

Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Birds Status and Distribution Committee, Records Submitted during 2024

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The Trinidad and Tobago Birds Status and Distribution Committee has assessed all records submitted during 2024. In all 104 records were assessed, representing 55 species. Two species were found in the country for the first time, which brings the current total of species on the National Official List to 498. Two additional species were found in Tobago for the first time. Highlights included Trinidad's first ever Willow Flycatcher and Southern Martins, Tobago's first Slender-billed Kite and Audouin's Gull and an unprecedented and diverse number of wintering wildfowl, several overstaying into the summer months.

Of the submissions assessed, in only two cases did we find the identification inconclusive.

The Committee comprises the following members: Martyn Kenefick (Secretary), Faraaz Abdool, Geoffrey Gomes, Nigel Lallsingh, Bill Murphy, Kris Sookdeo and Graham White. There are instances where we have benefited from supporting international expert knowledge to assist us with certain identification issues. We wish to acknowledge with thanks the valuable assistance provided by Mario Cohn-Haft and Alex Luna.

Archived records including photographic submissions number 2,062 at the end of 2024. This report is the twenty-second report of this committee. All reports were published in Living World and are available at <https://ttfnc.org/livingworld/index.php/lwj/issue/archive>. The list of species considered by the TTBSDC, 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 website at <http://ttbsdc.ttfnc.org>. We urge finders to document and report their sightings to us.

All documented sightings summarized below occurred in 2024 unless otherwise stated.

There are several authoritative bodies which govern the (both scientific and common) nomenclature of bird species. TTBSDC is historically aligned to the South American Classification Committee (SACC) which is affiliated to the International Ornithological Congress. However we recognise the ever increasing support given by the T&T birding community to the citizen science project eBird which follows the Clements Checklist of Birds of the World. In the vast majority of cases, there is uniformity between the two bodies however differences do occasionally occur. Cornell and most other organisations are embracing a new initiative named AviList. However our best source of information regarding nomenclature remains with

SACC as it is specific to our region and because they share pending recommendations and decisions online. As such, nomenclature in the report follows that used by the SACC as of September 2025 (Rensen *et al.* 2025).

Records accepted

A male **Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata* was found on 21 January on a flooded field within Caroni Rice Project before relocating to the lagoon by the flyover (RJ). It was regularly seen until 19 February. It is likely that the male seen at Sumaria Trace on 15 June was the same individual. There have now been seven birds found in the last nine years, all October-February.

A minimum of five **American Wigeon** *Mareca americana* were present in wetlands either side of the Solomon-Hochoy highway with the four recorded on 28 December 2023 by the Caroni flyover and five found along Sumaria Trace on 8 January (RL, MK, NL). At least one female remained until 28 January. In Tobago, a male was photographed on Bon Accord sewage ponds on 22 November (PW), moving to Centre Street ponds and present until 1 December at least. Finally, two immature/females were found by the Caroni flyover on 30 November (JF, NL). Whilst a "bumper year" for this species, it remains a rare southbound migrant to T&T only being recorded in four of the last ten years.

A drake and five immature/female plumaged **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* were found on Caroni flyover lagoon on 25 January (DG); increasing to a total of eight birds on 31 January (Fig.1.). This represents by far the largest ever total of this rare wintering duck from continental North America which has only ever been documented on five previous occasions.



Fig. 1. Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Caroni Rice Project, January 2024. Photo Davis Gunn.

It is difficult to definitively report the number of **Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca* present at Centre Street ponds, Tobago during 2024. The adult male first found on 27 December 2023 remained at least until 9 May. A female photographed on 3 January was present until 9 May (RJ, MKe) and may well be the individual intermittently reported for the remainder of the year. Finally a male was photographed on 14 November (RJ, MKe) and remained until 27 November at least (Fig. 2). Whilst there has been an obvious upsurge of sightings of this migrant duck from continental North America in the last two years, previously there have been only four documented records this century, all from Tobago.

