst four Plain-brown Woodcreepers gave prolonged close views. Forest birding in the tropics is never easy so it was therefore pleasing for the entire group to have superb views of a male Black-faced Antthrush at very close range. Antthrushes normally give a whole new meaning to the word elusive! New species continued to be added with Collared & White-tailed Trogons and Golden-crowned Warbler adding a splash of colour. It is always difficult to watch under bushes, in the trees and in the sky all at the same time but, with good numbers of raptors present, very necessary! By keeping an eye on the skies, we picked out Short-tailed, White & Zone-tailed Hawks in with the numerous Black & Turkey Vultures. After lunch and a two-hour break relaxing by the feeders where Blue-chinned Sapphire and Ruby-topaz Hummingbird were added to our lists, we returned to the forest again. En-route, we saw Greyish Saltator and Tufted Coquette and as soon as we entered the forest, White-bearded Manakin was a nice find. Both Ochre-bellied & Yellow-breasted Flycatchers showed well in the lower canopy and bathing respectively with a Blue Dacnis and a small flock of Turquoise Tanagers adding more colour. All too soon the light was fading and despite missing

Golden-headed Manakins at their lek, we had enjoyed an excellent first day seeing 56 species. Dinner followed the daily rum punch at 19.30.

Day 3: After an early morning feeder's session where Cocoa Thrush was seen, we left the guesthouse at 08.30 following breakfast. Our first stop was at the Agricultural Research Station where we birded all morning. New species came thick and fast in this open habitat and included White-winged Swallow, Grey-breasted Martin, Green-rumped Parrotlet, White-headed Marsh-tyrant, Pied Water-tyrant, Carib Grackle and Red-breasted & Yellow-hooded Blackbirds. In the remaining pools, overwintering waders included a small flock of Least Sandpipers and smaller numbers of Solitary & Spotted Sandpipers. Several Striated Herons were seen in the ditches and a male Ruddy-breasted Seedeater (an uncommon bird) gave excellent views with plenty of its more numerous cousin, Blue-black Grassquit (known locally as Johnny Jump-up because of its display). Raptors were not so common here with the exception of Savanna Hawk who prefer this type of habitat and Yellow-throated Spinetail proved quite elusive. A large heron flying over landed some way off and caused some identification problems in the developing heathaze. Whilst discussing the features, we were treated to the spectacle of several Fork-tailed Palm-swifts dashing back and forth over the fields. The heron incidentally, turned out to be the rare Cocoli Heron. Returning to our comfortable coach, we drove around the network of tracks continuing to add to our list with Gray Kingbird and a large flock of Southern Lapwings and a Yellow-bellied Elaenia. The undoubted highlight however, was an elusive Striped Cuckoo which, was eventually pinned down and gave excellent views to everybody. As it was late morning and becoming rather hot, we headed for Manzanilla Beach for lunch. A more idyllic spot you couldn't wish to pass an hour at, with blue seas, a golden beach and swaying palm trees all set off with fly by Brown Pelicans and a Magnificent Frigatebird! Reluctantly moving on, we made several stops for raptors and soon added both Yellow-headed Caracara and Plumbeous Kite. The next stop was at a mangrove-lined creek where a pair of Pearl Kites had built a nest. In the mangroves an American Pygmy-kingfisher gave prolonged views whilst both Bicolored Conebill and Red-rumped Woodpecker were normally difficult birds seen well. The 'chink' call of a Northern Waterthrush gave its location away but only showed briefly although 2 American Redstarts put on a first class display. Other impromptu stops gave us our only Squirrel Cuckoo of the trip, Great White Egret, Belted Kingfisher and Black-tailed Tityra. Another stop was a stakeout for Bat Falcon, which didn't disappoint us sitting on its normal dead tree. Arriving at Nariva Swamp, we had a brief view of an Azure Gallinule before it flew into deep cover. Wattled Jacanas and Cattle Egrets were numerous here and we soon located one of our target birds, Giant Cowbird, which was present in good numbers with its smaller cousin Shiny Cowbird. The highlight of the day was still to come however, as evening neared, small groups of Red-bellied Macaws started to arrive to roost. In total about 45 were seen, many of them sitting out in the open allowing good telescope views.

