

JUNIOR BIRDWATCHER

A super short book on the basics of birding
in Trinidad & Tobago



Cover illustration "Scarlet Ibis in Caroni Swamp" by [Katrina Khan-Roberts](#)

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The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club (TTFNC) is one of the oldest clubs existing in Trinidad and Tobago. It was founded in 1891! The Club is a volunteer, non-profit organization. Its main objectives are to bring together persons interested in the study of natural history, the sharing of knowledge thereof and the conservation of nature. [Membership](#) in the club is open to *anyone* who has an interest in nature and the natural environment. The TTFNC hosts monthly meetings, lectures and field trips for the enjoyment and education of its members. The Club also publishes a scientific journal named 'Living World' and a Quarterly Bulletin.

The Centre for the Rescue of Endangered Species of Trinidad and Tobago (CRESTT) was founded in 1993. The organization has played an important role in the historic return of the Blue and gold Macaws to the Nariva Swamp. CRESTT aims to contribute to the sustainable management of plants, animals and natural places in Trinidad and Tobago, through education and sound research. CRESTT works with government agencies, environmental non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and local and international research institutions to achieve its conservation goals.

The materials in this book have been carefully researched. However, both the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club (TTFNC) and the Centre for the Rescue of Endangered Species of Trinidad and Tobago (CRESTT) make no guarantee that the information contained in this book is appropriate for every individual or purpose and assume no responsibility for error or omission. The reader assumes the risk and full responsibility. Neither the TTFNC nor CRESTT will be held responsible for any loss or damage that may be a result of the information presented in this book.

In the event that any information is incorrect or has been used without proper credit, please contact us so this can be corrected.

Dear Junior Naturalist,

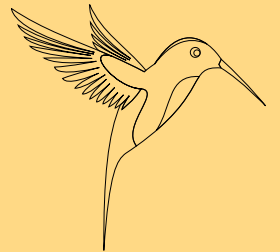
Have you ever wondered what all of that chirping outside your window was about? What kind of bird was perched on your tree and serenading you with its song? Trinidad and Tobago is home to small birds and large birds, colourful birds and songbirds, forest birds and seabirds. We are delighted to have you join us in learning about the fascinating world of birds!

This bird book was created by the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club (TTFNC) and the Centre for the Rescue of Endangered Species of Trinidad and Tobago (CRESTT). It is most suitable for children between the ages of 9 and 12 years old.

You may complete the activities by yourself or with a friend. The activities contained within this book are meant to inspire curiosity and help you explore the natural world around you. If you have questions or would like to share your bird photos and completed activities with us please email admin@ttfnc.org.

Remember to have fun!

All the best,
The TT Field Naturalists' Club & CRESTT



WHAT IS A BIRD?

A bird is a warm-blooded animal with:

a BEAK

FEATHERS

WINGS

Other animals
may have some
of these
features but only
a bird has them
ALL!



Birds hatch from EGGS.

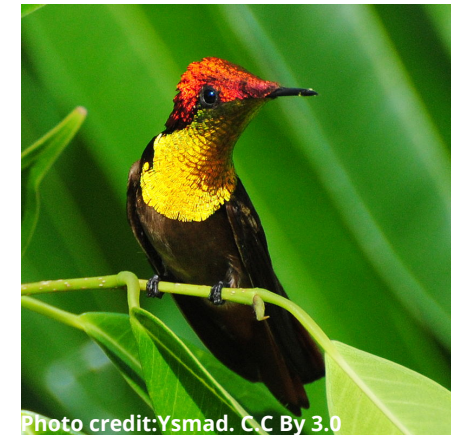
Blue- gray tanager, locally
called 'Blue Jean.'



