

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE EXPERIENCE
Birding and Natural History from a Famed Ec lodge



For many, there is no need to venture off-property, as the Centre's unparalleled viewing from the verandah teams with fascinating biodiversity seen from its excellent network of trails to keep the avid naturalist happy for years. Asa Wright Nature Centre's expert naturalists offer walks morning and afternoon, and evening programs, including several night walks a week. For keen birders who want to visit the full gamut of Trinidad habitats, aspiring to see the largest possible number of species, field trips off-site with expert guides are important.

For all visitors to Trinidad, a guided tour by boat into the Caroni Swamp, where electric-plumaged Scarlet Ibis fly in to roost is a world-class birding spectacle. If you take one outing from the Centre, this is our signature tour that should not be missed. Our top three tours on which to survey island species are Northern Range/Blanchisseuse, East Coast/Nariva, and the Aripo Savannah – most easily accessed at the Aripo Agricultural Station. Relatively new to the off-site tour menu is a visit to a private home at Yerette, where a well-known hummingbird photographer invites you to his private home for exceptional hummingbird viewing. This can be combined with Caroni.

Caligo Ventures guided tours are carefully crafted to see a wide-array of species. Independent Ventures let you pace yourself and choose active or quiet options. Whether you craft your stay for a relaxed pace (mainly Centre grounds with a visit to Caroni and one half day tour) or an Intensive pace (the Centre plus a number of off-site tours) we know that one day you'll return to experience more. We prize our many return visitors.



The Asa Wright Nature Centre and Ec lodge

Asa Wright Nature Centre is situated in the Arima Valley of Trinidad's Northern Range. It lies at an elevation of approximately 1200 ft. in a habitat type known as Evergreen Seasonal Forest. Formerly the Springhill Estate, the grounds have returned to a wild state from once extensive coffee, cocoa and citrus plantations. Some coffee, cocoa, and citrus plants are still maintained alongside the natural second-growth which has taken over and festooned the abandoned plantation vegetation with vines and a host of epiphytes. The whole effect is one of being deep in a tropical rainforest. A walk within the forest is the perfect complement to time spent on the verandah of the Asa Wright Nature Centre, where Ruby-topaz Hummingbirds, Tufted Coquette, Great and Barred antshrikes, Squirrel Cuckoos, and both Purple and Green Honeycreeper are among the many species that can be easily seen.

Learn more about the important education, community outreach, and conservation work of the Centre at www.asawright.org.

Centre Grounds and Viewing from the Verandah

The first birding morning in a new country is always an exciting time for birders. Even before dawn, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls call from the surrounding trees and occasionally you can hear the mournful descending call of the Common Potoo. From the balcony everything comes alive around 6.00am. First arrivals to the feeders could include the endemic Trinidad Motmot, Cocoa and Spectacled thrushes, White-lined, Blue-gray and Palm tanagers, Green and Purple honeycreepers together with the ever present Bananaquits. Busy at the sugar water feeders will be White-chested Emeralds, Blue-chinned Sapphires, and White-necked Jacobins and Copper-rumped hummingbirds whilst the floor is the home, not only of Ruddy Ground-Dove and Gray-

fronted Dove but also both Red-rumped Agouti and large Golden Tegu Lizards.

Both in front of and to the sides of the balcony are thin leaved, tiny black fruiting Trema trees. Regular visitors to these include Forest Elaenia, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, both Bay-headed and Turquoise Tanagers and Violaceous Euphonia. Close by, the orange lantana and lilac vervain is the favoured haunt of the tiny Tufted Coquette whilst the red and yellow Sanchasia bushes often attract Black-throated Mangos.

Scanning further down the valley, it is often possible to find Double-toothed Kite, Scaled Pigeon, Channel-billed Toucans, or a Black-tailed Tityra taking in the early morning sun whilst both Orange-winged Parrots and Crested Oropendolas regularly fly to and fro.