Day 4: After the usual pre-breakfast feeder session, we set out for Blanchisseuse Road after breakfast. This road traverses the Northern Range and gives easy access to areas of rainforest. It was slow going up this windy road but, at our first stop, we were amply rewarded with good views of both Double-toothed Kite and Ornate Hawk-eagle. Gray-rumped Swifts and 2 Band-rumped Swifts flew over the forest whilst a scan of the trees gave us Golden-olive and Lineated Woodpeckers and a trio of Channel-billed Toucans, a good start to the day! Continuing up the mountain road, several further stops were made the highlight of which was for Golden-headed Manakins which, showed superbly. Eventually, we reached the ridge and walked along the escarpment track. Unfortunately, the heavens opened at that moment so we reboarded the bus and drove down the north slope where we found a convenient bus shelter to eat our lunch in. With the rain abating, we drove further down the north slope to a site where Martyn regularly sees Rufous-tailed Jacamar. We were not disappointed, within a few minutes we were all enjoying excellent views of this jewel of a bird. After the rain, the area was alive with birds and we soon added the equally beautiful Purple Honeycreeper and Violaceous Euphonia to our lists whilst a group of parrots in flight obliged by not only landing in a close tree but by being Blue-headed Parrots as well! Returning back up the north slope, a sudden stop and quick reverse showed what incredible eyesight Kenny's had. A spectacular Blue-crowned Motmot was partially hidden in the foliage right next to the road. Both Rufous-tailed Jacamar and Blue-crowned Motmot are much commoner on Tobago but we had already seen both birds well on Trinidad! Arriving back at the ridge, we walked along the trail for a few hundred yards with plenty of keen eyes scanning the trees. A small flock of Speckled Tanagers were in the treetops close to the coach and several Scaled Pigeons flew over. A White-necked Thrush took a while to get good views of as we dodged the showers but the highlights were a splendid male Violaceous Trogon which showed extremely well and several Bay-headed Tanagers. Not quite so spectacular but nevertheless welcome were two new flycatchers, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Tropical Pewee. With the rain returning again, we returned to the coach and headed back down the south slope to PAX and a welcome rum punch and dinner.

Day 5: Our first destination of the day was Arena Forest, a reserve in the centre of the island. This type of lowland forest habitat is quite scarce in Trinidad now so is important for several specialities. Walking quietly along the road, it didn't take us long to hear the main target bird, White-bellied Antbird. Antbirds are notorious skulkers but fortunately, due to Kenny and Martyn's skills, it didn't take us long to not only all see it but have incredible prolonged views. As is typical in rainforest, plenty of birds were heard but few seen but with perseverance, we found several Lineated Woodpeckers and amongst the commoner Plain-brown Woodcreepers, several Buff-throated Woodcreepers. A solitary Red-crowned Ant-tanager played cat and mouse with us and a Northern Waterthrush walked along the road as we searched for another speciality of the forest Green Hermit. Male Green Hermits are fiercely territorial so as Kenny and Martyn knew the location of a displaying male it was easy! Even after being shown the bird through the telescope deep in the vegetation however, it was extremely difficult to locate and the chances of stumbling on it on your own were exceedingly remote, thank goodness for expert local guides! With the morning wearing on, we left the forest and checked out a nearby lake where Ringed Kingfisher, Anhinga and another Cocoli Heron were the highlights. Our next stop was at Trincity Sewerage Lagoons. Well, what good tour would be complete without a visit to sewerage pools or a rubbish tip! A small group of Least Grebes inhabited one of the pools whilst Common Gallinule reminded us

