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The Trinidad and Tobago Rare Birds Committee (TTRBC) was established in 1995 with the principal aim to assess, document and archive the occurrence of rare or unusual birds in Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee has now assessed all records submitted during 2011. In all, 54 records were adjudged, representing 42 different species. No additional species have been added to the Official List of the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago, the running total remains at 471 species. Of the submissions assessed, in only five cases did the Committee find the identification inconclusive. The records tabulated below follow the nomenclature and taxonomic order of the American Ornithologists Union South American Checklist; January 2012.

The Committee comprises the following members: Martyn Kenefick (Secretary), Geoffrey Gomes, Floyd Hayes, Bill Murphy, Courtenay Rooks and Graham White.

Archived records including photographic submissions are held at 36 Newalloville Ave., San Juan. Previous reports of this Committee were prepared by Hayes and White (2000); White and Hayes (2002) and Kenefick (2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011).

Members of the TTRBC are aware that a number of other rare birds are found each year in Trinidad and Tobago and urge finders not only to report their sightings to us, but to document same. In particular, a Double-striped Thick-knee was apparently seen by many observers during late September in Tobago. A recently revised list of those species considered by the TTRBC, together with the Official List of the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago and details of all accepted records by the Committee, can be accessed from our new website at <http://rbc.ttfnc.org>

RECORDS ACCEPTED

Two adult **White-faced Whistling-Ducks**, *Dendrocygna viduata*, were found on Caroni Rice Project on 3 July, 2011 (MK, DS). Whilst previously recorded annually at this site, difficulty of vehicular access has restricted the number of sightings of this scarce austral wanderer in recent years. On 15 October, 2011 a flock of 14 were photographed in South Oropouche (KS, CC). This is the first documented sighting for south Trinidad.

An adult male **Muscovy Duck**, *Cairina moschata*, flew high over South Oropouche on 12 February, 2011 (MK, GW) whilst at Iacos, two males were photo-

graphed on 23 May, 2011 (KS) with one present at the same location on 28 November, 2011 (KS). There have now been nine different sightings, involving probably 20 different birds, in the last three years. All but one have been in the wetlands of south-west Trinidad.

Three **Lesser Scaup**, *Aythya affinis*, in female or immature plumage were photographed at Lowlands, Tobago on 15 February, 2011 (MKe). This species has now been found at this site in three of the last five years.

Breeding of **Masked Duck**, *Nomonyx dominicus*, in Tobago was proven for the first time in 2011 when two pairs successfully reared at least 10 chicks with a further male still in breeding plumage on an adjacent wetland. Two different clutches of chicks were observed on 15 February and 24 March, 2011 (GG, MK, MKe BM *et al.*).

An adult **Green Heron**, *Butorides virescens*, was photographed close to Arima on 1 May, 2011 (DW). Whilst a common resident in Tobago, this is the first documented sighting in Trinidad since the inception of the TTRBC 17 years ago.

An immature **Gray Heron**, *Ardea cinerea*, was photographed at Bon Accord sewage lagoons, Tobago on 19 November, 2011 (FM, AS). With only two records in the previous century, there have now been eight sightings since 2001. This is likely the result of increased observer awareness of identification features especially of non-adult *Ardea* herons.

The **Purple Heron**, *Ardea purpurea*, first found in February, 2010 was still present at Bon Accord sewage lagoons, Tobago until late May, 2011 at least (many observers).

A juvenile **Reddish Egret**, *Egretta rufescens*, was photographed inside Caroni Swamp on 2 June, 2011 (RJ, DR *et al.*). Whilst this species is still undoubtedly rare, it has now been found in Trinidad in three of the last four years.

An adult **Jabiru**, *Jabiru mycteria*, was photographed close to Mon Desir Village on 9 September, 2011 (TM). This remains an extremely rare wanderer from mainland South America with just three previous records in the last 16 years.

An adult **Crane Hawk**, *Geranospiza caerulescens*, was photographed in trees close to the picnic site at Carli Bay on 16 November, 2011 (MK, FM). This species was first found in Trinidad as recently as 2001, and has been documented in every year since, except one.