Leaving the verandah, a walk down the main Discovery Trail quickly brings you to the lekking areas of both White-bearded and Golden-headed manakins. En route, flowering Torch Ginger is the favoured plant for the long tailed Green Hermit while stands of bamboo often attract both Silver-beaked Tanagers and Yellow Orioles. You can also find species not seen frequently from the balcony including both Green-backed and Guianan trogons, Golden-olive Woodpecker, White-necked Thrush, Rufous-breasted Wren, White-flanked Antwren, and Long-billed Gnatwren. Eventually you reach several Bearded Bellbird territories – you will hear them long before you see them. At times they call very close to the Front Desk office! Other times patience is required for a good view, but when you do see one, you won't be disappointed; it is, after all, the emblem of the Asa Wright Nature Centre.

Both the Bellbird and Chaconia trails provide quieter, out of the way trails as fewer people hike them. Along their routes one has a better chance of finding shy denizens of the forest including Cocoa and Plain-Brown woodcreepers, Black-faced Antthrush, White-bellied Antbird, and Stripe-breasted Spinetail. Even Little Tinamou is possible.

Walking the entrance road is leisurely with sure footing and very productive. Both Rufous-breasted and Little hermits are regularly found around the many heliconias; the roadside trees often attract Yellow-breasted, Yellow-olive, Piratic and Boat-billed flycatchers together with both Tropical Pewee and Tropical Kingbird. Both Barred and Great Antshrikes frequently forage in the lower-storey vegetation. It is a great route to study butterflies including dazzling Morphos and owl butterflies also known as Caligos.

Never discount, from road, trail or verandah, looking up into the skies. Whilst both Black and Turkey vultures may be almost ever present, Common Black, Gray-lined, White and Zone-tailed hawks regularly soar over. A fast flying, tight, loud chirruping flock may announce the presence of Lilac-tailed Parrotlets. The rather distant swifts flying across the valley will mainly be Band-rumped and Gray-rumped Swifts. Even as dusk draws in, whilst you are sipping your rum punch on the balcony, it is sometimes possible to see the twisting, turning feeding flight of a Short-tailed Nighthawk.

Asa Wright Nature Centre is a not-for-profit organization and proceeds from an ecolodge stay help to fund education, community outreach, science, and conservation. We recommend you allow time in your stay to join the Centre's talented naturalists who are on hand for twice daily public walks, and viewing from the verandah. An extensive trail system exists on the property for you to explore – ask the Front Desk for a map.

Hike to Dunston Oilbird Cave

Complimentary walk with Centre Stay of Three Nights

With a three-night stay at the Centre, one can visit Dunston Cave, a beautiful riparian grotto located on the sanctuary, home to a breeding colony of the fascinating nocturnal Oilbird. Naturalists will announce a walk down to Dunston Cave, home to our one of the most accessible Oilbird caves in the entire world. A walk along Guacharo trail gets you there in around 45 minutes. The trail can be steep in places, but there are well hand-rails along the way and at the destination an Oilbird viewing area.

Trinidad is perhaps the easiest place to see the world's only fruit eating, nocturnal bird which navigates within the cave by echo location. It is much, much bigger than anyone expects (almost the size of a small harrier – it has a wingspan of up to 42 inches). The floor of the cave is littered with germinating palm seedlings. The Oilbirds swallow the palm fruit entire, and, after the pericarp is digested, regurgitate the seeds. Oilbirds are birds very important to seed dispersal of a number of tropical trees. Staff of the Centre have collected these seeds and planted them around the estate to enrich the habitat.

En route this trail provides the best opportunity to find Gray-throated Leaf-tosser and Red-crowned Ant-tanager on the Estate and perhaps your only chance of viewing, at a safe distance, a sleeping Fer-de-Lance. On the return you can retrace your steps, or connect to another of the Centre's several trails to make a longer loop. These are less traveled and a real prize sighting might be that of the elusive Little Tinamou.

The cave has a stream running through it; the water level is dependent upon recent rainfall. However you should not get more than your ankles wet. Please note the Centre regulates no flash photography at the Cave. Limited Access, guided walks only.

