



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO December 10-20, 2006

Trip Report by Adrian Binns

Arriving a day earlier than the group gave Jane and I a chance to look around Asa Wright Nature Center coming up with Olive-sided Flycatcher; Barred Antshrike; Northern Waterthrush; a couple of Common Black Hawks and White Hawks, along with a few Turkey Vultures circling overhead while Orange-winged Parrots, sometimes in large numbers flew across the valley. On the Discovery Trail a Slaty-capped Flycatcher was seen well and we came across a small party of Bay-headed and Turquoise Tanagers as well as a very confiding Violaceous Trogon, while the White-bearded Manakin lek was very active with a great deal of wing-snapping (popping) going on as they bounced from twig to twig only a foot or two off the ground and feet away from us.

Day 1 / Dec 10- ASA Wright Nature Center

After picking everyone up, minus Jim, at the airport following a red-eye flight, we checked out the Gray-breasted Martin's, Ruddy Ground Doves and Carib Grackles in the airport car park, before heading through Arima and up along the windy Blanchisseuse Road making one stop to view a perched Grey Hawk and another for a Euler's Flycatcher. We passed a wide assortment of tropical vegetation including Chaconia, Cocoa, Nutmeg Tree, Bamboo, Banana, Avocado, Clove Tree (really a shrub), Rubber Tree and slopes of Christopheline before reaching the Asa Wright Nature Center where the entrance road was flanked by such colorful exotic plants as Red and Pink Ginger Lilies, Shrimp Plant, Angel Trumpet Flower, Firecrackers and Pink Hanging Heliconias. No sooner had we checked in, than we rushed to the verandah to look at 4 very close Channel-billed Toucans before heading to breakfast. The activity at the feeders, located just below the balcony was extraordinary and kept everyone enthralled for the morning hours as we became familiar with some of the countries more common species. Everywhere one looked there were Bananaquits, sometime by the dozens at a feeder especially seconds after they were restocked and then there were tanagers, such as the ubiquitous Palm, Blue-grey, White-lined and the stunning Silver-beaked; Green and Purple Honeycreeper including blotchy immature males; and all the hummingbirds, White-bellied Emerald, Blue-chinned Sapphire, White-necked Jacobin, Copper-rumped Hummingbird and a female Tufted Coquette. There were many Crested Oropendulas continuously flying across our view and some perched side by side, which showed the females being dwarfed in size by the males which are almost twice as large; a Broad-winged Hawk of all raptors, circled over head and a young female Merlin perched in full view, occasionally taking to the wing to chase a bird or two. A couple of Ochre-bellied Flycatchers were moving about a tree as flycatchers do and a male Lineated Woodpecker posed nicely on a couple of bare branches before putting a brief appearance in front of the verandah.

Following lunch were we could hear Southern House Wrens singing, we took a leisurely stroll along the entrance picking up Little and Rufous-breasted Hermit, a Boat-billed Flycatcher and several Orange-winged Parrots could be heard flying over. From here we went in the opposite direction taking the beginning of the Discovery Trail through the forest. A few Golden-headed Manakins could be seen well perched 20 feet off the ground, followed by a female White-tailed Trogon above a gorgeous Butterfly Orchid. At the White-bearded Manakin lek 5 birds were positioned to display but without a female in the vicinity of the lek the activity was greatly diminished. A Buff-throated (also known as a Cocoa) Woodcreeper was seen climbing up a couple of tree trunks, unfortunately they just happened to belong to several very tall trees and it was soon lost in the canopy. Back at the verandah for tea and excellent Jamaican beef patties we watched Blue-gray Tanagers being joined by a Bay-headed and a Turquoise Tanager and a couple of female Blue Dacnis in the next tree over with a number of Violaceous Euphonia's. Walking through the short grass path between several of the lower rooms was a Gray-fronted Dove and Great Antshrike's, a dimorphic species, showed up at the feeders once the Bananaquits had pretty vacated and polished everything off by late afternoon.

