



A glorious Bridled Quail Dove (Mark Van Beirs)

THE LESSER ANTILLES including TRINIDAD

2 – 17/22 JUNE 2017

LEADER: MARK VAN BEIRS



The smart Forest Thrush of Guadeloupe (Mark Van Beirs)

Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Santa Lucia, Saint Vincent, Barbados and Grenada were the ten islands we visited on our recent Lesser Antilles tour. Some are independent countries in their own right, while others are Overseas Territories. All these islands exude a quite different flavour, as some are rich and well developed and some are obviously quite poor with pothole-riddled roads and limited infrastructure. We all expected a sunny Caribbean Islands holiday, but the weather was definitely not on our side this time. It was usually overcast and windy, and we lost quite a bit of birding time due to excessive rain, especially on Dominica, Santa Lucia and Saint Vincent. The many internal flights all went smoothly thanks to the local airline LIAT (Leeward Islands Air Transport, but often transcribed as 'Leave Island Any Time') doing a very good job. We had to be a bit patient at one or two car rental offices, but the Caribbean has its own notion of time... We recorded all of the endemics, but sadly, the Whistling Warbler of Saint Vincent refused to show in the short time we had between squalls there. Bridled Quail-Dove, Blue-headed Hummingbird, Guadeloupe Woodpecker, Red-necked and Saint Vincent Amazons, Brown and Grey Tremblers, Forest Thrush and Plumbeous Warbler were some of the more memorable highlights as they performed so very well. Our fantastic experience with three outstanding Great Sperm Whales at close range and a playful pod of Pantropical Spotted Dolphins on a boat trip off Dominica was truly breath-taking.



The endemic Trinidad Piping Guan performed very well (Mark Van Beirs)

Our visit to Trinidad produced a splendid selection of Neotropical birds and was a great introduction to South American birding as it offered good views of non-overwhelming numbers of hummingbirds, furnarids, antbirds, tyrant flycatchers, wrens, tanagers, New World warblers and icterids. The bird of the Trinidad extension was in fact not a bird at all, as the magical encounters with the Leatherback Turtles at Grande Rivière left us all quite speechless. It was an amazing experience seeing the enormous, exhausted females on the beach in the early morning and watching dozens of tiny turtles crawl out of the sand and make their way to the safety of the ocean. We obtained great looks at both Trinidad endemics: the rare Trinidad Piping Guan and the colourful, recently split Trinidad Motmot. Seeing and hearing the truly bizarre Oilbirds at very close range in their cave was another magnificent experience. The celebrated Caroni swamp cruise was a rather wet affair, but we still saw a cute Silky Anteater and a couple of hundred improbably red Scarlet Ibises fly in to their roost. We sure enjoyed the amazing hummingbird spectacle at Asa Wright and at a private house, where Tufted Coquettes and glowing Ruby Topazes were the highlights amongst 13 species of hummingbirds. The cracking scope views of perched Lilac-tailed Parrotlets, a singing male Bearded Bellbird at close range and eye-ball to eye-ball looks at displaying White-bearded Manakins were other brilliant moments of our short visit to Trinidad. We experienced a tropical storm with high winds and lots and lots of rain while at extraordinary Asa Wright, which resulted in large uprooted trees blocking the road for a while.



White-cheeked Pintail (Mark Van Beirs)

A leisurely late afternoon exploration of the mangrove-lined salt water lagoon in front of our hotel on the island of Antigua was the beginning of our island hopping Lesser Antilles experience. In contrast to previous tours, the lagoon was brimming with water. Several stops at viewpoints and short walks produced an excellent variety of waterbirds. Several West Indian Whistling Duck showed all too briefly, while White-cheeked Pintail and Ruddy Duck gave better views. The heron tribe was represented by Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Green Heron, lots of Great and Snowy Egrets and a few Tricolored and Little Blue Herons. A stretch of tall mangroves held an active colony of Western Cattle Egrets and Brown Pelicans, while overhead evil-looking Magnificent Frigatebirds kept an eye on things. Common Gallinules walked along the mangrove roots and scores of Black-necked Stilts had downy young, alarmed continuously and showed off their broken wing distraction display. Wilson's Plover, Greater Yellowlegs and Willet foraged along the muddy edges and good numbers of Laughing Gulls showed. Several Cabot's Terns and lots of hyper active, displaying Least Terns performed well. Eye-catching White-crowned Pigeons, Common Ground Doves and smart Zenaida and White-winged Doves were loafing on wires and dead branches. Several Caribbean Martins were hawking insects overhead and Mangrove Warblers, Bananaquits and Black-faced Grassquits played hide and seek amongst the shining mangrove leaves. A male Lesser Antillean Bullfinch sang away from its perch. A Broad-winged Hawk sailed over and was harassed by a feisty Grey Kingbird. All in all it made for a great introduction to the birdlife of these little known islands!



The adorable Barbuda Warbler (Mark Van Beirs)

A quick pre-breakfast look at the lagoon produced several Roseate Terns and a few more West Indian Whistling Duck, next to the more regular fare. After breakfast we transferred to the harbour of St John's, where we boarded the ferry to the neighbouring island of Barbuda. In the harbour we spotted introduced Eurasian Collared Doves, introduced House Sparrows and a couple of Common Bottle-nosed Dolphins while Royal Terns and a young Ring-billed Gull were seen as we left the jetty. A few Bridled Terns and a couple of unidentified turtles enlivened the fairly smooth boat journey. All seats on the catamaran ferry were taken as a big festival was taking place near the jetty on Barbuda. Upon arrival we walked inland and soon found nice woodland habitat. It didn't take long for the lovely, endemic Barbuda Warbler to show very well. On our walk we were all the time escorted by this enchanting creature. Subtly-plumaged Caribbean Elaenias also performed very well, as did Lesser Antillean Flycatchers and Lesser Antillean Bullfinches. Black-whiskered Vireos were singing everywhere and soon appeared in front of our binoculars. A Mangrove Cuckoo was heard and both Green-throated Carib and Antillean Crested Hummingbird (of the green crested race) visited tiny flowers in the undergrowth. A smart American Kestrel of the distinctive heavily marked local race *caribaeorum* was scoped. A couple of feral Helmeted Guineafowl foraged in the clearing where we munched our picnic lunch. In mid-afternoon we returned to the jetty and found Brown Booby and Ruddy Turnstone along the shoreline. The return ferry ride was uneventful and dinner in St John's tasted delicious.



Pearly-eyed Thrasher and Scaly-naped Pigeon on Montserrat (Mark Van Beirs)

Montserrat is a small volcanic island situated to the southwest of Antigua, which suffered several impressive volcanic eruptions in 1997-98. Pyroclastic flows and layers of ash and mud destroyed large areas of the southern half of Montserrat. In mid-morning an Islander plane took us to this little known island. After checking in at our well-appointed hotel, we drove into the hills and spent the rest of the day along a really nice trail through excellent foothill forest. Our main target here was of course, the endemic Montserrat Oriole. It didn't take too long to find a pair, which showed quite well and was even seen mating, but rather sadly, the male was still dressed in immature plumage. Although we persisted, no more orioles were seen well. Several Pearly-eyed Thrashers were easy to observe, but the Scaly-breasted Thrasher needed a bit more work. The cock-tailed Brown Trembler and the smart Forest Thrush both played hide and seek in the forest giants and eventually performed quite well. We managed pretty good binocular views of a couple of shy Bridled Quail-Doves and along the forest edge we observed small numbers of Scaly-naped Pigeons. In late afternoon the wind came up with a vengeance, so we returned to our hotel.



Zenaida Dove (Mark Van Beirs)



Least Terns (Mark Van Beirs)

The following morning we flew from Montserrat to Antigua, where we explored a couple of wetland areas in the heat of the day. Next to a good selection of already observed birds we also found Pied-billed Grebe, Western Osprey and American Coot (of the form with a large white frontal shield, which was previously called Caribbean Coot). Least Terns were displaying and Wilson's Plover showed well. In late afternoon we took a flight south to the island of Dominica and transferred to our hotel in the southwest of the Nature Island.



Red-necked Amazon and Lesser Antillean Bullfinch (Mark Van Beirs)

Early in the morning we were already high up in the hills of the Morne Diablotin (mountain of the Black-capped Petrels) National Park in the north of the island. The slopes of the highest mountain of Dominica (at 1,446m, the second highest peak in the Lesser Antilles) are still clothed in beautiful forest. We spent most of the day at our favourite view point overlooking a forested valley and managed to get excellent scope looks at the endemic, attractive and colourful Red-necked Amazon. We saw quite a few of these smart birds perched and in flight. Twice some of us obtained brief views of a single, endemic Imperial Amazon, but the encounter left us rather frustrated. This area also gave us Broad-winged Hawk, several American Black Swifts, scores of Lesser Antillean Swifts, several gorgeous Purple-throated Caribs, an attractive Blue-headed

Hummingbird, a brief Lesser Antillean Pewee, several good-looking Scaly-breasted Thrashers, an endearing Rufous-throated Solitaire, tame Lesser Antillean Bullfinches and a Red-rumped Agouti.