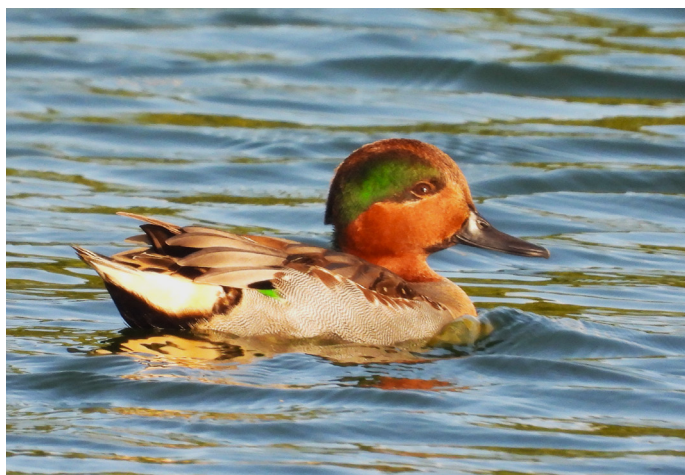


Fig. 2 Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca*, Centre Street ponds, November 2024. Photo Matt Kelly.

A female **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* was found at Centre Street ponds, Tobago on 20 November (MKe, PW) where it remained until the years' end, often in close association with a male Lesser Scaup. A male was photographed on Caroni flyover lagoon on 26 December (LJ, NL). This is the first documented record for Trinidad since 1967. There have now been 13 sightings of this "winter duck" in the last 11 years

The flock of up to 10 **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* first found on 2 December 2023 at Centre Street ponds, Tobago, remained well into the new year with three birds still being reported up to 14 March. Meanwhile in Trinidad an immature male was found on Caroni Rice Project on 6 January (MK, NL). It subsequently moved a short distance to the flyover lagoon and was joined by another male and two females, with one male remaining until 19 February. During the second winter period, two females were photographed on Centre Street ponds, Tobago on 20 November (ZA, MKe) and remained until the end of the year. Back on the Caroni flyover lagoon, three males and three females were photographed on 23 November (NL) with one male remaining until the years' end,

A **Dark-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus melacoryphus* was photographed inside Orange Grove farmland on 3 July (WL). This wanderer from mainland South America has been found annually in Trinidad for the last eight years with all but one sighting being during the period July-October.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* is a scarce southbound migrant through T&T. Single birds were found at Bon Accord, Tobago on 20 October (MST) and Waterloo, 26 October (Bd'A, ES) (Fig.3.) This latter sighting constitutes the third year in succession that a bird has been found at this precise locality and may well involve the same individual. All but one of the sightings in the last four years have occurred during October-November.



Fig. 3 Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, Waterloo, October 2024. Photo Vishal Rangsammy.

Immature male **Amethyst Woodstars** *Calliphlox amethystine* were photographed in a garden at Temple Village on 17 March, remaining until the 23rd at least (CR, JB) (Fig. 4.) and at Upper Gomez Trace, Brasso Seco on 9 May (AM). The March sighting is the joint earliest record for this wanderer from mainland South America; most reports are between April and June. These represent the sixteenth and seventeenth documented sightings since the species was first discovered in Trinidad in 2015.

An **American Coot** *Fulica americana* of the white-shielded conspecific form *caribaea* formerly known as Caribbean Coot was photographed at Bon Accord sewage ponds on 5 July (RJ, PW). It remained until the years' end irregularly commuting to/from Centre Street ponds. Of the seven documented sightings in the last 18 years, this is the only white-shielded form to be found in T&T.

A **Double-striped Thick-knee** *Hesperoburhinus bistratus* was found on Caroni Rice Project on 8 August (MK). All of the 19 records of this wanderer from mainland South America in the last nine years have occurred between 6 July and 7 September.