Amongst the other creatures that roamed the grounds, many Tegu Lizards, an Amieva lizard; Red-rumped Aquouti's and butterflies included Coolies, St. Lucia Mestra, Postman, Julia's (known as the Flambeau here) and Juno Silver-spots, Orange-barred Sulphur; Cattlehearts, Dirce's Beauty and Gold Rim.

Day 2 / Dec 11 – Asa Wright Nature Center

Opening the door to my room I heard what was likely the last call of the night from a Spectacled Owl –we'll have to try tomorrow. Before reaching the main building we stopped for a Golden-olive Woodpecker and a pair of White-tailed Trogons that were flying from the electric line across the car park to pick off fruit from a palm tree. The feeders at the verandah had the usual hustle and bustle along with a cooperative (for those up early enough) Gray-fronted Dove and Blue-crowned Motmot and just as the bell for breakfast rang 3 White Hawks entertained us down the valley along with Band-rumped and Gray-rumped Swifts.

Following breakfast Jogie joined us for a walk down the Discovery Trail, but no sooner had we reached the end of the feeders below the verandah, we had a Zone-tailed Hawk fly over the centre, followed by our Merlin from yesterday and what looked like a large swift following it. Once it got closer we could see that it was indeed a falcon, none other than a Bat Falcon flying around with the Merlin. Being a nice sunny morning butterflies were very evident along the trail with Postmans, Cattlehearts and false tigers. A Rufous-breasted Hermit posed nicely in the sun while the Green Hermit worked the shaded Torch Gingers. Bellbirds were 'bonking' so we tracked one down with a view high in the canopy, but a little further down the trail a couple of males were far more cooperative, often sitting within a few feet of each other. Wattles, maybe a hundred or more, could easily be counted with the scope views that we had. The walk back up was eventful with great looks at both Manakins – White-bearded and Golden-headed; a Tropical Pewee; a Little Tinamou quickly crossed the path only to vanish in the undergrowth before most could see it, though we did hear it calling a short while later; and we also heard a Dusky-capped Flycatcher.

The torrential rain just after lunch let up in time for our afternoon walk, giving way to a beautiful 3 hrs. Before we reached the Chaconia Trail, we had great looks at a White-necked Thrush, several Golden-headed Manakins and a Rufous-browed Peppershrike. The trail was actually very quiet other than a female Violaceous Trogon and a calling but elusive Rufous-breasted Wren. Following tea some of us walked up the paved entrance road where a juvenile peppershrike showed well as did a Bare-eyed Thrush, Northern Waterthrush and briefly a Tropical Parula. Overhead Scaled Pigeons and two pairs of Orange-winged Parrots were headed to their roosts.

The night walk with Mukesh was very interesting – we located a Ferruginous Pygmy-owl straight away on a roost, and followed this up with a variety of arachnids, a couple of Walking Sticks, a Forest Roach, Stag Beetle, the largest Leaf Hopper I ever saw, a Land Crab, a gorgeous Boan's Tree-frog (Trinidad's largest, and a tiny Flying Frog along with a stunning Variegated Gecko.

Day 3 / Dec 12 – Asa Wright Nature Center; Tamana Intech Park (Waller Field)

Outside our rooms at daybreak we had a Rufous-breasted Wren calling, followed by a pair of Golden-olive Woodpeckers, a Tropical Kingbird with a dragonfly it had just caught and the male White-tailed Trogon.

