



# Birding in Trinidad

UNDISCOVERED GEM  
OF THE CARIBBEAN



APRIL 23 - 29, 2006



Dear member,

This ABA-endorsed birding adventure, designed and operated by Siemer & Hand Travel, explores the Caribbean island of Trinidad, a destination that offers an astonishing variety of landscapes, habitats, and easily observable bird and wildlife species. The island's exceptional varieties of bird species, whose ranges are restricted to relatively small areas, make it a rewarding destination for avid birders. Leading this special program will be birding guide Josiah Clark, an experienced birder/naturalist who has worked on many of the world's tropical islands as well as in several Latin American countries.

The most southerly of the Caribbean islands comprising the West Indies, Trinidad was once connected to South America. Its continental origin and proximity to the mainland, combined with its array of habitats, have resulted in an unusually diverse mixture of flora and fauna, including more than 430 bird species.

Spend six nights at Trinidad's Asa Wright Nature Centre, a renowned birding lodge and leader in eco-tourism, where birds can be seen with ease and comfort. Tucked in a verdant valley at 1,200 feet in the island's Northern Range, the centre is located on a former cocoa/coffee/citrus plantation reclaimed by forest and surrounded by impressive tropical rain forest. From this convenient base, each day we explore the surrounding swamps, sea, fresh-water and saltwater marshes, lowland and montane rain forest, and savannas to encounter a wide array of bird species. Highlights of the program include searching for the endemic Piping Guan in the remote Toco region, exploring the inlets of the Caroni Swamp to observe flocks of Scarlet Ibis, Trinidad's national bird, returning to their evening roosts, and observing the nocturnal Oilbird, the island's strangest species.

I hope you can join other ABA members for this unique opportunity.

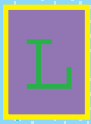
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Maynard".

Bill Maynard  
Field Programs Manager



Iguana



ying just seven miles off Venezuela's coast, **Trinidad** encompasses the species and biodiversity of South America—430

species of birds, 97 mammals, 55 reptiles, 25 amphibians, and 617 butterflies—all crammed onto a landmass the size of Delaware. No other Caribbean island, including Tobago, can match Trinidad's species richness.



A former cocoa and coffee plantation, Trinidad's **Asa Wright Nature Centre** was turned into a nature reserve in 1967. Nestled in an avian-rich verdant valley in the Northern Range, an extension of the Andean cordillera, the centre attracts naturalists from around the world and features a research



Top: Purple Honeycreeper  
Below: Golden-headed Manikin (photo by Tom Merigan)

station and a network of hiking trails. A wide variety of bird species inhabit the area, including Blue-crowned Motmots, Chestnut Woodpeckers, Palm Tanagers, Channel-billed Toucans, Blue-headed Parrots, and several species of hummingbirds and raptors. A special attraction at the centre is a breeding colony of the

Oilbird, the only nocturnal fruit-eating avian species in the world that uses sonar to find their way through the forest and into caves. Other creatures that can be observed at the center include more than 20 species of bats that have been recorded in the Arima Valley, as well as agouti, Paca and Nine-banded Armadillos, iguanas and lizards.

Excursions to the island's birding hotspots include the Nariva Swamp to see flocks of Red-bellied Macaws and to the Caroni Swamp, where hundreds of Scarlet Ibis (the national bird of Trinidad and Tobago) fly home to roost, making a vibrant red blanket of the trees. In the sparsely populated Toco region at the island's northeast tip, we

search for the endemic and highly endangered Piping Guan, or "pawi." Our program takes place during the nesting season of the giant Leatherback Sea Turtles, and we enjoy a nighttime excursion to the coast to observe these giant turtles coming ashore to lay their eggs—an enthralling experience.

## BIRDING LEADER

**Josiah Clark** grew up in San Francisco and has been studying the Bay Area's birds and nature since childhood. He has a degree in Environmental Studies from the University of California at Santa Cruz and is the author of *Birds of the Presidio* and several articles for ABA's *Winging It*. Over the years, Josiah has lived in remote parts of Venezuela and Ecuador where he worked as a birding guide, and has birded in nine Latin American countries, with sightings of more than 1500 species there. Highly interested in island habitats, Josiah has worked in the Santa Cruz Islands, the Galapagos and the Farallone Islands. When at home in the Bay Area, he is a Consulting Ecologist and specializes in creating and improving habitat for wildlife in the urban landscape. In addition to South America, Josiah has led trips to Mexico, Big Bend, Texas, and in 2003 and 2004, Panama-Costa Rica for ABA. He looks forward to birding once again with ABA members next spring.

