

## JOURNAL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: JUNE 16-25, 1990

by John C. Kricher

*Editor's Note.* Thirteen birding friends led by John Kricher and dubbed *The Darwin Group* visited Trinidad and Tobago in June, at the beginning of the wet season. Several Bird Observer staffers were in the group and were so delighted with Professor Kricher's informative daily journal of where we went and what we did that we decided to share it with our readers as a where-to-go feature.

**June 16, Saturday.** Long travel day for the Darwin Group beginning at fogged-in Logan Airport, Boston, and ending with a star-filled, humid night in the Arima Valley of Trinidad. American Airlines got us to Miami by 10:30 A.M., and we proceeded directly to BWIA to check luggage and get seat assignments for the 3:00 P.M. flight. Lunch during the Miami layover. BWIA flight over the Caribbean was smooth with Captain Mickey Santos identifying various islands. Quick stop at Barbados, then on to Trinidad arriving well after dark. Jogie Ramlal, acknowledged premier guide to birds in Trinidad, and his crew were waiting to transport us to Asa Wright Nature Centre. Drive to AWC (on the left side of the road) was punctuated by frog whistles and boom boxes, the latter celebrating Saturday night on Trinidad. Upon our arrival at the Centre, the director introduced himself and supplied coffee, juice, and sandwiches. Cabin and room assignments were given, and we were off to unpack and bed down. Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls were vocalizing.

**June 17, Sunday.** Up early to a sunny day in the Arima Valley. In the days previous to our arrival, rain had been occurring steadily, and we were told that we "brought the sun" with us. Frantic birding before breakfast: Tufted Coquette, Copper-rump, mango hummers. There goes a Palm Tanager, and a Blue-gray. What was that thrush? Look at all those oropendolas. They call them yellowtails here. Another Bananaquit? On to the famous veranda, throw open the screens, and watch the show: toucans, oropendolas, Yellow Orioles, Golden-olive Woodpeckers, Bay-headed Tanagers, Streaked and Piratic flycatchers, Smooth-billed Anis, all "teed up." Take your pick. Five species of hummers as well as Bananaquits and tanagers visiting feeders with the enthusiasm of kids at a McDonald's. Two Kowa TSN-4 scopes working at full capacity.

Breakfast was at 7:30 and consisted of scrambled eggs, bacon, hot cereal, and other incidentals.

After breakfast we slowly organized for a walk down the bellbird trail, accompanied by the Cincinnati Zoo Young Naturalists group. Altogether nearly thirty folk tucked in their pantlegs to cross chigger-infested terrain into the rain forest. First a visit to David Snow's historic lek of the White-bearded Manakin,

to watch the black and white "pufflets" whirl and snap, each in the hopes of sending his genes on a pleasant voyage to the next generation. Elias Mitchell, resident AWC naturalist moved us a bit farther along and spotted a male Bearded Bellbird in the thick understory, calling its signature—*tock!* Some effort was required on a steeply sloped hillside, but eventually we were one hundred percent in seeing as well as hearing this unique cotinga. Next stop was the more dispersed lek of the Golden-headed Manakin. We first heard, then saw, an adult male, though it was not really displaying. Not a bad morning.

Lunch was Sunday dinner—splendid barbecue chicken, rice and beans, plantain, salad, served in a comfortable dining room with big lazy Susans on each table.

After lunch, rain showers began, intermittent throughout the afternoon.

At 4:00 P.M. four vanlets of Darwins and Zoo folks left for Matura Bay on the east coast to make a nocturnal search for egg-laying leatherback turtles. Rain occurred off and on throughout the 1.5 hour drive. The isolated beach was accessed over rough dirt road and was deserted when we arrived near 6:00 P.M. An enjoyable rum punch was served followed by a picnic supper. Just as we were about to begin walking the beach, a torrential rain shower hit, a squall, and we hastened to the vans. After that, the rain ceased for the evening, and out came the stars. We walked the sandy tar-spotted beach with Scorpio high overhead and the Milky Way visible. No turtles. We kept walking the beach. Still no turtles. We sat on the beach. No turtles. We took the hint and left around eleven o'clock, only to learn later that the zoo kids, who, in a fit of mad youthful stamina, remained behind, nailed a leatherback around half-past eleven. Anyway, we got more sleep than they did.

**June 18, Monday.** This was our day to drive north along the Blanchisseuse Road, birding as we went. Morning was partly cloudy with intermittent rain showers, and afternoon was pleasant and hot, hot, hot. We made frequent stops along Blanchisseuse, finding such species as Speckled Tanager, all three trogon species, Lineated and Chestnut woodpeckers (together in the same tree), and a lek of Green Hermits. Raptors were not abundant, but one Ornate Hawk-Eagle was obliging as it circled overhead.

Lunch was served at Blanchisseuse Beach as Brown Pelicans, Magnificent Frigatebirds, and terns flew by.

As we pulled up at the lunch stop, we noted a headless carcass of a four-foot-long fer-de-lance hanging on a stick by the roadside—an omen of things to come.

The most notable birding on the ride back south to the AWC was a roadside mixed flock containing Blue Dacnis and several honeycreepers and tanagers. A Striped Cuckoo kept calling but never showed itself.

**June 19, Tuesday.** A humid night in the Arima Valley with quick

downpours off and on. Republic Day in Trinidad, a national holiday. Early morning veranda birding included the discovery of a White Hawk perched in a distant tree, but well revealed through the Kowa. After the White Hawk came omelet ranchero and corn flakes.

Jogie met us at 8:30 A.M., and we headed south down the Blanchisseuse Road, stopping to see a Rufous-breasted Hermit nest, inconspicuously located beneath a fern frond, and some motmot burrows along the embankment bordering the road. Next was a quick stop to observe a black hawk nest, with occupants.

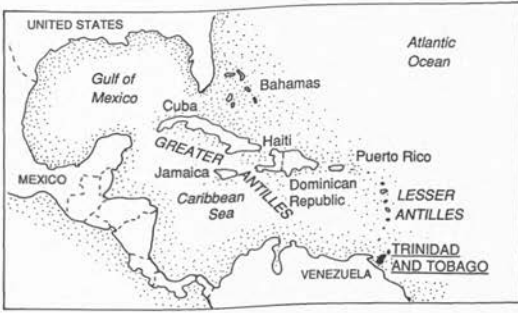
We drove east to Waller Field, an agricultural station that is part of the Aripo savanna. The terrain was open field with many wet areas along the dirt road, as well as cattle pasture and corral. We quickly picked up Southern Lapwing (adults and chicks), Wattled Jacana, Red-breasted and Yellow-hooded blackbirds, Pied Water-Tyrant, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, and Savannah Hawk. Blue-black Grassquits abounded, along with a few Ruddy-breasted Seedeaters. Among the ground doves, we found only Ruddys. One brushy field attracted dozens of Fork-tailed Flycatchers, feeding on berries. Most had incomplete tails, but a few had full, streaming tails. One cattle corral contained both Shiny and Giant cowbirds, along with cattle and everabundant Cattle Egrets. Weather was partly cloudy and breezy, making neither heat nor bugs a major problem. The dirt road was not dusty due to the recent frequency of rain.