Jim flew in early this morning and in no time he was catching up on the regular species. After breakfast we join Harold for our walk down the Guacharo (Indian for "the one that cries") named after the Oilbirds that are found at Dunstan Cave at the end of the trail. The name Oilbird comes from the young which once they have reached 2 ½ months old are 50% heavier than the adults, and it is at this stage that they are taken and boiled to produce oil for cooking, lighting lamps and torches – something that is no longer practiced! We began with a Southern House Wren in the Herb Garden, then a female White-tailed Trogon over the path, Green and Rufous-breasted Hermit and just as it began to rain a Forest Eleania on the hand rail at the beginning of the Guacharo Trail. The activity was slow along the trail and we had rain for the first 15 minutes but the lush forest was lovely to walk through as we worked our way across the stream and undulating landscape until we began our descent to Dunstan Cave. Cocoa Thrush, Gray-fronted Dove and Golden-olive Woodpecker along with a distant bellbird were heard while a Gray-throated Leaf-tosser flew in front of the lead walkers. Though we did not see many Oilbirds (there are about 150 in the cave), those that we did see were right in front of us and with

Harold's light we got great views of the world's only nocturnal fruit eating bird, along with a few that were flying about the cave.

By the time we had almost returned to the main trail the rains were back, this time for a considerable time. Most opted to head for the verandah and Jim, Jane & I headed for the bellbirds. Jim had some catching up to do having just arrived, so we got to show him the Golden-headed and White-bearded Manakins and spent a wet 3/4 hr trying to track down several Bearded Bellbirds only to find out that had we stayed with Jane we would have had one right over the path. For all our efforts we did not return empty handed having seen a male White-flanked Antwren. Part two of this search continued after lunch when we walked back down the Discovery Trail and stopped at the intersection of Chaconia and the White-bearded Manakin lek when we came across a large ant swarm crossing the trail. For the next hour we hardly moved watching a large party of at least 20 Plain-brown Woodcreepers feast on the ants and other insects as well as three White-bellied Antbirds on the ground – all very exciting indeed, and to add to our success a couple of bellbirds showed up above the trail and began calling, which made it far easier than this morning to locate. One of them even surprised the hell out of us when it split our eardrums, less than 20 feet overhead. What a huge difference between a calling bird 20 feet away and one 50 feet away!

At 4pm we left the center and headed down the hill to Waller Field the old abandoned US WWII airbase which has now been cleared of all riff-raff and is goes by the name, Tamana Intech Park. After passing through security gates and finding each runway named, we headed for Moriche Drive. A family of Yellow-headed Caracara's greeted us and at one stage all three were perched together. The Sulphury Flycatchers performed nicely being situated in the Moriche Palms and both Fork-tailed Palm Swifts and Short-tailed Swifts continually flew over us. At one point a large flock of Lilac-tailed Parrotlets flew passed but really they were too far away. As our mobile catering unit was setting up our excellent dinner a Rufous-breasted Wren sang beside the road and was located. After dinner we drove the runways spotlighting the edges where we had extraordinary looks at several White-tailed Nightjars and a Pauraque for comparison, though the later were more often heard, and to cap the evening a Common Potoo perched a good distance away but the scope views made up for it.

Day 4 / Dec 13 – Aripo Farmland; Manzanilla Beach; Nariva Swamp

It was nice to get into a different habitat today, and we began in the wet grasslands of the Aripo Livestock Station with the gorgeous Red-breasted Blackbird and Wattled Jacanas. Pied Water Tyrants and White-headed Marsh Tyrants showed themselves, often perching on the fences. The first of the days Blue-black Grassquits, known locally as "Johnny Jump-ups", were seen as were Shiny Cowbirds and White-winged Swallows. A pair of Yellow-chinned Spinetails did not cooperate preferring to stay deep in the grasses, while Southern Lapwings, Solitary Sandpipers and Least Sandpipers stood in full view. A couple of Yellow-headed Caracara's flew around the building while Savannah Hawks, about 5 in all, could be seen throughout the grasslands and a Peregrine perched in a tree.

Leaving Aripo we made a stop at a known Yellow-rumped Cacique nest site but only saw a Piratic Flycatcher and two new butterfly species the Giant Swallowtail and the colorful Coolie there, however we did catch up with half a dozen of them later near Manzanilla. The beach at Manzanilla was rather quite, with a few Gray-breasted Martins flying around, a Yellow-bellied Eleania across the road, Snowy Egrets on the beach and a couple of Brown Pelican over the rough sea. The tuna casserole was enjoyed by all including the dogs that Gwen had taken pity of.

