



American Flamingo

Trinidad & Tobago

With Black Swamp Bird Observatory

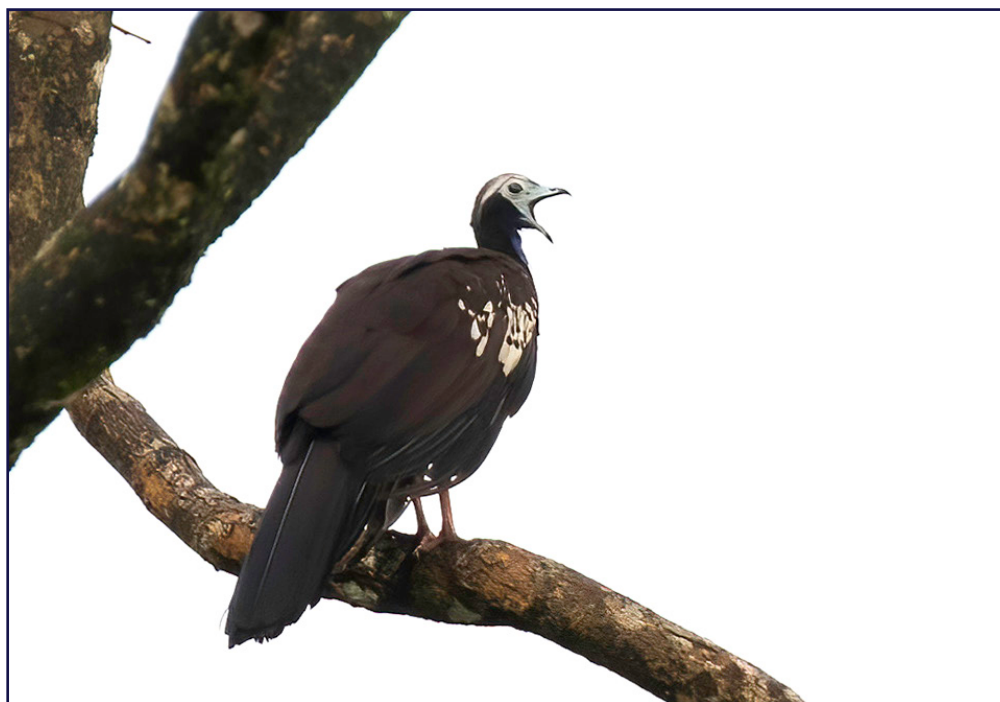
Tour Leader: Rob Ripma

June 19-29, 2026

June 19: Arrival - Transfer to Grande Riviere Coast

Several of the participants arrived a day early so the early arrivals spent an extra morning birding on our way to Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel. Our main stop for the morning was Aripo Livestock Station. The birding was quite good and in addition to many of the common and expected species, we also saw White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Pied Water-Tyrant, a large number of Fork-tailed Flycatchers, and Red-breasted Meadowlark. We made one additional brief stop adding Savannah and Zone-tailed Hawks, Yellow Oriole, and our first Turquoise Tanagers of the trip. After a brief restroom stop, we made the drive to Mt Plaisir. Upon arrival we had a wonderful lunch and settled into our rooms.

In the late afternoon, we made our first trip up to Pawi Lodge and Monte Video Trace, just a short drive from our hotel. This area offers the best birding in the area, and we quickly added new species to our list. Pawi is the local name for Trinidad Piping-Guan, and this area is the best spot to find this elusive species. We ended up finding three individuals and enjoyed extended views of this incredible species. Other highlights for the afternoon included Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Black-throated Mango, Tufted Coquette, Long-billed Starthroat, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, White-chested Emerald, Blue-chinned Sapphire, Plumbeous Kite, Channel-billed Toucan, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Black-tailed Tityra, and Rufous-breasted Wren.



Trinidad Piping-Guan

As we returned to Mt Plaisir, the rest of the group was arriving as they came directly from the airport. We all enjoyed our first dinner as a group and prepared for the adventures to come.

