New records for Tobago

*Catharacta skua*, Great Skua

While I was fishing on the north-east coast of Tobago 1.5 km outside of Bloody Bay on 7th March 1986, accompanied by five other persons of company executive status, this bird arrived alongside our boat at a distance of 8 m and stayed around for half an hour. I requested all persons present to observe it closely and memorize a description. On returning to shore I gave each "A guide to the birds of North America" and had each one find and identify the bird seen without assistance or prompting. Each person identified the bird as *Catharacta skua*, which confirmed my identification.

Description: A big, brown, chunky bird with white patches on the primary feathers of each wing, bigger and very different from the jaegers which I see in the area regularly.

*Oceanites oceanicus*, Wilson's Storm-Petrel

I first saw this species off Toco in 1975. In Tobago my first sighting was outside of Scarborough on 12 April 1986. I have seen it regularly all around the island, usually far offshore, the nearest sighting to shore being approximately 1 km outside Charlotteville. In April 1987, one of these birds fed around my stationary boat for 4 hr, several times coming as close as 3 m. Careful observation was eminently possible. The bird had only one leg. It appeared to stand on tip-toe while "hover-fluttering" over the wave tops and pecking into the water. Its food, being very small, remained unseen.

Description: A generally brownish bird about 15 cm long. Wings appear longer than the body. Pale to light buff wings bars; white rump bar; tail convex; feet yellow.

*Milvago chimachima*, Yellow-headed Caracara

One was seen on the Claude Noel Highway at 4.30 p.m. on 15th November 1987. I drove up to it and it flew into a coconut tree. I got so close to it I could have hit it with the truck.

Description: See ffrench (1973)

General observations

*Haematopus palliatus*, American Oystercatcher

As reported earlier (Rooks 1984), I observed a bird of this species on the rocks at Arnos Vale in 1982. From February to March 1986, small groups of two or three were regularly observed on the rocks of Man O'War Bay and Speyside. The bird has a startlingly red beak: it reminds one of a traffic light.

*Tachybaptus dominicus*, Least Grebe

Frequently seen in dams and any reasonably large body of water.

*Puffinus lherminieri*, Audubon's Shearwater

Seen as often feeding in the night as in the day. Though they feed far offshore in the day, they feed around the boat when we fish near the St. Giles islands at night using a bright lantern to attract fish. They can be seen close up in holes in the bank of the track leading up to the rest house on Little Tobago during their breeding season.

*Buteogallus urubitinga*, Great Black Hawk

Widespread and frequently seen in forested areas along Main Ridge.

*Falco peregrinus*, Peregrine Falcon

Seen regularly from October to April, especially in the presence of sea birds which they have been observed attacking.

*Sterna dougallii*, Roseate Tern

Nest in May and June 1986 and 1987 on Booby Island, Man O'War Bay. Nests with eggs and nestlings were visible from 7 m in indentations in the sheer rock face. Yellow-crowned Night Herons (*Nyctanassa violacea*) and Little Blue Herons (*Florida caerulea*) also use this island for nesting.

*Anous stolidus*, brown Noddy Tern

*Sterna fuscata*, Sooty Tern

*Sterna anaethetus*, Bridled Tern

All arrive in Tobago at the same time and nest at the same time, at the end of April, as the Roseate Tern but they use all the coastal islands and rocks for nesting as long as these are big enough to have some vegetation. They do not appear to nest on those that have no vegetation. They also nest in Alexander Bay, Little Tobago.

*Sterna maxima*, Royal Tern

These arrive in March. They nest on the Sisters with the nest being visible from the sea. I suspect that they also use the St. Giles Islands but I haven't seen any nests yet.

*Larun atricilla*, Laughing gull

Laughing Gulls arrive and nest at the same time as the Royal Terns. They nest on the St. Giles Islands and the outside face of Little Tobago.

*Campylopterus ensipennis*, White-tailed Sabrewing

This species has made a marked come-back from its near extirpation by hurricane Flora in 1963. I have observed it in the Louis d'Or valley and regularly in Main Ridge Forest Reserve.

*Chiroxipha pareola*, Blue-backed Manakin

Widespread, even quite common, in all forested areas.

*Cyanerpes cyaneus*, Red-legged Honeycreeper

One of the most common birds feeding around Forestry Division's look-out hut, Main Ridge. Also commonly seen at the water trough near the rest house on Little Tobago during the dry season of 1987.