BIRD BODY PARTS

Birds are often described using their colours, the size and shape of their beaks, or what their legs and feet look like. For example;

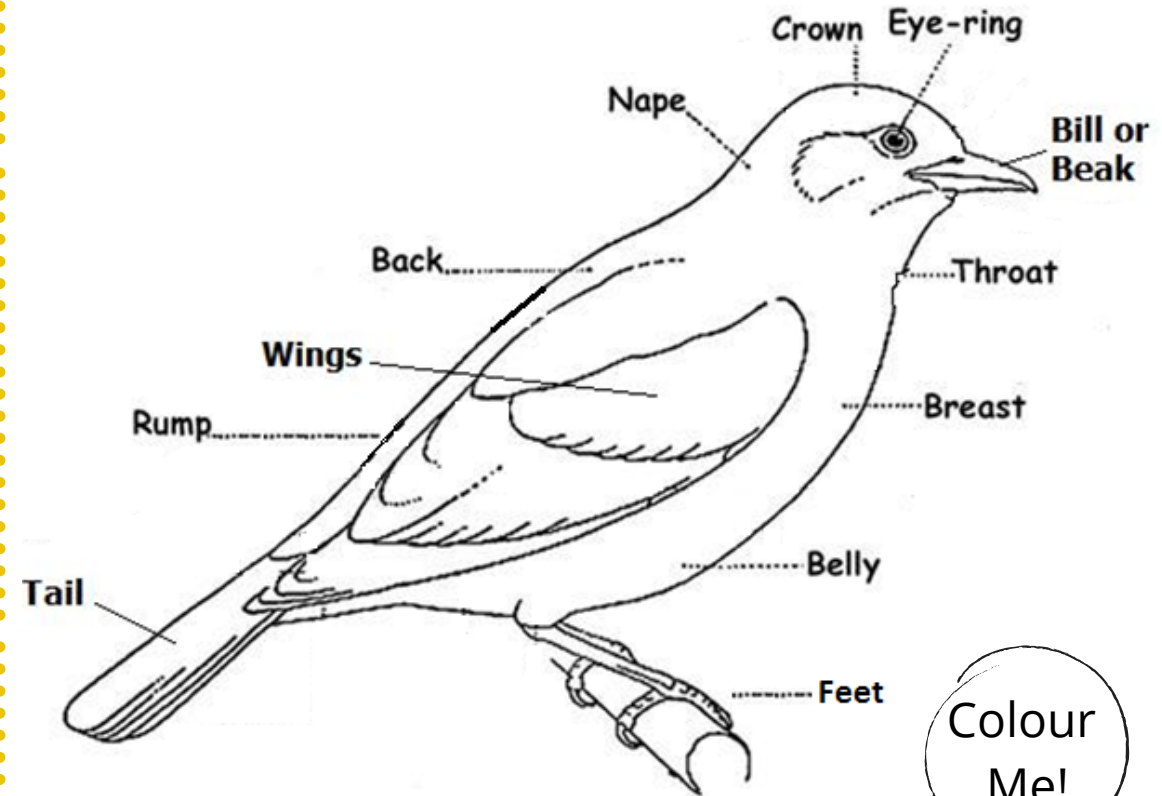
Ruby- topaz Hummingbird



Channel-billed Toucan



First you will need to know some basic body parts of a bird to properly identify them.



Colour Me!

Parts of a Bird. [Leigh Ornithological Society's Youth Wing.](#)

BIRD BASICS:

How do birds eat?

They use their beaks to help them take bites or swallow food whole. If the food is too large to swallow whole, they will break it into smaller pieces.



Some birds break the food into pieces by beating it against a rock or branch!

Some birds may hold the food with their feet and tear it using their beaks!



The food is moved to the back of the throat when the bird tilts its head back.

Then it uses its tongue to help place the food into a good swallowing position.

Saliva also makes food easier to swallow.

BIRD BASICS:

What do birds eat?

Different birds have different food preferences, just like we do.

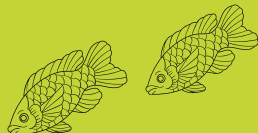
It also depends on the time of year and what type of food is available.

Early Bird Restaurant Menu



Some birds eat nectar from flowers, seeds or fruits.

Other birds eat insects, fish, snakes, frogs, small rodents or even dead animals!



Do you want to know what the birds in your area eat?