June 20: Monte Video Trace and Leatherback Sea Turtle Experience

Our day started early as we headed back up to Pawi Lodge but this time with our whole group. After the successful afternoon the day before, I was hopeful that we could find all of the birds for the rest of the group. Conditions looked to be difficult with some heavy downpours but with a covered area to bird from we quickly started to find some great birds. While watching the activity at the hummingbird feeders, one of the participants, Margy, found our biggest target for the morning, Trinidad Piping-Guan! It was in an excellent spot, and wonderful scope views were enjoyed by all. Increasing rain pushed us to end our morning of birding early and head back to the lodge for breakfast.



Tufted Coquette

After breakfast we gathered to bird around the lodge grounds and in nearby habitats. We had been hearing a Rufous-browed Peppershrike consistently singing from the parking lot, but no one had been able to find it. After a lengthy search, I finally found it and figured out why it had been so difficult to locate. It was singing from a very hidden nest! Everyone enjoyed extended views from a respectful distance.

We spent most of the day birding around the property and dodging heavy downpours by running back to the lodge for cover. Highlights included Orange-winged Amazon, Spectacled Thrush, Yellow Oriole, White-lined, Silver-beaked, Blue-gray, and Palm Tanagers, and Red-legged Honeycreeper.

After dinner, we waited for the guides for the Leatherback Sea Turtles to come get us. It wasn't long before we had our guide and we were headed out to see a sea turtle that had come ashore to lay eggs. This beach has one of the highest number of nesting Leatherbacks in the world and we all were thrilled to get to witness the incredible spectacle of these enormous turtles nesting.

June 21: Morning Birding - Transfer to Asa Wright Nature Center

After our late night out with the sea turtles, we had a relaxed morning with many of us birding around the grounds of the lodge. We mainly saw a similar list of species and again dealt with heavy rain. After lunch at Mt. Plaisir, we loaded up our vehicle and started on our way to Asa Wright Nature Center.

Upon arrival at Asa Wright, we got checked into our rooms and then spent the rest of the afternoon birding from the famous verandah. The hummingbird feeders were extremely active with a variety of species, White-necked Jacobin, Brown Violetear, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Black-throated Mango, Long-billed Starthroat, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, White-chested Emerald, and Blue-chinned Sapphire. We also had our first Bearded Bellbird of the trip. Although its loud calls make it seem close, this individual was perched up at a very long distance allowing for distant scope views.

June 22: Full Day at Asa Wright Nature Center

Our day started where yesterday ended, back on the verandah. We had a similar list of species but also enjoyed a family of Barred Antshrikes that we would become very familiar with over the next few days as they liked to feed around the main lodge.

After breakfast, we headed down to Dunstan's Cave where Asa Wright's famous Oilbirds reside. We took our time on the hike and found some great birds along the way including Black Hawk-Eagle, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Golden-headed Manakin, Collared Trogon, Plain Antvireo, White-flanked Antwren, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Tropical Parula, and Red-crowned Ant-Tanager. Once down at the cave, we enjoyed views of the incredible Oilbirds!



Bearded Bellbird

After a delicious lunch, we met to hike to the area where Bearded Bellbirds display. During our hike, we found some great species including Green-backed Trogon, Lineated Woodpecker, a heard only Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant, and Golden-fronted Greenlet. Along the trail, there is also a known lekking area for White-bearded Manakins, and we stopped to watch them put on quite the show! The bellbirds did not disappoint, and we had at least five individuals calling and had amazing views of three of them! We spent more time back on the verandah before enjoying another wonderful meal.



White-bearded Manakin

After dinner, some of the group headed out for a night hike. Although we didn't find any of the typical night birds, our local guide had a thermal camera and spotted Green and Little Hermits, and Ochre-bellied Flycatcher roosting. We also had a couple species of scorpion, Black-tailed Tree Boa, and Trinidad Chevron Tarantula.

June 23: Northern Range and Blanchisseuse Road

After some time on the verandah and a wonderful breakfast, we left for a full day of birding in the Northern Range near Asa Wright. We started out with some roadside stops with highlights being Guianan Violaceous Trogon, White-winged Becard, Piratic Flycatcher, Bay-headed Tanager, Blue Dacnis, 12 Swallow-tailed Kites, Ochre-lore Flatbill, White-bellied Antbird, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, and Golden-crowned Warbler.

