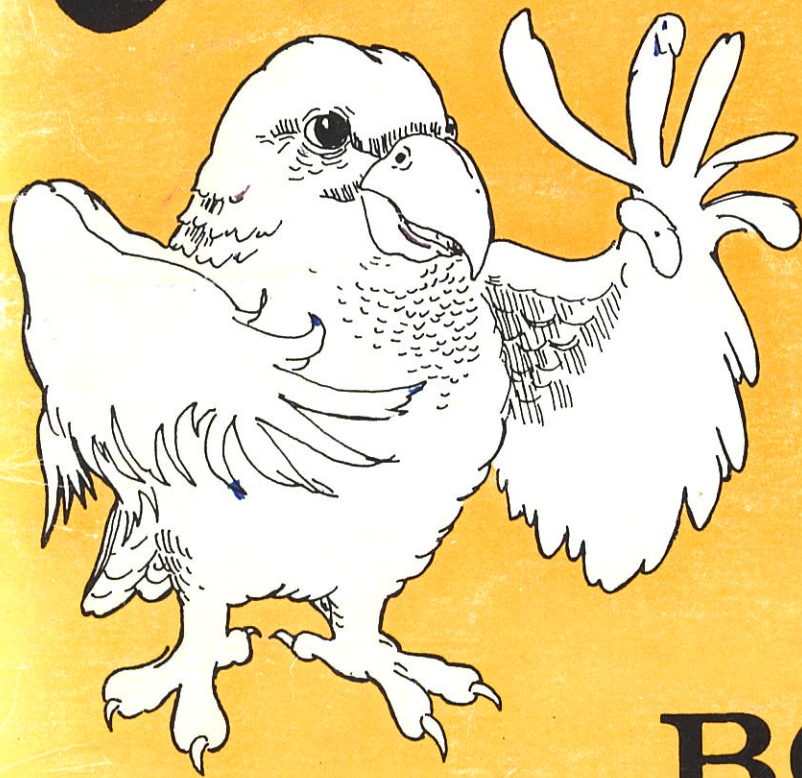


from  
2014  
10/11

# BUSH TALK



## BOOK 2

# BIRDS OF ST. LUCIA

Saint Lucia Forest & Lands Dept. Environmental Education Programme

Written and illustrated by Maria Grech  
Cartoons by Alwyn St. Omer & Christopher Cox

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# **BUSH TALK**

**book  
TWO**

**THE BIRDS  
OF  
ST. LUCIA**

# About **BUSH TALK** . . .

Bush Talk is a wildlife and conservation news-sheet that was first published by Forestry Department in November 1981. The original paper was designed by Maria Grech and contained a selection of stories about Saint Lucia's wildlife written by her at the request of Paul Butler, Forestry Conservation Officer. Giovanni St. Omer did the illustrations for this first issue and the cartoon featuring St. Lucia's National Bird, 'Jacquot', was drawn by his brother Alwyn St. Omer. The news-sheet was a great success and it was decided to continue on a monthly basis using a different topic each month and asking an appropriate person to contribute the introduction. All subsequent issues were written and illustrated by Maria Grech who also edited the introductions and did the layout. When Alwyn St. Omer left the island in 1986 to further his studies, Christopher Cox, artist and ornithologist working for Forestry and Lands Department took over as cartoonist.

Copies of each issue are distributed throughout the school system as part of Forestry and Land Department's Environmental Education Programme. In addition, the 'Voice', a local newspaper with a weekend circulation of about 5,000, uses Bush Talk as a supplement thereby further increasing its readership.

Whatever the topic, care is always taken to stress the importance of conservation, protection of the environment and, preservation of the island's rainforest and watershed areas.

# contents

	page
Introduction .....	1
Rare Birds .....	3
Town Birds .....	9
Birds of the Roadside .....	15
Birds of the Forest .....	21
Birds of the Swamp .....	27
Birds of the Seashore .....	33
Migratory Birds .....	39
Question Time .....	45

# INTRODUCTION

Saint Lucia has about sixty resident species of birds and a further fifty or so that are migratory visitors to our shores. Some of them are very common and can be seen throughout the islands, others, for one reason or another, are restricted to special habitats or areas. Our National Bird, for example, is found only in the undisturbed rainforest where its favourite foods such as the awalie and the wild breadfruit occur. The White-breasted Thrasher, another of our rarer birds, has its stronghold in one or two sites in the north-east of the island. But now, even these areas are threatened by man and so the future of this lovely bird is in jeopardy. The Blackbird or merle on the other hand has easily adapted to the presence of man and is found throughout the island wherever human habitation is evident. This book explores some of the things that affect where and how birds live in Saint Lucia.