Here's an easy to make bird feeder. *You will need to hang it somewhere you can see the birds eating without disturbing them.*

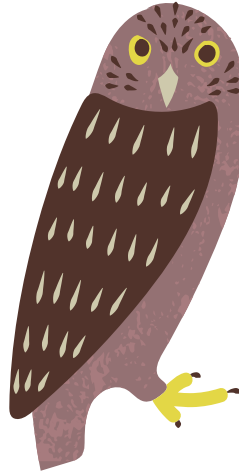


Owl bird feeder. [Red Ted Art.](#)

OWL BIRD FEEDER!

Ask an adult to help you find and use these items:

- ★ 1L milk or juice carton
- ★ Waterproof paint or poster paint & waterproof varnish
- ★ Knife or scissors
- ★ Plastic bottle covers
- ★ Markers
- ★ Paracord (clothesline)
- ★ Googly eyes (optional)
- ★ Craft stick/ lolly stick
- ★ Hot glue gun or crazy glue
- ★ Hole puncher (optional)



We would love to see your completed bird feeders. Send your photos to admin@ttfnc.org

Directions:

1. **Paint the carton using the waterproof paint.** You can use poster paint and then add a coat of waterproof varnish. Allow to dry completely.
2. **Cut out your owl feeder shapes.** Using the knife or scissors cut out a “tummy and wings” into the bottom half of your juice or milk carton. Use the tummy, to then cut a beak shape. As for the wings, do not cut them all out. You want to keep the “flaps” attached. This keeps the seeds a little bit more sheltered and gives you those beautiful owl wings!
3. **Add the owl eyes.** Glue on the googly eyes to the bottle covers and stick to the carton. You can also draw eyes on the bottle covers if you do not have googly eyes.
4. **Add food.** You can add small pieces of fruits and vegetables to the bird feeder.
5. **Hang and enjoy.** Punch holes on each side above each wing and hang the bird feeder outside using the paracord.

Remember to: Change the food and clean the bird feeder regularly!

BIRD BASICS:

How do birds sing?

Chirps, whistles, croaks; how do birds make these sounds? Birds have a special organ called the *syrinx*. It is located at the very top of the birds' windpipe. The air that comes in through the windpipe causes thin membranes to vibrate and produce sound. Sounds can also be made by other parts of the bird such as the wings or the beak.



Windpipe; tube in neck & chest that carries air to and from the lungs.

Membrane; a thin layer of cells that act as a lining



Birds sing to claim or defend territories and to attract mates. In fact songs play an important role in attracting mates. Like humans, singing in birds is often a chance to show off. They also use songs to communicate with each other or warn other birds of a nearby predator.

**KEEP
OUT**



Territory; an area that a bird uses for food, water and shelter

Predator; an animal that lives by killing and eating other animals



Listen! There are birds calling
outside your window.



Click here!*

Blue- gray tanager



Photo credit: Chris&Mike C.C. BY -S.A 2.0



Great kiskadee



Photo credit: Charles J Sharp C.C. BY -S.A 4.0



Palm tanager



Photo credit: Tony Castro C.C. BY -S.A 4.0



Tropical mockingbird

*Links will take you to xeno- canto; a website dedicated to sharing bird
songs from all over the world



Listen! There are birds calling
outside your window.



Photo credit: Benjamint444 C.C. BY -S.A 3.0



Ruddy ground dove



Photo credit: Dario Sanchez C.C. BY -S.A 2.0



House wren



Photo credit: Barloventomagico C.C. BY NC-ND



Yellow oriole



Photo credit: Meggs C.C. BY 3.0



Spectacled thrush



Listen! There are birds calling outside your window.



Photo credit: www.birdphotos.com C.C. BY-SA 3.0



Carib grackle



Photo credit: Charles J. Sharp C.C. BY-SA 4.0



Smooth-billed ani

Can birds really talk?



Well, not like humans. Birds hear sounds and then *imitate* (copy) them.

Pet parrots are good at imitating human speech and other sounds like barking dogs and car alarms.

But why?

This is because a parrot cannot survive on its own.

Parrots, in the wild, work together to find food and stay safe from predators. Their loud squawks alert other parrots when there is a predator nearby or if they have found juicy fruits.

Around humans, parrots imitate human words because they see their owners as their new family, or "flock." Their owners are the ones who will help them find food and stay safe.

