

Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Birds Status and Distribution Committee, Records Submitted during 2022

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The Trinidad and Tobago Bird Status and Distribution Committee (TTBSDC) was established in 1995 to assess, document and archive the occurrence of rare or unusual birds in Trinidad and Tobago and thus provide reliable long-term monitoring of our rarer species. The Committee has assessed all records submitted during 2022. In all, 103 records were adjudged, representing 59 different species, in a year where fieldwork was still seriously impeded by the continuation of the global pandemic. Two species were added to the National Official List bringing the current total to 494 and two additional species were found in Tobago for the first time. As in previous years, we wish to commend the quality of photographic submissions by so many observers. Of the submissions assessed, in only three cases did we find the identification inconclusive.

Records presented below follow the revised nomenclature and taxonomic order of the South American Classification Committee as at June 2023 (Remsen *et al.* 2023). All sightings summarized below occurred in 2022 unless otherwise stated.

The Committee comprises the following members: Martyn Kenefick (Secretary), Faraaz Abdool, Geoffrey Gomes, Nigel Lallsingh, Bill Murphy, Kris Sookdeo and Graham White. Again, there are instances where we have benefitted from supporting international expert knowledge to assist us with certain identification issues. We wish to acknowledge with thanks the valuable assistance provided by Dave Cooper, Juan Freile and James Smith.

Archived records including photographic submissions number 1,849 at the end of 2022. This report is the twentieth report of this committee. All reports were published in Living World and are available at <https://ttfnc.org/livingworld/index.php/lwj/issue/archive>.

The list of species considered by the TTBSDC, together with the Official List of the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago and details of all accepted records by the Committee can be accessed from our website at <http://ttsdc.ttfnc.org>. We urge finders to document and report their sightings to us.

Records accepted

Two **White-faced Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* were found at Caroni Rice Project on 11 June (MK, NL), increasing to four birds by 16 June with at least one remaining until 19 July at least. The vast majority of records for this species occur between end of May and the end of August.

An unseasonal female **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* was found at Centre Street ponds, Canaan, Tobago on 25 May (JM, JMM), remaining until 15 June at least. At the same site, an adult male was found together with the Lesser Scaups (see below) on 9 December (MKe). With the exception of this May sighting, all records have been between mid November and early March.

A group of six **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis*, including two moulting male birds, were found on Centre Street ponds, Canaan, Tobago on 9 December (MKe) with at least one remaining until the month's end. This migrant duck from continental North America has now been found in 10 of the last 13 winters.

A female, or non-breeding plumaged male **Masked Duck** *Nomonyx dominicus* was found at the Pitch Lake on 22 May (ES *et al.*). Whilst this is a scarce resident species to both Trinidad & Tobago, its reclusive nature may well mask its true abundance.

Slowly but surely, the increase in distribution of **Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* in suburban Trinidad gathers pace with one at Federation Park, north-west Port of Spain on 20 August (BW); up to 25 birds at Lange Park, Chaguanas from mid October to the years' end (ES) and two birds along the Maraval river, Westmoorings on 18 November (Bd'A).

A **Dark-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus melacoryphus* was photographed along Rahamut Trace on 2 September (KF) (Fig. 1). This wanderer from mainland South America has been found annually in Trinidad for the last six years with 78% of all sightings being during the narrow window of 12 July-30 August.



Fig. 1. Dark-billed Cuckoo, Woodland, September 2022. Photo Kevin Foster.

Individual **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** *Coccyzus americanus* were found on southbound migration as follows: Castara, Tobago on 19 October (JW); Waterloo on 23 October (ES) and Bon Accord, Tobago on 26 October (FA)(Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bon Accord, October 2022. Photo Faraaz Abdool.

A male **Common/Antillean Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor / gundlachii* was photographed alongside several Nacunda Nighthawks, *C. nacunda* in a sweet potato field along Bam Bam Road, Waterloo on 25 September 2017 (NL *et al.*)(Fig. 3). Unfortunately these two species cannot be visually separated and can only be safely identified on their nesting grounds by vocalization. Recent studies show that both potentially migrate through/over Trinidad. In either case, this would constitute a first documented sighting for T&T.



Fig. 3. Common/Antillean Nighthawk, Waterloo, September 2017. Photo Jerome Foster.

An immature **Rufous-shafted Woodstar** *Chaetocercus jourdanii* was photographed briefly feeding on Vervain at Pax Guest House on 24 June (FA). This is just the third documented sighting in the last 14 years with each bird seen between 3 May and 24 June.