A bird's choice of habitat is determined by many factors. Perhaps two of the most important are the presence of suitable food and adequate shelter. Without these, birds and animals find it difficult to survive and may even be forced to leave an area if it becomes unsuitable. Recent changes in land use in Saint Lucia have certainly affected the island's birdlife.

Sometimes man's actions prove beneficial, as in the construction of the cattle-watering holes that have helped ducks and other migratory species. The development of Nature Reserves has also helped, especially for the parrot who now has a special area reserved for him in the rainforest. More often though, man reduces the range of suitable habitats and by so doing, reduces also the number of birds that can survive in them. The widespread damage to mangroves and freshwater swamps, the rapid clearing of our forests, the use of chemicals to kill vegetation and the increasing pollution of our environment will all have an adverse affect on our birdlife.

While birds are attractive and fascinating to study, they are also important for other reasons. Many of them help to control insects and other pests. They add colour and variety to our lives and - perhaps more importantly - they serve as indicators of the state of our environment. There have been many examples throughout the world where birds have acted as monitors of man's health and well-being. Problems associated with the use of dangerous pesticides such as DDT and heavy metals like mercury, were first noticed when the bird populations began to diminish. Man himself only became affected by these substances some time later usually with tragic results. If we had taken

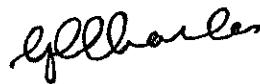
more notice of the animals around us we might have avoided the terrible and costly consequences of our own actions.

We are now learning of the importance of birds and other animals to the environment. In Saint Lucia our wildlife is protected by legislation and books and magazines are published that promote the awareness of conservation and environmental issues. There is also a growing network of reserves and protected areas where important habitats, such as the mangroves, wetlands and forests, are being saved for the benefit of future generations. These habitats are the key to success in our attempt to conserve our native flora and fauna; without them, most of our wildlife will dwindle and disappear, leaving us poorer in spirit and soul.

This book, admirably written and edited by Maria Grech, serves as a fine starting point for the study of Saint Lucia's birdlife. Birds are the most visual and obvious of our varied wildlife and their study can prove an interesting and enjoyable hobby. Regular, careful observations can even provide important information to scientists studying our environment. This is especially true in Saint Lucia, where there is still much to be learnt about our native fauna. The challenge of starting a new hobby such as ornithology (bird-watching) may seem daunting but you will probably be surprised at just how many of our birds you already know. From the sucrier and merle that commonly grace our gardens to the magnificent siseaux whose form and flying skills are demonstrated around our coast.

Perseverance will increase the number of species you can identify and drawing on information such as the bird's size, shape, colour and behaviour, it will not be long before you can identify the majority of our avian friends. Who knows, perhaps you will be the one to rediscover the Semper's Warbler, probably our rarest bird.