A male Caribbean Martin and a vagrant American Oystercatcher (Mark Van Beirs)

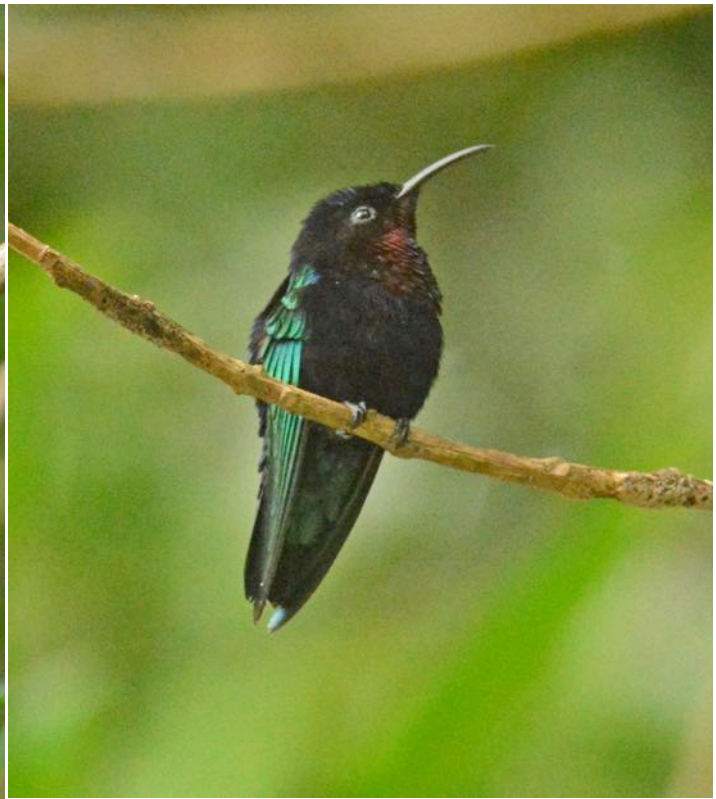
We returned to the same viewpoint next morning, but persistent rain ruined our birding experience. We did observe several Red-necked Amazons and had brief looks at a fly by Imperial Amazon. A Plumbeous Warbler showed very well and a House Wren of the distinctive Dominica race was lured in for excellent looks. We waited for the rain to relent, but eventually we had to concede defeat. On the return drive we stopped for splendid looks at several showy Caribbean Martins. After a tasty lunch we boarded a dive boat which first took us along the rocky shoreline southwards, where a single American Oystercatcher was a nice surprise. Several Magnificent Frigatebirds and a rather dark-looking immature Common Tern were hovering over a school of foraging tuna. Upon approaching the southern tip of Dominica we started to feel the force of the Atlantic Ocean as the wind increased and whitecaps appeared. Some distant Cory's Shearwaters and several better behaved Brown Boobies, Brown Noddies and Bridled Terns were seen. We turned away from these turbulent waters and headed towards the west stopping a few times to listen for whales with a hydrophone. A pod of playful Pantropical Spotted Dolphins provided good entertainment. Eventually we picked up the distinctive clicks of an echo locating Sperm Whale and first had great looks at a solitary animal. Later we managed to get close to a mother and her calf, which really allowed superb looks at close range. We had fantastic views of the bulbous head, the knobby backfin and the enormous fluke. After this success we returned to base and had a quick look in the hotel garden, where we were shown an occupied nest of a Green Heron. A flowering Bottlebrush tree was visited by five Antillean Crested Hummingbirds and a Green-throated Carib and a Tropical Mockingbird was singing from the roof.



Fabulous Great Sperm Whales gave terrific views off Dominica (Mark Van Beirs)

The following day was mainly a travelling day involving a bit of driving, lots of waiting and two bouts of flying. We arrived on the island of Guadeloupe in the afternoon, after transiting through the island of Antigua. Guadeloupe is a French department and, in contrast to several other Lesser Antillean islands, exuded a distinct Mediterranean atmosphere, with its four lane expressways, boulangeries, gendarmes and fancy cars.

Just after dawn we were already exploring the forest covering the slopes of the mountains of Basse-Terre, the southwestern part of Guadeloupe. The usually rather shy Bridled Quail-Doves were walking about in the open so we could study and photograph these beauties at length and in detail. No fewer than eight of these Antillean endemics were counted. Several retiring Forest Thrushes were found foraging on the deck along the forest edge, offering us our best views of the tour. A couple of lovely Plumbeous Warblers paid us an extended visit and obliged at close range. Good numbers of Brown Tremblers were visiting the fruiting trees and illustrated why they are called that way. A pair of Mangrove Cuckoos were seen copulating, after the male had offered a preying mantis to his partner. Several gorgeous Purple-throated Caribs were found sunning themselves in the morning warmth on bare twigs in the mid storey. But the highlight of our very enjoyable morning was the modestly plumaged Guadeloupe Woodpecker, that showed so very well. Four of these Guadeloupe endemics were almost constantly about and allowed us to admire the intricacies of their attire. In late morning, we reluctantly left this splendid venue and made our way to the modern airport of Pointe-à-Pitre to board the short flight to the island of Martinique. Upon arrival we drove to our accommodation on the eastern peninsula of La Caravelle. The day ended with a tasty sea food dinner in a Créole restaurant on the waterfront.



Mangrove Cuckoo and Purple-throated Carib (Mark Van Beirs)



The Brown Trembler shivered well for us (Mark Van Beirs)

A pre breakfast exploration of the dry woodland near our hotel produced nice observations of White-breasted Thrasher (endemic to Martinique and Santa Lucia). A pair of these rather skulking birds played a bit hard to

get, but we all had pretty good looks at this unique species. Bulky Lesser Antillean Saltators were visiting a fruiting tree and pretty Mangrove Warblers obliged ever so well. The form here has a distinctive rufous head, totally unlike the birds on the neighbouring islands. After a delicious breakfast in a boulangerie we headed into the highlands close to the infamous volcano of Montagne Pelée, whose violent eruption in 1902 killed 28,000 people on the island. Birding along a fairly quiet road through splendid mountain forest gave us good looks at Martinique's sole endemic: the rather different looking Martinique Oriole. Three birds were noted and we managed to scope one while it was preening itself on a bare twig in the canopy. Several Grey Tremblers (endemic to Martinique and Santa Lucia) moved through the tree crowns and showed their distinctive colour and behaviour. A Rufous-throated Solitaire was feeding a fledgling and a superb male Blue-headed Hummingbird posed in the scope for more than 10 minutes! Several Spectacled Thrushes were also noted. In late afternoon we returned to the La Caravelle Peninsula, where dozens of Magnificent Frigatebirds hovered over a distant stack and small numbers of Brown Noddies foraged offshore. The woodland didn't yield anything new, but several Tropical Mockingbirds were singing from the tops of bushes.



Western Cattle Egret in breeding attire; the amazing nest of an Antillean Crested Hummingbird (Mark Van Beirs)

A pre breakfast birding session in the nearby dry woodland was very quiet. After a scrumptious breakfast in the local boulangerie, we drove to the airport and flew south to the island of Santa Lucia. After the usual formalities we checked into our very nice hotel. A teeming Cattle Egret colony at the edge of a lotus covered pond just in front of the hotel was well worth a good look, but even better was the tiny nest of an Antillean Crested Hummingbird in a potplant next to one of our rooms. The nest was a magnificent, tiny structure camouflaged with lichen and held two diminutive young. In the afternoon we explored a stretch of woodland edge and neglected fields where we scoped a cracking, endemic Santa Lucia Oriole. It sat up for a while and was much admired. The woodland also gave us a pair of lovely Santa Lucia Warblers with their fledgling. Great looks! A Grey Tumbler was shivering about and several Shiny Cowbirds were foraging on a football field.

Early next morning found us in the wetter highlands in the south of the island, where we positioned ourselves at a strategic viewpoint. Pairs of colourful, endemic St. Lucia Amazons regularly flew over allowing for pretty good views. A single, endemic St. Lucia Pewee obliged all too briefly and a couple of Antillean Euphonias showed in a tree top. In late morning we left the hills and made our way south. A short stop at a lake gave us several American Coot and two totally unexpected Short-tailed Swifts. Later we explored the southern tip of Santa Lucia (Moule a Chique), where we observed several elegant Red-billed Tropicbirds, Brown Boobies, Brown Noddies and Bridled and Sooty Terns in rather windy conditions. A bout of birding in some scrubby coastal vegetation didn't produce anything of note, so in late afternoon we returned to our hotel and admired the activity at the heronry.



The St. Lucia Warbler is a delightful creature (Mark Van Beirs)

We tried before dawn for Rufous Nightjar, but not a sniff was heard. We spent most of the morning on the forested Grande Anse track, which gave us our final Santa Lucia endemic: the Santa Lucia Black Finch. A nice male of this unobtrusive species was feeding on the track and showed us its characteristic tail bobbing and fairly slender bill. Not much later we encountered the very distinctive form of the House Wren, as it was singing away in the mid canopy. With its bright white underparts it looked decidedly different from the Dominica form. We obtained more looks at a striking Santa Lucia Oriole and at several endearing Santa

Lucia Warblers, next to a good selection of already seen species. In late morning we returned to our hotel for a leisurely lunch. A bit of sightseeing for some and relaxing for others filled the afternoon till it was time for our early evening flight to Saint Vincent.