A **Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna* was heard repeatedly calling at night during mid July in Canaan, Tobago before being photographed on 25 July. (TB-Y) This is the first documented record for Tobago.

A **Uniform Crake** *Amaurolimnas concolor* was photographed late at night on 30 June in Santa Cruz. (MM) (Fig. 4). This is the first documented record of the species for T&T. Whilst nowhere common and normally extremely secretive, Uniform Crakes occur throughout much of Central America and the northern half of South America. They are considered sedentary within their normal range and this occurrence is likely due to the extreme adverse weather conditions in the region at the time.



Fig. 4. Uniform Crake, Santa Cruz, June 2022. Photo Mario Manuel.

For the sixth year running a **Double-striped Thick-knee** *Burhinus bistriatus* was found in exactly the same area of the Queens Park Savanna, Port of Spain as in previous years on 27 August (Bd'A). Elsewhere a soaking wet and bedraggled bird took refuge from a downpour in the carpark of Trincity Mall on 28 June (SA).

The **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* found on Caroni Rice Project on 27 December 2021 was joined by five more on 15 January (NL) with up to four birds remaining until 3 March at least.

An **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* was photographed flying over Caroni Rice Project on 8 May (NL) (Fig. 5). This is just the second ever documented northbound migrant. Additionally on 31 August, one was found in a wet grassy field close to Millennium Lakes golf course, Trincity (Bd'A), remaining until 5 September at least. Southbound migrants have now been documented in five of the last six years, all between end August-end October.



Fig. 5. Upland Sandpiper, Trincity, August 2022. Photo Brian d'Abreu.

A **Hudsonian Godwit** *Limosa haemastica* was photographed at Bon Accord, Tobago on 5 November (FA). Whilst this is an anticipated southbound migrant shorebird through Trinidad, this is just the fourth documented sighting for Tobago in more than 30 years.

An immature male **Ruff** *Calidris pugnax* was seen briefly and photographed at Bon Accord, Tobago on 1 November (FA). This is just the fifth documented sighting in the last eight years of this Old World shorebird.

An alternate plumaged **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* was found on Caroni Rice Project on 16 June (MK, NL)(Fig. 6) seen in tall grass within a flooded field and quickly flew east. This is just the second documented record for T&T, the previous being a basic plumaged bird seen at Bon Accord, Tobago on 13 February 1983 (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6. Spotted Redshank, Caroni Rice Project, June 2022. Photo Nigel Lallsingh.



Fig. 7. Spotted Redshank, Bon Accord, February 1983. Diagram David Fisher.

An immature **Pomarine Jaeger** *Stercorarius pomarinus* was photographed flying past Orange Valley on 3 March (NL). Whilst the species regularly winters in the coastal waters of the Lesser Antilles, there are only two documented records for T&T in the last 25 years

A first-winter plumaged **Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* was photographed at Orange Valley on 11 February (NL). It, or possibly another, was

found on 18 March at Crown Pt., Tobago and was the subject of sightings at various localities in south-west Tobago until 16 July at least (many obs). On 3 October, a basic plumaged adult was photographed on the flooded golf course at Lowlands, Tobago (JR). All sightings may refer to the one individual.

The first-winter plumaged **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* initially found at Orange Valley on 27 November 2021 re-appeared on 8 January together with two others. At least one bird remained faithful to roosting on the fishing boats tied to the jetty until 19 March at least (NL *et al.*).

An immature **Jabiru** *Jabiru mycteria* was found on the tidal mudflats south of Orange Valley on 15 April (NL), present until the next morning. It was subsequently photographed at the Aripo Livestock Farm on 4 July. Whilst still a rare wanderer from mainland South America, it has been documented in 10 of the last 13 years with all sightings between April-September.

A **Wood Stork** *Mycteria americana* was seen in flight over the Caroni Swamp Visitor Centre on 3 April (MH, AS). This is still an extremely rare wanderer to Trinidad, documented in just five of the last 22 years.

An adult **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* was photographed at Bon Accord, Tobago on 22 January 2019 (AC). Whilst an abundant resident in Trinidad, this is just the fourth documented sighting for Tobago in the last 27 years.

An immature **Gray Heron** *Ardea cinerea* was found at Tobago Plantations on 28 March (JR)(Fig. 8). There have now been 21 documented sightings in the last 17 years in both Trinidad & Tobago of this Old World heron, inevitably involving some duplication.