As we entered Nariva Swamp, amongst the palms that were between the road and the Atlantic Ocean, we found a small group of Yellow-headed Caracaras feeding on the ground with a couple of Turkey Vultures and a Savannah Hawk. A Crested Caracara was also there.

Our first stop produced several Black-crested Antshrikes, while the main road in the swamp was a great success beginning with an Azure Gallinule, an uncommon and recent sighting to the island; Purple Gallinules; what has turned out to be the first documented Orchard Oriole for the islands, in what must surely be the most unlikely of habitats, the wet grasslands of a swamp; Striated Heron, including one that landed on a Pied Marsh Tyrants nest and was duly dived bombed by both parents until it eventually moved on; jacanas and their day old chicks; Northern Waterthrush; Yellow-rumped Cacique; Yellow Oriole; Smooth-billed Ani's including one that

was grey in color; Yellow-hooded Blackbirds; Merlin; Zone-tailed Hawk; Southern Lapwing; Little Blue Heron, and a Pinnated Bittern that Jogie found with just its head and neck sticking out the tall grasses.

A stop as the sun set at the parrot roost produced a couple of Orange-winged Parrots, 2 Yellow-crowned Parrots and to our surprise 5 Red-bellied Macaws, all of which we got to see extremely well and a Grey Hawk rounded out our “rum punch stop” before heading back to the centre. One final stop produced a perched Common Black Hawk and minutes later one flying besides the van – a great end to a wonderful day.

Day 5 / Dec 14 – North Range / Blanchisseuse Road

Low clouds, on-off drizzle and some good steady rain consumed most of the field trip as we ventured along the winding Blanchisseuse Road. Our first stop was at the radio tower in the hopes of getting a look at Trinidad's only endemic bird, the Piping Guan or Pawi as it is locally known, but in spite of scanning the tree tops of a while we came up empty handed. We were rewarded with excellent looks at a couple of Scaled Pigeons and almost got a male Barred Antshrike to come in! Further along the North Range at the overlook, as the clouds began to lower, we watched a light morph Short-tailed Hawk hang in the air as it searched for some unsuspecting smaller avian prey, and had a juvenile Broad-wing Hawk, the first of two today, perched along the track. Both Collared Trogon and Tropical Parula were calling but neither showed themselves. There was also the briefest of views of a Lilac-tailed Parrotlet as it screeched by. A feeding flock of passerines was hard to come by today for some reason, but we did have a couple of productive stops, including one with several Tropical Pewees and Violacious Euphonias as well as a pair of Rufous-tailed Jacamars before the rains set in for the remainder of the morning.

We had a very pleasant picnic lunch at the beach, with the ocean being a lot calmer than the previous day. Grey-breasted Martins, a few Short-tailed Swifts and many vultures flew overhead, while half a dozen Spotted Sandpipers were spread out between the beach and the adjacent lagoon, where Southern Lapwings were resting and a few Southern Rough-winged Swallows flew low over the water. There was a great deal of excitement only a minute or so after we left our lunch spot as an Ornate Hawk-eagle was spotted circling above the road, but after a minute or so it glided out of view.

On the way back up the North Range our first stop was in the rain where a Rufous-browed Peppershrike sang but never showed and an Osprey of all things was seen over the forest. Our final stop was a great success, the clouds had lifted and the rain had stopped; Orange-winged Parrots covered the crown of a tree and at one stage 3 Blue-winged Parrots flew over the road but they never stopped. Yellow-rumped Caciques and Rufous-tailed Jacamars kept us busy until we found a close Golden-olive Woodpecker, followed by a Linneated Woodpecker and quickly thereafter a female Crimson-crested Woodpecker, a rather uncommon bird on the island.

