

### Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Rare Birds Committee: rare birds in 2008–10

During the review period, a total of 180 records was assessed by the Trinidad & Tobago Rare Birds Committee, representing 92 species. The committee added two species to the official list of birds of the islands with a further two added in the 'Introduced species' category. Additionally four species were documented for the first time on Tobago. Of those submissions assessed, in only 15 cases (8%) did the Committee believe that identification was inconclusive. Two further submissions remain under consideration. All locations mentioned are on Trinidad unless specifically designated Tobago. Nomenclature and species order follow those of the South American Classification Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union, Version 17 (May 2011).

#### Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

Despite no records during the previous 13 years, several records were made in the review period. In 2008, one, North Oropouche, 9 July (JK), followed by one flying south over Sudama Steps, 24 July (MK *et al.*), with three, Icacos, 17–19 September (KS). An adult at Icacos on 12 May 2009 (MR) may have been part of a flock of nine photographed nearby at Fullerton Swamp on 12 July 2009 (KS). Adult, Los Blanquizales Swamp, 9 January 2010 (KS). Historically a very rare wanderer from the mainland but there is now a Wildfowl Trust release programme at Point a Pierre, which may cloud the true origin of future records.

#### Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

Two males and a female, Caroni Rice Project, 10 July 2010 (MK, NL, DS) is the first record of this casual visitor from the mainland since 2002.

#### American Wigeon *Anas americana*

Female, or immature, Lowlands, Tobago, 16 November 2009 (BMu *et al.*). There have now been five

records in the last 15 years, all from south-west Tobago.

#### Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Two males and five females, Lowlands, Tobago, 8 March 2009 (DS, MKe, TM) had reportedly been present since early February, but this could not be confirmed. Also there, a female on 30 January 2010 (MKe, NL, DSm) was still present on 19 March at least. This winter visitor has been found in six of the last ten years, always in south-west Tobago.

#### Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

Three females and one male, Lowlands, Tobago, 16–19 November 2009 at least (AK, BMu *et al.*). Still a rare visitor, with just five records in the last 15 years.

#### American Flamingo

*Phoenicopterus ruber*  
During 2008, a flock spent several months on the tidal mudflats of Orange Valley. Eight were first found on 19 April, with a peak of 37 in June before the flock slowly fragmented. Eight still present on 9 September and a lone subadult until 23 October (TM, NL *et al.*). Two photographed at Orange Valley on 16 March 2010 (SP) with one until 2 April at least. All recent records have come from these tidal mudflats. At least some of those in 2008 were apparently shot.

#### Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Tideline corpse, Manzanilla, 28 November 2009 (GW) is the ninth record in the last 15 years, many of them moribund.

#### Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Tideline corpse, Manzanilla, 23 January 2002 (KG) is the third record for Trinidad, all from the north-east or east coasts.

#### White-tailed Tropicbird

*Phaethon lepturus*  
Adult photographed, Little Tobago Island, 14 March 2010 (MKe). There have been several reports of this species amongst the Red-billed Tropicbird *P. aethereus* colony, but

this is the first documented report for nine years.

#### Jabiru *Jabiru mycteria*

Two subadults photographed, east of Bush Bush reserve, 11–19 July 2009 at least (PB, MK, SR) is only the fifth record for Trinidad & Tobago.

#### Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*

Juvenile, near Caroni Bird Sanctuary, 13–17 January 2010 at least (SM, DR) is only the second documented record since 1942.

#### Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Adult, off St. Giles rocks, 2 August 2009 (BM) is only the second record for Trinidad & Tobago, and the first for Tobago.

#### Striated Heron *Butorides striata*

Adult photographed, Bon Accord lagoons, 25 July 2009 (JB *et al.*). Common on Trinidad (and mainland South America), but this is the first documented record for Tobago in the last 15 years.

#### Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Immature, Bon Accord ponds, Tobago, 1 April 2008 (BM, PT *et al.*), with an adult (the first in Trinidad & Tobago) at Lowlands, Tobago, 28 November 2008 (GW, PP) and another adult at the mouth of the Nariva River, 10 December 2009 (GW). Just one old record, but eight in the last 11 years, which doubtless reflects increased awareness of its separation from Great Blue Heron *A. herodias*.

