

## ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE PRE-TRIP TO JUNGLE RIVERS CRUISE

OCTOBER 9 – 13, 2006

*This tour emphasizes the natural history of the American tropics as well as bird identification, and is designed for anyone interested in tropical natural history. Birds comprise a highly visible portion of the natural world at the Asa Wright Nature Centre, where the tour is based, and they provide the dominant theme of study throughout the tour. The identification of birds in their natural environment is perhaps the first step toward a greater understanding of their lives and of the natural world. The second step is gaining an appreciation and understanding of some of the relationships of present-day tropical birds to their environment. Through a series of relaxed, informative field trips, we hope you will gain confidence with bird identification and a better understanding of how birds and other living things respond to life in the tropics.*

*Trinidad has a diverse, but not overwhelming, number of birds, plants, and animals. Here novices and experienced birders or naturalists alike can get acquainted with almost all of the New World families of birds and sharpen their skills on an avifauna of nearly 400 species. It's also an excellent place to become familiar with an array of tropical trees and flowering plants. During discussions and while in the field, we'll examine some of the consequences for birds that drink nectar or eat fruit as compared to those that search for insects or follow army ants. We'll learn some of the ways tropical plants cope with their environment and how they're affected by the birds and animals that drink (or steal) their nectar and destroy or disperse their seeds.*

*You will spend four nights at the world-famous Asa Wright Nature Centre. Over the years the Centre has hosted a veritable Who's Who of scientists, including many from the New York Zoological Society's research center just down the valley. One of the first and most prominent was William Beebe. Later David and Barbara Snow, two English scientists, spent nearly four and a half years working here. Some of their pioneering studies of fruit-eating birds and of the relationships between frugivorous birds and their host plants are classics which laid the foundation for later work by others.*

*Our pace will be relatively relaxed throughout. This is one of our least strenuous tropical American tours.*

**October 9, Day 1: Arrival in Trinidad.** Participants should arrive Port of Spain, Trinidad this evening by 8:00PM. After clearing customs and immigration, we will be transferred to the Asa Wright Nature Centre.

NIGHT: Asa Wright Nature Centre

**October 10-12, Days 2-4: Asa Wright Nature Centre.** During the next three days, we will explore the grounds of the Asa Wright Nature Centre and also make a round of visits to other areas in Trinidad, including the famous Caroni Swamp, the montane forests at Blanchisseuse and Aripo, and the savanna regions on the island. Here you will be introduced to some of the fascinating natural history of birds and plants of northern Trinidad.

During our stay at Asa Wright Nature Centre, we should see representative birds of many New World tropical families such as parrots, trogons, woodcreepers, antbirds, manakins, and motmots, as well as come to appreciate the

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fascinating expansion that several familiar groups, such as flycatchers and finches, have undergone. The Centre grounds are also home to one of the most accessible Oilbird roosting/nesting caves, and we will walk down to Dunstan Cave for a look at these avian wonders during our stay at Asa Wright. We hope to gain insight into the variety of nests and nesting strategies employed by tropical birds. During the field trips and natural history studies, we should encounter a number of particularly spectacular tropical birds, including the Scarlet Ibis, White Hawk, Blue-crowned Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Channel-billed Toucan, Bearded Bellbird, Golden-headed and White-bearded manakins, and a variety of tanagers, flycatchers, and finches. Throughout our stay at Asa Wright, our pace will be relaxed, ensuring an opportunity for repeated and often close observation of birds, as well as time to delve into the natural history of some of the fascinating birds, plants, and animals that we'll observe.