Fig. 4 Amethyst Woodstar *Calliphlox amethystina*, Temple village, March 2024. Photo Josh Bajnath

A **Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus* was photographed at Bon Accord sewage ponds on 13 October (PW). Whilst a commonly seen species in Trinidad, this is just the fifth documented sighting for our sister isle in the last 27 years.

A **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferous* was photographed beside the drain close to Bon Accord sewage ponds, Tobago on 17 November (RJ, PW) and two more on Caroni Rice Project on 7 December (NL, MK). Always a late southbound migrant, with only 7 documented records in the last 24 years, this species is a very rare shorebird to T&T.

A **Hudsonian Godwit** *Limosa haemastica* was found at Centre Street ponds, Tobago on 14 October 2024 (PW). This migrant shorebird is an uncommon passage migrant through Trinidad, and this is just the sixth documented record for Tobago in more than 30 years.

An alternate plumaged **Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* was photographed at Centre Street ponds, Tobago on 28 April 2023 (RL). This species is abundant throughout Eurasia and becoming increasingly found on the Atlantic coast of North America. There have been eight documented sightings in T&T in the last 10 years.

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* is a rare but annual visitor to the gull roosts on the western mudflats of Trinidad.

A first-winter plumaged bird was photographed at Waterloo on 8 January (NL) and both immature and adult birds were found at the same site on 26 December (NL). Whilst most winter off of the west coast of South America, this species has been found in Trinidad in all but two of the last 14 years. There is just one record from Tobago.

An **Audouin's Gull** *Ichthyaelus audouinii* in full alternate plumage was photographed on the shore at Charlotteville, Tobago on 13 March (ZF, MKe) (Fig. 5.). This is the first documented sighting for Tobago and the third for the country. This record further illustrates the range expansion of this oceanic species with anecdotal sightings in Barbados and on the northern coast of mainland South America.



Fig. 5 Audouin's Gull *Ichthyaelus audouinii*, Charlotteville, March 2024. Photo Matt Kelly.

A first-summer plumaged **Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* was photographed flying amongst the gull roost at Orange Valley on 1 June 2013 (NL). At the time, this was just the fourth ever sighting in Trinidad. There has only been one subsequent record.

A second-summer plumaged **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was photographed along Pigeon Point beach, Tobago on 5 May (AJ). It remained for the remainder of the year, wandering around south-west Tobago. A first-winter plumaged bird remained faithful to the Castara beachfront, from 11 November (DB) when first found, until the years' end.

A **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps*, first found at La Vega on 23 December 2023 (MK, GW) remained faithful to the same lake all year. On 28 December 2023, at least eight birds were photographed on the Caroni flyover lagoon

with five still present on 17 January (RJ, NL)(Fig. 5.). This species is a scarce breeding resident of inland freshwater lakes in Trinidad and a winter visitor to Tobago.



Fig. 5. Pied-billed Grebes *Podilymbus podiceps*, Caroni Rice Project, January 2024. Photo Rodney Jagai.

A **Cape Verde Shearwater** *Calonectris edwardsii* was photographed and carefully studied swimming close to the shoreline at Manzanilla beach on 8 December (EC, JC). This is only the second documented sighting of this extremely rare oceanic wanderer to T&T waters. It is endemic to the Cape Verde archipelago of Macaronesia in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of West Africa. Both this and the previous sighting off of Goat Island, Tobago in October 2019 involved approachable and likely exhausted individuals which may not have survived for long.

The **Reddish Egret** *Egretta rufescens* first found at Otaheite in November 2023 remained until 16 April at least (many obs).

An adult **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* was carefully studied beside a pond inside Kernaham village, Nariva on 31 December 2023 (MK, EH). Whilst extremely common in Tobago and all islands to the north, this is only the third documented sighting for Trinidad this century.

A **Slender-billed Kite** *Helicolestes hamatus* was photographed circling high over Bon Accord, Tobago on 12 April (FA, BCT *et al.*). This is the first documented record for Tobago and only the second ever for the country of this wandering raptor from mainland South America.