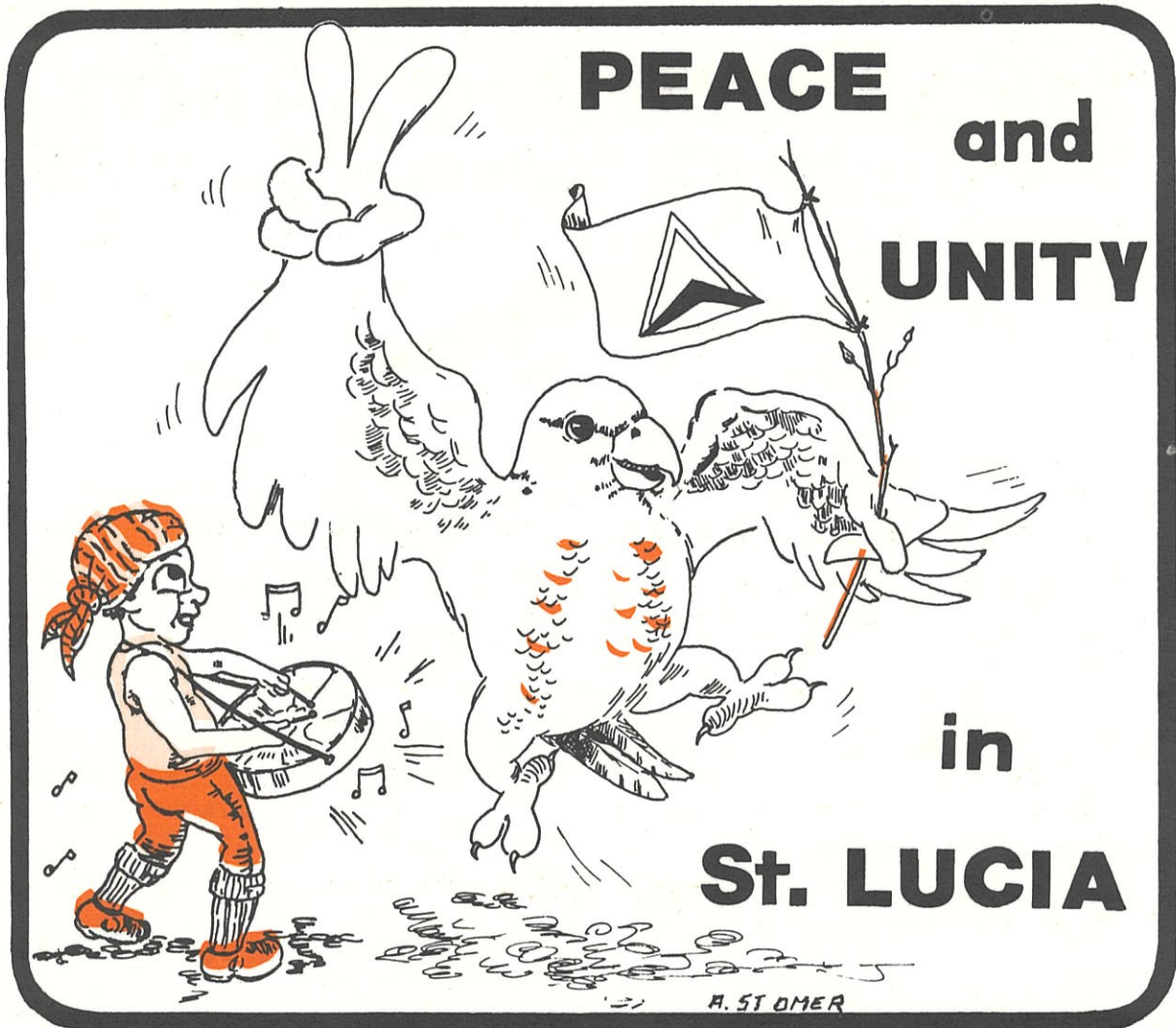
Let this book be your first step toward the study of these fascinating and lively inhabitants of our island. Happy watching!



Gabriel Charles  
Chief Forest Officer

FOREST AND LANDS DEPARTMENT  
Ministry of Agriculture  
St. Lucia

# BUSH TALK



## RARE BIRDS

1. The St. Lucia Parrot
2. The St. Lucia Blackfinch
3. The St. Lucia Oriole
4. Nightjars, Thrushes and Thrashers
5. Semper's Warbler and the St. Lucia Wren



# THE ST. LUCIA PARROT

*Amazona versicolor*

Just a few years ago, the Saint Lucia Parrot, *Amazona versicolor*, was in real danger of becoming extinct. Now, although there are still only about 200 parrots living in our rainforests, their numbers are slowly increasing. There are several reasons why this has happened. Perhaps the most important is that in 1979, the parrot was made the National Bird of Saint Lucia. But protecting the parrot was only part of the solution. It was also necessary to protect the rainforest that provided Jacquot with shelter and food.

Parrots eat seeds and fruits. One of their favourite foods is the fleshy red fruit of the awali creeper, *Clusea rosea*. This plant supports itself on the tall forest trees and its vines are used by craftsmen to make baskets. The trees in the forest also provide nesting places for the parrots.