After Waller Field, we stopped for a cool Carib beer and proceeded to the coconut beach at Nariva. Allegedly a million coconut trees line the beach, but I was not tempted to count them. The beach was being enjoyed by numerous Trinidadians celebrating Republic Day, but the Darwin Group celebrated a Pearl Kite, sitting shrike-like on a telephone wire. Two Gray-breasted Martins and a Tropical Mockingbird harassed the kite while a Yellow Oriole looked on.

We lunched on the beach until 2:30. The surf was very foamy and the sea a brownish color, not overly inviting. Flotsam consisted mostly of sand dollar tests. One Laughing Gull streaked by, and six Collared Plover were working the beach.

Our next stop was a mangrove swamp crossed by a wooden automobile bridge. Roadside birding was next to impossible due to heavy traffic. We followed Jogie, crept a short distance into the mangroves, and located both Silvered Antbird and Black-crested Antshrike, including the cuplike nest of the latter species. Both species were somewhat tape-responsive, and most of us, with patience and persistence got to see both species well. Back on the busy road, we observed Bicolored Conebill up in a mangrove.

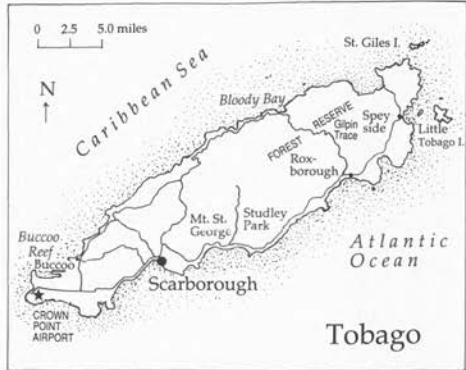
The Melon Patch was a fairly extensive fresh-water marsh that has been largely colonized by folk, producing the expected deterioration of habitat for birds. As we drove along the Melon Patch road, we saw more melons and more



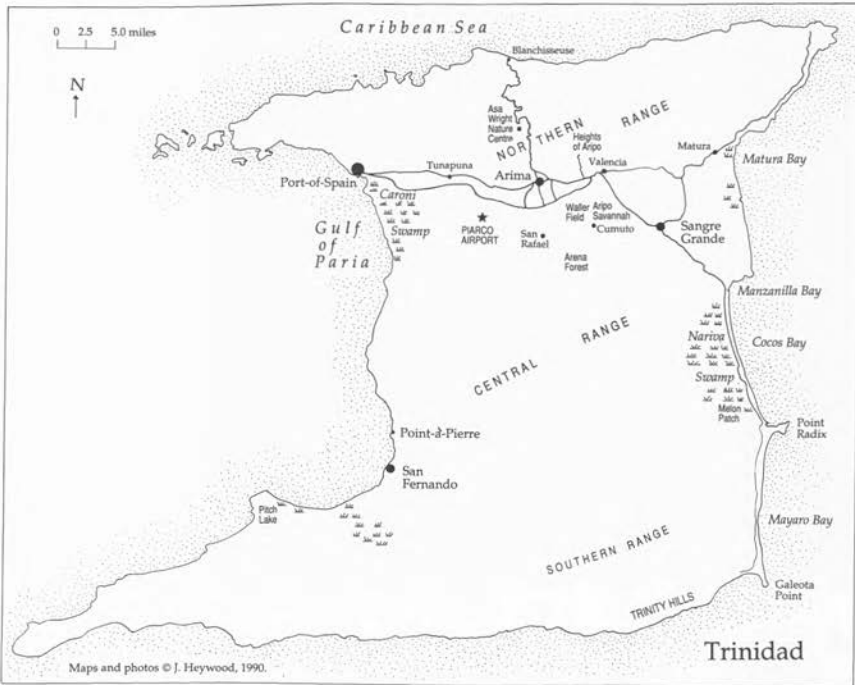
*Arima Valley*



*Veranda at AWC*



**Tobago**



**Trinidad**

people than birds. Nonetheless, Jogie found us two Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and a Pinnated Bittern. Some of us needed a lot of effort to discern the skulking bitter, but eventually all saw it. Naturally, after all this work, as we were leaving the Melon Patch, we spotted a Pinnated Bittern perched utterly in the open!

Sunset was approaching and with it the roosting flight of Red-bellied Macaws. We prepared for this spectacle by imbibing our daily rum punch, some of which was oddly green and tasted a bit like Scope. Not many macaws flew in, but some did. We saw them fine, and we were all pretty mellow.

Two more stops occurred, both interesting. Jogie stopped at his house to show us his resident Spectacled Owl, which responded instantly to his tape and perched patiently for all to see through the Kowa.

The second stop came as we were proceeding along the Asa Wright drive. Well illuminated by the van's headlights was an eight-foot-long serpent crossing the road—a golden brown snake with brown diamond patterning that I identified at once as a bushmaster. It took its time crossing and entered a roadside gully. We had splendid views of this, the largest of the New World poisonous snake—from a respectful distance.

A late dinner at the Centre consisted of lamb—and snake talk.

**June 20, Wednesday.** Another 8:30 A.M. departure after a breakfast that featured fried dough balls among the other more usual fare. This was Heights of Aripo day, and it took some time to reach the heights since the road is narrow, quite winding, and rutted—much like some of the roads in Massachusetts. Weather was partly cloudy with a few scattered, brief rain showers, which felt good. Humidity probably exceeded one hundred percent, if that's possible.

Scenery was memorable on the drive to the heights—clumps of bamboo, *Cecropia* stands, lots of *Heliconia* in bloom, and a profusion of roadside "house plants" such as *Impatiens* and *Coleus*. Lots of vistas. However, Jogie was of the opinion that the area had deteriorated for birding. Growth of human habitations, coffee plantations, and other encroachments had cut into some of Jogie's favored birding spots.

We did see birds, though not the montane specialty species we were hoping for. Among others, we had Gray Hawk, Orange-winged Parrots, and Squirrel Cuckoo and added Brown-crested Flycatcher and Forest Elaenia to our list.

Another highlight of the day was a demonstration of the odd insects and a *Peripatus* captured by the zealous Cincinnati youth. They actually had us vote on which hercules beetle male was horniest. [*Peripatus* is an evolutionary link between segmented worms and arthropods, and the beetles have hornlike protruberances on the head.]

At rum punch time we amused ourselves by reading entries in the Asa Wright Centre logbook, including those by such birding luminaries as Wayne R.

Petersen and Richard Forster. We also read an entry by some folks who apparently picked up, handled, and photographed a bushmaster not far from where we saw one and who failed to realize what they were holding. I added an entry about our more conservative experience with this reptile called "silent fate."

**June 21, Thursday.** The first day of summer, and it felt like it. But then that's how all the days feel here. It rained hard in the night but nary a drop during the day. Humidity remained awesome.

Our goal today was to bird another part of the Aripo Savanna as well as the Arena Forest. Jogie picked us up promptly at 6:30, an earlier than usual start due to the expected oppressive heat of the savanna, and we drove off under overcast skies. Clouds persisted most of the morning keeping our scorching down to a bare minimum. Still, it is not unfair to describe the savanna as "hot—damn hot."