Grenada Flycatcher and Lesser Antillean Tanager (Mark Van Beirs)

Rain ruined part of our first day on the island of St Vincent as we spent a fair amount of time standing under shelter or under our umbrellas while it was raining cats and dogs. In the morning we visited the famous Vermont area in the forested foothills of the south, where, in between squalls and showers we observed good numbers of St Vincent Amazons flying to and fro. After a particularly heavy shower no fewer than 60 of these very attractive endemics were gathering in a few emergent trees on top of a forested ridge and were interacting and playing about. Splendid behaviour and much appreciated scope looks! Four Common Black Hawks could be scoped and a couple of subtly-plumaged Grenada Flycatchers were hawking insects. A Lesser Antillean Tanager of the distinctive St Vincent race was foraging in a Breadfruit tree and cute totally black Bananaquits fed in tiny flowers. We also found typical South American birds like Eared Dove and Yellow-bellied Elaenia. A short foray in the forest gave us good views of a House Wren of the St Vincent race. In the afternoon we visited the Kingstown Botanical gardens, but once again rain sabotaged our stay and the only bird of note was a magnificent male Antillean Crested Hummingbird that showed its gorgeous blue and green crest. A Cocoa Thrush was also noted in this nice area.



Eared Dove and Cocoa Thrush (Mark Van Beirs)

Another morning in the verdant hills of St Vincent didn't add a lot to our tally. We walked along a nice trail through beautiful forest, but nothing was moving or singing. Although it didn't rain, it was dark and very gloomy. Eventually we heard the distinctive glissading song of the endemic Whistling Warbler, but it was too distant, so there was no response. A fledged Broad-winged Hawk was begging for food, several St Vincent Amazons flew over and we heard the song of the St Vincent race of the House Wren. Upon retracing our steps we heard another Whistling Warbler and this one obviously came in for a better look, but immediately disappeared, causing major frustration! Then it was time to organize ourselves for the next island. We arrived in late afternoon on Barbados and while waiting for the transport to our hotel, we had our first views of the rather dull-looking Barbados Bullfinch, the only endemic of the island. The day ended with a nice BBQ dinner on the seaside.



The Barbados Bullfinch is the most subtly-attired endemic of The Lesser Antilles (Mark Van Beirs)

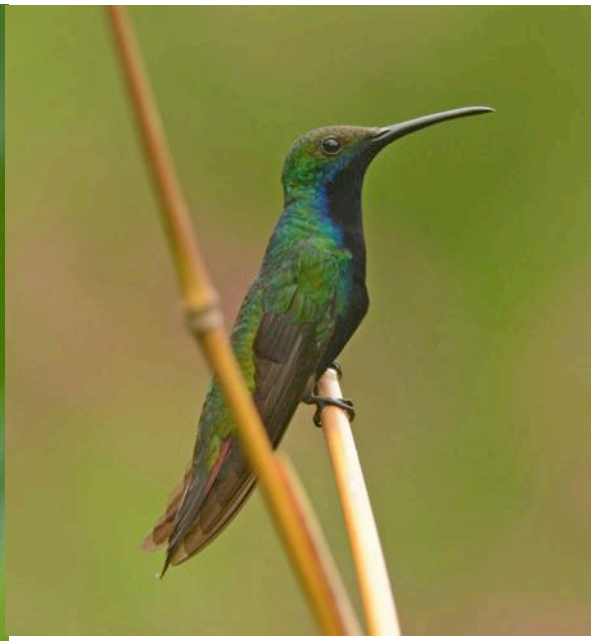
Endemic, very modestly-plumaged Barbados Bullfinches were commonly observed in the sparse gardens of our hotel before breakfast. Endearing Bananaquits were raiding the sugarpots in the restaurant and Scaly-naped Pigeons, Zenaida Doves and Caribbean Elaenia also showed. Our midday flight to the island of Grenada was a smooth affair and after checking in into our rather posh resort, we birded a nice stretch of woodland in the south of the island. We soon heard the distinctive calls of the endemic Grenada Dove, our main target here, but try as we might, we couldn't locate it. Several House Wrens of the local Grenada form were seen well and a few Smooth-billed Anis were spotted. An after dinner nightbirding excursion produced excellent views of an adult and a fledgling of the local form of Barn Owl, which is sometimes considered a

separate species (Lesser Antillean Barn Owl), or sometimes regarded as belonging with Ashy-faced Owl. Whatever the taxonomists will decide, we obtained great looks!



A Bananaquit pinching sugar from the breakfast table on Barbados; Spectacled Thrush at its nest (Mark Van Beirs)

On the final day of the main tour we returned to the reserve and slowly walked the narrow trails through the thorny woodland. We heard several Grenada Doves vocalize and eventually we all got views, but we would have preferred better looks at this scarce endemic. Several Black Bananaquits were seen flitting about and we heard the raucous calls of introduced Orange-winged Amazons overhead. After our best breakfast of the trip, we had a look at a nest of a Spectacled Thrush with chicks in the garden of our hotel and drove to the airport, where the main section of the tour ended and where we said goodbye to several participants.



White-necked Jacobin and Black-throated Mango at Asa Wright (Mark Van Beirs)

The Trinidad extension started at the Piarco airport near the capital Port of Spain where new participant Michael was waiting for us. We were welcomed by Kenny, our able Mr fixit and while waiting for the bus observed Western Osprey, several Black Vultures, White-winged Swallows and Grey-breasted Martins. The drive to world famous Asa Wright produced a Limpkin, Southern Lapwing, Ruddy Ground Doves, Ringed Kingfisher and many Tropical Kingbirds. Upon arrival at this magnificent venue we quickly gathered on the veranda and spent the rest of the afternoon admiring the action at the feeders and in the surrounding bushes and trees. The hummingbird feeders were visited by dozens of feisty White-necked Jacobins and smaller numbers of Black-throated Mangos, Blue-chinned Sapphires, White-chested Emeralds, Copper-rumped Hummingbirds and a Long-billed Starthroat. A female Tufted Coquette favoured the tiny flowers of a Vervain

bush. The local guide pointed out a delicate Green Hermit nest attached to the chain of a hanging lamp in one of the communal rooms. While sipping and munching the four o'clock tea and pies we observed Scaled Pigeon, Grey-fronted Dove, Squirrel Cuckoo, Guianan Trogon, male and female Barred Antshrike, Cocoa and Spectacled Thrushes, Violaceous Euphonia, Crested Oropendola and Yellow Oriole. Best of all was a superb male Bearded Bellbird that was scoped on his distant favourite perch. Tanagers were represented by White-lined, Silver-beaked, Blue-grey, Palm, Turquoise and Bay-headed and other interesting birds included Blue Dacnis and Purple and Green Honeycreepers, while several Red-rumped Agoutis wandered about.



A male Violaceous Euphonia; the amazing Oilbirds (Mark Van Beirs)

Next morning, we started in the open areas around the accommodation where several incredibly handsome male and more modest female Tufted Coquettes were visiting the vervain bushes. Overhead we spotted a cracking White Hawk and Channel-billed Toucan, Orange-winged Amazon and Piratic Flycatcher also obliged. We strolled along the entrance road and found a couple of gorgeous Golden-headed Manakins feeding on tiny berries and we obviously had another look at the different hummingbirds at the splendid feeders. After a scrumptious breakfast we walked to the famous Oilbird cave, which is in fact not a cave but a narrow gorge. A pair of White-flanked Antwrens escorted us and upon arriving we already heard the "Donald Duck in a rage" sounds emanating from the area. We quietly entered the narrow fissure and obtained brilliant views of these really bizarre nightbirds at close range. A truly splendid experience! We walked some other trails and although it regularly rained, we had a great time observing a singing (well, vocalizing) male Bearded Bellbird in the mid canopy and spent some magical time at a busy lek of White-bearded Manakins, where we were continuously surrounded by the tell-tale fire cracker sounds. A Black-faced Antthrush walked rail-like about and we also saw Cocoa Woodcreeper, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, White-necked Thrush and Red-crowned Ant Tanager. Those of us that had stayed at the veranda obtained good looks at a Trinidad Motmot and at a Black-tailed Tityra. Through the middle of the day we sat on the veranda enjoying great looks at Zone-tailed Hawk, Forest Elaenia, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, very smart Red-legged, Purple and Green Honeycreepers and a Red-tailed Squirrel. In the afternoon we drove into the lowlands to a disused airfield surrounded by stretches of Moriche (Mauritia) palms. Specialities here included several modest Sulphury Flycatchers, a lovely female Ruby Topaz, c30 Red-bellied Macaws feeding on the palm fruits, a pair of well-behaved Black-crested Antshrikes and an Epaulet Oriole next to more widespread species like Turkey Vulture, Grey-lined and Short-tailed Hawks, Southern Lapwing, Pale-vented Pigeon, Grey-rumped and Short-tailed Swifts, Neotropical Palm Swifts, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Lineated Woodpecker, Yellow-headed Caracara, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Yellow-rumped Cacique and Blue-black Grassquit (with its magnificent local name of Johnny Jump Up). Our tasty dinner at Asa Wright was interrupted by a Black Mastiff Bat that showed very well on the floor of the dining room.