A **Plumbeous Kite** *Ictinia plumbea* was seen gliding over Speyside, Tobago on 15 September (NH). This is a breeding visitor to Trinidad from mainland South America. However there have been five sightings in the last seven years from Tobago all outside of the known breeding season.

A sub-adult **White-tailed Hawk** *Geranoaetus albicaudatus* was found perched in trees alongside Cascadoux Trace on 28 November (MK, DR)(Fig. 6.). Of the 13 documented

sightings in the last 24 years, ten have occurred between October-February.



Fig. 6. White-tailed Hawk *Geranoaetus albicaudatus*, Cascadoux Trace, November 2024. Photo Anindya Sen.

A **Zone-tailed Hawk** *Buteo albonotatus* was photographed soaring past Englishman's Bay, Tobago on 16 November (MKe). This is just the third documented sighting from Tobago, presumably involving a wanderer from Trinidad.

A **Burrowing Owl** *Athene cunicularia* was photographed at an undisclosed location on 27 March (observer details withheld). It had apparently been present for several weeks. This is the third documented record for Trinidad.

A **Ringed Kingfisher** *Megaceryle torquata* was photographed at Bon Accord sewage ponds, Tobago on 14 December (PW). It remained until the years end commuting between Bon Accord and Centre Street ponds. This is just the third documented sighting for Tobago.

A **Willow Flycatcher** *Empidonax traillii* was carefully studied and photographed in fields to the south of Waterloo Estate on 3 March (NL) (Fig. 7.). It remained in the area until at least 27 April, during which time it moulted. This is the first documented sighting in T&T of this migrant warbler from continental North America. *Empidonax* flycatchers are notoriously difficult to identify and fortunately this individual was regularly calling, enabling observers to eliminate the visually similar Alder Flycatcher *E. alnorum*.

The **Eastern Wood-Pewee** *Contopus virens* photographed in October 2023 off of Tortuga Shortcut Road remained until 10 March at least (MH, AS). What was presumably the same individual reappeared in the same stand of trees



Fig. 7. Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*, Waterloo Estate, March 2024. Photo Nigel Lallsingh..

on 19 October (NL) and remained until 3 November at least. A second bird was photographed about 1 km further east on 30 October (NL). With observers gaining a better understanding of both the plumage and vocal differences from our resident Tropical Pewee *C. bogotensis*, we may well gain a better understanding of the wintering grounds of this migrant flycatcher from continental North America.

Historically **Black-whiskered Vireo** *Vireo altiloquus* has been considered a migrant species found in Trinidad during winter months. A single bird photographed at Bajnath Estate on 3 February (JB, JF) reinforced this belief. However another was photographed on the Chaguaramas peninsula on 25 May (Bd'A). This species is resident on many of the Lesser Antillean islands, yet it's status in T&T has become questionable. It has been recorded almost annually in the last 15 years in almost every month, however, with four documented sightings during potential breeding season months, this may indicate a genuine southward distribution trend and perhaps breeding may be proven in the upcoming years.

At least five **Southern Martin** *Progne elegans*, including one adult male, were found close to the Waterloo Moslem cemetery on 13 July, with two present until 15 September at least (NL)(Fig. 8.). This is the first documented sighting of this austral wanderer to T&T. The identification of *Progne* swallows is based on very subtle plumage and structural differences.

A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* was carefully studied along the entrance road to Asa Wright Nature Centre on 7 November (DB). This is just the second documented



Fig. 8. Southern Martin *Progne elegans*, Waterloo estate, September 2024. Photo Nigel Lallsingh

sighting of this migrant thrush in the last 30 years. This species breeds in continental North America and winters throughout the northern half of South America.

October is the usual month for finding **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* in T&T. Right on cue, two birds were found feeding on tall grasses inside Caroni Rice Project on 16 October (NL) and three days later one was photographed beside Centre Street ponds, Tobago (PW). Of the 35 documented sightings this century, only seven have come from Tobago.