TOURS EXTENDING OFF-SITE FROM the ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE

With local expert guides

Pricing includes transport: Mid-range \$75pp, Full-range \$90pp

Caroni Swamp National Park – Spectacular flight of Scarlet Ibis at Sunset and More

Full Range (includes boat and local tour guide fees)

Departs the Centre 2:30PM, returns approximately 7:30PM

Can be combined with Yerette Hummingbirds, depart late-morning with picnic lunch

Caroni Swamp comprises 6000 hectares of protected area, including National Park lands, its habitat being mainly mangrove forest. It holds a very specialized mangrove forest that contains several genera and species of mangroves, showing classic examples of plant adaptation in a unique brackish water community. From the Centre, we drive in the direction of Port of Spain, close to the airport. This wild land area is south of the growing sprawl of the city, but worlds away from the city's congestion. Before our boat departs, we have the opportunity to seek out mangrove species from the roadside. Black-crested Antshrike, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Straight-billed Woodcreeper and Masked Cardinal are some of the possibilities. There is also the opportunity of clean washrooms facilities at the National Park Information Facility.

After boarding our small tour boats, we explore to the west down the Blue River (or as we Trinians call it, No 9 drain). This is a public waterway used both by fishermen and leisure boaters before we turn south into the permit controlled forestry reserve. Our boat leaves around 4.00pm, under the leadership of an experienced tour guide who visits the swamp each day. Your Asa Wright guide will also be on board.

Whilst the highlight of the afternoon is the Scarlet Ibis spectacle, we will spend an hour or so slowly navigating some of the mangrove channels seeking out those specialties of the area such as Green-throated Mango, Greater Ani and Bicolored Conebill. Gliding through the peaceful mangrove habitat, seek out some of its more specialized denizens — Neotropical Cormorants, Anhingas, Striated Herons, White-cheeked Pintails, Large-billed Terns, Pied Water Tyrants, and striking Masked (Red-capped) Cardinals. Often there are roosting Tropical Screech-Owls and a Common Potoo close to the water and we have a distinct chance of spotting a kingfisher or two with Green, Ringed and American Pygmy all living in the swamp. There is also an outside chance of a Boat-billed Heron, the least confiding of our salt-water herons.

On the way, the boatman will keep a special eye out for Ruschenberger's Tree Boa roosting in the branches close to the river - these snakes feed almost exclusively on small birds and can grow to about 7-8 ft. long. We also have a chance of a roosting Silky Anteater or even a Spectacled Caiman.

We then moor up, sip our rum punch and wait for parties of Scarlet Ibis, plus smaller numbers of Tricolored and Little Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets flying into roost in the mangroves. The star attraction will be the spectacular flight of Scarlet Ibises, which occur often by the 100's, and in some months by the 1000's, returning to their mangrove roosts at dusk. This is truly one of the world's most dramatic natural moments. We leave as light begins to wane, retracing our steps back, arriving at the dock at dusk. We then, return direct to the Centre for a slightly later than usual dinner.

Our most popular tour, NOT to be missed!

**Pairs well with the Yerreté Hummingbirds Field Trip*

Northern Range / Blanchisseuse Road

Full Range – full day

Mid-Range – half day (ends at Brasso Seco and return)

This scenic, all-day excursion follows a lush and winding mountain road that passes over the Northern Range towards the seaside village of Blanchisseuse. Trinidad's Northern Range is an eastern extension of the Coastal Cordillera of Venezuela, a connecting range to the Andes.

We leave just after breakfast, to drive north on the Blanchisseuse Road into the upper elevations of the Northern Range forest. This is the only road on the island which bisects the Northern range before finally descending to the Caribbean coastline at the fishing village of Blanchisseuse. Here we reach the highest elevation possible by motor vehicle, some 2,200 ft. Our day will be spent birding both quiet country roads and wide forest tracks seeking species more easily found at this higher altitude. We will take a picnic lunch with us which will be enjoyed in the village of Brasso Seco where clean washroom facilities are available. This is not a day where we spend a long time driving. We make numerous roadside birding stops, never walk far from the vehicles and there are always coolers with both water and fruit juice on board.