## USA / TRINIDAD Sunday, April 23

Depart the USA for Port of Spain, Trinidad. Upon arrival, travel to the Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge, a 200-acre wildlife sanctuary in Trinidad's Northern Range. *SIX NIGHTS, ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE LODGE*

## ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE Monday, April 24

Awake this morning to the raucous noise of the Crested Oropendola and a host of exotic sounds coming from the surrounding tropical rainforest. After breakfast, join a guided tour on trails that traverse this rich and diverse sanctuary observing species including Violaceous Trogon, White Hawk, Common Potoo, White-necked Jacobin, Blue-chinned Sapphire, Channel-billed Toucan, Chestnut Woodpecker and Tufted Coquette. The afternoon is at leisure and you may want to look for flycatchers, honeycreepers and tanagers from the lodge's verandah. Tonight, we depart for a visit to the nesting beaches of the spectacular Leatherback Sea Turtle. Conditions permitting, these incredible creatures walk from the ocean up onto the beach where they dig nest sites and lay their eggs before returning to the ocean.

## BLANCHISSEUSE Tuesday, April 25

Depart for a full-day excursion over the Northern Range to the seaside village of Blanchisseuse. En route we see an abundance of birds including Swallow-tailed Kite, Common Black Hawk, Magnificent Frigatebird, Little Tinamou, Plumbeous Kite, Blue-headed Parrot, Bat Falcon, White-tailed and Collared Trogon, Streaked Xenops, and Rufous-tailed Jacamar. We also observe leaf-cutter and army ants, orchids and other tropical flora. We have lunch along a beautiful Caribbean beach and then explore a host of tide pool organisms.

## TOCO VALLEY & GRANDE RIVIERE Wednesday, April 26

Rise very early this morning and travel to the scenic Toco Valley and village of Grande Riviere, located on the northeastern side of the island. Here we search for the endemic and endangered Piping Guan, once widespread on the island, and numbering only 200 today. As an added bonus, the rainforest within which we search for the Piping Guan is pristine and offers superb birding.

## ARIPO SAVANNAH & NARIVA SWAMP Thursday, April 27

Our first stop today is the lowland Aripo Savannah en route to the eastern coast and Nariva Swamp, the island's largest freshwater herbaceous swamp. In this area of extremely acidic soil with poor drainage, we search for new species including Orange-winged Parrot and Squirrel Cuckoo. Continue to Nariva Swamp, where islands of Moriche Palm line its banks. During our journey we hope to see species such as Savannah Hawk, Red-breasted Blackbird, Southern Lapwing, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, and Green-rumped Parrotlet. At the marsh we look for Pinneated Bittern, Pearl Kite, Wattled Jacana, Blue and Yellow Macaw, and Crimson-crested Woodpecker. We may also glimpse Red Howler and Capuchin monkeys and Giant Anaconda in the forest. At dusk, we wait to see flocks of Red-bellied Macaws returning to their nighttime roosts.



A weevil on an orchid



A Blue-crowned Motmot feeds at the Asa Wright Centre  
(Photo by Tom Merigan)



Giant Tree Frog



## CARONI SWAMP Friday, April 28

This morning hike on the Asa Wright grounds to Dunstan Cave, a beautiful riparian grotto, to view a breeding colony of the fascinating nocturnal Oilbird. After lunch depart for Caroni Swamp, a very specialized mangrove forest, where we travel by boat through a maze of brackish channels and search for Neotropical Cormorant, Anhinga, Striated Heron, White-cheeked Pintail, Large-billed Tern, Pied Water-tyrant, Bi-colored Conebill, and Red-capped Cardinal. During our excursion we may also see the Cook's Tree Boa, Spectacled Caiman, and Silky Anteater. At day's end we observe the mangrove islands filled with Snowy Egrets and Little Blue Herons. Then we watch the flight of the spectacular Scarlet Ibis as they arrive in small groups from their feeding grounds, gliding gracefully to roost until hundreds of them stand out like brilliant flowers against a dark green background.

## TRINIDAD / USA Saturday, April 29

After an early breakfast, proceed to the airport for flights to the USA.

## ACCOMMODATION

The Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge is a beautiful 24-room lodge and wildlife sanctuary located in the midst of a lush rain forest in northern Trinidad. Formerly the estate house of the former plantation, the centre's main lodge is a gathering place for guests throughout the day and evening, and the lodge's verandah offers up-close viewing of an incredible variety of birds that live in the surrounding rainforest. Guests also enjoy high tea in the afternoon and complimentary rum cocktails in the evening as the sun sets over the Arima Valley. Guest accommodations are comfortable twin-bedded rooms, each with a private bath. The centre has a natural grotto on a free-running rainforest stream, providing a relaxing escape from the tropical heat. Delicious meals reflect the diversity of the local cuisine, which is a mix of West Indian, Creole, Oriental, Indian, and European dishes, and served family-style in the centre's dining area.