We birded some abandoned runway areas where dense brushy vegetation predominates along with stands of moriche palms. We bagged Yellow-breasted Flycatcher, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, and Sulphury Flycatcher, the latter a specialist species affiliating with moriche palm. The other moriche specialist, the Moriche Oriole, failed to put in an appearance. Two pauraques flushed and quickly evaporated into the scrub.

A bit farther along we stopped for Gray-headed Kite, also picking up a Plumbeous Kite. Roadside birds included close looks at Rufous-browed Peppershrike.

We walked a rutted road that bordered a water buffalo ranch and finally got good looks at Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, which we have been hearing virtually everywhere. The Bran-colored Flycatcher also put in an appearance; but the Masked Yellowthroat had apparently gone extinct or was suffering from heat stroke, as there were none to be found.

A stop for cold drinks included looks at a Yellow-rumped Cacique colony, which has been in its present location for years and has been seen by countless birding groups, now also including us.

At an open field with bamboo clumps adjacent to the Arena Forest, a Striped Cuckoo sat atop a bamboo blade and sang its "wife-sick" whistle as we Kowa'ed it. Nearby, our raptor-meisters photographed a nest of a Plumbeous Kite.

Lunch was at a picnic grove near a lake within the Arena Forest preserve. A quick rain shower accompanied lunch but was soon over. After lunch we found a Pied-billed Grebe, some egrets, and about fifty Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at the lake. Overhead was a flock! of Plumbeous Kites.

We were back at the Centre by 2:45 P.M., making one brief unscheduled stop for some quick welding of the muffler pipe on Jogie's van. The leisurely afternoon featured swimming for some in the grotto pool and lots of veranda

birding that included good views of Green Honeycreeper and male Tufted Coquette. Keep on the lookout for an agouti beneath the fruit feeder. Could you bring that Kowa over here, please?

The evening featured a Spectacled Owl chorus as two birds woofed and wailed in the forest just beyond the hillside cabins.

**June 22, Friday.** Overcast skies as Elias led us on a hike to Dunston Cave to see the Oilbirds. Guacharo Trail winds down a ravine, then up, then down to where the Oilbirds reside. Steps and rails have been added to the trail, making the going easier. Along the trail we encountered a Long-billed Gnatwren, seeing it well as it fed a juvenile.

Rain began, and we stopped temporarily near the Oilbird cave at a shelter that had paintings explaining Oilbird ecology. The soft, steady rain falling through the rain forest added to the beauty of the Arima Valley. We waited until the downpour subsided to a trickle and continued to the Oilbird condos. Reaching the entrance to the diminutive cave, Elias pointed out a nest of Chestnut-collared Swifts on the rock face. Two nestlings found their way into the field of the Kowa.

Elias then took each of two groups of us a short distance into the cave, negotiating our way over wet and somewhat slippery rocks as well as rushing water current. Oilbirds were nesting on miniscule ledges, tipping their tails upward so they could fit. Once in a while one or two birds would snarl and fly around a bit before settling back. One bird was sitting atop a young chick, which could be seen as the parent bird resettled itself. Satisfied, we began the trek back up Guacharo Trail, encountering gentle rain throughout most of the walk back.

Lunch was roti, a kind of Caribbean chimichanga.

After lunch we checked the Cocoa Thrush nest, unobtrusively placed within the embankment near the cabins, to see whether any eggs had hatched. They had.

At 1:30 P.M. we were aboard vans and off to the western side of Trinidad to visit Caroni Swamp, preceded by a stop at some sewage ponds near Caroni. The sewage ponds proved to be a real hot spot for birding. Great views were afforded of Least Grebe, Wattled Jacana, Common Moorhen, one rather shy Purple Gallinule, Yellow-billed Terns, White-winged Swallows, Black Skimmer, and Yellow-hooded Blackbirds. Herons and egrets were around, including one Little Egret. We probably also had a Striped-backed bittern, but the bird was too quick to disappear into the water hyacinth to permit a solid identification.

By 4:00 P.M. we were at the boat dock at Caroni Swamp, where Winston Nanan, the guide for this area, ushered us into a green, flat-bottomed boat for the trip into the Caroni. Two Red-capped Cardinals were flying around among the red mangroves bordering the channel. Winston lectured on red mangroves

and four-eyed fish, and pointed out such birds as Yellow-crowned Night Heron, an inconspicuous Pygmy Kingfisher, and some Bicolored Conebills. We had excellent views of Common Potoo and soon found another potoo, also in good viewing position.

From 5:15 to 6:30 P.M. we watched Scarlet Ibis, Cattle, Snowy, and Great egrets, Tricolored and Little Blue herons fly to roost on one of the mangrove cays. Winston talked about the history of the Scarlet Ibis roost. He noted that many birds were still actively nesting; thus, the nightly population of roosting birds was down somewhat and contained many juveniles. Rum punch, red this time, was served as we watched the ibises.

On the boat ride back from the roost, we saw another potoo, this one in flight, and some spectacled caymans, especially their eyeshine. We were back at Asa Wright for creole soup and meatloaf by 8:15 P.M. and the discovery of a *Bufo marinus* toad, apparently on sentry duty outside the Kricher abode.

### Tobago Extension

**June 23, Saturday.** At 8:30 A.M. nine remaining from the group left the Asa Wright Centre to catch a 10:30 plane to Tobago—a twelve-minute flight.

Once on Tobago, we were met by Adolphus James, the acknowledged authority on Tobago birds, and transported directly to the Kariwak Village nearby. Caribbean Martins, Black-faced Grassquits, Eared and White-tipped doves, Carib Grackles, and, not unexpectedly, Bananaquits were there to greet us.

At 2:30 P.M. Adolphus drove us to Buccoo Marsh. Weather was hot (what else is new?) and sunny, a bit hazy, and quite calm. Light was good at Buccoo Marsh, affording excellent views of White-cheeked Pintail, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Caribbean Coot, and, of all things, a Western Reef Heron!

Our next stop was the Grafton Estate, where motmots eat cheese from the hand. We had no cheese, and the motmots seemed dissatisfied with us. A walk along the trace at Grafton produced Buff-throated Woodcreeper, Rufous-vented Chachalaca, a pair of White-fringed Antwrens, and a full adult male Blue-backed Manakin. The bright red split crest of the manakin elicited much comment.

We ended the birding day at Buccoo Reef, watching pelicans, Laughing Gulls, frigatebirds, Common and Roseate terns. Among them was one Cayenne Tern.

The piña coladas at the Kariwak were most satisfactory.

**June 24, Sunday.** Adolphus met us at 7:40 A.M., and we drove the length of Tobago, from Crown Point to Speyside, for a trip to Little Tobago Island. The drive took us past Scarborough, Studley Park, and Roxborough and, though generally slow going, was nonetheless pleasant. Weather was partly cloudy with



abundant heat and humidity.