Our target species include Short-tailed Hawk, Blue-headed Parrot, Lilac-tailed Parrotlet, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Collared and Green-backed Trogons, Golden-olive, Red-rumped and Chestnut Woodpeckers, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Streaked Xenops, Cocoa and Plain-Brown Woodcreepers, White-bellied Antbird, Black-faced Antthrush, Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, Dusky-capped, Slaty-capped, Streaked and Euler's Flycatchers, Gray-breasted Martin, Rufous-breasted Wren, Long-billed Gnatwren, White-necked Thrush, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Speckled and Hepatic Tanagers, Blue Dacnis and Golden-crowned Warbler. Bright blooms of the forest canopy attract a number of nectar-feeding birds. Along with rich birdlife, we will also have an opportunity to examine the fascinating world of leaf-cutter and army ants, and to photograph orchids, elephant ear philodendron, ferns, mosses, and other tropical flora. Occasionally an Ornate Hawk-Eagle can be seen soaring over and there is an outside chance of finding Trinidad's most sought endemic species today – Pawi or Trinidad Piping Guan. Several birds reside in the high forests but we will need to be fortunate indeed. In the appropriate seasons, wintering American Redstart and Northern Waterthrush together with the delightful Swallow Tanager which arrives in late February are distinctly possible.

Towards mid-afternoon we stop our northward journey at the village of Morne le Croix. Here we take afternoon tea and cake whilst looking for additional species such as Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Southern Rough-winged Swallow and Yellow-rumped Cacique before a late afternoon drive back south to the Centre in time for a shower before rum punch and dinner.

Road-based. A popular and scenic trip with less driving distance than Nariva. The route features curving mountain roads. The ability to reach the beach at Blanchisseuse depends on road conditions; particularly washouts from heavy rains may preclude this. This is a fabulous, very scenic trip full of birds seen at different elevations and habitats than those seen at the Centre. Active birders may want to consider requesting hiking along the way, possible on several trails.

Trinidad's East Coast / Nariva Swamp

Full Range – All-day tour

The east side of Trinidad hosts an ecosystem very different than that of Caroni on the west side. Where the Nariva River reaches the sea here, freshwater environments are comprised of herbaceous swamp and swamp forest, dotted with a few patches of mangroves such as the area around Bush Bush Creek. Nariva is the largest freshwater herbaceous swamp on the island. Along its edges are “palm islands,” where the tall Moriche Palm is common. Here too we will see a unique mangrove community, made up primarily of the stilt-rooted rhizophora mangrove, which often reaches a height of 80 feet. Part of our drive follows the ocean shore down scenic “Coconut Alley”.

Immediately after breakfast, we will leave Asa Wright Nature Centre and travel south down the Arima valley before turning east. We have now entered the lowlands where Great Kiskadees and Tropical Kingbirds regularly perch on overhead utility wires, Carib Grackles abound and Short-tailed Swift is the commonest aerial feeder. Just below the foothills of the Northern Range lies the Arup Agriculture Research Station which works primarily with livestock, breeding a cross of Water Buffalo and Brahma cattle. Here we will spend a couple of hours.

This open countryside and rough pasture allows us the opportunity to seek out a number of new species including Cocoi Heron, Savannah Hawk, Gray-headed Kite, Yellow-headed Caracara, Wattled Jacana, Southern Lapwing, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Fork-tailed Palm-Swift and White-winged Swallows. White-headed Marsh and Pied Water-Tyrants, Yellow-chinned Spinetails rattle throatily from the grasses whilst Red-breasted Blackbirds add a splash of color. This is also the only site where we can reliably find Grassland Yellow-Finches and there is a chance of Ruddy-breasted Seedeater.

Having taken a comfort break in the nearby town of Valencia, we drive on for about an hour to the Atlantic coast, taking our hot picnic lunch on the beach at Manzanilla. Both Magnificent Frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans are easily found here. During January – April, there is an outside chance of seeing a Leach's Petrel on its northward migration, especially if there is a strong on-shore wind.

The early afternoon will find us driving slowly south through a million coconut palms looking for raptors sheltering from the midday sun. We should see Common Black-Hawk, Yellow-headed Caracara and Savannah Hawk and have a realistic chance of finding Pearl Kite, Gray-lined Hawk and Crested Caracara. A brief stop near some roadside mangroves offers the possibility of Plumbeous Kite from February onwards, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Black-crested Antshrike, Silvered Antbird and Brown-crested Flycatcher.