Parrots usually mate for life. If one of the pair dies or is killed, it may be years before the survivor finds another mate. The female lays her two white eggs deep down inside a hollow tree trunk. When the young ones hatch, they are blind and naked and stay, helpless in the nest for many weeks. They will often remain with their parents even after they have learned to fly



and will not mate themselves until they are about five years old.

*Amazona versicolor* is one of our largest birds. It can grow to a length of 18 inches and like the other members of this bird family, its feathers are mostly green. The Saint Lucian species has patches of bright red and blue on the edges of its wings and red beneath its beak. It also has splashes of darker red on its chest. The top of its head is a beautiful light blue and the feathers beneath its tail are a pretty shade of yellow. Parrots have a heavy, powerful beak with a sharp hooked end. They also have large, strong claws that they use to climb trees or to hang upside down from a branch while they reach for their food. They will often hold a seed or a nut in their claws so that they can crack it open with their beak.

Parrots do not sing. They fly to their feeding grounds early in the morning and return home late in the afternoon. As they fly their loud screeching echoes through the forest and makes them very easy to identify.



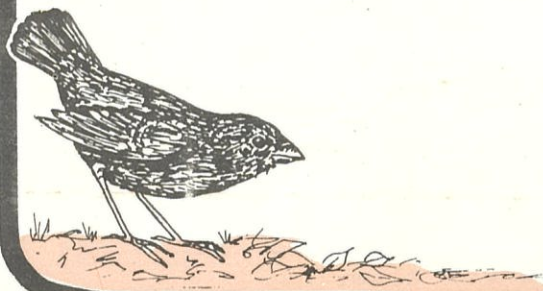


# THE ST. LUCIA BLACKFINCH

*Melanospiza richardsonii*

The Saint Lucia Blackfinch, *Melanospiza richardsonii*, is slightly smaller than the Lesser Antillean Bullfinch but at first glance they can easily be mistaken. You have to get very close, or look with binoculars to see that the male has no patch of red on its throat. The females and the young males are easier to recognise because the top of their head is grey, not brown like the Bullfinch. Their underneath parts are also grey but the feathers on their back are brown.

Like most finches, the Blackfinch eats seeds and berries as well as some fruits. This species also likes to pick around in the dead leaves on the forest floor looking for small insects or grubs. Richardson, the man who first 'discovered' the Blackfinch, never saw a live bird. He bought two dead birds from an old man who lived in the forest and so was able to prove that it was a different species to the Bullfinch, *Loxigilla noctis*. (See page 11)



He gave the bird its scientific name but it got its patois name, mwasson pyé blan, because of its pale legs. They are not really white but more of a pale pink colour.

Blackfinches build their neat, round nests in trees or bushes, leaving a small opening on the side to get in and out. The female will lay two white eggs in the nest and both birds will look after them until they hatch. Even when the young are ready to fly and can feed themselves, they will probably still stay with their parents.

You are likely to see the Saint Lucia Blackfinch anywhere in the island where there are plenty of bushes or trees. It is in the leaf litter under the trees that they find most of their food. They can be seen in the forest behind Soufriere, at Piton Flore and around Louvet as well as several other places. But in each of these areas there are only a few birds. Because they are so scarce, it is important to protect their natural habitat to help keep the species alive.





# THE ST. LUCIA ORIOLE

## *Icterus laudabilis*

True Orioles belong to the bird family Oriolidae. They are songbirds and are only found in the \*Old World. The Saint Lucia Oriole, *Icterus laudabilis*, belongs to the same family as the Carib Grackle, *Quiscalis lugubris*. This family is called the Icteridae and they are found only in the NEW World. Another name for the orioles of the New World is 'Troupiales'.

The Saint Lucia Oriole is a bit smaller than a Grackle (8 - 8½ inches) and much more rare. Both the male and the female have shiny black feathers with patches of bright orange on the wings, chest and back. These patches are usually lighter and more yellow on the female.

There are orioles on most Caribbean islands but they are different species. Some of them have white patches on their wings, others have yellow markings instead of orange. In Martinique the oriole's orange patches are almost red and the feathers on its head and neck are a rich, chestnut brown instead of black. The species called *Icterus laudabilis* is found only in Saint Lucia and its patois name is kawouge.