of home. Several Yellow-throated Spinetails gave frustratingly brief views until one decided to untypically sit in a tree in the open! Both Pied Water-tyrant and White-headed Marsh-tyrant showed very well and a Lesser Yellowlegs was probably a migrant heading north. By now, it was extremely hot so we returned to PAX for lunch and a rest. Late afternoon, we headed back to the lowlands again, this time to Wallerfield, a disused airfield. En-route, we stopped at an unlikely looking urban roadside site but low and behold there it was, a Piratic Flycatcher as promised with a colony of Yellow-rumped Caciques nearby! Wallerfield is a very open area of savannah type habitat interspersed with bushes and palm trees. It was immediately obvious that there were lots of birds about and even as we got out of the coach a Sulphury Flycatcher was found. A Ferruginous Pygmy-owl called relentlessly but defied all efforts to see it. As we searched however, we found several Barred Antshrikes and what was possibly the star bird of the tour, a splendid male Moriche Oriole, so rare in Trinidad that it was even new for Martyn! Four Lilac-tailed Parrotlets flew over and Red-bellied Macaws started to come in to roost in the palms. After avoiding a heavy shower and with plenty of light left, we continued around the area looking for Masked Yellowthroat which, we successfully found together with a Bran-coloured Flycatcher. All the time, the Ferruginous Pygmy-owl continued to call but remained unseen. As dusk gathered, we ate our packed dinners in the old control tower of the disused airfield but were interrupted by both Common Pauraque and White-tailed Nightjar coming out to hunt. Both species initially gave quite good views but as we walked around the runways, the views got better and better until we were able to watch a male White-tailed Nightjar by torchlight sitting on a dead twig only 10 yards away. A search for owls drew a blank although, Kenny heard a Tropical Screech-owl. We arrived back at PAX with plenty of time for a rum punch and other celebratory drinks!

Day 6: Today we headed straight for Waterloo, an area of mudflats on the coast. Immediately we started to add new birds to our lists including an impressive number of waders with Semipalmated Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Semipalmated & Western Sandpipers and Whimbrel all new for the tour. Large numbers of Laughing Gulls were present together with smaller numbers of Black Skimmer and a single Yellow-billed Tern. Several Neotropical Cormorants sat on posts whilst good numbers of Snowy Egrets and Little Blue and Tri-coloured Herons patrolled the mudflats together with a single Great Blue Heron. Moving on to Point a Pierre, primarily a wildfowl sanctuary similar to Slimbridge, we were very impressed by the close views of a number of species of wild birds on the feeders. We were able to eat our lunches watching Yellow Oriole, Blue-grey and Palm Tanagers and a superb male Ruby-topaz Hummingbird which all gave superb views. Walking on the trail around the lake, single Black-crowned Night-heron and Striated Herons were seen. At the waterfall, we spent some time scanning the lake and it didn't take us long to find our target bird, Red-capped Cardinal, a pair of which showed superbly. A Streak-headed Woodcreeper was found on trees around the waterfall before the heavens opened and we had to take shelter. The Anhinga perched on a branch nearby however seemed to be enjoying the rain! As we watched the lake from our shelter, we found several American Purple Gallinules in a reedbed on the opposite side of the lake. The rain stopped as quickly as it started and we returned to the information centre before re-boarding the coach. As we were leaving however, a couple of Saffron Finches were found which delayed our departure. At a complex of lakes nearby, large numbers of Black-crowned Night-herons were found together with several Greater Anis. With the afternoon wearing on and a boat to catch, we left for Caroni Swamp. After boarding our boat, we drifted slowly down the mangrove-lined channel, briefly seeing a Green Kingfisher and then a much more obliging Eared Dove. Eventually our target was located, a Grey Potoo roosting on the stump of a tree and for all the world looking part of it! Continuing down the channel, a Cox's Tree Boa was found coiled on a branch before we reached the tower which, we climbed for a spectacular view over the whole of the swamp. We could even see PAX guesthouse on the hillside in the distance. Returning to the boat, we headed out into the lagoon where several Blue-winged Teal and good number of Yellow-crowned Night-herons were seen. As dusk approached we headed for a position to view the Scarlet Ibises coming in to roost. We had seen the odd bird earlier on the boat trip but nothing prepared us for the spectacle of thousand of these birds flying in to roost in the mangroves. It was difficult to imagine that so many brightly coloured birds could hide themselves in the mangroves during the day! Heading back, the heavens opened once again but with excellent teamwork, we managed to get a waterproof cover over the boat before anyone got seriously wet. Again, it stopped as quickly as it started so we waited to see if we could spotlight a Boat-billed Heron coming out from its daytime roost. All we could find however were more Yellow-crowned Night-herons and the amazing view of a Grey Potoo flying overhead, so it was back to PAX for dinner