We arrived at Las Lapas Trace and although the skies were threatening rain, we decided to take a walk here. The rain mostly held out, and we found some excellent species here. Highlights included a heard only Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Streaked Flycatchers visiting a probable nesting site, Tropical Parula, Hepatic Tanager, Swallow Tanager, Pur-

ple, Red-legged, and green Honeycreepers, and Yellow-bellied Seedeater.

The rain did finally roll in so we took cover and had an early lunch while waiting for the storm to pass. Luckily, it didn't take long, and we were back to birding! Our first roadside stop was a bit slow, but activity picked up farther down the road and we added several species including Red-rumped Woodpecker, heard only Great Antshrike, Black-tailed Tityra, Euler's Flycatcher, Northern Tropical Pewee, Rufous-breasted Wren, heard only Trinidad Euphonia, and White-shouldered Tanager. Throughout our birding, Rufous-tailed Jacamars had been calling but wouldn't come out. Once most of the group had gotten back on the bus, one of our local guides, Sabira, finally found the jacamars! Everyone got back off the bus and enjoyed extended excellent views of a pair of jacamars.

We headed back to Asa Wright and enjoyed a relaxed afternoon around the property before yet another amazing dinner.

June 24: Waterloo, Brickfield, and Caroni Swamp

After breakfast, we set off for a day along the coast visiting several spots and ending at the famous Caroni Swamp. After breakfast, we loaded up and began our 1.5 hour drive to our first stop. Along the way, we had excellent views of a Savannah Hawk along the road. A quick stop at another location added Fork-tailed Palm Swift, Osprey, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Red-breasted Meadowlark, and Yellow-hooded Blackbird. As we drove, we also spotted our first Crested Caracara of the trip.

Our first stop was at Brickfield and, although the tide was high, we found some good birds. We had our first Large-billed Terns as well as our first American Flamingos. We took a short walk down the road through the mangroves and farm fields adding Pale-breasted Spinetail, Pied Water-Tyrant, Blue-black Grassquit, and Olive-gray Saltator. The biggest highlight here was a Great Black Hawk that flew over!

Next, we visited Temple by the Sea. We unfortunately dealt with a lot of rain while here but did see a few things along the shore including Southern Lapwing and Black Skimmer. After lunch here, we continued to Orange Valley. This stop was loaded with birds, and we spent a significant amount of time scanning for shorebirds. Highlights included Black-bellied Plover, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Short-billed Dowitcher, Willet, Greater Yellowlegs, and Semipalmated Sandpiper. Scarlet Ibis, American Flamingo, and a Yellow-headed Caracara passing overhead also kept us entertained.

We still had a bit of time to kill before our boat ride at Caroni, so we made a stop at a huge Hindu temple. The temple was impressive and we saw our only Gray-lined Hawk of the trip while there.

Once we arrived at Caroni, we quickly boarded our boat with our incredible local guide, Lester Nanan. Lester's grandfather and father both worked to protect Caroni Swamp and were instrumen-

tal to the creation of the sanctuary in 1948. We had barely left the dock when we started to find new species for our trip! A group of three Masked Cardinals showed well as a Green-throated Mango visited a nest in the same tree. As we continued birding, we found Greater Ani, American Pygmy and Green Kingfishers, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Black-crested Antshrike, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, and Bicolored Conebill. In addition to the birds, we had wonderful looks at Silky Anteater, Common Opossum, Large Fish-eating and Brazilian Long-nosed Bats, and Speckled Caiman. As it got later, we noticed many Scarlet Ibis starting to head to their roosting site, so we moved that way as well. We all enjoyed some wonderful rum punch while watching almost 4,000 Scarlet Ibis come to roost. Many American Flamingos also kept us entertained! We stayed out late to look for night birds on our way back. We had many Common Pauraque and one Short-tailed Nighthawk as we made our way back to the dock.



Yellow-chinned Spinetail

June 25: Asa Wright and Transfer to Tobago

We had a relaxed morning before bidding farewell to Trinidad and heading to the airport for flights to Tobago. It was a busy weekend to be flying to Tobago, so we had to split the group for the flights. Upon arrival in Tobago, our first group made a couple of birding stops on the way to Cuffie River Estate. A brief stop at Bon Accord Sewage Treatment Ponds produced our first Rufous-vented Chachalaca and Scrub Greenlet. Our next stop at Centre Street Ponds was quite productive with highlights being Blue-winged Teal, White-cheeked Pintail, Least Grebe with young, Glossy Ibis, Caribbean Martin, and Black-faced Grassquit. We made our way to Cuffie River, and the rest of the group arrived shortly after. We settled in for the night and prepared for our few days on Tobago.