The Saint Lucia Oriole feeds on different kinds of fruits and insects. It can be seen all over the island. It lives in the rainforest but it can also



be found living in fairly dry, scrubby areas near the coast. The birds usually stay in pairs and so if you see one you are quite likely to see its mate also.

With its bright orange and black feathers, the oriole is an easy bird to identify. But only if you see both together will you be able to tell which is the male and which the female. There is no other bird like it in Saint Lucia.

The Oriole's nest is a well-made basket woven from grass and fibre. It is usually hung from the leaves of a balizier or a palmiste. In it the female will lay three spotted eggs which she will sit on until they hatch. This is called incubating. When the fledglings appear, her mate will help her to find food for them. Like most birds, the Orioles are good parents and will feed and protect their young ones until they are ready to fly away from the nest.

\*The New World is the Americas and the Caribbean.  
The Old World is everywhere else.



# NIGHTJARS, THRUSHES AND THRASHERS



Although the Rufous Nightjar, Caprimulgus rufus is found all over South America, the only other place it can be seen is here in Saint Lucia.

Nightjars are birds that are more often seen than heard. They are most active just before dark when they come out to swoop around and catch the insects that appear as the sun goes down. They have a loud sad song that some people mistake for the call of an owl. It sounds as if they are saying 'jak-pa-papa-ou..' and so sometimes that is what the bird is called.

During the day they rest on the ground or on the lower branches of trees and like some of the doves, they build their nests on the ground. Their brownish-grey feathers with black markings make them hard to see, but when they are sitting on their nest they are easy prey for mongooses or other predators. There might have been nightjars in some of the other islands before the mongoose was introduced. In Saint Lucia, they could still disappear if there is much more clearing of the areas of natural scrubland in the north-east of the island where they usually live.

Two other birds found only in Saint Lucia are the Saint Lucia Forest Thrush, Cichlherminia lherminiera sanctaeluciae and the White

breasted Thrasher, Ramphocinclus brachyurus sanctaeluciae.

Like the Rufous Nightjar, the White-breasted Thrasher inhabits the north eastern part of the island. It is a handsome bird. The feathers on its back are dark blackish-brown and its underparts are pure white. It is usually seen in the bushy areas along the banks of rivers and spends much of its time on the ground searching for insects. Some times it will twitch its wings as if it is trying to shake something off. It builds its nest in small trees or bushes and the female lays two blue eggs in it. Although Whitebreasted Thrashers have been spotted recently there are very few of them left

No-one has reported seeing the Forest Thrush for several years. It is quite a large bird but it is very shy and now thought to be extremely rare. Its feathers are brown with a speckling of white on the belly and there is a patch of yellow skin around its eye. Its beak and legs are also yellow. That is probably why its patois name is gwiv a pyé jon. If you are in the forest and hear a sound like a puppy yapping, it might just be a rare

Forest Thrush.





## SEMPER'S WARBLER

*Leucopeza semperi*



There is probably no-one in Saint Lucia who has ever seen a Semper's Warbler. This little dark grey bird was first spotted by an \*ornithologist called Semper in 1876. It has a whitish belly and pale legs. In patois its name is pyé blan. It is usually found in the undergrowth of mountain forests but very little is known about its

habits or even the song it sings. There are specimens of Lucopeza semperi in some museums but the last time this rare bird was seen alive was in 1972. It was identified by some visiting American ornithologists who were looking for it at Piton Flore.

\*Ornithologist - a person who studies birds

## THE ST. LUCIA WREN

*Troglodytes aedon mesoleucos*

There are wrens on most of the islands of the Lesser Antilles but they are not all the same. Perhaps they were, many hundreds of years ago. But now, each island has a slightly different species. In St. Vincent, the wren lives on the slopes of the hills on both sides of the island. In Grenada, it prefers to be closer to houses and people. In Guadeloupe it lives in the mountains. In Saint Lucia it is now only found in the dry wooded areas around Louvet and Grande Anse. If you are not an ornithologist, you will probably find it hard to see what makes the Saint Lucia Wren, Troglodytes aedon mesoleucos, different from any other wren.