Roads on Tobago are narrow, with potholes and sharp curves, but folks seem to cooperate, and pedestrians actually signal drivers of oncoming vehicles at sharp curves. Much of the drive was coastal, dodging chickens, dogs, goats, and kids, passing coconut-lined beaches without much hint of tourism. People are mostly black Carib; the East Indian influence seen in Trinidad seems absent from Tobago.

The drive required about two hours, and roadside birds included an abundance of Tropical Mockingbirds, kingbirds, Blue-black Grassquits, anis, Blue-gray Tanagers, Red-crowned Woodpeckers, and lots of doves—Ruddy Ground-, White-tipped, and Eared doves, and Pale-vented Pigeons.

Speyside is a resort with a well-manicured beach and hotel with restaurant. We got aboard a glass-bottom boat and set out across coral rubble before reaching some live coral. Water was a bit choppy, with a brisk breeze blowing. We passed Goat Island and crossed what was alleged to be the world's largest brain coral. It looked pretty smart, for a coelenterate.

We made a wet landing on the beach at Little Tobago, as frigatebirds, Brown Noddies, and Laughing Gulls flew by. After washing our feet—God forbid we tourists should walk with sandy feet—we ambled up a steep slope of the well-forested island, picturesque with palms, bamboo, and other tropical flora. We trekked to the highest point, an overlook that afforded eye-level views of Red-billed Tropicbirds as they coursed along. Laughing Gulls and frigates were also in the air, and well below us along the rocky beach were Brown Noddies, Brown Boobies, a few Sooty Tern pairs, and a Bridled Tern or two. Well out to sea, beyond some rocky islets, Red-footed Boobies—Adolphus pointed out the white tails, a key field mark—flew just above the waves. The birds were most satisfactory, and the view exceeded expectations.

Forest birds on Little Tobago included motmots, Brown-crested Flycatcher, and the elusive (to the sight) Chivi Vireo.

We left the island for snorkeling and, rather than tropicbirds, saw queen angelfish, French angelfish, black durgons, stoplight parrotfish, sergeant majors, blue-headed wrasses, blue tangs, and slippery dicks.

Upon returning to Speyside we had a late but ample lunch of fish and chicken. The ride back to the Kariwak was punctuated by several stops, the longest of which was at Fort George, built in 1777 or thereabouts. It changed hands often, and the Spanish and English kept shooting each other over it. We all straddled a cannon. Really!

Kariwak's piña colodas are world class.

**June 25, Monday.** Breakfast at 7:00 A.M. at the Kariwak as a Carib Grackle sang to us from a chairback. Hilty and Brown describe Carib Grackle vocalization as "a loud, strident *queek, queek, queek, queek.*" They obviously

have not been to Tobago. Our bird went *queek, que, que, queek, queek, queek, que, que, queek, que, queeee*. It was certainly loud and strident.

Adolphus collected us at 7:30, and we were off to Gilpin Trace, along Bloody Bay Road, in the Tobago highlands. We climbed into hurricane-disturbed forest on a winding, slow road, seeing Gray-rumped Swifts and a few Broad-winged Hawks.

Gilpin Trace is marked by a small sign and is a narrow trail descending gradually down a somewhat slick, muddy slope. It had rained torrentially during the night, and thus, the forest and trail were wet. The orange-colored soil was slippery, probably due to high clay content—typical tropical soil. The forest was splendid in appearance—lots of the *Heliconia*, an abundance of *Cecropia*, ferns, and tall, vine-laden, epiphyte-covered trees. There was abundant evidence of leaf-cutter ants. Fern fronds and *Heliconia* leaves were stripped bare. Land crabs, orange like the soil, challenged us from several points along the trail.

Bird highlights included Yellow-legged Thrush, White-tailed Sabrewing, and Venezuelan Flycatcher. We came upon some chachalaca chicks and deemed them to be really cute. Other ornithological favors included Rufous-breasted Hermit, Copper-rumps, Blue-gray and White-lined tanagers, and, finally, good views of Stripe-breasted Spinetail. We walked for about two hours, birding along, before turning back.

Adolphus James was adorned in cutoff cords, Bean gum boots, and a shirt that said "I love you" in French. He likes his group to be very quiet, often difficult to achieve. He carries a big umbrella, which he did not need to open on this walk, and uses it as a pointer to direct people's eyes to the bird in question. He has a small towel on one shoulder to swat insects, and he also broke off a few leafy branches for the same purpose. He seemed to like our group and said so. The feeling was quite mutual.

Lunch was served at an overlook along Bloody Bay Road. Adolphus supplied a paintbrush to wipe mud from shoes. We found a nest of a Tropical Mockingbird with young, and Orange-winged Parrots and Gray-rumped Swifts flew overhead.

Following lunch we drove back along Bloody Bay Road, stopping to bird along a trace where Adolphus hoped we would get Olivaceous Woodcreeper. We did not, but after pushing some cows aside, we did encounter two Great Black Hawks. One briefly perched, affording a very fine look.

After dinner at the Kariwak, we were aboard the jet for a 9:00 P.M. departure for Trinidad and the Bel Air Hotel. The air there was not that bel.

**June 26, Tuesday.** Piarco International Airport: early departure from Trinidad aboard BWIA. Stop at Grenada, stop in Aruba, where we did passports for U. S. customs, then on to Miami. Then on to Boston.

**Bird Species Seen or Heard by the Darwin Group  
on Trinidad and Tobago, June 17-25, 1990**

- Little Tinamou.** Heard in several places on Trinidad.
- Least Grebe.** Several seen at sewage ponds near Caroni Swamp.
- Pied-billed Grebe.** One on lake near picnic area at Arena Forest.
- Red-billed Tropicbird.** A dozen or more nesting on the cliffs of Little Tobago.
- Brown Booby.** Nesting on rocks on Little Tobago.
- Red-footed Booby** Twenty or more well offshore, seen from Little Tobago.
- Brown Pelican.** Seen regularly along coast on both islands.
- Olivaceous Cormorant.** One on Tobago at Buccoo Marsh.
- Magnificent Frigatebird.** Common along coast on both islands.
- Pinnated Bittern.** Two at the Melon Patch area of Nariva Swamp.
- Stripe-backed Bittern.** One probable at Caroni sewage ponds.
- Great Egret.** At Waller Field, Nariva Swamp, Arena Forest Lake, Caroni Swamp.
- Little Egret.** One at sewage ponds near Caroni Swamp.
- Western Reef Heron.** One at Buccoo Marsh, Tobago.
- Snowy Egret.** Many at Caroni Swamp and nearby sewage ponds.
- Little Blue Heron.** Common at Nariva and Caroni swamps. Also at Buccoo Marsh on Tobago.
- Tricolored Heron.** At Caroni Swamp, Trinidad; at Buccoo Marsh, Tobago.
- Cattle Egret.** Abundant on both islands.
- Green-backed Heron.** Many places on Trinidad; several places on Tobago.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron.** One at Buccoo Marsh on Tobago.
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.** At Caroni Swamp. Several places on Tobago.
- Boat-billed Heron.** Several flying over Caroni Swamp.
- Scarlet Ibis.** Several hundred, adults and juveniles, at roost in Caroni Swamp.
- Roseate Spoonbill.** One fly-by at Caroni Swamp.
- Fulvous Whistling-Duck.** Several dozen flying over Caroni Swamp.
- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck.** Two at Nariva Swamp, over a hundred on Arena Forest Lake. Twenty-five at Buccoo Marsh on Tobago.
- White-cheeked Pintail.** Two pairs at Buccoo Marsh, Tobago.
- Black Vulture.** Many seen daily on Trinidad; not on Tobago.
- Turkey Vulture.** Seen daily on Trinidad but not as abundant as Black. None on Tobago.
- Osprey.** One at Matura Bay and one at Caroni Swamp.
- Swallow-tailed Kite.** Individuals seen from Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo.
- Pearl Kite.** One at Nariva Swamp, two at Aripo Savanna.
- Gray-headed Kite.** One near Matura Bay; one, possibly two, at different places at Aripo Savanna.