Asa Wright is the best place in the world to admire Bearded Bellbirds (Mark Van Beirs)

At dawn we were again walking along the entrance road hoping to get to grips with Trinidad Motmot and indeed, in the gloomy morning light we spotted one singing away in a shady bamboo patch. This recent split from Blue-crowned Motmot is now considered a separate species endemic to the island of Trinidad! We also connected with Great Antshrike (a female) and admired a splendid male Golden-headed Manakin. In the

garden we found a nest of a Spectacled Thrush with large chicks. After breakfast we explored the road into the hills, where several stops in great looking forest gave us Rufous-breasted Hermit, Green-backed and Collared Trogons, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Streaked Xenops, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Tropical Pewee, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Rufous-breasted Wren, Long-billed Gnatwren and Golden-crowned Warbler. Rain regularly interrupted our birding, but we still came away with nice observations. After lunch we boarded our bus and headed towards the famous Caroni swamp. A large grassy area held a Savanna Hawk and a rather bedraggled-looking Pearl Kite sat on a roadside wire. A short stop at some inaccessible sewage works gave us a good variety of widespread species like Purple Gallinule, Wattled Jacana, Yellow-billed and attractive Large-billed Terns, White-tipped Dove, Yellow-chinned Spinetail (at the nest), Pied Water Tyrant and Red-breasted and Yellow-hooded Blackbirds. Two Black Skimmers were totally unexpected and the scope views of an intriguing Striped Cuckoo were much appreciated. In mid-afternoon we boarded a flat bottom boat and slowly made our way through the impressive mangrove swamp. We spent quite a while within the mangrove forest itself where Green-throated Mango, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Ochre-colored Flatbill, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Bicolored Conebill showed. Best of all was a Silky (or Pygmy) Anteater that was sleeping quite high on a branch of a large mangrove tree. This smallest member of the anteater family was totally curled up and looked like a ball of fur! Wow! Towards dusk we stopped at the edge of a large stretch of mudflats and mangrove and observed the roost flight of small flocks of colourful, bloodred Scarlet Ibises together with a variety of herons, egrets and waders including Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Tricoloured and Little Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets, Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Greater Yellowlegs and Willet. We also recorded Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Anhinga and a sneaky Greater Ani. The return journey to Asa Wright was quite slow due to heavy rain. We then heard that a 'Storm Warning' had been issued for the whole of Trinidad for the next 24 hours. It indeed rained cats and dogs the whole night through and we were hit by very strong winds for a while in the darkest hours of the night.



The glorious Scarlet Ibises of the Caroni swamp (Mark Van Beirs)

In the morning we could appreciate the ravage the tropical storm had caused. Several big trees and quite a few smaller trees and bushes had been uprooted and everywhere were fallen boughs, broken branches and discarded bromelias. The giant bamboos had taken a severe beating and the entrance road was covered in plant debris. It soon became apparent that the main road was blocked as no vehicles could be seen. Several big trees and a flooded stream had taken care of that. Our departure from Asa Wright was thus delayed by several hours. It kept on raining quite heavily on and off throughout the morning. Birding in the gardens

produced more sightings of well-known avian delights. Eventually, close to midday, we were able to continue our travels and said goodbye to the fabulous venue of Asa Wright. We first drove to the hummingbird paradise of Yurette, where we had a fantastic time observing no fewer than 11 species of sugar driven hummers. Best of all were the magnificent males Ruby Topaz that seemed to glow from the inside. The way their colours changed as they hovered in front of the feeders was truly awesome! A female Amethyst Woodstar was a new bird for this tour and we also admired the antics of already known species like Black-throated and Green-throated Mangoes, White-chested Emerald, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, a female Tufted Coquette, Blue-chinned Sapphire, Long-billed Starthroat and White-necked Jacobin. A pair of Greyish Saltators foraged in a fruiting tree. After this extraordinary spectacle, we grabbed a quick late lunch nearby and drove the rest of the afternoon to the far northeast of the island to the lovely area of Grand Rivière. We arrived in late afternoon at our beach hotel and had dinner by candlelight, as the power supply had been cut off by the storm.

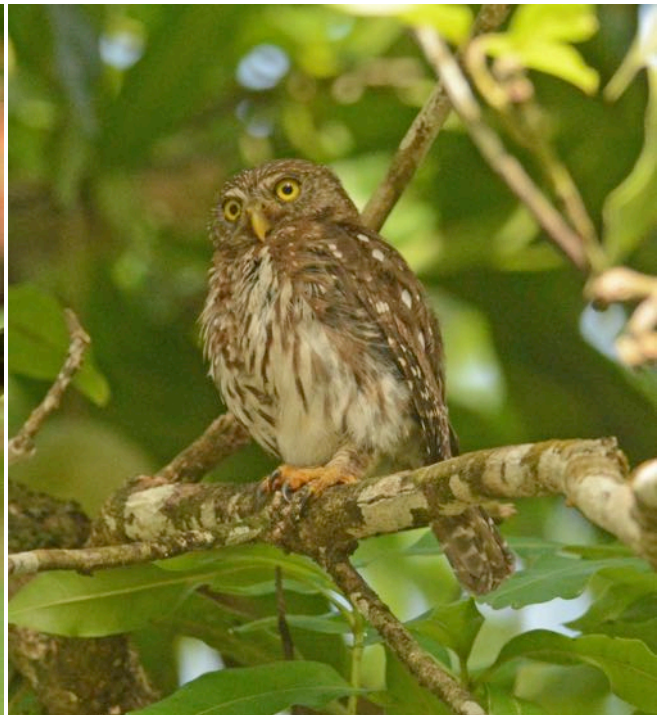


The male Ruby Topaz is a real cracker! (Mark Van Beirs)



The Leatherback Turtles at Grande Rivière sure made an impression (Mark Van Beirs)

The day started in the twilight on the beach in front of the hotel, where five enormous lady Leatherback Turtles were just finishing their egg laying duties. It was totally surreal to be able to observe these gigantic creatures so very up close. As it was slowly getting light, they covered their hatch and laboriously made their way back to sea. Magical moments! We then drove into the hills to our favourite viewpoint where we scanned the surrounding treetops. Minutes later the scope was already showing a rare, endemic Trinidad Piping Guan in all its beauty. For the next 30 minutes we gorged ourselves on the splendid sight of about ten of these splendid birds, as they fed in a fruiting tree or just enjoyed the warming morning sunrays. A fantastic birding experience.



A male White-bellied Antbird singing away; Ferruginous Pygmy Owl (Mark Van Beirs)

Later we explored a nearby track and had great encounters with Plumbeous Kite, Pale-breasted Spinetail, a cracking White-bellied Antbird, White-winged Becard, Golden-fronted Greenlet and Trinidad Euphonia. A pause in the heat of the day produced a Western Osprey and the return of power. In the afternoon we explored the gardens surrounding the hotel, which gave us an angry-looking Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, White-

tipped Dove and a smart Rufous-browed Peppershrike. We returned to the hills for a while where we bagged Streaked Flycatcher and Tropical Parula and then received a call from Kenny that he had located several Lilac-tailed Parrotlets in the canopy of a tall tree. Not much later we were observing the antics of several of these rarely seen beauties through the scope. Fantastic moments! Parrotlets belonging to the genus *Touit* are usually only seen in swift flight overhead, so seeing these exquisite birds courting, skirmishing and displaying was pure eye candy. Whilst enjoying our dinner the dining room was steadily being invaded by dozens of just fledged, tiny Leatherback Turtles, that were attracted by the restaurant's lights. We collected them all and released these cute creatures at the edge of the sea. Later some of us admired several female Leatherback Turtles arriving arduously on the beach, watched them dig a deep hole with their hind flippers and saw them lay dozens of eggs. Quite a unique spectacle.



We collected three boxes full of tiny Leatherback Turtles; a pair of displaying Short-tailed Swifts (Mark Van Beirs)

Next morning, while the sun was struggling with the horizon we stood in awe near a late female Leatherback Turtle on the beach as she was covering her eggs and making her way back to the safety of the wide ocean. Small turtles were found arriving at the surface struggling out of a tiny hole in the sand. We escorted these beautiful little creatures on their way to their new home keeping the vultures and other predators at bay. After this splendid sight we made our way into the hills and had more good looks at the marvellous Trinidad Piping Guans. They kept a much lower profile compared to the day before, but we still obtained good looks. We also checked the roosting tree of the Lilac-tailed Parrotlets, but nothing was moving there. Our last walk in the hills gave us a nice Silvered Antbird and a humble Southern Bearded Tyrannulet, next to a great bird of prey show including Plumbeous Kites and Common Black, White and Grey-lined Hawks. And then it was time to drive to international airport where our ways parted. Trinidad sure had shown us its bountiful treasures!



Great Sperm Whales never fail to impress (Mark Van Beirs)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

(CR) = Critically Endangered, (E) = Endangered, (V) = Vulnerable, (NT) = Near Threatened

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED IN THE LESSER ANTILLES

West Indian Whistling Duck ◊ *Dendrocygna arborea* (V) Several showed fairly distantly on Antigua.

White-cheeked Pintail *Anas bahamensis* Excellent close up looks on Antigua.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* A flock of c25 birds was seen on Antigua.

Helmeted Guineafowl (introduced) *Numida meleagris* Two of these well-known birds were noted on Barbuda.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis* Three showed in the distance on our boat trip off Dominica.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Two were seen on a pond on Antigua.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* Nice looks at 5 from the southern cape on Santa Lucia.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Several records from different islands.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nyctanassa violacea* Nice looks at several on different islands.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* Seen on all the islands visited, with the exception of Barbados.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Common. Great looks at a colony at our Santa Lucia hotel.

Great Egret (American G E) *Ardea [alba] egretta* Good numbers were noted on Antigua.

Tricolored Heron (Louisiana H) *Egretta tricolor* A handful of observations on Antigua.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* Small numbers were noted on several islands. Many immature birds.



Green Heron and Yellow-crowned Night Heron (Mark Van Beirs)

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* Many on Antigua and small numbers on several other islands.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* Regular. A thriving colony could be admired on Antigua.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* This kleptoparasite was seen on all the islands visited.