#### Cocoi Heron *Ardea cocoi*

Adult, Bon Accord lagoon, Tobago, 8 March 2010 (MKe). A common seasonal visitor to Trinidad, but this is only the fifth sighting on Tobago in the last 15 years.

#### Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Immature photographed, Bon Accord lagoons, Tobago, 2 February 2010 (BB *et al.*; Fig. 1) remained until April 2011 at least. The committee has retrospectively accepted a record from Buccoo Marsh, Tobago, in September 1999 (AS). There are now three records for Trinidad & Tobago.



Figure 1. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Bon Accord, Tobago, February 2010 (Matt Kelly)



Figure 2. Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*, Erin Bay, southern Trinidad, August 2008 (Tarran Maharaj)

### Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*

Three in 2008: an immature / non-breeder, Brickfields Fish Quay, 8 July (MK, GG) flew north over Caroni Swamp; on 10 July, a similarly plumaged but clearly different individual arrived at Diego Martin River (FO, GW) and was last seen on 1 August. A much darker bird was at Erin Bay on 23–30 August (TM, DS; Fig. 2), with a white morph at Orange Valley on 16 June 2009 (MK). These are the first records for Trinidad & Tobago since a Tobago sighting in July 2003.

### Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

In 2008, one flew west over Caroni Rice Project, 26 July 2008 (MK *et al.*), with a different juvenile photographed at South Oropouche on the same date (KS). The latter bore a coloured number band and had been ringed in Doñana National Park, southern Spain, on 3 June 2006. In 2010, two immatures at Caroni Swamp on 3 May 2010 (SM, BM *et al.*), with an immature at Caroni Rice Project on 4 September (NL, DSm), two there on 8 September (MK, GW) and one photographed east of

Woodlands on 10 October (MK, DS, NL, HV). There has been a total of 15 in the last 15 years.

### Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Adult, over Nariva Swamp, 12 November 2010 (LF, PP, MD, CR) is the first record for Trinidad; the only previous record was from Tobago, in November 1986.

### Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja*

One, rice fields near Caroni bridge, 6 December 2008 (RT) is the first report since August 1999.

### Hook-billed Kite *Chondrohierax uncinatus*

Grey morph (probably male), Cat's Hill, 2 May 2009 (KS). Predominantly a rare visitor to Trinidad & Tobago, but a small resident population may persist in south Trinidad.

### Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*

Adult male, South Oropouche, 21 October 2008 (MK). Another male photographed, Valsayn rice fields, 24 May 2010 (GW, DSm), remained until 5 June when relocated at Caroni Rice Project. Still a rare visitor, there have been just four documented records in the last 15 years.

### Crane Hawk *Geranospiza caerulescens*

Two adults in 2008: Roussilac on 31 May (KS) and near Penal on 26 October (KS). One near Piarco airport on 26 September 2010 (GG). First recorded in Trinidad as recently as 2001, there have now been 16 documented records relating to probably 19 individuals.

### White-tailed Hawk *Buteo albicaudatus*

A subadult spent much of 2008 at the freshwater marsh north-east of Kernaham settlement, Nariva. First found on 22 February, it was regularly seen on 31 March–27 April and on 13 November–4 March 2009 (RN, RG, MK, NH *et al.*). A rare visitor from mainland South America with just four records in the last 13 years.

### Bat Falcon *Falco ruficularis*

One, Boxborough–Bloody Bay Road, Tobago, 20 February 2008

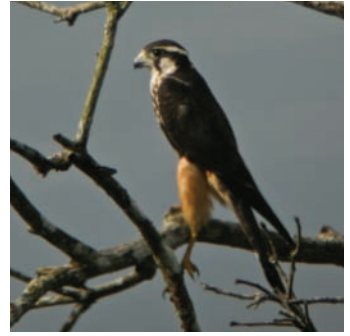


Figure 3. Aplomado Falcon *Falco femoralis*, east of Woodlands, Trinidad, 5 September 2010 (Kris Sookdeo)

(MKe) is only the second record for Tobago, the previous being in October 2005 only a few km away and just possibly the same individual?