Day 6 / Dec 15 – Bon Accord Sewer Treatment Plant; Hilton Ponds; Grafton Estate; Blue Waters Inn

Everyone was up for a 5am breakfast followed by the journey down the hill to catch the 7:30 puddle-jumper to Tobago – a 20 minute flight. Adolphus was there to meet us and in no time we were birding the sewer ponds. One of the advantages of arriving early was that the ducks were still around, and there were good numbers of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Blue-winged Teal and White-cheeked Pintails. Egrets were plentiful and we got great looks at the Tobagan race of the Green Heron, really a cross between our Green Heron and Striated Heron. Anhingas and the first of many frigatebirds were overhead as were a couple of Barn Swallows and in the ponds numerous Least Grebes including one or two little ones. The next stop was around the corner at the new Hilton Ponds, where we had more of the same ducks along with an Osprey.

The Grafton Estate, an old cocoa, coffee and coconut plantation, and now a bird sanctuary, was chock full of birds. The fruit feeders or better still the cages that held them had Red-crowned Woodpeckers, Bare-eyed Thrushes, Rufous-vented Chacalacas, many Blue-gray Tanagers and of all things Barred Antshrikes. Our walk down the wide trail began with a Gray Kingbird, and was followed by noisy Rufous-tailed Jacamars, White-fringed Antwrens, White-tipped Dove, Short-tailed Swifts overhead, Barred Antshrike, a pair of Blue-crowned Motmots, Scrub Greenlet and a Rufous-breasted Hermit. On the drive out Griff spotted a flycatcher which turned out to be a Fuscous, posing nicely for all of us. It was a great find.

We followed the winding, slow but scenic route along the Caribbean coast to Speyside and the Blue Waters Inn. The day was our best yet weather wise and the views exquisite, especially once Goat Island and Little Tobago were in sight. After a late lunch we settled in and while most opted to take it easy either on the beach (where there were many Ruddy Turnstones and a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron along with two Little Blue Herons) or in the water, while Rebecca, Jim, Dorothy and I took the upper trail to see what we could find. The view was magnificent and it was nice to see many Red-billed Tropicbirds flying in the distance as were frigatebirds and a couple of Brown Boobies. On the trail we had at least a dozen Broad-winged Hawks overhead at one time or another; Tropical Mockingbird; Blue-black Grassquits; Pale-vented Pigeon; White-tipped Dove; Brown-crested Flycatcher and in one tree a couple of Scrub Greenlets, known as the 'nothing bird' and Yellow-breasted Flycatchers.

Day 7 / Dec 16 - Main Ridge - Roxborough to Bloody Bay Rd, Gilpin Trace; Boat from Charlottesville to St.Giles

Gladwyn, Adolphus' son, took us to the Main Ridge where we began our birding along the Roxborough to Bloody Bay Road. The first stop was most productive beginning with a calling Venezuelan Flycatcher at the very top of the canopy. It eventually returned a great deal lower and showed itself very well. A couple of Scrub Greenlets were less co-operative, but the male Collared Trogon, though distant, was seen by all as was a couple of female Blue-backed Manakins and a Rufous-tailed Jacamar. We also picked up a Red-tailed Squirrel in this area.

By mid morning we had ventured in to the marvelous rain forest along Gilpin Trace and had a couple of fantastic hours birding. A male Plain Antvireo was calling and he eventually came in very close to perch on some vines in full view. A Striped-breasted Spinetail was located across the stream in the open, but was moving away from us. We all finally caught up with a Rufous-breasted Wren, a species that we had heard on numerous occasions each day. For the second day in a row we got to see a Fuscous Flycatcher. More female Blue-backed Manakins and a couple of American Redstarts and a Rufous-breasted Hermit followed. Gladwyn heard a White-tailed Sabrewing (the bird of this forest) and we soon found it below us bathing, which was an extraordinary sight to witness, and then followed it to its perched where it proceeded to preen and dry itself out. This was followed by a stunning male Blue-backed Manakin (the bird of the trip) which came in to check us out! We did extremely well with woodcreepers seeing a pair of Olivaceous and a Buff-throated. Once again Gladwyn came up trumps, hearing the call of a juvenile Yellow-legged Thrush which was duly located, and we finished up with a very cooperative Blue-crowned Motmot perched over the stream.