A Magnificent Frigatebird and a Brown Pelican fighting for a piece of fish (Ian Lewis); Common Gallinule with chicks (Mark Van Beirs)

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Seen on the boat trips and from the southern cape of Santa Lucia.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* One showed well on Antigua.

Common Black Hawk *Buteogallus anthracinus* Great looks at several birds on St Vincent.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* Recorded on most islands. Several begging fledglings were seen. See Note.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata* Regular. Showy on Santa Lucia where we saw immatures feed chicks.

American Coot ♦ (Caribbean C) *Fulica americana* Small numbers were seen on Antigua and on Santa Lucia.

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus* A single bird was found on our Dominica boat trip. A rare visitor.

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* Common and vociferous on Antigua.

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* A few were noted on Antigua, including a brooding bird.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* A single bird was noted on Antigua.

Willet (Eastern W) *Tringa [semipalmata] semipalmata* Several showed well on Antigua.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* A single bird was seen on Barbuda.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Small numbers were seen on different islands.



Black-necked Stilt and Cabot's Tern (Mark Van Beirs)

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* Very common on Antigua and smaller numbers elsewhere.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* An immature bird showed in the harbor on Antigua.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* Just a handful of records.

Cabot's Tern *Thalasseus acuflavidus* Close up looks on Antigua and a few records elsewhere.



Least Tern; A Black Tern hovering over a school of tuna. This rather odd looking bird caused some confusion (Mark Van Beirs)

Least Tern *Sternula antillarum* Fantastic looks at fishing and displaying birds on Antigua.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* Seen on the boat trips and from the southern cape of Santa Lucia.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* Several were seen off the southern cape of Santa Lucia.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* Nice looks at several on Antigua.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* A single dingy bird (*surinamensis*) was fishing over a school of tuna off Dominica.

Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*

White-crowned Pigeon ♦ *Patagioenas leucocephala* (NT) Many good looks on Antigua and Barbuda.

Scaly-naped Pigeon ♦ *Patagioenas squamosa* Commonly encountered from Montserrat south.

Eurasian Collared Dove (introduced) *Streptopelia decaocto* Regular sightings on most islands.

Common Ground Dove *Columbina passerina* Regular on all the islands visited. See Note.

Ruddy Quail-Dove *Geotrygon montana* Heard on Dominica and seen quite well on St Vincent.

Bridled Quail-Dove ♦ *Geotrygon mystacea* Splendid looks at 8 birds on Guadeloupe. Also seen on Montserrat.

Grenada Dove ♦ *Leptotila wellsi* (CR) Brief looks at three birds on Grenada. A bit disappointing.



Scaly-naped Pigeon and Common Ground Dove (Mark Van Beirs)

Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata* A few on St Vincent and fairly common on Grenada.

Zenaida Dove ♦ *Zenaida aurita* Regularly seen on all the islands with the exception of St Vincent.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* Small numbers were noted on Antigua and Barbuda.

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani* We only saw this widespread species on Grenada.

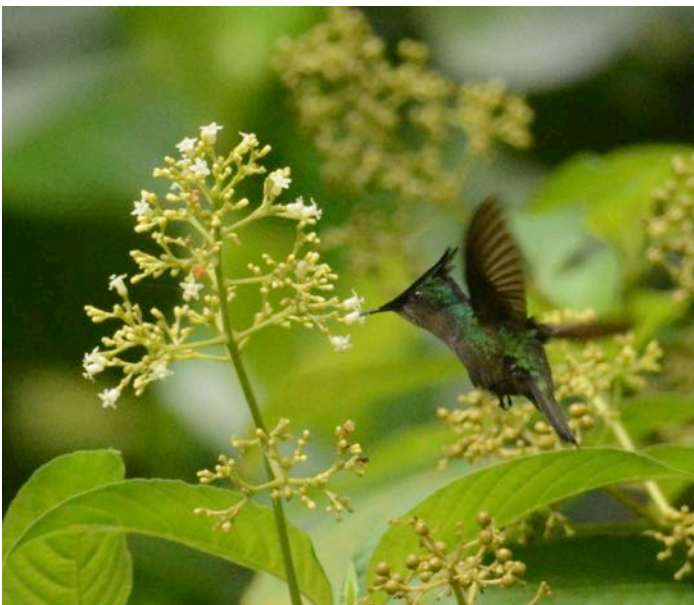
Mangrove Cuckoo ♦ *Coccyzus minor* Regular encounters. Cracking views of a mating pair on Guadeloupe.

Western Barn Owl ♦ (Lesser Antillean B O) *Tyto [alba] insularis* Two showed quite well on Grenada.

American Black Swift ♦ *Cypseloides niger* Several performed nicely on Dominica.

Lesser Antillean Swift ♦ *Chaetura martinica* Regular observations.

Short-tailed Swift *Chaetura brachyura* Five sightings on Santa Lucia and quite regular on St Vincent.



Antillean Crested and Blue-headed Hummingbirds (Mark Van Beirs)

Purple-throated Carib ♦ *Eulampis jugularis* Many excellent views of this beauty.

Green-throated Carib ♦ *Eulampis holosericeus* A bit less common than previous species, but regularly noted.

Antillean Crested Hummingbird ♦ *Orthorhyncus cristatus* Many splendid encounters. See Note.

Blue-headed Hummingbird ♦ *Cyanophaia bicolor* Great views of this attractive species on Dominica and Martinique.

Guadeloupe Woodpecker ♦ *Melanerpes herminieri* (NT) Several very well behaved birds showed on Guadeloupe.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* Six observations of this widespread falcon.

Red-necked Amazon ♦ (R-n Parrot) *Amazona arausiaca* (V) Very nice scope views in the mountains of Dominica.

St. Lucia Amazon ♦ (Saint L Parrot) *Amazona versicolor* (V) Nice looks on Santa Lucia, but always in flight.



Guadeloupe Woodpecker and St. Lucia Amazons (Mark Van Beirs)

Imperial Amazon ♦ (I Parrot) *Amazona imperialis* (E) Three sightings of flying birds in the highlands of Dominica.

St. Vincent Amazon ♦ (Saint V Parrot) *Amazona guildingii* (V) Spectacular, although distant, views of 60 birds.

Orange-winged Amazon *Amazona amazonica* (H) We heard this introduced bird on Grenada.

Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster* Nice looks on St Vincent and Grenada. Widespread in the Neotropics.



Caribbean Elaenia and Grey Kingbird (Mark Van Beirs)

Caribbean Elaenia ♦ *Elaenia martinica* Many good looks at this modestly-plumaged bird.

Lesser Antillean Pewee ♦ *Contopus [latirostris] blancoi* All too brief looks of one on Dominica.

Lesser Antillean Pewee ♦ ++ (St Lucia P) *Contopus [latirostris] latirostris* Good looks on Santa Lucia.

Grey Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis* Common and showy on all the islands visited.

Grenada Flycatcher ♦ *Myiarchus nugator* Nice looks at several on St Vincent and Grenada.

Lesser Antillean Flycatcher ♦ *Myiarchus oberi* Regular encounters with this fairly distinctive Myiarchus.

Black-whiskered Vireo ♦ *Vireo altiloquus* Fairly common. More often heard than seen.

Caribbean Martin ♦ *Progne dominicensis* Recorded on all the islands visited except for Barbuda and Grenada.

House Wren ♦ (Dominica H W) *Troglodytes [aeson] rufescens* Excellent views of one in the hills.



Tropical Mockingbird and Grey Trembler (Mark Van Beirs)

House Wren ♦ (St. Lucia H W) *Troglodytes [aeson] mesoleucus* Two showed well at Grande Anse.
House Wren ♦ (St. Vincent H W) *Troglodytes [aeson] musicus* Great views of two in the dripping forest.
House Wren ♦ (Grenada H W) *Troglodytes [aeson] grenadensis* Quite common in the dry woodland.
Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus* Regular encounters from Dominica southwards.
White-breasted Thrasher ♦ *Ramphocinclus brachyurus* (E) Good looks in the dry woodland on Martinique.
Scaly-breasted Thrasher ♦ *Allenia fusca* Many excellent encounters. See Note.
Pearly-eyed Thrasher ♦ *Margarops fuscatus* Regular observations.
Brown Trembler ♦ *Cinclocerthia ruficauda* Fairly regular. Best observations were on Guadeloupe. See Note.
Grey Trembler ♦ *Cinclocerthia gutturalis* Nice looks at this shivering bird on Martinique and Santa Lucia.
Rufous-throated Solitaire ♦ *Myadestes genibarbis* We only found it on Dominica and Martinique. See Note.
Cocoa Thrush *Turdus fumigatus* A few were seen on St Vincent.
Spectacled Thrush (Bare-eyed T) *Turdus nudigenis* Regular observations on the southern islands. See Note.
Red-legged Thrush ♦ *Turdus plumbeus* We only saw this beauty on Dominica.
Forest Thrush ♦ *Turdus lherminieri* (V) Seen on Montserrat and Dominica. Nice views on Guadeloupe. See Note.
House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* We saw it on Antigua and St Vincent.
Antillean Euphonia *Euphonia musica* All too brief looks on Santa Lucia. See Note.
Whistling Warbler ♦ *Catharopeza bishop* (H)(E) The most frustrating bird of the trip. We heard it a few times.



A lovely Plumbeous Warbler and the very smart Mangrove Warbler of Martinique (Mark Van Beirs)

Plumbeous Warbler ♦ *Setophaga plumbea* Very nice looks at this subtle beauty on Dominica and Guadeloupe.
Mangrove Warbler *Setophaga petechia* Regular. The birds on Martinique were especially attractive. See Note.



