

Fifth Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Rare Birds Committee: Rare Birds in Trinidad and Tobago 2006 and 2007

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The Trinidad and Tobago Rare Birds Committee (TTRBC) was established in 1995 with the principal aim to assess, document and archive the occurrence of rare or unusual birds in Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee has now assessed all records submitted during 2006 and 2007. In all, 103 records were adjudged, representing 63 different species. As a result of these submissions, three additional species have been added to the Official List of Birds of Trinidad and Tobago, bringing the running total to 468 species. Additionally, a further four species have been found on Tobago for the first time. Of those assessed, in only eight cases did the Committee feel that the identification had been inconclusive. The records tabulated below follow the nomenclature and taxonomic order of the American Ornithologists Union South American checklist; 10th version February, 2006.

The Committee comprises the following members: Martyn Kenefick (Secretary), Richard French, Geoffrey Gomes, Floyd Hayes, Bill Murphy, Courtenay Rooks and Graham White. Archived records including photographic submissions are held at 36 Newalloville Ave., San Juan.

We are aware that a number of other rare birds are found each year in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) and urge finders not only to report their sightings to us but to document same. A recently revised list of those species considered by the TTRBC can be accessed, together with our Photo Gallery, from the home page of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club at www.wow.net/ttfn

RECORDS ACCEPTED

A non-breeding plumaged **American Wigeon**, *Anas americana* was found at Bon Accord sewage ponds, on 2 December, 2007 (MK *et al.*). This is the fourth record in the last 12 years, all from Tobago.

Two adult male and one female **Ring-necked Ducks**, *Aythya collaris* were found on a narrow freshwater pool within the Hilton Hotel complex at Lowlands, Tobago on 6 February, 2006 (PC, MK). In all, 12 birds have been found since 1995, all in Tobago.

Two female **Lesser Scaup**, *Aythya affinis* accompanied the Ring-necked Ducks mentioned above, at Lowlands, Tobago on 6 February, 2006 (PC, MK), until 12 March, at least. This remains a rare visitor with just five birds found since 1995.

Up to three **Trinidad Piping-Guans**, *Pipile pipile*

were periodically seen close to the telecommunications station at Morne Bleu from the beginning of 2007; photographed on 4 March, and reported until end April at least. (AM, GW *et al.*). There are undocumented reports of the same birds being present from 22 October - mid December. Perhaps two of this same group were birds found at Las Lapas on 21 October, (MK, GW, PB) .

An adult **Rufescent Tiger-Heron**, *Tigrisoma lineatum* on 20 August, 2006 (MK) and a sub-adult on 26 October, 2006 (GW) were both found at a recognized freshwater swamp - forest site in the Aripo savannah. On 29 October, 2006 an adult was present at Los Blanquizales (FO). This latter report is the first documented record of this species from south Trinidad.

A sub-adult **Gray Heron**, *Ardea cinerea* was found at Caroni rice project on 5 May, 2006 (MK) and is the sixth record for T&T, and the fifth since 1999.

An adult **Cocoi Heron**, *Ardea cocoi* found at Bon Accord sewage ponds on 5 February, 2006 (PC, MK) and photographed at Turtle Beach in May, 2006 (DH) is the fourth record for Tobago.

A **Glossy Ibis**, *Plegadis falcinellus* was found feeding in a shallow creek close to Sudama steps, South Oropouche on 30 May, 2006 (HK). This is the first documented record of this species since 2002.

Three immature **Greater (Caribbean) Flamingos**, *Phoenicopterus ruber* were found feeding on the tidal mudflats at Waterloo on 11 October, 2006 (MK). Additionally, there are several unsubstantiated reports of "up to 25" birds occasionally seen in the Carli Bay area.

An adult **Hook-billed Kite**, *Chondrohierax uncinatus* was seen at Lowlands, Tobago on 10 January, 2006 (BM *et al.*). This is just the fourth record for the island. On the following day, an immature was found at Sudama steps, South Oropouche (MK, HK).

A single **Crane Hawk**, *Geranospiza caerulescens* was seen flying north, close to Freeport on 30 December, 2005 (NL). On 5 January, 2006, one was seen over the Arima By-pass (BM *et al.*) and on 28 January, 2006, two adults were seen together at Waller Field (MK). The destruction of habitat to prepare for industrialization at this latter site has undoubtedly caused this species to move away from this regular (and possible breeding) site. On a more positive note, three birds were found along Wilson Rd., Barrackpore on 8 December, 2007 (KS), the first

record for south Trinidad.