Day 7: With the Oilbird caves at Asa Wright now no longer available to day visitors, we had to visit a much more difficult site. As this involved an arduous six-hour walk there and back half the group decided to take the opportunity to visit Port of Spain and look at the preparations for the carnival whilst the rest of us set out up into the Northern Range. The road was in an 'interesting' condition and at one point we didn't think that the bridge was strong enough to take the coach! En-route we made a couple of stops where Bearded Bellbirds called and showed briefly. Eventually arriving at the trailhead we started the walk down the valley. The trail was in a poor condition and very muddy in places and this was exacerbated by a torrential downpour halfway down the valley! Fortunately we managed to find some cover and some large leaves came in very handy! Little time was spend birding on the way down except for looking through a mixed flock of Band-rumped, Gray-rumped and Short-tailed Swifts for anything rarer, as we wanted to reach the cave as soon as possible. Eventually, we reached our destination and were rewarded for our efforts with the eyrie sound of the Oilbirds. With the aid of a torch about 20 birds were seen well although, it was likely that many more were further in the cave. We resisted the temptation to venture further in as following the heavy rain a flash flood could have occurred at any time and a plaque at the cave entrance commemorated a British potholer who had died there. The return journey was taken at a more leisure pace with more birds being seen. As we negotiated the muddiest part of the trail, Rufous-breasted Hermit gave us a good display whilst several White-flanked Antwrens showed well half way back. Ironically, some of the best birds were however, seen near the trailhead with Great Antshrike, Dusky-capped & Slaty-capped Flycatchers and Forest Elaenia all new for the tour. Of birds previously seen, highlights were both Golden-headed & White-

bearded Manakins, Red-legged Honeycreeper and a Rufous-tailed Jacamar which gave wonderful views. Meeting up with the rest of the group at PAX, we were greeted with the news that they had seen a Broad-winged Hawk and two Trinidad Euphonias during their visit to the capital. They also enjoyed a visit to the beach and previews of the carnival costumes.

Day 8: A leisurely morning was spent around PAX looking for species previously missed by some or all of the group. Once again, Little Tinamou was heard but not seen although Grey-headed Kite gave excellent views for everyone to see, together with Gray & Zone-tailed Hawks. Several Southern Beardless-tyrannulets were found on the walk up from the guesthouse to the trailheads along with the usual common species. After lunch, we headed back to Nariva Swamp to try for several species we had missed on the previous visit. On the edge of the mangroves we found Red-rumped Woodpecker again together with an American Redstart and a Green Kingfisher showed briefly. It didn't take long to find our target bird, Black-crested Antshrike. Not content with just one bird however, we were soon watching anything up to ten including males, females and immatures, all around us. The Pearl Kite was watched on the nest again before moving along the coast road where a Common Black Hawk watched impassively as it was photographed from ten yards. When we arrived at the swamp, it was full of Wattled Jacanas, Pied Water-tyrants, White-headed Marsh-tyrants, Shiny & Giant Cowbirds and Red-breasted Blackbirds again. After negotiating a maze of tracks to get as near to the forest as possible, we had just disembarked when an American Swallow-tailed Kite was found and treated us to prolonged views. Entering the forest, it was apparent that all the recent rain had been beneficial to mosquitoes! We nevertheless decided to carry on and were soon watching Plumbeous Kites in a clearing. A Pale-vented Pigeon kindly perched in the treetop to allow telescope views and two Channel-billed Toucans kept an eye on our progress from above. As the mosquitoes were by now becoming troublesome, we returned to the coach seeing several Black-tailed Tityras and a flock of Southern Lapwings on our return journey. Once out of the forest, we drove to a good vantage point and it wasn't long before the Dickcissels came in to roost in the long grass in the swamp in their thousands, it was indeed an impressive sight. By now the Red-bellied Macaws were also coming in to roost, although in smaller numbers!