**Double-toothed Kite.** One on the drive to Matura Bay.

**Plumbeous Kite.** One on drive to Matura Bay; many at Aripo Savanna and Arena Forest. Small flock overhead at lunch stop.

**White Hawk.** One seen several times from AWC veranda, once at manakin lek.

**Common Black Hawk.** Seen several times from AWC veranda, at Heights of Aripo, along Blanchisseuse Road.

**Great Black Hawk.** Two along trace from Bloody Bay Road on Tobago.

**Savannah Hawk.** Several, at Waller Field, Nariva Swamp, Aripo Savanna.

**Gray Hawk.** One, Heights of Aripo.

**Broad-winged Hawk.** Several, from Bloody Bay Road, Tobago; one on Little Tobago.

**Zone-tailed Hawk.** Several along Blanchisseuse Road, Waller Field area, Aripo Savanna.

**Ornate Hawk-Eagle.** One soaring over Blanchisseuse Road.

**Yellow-headed Caracara.** Several, at Aripo Savanna and near Caroni Swamp.

**Bat Falcon.** Seen on two occasions at AWC.

**Rufous-vented Chachalaca.** Seen (and heard!) on Tobago at Grafton Estate, Gilpin Trace (chicks), and scattered locations.

**Clapper Rail.** Heard at Caroni Swamp.

**Purple Gallinule.** One at sewage ponds near Caroni.

**Common Moorhen.** Several at sewage ponds near Caroni. At Buccoo Marsh on Tobago.

**Caribbean Coot.** One at Buccoo Marsh on Tobago.

**Limpkin.** Heard at Caroni Swamp.

**Southern Lapwing.** Many at Waller Field area, Aripo Savanna, on Caroni trip. One at Buccoo Marsh on Tobago.

**Black-bellied Plover.** Several on beach at Buccoo Reef area, Tobago.

**Collared Plover.** Flock of six on beach at Nariva Swamp.

**Black-necked Stilt.** Several at sewage ponds near Caroni Swamp.

**Wattled Jacana.** Many at Aripo Savanna, Waller Field, sewage ponds, Nariva Swamp, Melon Patch, other suitable habitat. Also at Buccoo Marsh on Tobago.

**Greater Yellowlegs.** One at Waller Field cattle pens.

**Whimbrel.** One at Buccoo Marsh, Tobago.

**Laughing Gull.** Nariva Swamp, other coastal locations. Abundant along Tobago coast.

**Large-billed Tern.** One at Caroni Swamp.

**Cayenne Tern** (formerly lumped with Sandwich Tern). One at Buccoo Reef on Tobago.

**Roseate Tern.** A few at Blanchisseuse Beach during lunch stop.

**Common Tern.** Several at Blanchisseuse Beach. Also on Tobago.

**Bridled Tern.** Several on Little Tobago.

**Sooty Tern.** Several breeding pairs on Little Tobago.  
**Yellow-billed Tern.** Several at sewage ponds near Caroni Swamp.  
**Brown Noddy.** Common around Little Tobago and nesting there.  
**Black Skimmer.** Two at sewage ponds near Caroni.  
**Scaled Pigeon.** Seen daily at AWC, often from veranda.  
**Pale-vented Pigeon.** Seen frequently on Tobago, often perched on snags.  
**Eared Dove.** Seen frequently on Tobago, often on roadsides.  
**Common Ground Dove.** Several at old runway area, Aripo Savanna.  
**Ruddy Ground Dove.** Abundant in open areas on both islands.  
**White-tipped Dove.** Seen frequently in open areas on Tobago.  
**Gray-fronted Dove.** Heard on Blanchisseuse Road, seen once at AWC.  
**Rock Dove.** Common in urban and rural habitats on both islands.  
**Red-bellied Macaw.** 8-10 coming to roost in palms at Nariva Swamp.  
**Green-rumped Parrotlet.** Several at Aripo Savanna (Waller Field), near Caroni Swamp. Also on Tobago.  
**Lilac-tailed Parrotlet.** Seen daily from veranda at AWC.  
**Blue-headed Parrot.** Heard and seen flying over Blanchisseuse Road.  
**Orange-winged Parrot.** Seen commonly around Arima Valley, Heights of Aripo. Also on Tobago.  
**Squirrel Cuckoo.** Seen AWC, Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo.  
**Greater Ani.** Heard at Caroni Swamp.  
**Smooth-billed Ani.** Seen allopreening daily at AWC. Common along roads and fields on both islands.  
**Striped Cuckoo.** Flying across Blanchisseuse Road; perched, singing, at Aripo Forest.  
**Spectacled Owl.** One seen in Jogie's yard, one seen at cabin area of AWC, where two birds vocalized.  
**Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl.** Heard often on Trinidad. Seen on Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna.  
**Mottled Owl.** Heard several times at AWC and on Blanchisseuse Road.  
**Oilbird.** About 130 birds nesting in Dunston Cave at AWC.  
**Common Potoo.** At Caroni Swamp, two perched, one in flight.  
**Lesser Nighthawk.** Seen at Caroni Swamp.  
**Pauraque.** Two seen briefly at old runway area at Aripo Savanna.  
**White-tailed Nightjar.** One (not definite) on Blanchisseuse Road.  
**Chestnut-collared Swift.** Two nestlings in nest in Dunston Cave.  
**Gray-rumped Swift.** Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo. Bloody Bay Road on Tobago.  
**Short-tailed Swift.** Seen often on Trinidad and Tobago.  
**Fork-tailed Palm-Swift.** Several times and places at Aripo Savanna.  
**Rufous-breasted Hermit.** Along trails and from veranda at AWC, on

Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo. Grafton Estate, Gilpin Trace on Tobago.  
**Green Hermit.** Seen several times at AWC, along trails. Lek along Blanchisseuse Road.

**Little Hermit.** Around AWC, on Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna.

**White-tailed Sabrewing.** On Gilpin and nearby trace on Tobago.

**White-necked Jacobin.** Often at AWC veranda. Gilpin Trace, Tobago.

**Black-throated Mango.** Often at AWC veranda, elsewhere on Trinidad.

**Ruby-Topaz.** Two in moriche palm area along old runways at Aripo Savanna. One female at the Kariwak Village on Tobago.