An adult **Rufous Crab-Hawk**, *Buteogallus aequinoctialis*, was photographed perched on a utility pylon at Iacos on 27 March, 2011 (DS). This is likely to be one of the adults seen in exactly the same area during 2010. Several sightings of two adults and a juvenile during September and early October, 2011 at Carli Bay (NL, SP, DS *et al.*) suggest that this species now breeds in Trinidad.

An adult **Great Black-Hawk**, *Buteogallus urubitinga*, photographed at Cat's Hill on 18 June, 2011 (KS, DS, NL) was the only documented sighting in Trinidad during the year. The species remains a rare resident in Trinidad, more regularly found in eastern Tobago.

An adult **Black-collared Hawk**, *Busarellus nigricollis*, was photographed soaring over Rousillac on 16 November, 2011 (KS). This is the first sighting of this occasional wanderer from the South American mainland since 1998.

An adult **Black Hawk-Eagle**, *Spizaetus tyrannus*, was seen soaring high over the Arima Valley from Asa Wright Nature Centre on 6 May, 2011 (ER *et al.*). Whilst this is the only documented sighting, we are aware of verbal reports indicating that this species has been seen in the valley on a number of occasions during the year.

Numerous reports of **Crested Caracara**, *Caracara cheriway*, in the Manzanilla and eastern Nariva coastline during the year included a family group of two adults and three juveniles on 6 October, 2011 (BM *et al.*) further supporting our belief of local breeding. Elsewhere, an adult was photographed at La Brea on 4 October (SP).

Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, *Aramides axillaris* is a species occasionally encountered in Caroni swamp (SM per. comm.). On 9 October, 2011, a juvenile was photographed alongside Drain No 9 (BM *et al.*). This is the first photograph of juvenile plumage to be submitted to TTRBC.

An **American Oystercatcher**, *Haematopus palliatus*, was photographed amongst the high tide roost at Orange Valley on 19 June, 2011 (NL) and was still present the following day. Another individual was photographed at the same site on 16 November, 2011 (MK, DS). Despite these being the first sightings in Trinidad since 1997, the likelihood of only one bird being involved at this well watched site is unlikely.

A **Hudsonian Godwit**, *Limosa haemastica*, was found on sewage ponds within the Lowlands complex, Tobago on 26 October, 2011 and was still present the following day (NG, MK). Whilst this species is a fairly regular southbound migrant in the wetlands of Trinidad, this is the first Tobago sighting for many years.

Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*, is an uncommon passage migrant through Trinidad and Tobago and, as such, records are not normally considered by TTRBC. How-

ever, during mid to late September, 2011, several birds amongst a feeding flock of 12 at Orange Valley were seen to have colored "flags" attached to their legs (DS). Subsequent investigation has proved that not only were these individuals originally tagged in New Jersey, USA; but they have been documented 7000 km south at their wintering grounds in southern Argentina.

Two **Buff-breasted Sandpipers**, *Tryngites subruficollis*, were photographed on a flooded sports field at Penal on 15 October, 2011 (KS). This species has been recorded in eight of the last 11 years. All southbound migrant records have occurred during the period 17 September - 28 October.

An **Upland Sandpiper**, *Bartramia longicauda*, was photographed east of Woodland Settlement on 31 August, 2011 (KS). This is the earliest southbound record since the formation of the TTRBC. Another was found on Lowlands golf course, Tobago 25-26 October, 2011 (NG, MK).

A first winter plumaged **Black-headed Gull**, *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, was found at Orange Valley on 22 January, 2011 (NL). It remained in the area until 8 May, 2011 at least (DS, MK *et al.*), by which time it had partially moulted into breeding plumage. Since 2000, we have averaged one documented sighting per year, all from the Trinidad west coast mudflats.

One, possibly two, **Franklin's Gulls**, *Leucophaeus pipixcan*, were amongst the high tide gull roost at Brickfields 24-25 January, 2011 (MK, DS *et al.*). There have now been nine birds recorded since 1998. Whilst still undoubtedly rare, and only ever found on the west coast of Trinidad, their true abundance is probably overlooked amongst the large flocks of wintering Laughing Gulls.