Eventually we enter Nariva Swamp through the settlement of Kernaham. Here we will slowly drive the raised bund roads looking out over both freshwater marsh and water melon cultivation fields. Target species here include Pinnated Bittern, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Purple Gallinule, Yellow-hooded Blackbird and we will spend time seeking out the enchanting White-tailed Goldenthrout hummingbird. Long-winged Harriers occasionally quarter the reeds and if we are lucky both Yellow-crowned Parrot and Red-bellied Macaw will be seen flying in to roost. Historically this has been the site for one of Nariva's best kept secrets, the diminutive and secretive Azure Gallinule. They still exist in the marsh but we would need luck to find one. Late arrival back at the Centre means going straight into dinner.

All day, driving with numerous stops for birding. A rich tour for finding numerous species, and a chance to see more geography of Trinidad.

Bush-Bush Forest Wildlife Sanctuary

Add-on to East Coast / Nariva tours

You may add time onto your East Coast / Nariva day and walk into the Bush Bush Forest, an area that provides good birding, and a good chance to see Red Howler and White-faced Capuchin Monkeys and possible other mammals such as Prehensile-tailed Porcupines. This is a raised area of sandy soils, surrounded by wetlands, and site of much of the work of C. Brooke Worth described so well in his book, *A Naturalist in Trinidad*. In 1999, a reintroduction effort to restore Blue and Yellow Macaws was begun here. The walk is in an area where permits are required by the Forestry Department, in the sanctuary where hunting is not allowed and thus it's a good place to look for mammals.

Independent travelers (1-4) persons with advance notice can go into the Bush-Bush Forest by boat. A local operator will drop you off with your guide on the "island" (actually a peninsula) at a different area than the one we walk into. This is a simple fishing boat that glides through a tight channel in the mangroves – a wonderful experience!

Aripo Savannah and Arena Forest

Full Range – Full day departs early

Mid-Range (most commonly selected) – depart early and back for lunch

The Aripo Savannahs are an area of natural savannah and Palm Marsh at lower elevation, just over an hour's drive from the Centre. The Aripo Savannahs occur due to particularly poor soils where an impervious clay layer prevents the movement of water downwards or upward through the profile, resulting in alternating extremes of wet and dry conditions. They have a unique flora adapted to such harsh conditions and show similarities to the llanos of Venezuela. Where the trees are able to penetrate the clay layer, Palm Marsh and Marsh Forest occur.

Here we will initially walk quiet farm roads before a short drive brings us to a walkable disused and overgrown railway track. During the morning, we will be specifically seeking out species which habitually associate the Moriche Palms include Moriche Oriole, Fork-tailed Palm-Swift, Sulphury Flycatcher and Red-bellied Macaw. But the site is also good for Savannah Hawk, Striped and Little Cuckoos, Ruby Topaz and White-tailed Goldthroat hummingbirds, Green-rumped Parrotlets and Crimson-crested and Lineated Woodpeckers. Even Bat Falcon is distinctly possible here.

A further 15 minute drive brings us to the Arena Forest, and extensive area of Evergreen seasonal Forest. Here we will take our picnic lunch before driving and walking wide forest tracks seeking out Green-backed and Guianan Trogons, Channel-billed Toucan, Plain Antvireo, White-bellied Antbirds and Golden-crowned Warbler. Whilst the forest may appear initially quiet, patience and perseverance can reveal even two of Trinidad's most elusive flycatchers, White-throated Spadebill and Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant.

The Aripo Savannah today exists as a remnant of what once was a major habitat type of lowland Trinidad. These remnant, seasonally-wet savannahs are now surrounded by extensively altered landscapes where much sugar cane is grown, as well as small-scale agriculture and housing development sprawl. This field trip involves a number of stops in known bird-rich areas, for frequent scans of roadside and open area vegetation. An old USA airbase from World War II, Waller Field, has groves of Moriche Palms, which are focal points for Fork-tailed Palm Swifts, Piratic and Sulphury flycatchers, and Epaulet (Moriche) Orioles. Open skies are good to scan for Long-winged Harriers, Zone-tailed Hawks, Yellow-headed Caracaras and Savannah Hawks.