**Tufted Coquette.** Seen daily from cabins and AWC veranda.

**Blue-chinned Sapphire.** AWC veranda daily, other Trinidad sites.

**White-chested Emerald.** AWC veranda daily, other Trinidad sites.

**Copper-rumped Hummingbird.** AWC veranda daily. Common throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

**Long-billed Starthroat.** Several times at AWC, on Blanchisseuse Road.

**White-tailed Trogon.** Responded to tape on Blanchisseuse Road; seen at Heights of Aripo.

**Collared Trogon.** Both sexes seen along Blanchisseuse Road.

**Violaceous Trogon.** Seen often at AWC, on Blanchisseuse Road.

**Green Kingfisher.** One at lunch area at Blanchisseuse Beach.

**Pygmy Kingfisher.** One perched on mangrove roots at Caroni Swamp.

**Blue-crowned Motmot.** Daily at AWC, elsewhere on Trinidad. Nest holes in Blanchisseuse Road embankments and other areas. Abundant at Grafton Estate, common in other forested areas on Tobago.

**Rufous-tailed Jacamar.** One near Matura Bay. On Bloody Bay Road, at Grafton Estate, Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**Channel-billed Toucan.** Several almost daily from veranda at AWC.

**Golden-olive Woodpecker.** Seen daily from veranda, around AWC, and at other locations. Also seen along Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**Chestnut Woodpecker.** Several around AWC, also Blanchisseuse Road.

**Red-crowned Woodpecker.** At many places on Tobago.

**Lineated Woodpecker.** Seen daily from veranda and around AWC as well as other forested areas on Trinidad.

**Red-rumped Woodpecker.** Several times from veranda and around AWC.

**Crimson-crested Woodpecker.** Seen on drive to Matura Bay.

**Plain-brown Woodcreeper.** Several seen near army ant swarm on AWC Chaconia Trail.

**Olivaceous Woodcreeper.** Heard briefly but not seen on trace at Bloody Bay Road on Tobago.

**Buff-throated Woodcreeper.** Heard often. Seen along Blanchisseuse Road, around AWC. Seen at Grafton Estate on Tobago.

**Pale-breasted Spinetail.** Heard often. Seen along Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo.

**Stripe-breasted Spinetail.** Grafton Estate, Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**Yellow-throated Spinetail.** Seen skulking at Caroni Swamp.

**Great Antshrike.** Several times along AWC drive, Heights of Aripo.

**Black-crested Antshrike.** Both sexes at nest in mangroves at Nariva Swamp, several birds at Caroni Swamp.

**Barred Antshrike.** Both sexes seen often around AWC, other areas of Trinidad. Grafton Estate, Gilpin Trace, Kariwak Village on Tobago.

**Plain Antvireo.** AWC trails, along Blanchisseuse Road. Also along Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**White-fringed Antwren.** Pair on trace at Grafton Estate on Tobago.

**Silvered Antbird.** Pair seen among mangroves at Nariva Swamp.

**White-bellied Antbird.** Pair foraging near army ant swarm on AWC Chaconia Trail.

**Black-faced Antthrush.** Heard and seen often at AWC along trails, at ant swarm, and other forested areas in Trinidad.

**Southern Beardless Tyrannulet.** One seen near hermit lek on Blanchisseuse Road.

**Forest Elaenia.** AWC, Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo.

**Yellow-bellied Elaenia.** Nest at AWC. Seen very frequently virtually anywhere on Trinidad and Tobago.

**Ochre-bellied Flycatcher.** At lek on AWC Chaconia trail.

**Slaty-capped Flycatcher.** One along Blanchisseuse Road.

**Yellow-breasted Flycatcher.** Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna, Heights of Aripo. At Grafton, Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**Bran-colored Flycatcher.** One near water buffalo farm at Aripo Savanna.

**Tropical Pewee.** Around AWC, Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo.

**Euler's Flycatcher.** Along Blanchisseuse Road; near ant swarm at AWC Chaconia Trail.

**Fuscous Flycatcher.** Grafton Estate on Tobago.

**Pied Water-Tyrant.** Many at Aripo Savanna in wet areas, Nariva Swamp, sewage ponds, Caroni Swamp.

**White-headed Marsh-Tyrant.** Several at Aripo Savanna in wet areas, Nariva Swamp, sewage ponds, Caroni Swamp.

**Bright-rumped Attila.** Heard but not seen on AWC Guacharo Trail.

**Venezuelan Flycatcher.** At Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**Brown-crested Flycatcher.** Several at Aripo Savanna. At Grafton Estate, along Bloody Bay Road on Tobago.

**Great Kiskadee.** Common at AWC and at many places on both islands.

**Boat-billed Flycatcher.** Seen often from AWC veranda, many other locations

on Trinidad.

**Streaked Flycatcher.** Often from AWC veranda, many other places on Trinidad. Along Bloody Bay Road on Tobago.

**Piratic Flycatcher.** Common at AWC veranda, other areas on Trinidad.

**Sulphury Flycatcher.** Two in moriche palms at old runway area of Aripo Savanna.

**Tropical Kingbird.** Abundant on both islands.

**Gray Kingbird.** Several on Tobago, scattered locations.

**Fork-tailed Flycatcher.** Many feeding on berries at Aripo Savanna. Seen at other open field habitats on Trinidad.

**White-winged Becard.** Male and female seen from AWC veranda.

**Black-tailed Tityra.** Pair observed frequently from AWC veranda.

**White-bearded Manakin.** Many males and a few females around lek at AWC. Also along Blanchisseuse Road.

**Blue-backed Manakin.** Several males at Grafton Estate, Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**Golden-headed Manakin.** Male on lek at AWC. Several females or immatures on Blanchisseuse Road, at Arena Forest, other places.

**Bearded Bellbird.** Males calling in Arima Valley at AWC; male and female observed from AWC veranda.

**Caribbean Martin.** Very common in open habitats on Tobago.

**Gray-breasted Martin.** Common in open habitats on Trinidad.

**White-winged Swallow.** One at cattle enclosure at Aripo Savanna, several at sewage ponds near Caroni Swamp.

**Southern Rough-winged Swallow.** Several places in Aripo Savanna.

**Rufous-breasted Wren.** Often seen and heard at AWC, Blanchisseuse Road, brushy areas, forest edges in Trinidad. At Grafton Estate and Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**House Wren.** Often seen at AWC, other places on both islands.

**Long-billed Gnatwren.** Blanchisseuse Road, pair nesting on AWC Guacharo Trail.

**Yellow-legged Thrush.** Several seen on Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**Cocoa Thrush.** Nest in embankment in AWC cabin area. Common in forested and semiforested areas on Trinidad.

**Bare-eyed Thrush.** Common at AWC, forested areas on both islands. Visited dining area at the Kariwak, bringing brood with it.

**White-necked Thrush.** One along Blanchisseuse Road.

**Tropical Mockingbird.** Seen frequently in open and semi-open habitats on both islands.

**Rufous-browed Peppershrike.** Daily at AWC. Also seen Aripo Savanna, Blanchisseuse Road, Arena Forest, Heights of Aripo.