Asa Wright Centre

**LAND PROGRAM COST:** .....\$2,895  
Per person, double occupancy

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:** .....\$325  
Subject to availability

**SAMPLE AIRFARE FROM MIAMI:** ..... \$ 6 2 5

Airfare quote as of July 2005 and subject to change. Siemer & Hand Travel is available to assist with roundtrip flight reservations to Miami from your home city. A \$45 per person service fee will be applied for all airline tickets.

**BRING A FRIEND AND SAVE**

Because a memorable trip can be even more special when shared with friends, we are pleased to offer a savings of \$150 per person to you and to any of your friends who join you on this trip, even if they register at a later date. (Please note that friends must reside at different addresses.)

**THIS EXCITING PROGRAM INCLUDES...**

- ✧ Field commentary throughout the program by ABA birding guide Josiah Clark
- ✧ Six nights accommodation at the Asa Wright Nature Centre
- ✧ All meals throughout the program
- ✧ Gratuities to drivers and guides
- ✧ All sightseeing and excursions as outlined in the itinerary
- ✧ Transportation and luggage handling in Trinidad
- ✧ Local English-speaking guides and naturalists
- ✧ Pre-trip assistance including suggested reading list, bird list and pre-departure information

**LAND PROGRAM COST EXCLUDES:** International airfare; local airport taxes; transfers for those not traveling with the group; charges for items of a personal nature including laundry, beverages and excess baggage charges; individual travel arrangements; travel and accident insurance; and passport fees.

**GROUP SIZE:** The trip price is based on a minimum of 16 participants and is strictly limited to 24 participants. A small group surcharge of \$470 per person may be applied for a group with 11-15 participants.

**HEALTH:** All participants must be in good health. This program is extremely active and involves walking over uneven surfaces, climbing stairs and getting in to and out of small boats. All locations may not be handicap accessible. Any condition that may require special medical attention or other accommodation must be reported at the time of your reservation.

**DEPOSIT AND FINAL PAYMENT:** To apply for a space on this tour, send a completed reservation form and a \$500 deposit. Reservations are accepted on a first come, first served basis. Final payment is due by February 23, 2006, and must be made by check.

**CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS:** Refunds, less a cancellation fee of \$275 per person, will be made if we are notified on or before February 23, 2006. No refunds will be granted after that date. All cancellations must be in writing.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** Travel insurance is strongly recommended. To protect for the following three conditions, insurance must be purchased within fifteen (15) days of your initial tour deposit: 1) a pre-existing condition pertaining to you, a travel companion, or an immediate family member; 2) unforeseeable events or their consequences, including cancellations by an airline, cruise line, or tour operator as a result of financial insolvency; and 3) terrorist act(s) that occur in your departure city or in a city that is a scheduled destination on your trip and within 30 days of the scheduled departure date.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** A detailed statement of limitations and exclusions of liability of Siemer & Hand Travel, Inc. and the American Birding Association for loss of property, injury, illness or death will be provided to passengers upon enrollment, and is available to prospective travelers upon request.

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Brochure photos courtesy of Tom Merigan, John Moyle, Raymond Mendez, the Asa Wright Nature Centre, and the Trinidad & Tobago Tourist Board.

Please make check payable to and mail to Siemer & Hand Travel, 750 Battery Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94111. Tel (800) 451-4321

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_ (\$500 per person) as a deposit to hold \_\_\_\_\_ place(s) on **Birding in Trinidad**. Or, charge my deposit to:

\_\_\_\_ Mastercard    \_\_\_\_ Visa    \_\_\_\_ Diner's Club  
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Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_ I request trip cancellation insurance covering the full trip cost. By purchasing the coverage now, I also am protected for the three conditions stated in the Travel Insurance section in the General Information. Multiply the full program cost—including any non-refundable air—by .055 for each traveler for a total premium of \$\_\_\_\_.

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#### ACCOMMODATIONS

\_\_\_\_ I wish to have single accommodations at an additional cost of \$325 (subject to availability)

\_\_\_\_ I plan to share accommodations with:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I am willing to share with another participant:

\_\_\_\_ non-smoker    \_\_\_\_ smoker (shares cannot be guaranteed)

Please make roundtrip air arrangements from:

\_\_\_\_\_

I/We have read the General Information section of this brochure and agree to its terms.

Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Birding in Trinidad



Photos this page, clockwise: Green Honeycreeper (photo by Tom Merigan); hiking in Trinidad; market produce: a local islander; Scarlet Ibis (photo by Tom Merigan)  
Cover photos: Phalaenopsis; White-tailed Trogon (photo by Tom Merigan);  
Great Egrets: a beach in Trinidad

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