Note: Our Night Birds option also features an hour or so of birding by day in this habitat.

Aripo Agricultural Station

Mid-range tour, morning with return by lunch to the Centre

If someone is not taking the Nariva trip, then the Aripo Savannah tour will visit the outstanding Aripo Agricultural Station, an outstanding site also described in the Nariva tour section. This tour visits the lowlands where Great Kiskadees and Tropical Kingbirds regularly perch on overhead utility wires, Carib Grackles abound

and Short-tailed Swift is the commonest aerial feeder. Just below the foothills of the Northern Range lies the Aripo Agriculture Research Station which works primarily with livestock breeding a cross of Water Buffalo and Brahma cattle. There are numerous species here not found at the Centre, and photographic opportunity abounds.

This open countryside and rough pasture allows us the opportunity to seek out a number of new species including Cocoli Heron, Savannah Hawk, Gray-headed Kite, Yellow-headed Caracara, Wattled Jacana, Southern Lapwing, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Fork-tailed Palm-Swift and White-winged Swallows. White-headed Marsh and Pied Water-Tyrants, Yellow-chinned Spinetails rattle throatily from the grasses whilst Red-breasted Blackbirds add a splash of color. This is also the only site where we can reliably find Grassland Yellow-Finches and there is a chance of Ruddy-breasted Seedeater.

Night Birds

Mid-Range – afternoon departure with picnic dinner

We leave the Centre about 4.00pm, taking a hot dinner with us. Our first stop, whilst there is still good birding light is a small patch of Moriche Palms within a disused airfield. Here, whilst sipping our rum punch, we will be specifically looking out for Fork-tailed Palm-Swifts, Sulphury Flycatchers and, with patience and a little luck, Moriche Orioles

We then drive a short distance to the north and enter the Aripo Livestock Station (a site visited on our East coast tour). Here we take our dinner and, after dark, very slowly drive the gritted tracks seeking out both White-tailed Nightjars and Common Pauraque. Finding Tropical Screech-Owl can sometimes take a bit more perseverance but we stand an excellent chance. There is also the possibility of Barn and even Spectacled Owls in the area. We return to the Centre shortly after 8.00pm

Please note that it is the policy of Asa Wright Nature Centre that a manned security vehicle accompanies every tour away from the Centre after dark

Can easily be a choice on the same day with Centre Grounds Walk, Oilbird Cave, Half-day Yerreté, and Half-day Aripo Savannah.

Yerette Hummingbirds

Mid-range, depart and return from the Centre

Or, as Add-on to Caroni special price \$60pp, price includes \$25 entry fee

To the west of Asa Wright Nature Centre lies Yerette, a private garden nestled high up in the hills overlooking the Maracas-St. Joseph Valley, home to Theo and Gloria Ferguson (and sometimes up to 1,000 hummingbirds!). This is birdwatching at its most relaxing. Thirteen of the seventeen species of hummingbird recorded in T&T have been seen at Yerette; everyday eleven are found, often twelve. All you do is sit, sipping home-made juice and sampling home-made cake whilst watching the feeding frenzy happening mere feet away.

Theo is also a bird photographer, *par excellence* and will take pride in inviting you to a professional, interpreted slide show of his new found family. During the visit we enjoy our picnic lunch. You may take this tour at your leisure returning to the Centre. Many combine it with Caroni, leaving in time for the 45-minute drive to the Caroni Bird Sanctuary Information Centre ahead of the 4PM boat departure.

Keen photographers can choose to book four hours with the hummingbirds in dedicated photo blinds for additional cost, please inquire.

Trinidad's West Coast at Waterloo

Mid-Range (most commonly selected), morning or afternoon depending on tides

Full Range – adding in cultural site visits (Hanuman Temple) or birding to the north along the river

The best area for finding shorebirds in Trinidad is the extensive area of tidal mudflats along the west coast – an area generically locally known as “Waterloo”. Driving time from the Centre is approximately 90 minutes. Leaving immediately after breakfast, we spend the morning checking out several watch points.