An adult and an immature **Rufous Crab-Hawk**, *Buteogallus aequinoctialis* were seen at Carli Bay on 29 - 30 January, 2006 (NL, GW). What is presumably the same young bird was seen again on 11 November, 2006 (GGo) and possibly the same adult was present further up the coast at Brickfields on 3 March, 2007 (DS). At Guayaguayare, an adult was found on 22 February, 2006 in roadside mangrove (MK, GG); at North Manzanilla, an adult was found on 15 September, 2006 (GW, MK) and finally an adult was seen at the Moruga river mouth on 21 July, 2007 (FL). Despite the flurry of sightings in recent years, this bird remains a rare resident of Trinidad mangrove.

An adult and an immature **Great Black-Hawk**, *Buteogallus urubitinga* were soaring over Edward's Trace, just north of the Trinity Hills on 22 February, 2006 (GGo, MK) and a sub-adult was found and photographed at Nariva on 16 December, 2006 (CR). Whilst regularly seen over north-eastern Tobago, this species remains a rare resident in Trinidad.

A light morph immature **Swainson's Hawk**, *Buteo swainsoni* was seen on four occasions between 29 October - 14 November, 1999 on Chacachacare (FH *et al.*). This is just the sixth record for T&T; there have been none found since.

A **Zone-tailed Hawk**, *Buteo albonotatus* both seen and photographed on 11 December, 2006 at Barbados Beach, Tobago (MI, GJ) and subsequently widely reported, constitutes the first record for Tobago.

A single **Black Hawk-Eagle**, *Spizaetus tyrannus* was seen soaring over the disused airport site at Waller Field on 5 January, 2006 and, close by, a pair was seen attempting to mate on 28 January, 2006 (MK). The destruction of suitable habitat at this site in favour of the industrial park complex has eliminated any chance of breeding in the area. Elsewhere, an adult was photographed near Penal on 27 August, 2006 (KS); an adult was found near Lower Fishing Pond on 5 September, 2006 (MK, GW); a sub-adult was seen soaring over Siparia Forest Reserve on 18 August, 2007 (HK) and an adult photographed perched close to Pt. Fortin on 29 December, 2007 (KS).

An adult **Crested Caracara**, *Caracara cheriway* was seen at Caroni rice project on 30 December, 2005 (NL) and another at Aripo Agriculture Station on 6 January, 2006 (BM *et al.*). All remaining sightings of this species were from the palm lined coastal road between Manzanilla Beach Facility and the mouth of the Nariva River with an adult seen on 18 February, 2006 (GGo), an immature on 13 November, 2006 (GGo) and another adult on 9 October, 2007 (MK, BM).

An immature male **American Kestrel**, *Falco*

sparverius was found hovering over the M2 Ring Road, south of La Romaine on 26 June, 2007 (HK). This is the first documented record for at least 11 years.

Single immature **Aplomado Falcons**, *Falco femoralis* were found hunting over Caroni rice project on 10 August, 2006 (MK, GW) and Kernaham on 9 October, 2007 (MK, BM). This brings the total of this scarce visitor to 13 birds found in the last 12 years.

A **Rufous-necked Wood-rail**, *Aramides axillaris* was photographed at Cacandee on 26 March, 2007 (RA). This species remains a rare resident in Trinidad, with all recent records coming from the mangrove lined west coast.

An **American Coot**, *Fulica americana* found at Bon Accord sewage ponds on 4 - 5 February, 2006 (MK) is only the fifth documented record for T&T, all from Tobago. We are aware of several undocumented reports and photographs. Due to its close similarity, and elsewhere hybridizing with Caribbean Coot, we urge all reports of this species to be submitted.

A **Double-striped Thick-knee**, *Burhinus bistriatus* was photographed at the Hilton golf course complex, Lowlands on 25 February, 2007 (DA). This is the first sighting in the last 10 years and only the second for Tobago.

A **Killdeer**, *Charadrius vociferus* was photographed at Lowlands Estate, Tobago on 10 January, 2006 (PE, BM *et al.*). This is just the third record in the last 12 years. There are undocumented reports that it remained in the area for several months.

An **American Oystercatcher**, *Haematopus palliatus* was found on the rocky shoreline of Little Tobago island on 25 February, 2007 (BM *et al.*). This is just the third record for Tobago.

A **Marbled Godwit**, *Limosa fedoa* was photographed on the tidal mudflats at Orange Valley on 18 August, 2006 (NL). This is the first sighting for six years.

An **Upland Sandpiper**, *Bartramia longicauda* was found in a flooded pumpkin field south of Caroni Rice Project on 16 September, 2007 (GW, MK). Still truly rare, there have been only three birds found since 2001.

Three adult **Buff-breasted Sandpipers**, *Tryngites subruficollis* were found in a burnt, ploughed field in Caroni Rice Project on 5 May, 2006 (MK, GW) and two birds were seen feeding on the short grass at Bon Accord sewage ponds, Tobago on 2 October, 2007 (BM *et al.*). Whilst still a scarce and sought after passage migrant, there have now been a total of 34 seen in the last 12 years.