Up to four second winter plumaged **Ring-billed Gulls**, *Larus delawarensis*, and a further adult were regularly seen at the high tide roost at Orange Valley between 11 January and 9 April, 2011 (DS, TM, NL *et al.*). This is the highest annual total on record, with just four birds recorded from 2000 to 2010.

A non-breeding plumaged **Caspian Tern**, *Hydroprogne caspia*, was photographed at Orange Valley on 15 November, 2011 (NL, DS *et al.*). It was still present at the high tide roost two days later. The only other recent record of this species was on 24 November, 2005.

At least two pairs of **Scaled Doves**, *Columbina squammata*, were found on a private estate on Monos Island on 1 May, 2011 (ER). Two birds were still present on 29 May (GW, MK). Another pair was photographed at the Pitch Lake on 17 November, 2011 (SP). There are now just four records for Trinidad with previous sightings in 1926 and 1996. However, neither of these sites are regularly visited by birdwatchers and the current data

may not reflect the true status of this species.

An adult male **Blue Ground-Dove**, *Claravis pretiosa*, was photographed and two others seen at Granville on 18 November, 2011 (NL, FM). Whilst this species is undoubtedly still a rare resident, few birders ever visit this site.

A **Scaly-naped Pigeon**, *Patagioenas squamosa*, was seen flying over Little Tobago Island on 4 October, 2011 (BM *et al.*). Since first being found as recently as 2005, all records to date have been from Tobago and Little Tobago. There are now undocumented reports of a small resident population on the island.

A **Dark-billed Cuckoo**, *Coccyzus melacoryphus*, was found on the western side of Nariva Swamp, accessed from Plum Mitan Village on 24 July, 2011 (MK, GW). This is the fifth record in the last 16 years; all records are from July and August.

A **Mottled Owl**, *Ciccaba virgata*, was photographed in an area of deciduous woodland close to Cat's Hill on 31 May, 2011 (KS). On subsequent visits during June and July, perhaps three different birds were heard calling and one seen on two different dates.

Two immature **Cliff Swallows**, *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*, were found feeding amongst a flock of Barn Swallows at Bon Accord sewage lagoons on 2 October, 2011 (BM *et al.*), with one still present on the 28 (MK). This location is proving to be particularly reliable for this species with sightings in six out of the last seven years in March and from late September to December.

A male **Gray Seedeater**, *Sporophila intermedia*, was photographed at Carli Bay on 6 November, 2011 (NL). Its wary nature could indicate a wild bird, however, it is impossible to rule out a possible escapee from captivity.

At least two male **Lesson's Seedeaters**, *Sporophila bouvronides*, were photographed in Cat's Hill forest on 25 May, 2011 (KS). One was still singing until 31 May at least (MK, KS *et al.*). Whilst all *Sporophila* seedeaters are still rare in Trinidad, this is the second year in recent times that this species has been found in forested South Trinidad.

A flock of approximately 10 **Lined Seedeaters**, *Sporophila lineola*, including just one adult male were seen and photographed in dry agricultural fields at South Oropouche on 31 August, 2011 (KS). First found in Trinidad as recently as 2007, all documented sightings have been either from South Oropouche or Nariva Swamp and fall during the period mid-August to early October.

A small flock of six **Yellow-bellied Seedeaters**, *Sporophila nigricollis*, were found on Monos Island on 1 May, 2011 (ER *et al.*), with at least one female still present on 29 May. A pair successfully nested in Lopinot Valley (GW). This is the first documented breeding record for mainland Trinidad in many years.

An adult male **Summer Tanager**, *Piranga rubra*, was photographed along the Blanchisseuse Rd. on 6 February, 2011 (MK, MKe), and on 10 December, 2011 a bird in female or immature plumage was photographed at Carli Bay (KS, DS, NL). One or two individuals are recorded almost annually, however, the true status of this winter visitor may be obscured due to its plumage similarity with the resident Hepatic Tanager.