Day 9: The Caroni Rice Fields were our destination this morning. We surveyed the area from a bridge but the hoped for Limpkin did not materialise. As we kept scanning, Osprey and a Peregrine Falcon were seen and eventually our main target, Long-winged Harrier. At first, views were rather distant but a quick drive to a nearer vantage-point gave us all excellent views of three birds including an adult male. The area that they were hunting over was really part of the Coroni Swamp which looked really interesting so we drove down a dirt track until we could drive no further and then set off on foot. Almost immediately, we found two excellent birds for Trinidad, Pale-breasted Spinetail and several Northern Scrub-flycatcher. The spinetail only gave brief views but the flycatchers gave prolonged good views. The Long-winged Harriers gave incredible views even soaring above our heads and many other common marsh birds were seen. Returning to the coach, we drove the short distance to the new Coroni visitor centre, which unfortunately was not open. The security guard kindly let us in to birdwatch however, and for this we were very grateful as we found another rare Trinidad bird, Mangrove Cuckoo which showed remarkably well for this normally shy bird. Another Green Kingfisher was seen briefly together with Rufous-browed Peppershrike and two more Red-capped Cardinals. After returning to PAX for lunch, we spent the afternoon on the trails again seeing many of the common birds again including superb Turquoise Tanagers. After nine days, new birds were becoming harder to find but Long-billed Gnatwren and Streaked Xenops were both welcome additions to our lists with the gnatwrens showing particularly well.

Day 10: Because large numbers of cruise ship passengers visit Asa Wright, it is crucial to plan a visit to coincide with the least number. Fortunately, our hosts have good contacts at Asa Wright who Kenny used to work for, and so we picked the quietest day. Asa Wright is a superb place but unfortunately, it has become a victim of its own success with large numbers of (often-noisy) non-birders now visiting it. Groups of 30+ cruise ship day visitors are not uncommon on the trails so it is crucial to time the visit right. Our day was perfect and the birds were superb. From the balcony, the spectacle of birds on the feeders was amazing. Green & Purple Honeycreepers, Great Antshrike and numerous tanagers were supplemented by various hummingbirds on the feeders. The undoubted highlight here were several male White-necked Jacobins, which posed delightfully for photographs whilst a Golden-olive Woodpecker fed in a bromeliad only a few yards away. Our Asa Wright guide took us on a walk around the trails in the morning and after lunch, Kenny was allowed to take us on another walk. During these walks a superb selection of birds were seen. Male Bearded Bellbirds were watched calling from the treetops and all three species of trogons seen. Of the funerids, Grey-throated Leaf-tosser was heard but not seen but White-bellied Antbird, Black-faced Antthrush and White-flanked Antwren were all seen well. Flycatchers were everywhere and additions to the list included brief views of a Bright-rumped Attila and a Euler's Flycatcher. A White-bearded Manakin lek was an amazing sight to watch and an Ornate Hawk-eagle flew over. Red-crowned Ant-tanagers proved more obliging than elsewhere and a Blue-crowned Motmot sat motionless for everyone to see. Two Stripe-breasted Spinetails completed our 'set' whilst Chestnut Woodpecker left the rare Crimson-crested as the only one not seen on the tour. A Grey-fronted Dove was seen briefly by several members of the group and did I mention the Ferruginous Pygmy-owl? After the frustration at Wallerfield, the birds here couldn't have been more cooperative even allow Vaughan to photograph it for the cover of the 2001 Brochure! It was difficult to drag ourselves away from this fantastic place but a rum punch and dinner were beckoning at PAX!