The wren is a small,

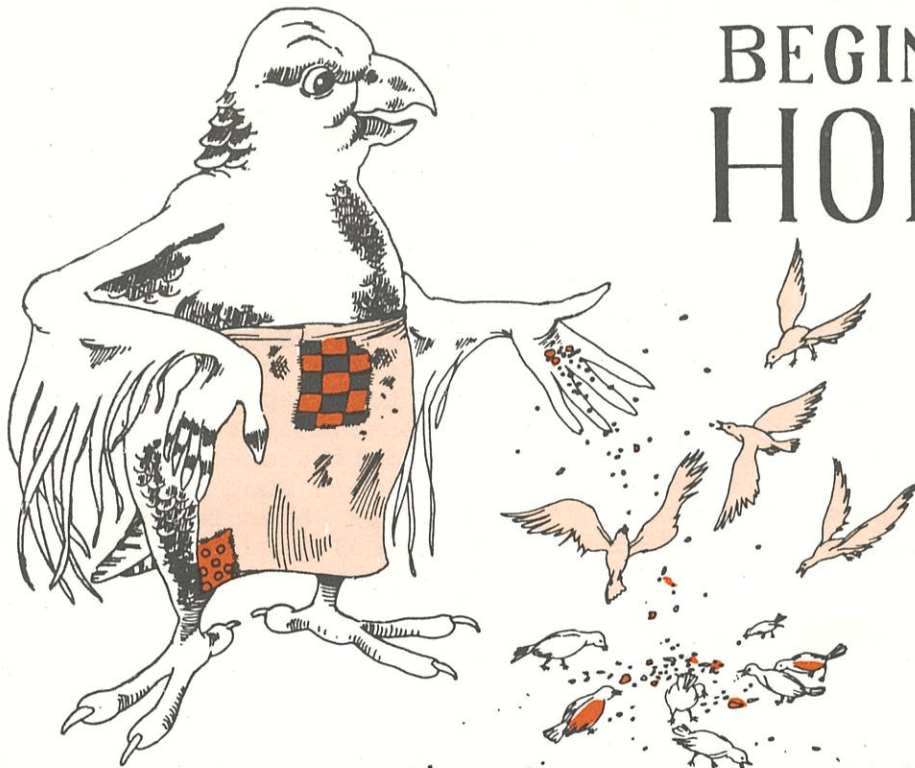
brown bird with black markings on its wings and a white belly. It feeds mainly on insects that it picks out from under the bark of trees or bushes and has a very pretty song. It is sometimes called Rossignol because the Rossignol or nightingale is supposed to sing more sweetly than any other bird.

The female lays four or five spotted eggs in a nest in a tree stump or in a crack in an old wall. She sits on the nest for about two weeks, until the young ones hatch. The male will bring food for her while she is on the nest and sometimes help her to feed the fledgelings. The Saint Lucia Wren is fast becoming a very rare bird.

HELP SAVE SAINT LUCIA'S RARE BIRDS - PROTECT THEIR FOREST HABITAT

# BUSH TALK

## CONCERN FOR OUR WILDLIFE BEGINS AT HOME



### TOWN BIRDS

1. The Bananaquit
2. The Bullfinch
3. The Mockingbird
4. The Grey Kingbird
5. Hummingbirds

# THE BANANAQUIT

## *Coereba flaveola*

In this section, we are going to take a closer look at some of the birds you can see in your own backyard. We will start with the Bananaquit. This bird's Latin name is Coereba flaveola and it belongs to the bird family Coerebidae. Its patois name, sikwyé, is a good guide to its habits because it zooms all around the garden sipping honey from the flowers. Its beak is slender and quite long but sometimes the Bananaquit will still find a blossom that is too deep for it to reach into. When this happens, the bird will make a little hole in the outside of the flower stem and suck the nectar out with its long tongue.