Several of us opted to try something new, which was a boat trip from Charlottesville to St. Giles, the islands off the eastern tip of Tobago. Though the boat arrived an hour late to pick us up it was a wonderful experience seeing the nesting colonies of seabirds. Magnificent Frigatebirds in the thousands were on nests in the shrubs and trees on the slopes, the males with their red throats almost fully extended added some brilliant color. Brown Boobies, though fewer in number were paired off in pockets here and there and we got to see three morphs of the Red-footed Booby – Brown, White and White-tailed Brown. A pleasant surprise was a couple of Masked Boobies on the northern side of Marble Island. Though the light conditions were rather poor as we skirted a storm, all the activity and sheer number of birds made for a wonderful hour long trip.

Day 8 / Dec 17 – Blue Waters Inn; Little Tobago

Our pre-breakfast walk around the grounds of Blue Waters produced many Ruddy Turnstones, a Spotted Sandpiper and a hungry crab-eating Yellow-crowned Night Heron on the beach. Checking all the trees we had great looks at Pale-vented Pigeons; a nesting White-tipped Dove; Rufous-vented Chacalacas all over including ones eating the fruit from a tree; a couple of Broad-winged Hawks; a large party of Shiny Cowbirds; several Bananaquits nest building; Southern House Wrens and a Black-faced Grassquit amongst the grasses on the far slope. At breakfast we were joined by a Yellow-bellied Eleania in the dinning hall, and for that matter lunch as well.

We took Frank's Glass Bottom Boat out to Little Tobago, a ride of only a half hour and that included a slow trawl over Angel Reef which just happens to be a great snorkeling reef, and one can see why. The corals and fishes were exquisite, with Grooved-brained and Smooth-brained, Potato, Fire and Pillar Coral, Yellow-tubed

Sponges along with Dead-Mans-Fingers and Sea Fans and a wide assortment of colorful fishes including Stoplight Parrotfish, 4-eyed Butterflies, Trumpetfish, Bi-colored Damselfish, Sand Drivers, Yellow Porkfish, Blue Tangs, French and Queen Angels and Creole Wrasse. We entered the shallow end of the Japanese Garden, where there used to be a great deal of black coral and had Giant Clam Sponges (a soft coral) and Sargent Majors and a Spanish Hogfish. Just before reaching the island we had a look at the worlds largest Brain Coral, estimated to be 2000 years old and about 16 feet tall by 12 feet wide.

The disembarking from the boat was a little rough due to the undulating tides, which kept Alice and Dorothy from getting off. The rest of us soldiered up the path and steps on this warm and sunny morning. At the hut Blue-gray Tanagers greeted us by the hordes and many Short-tailed Swifts flew overhead. A couple of Yellow-bellied Eleania's were about as was a Bare-eyed Thrush and a very uncooperative Chivi Vireo. We stopped at the first overlook and saw several Brown Boobies flying around the cove and then proceeded down the steep slope and through the trees to where 3 Red-billed Tropicbirds were on their nests – the first of the season. At the upper overlook shelter the tropicbirds were giving us excellent views as they flew passed on their regular flight path around the bay. A couple of Red-footed Boobies could be seen below us and across the water on the far slope, with 1 white morph on a nest, and of course many frigatebirds were in the air.

Following lunch we transferred back down to Crown Point for our late afternoon flight back to Trinidad. After some confusion at the counter, a different flight number / plane, and an unannounced flight departure time we actually found ourselves back in Trinidad head of schedule but minus Gwen's bag. It did eventually catch up with us an hour or so later, having arrived on the next flight.