A belated report of an immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, photographed in St. Mary's Village, South Oropouche on an undocumented date in 2007 (TM). This is the first record of this species in Trinidad away from the Northern Range. More expected, was a female feeding in a *Trema* tree at Asa Wright Nature Centre on 3 December, 2011 (MK, LE *et al.*).

An immature female **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, *Dendroica pensylvanica*, was seen briefly at the entrance to Asa Wright Nature Centre on 16 January, 2011 (MK). This is the fifth record in the last 16 years, with all sightings between 19 December and 28 February.

A flock of at least 30 **Bobolink**, *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, were found feeding on guinea grass at Caroni Rice Project on 11 October, 2011 (MK, DS, GW). Flocks of Bobolink have now been seen on 15 occasions since 2000; eight times at this location. All but one sighting are from 1 October to 28 December.

An adult male **Lesser Goldfinch**, *Carduelis psaltria*, was photographed on 30 June, 2011 on Mt. St. Benedict (MMC). First found in Trinidad in 2005 and seen in just two subsequent years, all documented records come from this one location.

INCONCLUSIVE RECORDS

The following submissions were considered inconclusive: Hook-billed Kite, *Chondrohierax uncinatus*; Double-striped Thick-knee, *Burhinus bistriatus*; Eurasian Collared Dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*; Striped Owl, *Pseudoscops clamator* (Tobago); Cliff Swallow, *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* (Tobago).

SOUTH AMERICAN CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE

For ornithological classification, Trinidad and Tobago are considered part of South America and, consequently, we contribute to the Official South American Checklist compiled and maintained by the South American Classification Committee (SACC). Their criteria for record acceptance of a new species to the region is far stricter than that adopted by the TTRBC. They insist on photographic evidence or a specimen.

Currently, there are seven species, accepted by the TTRBC but not documented elsewhere in South America, where no such photographic evidence has been ar-



chived. The species involved are as follows:

Snow Goose, *Chen caerulescens*, sightings December, 1975 and December, 1984.

Northern Gannet, *Morus bassanus*, seen off north-east Tobago November, 1991 and again in August, 2009.

Common Ringed Plover, *Charadrius hiaticula*, single bird mist-netted in October, 1962.

Spotted Redshank, *Tringa erythropus*, single bird in Tobago February, 1983.

Common Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia*, two different sightings in south-west Tobago July, 1977, and Waller's Field in 1987.

White-eyed Vireo, *Vireo griseus*, single record at Buccoo Marsh, Tobago January, 1998.

Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*, one close to Caroni Swamp from June, 1980 to mid 1981.

If anyone has photographic evidence of any of the above, we would be delighted to hear from you.

NOMENCLATURE CHANGES

Part of the mission statement of the SACC is to create a standard classification, with English names, for the birds of South America. This is subject to constant revision by the proposal system to allow incorporation of new data. As a result, the following nomenclature change was made in 2011:

- * **Masked Cardinal, *Paroaria nigrigenis***, (formerly Red-capped Cardinal). Birds found with extensive black eye-masks and red triangular throat patches have been elevated to species rank.

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Legends to Plate

1. Franklin's Gull, Brickfield, 25 January, 2011. Photo: Dave Smith.
2. Masked Duck, Lowlands Tobago, February, 2011. Photo: Jan Willem Steffelaar.
3. Lesser Scaup, Lowlands Tobago, 15 February, 2011. Photo: Matt Kelly.
4. Scaled Dove, La Brea, 17 November, 2011. Photo: Sanjiv Parasram.
5. Crane Hawk, Carli Bay, 16 November, 2011. Photo: Fayard Mohammed.
6. Upland Sandpiper, Woodland, 31 August, 2011. Photo: Kris Sookdeo.
7. Rufous Crab-Hawk, Icacos, 27 March, 2011. Photo: Dave Smith.
8. American Oystercatcher, Orange Valley, 19 June, 2011. Photo: Nigel Lallsingh.
9. Lesser Goldfinch, Mount St. Benedict, 30 June, 2011. Photo: Miguel MC. ??

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