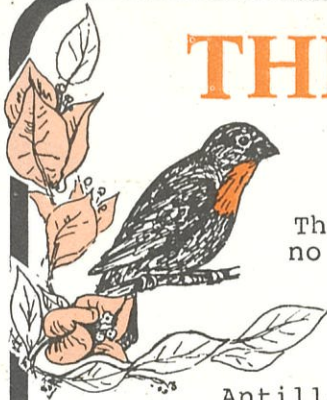
The Bananaquit has no special habitat. It lives just about everywhere and is quite well adjusted to living close to man. It is a pretty bird but it has no song. Its voice sounds like a wet cork being rubbed over a piece of glass. The male and female both look alike. They have very dark, almost black feathers on their head, wings and tail and bright yellow on their back and underparts. Under their chin is grey and over each eye is a clear white stripe. If you are able to get close enough to have a good look you will notice that there are little patches of red at the corners of their mouths. They are small, slender birds only four inches long



and they usually live in pairs.

Bananaquits love to make nests. Even if they have no young ones to care for they will still build a nest just to sleep in. It is round and rather untidy with a little opening on the side. When they are breeding, the female will lay 2 or 3 pale brown eggs with splotches of a darker brown on them. She will sit on these eggs for the 12 or 13 days it will take them to hatch.

When the young ones emerge, both parents will work to gather enough food to feed them while they grow and mature. Like many young birds, they are born blind and naked with mouths that are constantly open demanding food. After a few days their eyes will open and their feathers will begin to grow but it will be more than two weeks before the nestlings are able to fly off and look after themselves. All this time the two parents struggle to find enough food for them to eat. In the dry season when there are fewer flowers for them to feed from they are glad to have sugar and water put out. Just be sure that it is in a safe place.



# THE BULLFINCH

*Loxigilla noctis*

This bird needs no introduction.

Like the Blackbird or merle, the Lesser

Antillean Bullfinch,

*Loxigilla noctis* is a very bold bird. It is also probably the friendliest of the 'town birds'. It is a cousin of the mwosan pyé blan (the saint Lucia Blackfinch), mentioned in the first section of this book and like the Blackfinch, the male Bullfinch has shiny black feathers. The difference is that *Loxigilla noctis* has a little patch of bright red under his chin and if you look really hard you will see two small red spots over his eyes as well. If he is keeping company with a rather plain grey and brown bird, that will be his mate or a younger, immature male.

The Bullfinch's nest looks very much like the nest made by the Bananaquit and will often be put in a hanging plant pot or even in an outdoor light. The female lays 2 or 3 spotted eggs that she alone will sit on but her mate will bring her food while she is on the nest. He will also help her to feed the young ones when they hatch. These birds tend to live in family groups so the young Bullfinches will probably still remain with their parents even when they are

old enough to find their own food. They are always very quarrelsome. Stop and listen to them sometime. They are like unruly, bad-tempered children, twittering and chattering at each other and even coming to blows.

Their short, heavy beaks are made for cracking seeds, but like the sikwyé, they are also fond of sugar. They will quickly learn to visit you if they know you will put some out for them. They are even cheeky enough to remind you if you forget, sitting in a nearby bush chirping away at you in their loudest voices. They will often fight with each other to get at the sugar and will chase away other small birds or any bold lizards that try to share their treat.

Now and again, you may notice a bird with patchy black and brown feathers. This will be one of the young, male Bullfinches. When they are first hatched from the egg, they have no feathers at all. Later when they get their first set, they are brown just like their mother's. It is only as the young birds mature that the males will get their handsome black feathers.

If you make a bird table and put out food for the birds, the Bullfinch will be one of your most regular visitors.

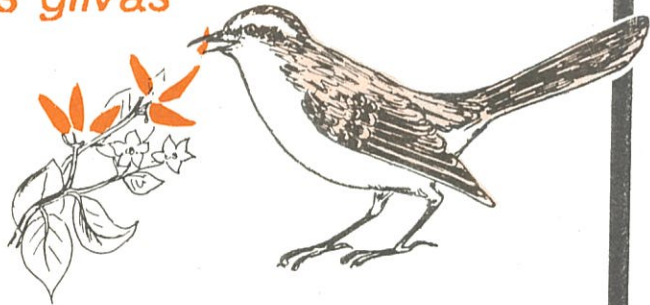
# THE MOCKINGBIRD

## *Mimus gilvas*

The Mockingbird, *Mimus gilvas* is one of the largest of our 'town birds' and is a very common visitor. I am sure you have all seen this bird hopping from branch to branch in a tree as it searches for insects or berries. It likes fruit too and if there is any around it is quick to help itself. If you have a pepper tree near the house with those small, round, hot peppers on it - watch out! the Mockingbird will come and pick them all for you, even if it means coming right up to your back door. Maybe that's why this kind of pepper is called 'piman gwiv'.