### Aplomado Falcon *Falco femoralis*

During 2009, two on the east coast of Trinidad: adult, Manzanilla, 8 March (GW) and immature, Nariva Swamp, 22 September (MK, BMu *et al.*). In 2010, immatures were photographed east of Woodlands on 31 August, where still present on 5 September at least (NL, DSm, KS; Fig. 3) and Caroni Rice Project on 25 September (DSm, FO, NL). There have now been 16 records since the year 2000, of which 11 have been in August–October.

### Rufous-necked Wood Rail *Aramides axillaris*

One, mangroves north of Manzanilla, 1 January 2009 (MK) is the first record away from Caroni Swamp.

### Paint-billed Crake *Neocrex erythrops*

Adult photographed east of Woodland on 25 July 2010 (KS). Two, possibly this species, glimpsed there on 27 July 2010 (DS, MK). About 2 km to the south, another adult seen on three occasions between 29 July and 4 August 2010 (NL, TM *et al.*). We await submission of photographs to support a report of three near Aripo earlier in 2010. Prior to 2010, there were only three records of this casual visitor from

South America, the most recent in 2001.

**Spotted Rail** *Pardirallus maculatus*

One, near Abidh trace, Cacandee, 25 January 2008, is the first to be found alive in the last 15 years at least, and was still present on 3 February together with three Sora *Porzana carolina*, two Yellow-breasted Crakes *P. flaviventer* and a Stripe-backed Bittern *Ixobrychus involucris* (GW, MK *et al.*).

**Marbled Godwit** *Limosa fedoa*

One, Freeman's Bay, San Fernando on 15 September 2008 (TM). Still a genuinely rare visitor with only six records in the last 13 years.

**Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda*

One, South Oropouche on 6 September 2008 (KS) and one photographed, Turtle Beach, Tobago, on 23 September 2009 (DH). Whilst fitting an established pattern of occurrence between 6 September and 26 October, these are only the 10–11th found this century and include only the second for Tobago.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper**

*Tryngites subruficollis*  
One, Caroni Rice Project, 10 October 2009 (MK, GW); an adult south-west of Debe, which flew strongly south, 18 September 2010 (MK, GG), with singles at Couva on 7 October 2010 (DS, HV) and Kernaham on 9 October 2010 (MK, DS, KS, NL). These sightings fall within the established phenology of records in Trinidad & Tobago, between 17 September and 16 October.

**Common Black-headed Gull**

*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*  
First-winter, Barbados Bay, Tobago, 21 March 2008 (PD *et al.*); first-winter, Orange Valley high-tide roost, 24 February 2009 (MK, GW), with a second bird photographed next day (NL, DS) remaining until 28 March at least. Ten records in the last 15 years.

**Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus*

Adult photographed, Orange Valley, 4 December 2009 (NL,



Figure 4. Adult Greater Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, Orange Valley, Trinidad, January 2009 (John Muddeman)

DS) is only the second record for Trinidad.

**Greater Black-backed Gull**

*Larus marinus*

Adult photographed, Orange Valley, 31 January 2009 (JM) remained until 21 March at least, and is the first record for Trinidad & Tobago (Fig. 4). A first-winter was found there on 23 February 2009 (MK); it was well watched and photographed until 9 July at least.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

Third-winter photographed, Coco Reef beach, Tobago, on 8 March 2009 (DS, MKe, TM). Reports suggest this bird was present since 18 February. It is only the fourth record for Trinidad & Tobago, and the first for Tobago.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

Adult, off Speyside, Tobago, on 3 March 2009 (NH) and 2–3 adults flew north off Manzanilla on 4 March 2009 (MK, GG *et al.*). These are the second and third records for Trinidad & Tobago, and the first for Tobago. A storm in the north-east Atlantic during late February 2009 provoked a widespread dispersal of this species, with individuals even reaching central Morocco (P. G. Lansdown pers. comm.), while in the eastern Caribbean, there were also at least five tideline corpses in Guadeloupe (A. Lavesque pers. comm.) and two in Barbados, together with another two birds seen alive (E. Massiah pers. comm.), with additional records

from Cuba, Dominica, Guyana, Panama and Venezuela<sup>1</sup>.

