

Endemics and birds of the Eastern Caribbean

The Lesser Antilles island group straddles the Eastern Caribbean region between the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. In total, we visit nine islands: Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat, Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago. Most islands have at least one endemic bird species with St Lucia holding the largest number of seven. Our travels take us to some truly breathtaking areas in this little-watched area of the world for birds. You can expect to observe many of the Caribbean region's endemic birds plus several which are shared with the larger islands of the Western Caribbean.

Day 1: A morning flight to St John's in Antigua where we have a three-night stay.

Day 2: Today, a short flight to Barbuda, a dry, flat island north of Antigua, which makes up the other half of this two-island country. Our main interest is locating the endemic Barbuda Warbler. Other species we may find include Lesser Antillean endemics – Green-throated Carib and Lesser Antillean Bullfinch. Barbuda is also home to a large colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds, Brown Pelican, Brown Booby, Royal Tern, West Indian Whistling Duck, Black-whiskered Vireo, Golden Warbler (split from Yellow Warbler) and Carib Grackle. Return to Antigua either by air or ferry.

Day 3: This morning we embark on a short flight to Montserrat, an island which was partially destroyed by the Soufriere Hills Volcano which erupted in 1995. Our main interest is the Montserrat Oriole found in the Central Hills Reserve. Other species present include Purple-throated Carib, Brown Trembler, Pearly-eyed Thrasher and the shy Forest Thrush. With a little luck, we may find the uncommon Bridled Quail-dove and Antillean Crested Hummingbirds. More widespread species on Montserrat are Red-billed Tropicbird, Little Blue Heron, Great and Snowy Egrets, American Kestrel, Merlin, Common Ground Dove and Mangrove Cuckoo. Return to Antigua for the night.

Day 4: Antigua has several lagoons and saltpans which we can explore this morning.

Dates

Tuesday November 14th - Tuesday November 28th 2017 (extension to Trinidad December 1st)

Leader: Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 130-150 (180-220 with the extension)

The island holds a good population of White-cheeked Pintail and Caribbean Coot. Wintering shorebirds from the High Arctic include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet and Solitary Sandpipers. Among the resident species, we may find Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Wilson's Plover, Great Blue, Little Blue, Tricoloured and Green Herons and White-crowned Pigeon which reaches the southern end of its range on Antigua. Later in the day, we take a flight south to the forested island of Dominica for a three-night stay.

Days 5-6: Today we start our exploration of Dominica by travelling from Portsmouth to the Northern Forest Reserve on the lower slopes of Morne Diablotin. Dawn is the best time to encounter the uncommon, endemic Red-necked Parrot from a viewpoint. A little more time and luck is required to locate the extremely rare Imperial Parrot, probably the hardest of the Lesser Antilles endemics to see. The reserve has extensive trail systems bordered by tree ferns and huge trees. Species we expect to find include Lesser Antillean Swift, Blue-headed Hummingbird,



Trinidad Motmot Photo: Barry Lancaster

Lesser Antillean Peewee, Lesser Antillean Flycatcher and Dominica House Wren. As we wander around the trails, sightings of Caribbean Elaenia, Scaly-breasted Thrasher, Plumbeous Warbler, Red-legged Thrush and Antillean Euphonia should be possible. Lower down in the mango stands, we search for the uncommon Lesser Antillean Saltator and Scaly-naped Pigeon. Returning to Portsmouth, we should see more widespread species – Broad-winged Hawk, Ruddy Quail-dove and the impressive Belted and Ringed Kingfishers. The coast road also offers us Roseate Tern, Cliff Swallow, Caribbean Martin and Tropical Mockingbird. On the morning of Day 6, we have another visit to the Northern Forest

Reserve in case we have missed anything on the previous morning. In the afternoon we visit Portsmouth on the coast road where we may find Grey and Semipalmated Plovers, Spotted Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Scaly-breasted Munia. Stands of scrub may hold wintering American Redstart.

Day 7: Depending on flight times, we explore another area on Dominica before making the short flight to St Lucia and a two-night stay.

Days 8-9: St Lucia is an island dominated by lofty peaks rising from the Caribbean Sea. The island also has seven endemic birds which we hope to find. Our main interest is the Edmund Forest Reserve holding St Lucia Parrot, St Lucia Warbler, St Lucia Black Finch and St Lucia Oriole. On Day 9 we visit the dry north-eastern area of St Lucia for the localised and rare St Lucia Wren. We also have further opportunities for St Lucia Peewee, White-breasted Thrasher and Bridled Quail-dove. Other species we may see include Purple-throated and Green-throated Caribs, Grey Tumbler, Bare-eyed Thrush and Black-whiskered Vireo. On the afternoon of Day 9, we make the short flight across to the island of St Vincent where we stay for two nights.

Day 10: St Vincent is a mountainous island with extensive stands of forest. Our main interest is in locating the three endemic birds - St Vincent Parrot, St Vincent Wren and the beautiful Whistling Warbler. Other species we may find include Common Black Hawk, Cocoa Thrush, Grenada Flycatcher, Lesser Antillean Tanager and Eared Dove.

Days 11-12: This morning we fly to Grenada, the most southerly of the Lesser Antilles. Our target species here is the highly endangered Grenada Dove. We concentrate our search in the southwest of the island at Mount Hartman Estate. Other species include Rufous-breasted Hermit, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Yellow-bellied Seedeater and Shiny Cowbird.