What do you need to watch birds?

Here are some tips to get you started exploring the world of birds.



You will need: pencil, small notepad, printed copy of the record sheet below, pair of binoculars (you can still look at birds if you don't have binoculars!)



Bright colours and bold patterns on your clothes can scare birds away. You will want to wear brown or olive green clothing, if possible. A hat is needed to shield your eyes from the sun's glare.



Birds have favourite places just like we do. They go where there is food and water. Check fruiting trees in your yard or the owl bird feeder, look at the fences, light poles, patio furniture, anywhere they can perch.



Use your ears. You may hear a bird before you see it.



Really look at the bird. Take note of its colour, size and shape.



Birds are most active between 6am and 8am in the morning. Then again between 4pm and 6pm in the evening.

Bird-watching DO's...& DON'Ts



Bird watch by the Rules:

Be quiet- do not talk in a loud voice or get too close to the birds



Do not disturb the birds- especially those that are nesting.



Birdwatch with an adult- this may be a parent, guardian or older sibling.



Respect private property- ask for permission before going onto private property.

HAVE FUN! Bird watching takes time and practice.



BIRD BASICS:

Where can you find birds?

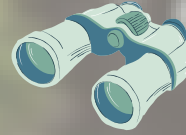
Birds are everywhere you are!

The first step is to pay attention. You can start looking for birds right in your own backyard. As you explore, keep looking up. Birds like to sit on exposed perches like fences. Power lines are an absolute favourite of birds too.

As you move away from your backyard you will see them in parks, at your school, cities, along beaches, in forests, in mountains and in wetlands (areas where there is shallow water or soaking wet soil at least part of the year).



Backyard Bird Watching Expedition!



We want you, ***with an adult***, to go outside and look for birds in your yard!

You will need:

- pencil
- bird record sheets (below)
- clipboard (optional)
- sunblock/ bug spray (Off/ Odomos/ Citronella)
- water bottle





















Directions:

- Think about where birds like to perch (sit); on fences, electricity lines, patio furniture and look there first
- Some birds may also be on the ground, look there too!
- Use the photos of the birds on the record sheet to help you identify the birds, paying careful attention to the colours of the birds.
- Write down how many birds you have seen and what the birds were doing (eating, singing, perched) on the record sheets.
- Remember: **SPEAK SOFTLY & TRY NOT TO GET TOO CLOSE TO THE BIRDS**





















BACKYARD EXPEDITION RECORD SHEET

Which birds do you see in your backyard?











Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

BIRD	Number seen	Activity
<p>Blue-gray tanager/ 'Blue Jean'</p> 		<div>  FLYING  EATING </div> <div>  SINGING  PERCHED </div> <p>OTHER: _____</p>
<p>Palm tanager/ 'Palmiste'</p> 		<div>  FLYING  EATING </div> <div>  SINGING  PERCHED </div> <p>OTHER: _____</p>
<p>Great kiskadee/ Kiskadee</p> 		<div>  FLYING  EATING </div> <div>  SINGING  PERCHED </div> <p>OTHER: _____</p>
<p>Tropical Mockingbird/ 'Day clean'</p> 		<div>  FLYING  EATING </div> <div>  SINGING  PERCHED </div> <p>OTHER: _____</p>

Which birds do you see in your backyard?

BIRD	Number seen	Activity
Ruddy ground dove/ 'Dove' 		<div>  FLYING  EATING </div> <div>  SINGING  PERCHED </div> OTHER: _____
House wren/ 'House bird'/ 'God- bird' 		<div>  FLYING  EATING </div> <div>  SINGING  PERCHED </div> OTHER: _____
Yellow oriole/ 'Small Cornbird'/ 'Plantain bird' 		<div>  FLYING  EATING </div> <div>  SINGING  PERCHED </div> OTHER: _____
Spectacled thrush/ 'Gold-eye thrush'/ 'Big-eye grive' 		<div>  FLYING  EATING </div> <div>  SINGING  PERCHED </div> OTHER: _____

Which birds do you see in your backyard?