Fig. 8. Gray Heron, Tobago Plantations, March 2022. Photo John Mangold.

An adult **Cocoi Heron** *Ardea cocoi* was photographed at Bon Accord, Tobago on 25 April (JR). This species is a regular dry season visitor to Trinidad, however this is just the fourth documented wanderer to Tobago in the last 10 years.

The **Whistling Heron** *Syrigma sibilatrix*, first seen flying over the Aripo Livestock Station in December 2021, was re-found at East Lake, Arima on 19 February (JRy).

An adult **Capped Heron** *Pilherodius pileatus* was photographed along Bowen Trace, Granville on 16 July (KF)(Fig. 9). This is just the second documented sighting of this secretive heron from mainland South America and could well be the same individual seen flying nearby on 16 May 2020.



Fig. 9. Capped Heron, Granville, July 202. Photo Kevin Foster.

Sightings of **Snail Kite** *Rostrhamus sociabilis* within fresh water wetland and wet agricultural sites in Trinidad were follows: an adult female at Caroni Rice Project on 3 January (NL); an adult female in Aranguez farmland on 10 January (RJ); an adult male at Orange Grove on 11 February (JF); two adult males in Caroni Rice Project on 15 February (MK, MKe) and an immature by Caroni Swamp Visitor Centre on 30 October (JF).

A **Plumbeous Kite** *Ictinia plumbea* was seen over Cuffie River, Tobago on 5 August (FA). Whilst this is a common breeding visitor from the mainland to Trinidad, this is just the third documented sighting for Tobago.

A dark-morph **Long-winged Harrier** *Circus buffoni* was photographed over Centre Street ponds, Canaan, Tobago on 20 January (MKe). This is the first documented record for the island.

A **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* was photographed initially over La Peyrouse Estate, Gran Couva on 20 March (MK, NH) and subsequently at La Vega on 1 April (VR)(Fig. 10). Previous sightings of this Old World raptor have been from Gasparillo in 2014 and more recently Claxton Bay in 2020. Given the proximity of all of these sites to the Forres Park landfill site and the fact that the species commonly lives for at least 20 years suggests just one bird may be involved in all sightings.



Fig. 10. Black Kite, Gran Couva, March 2022. Photo Nigel Hacking.

A **Roadside Hawk** *Rupornis magnirostris* was found in trees close to Caroni North Bank Road on 15 March (VR) (Fig. 11). This is just the third documented sighting for the country, the previous two being from Cascadoux Trace in both January 2019 and January 2020 and may possibly involve the same individual bird.



Fig. 11. Roadside Hawk, Caroni, March 2022. Photo Vishal Rangersammy.

The **White-tailed Hawk** *Geranoaetus albicaudatus* initially seen flying over north Port of Spain on 25 October 2021 was re-found in the Queens Park Savanna on 15 January and was seen intermittently until the years' end (many obs). Elsewhere an immature was photographed at Icacos on 13 February (KF).

A **Burrowing Owl** *Athene cunicularia* was photographed in the unlikely setting of the Brentwood Court, Chaguanas, around 11 January (Fig. 12). The only other previous sighting of the species was of a pair at Pt. Lisas back in June 1982. The species is predominantly non-migratory hence the origin of this bird, whilst uncertain, is most likely from resident populations in either Venezuela or Colombia.



Fig. 12. Burrowing Owl, Brentwood, January 2022. Photo Andre Hamid.

Up to 5 **Small-billed Elaenias** *Elaenia parvirostris* were present feeding on Black Sage adjacent to Caroni Rice Project; first found on 21 May (NL) with at least one remaining until 7 August. Elsewhere one was photographed at Waterloo Estate on 4 June (NL).

An immature male **Crested Doradito** *Pseudocolopteryx sclateri* was found at Caroni Rice Project on 24 October (NL)(Fig. 13). This is just the third documented sighting in the last 27 years; the previous both being along Rahamut Trace in July 2010 and August 2018.



Fig. 13. Crested Doradito, Caroni Rice Project, October 2022. Photo Nigel Lallsingh.

Just two south-bound migrant **Cliff Swallows** *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* were documented this year; on Caroni Rice Project, 4 September (NL) and at Orange Valley on 18 September (NL). There have now been 16 documented sightings in all but one of the last 10 years.