Barbuda and Santa Lucia Warblers used to be lumped in Adelaide's Warbler (Mark Van Beirs)

Barbuda Warbler ♦ *Setophaga subita* (NT) This lovely species was quite common all over the island.

St. Lucia Warbler ♦ *Setophaga delicata* Several excellent observations of this attractive endemic.



Martinique Oriole and Lesser Antillean Saltator (Mark Van Beirs)

Martinique Oriole ♦ *Icterus bonana* (V) Good looks at this handsome, colourful endemic.

Montserrat Oriole ♦ *Icterus oberi* (V) Three birds showed well, but they were all in female plumage.

St. Lucia Oriole ♦ *Icterus laudabilis* (NT) This cracking endemic offered several nice sightings.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* Just a handful of records, luckily.

Carib Grackle *Quiscalus lugubris* We saw this species on all the islands visited. See Note.

Bananaquit ♦ (Lesser Antillean B) *Coereba [flaveola] bartholemica* Regular observations. See Note.

Lesser Antillean Tanager ♦ *Tangara cucullata* Good looks at one on St Vincent.

Lesser Antillean Saltator ♦ *Saltator albicollis* Nice views on Martinique and Santa Lucia.

Black-faced Grassquit *Tiaris bicolor* Common on most islands visited.

Lesser Antillean Bullfinch ♦ *Loxigilla noctis* Common and obvious. See Note.

Barbados Bullfinch ♦ *Loxigilla barbadensis* The dullest endemic of the Lesser Antilles!

St. Lucia Black Finch ♦ *Melanospiza richardsoni* (E) Scope views of a male on Santa Lucia.



Great Sperm Whales (Ian Lewis)

MAMMALS

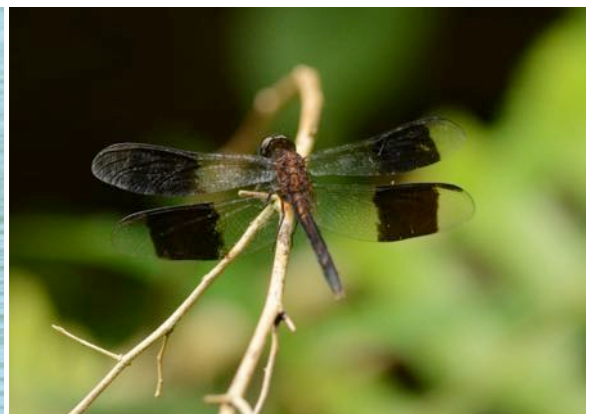
Red-rumped Agouti (Brazilian A) *Dasyprocta leporina* Several showed well on Dominica.

Small Indian Mongoose (introduced) *Herpestes auropunctatus* 11 sightings of this nastily behaving predator.

Great Sperm Whale (Sperm W) *Physeter microcephalus* Fantastic encounters off Dominica.

Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* Two showed very well in a harbour on Antigua.

Pantropical Spotted Dolphin *Stenella attenuata* A pod of c20 performed beautifully off Dominica.



Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin; Band-winged Dragonlet (Mark Van Beirs)



Moule a Chique, the southern cape of Santa Lucia (Mark Van Beirs)

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED IN THE LESSER ANTILLES

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*

Three forms were seen during the tour: *insulicola* (Antigua); *rivieri* (Dominica, Martinique & St Lucia) and *antillarum* (St Vincent & Grenada).

Common Ground Dove *Columbina passerina*

Three forms were seen during the tour: *nigrirostris* (Antigua, Dominica, Guadeloupe); *trochila* (Martinique) and *antillarum* (St Lucia, St Vincent, Grenada).

Antillean Crested Hummingbird *Orthorhyncus cristatus*

On most of the islands we saw the widespread *exilis*. Further south, on St Vincent, we saw the form *ornatus*, whilst on Grenada, we saw the form *emigrans*. The crest of the southern forms is two-toned, showing violet and green.

Scaly-breasted Thrasher *Allenia fusca*

During the tour we saw three forms. On Montserrat, we saw the form *hyphenema*, on Dominica and Martinique we saw the nominate form and on St Lucia we saw the form *schwartzi*.

Brown Trembler *Cinlocerthia ruficauda*

We saw three forms. On Montserrat we saw the form *pavida*, on Guadeloupe we saw *tremula* and on St Vincent the form *tenebrosa*.

Rufous-throated Solitaire *Myadestes genibarbis*

Another great bird, with a great song, that was seen on two islands. The forms noted were *dominicanus* on Dominica and the nominate on Martinique.

Spectacled Thrush *Turdus nudigenis*

Common, first recorded on Martinique, also on St Lucia, St Vincent and Grenada (*nudigenis*). Note that this species was formerly known as Bare-eyed Thrush, but this name is now reserved for the African species *T. tephronotus*.

Forest Thrush *Turdus lherminieri*

We saw three different forms of this very smart bird. On Montserrat we saw two shy individuals of the form *dorotheae*, a very scaly form. On Dominica we saw the quite different *dominicensis*. This form is brown-breasted with a pale mark like a White-throated Thrush. Quite different from Montserrat birds. On Guadeloupe, we had good looks at the nominate form, another scaly form, more like the birds from Montserrat.

Antillean Euphonia *Euphonia musica*

Although the IOC does not split the form concerned, some authors do as Lesser Antillean Euphonia *E. flavifrons*.



Monarch Butterfly; Carib Grackle (Mark Van Beirs)

Mangrove Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

We saw two forms of this attractive species. Those on Barbuda and Antigua (*bartholemica*) were Golden Warbler like, whilst the form *ruficapilla* on Martinique showed a complete rufous head like a standard Mangrove Warbler. The taxonomy of this complex is complicated.

Carib Grackle *Quiscalus lugubris*

We recorded four forms of this widespread species. On Antigua and Barbuda (where it is introduced) and Barbados, we saw the form *fortirostris*. On Dominica, Guadeloupe and Martinique, the form was *guadeloupensis*, on St Lucia, *inflexirostris*, and on Grenada, *luminosus*.



Picnic breakfast on St Vincent; Rum punch on the Dominica boat trip (Mark Van Beirs)

Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola*

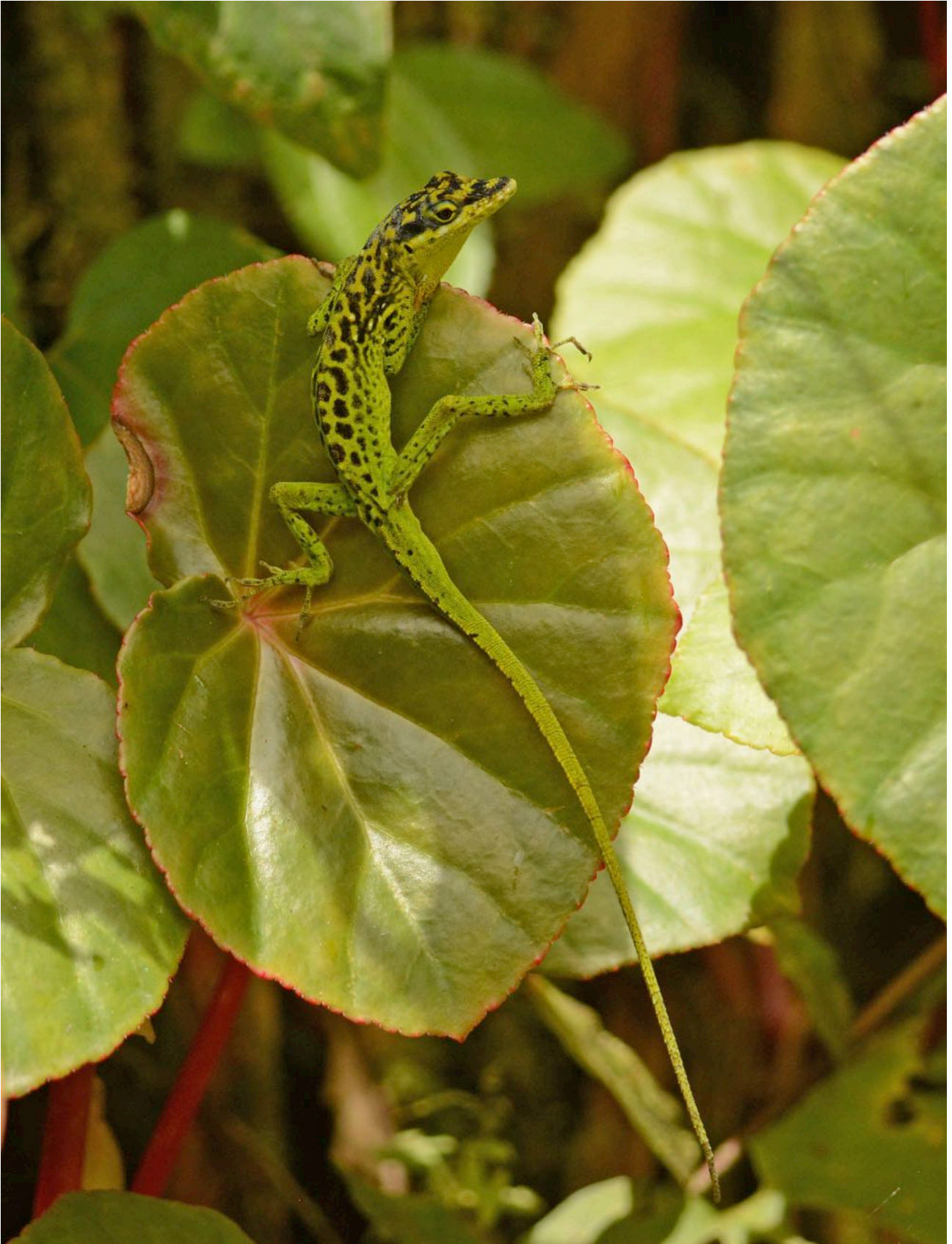
One of the big surprises of the tour, for many, was seeing just how different the Caribbean Bananaquits are! Within the Lesser Antilles there are several forms, and we saw the following: Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat and Guadeloupe (*bartholemica*), Martinique and St Lucia (*martinicana*), St Vincent (*atrata*), Grenada (*aterrima*) and Barbados (*barbadensis*). Several of the birds on St Vincent and Grenada were all black!