**Chivi Vireo.** Heard daily, seen infrequently on Trinidad. Seen well on Little Tobago.

**Golden-fronted Greenlet.** Seen often on Trinidad—at AWC, on Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo, Aripo Savanna.

**Scrub Greenlet.** Seen only along Gilpin Trace on Tobago.

**Tropical Parula.** From AWC veranda, on Blanchisseuse Road, at Heights of Aripo, several other places.

**Golden-crowned Warbler.** One on Blanchisseuse Road.

**Blue Dacnis.** Several times from AWC veranda, and on Blanchisseuse Road.

**Green Honeycreeper.** Several times from AWC veranda, Heights of Aripo, Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna.

**Purple Honeycreeper.** Several from AWC veranda, Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna, Arena Forest.

**Red-legged Honeycreeper.** Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo.

**Bicolored Conebill.** Among mangroves at Nariva and Caroni swamps. Winston claimed Cook's tree boa eats conebills.

**Bananaquit.** As abundant at AWC as greenheads at Plum Island on a hot, still summer's day. Seen on all trips in all habitats on both islands. Visited dining area at the Kariwak on Tobago.

**White-shouldered Tanager.** Seen infrequently from AWC veranda; along Blanchisseuse Road.

**White-lined Tanager.** Common from AWC veranda, on most field trips on both islands.

**Red-crowned Ant-Tanager.** At ant swarm on AWC Chaconia Trail.

**Silver-beaked Tanager.** Common at AWC veranda, as well as most forested and semiforested areas on Trinidad.

**Blue-gray Tanager.** Common at AWC, other habitats on both islands.

**Palm Tanager.** "Starling" of AWC and Trinidad. Not seen on Tobago.

**Violaceous Euphonia.** Seen often from AWC veranda as well as Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna, Heights of Aripo.

**Turquoise Tanager.** Fairly regularly from AWC veranda. Also Heights of Aripo, Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna.

**Speckled Tanager.** One or two along Blanchisseuse Road.

**Bay-headed Tanager.** Regularly from AWC veranda, on Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna, Heights of Aripo.

**Grayish Saltator.** Many places including AWC veranda, Blanchisseuse Road, Aripo Savanna.

**Red-capped Cardinal.** Several by mangrove channel at Caroni Swamp.

**Blue-black Grassquit.** Ubiquitous on both islands in all open grassy habitats.

**Ruddy-breasted Seedeater.** Several at Aripo Savanna agricultural area. Seen once on Tobago.

**Black-faced Grassquit.** Especially at Kariwak Village on Tobago.

**Yellow-hooded Blackbird.** Several places at Aripo Savanna, Nariva Swamp, and sewage ponds near Caroni.

**Carib Grackle.** Aripo Savanna, at many open fields on Trinidad. On Tobago, a melodious companion at all Kariwak meals.

**Yellow-rumped Cacique.** Aripo Savanna. Colony at police station near Arena Forest.

**Crested Oropendola (Yellowtail).** Abundant at AWC, Blanchisseuse Road, Heights of Aripo. On Tobago, especially Little Tobago.

**Giant Cowbird.** Several at Aripo Savanna agricultural area, other places at Aripo. Also at Buccoo Marsh on Tobago.

**Shiny Cowbird.** At various places within Aripo Savanna, Heights of Aripo. Also on Bloody Bay Road on Tobago.

**Red-breasted Blackbird.** Many at Aripo Savanna agricultural area. A few around sewage ponds near Caroni Swamp.

**Yellow Oriole.** Frequently seen from AWC veranda, regularly in forested habitat throughout Trinidad.

#### Other Creatures Observed

The vertebrates we saw included—

- agouti—a husky, almost deerlike rodent that is related to guinea pigs and was seen regularly around AWC;
- sciurid squirrel—tree dweller, related to the gray squirrel;
- giant marine toad (*Bufo marinus*)—found at Kricher's cabin;
- spectacled cayman—seen at Caroni Swamp and sewage ponds;
- indigo snake—small one on AWC grounds;
- Cook's tree boa—draped over mangrove limbs at Caroni Swamp;
- bushmaster snake or silent fate—one (one is probably enough) eight-footer crossing the AWC drive just above the grotto pool, not easily forgotten;
- lizards—various and sundry.

The invertebrates we noted were—

- giant land crab—an orange-clawed crustacean that challenged all comers when encountered on both islands;
- *Heliconius melpomenes* or postman—a slender-winged butterfly with brilliant red spots on black wings;
- emperor butterfly, a blue morpho species—a big butterfly of Trinidad's forested areas with bright blue inside the wings;
- ants—fungus garden (leaf-cutter) ants, army ants, termites;
- cicadas—not seen, but constantly supplying a distinctive background noise (like French police sirens in the distance);

- blaborous [*sic*] cockroach—a large roach that shared the veranda with us; and, courtesy of our friends from the Cincinnati Zoo, we also saw—
- *Peripatus*—wormlike in appearance, belonging to its own class, Onychophora. As missing links go, this one is not missing. It is the unique animal that combines annelid (segmented worm) characteristics with those of arthropods (insects, crustacea, etc.);
- harlequin beetle—a big, red-on-black beetle that carries commensal pseudoscorpions under its wings, has long antennae;
- Hercules beetle—very large as beetles go. Males have long horns, and females do not.
- *Pyrophorus* click beetle—an odd beetle with bioluminescent headlights. We found one on a night walk, the insect aglow and swinging its little beetle bod along the AWC drive.

### Suggested References

- de Schauensee, R. Meyer, and W. H. Phelps Jr. 1978. *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Illustrations by Guy Tudor, mostly in color. Contains all the birds of Trinidad, plus many more. Very useful.
- French, Richard. 1976. *A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*. Valley Forge, PA: Harwood Books. The standard guide to Trinidad birds, with illustrations, most in color, by John P. O'Neill and Don Eckleberry. Includes a detailed introduction to habitat diversity of Trinidad.
- Kricher, John C. 1989. *A Neotropical Companion: A Guide to the Animals, Plants, and Ecosystems of the New World Tropics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Many black-and-white illustrations. Overview of tropical ecology, including numerous specific references to Trinidad.
- Linblad, Jan. 1966. *Journey to Red Birds*. New York: Hill and Wang. Color and black-and-white photos by author. Out of print but findable in libraries and used book stores. Engrossing account of Linblad's adventures in photographing Scarlet Ibis and Oilbirds, plus lots of other notes about Trinidadian natural history.
- Murphy, W. L. 1987. *A Birder's Guide to Trinidad and Tobago*. Peregrine Enterprises, Inc., P. O. Box 1003, College Park, MD 20740. Like a Lane guide to Trinidad. Includes an annotated species list, references on Trinidad birds, specific directions to field areas (which you do not need).
- Snow, David W. 1976. *The Web of Adaptation*. New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co. Few illustrations. Available in paperback. A

very enjoyable, readable account of Snow's work on oilbirds, cotingas, and manakins in Trinidad.