A female **Black-and-White Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* was found along the Blanchisseuse Road on 30 December 2023 (EH). This species is a rare winter visitor with nine sightings in the last ten years, all from mid September to late January.

A **Tennessee Warbler** *Leiothlypis peregrine* appeared at the bench feeders at Asa Wright Nature Centre on 2 November (CW). This is most unusual behaviour at this well-watched site yet this is the second year running that this has occurred. This suggests that the same individual was involved. The first record for Trinidad was as recent as 2014, but there have now been 10 documented sightings of this rare southbound migrant which winters in Central and north-western South America.

An adult male **Northern Parula** *Setophaga americana* was photographed at Corbin's Local Wildlife, Tobago on 9 July (TM)(Fig. 9). This is just the third documented sighting this century of this New World warbler but also an exceptional date. All other sightings have been December-February.



Fig. 9. Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*, Corbin Wildlife Park, July 2024. Photo Tarran Maharaj.

A **Bay-breasted Warbler** *Setophaga castanea* was photographed on 9 January along the entrance road to Caroni Swamp (JF) (Fig. 10.), and was still present the following day. Another was found at Las Lapas on 13 January (JF). Both were bright basic plumaged birds. An extremely dull immature female was found at Hacienda Jacana on 17 March (MK, MM). This brings the total number of birds seen to 26 in the last 11 years with sighting ranging from 24 November to 30 March.



Fig. 10. Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*, Caroni Swamp, January 2024. Photo Jerome Foster.

An immature (or possibly worn adult female) plumaged **Blackburnian Warbler** *Setophaga fusca* was photographed at Las Lapas on 16 October (JF) (Fig. 11.). Whilst still a rare passage migrant, there have now been 11 documented sightings in the last nine years, all between 16 October and 3 April.

An alternate-plumaged **Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Setophaga pensylvanica* was photographed in woodland near Talparo on 10 March (JF) (Fig. 12.). There have been 12 documented sightings this century of this migrant from continental North America, all between late December and early April.

A female **Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* was found



Fig. 11. Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*, Las Lapas, October 2024. Photo Jerome Foster.

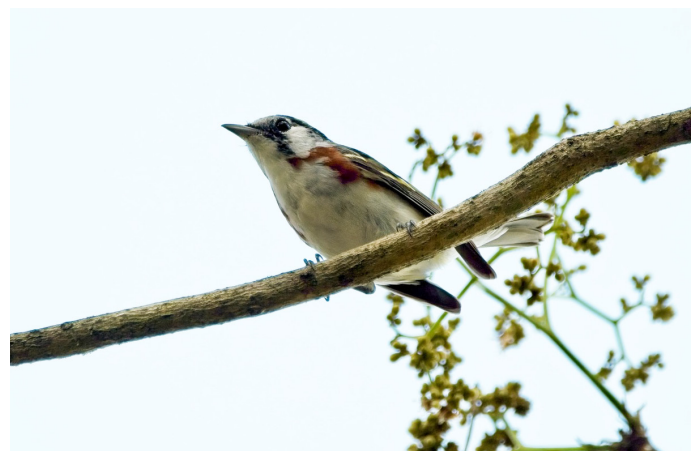


Fig. 12. Chestnut-sided Warbler *Setophaga pensylvanica*, Talparo, March 2024. Photo Jerome Foster.

along the Blanchisseuse Road on 24 January (JW). Close by a male was photographed on 28 January (KM, CR). On 5 November, another male was photographed along the Tortuga shortcut Road (NL). This species is a scarce but annual winter visitor. There have been 33 documented sightings in the last 10 years, all from Trinidad with dates ranging from 5 November to 18 April.

An alternate plumaged male **Scarlet Tanager** *Piranga olivacea* was photographed close to the balcony at Asa Wright Nature Centre on 24 April (RDU). This is an extremely uncommon passage migrant through T&T with about one record per year.