Lesser Antillean Bullfinch *Loxigilla noctis*

Common and widespread with several forms being seen. Antigua and Barbuda (*ridgwayi*), Dominica and Guadeloupe (*dominicana*), St Lucia (*sclateri*), St Vincent (*crissalis*) and Grenada (*grenadensis*).



A superbly elegant Roseate Tern (Mark Van Beirs)



The very attractive Martinique Anole (Mark Van Beirs)



A young Leatherback Turtle reaches the sea (Mark Van Beirs)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED IN TRINIDAD

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(CR) = Critically Endangered, **(E)** = Endangered, **(V)** = Vulnerable, **(NT)** = Near Threatened

Little Tinamou *Crypturellus soui* (H) We only heard its distinctive notes at the Wallerfield airport.

Black-bellied Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis* Two were noted on the Caroni boat trip.

Trinidad Piping Guan ◊ *Pipile pipile* **(CR)** Fantastic views of this much wanted endemic at Grande Rivière.

Scarlet Ibis ◊ *Eudocimus ruber* c180 birds showed well in rather wet conditions at Caroni.



Trinidad Piping Guan and Scarlet Ibises (Mark Van Beirs)

- Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* A single at the Wallerfield airport.
- Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* Common and showy in the Caroni mangroves.
- Striated Heron (Green-backed H)** *Butorides striata* Several were at the sewage works.
- Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Common and widespread.
- Great Egret (American G E)** *Ardea [alba] egretta* A handful of observations in open areas.
- Tricolored Heron (Louisiana H)** *Egretta tricolor* Good numbers were seen on the Caroni boat trip.
- Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* Many, including lots of immatures were noted at Caroni.
- Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* Good numbers were observed on the Caroni boat trip.
- Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis* Small numbers were noted in the northeast.
- Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* Fair numbers were found along our route.
- Anhinga** *Anhinga anhinga* Two showed well in the Caroni swamp.
- Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura* Common and widespread.
- Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus* Very common.
- Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* Two observations of this well-known piscivore.



Pearl Kite and Zone-tailed Hawk (Mark Van Beirs)

- Pearl Kite** *Gampsonyx swainsonii* A single, rather wet bird showed well on a roadside wire.
- Plumbeous Kite** *Ictinia plumbea* Ten birds showed off their aerial prowess in the northeast.
- Common Black Hawk** *Buteogallus anthracinus* Seven observations. Always in flight.
- Savanna Hawk** *Buteogallus meridionalis* A single bird was sitting in a large meadow.

White Hawk *Pseudastur albicollis* Three sightings of this smart bird of prey.

Grey-lined Hawk *Buteo nitidus* Five nice observations.

Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* A single pale morph bird was at the Wallerfield airport.

Zone-tailed Hawk *Buteo albonotatus* Two very nice sightings of this Turkey Vulture mimic.

Purple Gallinule (American P G) *Porphyrio martinica* Two showed briefly at the sewage works.

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* A single bird was seen near the airport.

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis* Regular observations.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola* Five were seen at Caroni.

Wattled Jacana *Jacana jacana* Three were noted at the sewage works.

Whimbrel (Hudsonian W) *Numenius [phaeopus] hudsonicus* Six birds showed well at Caroni.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* Five were observed at Caroni.

Willet (Eastern W) *Tringa [semipalmata] semipalmata* A single bird was at the Caroni mudflats.

Black Skimmer *Rhynchops niger* Two flew over the sewage works. A write in.

Yellow-billed Tern *Sternula superciliaris* A single bird showed well at the sewage works.



Large-billed Tern; a displaying pair of Black-throated Mangoes (Mark Van Beirs)

Large-billed Tern *Phaetusa simplex* Good looks at several at the sewage works and at Caroni.

Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*

Scaled Pigeon *Patagioenas speciosa* Very nice scope looks from the Asa Wright veranda.

Pale-vented Pigeon *Patagioenas cayennensis* A handful of observations in the lowlands.

Common Ground Dove *Columbina passerina* Just two observations.

Ruddy Ground Dove *Columbina talpacoti* Very common.

White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi* Just a few sightings.

Grey-fronted Dove *Leptotila rufaxilla* Repeated nice looks at a pair at Asa Wright.

Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata* A few in open areas.

Greater Ani *Crotophaga major* A single bird was seen at Caroni.

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani* Regular in open habitat.

Striped Cuckoo *Tapera naevia* Excellent scope views at the sewage works.

Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana* Two showed well from the veranda at Asa Wright.

Tropical Screech Owl *Megascops choliba* (H) We heard it in the northeast.

Ferruginous Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum* Great looks at an angry bird at Grande Rivière.

Oilbird ♦ *Steatornis caripensis* The extraordinary experience in the cave at Asa Wright!

Grey-rumped Swift *Chaetura cinereiventris* Regular observations.

Short-tailed Swift *Chaetura brachyura* Quite common. A distinctive silhouette.

Neotropical Palm Swift (Fork-tailed P S) *Tachornis squamata* Regular in palm areas.

Rufous-breasted Hermit *Glaucis hirsutus* A few observations at Asa Wright.

Green Hermit *Phaethornis guy* Great looks at a bird on or near its nest at Asa Wright.

Little Hermit *Phaethornis longuemareus* Two observations of this swift undergrowth feeder.

White-necked Jacobin *Florisuga mellivora* Abundant and very showy at Asa Wright.
Green-throated Mango ♦ *Anthracothorax viridigula* Fair looks at Caroni and at Yerette.
Black-throated Mango *Anthracothorax nigricollis* Splendid looks at both hummingbird feeder stations.
Ruby-topaz Hummingbird *Chrysolampis mosquitos* Gorgeous males and modest females at Yerette!
Tufted Coquette ♦ *Lophornis ornatus* Males and especially females showed well at Asa Wright.



A stunning male Ruby Topaz; a female Tufted Coquette (Mark Van Beirs)

Blue-chinned Sapphire *Chlorestes notata* Nice looks at the Asa Wright feeders.
White-chested Emerald *Amazilia brevirostris* Common at Asa Wright and at Yerette.
Copper-rumped Hummingbird *Amazilia tobaci* Common at Asa Wright and at Yerette.
Long-billed Starthroat *Heliomaster longirostris* Great looks at one or two at Asa Wright and at Yerette.
Amethyst Woodstar *Calliphlox amethystina* A lovely, tiny female performed well at Yerette.



White-chested Emerald and Long-billed Starthroat (Mark Van Beirs)

Green-backed Trogon (Amazonian White-tailed T) *Trogon viridis* A couple of encounters.
Guianan Trogon *Trogon violaceus* Three observations.
Collared Trogon *Trogon collaris* A pair was seen in the mist above Asa Wright.
American Pygmy Kingfisher *Chloroceryle aenea* A single bird showed briefly on the Caroni boat trip.



The endemic Trinidad Motmot; the widespread Golden-olive Woodpecker (Mark Van Beirs)

- Ringed Kingfisher** *Megaceryle torquata* One was noted near the airport.
- Trinidad Motmot** ♦ *Momotus bahamensis* Excellent looks at this Trinidad endemic in the Asa Wright area.
- Rufous-tailed Jacamar** *Galbula ruficauda* Two showed all too briefly at Wallerfield.
- Channel-billed Toucan** *Ramphastos vitellinus* (V) Regular observations.
- Golden-olive Woodpecker** *Colaptes rubiginosus* Good looks at three near Asa Wright.
- Lineated Woodpecker** *Dryocopus lineatus* A single bird was noted in flight at Wallerfield.
- Yellow-headed Caracara** *Milvago chimachima* Four observations of this widespread species.



Lilac-tailed Parrotlet and Red-bellied Macaws (Mark Van Beirs)

- Lilac-tailed Parrotlet** ♦ *Touit batavicus* Perfect scope views of perched birds in the northeast!
- Orange-winged Amazon** *Amazona amazonica* The most common parrot in Trinidad. Many great observations.
- Green-rumped Parrotlet** *Forpus passerinus* A single bird was scoped at the old Wallerfield airport.
- Red-bellied Macaw** *Orthopsittaca manilatus* Excellent views, eventually, in the old Wallerfield airport area.
- Stripe-breasted Spinetail** *Synallaxis cinnamomea* (H) We heard it in the forest at Asa Wright.