Day 11: Before breakfast, two Lesser Swallow-tailed Swifts were seen by several members of the group. With our flight to Tobago not until early evening, we were able to spend most of the day relaxing or on the trails. Once again Little Tinamou was heard but not seen. The forest was however, full of birds and it was very pleasant watching familiar species. There were a couple of surprises, we found two pairs of White-bellied Antbirds holding territory and when the group split into two to search different trails, one group found a Trinidad Euphonia. Unfortunately those who had missed the previous bird were in the other group! After a leisurely lunch, a few decided to go for a last walk. Just as we were returning to PAX to board our coach to the

airport, a Long-billed Starthroat was found ensuring that we had found a new bird on every day during our stay at PAX! Returning to the airport, our twenty-minute flight to Tobago went smoothly and a coach provided by Speyside Inn met us. The journey to Speyside was uneventful except for a White-tailed Nightjar flying in front of the coach. After settling into our rooms (with fantastic sea views); we had an excellent dinner and were lulled to sleep by the noise of the waves rolling up on the beach.

Day 12: A pre-breakfast walk around the grounds of the Speyside Inn gave us several new birds. It was actually more a case of sitting on the veranda rather than walking! In the trees and bushes, several Chivi Vireos were joined by a couple of Scrub Greenlets whilst a Black-faced Grassquit fed on the lawn. A Rufous-vented Chachalaca was very vocal but unfortunately not seen but a Blue-crowned Motmot was very obliging. Several Pale-vented Pigeons were seen and they appeared a lot less wary than those on Trinidad, sitting on telephone wires. Scanning out towards Little Tobago Island we could see Magnificent Frigatebirds and very distant Brown Boobies. After breakfast, we strolled down to meet our boat to Little Tobago Island and en-route, saw several Caribbean Martins. As we headed out towards the island, a Broad-winged Hawk was seen flying along the mainland coast. Except for plenty of Magnificent Frigatebirds, no other seabirds were seen on the crossing although, the sealife below seen through the glass bottom of the boat was spectacular. The walk up to the top of Little Tobago Island was quite steep but on a good path and with stopping for birds like Chivi Vireo, taken at a leisurely pace. At the top of the island we rested by an old house where Venezuelan Flycatcher was seen. Continuing through the woods we finally arrived at a spectacular overlook where numerous Red-billed Tropicbirds and Brown Boobies could be watched. One of the tropicbirds could even be watched on the nest close to the path. After spending half an hour here, we moved on to another vantage-point where the views of Red-billed Tropicbirds were even more spectacular, in fact, you really had to watch where you trod. We had still not seen any other seabirds however, so we returned to the first viewpoint where, after careful scanning, a single white phase Red-footed Booby was seen well both perched and in flight. The terns would not be returning until April however, so as we could not stay that long we reluctantly made our way back down the path to re-board the boat. The return journey was equally enthralling with point blank views of Magnificent Frigatebirds and wonderful views of fish through the glass bottom. After a relaxing lunch, we walked along the coast road towards the Blue Waters Inn. Green Herons (they replace Striated Heron here which, only occur in Trinidad) were seen along the creek together with an incredibly tame flock of Ruddy Turnstone. The steep road up towards Blue Waters was taken at a leisurely pace not only enjoying the scenery but also the incredible views of White-fringed Antwren, which was almost permanently in view. Dinner at the Speyside Inn was wonderful and we were not surprised to see many guests from Blue Waters Inn trying to get a table. They were disappointed however, as we had taken most of the tables!