**Blue Ground Dove** *Claravis pretiosa*

Male near Chaguaramas golf course on 23 June 2009 (FO), with two males and a female there on 27 June 2009 (MK, FO). A rarely seen resident on Trinidad with just two documented records in the last 15 years.

**Scaly-naped Pigeon** *Patagioenas squamosa*

Four were photographed on Little Tobago on 28 July 2009 (JB *et al.*). There are reports that they were present for at least two months. Two, Grafton Sanctuary, Tobago, on 7 February 2010 (MK, DS). Widespread throughout the Lesser Antilles, this species was first found in Trinidad & Tobago in 2005. There are now four documented sightings, all from Tobago.

**Eurasian Collared Dove**

*Streptopelia decaocto*

Five at Barataria on 23 October 2008 (MK) and on many subsequent dates. The committee has retrospectively accepted one at Waterloo on 8 October 2000 as the first record for Trinidad & Tobago. The species is spreading south through the Antilles and is now common as far south as Dominica and is present on St. Lucia.

**Dark-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus melacoryphus*

Two photographed east of Woodlands on 31 August 2010 (NL, DSm, KS; Fig. 5) were still present on 5 September, with one

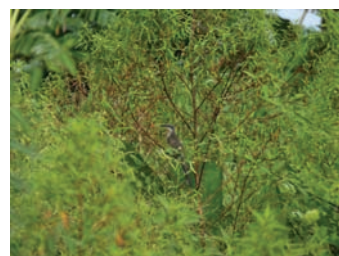


Figure 5. Dark-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus melacoryphus*, South Oropouche, Trinidad, August 2010 (Kris Sookdeo)



Figure 6. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Caroni Rice Project, Trinidad, October 2010 (Dave B. Smith)

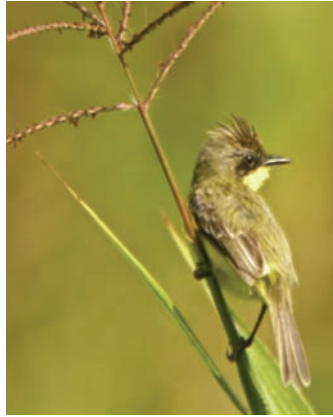


Figure 7. Male Crested Doradito *Pseudocolopteryx sclateri*, east of Woodlands, Trinidad, August 2010 (Dave B. Smith)



Figure 8. Female Crested Doradito *Pseudocolopteryx sclateri*, east of Woodlands, Trinidad, August 2010 (Kris Sookdeo)

remaining until 10th at least. Rare visitor to Trinidad and only the third record in the last 15 years.

#### Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

One photographed, Caroni Rice Project on 3 October 2010 (KS, MK, DS<sub>m</sub>; Fig. 6). The only previous record for Trinidad & Tobago was in late September 2001, coincidentally in the same field.

#### Rufous-shafted Woodstar

##### *Chaetocercus jourdani*

Up to four (two partially breeding plumaged and two non-breeding males) along the entrance track to Morne Bleu on 8–15 June 2008 (RC, GW *et al.*) were hunting insects; none was seen taking nectar. The first documented record of male-plumaged birds for Trinidad.

#### Ringed Kingfisher *Megaceryle torquata*

One, Bon Accord on 1 December 2008 (MK) is only the second for Tobago, and comes from the same site as one on 16 July 2007. The locality is well watched and the likelihood of the same individual lingering unseen for so long is remote.

#### Scaled Antpitta *Grallaria guatemalensis*

One heard, Matura National Park, 20 May 2009 (GW, KM). Perhaps

the island's scarcest resident, this is only the fifth documented record in the last 16 years.