Pale-breasted Spinetail *Synallaxis albens* Good looks at this widespread Neotropical species.
Yellow-chinned Spinetail *Certhiaxis cinnamomeus* Great scope views of birds attending a nest.
Streaked Xenops *Xenops rutilans* Brief looks in the Asa Wright forest.
Plain-brown Woodcreeper *Dendrocincla fuliginosa* A single bird showed well at Asa Wright.
Straight-billed Woodcreeper *Dendroplex picus* One showed well in the Caroni mangroves.
Cocoa Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus susurrans* Regular encounters. More often heard than seen.
Great Antshrike *Taraba major* Good looks at a female at Asa Wright.



Black-crested and Barred Antshrikes (Mark Van Beirs)

Black-crested Antshrike *Sakesphorus canadensis* A pair performed very well at the old Wallerfield airport.
Barred Antshrike *Thamnophilus doliatus* Regular observations. Often heard.
White-flanked Antwren *Myrmotherula axillaris* Several allowed good looks at Asa Wright.
Silvered Antbird *Sclateria naevia* A male gave a nice performance at Grande Rivière.
White-bellied Antbird *Myrmeciza longipes* Magnificent looks at this beauty at Grande Rivière.
Black-faced Antthrush *Formicarius analis* A responsive bird walked in for good looks at Asa Wright.
Forest Elaenia *Myiopagis gaimardii* Several nice sightings of this unobtrusive species.
Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster* Regularly heard and seen once.



Tropical Pewee and White-bearded Manakin (Mark Van Beirs)

Southern Beardless Tyrannulet *Camptostoma obsoletum* Nice looks at one at Grande Rivière.

Ochre-bellied Flycatcher *Mionectes oleagineus* Good looks at this 'wing-lifter' from the Asa Wright veranda.

Yellow-olive Flatbill (Y-o Flycatcher) *Tolmomyias sulphurens* (H) We heard it in a bamboo grove at Asa Wright.

Ochre-ored Flatbill (O-I Flycatcher) *Tolmomyias flaviventris* Brief looks at one in the Caroni mangroves.

Euler's Flycatcher *Lathrotriccus euleri* (H) We heard it in the northeast.

Tropical Pewee *Contopus cinereus* Several nice observations.

Pied Water Tyrant *Fluvicola pica* Several performed well at the sewage works.

Piratic Flycatcher *Legatus leucophaeus* A pair was 'attending' the Oropendola colony at Asa Wright.

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus* Regular and vociferous.

Streaked Flycatcher *Myiodynastes maculatus* Good looks at a pair in the northeast.

Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua* A handful of observations.

Sulphury Flycatcher *Tyrannopsis sulphurea* Quite common in the Moriche swamp.

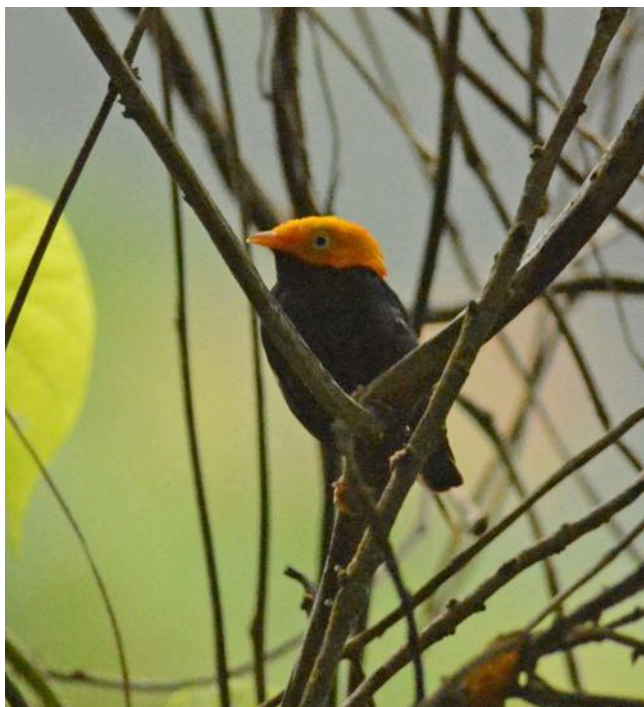
Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus* The ubiquitous TK.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana* A couple of observations of this southern migrant.

Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus* (H) We heard the distinctive voice at the Moriche swamp.

Bearded Bellbird ♦ *Procnias averano* Fantastic views of a singing male at close range at Asa Wright.

White-bearded Manakin *Manacus manacus* Eye-ball to eye-ball views of displaying males at Asa Wright.



Golden-headed Manakin and Rufous-browed Peppershrike (Mark Van Beirs)

Golden-headed Manakin *Ceratopira erythrocephala* Superb males and females showed well at Asa Wright.

Black-tailed Tityra *Tityra cayana* A handful of encounters.

White-winged Becard *Pachyramphus polychopterus* All too brief looks at several in the northeast.

Rufous-browed Peppershrike *Cyclarhis gujanensis* Cracking views of several. Often heard.

Golden-fronted Greenlet *Hylophilus aurantiifrons* Several nice encounters with this unobtrusive bird.

White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer* Regular observations.

Grey-breasted Martin *Progne chalybea* Common.

Southern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* Regularly encountered.

Rufous-breasted Wren *Pheugopedius rutilus* Several nice observations. More often heard than seen.

House Wren (Southern H W) *Troglodytes [aeson] musculus* Fairly common.

Long-billed Gnatwren *Ramphocaenus melanurus* Three nice sightings.

Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus* Common and obvious. A good songster.

Cocoa Thrush *Turdus fumigatus* Regular encounters.

Spectacled Thrush (Bare-eyed T) *Turdus nudigenis* Common. Several nests with chicks were found.



Spectacled Thrush and Yellow-hooded Blackbird (Mark Van Beirs)

- White-necked Thrush** *Turdus albicollis* A few were noted on the Asa Wright trails.
- Trinidad Euphonia** *Euphonia trinitatis* Fair views of a couple in the northeast.
- Violaceous Euphonia** *Euphonia violacea* Common and attractive.
- Tropical Parula** *Setophaga pitaiyumi* Two were briefly seen in the northeast.
- Golden-crowned Warbler** *Basileuterus culicivorus* A single bird was observed in the Asa Wright area.
- Red-breasted Blackbird** *Sturnella militaris* Several showed well at the sewage works.
- Crested Oropendola** *Psarocolius decumanus* Several active colonies were seen.
- Yellow-rumped Cacique** *Cacicus cela* Just a single observation of a flying bird.
- Yellow Oriole** *Icterus nigrogularis* Regular and attractive.
- Epaulet Oriole** *Icterus cayanensis* Two showed well in the Moriche swamp.
- Shiny Cowbird** *Molothrus bonariensis* A handful of observations only.
- Carib Grackle** *Quiscalus lugubris* Very common in open areas.
- Yellow-hooded Blackbird** *Chrysomus icterocephalus* Nice looks at several in the sewage works reeds.



Silver-beaked and Blue-grey Tanagers (Mark Van Beirs)

- Bananaquit** *Coereba flaveola* Common and feisty at the Asa Wright feeders.
- White-lined Tanager** *Tachyphonus rufus* Regular.
- Silver-beaked Tanager** *Ramphocelus carbo* Fairly common.
- Blue-grey Tanager** *Thraupis episcopus* Common.
- Palm Tanager** *Thraupis palmarum* Very common.



Purple and Green Honeycreepers (Mark Van Beirs)

Turquoise Tanager *Tangara mexicana* Four observations of this lovely species.

Bay-headed Tanager *Tangara gyrola* Five encounters only.

Blue Dacnis *Dacnis cayana* Several showed well at the Asa Wright feeders.

Purple Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes caeruleus* Many showed well at the Asa Wright feeders.

Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus* Just a handful of observations.

Green Honeycreeper *Chlorophanes spiza* Several cracking males showed well at the Asa Wright feeders.

Bicolored Conebill *Conirostrum bicolor* (NT) A couple performed nicely in the Caroni mangroves.

Greyish Saltator *Saltator coerulescens* A pair was noted at Yerette.

Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina* 'Johnny Jump Up' was regularly observed in display.

Red-crowned Ant Tanager *Habia rubica* Good looks at a pair in the Asa Wright forest.



Asa Wright in the rain (Mark Van Beirs)



Red-rumped Agouti (Mark Van Beirs)

MAMMALS

Silky Anteater (Pygmy A) *Cyclopes didactylus* We were shown a round ball of fur in the Caroni mangroves.

Red-tailed Squirrel *Sciurus granatensis* Two were seen at Asa Wright.

Red-rumped Agouti (Brazilian A) *Dasyprocta leporina* Several walked around at Asa wright.

Black Mastiff Bat *Molossus rufus* A single animal showed very well at Asa Wright.



Grande Rivière scenery (Mark Van Beirs)



Yellow Oriole (Mark Van Beirs)



The group on Santa Lucia (Mark Van Beirs)

BIRDS OF THE TOUR

THE LESSER ANTILLES (main tour)

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | St Vincent Amazon | 14 points |
| | Red-necked Amazon | |
| 3 | Guadeloupe Woodpecker | 13 |
| | Bridled Quail Dove | |
| 5 | Purple-throated Carib | 8 |
| 6 | Blue-headed Hummingbird | 7 |

TRINIDAD (post trip)

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Leatherback Turtle | 22 points |
| 2 | Oilbird | 11 |
| 3. | Lilac-tailed Parrotlet | 10 |
| | Trinidad Piping Guan | 10 |
| 5 | Ruby Topaz | 8 |
| | Bearded Bellbird | 8 |



Antillean Crested Hummingbird (Rainer Kopa)