

# ENVIRONMENT



THE BLUE SEAS OF TOBAGO



ST GILES ISLAND



THE RUFIOUS-VENTED CHACHALACA

## A Naturalists' View: Tobago

THE TTFNC visited Tobago during the month of July. The blue seas surrounding Tobago are a vacationer's dream. They are noticeably clearer and bluer than the waters around Trinidad. This is because the water surrounding Trinidad tends to have a higher sediment and nutrient load, largely on account of the discharge from the nearby Orinoco River in Venezuela. Besides the aesthetic appeal, Tobago's clearer seas are conducive to the growth of different types of coral, many of which require plenty of sunlight.

The rufous-vented chachalaca (*Ortalis ruficauda*) is more commonly known as the cocorico on account of its noisy calls which are frequently heard in the mornings or late afternoon. The cocorico is a large pheasant like bird and indeed belongs to the order of Galliformes, which includes the well known pheasants of Eurasia. It is principally brown with a red wattle under its chin. Cocoricos are gregarious and will usually be found in small flocks both at the roost and while feeding.

The Trinidad Motmot (*Momotus bahamensis*) is found on both islands but is far more common in Tobago. While in Trinidad they are scarcely seen inhabitants of forest, in Tobago these motmots can be found anywhere from gardens to forests to dry scrub. They are beautiful birds, being chestnut underneath and olive-green on top. They have a stunning blue crown and a pair of raquettes which protrude from the base of the tail. The trinidad motmot was formerly known as the blue-crowned motmot (found throughout much of South America), but in 2010 the birds of Trinidad and Tobago were recognised as being unique and were placed in a separate group from blue-crown motmot. As such, the trinidad motmot is considered an endemic species which can be found nowhere else in the world.

Located off the north east coast of Tobago is St Giles Island. It is an important seabird nesting site which supports breeding colonies of frigatebirds, terns, boobies and other bird species. The island, like nearby Little Tobago, has long been declared a wildlife sanctuary in order to protect the birds from poaching and other forms of human disturbance.

For more information on our natural environment, you can contact the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club at [admin@ttfnc.org](mailto:admin@ttfnc.org) or visit our website at [www.ttfnc.org](http://www.ttfnc.org). The Club's next monthly meeting will be held on August 14, 2014 at St Mary's College, PoS.



THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB



THE TRINIDAD MOTMOT