NIGHTS: Asa Wright Nature Centre

**October 13, Day 5: Departure from Trinidad.** After breakfast this morning we will be forced to say "goodbye" to the Asa Wright Nature Centre. We will be transferred to the dock for embarkation on the *Clipper Adventurer*.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour is limited to 34 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS:** Steve Hilty and David Ascanio, with the assistance of various local guides

**Steve Hilty** is the senior author of *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, and the recently published *Birds of Venezuela*, both by Princeton University Press. Other credits include *Birds of Tropical America, A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity*, which has just been republished by the University of Texas Press. He has also written a number of scientific papers on birds and plants, and is presently preparing the text and species accounts for the tanagers for a forthcoming volume of the acclaimed *Handbook of Birds of the World*, published by Lynx Press in Barcelona. Steve holds a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Arizona and has worked at the Arid Lands Department at the University of Arizona, as a consultant to The Nature Conservancy, and as a stockbroker. He is currently a research associate at the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History. Since 1975, he has led tours throughout North and South America, and co-led trips to India, the Orient, and Australasian regions. With three decades of experience in South America and a wide range of natural history interests, he brings a unique breadth of expertise to his Neotropical tours. At night he often turns his binoculars towards the skies for stargazing. Steve lives in Kansas City with his wife, Beverly. They have two college age daughters.

**David Ascanio**, a young Venezuelan birder and naturalist, has spent the last 20 years guiding birding tours throughout his native country, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Guyana, northern Peru, and western Ecuador. He is especially interested in bird vocalizations, and has a private library containing sounds of more than 70% of all the birds of Venezuela, including some which are the only recordings known to science. David speaks excellent English and combines superb birding skills with an astonishing command of bird vocalizations. He has published several manuscripts about the birds of the llanos (plains) and the tepui endemics for which he has become an authority. He is an excellent communicator, has a great sense of humor, and is tireless in helping others find birds and wildlife. These traits have made him the most popular naturalist/guide in his country.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$1195** per person in double occupancy from Port of Spain. This includes all meals beginning with breakfast on Day 2 through lunch on Day 5, lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the leaders. It does not include airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs. If the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the tour is **\$120**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**ACCOMMODATIONS AT ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE:** Single accommodations are often limited and singles may be asked to share. If so, you will be credited accordingly. Also note that “closer in” rooms can be requested for participants with mobility problems.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, complete the VENT registration form and return it with a deposit of **\$500** per person (check or money order in U.S. dollars). If registering by phone, the deposit must be received within 10 days or the space will be released. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before departure date, the deposit less **\$75** per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself.***

**If you cancel:**

120 days or more before departure date  
Fewer than 120 days before departure date

**Your refund will be:**

Your deposit minus \$75.  
No refund available.

**TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE:** Application forms for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available, as are other coverage’s such as terrorism protection; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**CLIMATE:** The temperature averages about 72-95 degrees. The lowlands tend to be a bit more hot and humid than at Asa Wright. The rainy season extends from April or May to December. As with most tropical areas, the “rainy season” simply means it rains more often than in the dry season.

**CLOTHING:** Lightweight clothes are best for the field, including long-sleeved shirts and either long pants or shorts. Shorts are good on most days and are cooler. Bring a hat and raingear, **including an umbrella**. Sneakers or walking shoes are fine; we recommend a pair of walking shoes or lightweight hiking boots with a Vibram or other good gripping sole, as the trails at Asa Wright Nature Centre can be a bit slippery and/or muddy. Walking sticks are available at the Centre. **Rubber boots are also useful** (particularly from May through December) because of potentially wet grass and muddy trails, and as protection against chiggers, but they are not essential. Dress will be casual at all times.

**LAUNDRY:** Laundry service is available at Asa Wright Nature Centre for a reasonable fee.

**CURRENCY:** U.S. dollars are accepted in Trinidad and Tobago, but it is best to convert a small amount to local currency. There is a bank open until 10 p.m. every night at the airport. The Asa Wright Nature Centre may also convert small amounts and will accept U.S. dollars or credit cards for purchases of items in their store.

**DOCUMENTS:** A valid passport, along with an ongoing or return air ticket, is required. Visas are not required for entry by U.S. citizens for stays of less than two months. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. Please hold on to the immigration card you receive en route, and keep it along with your passport in a safe place. You must surrender this card on departure.