Day 9 / Dec 18 – PAX Guest House; Freeport; Waterloo; Point-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust; Caroni-Savannah Road; Caroni Swamp

We began at first light on the lower verandah at PAX with a multitude of tanagers and handful of hummers, namely Copper-rumped and White-bellied Emeralds. By the time we went to breakfast at 7:30 we had added a male Tufted Coquette, Long-billed Starthroat and the beautiful female Black-throated Mango. It was nice to see a Yellow Oriole along with a Grayish Saltator and the Rufous-browed Pepper-shrike. Overhead we had Gray-rumped and Short-tailed Swift as well as 3 Lesser Swallow-tailed Swifts. While waiting for our van, the large open shade tree outside the guest house held a Yellow Warbler and a pair of Lineated Woodpeckers.

We spent the day in the lowlands along the west coast first stopping to look for Saffron Finch (without any luck), where we came across a couple of Yellow-headed Caracaras harassing a Zone-tailed Hawk; a Merlin; White-winged Swallows and a White-headed marsh Tyrant. At Waterloo, we encountered the opposite of what the tide chart in this mornings paper read, getting a high tide, which meant fewer shorebirds! However we did well picking up many new trip species, including Whimbrel, Laughing Gull, Black Skimmer, both night-herons, and the stunning Large-billed Tern, of which we had about a dozen sitting on posts in the water. By midday the rains had come, and it looked at one point as though it would be here for the day. We took lunch at the Point-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust nature center while it poured and to our relief it let up as we were finishing. Many Yellow-hooded Blackbirds and tanagers were at the feeders and at one stage an immature Red-capped Cardinal joined them. Male Black-throated Mango's were on the mimosas and the pond held Muscovy's, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Wattled Jacana, Moorhen, Purple Gallinule, Striated Heron Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant and three kingfisher species, Ringed, Green and American Pygmy.

Before taking our boat ride through Caroni Swamp we stopped on the southern outskirts of the swamp and walk a tracked picking up a calling Striped Cuckoo in the drier areas and Bicolored Conebills along with Yellow Warblers, Yellow-chinned Spinetails and Pied Marsh Tyrant on the edge of the swamp. Our boat was captained and guided by the very talented baby-faced Shaun who's spotting skills are nothing short of extraordinary. A Green-breasted Mango was first up, followed by Caiman; 4-eyed fish or better known as Mud Skippers; Eared Dove; Straight-billed Woodcreepers; Cook's Tree Boas, one of which was most obliging for photos; female Black-crested Antshrikes; a sleeping Silky Anteater which is about the size of a coconut; and then the Scarlet Ibis spectacle. Though a great many of them had changed their roosting spot several days before we arrived we still got to see them fly in and continue eastwards, while an estimate 2000 came in to roost in small groups of anywhere from 4 to 60 birds over the course of half an hour around sunset. The sight of brilliant red birds twisting and turning as they come in to the small island to roost is an image no one that was there today will

forget. As the late afternoon progressed, the sounds became louder as Snowy Egrets and Tri-colored Herons along with a few Little Blue Herons and Neotropic Cormorants joined them.