Late autumn is peak time to find **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* in T&T. Documented sightings were as follows: at least 10 on Caroni Rice Project on 2 October (NL); two at Lowlands, Tobago on 14 October (JW); three at Centre Street ponds, Canaan, Tobago on 26 October (FA) and up to 39 at Caroni Rice Project on 6 November (MH, AS).

A **Black-and-White Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* was found along Gilpin Trace, Tobago on 23 January and present the following day (NG, MKe). This migrant from North America is found almost annually in T&T with 76% of all sightings documented between mid October and late January.

The adult male **Cerulean Warbler** *Setophaga cerulea* found along Tortuga Shortcut Road on 7 December 2021, remained, faithful to a circuit of mango trees until 5 February at least, returning yet again on 22 October and present until the years' end (NL *et al.*). An adult female was photographed in the same mango tree on 12 February (MK, JMM).

A male **Bay-breasted Warbler** *Setophaga castanea* was initially found at La Peyrouse Estate, Gran Couva on 7 March (NL). It remained until 20 March by which time it had moulted into alternate plumage. Elsewhere, a male in transitional plumage was photographed at Talparo on 19 March (JF). A total of 22 birds have now been documented in the last nine years.

A non-breeding plumaged male **Blackburnian Warbler** *Setophaga fusca* was photographed along Las Lapas Trace on 23 January (FA) and an immature was found on Tortuga Shortcut Road on 22 October (NL). Once a very rare migrant from the north, there have now been eight documented sightings in the last six years.

A basic-plumaged male **Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Setophaga pensylvanica* was found in the forest south of Grande Riviere on 26 March (NH, NA). This remains a scarce winter visitor with just seven documented sightings in the last 10 years.

Adult male **Lesson's Seedeaters** *Sporophila bouvronides* were photographed close to Bush Bush Reserve on 25 June 2016 (WR) and along Rahamut Trace on 4 December (SP, SW *et al.*). We also received documented evidence from a known breeding site in south Trinidad.

A **Saffron Finch**, *Sicalis flaveola* was photographed at Canaan, Tobago on 24 May (KT). Whilst this species has spread rapidly throughout Trinidad, this is just the second documented sighting for Tobago.

Escaped cage and aviary species

Red-and-Green Macaws *Ara chloropterus* continue to be regularly reported from the south-west peninsula and north coast of Trinidad plus sightings near Chaguanas. **Festive Parrots** *Amazona festiva* were seen in Port of Spain Botanical Gardens and **Village Weavers** *Ploceus cucullatus* are frequently seen within the Caroni Rice Project.

The provenance of most seedeater and seed-finch species continues to be a problem. The Committee has taken a decision that, unless there is supporting evidence to the contrary, all sightings will be considered under this category and that assessment will be based on identification alone.

Additional records

Acceptable records were also received or submitted to Ebird for a further 34 sightings of the following species whose status has been established but whose distribution continues to be monitored by the Committee. **Trinidad Piping-Guan** *Pipile pipile*, **Scaled Dove** *Columbina squammata* (Fig. 14), **Rufescent Tiger-Heron** *Tigrisoma lineatum*, **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*, **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*, **Hook-billed Kite** *Chondrohierax uncinatus*, **Black Hawk-Eagle** *Spizaetus tyrannus*, **Crane Hawk** *Geranospiza caerulescens*, **Rufous Crab Hawk** *Buteogallus aequinoctialis* (Fig. 15), **Great Black Hawk** *Buteogallus urubitinga*, **Crested Caracara** *Caracara plancus*, **Aplomado Falcon** *Falco femoralis*, **Variegated Flycatcher** *Empidonomus varius*, **Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* and **Yellow-bellied Seedeater** *Sporophila nigricollis*.



Fig. 14. Scaled Dove, Mayaro, May 2022. Photo Cyril Coomansingh.



Fig. 15. Rufous Crab Hawk, Icacos, February 2022. Photo Kevin Foster.

Inconclusive records

Submissions of the following species were deemed inconclusive: **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus*, **Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus* and **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata*.

Nomenclature changes

Part of the mission statement of the South American Classification Committee is to create a standard classification, with English names, for the birds of South America. This is subject to constant revision by the proposal system to allow incorporation of new data. The following change were made in 2022: the former superspecies Grayish Saltator *Saltator coerulescens* has been split reflecting the visible plumage differences between populations in Central and South America; and the species found in Trinidad (and the northernmost regions of continental South America) has been re-named Olive-gray Saltator *S olivascens*.

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