Many species are present year round and those likely to be found include Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Neotropic Cormorant, Great and Snowy Egrets, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Black-necked Stilt, Southern Lawing, Willet, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Semi-palmated and Black-bellied Plovers, Short-billed Dowitcher, Laughing Gull, Royal Tern and Black Skimmer.

Of significant interest are birds arriving from mainland South America. From February through to November large numbers of both Yellow-billed and the striking Large-billed Terns are present whilst from mid-April through to October breeding Collared Plovers can be found.

Also of significant interest is the beautiful Hindu Temple of the Sea, in view from our birding areas and well worth a visit. Additional cultural sites can be added to this day.

Many of the shorebirds found in Trinidad are passage migrants. During the appropriate seasons, our resident birds are augmented in varying numbers by Wilson's Plover; Spotted, Solitary, Pectoral, White-rumped and Stilt Sandpipers; American Golden Plover and occasionally Hudsonian Godwit. The shallow waters of the Gulf of Paria provide a safe haven from inclement weather and the list of rarities in this area is substantial. It includes the only Maguari Stork, Terek Sandpiper, Kelp and Greater Black-backed Gulls to be found in our islands.

By late morning, we travel a few miles south to the beachfront at Carli Bay where we will take our picnic lunch whilst looking out for gaudy Saffron Finches that are plentiful in this area. This is also one of the better sites in Trinidad to find our rare resident Rufous Crab-Hawk, although you will need good fortune on your side.

Full range tours continue birding after the picnic lunch heading north and then west through the village of Cacandee. Here we will park up and walk along the bank of the Madame Espagnole river. Species we hope to find here include Eared Dove, Green-rumped Parrotlets, Green and American Pygmy Kingfishers, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Black-crested Antshrike, White-headed Marsh and Pied Water-Tyrants, Bicolored Conebill, Rufous-browed Peppershrike and Yellow Oriole. Late afternoon, we drive back to the Centre arriving in time for a shower before rum punch and dinner

Lalaja Trace

Mid-range Active tour

This is a morning excursion birdwatching high up on the eastern rim of the Arima valley, above the Simla Research Station. Whilst you can see the rim from the Centre balcony, the drive to the top, when road conditions are good, will take around 30 minutes. If it is wet or the road is not good, we can still access the area by hiking. Many of the species described above on our “Northern Range” tour can also be found on Lalaja. However, from the top of the hill, the view over the forest is much more open providing excellent opportunities for watching birds of prey. Both Ornate and Black Hawk-Eagles are regularly seen in this area and, from mid-February onwards, there is a good chance of both Plumbeous and Swallow-tailed Kites. This is an active tour with walking and birding, from the roadside and a trail along the ridge if we reach there.

We return to the Centre for lunch.

Morne Blue

Mid-Range Active tour

This is an active trip for those that want to enjoy walking while birding. Morne Blue is area is part of Trinidad's annual Christmas Bird Count and is always productive. It is accessed in several places, and there is a rare chance here to spot Trinidad Piping Guans. On this guided tour, we arrange for a drop off at the top of a nearby ridge to the Centre that houses a telecommunications site, one quite popular with entomologists for its fine array of beetles, butterflies, and other species. Depending on trail conditions, we may bird part of the morning on a forest trail. We then walk back to the Centre downhill at a leisurely pace, birding the forest edge along the road. This area is particularly good for seeing mixed flocks of tanagers, along with other species typical of areas of the Blanchisseuse Road. While the range of species will not be as great as the full-day Blanchisseuse tour, this is a nice alternative to see some of the Northern Range species with little driving, and a chance to walk

Lopinot Valley

Mid-Range Cultural Tour

Full Range Hiking and Birding with Cultural Tour

This lovely valley of the Northern Range shares many of the same birds as the Arima Valley and the Centre but for those interested in local history, artisanal agricultural (the revival of cacao) and a lunch of local foods at the award-winning Mariposa Cafe, this makes a nice half-day trip from the Centre. It is perfect for past travelers that have been at the Centre before, and are looking for different sites to explore. For birders, we recommend combining this with the first part of Blanchisseuse Road, birding your way to the first lookout point, where you are dropped off for a walk down to Lopinot Valley, birding your way there through the quiet of the forest, for lunch and a visit to the historical park in center of this picturesque village.