#### Small-billed Elaenia *Elaenia parvirostris*

One photographed, Lopinot Valley, 16 May 2009, 11 June and 16 July, when two were probably present (GW, MK *et al.*); this is the second series of records from this locality in recent years. Singles Roussilac, 15 August 2010 (KS) and east of Woodlands, 5 September 2010 (KS, MK, DS). With observers now more confident of identifying smaller *Elaenia*, this species may not be the extreme rarity that it was previously considered to be.

#### Crested Doradito

##### *Pseudocolopteryx sclateri*

Three pairs, east of Woodlands, 24 July 2010 (MK, GW *et al.*; Figs. 7–8) remained until 18 August, with at least one male until 18 September. Carrying of nest material by all three pairs indicated breeding, but there was no evidence of success, perhaps due to rising water levels. This is the first record in Trinidad since 1984, and the first away from the region of the Caroni Swamp.

#### Variegated Flycatcher

##### *Empidonomus varius*

One photographed, Asa Wright Nature Centre, 26 July 2009 (BM). Historically considered a

very rare visitor, there have now been nine this decade on Trinidad, doubtless reflecting increased observer awareness of the species' identification features.

#### Southern Rough-winged

##### Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*

Three, Castara, Tobago, 26 March 2010 (MK<sub>e</sub>) is the first documented record from Tobago for many years.

#### Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Two adults and two juveniles, Bon Accord lagoons, Tobago, 16 November 2009 (BMu *et al.*), with an adult within a flock of Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* on 18–19 April 2010 (MK *et al.*), bringing to 20 the number found this decade, 12 of them in the period 3 March–22 April.

#### Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

One, Main Ridge Forest Reserve, Tobago, 27 November 2006 (KM, DH) is the first documented record for 38 years.

#### Northern Parula *Parula americana*

One photographed, Englishman's Bay, Tobago, 31 December 2008 (MK<sub>e</sub>) is the sixth record for Trinidad & Tobago, of which five records are from Tobago.

**Magnolia Warbler** *Dendroica magnolia*

One photographed, Castara, Tobago, 7 January 2010 (ZL), and one, Gilpin trace, Tobago, 15 March 2010 (DG, MK *et al.*) are the third and fourth records for the country; the previous two being in 1966 and 1967.

**Black-and-white Warbler***Mniotilta varia*

Adult female, Las Lapas trace, 27 December 2009 (MK), with another female, Blanchisseuse Road, above Paria junction, 9 March 2010 (MK *et al.*). Nine records in the last decade, between 10 October and 28 March.

**Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

A scarce passage migrant through Trinidad & Tobago. A flock of c.45, South Oropouche, on 22 November 2008 (TM, DS, KS). In 2009, three, Caroni Rice Project, on 8 October (MK, GW) and two, near Speyside village, Tobago, on 12 October (SJ, JC). In 2010, adult female, Bon Accord, Tobago, on 11 May (TM) is the first documented northbound migrant for 45 years. Southbound passage was represented by a total of 12, Caroni Rice Project, on 3 October (KS, MK, DSm) and five, east of Woodlands, on 31 October (KS, DS). Of the 13 records documented in the last 15 years, ten have been in October.

**Lesser Goldfinch** *Carduelis**psaltria*

Adult male, Mount St. Benedict, 28 March 2009 (MB), with a male and two females there on 29 May 2009, and up to three males and seven females were seen on seven dates during 5–14 November 2009 (DS). These follow the first documented record for Trinidad, at the same site in February 2005.

**Swallow Tanager** *Tersina viridis*

Adult female, Cuffie River Nature Resort, Tobago, 21 April 2008 (JC) is the first record for the island.

**Lesson's Seedeater** *Sporophila bowronides*

Adult male, South Oropouche, 9 December 2008 (KS), and three males and two females photographed, Cat's Hill area, 2 August 2009 (KS *et al.*). Still an

extremely rare visitor from the mainland, with just three records in the last 15 years.