Day 10 / Dec 19 – Grand Riviere; Aripo Valley; PAX Guest House

Following coffee and tea at 3:45am we all piled into our van and set off for the 2 ½ hr ride to Grand Riviere in the north eastern corner of the country. Just before reaching our destination we heard several very vocal Silvered Antbirds at 6:20am besides a slow running stream. Both males and females cooperated very nicely giving us tremendous looks as they continued to sing. We reached our destination, a track through the forest, at 6:55am, and had to walk the final two hundred yards as the slope was too slippery for the van. A White-bellied Antbird was singing besides the track, but in spite of all our efforts over the next 2 hrs it would never venture into the open. We positioned ourselves on a knoll between two dwellings (owned by the 'keeper of the Pawi'), which allowed us to get a good view of the surrounding forest edge. A pair of Black-tailed Tityra's perched in a Cecropia tree for scope views and by 7:10 we had our first Piping Guan in a Marchwood tree at close range feeding on its fruits. Over the course of our stay we would get excellent views of about 4 or 5 of them flying from tree to tree and overhead as well as perched atop the trees. Amongst the birds that were heard only, were Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl and Southern Beardless Tyrannulet. Rufous-breasted Hermits, Rufous-breasted Wren, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Scaled Pigeon, Little Hermit and several male Violacious Trogons showed well as did a pair of Squirrel Cuckoos and Golden-fronted Greenlets while a Pale-breasted Spinetail was seen by all, but spent most of its time singing in the upper canopy of a large shade tree. This was an outstanding stop, not only for the islands only endemic, but for seeing species we had missed and catching up with some which had eluded some of the group, and all of this within a 50 yard stretch!

The journey back was eventful, as the van suddenly only had 2 gears, luckily it was first and forth! We followed the northern coast and the Caribbean Sea with Tobago in the distance until Toco before heading south and skirting the Atlantic. Kenny continued to pull out all the birds, with 4 Trinidad Euphonias at our first stop. A Black Hawk was seen perched on the rocks above the coastline while a Grey Hawk was on telephone wires. Once we reached the valley we made a slow search along scrub and farmland for a Pearl Kite without any luck. Then the gear situation got worse as we got down to only one gear, first, which meant a painful crawl. We decided to pull over at the entrance to the Aripo Livestock farm and called for a mobile mechanic. In no time at all he showed up with one tool, a spanner. The only problem it was the wrong size. The good news was that he could fix the problem – apparently all it needs was a bolt that had come loose, to be tightened. It was back to the shop to pick up the next size spanner, and within half an hour we were back on the road with the correct number of gears in working order. Kenny knew of a Pearl Kite nest along the way, so we stopped to check it out, and low and behold she was hunkered down on the nest. After positioning ourselves to our best advantage we managed to gets looks at various body parts, which in the end added up to a Pearl Kite! A white morph Short-tailed Hawk flew over the road with prey in its talons, and a pair of Green-rumped Parrotlets streaked by in the distance. By 2pm we were back at PAX and having a very late lunch, having been out for the previous 10 hours.

After lunch we took it easy, some opting to rest, others headed to the Monastery and gift shop and some took in the birds at the verandah, which included a Blue Dacnis, Turquoise Tanagers, a Green Hermit and a Zone-tailed Hawk.

Day 11 / Dec 20 – PAX Guest House, Old Donkey Trail

It is our last morning and it certainly does not feel like 5 days before Christmas here in the tropics – it's a beautiful sunny and warm day with a great deal of tropical calls. New at the verandah were about 20 Lilac-tailed Parrotlets that flew around the building and a lone male Shiny Cowbird. The Rufous-browed Peppershrike never called but showed up unannounced and perched briefly on the balcony railing and other than the Black-throated Mango, the 2 star hummers, the male Tufted Coquette and Long-billed Starthroat never showed.

Following breakfast we walked up the hill picking up a calling Chivi Vireo but we could not locate it; the same group of parrotlets as we had earlier in the morning; a pair of tangling Zone-tailed Hawks; a Broad-wing Hawk and a female Tufted Coquette Linda found. The Old Donkey trail was very quiet this morning with a couple of

uncooperative Golden-crowned Warblers, which is a little unusual. A male American Redstart, Cocoa Woodcreeper and several Golden-fronted Greenlet showed well and towards the end of the walk, we caught the end of the tanager flock which included a Turquoise and Bay-headed along with a female Blue Dacnis. One final look from the verandah produced a Short-tailed Hawk.

After lunch we loaded our bags and headed for the airport and our late afternoon flight back to New York following a most enjoyable and successful trip.