An immature female **Ruff**, *Philomachus pugnax* was present at Caroni Rice Project from 30 Sept - 1 October, 2000 (FH *et al.*). Additionally, an immature male was seen varyingly at Caroni rice project and Orange Grove between 7 - 14 December, 2000 and an un-aged bird was found at Lowlands, Tobago on 22 December, 2000 (FH

et al.). On 23 September, 2001, an immature female was found at Caroni Rice Project (FH, MK) and on 9 December, 2005 an immature male was found and photographed at Caroni Swamp (JD, BP). Still a truly uncommon passage migrant, there have now been a total of 10 birds found in the last seven years.

An immature **Wilson's Phalarope**, *Phalaropus tricolor* was photographed at Bon Accord sewage ponds on 3 August, 2006 (per NG). This is the second record for Tobago and the fifth for T&T. It is also the earliest recorded date for this very rare migrant (previously 28 August).

An adult **Black-headed Gull**, *Larus ridibundus* was found at Waterloo between 3 - 17 February, 2001 (FH, NL). This is just the sixth record of this species in the last 12 years.

A first winter plumaged **Sabine's Gull**, *Xema sabini* was photographed at Waterloo on 27 January, 2002 (NH, FH, *et al.*). This is just the second record for T&T.

A group of 16 adult **Black Skimmers**, *Rynchops niger* were found at Bon Accord sewage ponds on 13 August, 2005 (MK). Undocumented reports indicate the flock was initially at least 22 earlier in the month. The first record of this species for Tobago was from this site as recently as September, 2004. During 2007, there were numerous reports of a flock totaling at least 60 birds through much of August - September (many obs), with a party of nine still present 4 December at least (MK).

An immature male **Blue Ground-dove**, *Claravis pretiosa* was seen and photographed at Surrey Village, Lopinot Rd. on 11 December, 2007 (GW). This remains a rare and infrequently encountered resident in Trinidad.

A **Dark-billed Cuckoo**, *Coccyzus melacoryphus* repeatedly visited a private garden behind Diego Martin during August, 2006 (per GGo). This is just the third record for Trinidad in the last 12 years.

Three individual **Striped Owls**, *Asio clamator* were recorded in Tobago during the review period - at Bloody Bay, 19 January, 2005 (MKe); Runnemeade 10 January, 2006 and near Scarborough 13 January, 2006 (BM *et al.*). This remains a rarely seen resident on the island.

A **Lesser Nighthawk**, *Chordeiles acutipennis* was found hawking insects at dusk over Bon Accord sewage ponds on 11 December, 2006 (MK). This is the first documented record for Tobago.

A male **Blue-tailed Emerald**, *Chlorostilbon mellisugus* frequented a Surrey Village, Lopinot Rd. garden during June and July, 2007 before being joined by a female on 20 July (GW). This is the easternmost documented record of this species in Trinidad.

A female **Ringed Kingfisher**, *Megaceryle torquata* was found at Bon Accord on 16 June, 2007 (NG). This is the first record for Tobago.

A **Scaled Antpitta**, *Grallaria guatemalensis* was found on the upper Blanchisseuse Rd., just above Paria junction on 8 January, 2006 (MK, NH). There are undocumented sightings of this individual in the same area for several weeks thereafter.

Small-billed Elaenia, *Elaenia parvirostris*. At least two different birds were present and photographed in a Surrey Village, Lopinot Rd. garden on 18 September, 2006 and from 11 June - 30 September, 2007 (GW, MK). This is an austral migrant and the first sighting in Trinidad for at least 40 years.

A **Variiegated Flycatcher**, *Empidonomus varius* was found and photographed on the lower Blanchisseuse Rd., below Paria junction on 7 December, 2007 (MK, DR, BH). A total of eight have now been recorded since 2000.

An unprecedented total of 12 **Black-whiskered Vireos**, *Vireo altiloquus* were found during this review period. On 22 February, 2006, two birds were found along Edwards Trace, Trinity Hills (MK, GGo). Singles were then found at Surrey Village, Lopinot Rd. on 14 January, 2007 (MK, GW) and Galera Pt. on 30 January, 2007 (MK). A group of three birds fed in a fruiting tree along Montevideo Trace, Grande Riviere on 1 February, 2007 (MK). During October, 2007, single birds were found at Morne Bleu and Paria junction on the 7th (MK, BM) and Aripo Agriculture Station on the 10th (MK). All these birds are considered the race *bonairensis*. A brighter plumaged individual found at the top of the Blanchisseuse Rd. on 23 October (MK) is likely to be of the race *barbadensis*. Finally, an individual seen and photographed on Little Tobago island on 18 May, 2007 (RJ) is just the third record for Tobago.