Day 13: Today we fly to Tobago, the southernmost island of the Lesser Antilles chain,



Lesser Antillean Bullfinch *Photo: Barry Lancaster*

for a three-night stay. On arrival we head to southwestern Tobago visiting Hilton and Bon Accord, and the Grafton Caledonia Bird Sanctuary. We should observe Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, Smooth-billed Ani, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Tropical and Grey Kingbirds, Caribbean Martin, Bare-eyed Thrush, Tropical Mockingbird, Scrub Greenlet, Bananaquit, Blue-grey Tanager, Black-faced Grassquit, Carib Grackle, and Crested Oropendola. At the Grafton Caledonia Bird Sanctuary we may find Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Blue-crowned Motmot, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Fuscous Flycatcher, Blue-backed Manakin, and Scrub Greenlet.

Day 14: We start the day by visiting the Gilpin Trace high in the central range of Tobago. Montane forest birds are the focus of our visit and include White-tailed Sabrewing, Blue-backed Manakin, Yellow-legged Thrush, Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Collared Trogon, Red-crowned Woodpecker and White-fringed Antwren. Later in the day, we visit The Tobago Main Ridge Forest Reserve

where the cool montane forests hold Great Black Hawk, Orange-winged Parrot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Venezuelan Flycatcher and Rufous-breasted Hermit.

Day 15: Early morning flight to Trinidad and onward connections to the UK or transfer to the Asa Wright Centre situated high in the mountains of Trinidad for a three-night stay.

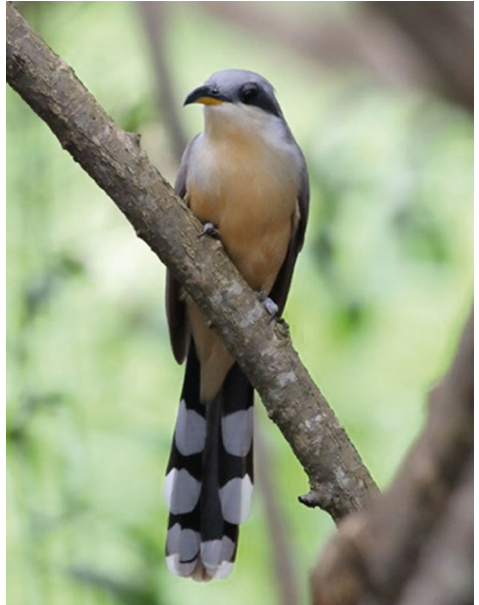
Extension: We make our way into the mountains of northern Trinidad and our base at the Asa Wright Centre. The centre is a remarkable place with its hummingbird feeders and fruit-laden bird tables viewable from the balcony of the old house. On arrival we should see Green and Little Hermits, Black-throated Mango, Tufted Coquette, White-chested Emerald and Long-billed Starthroat attending the hummingbird feeders. In the afternoon, we take a leisurely walk around the extensive grounds where interesting species include Green and Purple Honeycreepers, Silver-beaked and White-lined Tanagers, Blue-headed Parrot, Squirrel Cuckoo, Channel-billed Toucan, Golden

Olive, Chestnut, Lineated and Red-rumped Woodpeckers, Great Antshrike, Streaked and Ochre-bellied Flycatchers, White-necked Thrush, White-bearded and Golden-headed Manakins. High in the canopy, we may find the bizarre Bearded Bellbird giving its rather odd calls. Raptors also feature and may include the beautiful White Hawk, Grey-headed Kite and Ornate Hawk-Eagle.

Day 16: This morning we explore the road towards the coastal village of Blanchisseuse. At higher elevations, we expect to find different species which may include Collared Trogon, Black-faced Antthrush, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Tropical Parula, Golden-crowned Warbler, Blue Dacnis and Bay-headed and Speckled Tanagers. Return to the centre for lunch, followed by an afternoon and evening excursion into Trinidad's lowlands. Small ponds often attract Least Grebe, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Pied Water-Tyrant, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant and Yellow-hooded Blackbird. A highlight of our stay is a boat trip into the Caroni Swamp with its spectacular roost of Scarlet Ibis. Other species of the mangroves include Common Potoo, Yellow Oriole, Bicoloured Conebill and Red-capped Cardinal plus wintering waders from the High Arctic.

Day 17: An early start today as we visit a remote area of the island for the rare and beautiful Trinidad Piping Guan. Other species we may encounter are Lilac-tailed Parrotlet, White-flanked Antwren, Silvered and White-bellied Antbirds, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Black-tailed Tytyra, Long-billed Gnatwren, Rufous-browed Peppershrike and Yellow-rumped Cacique. Later in the day, we visit the Nariva Swamp in eastern Trinidad for roosting Red-bellied Macaw, Orange-winged and Yellow-crowned Parrots.

Day 18: Depending on flight times (usually in the evening), we birdwatch around the centre and visit a cave for the extraordinary Oilbird. Transfer to the airport for onward connections to the UK with arrival on the following morning.



Mangrove Cuckoo Photo: Neil Norvock

Prices

Ground Price: £4,995
 Single room: £400
 Deposit: £500
 *Air Fare: £2,000
 Extension: £1,200
 Single room: £100

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature and any relevant fuel surcharges. All airport departure taxes from each island are payable locally.

Please note: Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago have forest trails which may be steep and slippery after rain. Stout footwear is recommended.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*