BIRD	Number seen	Activity
Carib grackle / 'Blackbird' / 'Boat-tail' 		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div>  FLYING </div> <div>  EATING </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div>  SINGING </div> <div>  PERCHED </div> </div> <p>OTHER: _____</p>
Smooth-billed ani / 'Merle corbeau' / 'Old witch' 		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div>  FLYING </div> <div>  EATING </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div>  SINGING </div> <div>  PERCHED </div> </div> <p>OTHER: _____</p>
Use these rows to add additional birds:		

Use this space to draw a bird you see while bird watching.

BIRDS OF T&T:



Photo credit: Lt. Shears CC BY-SA 3.0

Scarlet Ibis.

Height: about 63cm

Weight: 3 lbs- as heavy as a pair of garden boots.

Favourite food: shrimp, crab, insects, small fish, crayfish & amphibians.

Rufous-vented Chachalaca.

Local name: Cocrico

Height: about 58cm

Weight: 1.5 lbs

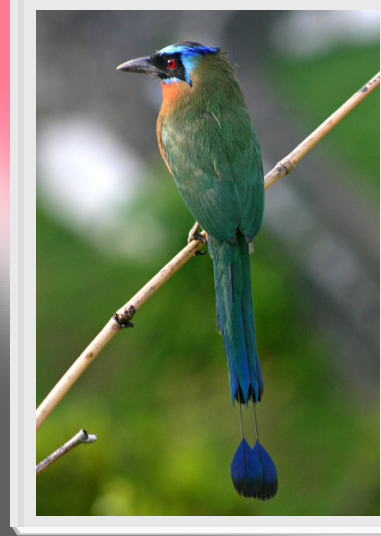
The male's call is a loud low 'ka-ka-rooki-rooki-ka,' answered by the female's high-pitched 'watch-a-lak.'



Photo credit: Dominic Sherony CC BY-SA 3.0



These two birds are found ONLY in Trinidad & Tobago:



Trinidad Motmot

Height: 46cm

Weight: 112g

When excited it swings its tail rapidly from side to side!

Trinidad Piping-guan

Local name: Pawi

Height: 69cm

Weight: 7 lbs

Its call is a thin 'pee-oo' but also produces a loud 'clap' with its wings!



Photo credit: Alastair Rae CC BY-SA 2.0

Reasons to be thankful for birds

Birds help us and the environment in many ways.

- Birds eat pests that are harmful to our food crops.
- Birds are beautiful singers.
- Birds clean up by eating dead animals.
- Birds spread seeds by dropping seeds far away from the parent plant.
- Birds pollinate flowers.
- Birds poop. Their poop contains nutrients that make soils more fertile.
- Birds help fishermen find fish.
- Birds warn of us storms & hurricanes.
- Birds connect us to nature.



Can you think of another reason why we should be thankful for birds?

Create your own poster of why we should be thankful for birds.

Ask a parent or guardian to email photos of your poster with your name and age to admin@ttfnc.org.


Poster tip:
Choose one reason
and use books,
Google or YouTube
to learn more
about it

Poster tip:
Use images: draw,
paint or cut out
photos to help
share your
message


When you are
done, share the
poster with
your family,
classmates and
us!


My Pledge to Help Birds

I, _____ pledge to take the following actions to help protect birds wherever and whenever I can. (Circle the birds next to each action you pledge to help with!).

 Talk to my friends and family about birds and why they are important

 Never to harm birds, their nests or eggs

 Keep all cats indoors

 Keep all dogs on leashes when walking

 Avoid littering to keep the water and ground clean for the birds

 Put up a bird feeder - and keep it clean and filled with good food



(Use this space to another action you pledge to help with)

Write your name here

Date

Want to learn more about birds?

Check out these:



Online: All About Birds, Interactive feathers exhibit, bird songs



Free phone apps: eBird, Merlin, Audubon



Books: Fine Feathered Friends: All About Birds, Endemic Birds of the West Indies, T&T Bird Guide

Got questions or a cool bird photo you would like to share with the TTFNC Bird Group? Ask your parent or guardian to email it to: admin@ttfnc.org

Print and cut along the dotted lines. Put it somewhere you and your family can see it every day to help you remember all the things you can do to help birds.