Turtle Watching at Matura Beach

Full Range (Seasonal April – August) – *tour fees include a contribution to Nature Seekers, a local non-profit organization committed to turtle conservation that provides guides for our turtle viewing.*

Certain beaches along Trinidad's north and east coasts serve as nesting areas for the endangered Leatherback Turtles. This night trip takes to you to Matura Beach along Trinidad's Atlantic Coast. Here a community group provides protection to these turtles and provide an opportunity for visitors to witness the spectacle of these giant creatures. The turtles generally emerge from the waters at night and select a spot above the high-water mark to nest. The female carefully excavates a neat flask-shaped hole into which she will lay about 80 eggs. When she has completed laying she will re-fill the hole and gently pat down the sand. Her final action upon leaving the nest site is to use her powerful flipper to scatter sand over the nest to camouflage it. The entire process takes about 90 minutes. Experienced guides will describe the nesting process, the threats faced by the turtles and the work that they do to protect the turtles. This includes prohibiting the use of bright torches and flashes. Turtle watching is available during the laying season which occurs from March-August each year. The eggs take about 60 days to hatch so at the latter part of the season you may be lucky to witness the emergence of hatchings from the sand as they scurry down to the sea.

There is no planned birding on this trip although the occasional large raptor may be seen on the drive to the beach. There is a variety of other life which may be seen along the beach at night including ghost crabs and very occasionally other species of marine turtles. Before the moon rises it is a wonderful opportunity to view the night sky free from the influence of electric lights.

Specialty Tour: Focus on Trinidad Piping Guan - the Great "Pawi" Search

Full Range Plus: This is a specialty tour \$165pp for 1-2 persons, \$135 for 3 or more) due to the long distance travelled and very early morning departure. Typically we are back to the Centre by lunch.

The focus of this excursion, with its 3AM departure, is the hope of finding one specific target bird – Trinidad Piping-Guan. By far travelled and the early morning departure. The best chance to see this magnificent species but highly endangered species is to be on site for the first three hours of daylight (it is extremely unusual to find one after 9.00am when the forest heats up). We therefore have an extremely early start and a drive of three hours to reach the village of Grande Riviere on the north east coast of the island.

Here, we drive up a wide forested track, park up and look out over a superb viewing area, specifically scrutinizing the wild nutmeg trees that are their preferred feeding habitat. Having hopefully found our main quest, we will continue driving down a steeply wooded slope into some riverine forest where we continue birding. Other exciting finds could include Swallow-tailed Kite (from late February onwards), Gray-headed and Plumbeous Kites, Short-tailed Nighthawk, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Silvered and White-bellied Antbirds, Green-backed and Guianan Trogons, Channel-billed Toucan, Black-tailed Tityra and Trinidad Euphonia.

By 9.30am, after a picnic breakfast, we drive back to the Centre in time for lunch and a well-earned siesta.

Whilst a single target bird always carries "a risk", our tour guides have an excellent success record and remember that this species occurs nowhere else on earth! Overnight tours to see this species can also be arranged, ask us for details.

An amazing experience for keen birders, VERY early start!

Off-site Tour Pricing:

Mid-range tours: \$75pp.

Full-range tours: \$90.00pp.

Piping Guan tour \$165pp with minimum of two persons, discount applies for 3 or more.

Special price for Yerette combined with Caroni of \$60pp.

Tours are based on 2 person minimum, willing to share. Those arranged in advance will be scheduled and guaranteed for your visit, pending weather or guide availability issues. Visitors not booking ahead can join tours booked by others and scheduled for days of your visit as space is available.

Private tours may confirmed with payment for 3 persons.

Acknowledgements

These tour descriptions have been prepared in collaboration with the guides of the Asa Wright Nature Centre: Mahese Ramlal, Dave Ramlal, Roodal Ramlal, Denise Etienne, Molly Calderon, and Mukesh Ramlal, along with Asa Wright Nature Centre Board Member Graham White, Martyn Kenefick, author of *Field Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago* and Peg Abbott, CEO of Caligo Ventures.