Worth, C. Brooke. 1967. *A Naturalist in Trinidad*. Philadelphia: Lippincott. Out of print but worth searching for in libraries and used book stores. Good readable overview of Trinidad natural history, including mammals, reptiles, plants, etc. Not well illustrated but nonetheless informative.

**JOHN C. KRICHER**, Jennings Professor of Natural Science at Wheaton College in Norton, is currently on leave to write and travel. In addition to leading the Darwin Group in Trinidad, his recent perambulations include Venezuela and Brazil, as lecturer aboard the *Society Explorer*. John is the author of *A Neotropical Companion* and *A Field Guide to Eastern Forests* and is currently completing *A Field Guide to Western Forests* and a coloring book on the tropical rain forest. A former president of the Association of Field Ornithologists, Dr. Kricher's research interest is the ecology and evolution of neotropical birds. *Bird Observer* is grateful for the many fine articles he has contributed to us. In his current publishing ventures, John is again teamed with friend Gordon Morrison, whose artwork has several times graced our cover.

#### Addenda

**Geography and climate.** Trinidad is the southernmost island in the Caribbean and about six miles from Venezuela. During the Pleistocene Ice Age when the sea level was lower, the island was physically connected to South America. For that reason, Trinidad now has a biogeography much like Venezuela's and distinct from other Caribbean islands. Many species remained on Trinidad after it was isolated by water from the mainland about 10,000 years ago, and the proximity of the continent provided a source of additional immigrant species. Hence, Trinidad has many more species of birds than any other Caribbean island, an exceptional species richness for so small an area. Trinidad also comprises an abundance of habitats—tropical moist forest (a term for woodland with abundant but seasonal rainfall), montane forest, savanna, fresh-water and salt-water swamps and marshes, open ocean and beaches. There are approximately 425 bird species, of which about 250 breed. Although some nesting occurs in every month of the year, June has the largest number of species breeding, i.e., 76.

Trinidad is roughly a 50-by-35-mile rectangle and has three east-west mountain ranges. The Northern Range is an Andean spur and contains Mount Aripo (3084 feet), the highest point on the island. Lush tropical moist forest characterizes this range, which is the location of the Arima Valley and the Asa Wright Centre. In some areas of Trinidad, but especially in these mountains, rainfall may reach almost two hundred inches annually, and it averages eighty

inches throughout most of the island. The driest months are from January to April, and the heavy rains begin in late May. Air temperature ranges between 70 and 86 degrees F. Humidity routinely runs near ninety percent during the day.

**Tobago.** Trinidad and Tobago constitute a single independent national unit. Tiny Tobago, 26 miles long, 7.5 miles at its widest, and 116 square miles in area, lies on the very edge of the continental shelf, 26 miles northeast of Trinidad. Tropical moist forest covers most of a low but rugged mountain ridge of volcanic origin that extends for 18 miles along the northern portion of the island, the highest point being 1890 feet. The southernmost part of Tobago, where most of the population resides, consists of fertile flatlands with some wetlands. Like Trinidad, Tobago has variable wet and dry seasons, the first five months of the year being the driest period. The wettest month is November. Due to Tobago's lower topographical profile, the steady northeast trade winds produce a climate more like that of the Lesser Antilles—less humid and more windy than Trinidad.

Tobago has many fewer birds than Trinidad. Richard French's book lists a total of 172 species on Tobago, half of them breeding birds. Only 18 of these, which include 13 breeding species, are not found on Trinidad. Comparison of the two islands reveals a possible explanation for this. Tobago became separated from the mainland millions of years before Trinidad, which has been an island for only 10,000 years. Also Tobago suffers a paucity of different habitats. Competition over a great time span on an island with little habitat variety would tend to eliminate species and restrict speciation.

The tiny islands of St. Giles and Little Tobago, just two kilometers off the north coast, provide fine pelagic birding and nesting seabirds. The 300-acre islet of Little Tobago is also a sanctuary for birds of paradise brought there in 1908.

**The Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge** is a former cocoa, coffee, and citrus plantation tucked in the Arima Valley at an elevation of 1200 feet. Formerly called Spring Hill Estate, it is now a two-hundred-acre sanctuary. Feeders attract tanagers and honeycreepers, which can be viewed easily from the veranda—its screens are movable. About seven hummingbird species visit vervain clumps and other flowers that surround the main house. Well-maintained trails lead from the house into splendid tropical moist forest, and Dunston Cave with its nesting Oilbirds is on the property. There are resident and visiting naturalists, and a varied program is offered by the Centre—seminars, guided walks, and nature tours of Trinidad.

The drive up to the lodge is reached from Blanchisseuse Road, a fine-sounding name that means *washerwoman*. Guests are lodged in two-person cabins and in double-bedded rooms in the main lodge, which contains the dining room and the famous veranda. All rooms have showers. The meals include local specialties and are served buffet style at traditional times. Substantial picnic

lunches are provided for field trips. There is afternoon tea, and rum punch is served before dinner.

The Centre is a true retreat. Arima is a fifteen-minute drive down the mountain, there is no telephone, and mail is picked up in Arima.

**Miscellaneous Trip Tips.** It is possible to bird Trinidad and Tobago without joining a tour group provided reservations are made well in advance. English is the language, and traveling around is simple. Regularly scheduled buses travel the highways, and taxis are available even in remote places late at night or early in the morning. Any vehicle that bears an *H* on the license plate can be flagged down for taxi service. The distances are not great, and cars may be rented. However, driving is on the left side of the road, and birders who are reluctant to drive can readily hire a driver or even a birding guide to take them around. The following people are among the better known guides and are regarded as local birding experts.

- Jogie Ramlal for landbirding on Trinidad: Milepost 3-3/4, Blanchisseuse Road, Arima, Trinidad, W. I.
- Winston Nanan for Caroni Swamp boat tours: Bamboo Grove Settlement No. 1, Butler Highway, Valsayn, P. O., Trinidad, W. I. Telephone: 809-645-1305.
- Adolphus James for birding on Tobago: c/o Scarborough Post Office, Tobago, W. I. Telephone: 809-639-2231, 809-645-4706.

Trinidad and Tobago are tropical islands that provide rich birding opportunities at any time of year. The variable dry season extends through roughly the first five months of the year, and heavy rains begin in late May. Higher prices and more chiggers characterize the drier months and lower prices, fewer tourists, more mosquitos, muddier roads, and South American migrants the wet season. Lightweight clothing is more comfortable—Trinidad is at the same latitude as Ethiopia and the Philippines. Long sleeves and long trousers should be worn and insect repellent used by the visitor who cannot tolerate insect and chigger bites. Extra sneakers are needed in the rainy season, when clothing dries very slowly.

#### **Some addresses and phone numbers.**

- *Trinidad and Tobago Tourist Board*, Suite 712-714, 400 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Telephone: 212-838-7750, 7751.
- *Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge*. Reservations (and travel arrangements) can be made through Caligo Ventures, Inc., 387 Main Street, P. O. Box 21, Armonk, NY 10504-0021. Telephone: 800-426-7781.
- *Kariwak Village*, P. O. Box 27, Scarborough, Tobago, W.I. Telephone: 809-639-8545.

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