**Lined Seedeater** *Sporophila lineola*

First recorded in south-west Trinidad as recently as 2007, this species was found in the same agricultural and freshwater swamp area in each of the succeeding years as follows. Eight on 16 August 2008 (KS), an adult and an immature male on 15 August 2009 (MK, KS, DS) and a flock of 30 on 14 August 2010 (KS, DSm) with at least 12 still present on 18 August 2010. These latter birds attracted the attention of local bird-catchers and there were no further sightings, although a male and female seen a few km further north on 22 August 2010 (MK) could have been part of the original flock. Adult male, north of Kernaham, on 9 October 2010 (KS, MK). In August–October each year, many additional sightings of unidentified birds in non-breeding plumage involved either this species or the near-identical Lesson's Seedeater *S. bowronides*.

**Yellow-bellied Seedeater***Sporophila nigricollis*

Pair photographed, Lopinot Valley, 2 May 2009 was seen on several subsequent dates to 9 August at least (GW, MK *et al.*). Breeding suspected but not proven. Adult male and an immature or female, Mount St. Benedict, 11 December 2009 (DS). Still very uncommon, there have now been six birds in the last 16 years.

**Large-billed Seed Finch***Oryzoborus crassirostris*

Adult male photographed, South Oropouche, 17 July 2010 (KS, MK, DSm, TM). This record falls within the pattern of post-breeding dispersal from the mainland by several species of seedeaters, but is the first documented sighting for many years.

**Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra*

Male, near Cumuto village, 24 February 2008 (NL, KL, TM) and another seen briefly on Mount St. Benedict on 11 December 2009 (DS). Still a rare winter visitor,

there have eight documented records in the last 15 years. However, the species' true abundance may be obscured by its similarity to Hepatic Tanager *P. flava*, which is resident in Trinidad.

**Scarlet Tanager** *Piranga olivacea*

Two adult males photographed: one at Mount Irvine, Tobago, on 11 April 2008 (DK) and one at Asa Wright Nature Centre on 31 May 2009 (SP). This brings the number of spring migrants documented in Trinidad & Tobago during the last 25 years to ten, with all but the most recent sighting during the period 8–28 April.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak***Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Immature male photographed, near the Textel station, Morne Blue, 14 November 2010 (BM *et al.*) is the first autumn sighting in the last 15 years; almost all records this decade have been in March–April.

**Introduced species****Tricoloured Munia** *Lonchura malacca*

Up to 30, including many juveniles, throughout the review period at South Oropouche, being first photographed there in 2007 (KS, MK, DSm). A native of the Indian subcontinent and South-East Asia, there are now resident populations in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador<sup>2</sup>.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

Female photographed, near Scarborough, Tobago, on 5 May 2009 (TM). An adult male and an immature or female-plumaged bird photographed at Caroni Rice Project on 28 May 1997 (BG, RN, PP) has only recently been accepted. Following introduction in the 19th century, the species has now colonised much of South America and the islands of the Caribbean.

Acceptable records were also received for a further 43 sightings of the following species whose status has already been established: Trinidad Piping

Guan *Pipile pipile*, White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*, Masked Duck *Nomonyx dominicus*, Rufescent Tiger Heron *Tigrisoma lineatum*, Rufous Crab Hawk *Buteogallus aequinoctialis*, Great Black Hawk *B. urubitinga*, Black Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus tyrannus*, Ornate Hawk-Eagle *S. ornatus*, Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*, Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* and Black-whiskered Vireo *Vireo altiloquus*.

Records determined to be unproven were of Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* (Tobago), Rufous-necked Wood Rail *Aramides axillaris*, Yellow-breasted Crake *Porzana flaviiventer* (Tobago), Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea* (Tobago), Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*, Blue-and-yellow Macaw *Ara ararauna*, Blue-headed Parrot *Pionus menstruus* (Tobago), Blue-chinned Sapphire *Chlorestes notata* (Tobago), Slaty Elaenia *Elaenia strepera*, Lesser Elaenia *E. chiriquensis*, Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*, Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea*, Lesson's Seedeater *Sporophila bouvronides* and Large-billed Seed Finch *Oryzoborus crassirostris*.

Additionally records of Red-and-green Macaw *Ara chloropterus*, White-eyed Parakeet *Aratinga leucophthalma* and Chestnut-bellied Seed Finch *Oryzoborus angolensis* whilst correctly identified were considered to be of suspect origin.

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