Day 13: Today we were met by Renson Jack our local guide together with Milton Eastman our coach driver, for the short journey to Gilpin Trace. En-route, we had excellent views of several Rufous-vented Chachalacas looking rather incongruous perched in trees. Passing by the terrace, we visited another area well known to Renson for White-tailed Sabrewing. The conditions underfoot were somewhat muddy (what do you expect in rainforest!) but we were not disappointed. The first new bird was a splendid Red-crowned Woodpecker. Picking our way through the driest spots, eventually, we found a superb male White-tailed Sabrewing, which perched right beside the path. Unfortunately, the weather decided to deteriorate and we had to return to the coach before we could look for Blue-backed Manakin. Driving back up to the top of the hill, we stopped at a rest area where we ate lunch and were able to buy cakes and coffee. This area is one of the best for Great Black Hawk but with low cloud and rain, we had no chance. Eventually the rain subsided and the cloud lifted so we decided to make the best of it and go straight to Gilpin Terrace. The track conditions here were appalling even with wellingtons and some of the groups were unable to make it. For those that were, the area was relatively birdless except for superb views of several Plain Antvireos. The reason for this was probably that everyone was looking at their feet instead of the trees! When we took a break and stood still for a while however, we were rewarded with excellent views of a White-necked Thrush and frustratingly heard but could not see Blue-backed Manakins. Eventually we had to give up and started the return walk but during another brief rest stop, a splendid male Blue-backed Manakin was spotted sitting in dense vegetation. Although nearly impossible to see with the naked eye, once you found the right spot you could see all the features through binoculars. Success! Continuing our walk back, the mud seemed a little less daunting and when we also found an Olivaceous Woodcreeper as well, it seemed positively enjoyable! Back at the coach, we decided to spend the last part of the day walking a short trail in woods on the opposite side of the road. In this secondary growth birds were in short supply but eventually most of us managed to get views of Yellow-legged Thrush.

Day 14: Our last full day and the group split into two in the morning with those who had missed the manakins the previous day visiting Renson's home where they were successful. The rest of us spent the morning at some small lakes where there was an excellent selection of common birds. Continuing on to Buccoo Marsh on the extreme eastern end of the island, we saw a couple of Royal Terns en-route. We had to pick our way carefully around the marsh but being one of the few areas of fresh water on the island, it was alive with birds. There were lots of Wattled Jacanas with a few Black-bellied Whistling-ducks whilst a careful check of all the Common Gallinules gave us two Caribbean Coots. The other side of the marsh was too wet to penetrate but the small area we were able to visit had several Blue-winged Teal and a pair of White-cheeked Pintail. Waders were dominated by Southern Lapwing but four Wilson's Snipe were found with the scattering of Solitary Sandpipers and Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs. Ironically, probably the rarest bird of Trinidad & Tobago was then found, a Little Egret, with Little Blue Heron & Snowy Egret for comparison! Green-rumped Parrotlet and Red-crowned Woodpecker were also seen well. We then drove to the beach where we had lunch whilst watching the world go by and were then entertained by goat racing! A final walk to the other side of the marsh added more White-cheeked Pintail and then amazing views of a pair of White-tailed Nightjars under some bushes. We returned to Speyside for dinner before a few of us opted for an evening's owling on the road to Gilpin Terrace.

White-tailed Nightjars were very common on the road and gave spectacular views and in addition, three Rufous Nightjars were seen. Try as we did however, we only managed brief flight views of a Striped Owl.

Day 15: The morning was spent working the area around Speyside. Although nothing new was seen, it was very pleasant seeing familiar birds in superb scenery. After lunch, we drove back to Scarborough to catch our flight back to Trinidad. The transfer went smoothly and we were soon on the flight back home via Barbados, arriving at London Heathrow the next morning at the end of the tour.