An adult male **Caribbean Martin**, *Progne dominicensis* accompanied Gray-breasted Martins perched on utility wires along Edwards Trace, Trinity Hills on 22 February, 2006 (MK, GGo). This is the first documented record for south Trinidad.

A **Bank Swallow**, *Riparia riparia* was found feeding with a party of Barn Swallows over Bon Accord sewage ponds on 23 April, 2006 (MK *et al.*). This is the second record for Tobago.

An adult **Cliff Swallow**, *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* was found at Bon Accord sewage ponds, Tobago on 29 December, 2006 - 1 January, 2007 (NS). This was followed by an unprecedented passage with up to seven, an adult and six immatures, hunting over the freshwater marshes at Sudama Steps between 1 - 6 March, 2007 (MK, BM) and a further adult again at Bon Accord sewage ponds on 18 March, 2007 (MK, GJ).

A group of 33 **Lined Seed eaters**, *Sporophila lineola* including five adult males, were found beside an area of freshwater marsh west of Sudama Steps on 27 September, 2007 (MK). This is the first record of this species for

T&T. At least 30 were still present and photographed the following day (GW) and a lone male was found nearby on 18 October, (MK, HK).

An adult male **Yellow-bellied Seedeater**, *Sporophila nigricollis* was found at Surrey Village, Lopinot Rd. on 14 May, 2006 (GW). This is just the third recorded away from the Bocas Is. in the last 12 years.

Two **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, *Pheucticus ludovicianus* were found at Asa Wright Nature Centre during the review period; an adult male on 22 April, 2006 (AMcG) and an adult female on 11 April, 2007 (RAt). Of the nine records of this rare migrant during the last 12 years, all but two have been seen between 7 March - 22 April.

An immature male **Summer Tanager**, *Piranga rubra* was found along the upper Blanchisseuse Rd. on 26 April, 2007 (MK *et al.*) and an adult male at Las Lapas on 3 December, 2007 (GW).

An adult male **Scarlet Tanager**, *Piranga olivacea* was photographed at Asa Wright Nature Centre on 16 April, 2006 (MK, WP). All eight spring records of this rare migrant have been between 8 - 28 April.

A **Black-and-white Warbler**, *Mniotilta varia* was found along the upper Blanchisseuse Rd. on 10 October, 2006 (MK) and a second bird lingered in the mangrove at Lowlands from 10 November - 2 December, 2007 at least (NG, MK).

An immature female **Hooded Warbler**, *Wilsonia citrina* seen at San Francique on 6 - 7 January, 2006 (HK) is just the second record for Trinidad.

A **Canada Warbler**, *Wilsonia canadensis* was found and photographed at Asa Wright Nature Centre in December, 1993 (RN). This is the first record for T&T.

An adult male **Orchard Oriole**, *Icterus spurious* found and photographed at Kernaham Settlement, Nariva on 13 December, 2006 (AB) is the first record for T&T.

INCONCLUSIVE RECORDS

Records considered inconclusive were of Sooty Shearwater, *Puffinus griseus*; Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*; Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, *Cathartes burrovianus*; Black Hawk-Eagle, *Spizaetus tyrannus*; Caribbean Coot, *Fulica caribaea*; Variegated Flycatcher, *Empidonomus varius*; Long-billed Gnatwren, *Ramphocaenus melanurus* and Slate colored Seedeater, *Sporophila schistacea*. Additionally, records of Chestnut-bellied Seedfinch, *Oryzoborus angolensis* and Common Waxbill, *Estrilda astrild* from Tobago, whilst correctly identified, were considered of suspect origin.

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Photograph credits:

1. Aplomado Falcon, Caroni Rice Project - G. White
2. Canada Warbler, Asa Wright Nature Centre - R. Neckles
3. Buff-breasted Sandiper, Bon Accord - G. Hilton
4. Striped Owl, Runnemedede - P. Elia
5. Double-striped Thicknee, Hilton Golf Course - D. Ascanio
6. Dark-billed Cuckoo, Blue Range, Diego Martin - B. D'Almadas
7. Lined Seedeater, Oropouche Lagoon - G. White
8. Blue Ground Dove, Lopinot - G. White
9. Variegated Flycatcher, Lower Blanchisseuse Rd. - B. Hanson
10. Summer Tanager, Las Lapas Trace - G. White
11. Orchard Oriole, Nariva Swamp - J. Binns
12. Scarlet Tanager, Asa Wright Nature Centre - W. Powell
13. Small-billed Elaenia, Lopinot - G. White
14. Rufous Crab-Hawk, Carli Bay - G. White



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