Escaped cage and aviary species

We are aware of a reintroduction project involving Muscovy Ducks *Cairina moschata* from Point a Pierre Wildfowl Trust. Sightings of this species from the south-west peninsula of Trinidad may involve birds from this source.

Ringed Turtle-Doves *Streptopelia risoria* have been seen perched on utility wires in Valsayn; Blue-and-yellow Macaws

Ara ararauna are frequently seen around the Queens Park Savanna, Port of Spain; Festive Parrots *Amazona festiva* were seen in Port of Spain and Champs Fleurs; Village Weavers *Ploceus cucullatus* are frequently found inside Caroni Rice Project; A Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* was seen in Palmiste; and finally a Horned Screamer *Anhima cornuta* and Maguari Stork *Ciconia maguari* were photographed near Moruga, both of which appeared to be domesticated.

The provenance of most seedeater and seed-finch species continues to be a problem. The Committee has taken a decision that, unless there is supporting evidence to the contrary, all sightings will be considered under this category and that assessment will be based on identification alone.

Additional records

Acceptable records were also received or submitted to Ebird for a further 39 sightings of the following species whose status has been established but whose distribution continues to be monitored by the Committee. Trinidad Piping-Guan *Pipile pipile*, Scaled Dove *Columbina squammata*, Rufescent Tiger-Heron *Tigrisoma lineatum*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*, Black Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus tyrannus*, Crane Hawk *Geranospiza caerulescens*, Rufous Crab Hawk *Buteogallus aequinoctialis*, Great Black Hawk *Buteogallus urubitinga*, Crested Caracara *Caracara plancus*, Aplomado Falcon *Falco femoralis*, Small-billed Elaenia *Elaenia parvirostris*, Variegated Flycatcher *Empidonomus varius* and Yellow-bellied Seedeater *Sporophila nigricollis*.

Inconclusive records

One submission each of Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis* and Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* were considered inconclusive.

Nomenclature changes

Barn Owls in the New World are now considered a separate species, known as American Barn-Owl *Tyto furcata*; the common name for Yellow-crowned Parrot *Amazona ochrocephala* has been changed to Yellow-crowned Amazon;

the common name for Orange-winged Parrot *Amazona amazonica* has been changed to Orange-winged Amazon and the common and scientific name for House Wren *Troglodytes aedon* has been changed to Southern House Wren *Troglodytes musculus*.

Additions to the South American Classification Committee List of Species

The sightings of a Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* from Trinidad have been accepted by SACC as “firsts” for the Region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Records and contributions were received from the following: Faraaz Abdool, Brian d’Abreau, Zak Ali, Josh Bajnath, Fraser Bell, Gary Bletch, Dave Bowes, Ernesto Carman, Jared Clarke, Cyril Coomansingh, Jan Cubilla (JC), Rainer Deo, Randell Duberry (RDu), Jerome Foster, Kevin Foster, Zolani Frank, Newton George, Rishi Goordial, Davis Gunn, Nigel Hacking, Curtis Higgins, David Huggins, Mark Hulme, Eric Hynes, Avinash Jackree, Benny Jacobs-Schwartz, Rodney Jagai, Lawrence James, Martyn Kenefick, Matt Kelly (MKe), Richard Lakhan, Nigel Lallsingh, Will Laurie, Colin McGregor, Tarran Maharaj, Alexis Marianes, Michael Marsden, Kathleen Matthews, Lester Nanon, Xavier Ragbir, Averil Ramchand, Barry Ramdass, Charan Ramdass, Dave Ramlal, Mahase Ramlal, Sanjay Ramsaroop, Sham Sahadeo, Alex Sansom, Elizabeth Seebaren, Merryl See Tai, James Smith, Brodie Cass Talbott, Caleb Walker, Janet Wenkstern, Graham White, Phill Williams, Brandon Woo.

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