June 26: Gilpin Trace - Main Ridge Forest Reserve

Most of the group was up early to bird the lodge grounds before breakfast. Trinidad Motmot is extremely common here and we enjoyed our first views of this endemic species. The hummingbird feeders were very active and we saw our first White-tailed Sabrewings of the trip along with a good number of Ruby-topaz Hummingbirds, White-necked Jacobins, and Black-throated Mango.

After breakfast, we headed out to bird along the main ridge but along the way we made a stop to check a known Common Potoo roost. Unfortunately, it was not to be found that day. We made some stops along the main ridge road and between rain showers found some good birds. Highlights included three extremely cooperative Rufous-tailed Jacamars and Golden-olive Woodpecker.



Rufous-tailed Jacamar



Trinidad Motmot

Next, we hiked along Gilpin Trace which goes through some incredibly beautiful forest. The birding was excellent there and we had many highlights including Northern White-fringed Antwren, Olivaceous, Plain-brown, and Cocoa Woodcreepers, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, lekking Blue-backed Manakins, White-throated Spadebill, and Yellow-legged and White-throated Thrushes. A non-bird highlight was a Black-banded Snake that everyone got to see up close!

After a quick bathroom stop at the park headquarters, we started to make our way to lunch at a small restaurant on the beach. Along the way, we made a quick stop to see our first Roseate Tern of the trip. We enjoyed an excellent lunch and some souvenir shopping at the beach. After a short drive back to our lodge, everyone took a bit of a break before birding around the lodge grounds again in the afternoon.

After dinner, most of the group went out to hear the Common Potoos that were calling and to see the White-tailed Nightjars hunting around the lights on the property.

June 27: Coastal Birding and Arrival at Blue Waters Inn

Our day started birding at Cuffie River Nature Retreat again with many of the same species that we had been seeing. As we were packing up after breakfast, some one found a flycatcher hunting insects on one of the hotel balconies. It turned out to be our only Fuscous Flycatcher of the trip!

We loaded up and started on our way to our final stop of the tour at Blue Waters Inn. We took the long way along the Caribbean coast with several birding stops. Highlights included Brown Noddy, Roseate and Royal Terns, Northern White-fringed Antwren, Great Black Hawk, Ochre-lored Flat-bill, Red-crowned Woodpecker, and Streaked Flycatcher. After getting checked in and settled in our rooms, most of the group met for some afternoon birding around the property. We again dealt with some rain but had a few highlights including Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, and nesting Gray Kingbirds.

June 28: Little Tobago Island by Glass-Bottom Boat

After breakfast, we boarded our boat and headed out to Little Tobago for a morning of birding. Along the way, we cruised the rocky shores finding many species along the way including Scaly-naped Pigeon, a recent addition to the avifauna of Tobago, Brown Noddy, Sooty, Bridled, and Roseate Terns, and Red-footed and Brown Boobies. Once on Little Tobago, we made the hike up to the lookout where we enjoyed the incredible views and saw our only Red-billed Tropicbirds of the trip! On the way back to Tobago, we all enjoyed the incredible underwater life that we could see thanks to our glass-bottomed boat! After lunch and a long break, some people did more birding around the Blue Waters Inn with similar highlights to our other outings around the property.

June 29: Departure

We got an early start from Blue Waters Inn as we headed to the airport for the first group to fly back to Trinidad. After dropping off this part of the group, the others birded a bit more before their flight. The first stop was for a Common Potoo roost and this time there was an adult and a chick! While walking back from the potoo to the bus, three Mangrove Cuckoos were seen by the group, our only time seeing this species on the trip. A final stop at Centre Street Ponds netted several highlights including White-cheeked Pintail, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Least Grebe, Common Gallinule, Glossy Ibis, and Blue-winged Teal.

The tour ended with 201 species and countless non-avian highlights!