*Forpus passerinunus*, Green-rumped Parrotlet

Now common on the western end of the island.

*Thraupis palmarum*, Palm Tanager

This species, unrecorded from Tobago before 1982 (Rooks 1982), is not plentiful but is widespread. It was first observed at Speyside and it has now been seen in Charlotteville.
References


Noteworthy Bird Records

by Graham White.
14 Santa Anna Gardens, Tunapuna, Trinidad W.I.

Paint-billed Crake, *Neocrex erythrops*. A dead specimen of this bird was found on Cumuto road about 1/2 to 2 km south of the junction with Churchill-Roosevelt Highway. This is the first record of the species in Trinidad. The specimen was preserved and is still in my possession. With me at the time were Anil and Vasheish Kokaram. The Paint-billed Crake is very similar to the Ash-throated Crake except that the base of the bill is red. A complete description is as follows.

A small rail-like bird 20.5 cm long. Bill greenish-yellow with red base. Crown, nape, mantle, back, rump dark olive brown. Upper sides of wings mid-brown. Sides of head, neck, breast and belly slate grey. Throat and chin whitish. Two white feathers 1 cm behind eye and 5 mm above ear. Iris red (bird dead). Underwing coverts brown barred white. Thighs, flanks, vent and undertail coverts dark brown barred white. Tail short, 37 mm, mid-brown. Feet pugnacious. This description fits very well with that of the bird in *Birds of Venezuela* (Meyer de Schauensee & Phelps 1978) and was thus, on future sightings, able to look for specific features.

The habitat of this bird includes swamp and pastureland. There is ample pasture in the area in which the bird was found. The range of the Paint-billed Crake includes Monagas so it is unlikely that this is an escapee.

Marbled Godwit, *Limosa haemastica*. On 86.10.05 I saw this bird at the Port of Spain sewage ponds. I had never before seen either the Marbled or Bar-tailed Godwit. I took a description into a taperecorder and identified the bird at home. Unfortunately I was the only observer but I am confident of my identification as the bird was only 7 m away. It is a rare species with only a few recent records (ffrench 1986).

Ornate Hawk-Eagle, *Spizaetus ornatus*. A bird of this species attempted to nest at the Asa Wright Nature Centre. More information can be gained from the centre.

White Ibis, *Eudocimus albus*. On a trip to see Scarlet Ibis with Mr. Winston Nanan in August 1985 one White Ibis was seen in the flock. I pointed this out to Mr. Nanan who agreed that it was a White Ibis and claimed that he does see the occasional White Ibis in the flocks of Scarlet Ibis. The bird seen was white but with black wing tips. Ffrench (1980) gives its status as an "accidental visitor to Trinidad".

Brown-Throated Parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*. For the past two years I have been seeing small flocks of parakeets. I saw them first in North Valsayn and I have seen them in Tunapuna and St. Augustine. Professor Kenny had reported them from Maracas Valley. The birds are Brown-throated Parakeets. Many views have been good enough for identification. I have viewed them from about 5 m in Valsayn and about 7 m on campus, UWI.

These birds fly in noisy flocks of 2 to 7. They are basically blue-green above with a brown throat and greenish yellow belly. There is a yellow eye-ring. The tail is long as is typical of parakeets (note, not parrotlets.) After the first sighting I consulted *Birds of Venezuela* (Meyer de Schauensee & Phelps 1978) and was thus, on future sightings, able to look for specific features.

The range of this bird includes the delta region in extreme southeast Monagas and in Delta Amacuro. However the birds seen are probably escaped cage birds since they are most common in semi-urban areas. These birds have not been recorded before in Trinidad.

Black-necked Stilt, *Himantopus himantopus*. The T & TFNC bird group has recorded nesting of this bird in 1985, 1986 and 1987 at the Port of Spain sewage ponds. This bird group has also noted the presence of Stilts at the ponds all year round.

Black-bellied Whistling-duck, *Dendrocygna autumnalis*. A large flock (more than 50 of these birds) was seen by myself in a pond behind Buccoo Bay in Tobago. One had 5 chicks. I am very familiar with both of the common species of whistling duck. They are not recorded in *Birds of Trinidad and Tobago* by R. ffrench (1980).

References