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag.

Other items should include a flashlight and extra batteries, an alarm clock, notebook and pens, sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, and plastic protective bags or coverings to protect anything you want to keep from dust or moisture. It is important to bring a water bottle, as there will be some days we will be in the field all day. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

**HEALTH:** At this time, no vaccinations are required for travel to Trinidad. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) highly recommends that your Yellow Fever and Tetanus be up-to-date. You may check with the CDC in Atlanta (877-FYI-TRIP or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) for further health information and updates. At the Asa Wright Nature Centre, pitchers of purified water are provided, and there is a large container of purified water on the veranda at all times if you run out. There are few insects, but you should bring pump or spray repellent for chiggers, which are common in the grass around the Nature Centre, or wear rubber boots.

**MISC:** Departure Tax - \$100 Trinidad in local currency only (approximately \$17 U.S. per person).

Electricity - The Asa Wright Nature Centre operates on 110 volt current.

Language - The national language is English, often spoken with a lilt. Hindi dialects, French patois, Spanish, Chinese, and Urdu are heard in some areas.

Time - 1 hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Because of the many birds at feeders by the Asa Wright House, this is an excellent place for bird photography.

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website at [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com), or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com), which specializes in ornithology books.

***Birds:***

Ffrench, Richard. revised edition. *A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*. Wynnewood, Pennsylvania: Livingston Publishing Company, 1991. Excellent field guide/handbook. A must for birders visiting Trinidad.

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America: A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding, and diversity*. Shelbourne, VT: Chapters Publishing Ltd., 1994.

Hilty, Steven. *Guide to the Birds of Venezuela*. Second Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. Better plates than Ffrench book.

***General Ecology:***

Forsyth, Adrian and Ken Miyata. *Tropical Nature*. New York: Scribners, 1984. A good layman's introduction to tropical biology. Highly recommended.

Kricher, John C. *A Neotropical Companion: An Introduction to the Animals, Plants and Ecosystems of the New World Tropics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Another good introduction to Neotropical biology.

Snow, David W. *The Web of Adaptation: Tropical Bird Studies*. Collins, 1976. Excellent introduction to the ecology of fruit-eating birds. Written in popular, readable style and based mostly on studies conducted in Trinidad. Good list of references. Recommended!

**Fish:**

Chaplin, Charles C.G. *Fishwatcher's Guide to West Atlantic Coral Reefs*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Harrowood Books, 1972. Waterproof.

Greenberg, Idaz. *Guide to Corals and Fishes of Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean*. Miami, FLA.: Seahawk Press.

**Trees/Plants:**

Duncan, E. Julian. *A Guide to the Wild Flowers of Trinidad and Tobago*. Asa Wright Center, 1993.

Hargreaves, Dorothy and Bob. *Tropical Trees Found in the Caribbean, South America, Central America, Mexico*. Kailua, Hawaii: Hargreaves Publishing Company, 1965. Available at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

Hargreaves, Dorothy and Bob. *Tropical Blossoms of the Caribbean*. Kailua, Hawaii: Hargreaves Publishing Company, 1960. Available at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

Marshall, R.C. *Silviculture of the Trees in Trinidad and Tobago*. London: Oxford University Press, 1939.

Seddon, S.A. and G.W. Lennox. *Trees of the Caribbean*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1980. Available at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

**Cultural Background:**

De-Light, Dominique and Polly Thomas. *The Rough Guide to Trinidad & Tobago*. London: The Rough Guides, 2001. Current, thorough tourist guide with lots of background essays.

Naipaul, V.S. *A House for Mr. Biswas*. New York: Vintage Internationals, 1961, 1989. The Nobel-Prize-winning author's most acclaimed novel about life in postcolonial Trinidad.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect April 22, 2005 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets

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and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.