In patois, the Mockingbird's name is gwiv blan. It is about the same size as the Grackle or Blackbird but with different colouring. Its feathers are greyish-brown with darker brown feathers edged with white on the wings and a white tip to the long brown tail. Over the eye is a white streak and under its throat and its chest is a pale, creamy white.

Unlike the noisy Blackbird, *Mimus gilvas* sings beautifully changing its song often. From its name you would think that it imitates the songs of other birds but that is rare. What it does is to copy the song being sung by another Mockingbird so that it sounds as if they are having a contest. One will



sing a series of notes, then the other will copy. Then the first one will change its tune slightly and the other will copy this new song. If you have a chance to listen, see if this is so.

Both the male and the female Mockingbird look alike. They build their nest of twigs together, lining it with bits of plants. It is usually a rather rough looking affair placed carelessly among the branches of a bush or tree. The female will lay 3 or 4 pale green spotted eggs in it and then she will sit on them until they hatch. This will take 12 to 14 days and when the young birds hatch out, both the parents will take turns feeding and caring for them.

The Mockingbird is not as friendly or as trusting as the bold little Bullfinch or the Banaquit but it will still come quite close to the house if there is something nearby that it wants. With its shiny black bill and orange-yellow eyes it is an attractive bird. If it steals a few peppers now and then it can surely be forgiven for the lovely songs it sings.



# THE GREY KINGBIRD

*Tyrannus dominicensis*



The Grey  
Kingbird,  
Tyrannus

dominicensis is  
probably known  
better by its

patois name - pipirite. It is here among the 'town birds' because even though it is may not come to your back door or feed from your bird table you must see and hear it often.

The Kingbird's diet consists mainly of insects and it prefers to eat its food fresh. You will see it perched on the telephone wires or sitting patiently on the branch of a tree keeping a sharp look-out. Watch, as it darts out to catch something flying past. The kingbird will often perform spectacular acrobatic loops and rolls before returning to its perch with its prey. Then it will sit there turning its head this way and that until the next unfortunate bug comes flying by.

This is a smaller bird than the Mockingbird and more grey in colour. Its tail is shorter and instead of being rounded at the end it is notched into a 'V' shape. There are darker, almost black patches around its eyes, and its beak, which is also black, is heavy and wide. This makes it possible for even a fairly large insect to be grabbed with ease. The feathers on its under parts

are white and so it is sometimes called the White-breasted Kingbird. On its head, hidden among the grey feathers is a crest of brilliant orange which it will show when it is angry or alarmed. The female is smaller than the male but she has the same colouring.

The Kingbird's nest is a flimsy thing put together any old how by the female and propped up in the branches of a tree. It is made of bits of grass and roots shaped into a shallow cup. The female lays two eggs in it. They are a pinkish colour with darker reddish-brown markings on them. She will watch over these eggs for two weeks until they hatch out. After that, her mate will help her to feed the fledgelings until they are mature and ready to fly away and start life on their own.

Kingbirds are solitary creatures and except for the time when they are breeding they prefer to live alone. They like places where there are tall trees and when insects are in short supply they will eat berries or seeds. At dusk when the air is full of flying insects and the Kingbirds are hunting for their supper, you may hear them calling to each other as they swoop through the evening sky, "pipirite, pipi-rr-r-ite."

# HUMMINGBIRDS

In Saint Lucia, all Hummingbirds are called kolibwi but if you look carefully you will see that there are three different species. The most common is the Antillean Crested Hummingbird, Othorhyncus cristatus, a small bird only 3 inches long. The male is easily recognised by the brilliant green, or blue and green crest on his head. The female has a paler green body than the male and is light grey or pale brown underneath where the male is dark grey or even black. She may also have a crest but this is unusual.

Another species of Hummingbird seen in Saint Lucia is the Purple-throated Carib, Eulampis jugularis. This bird is 4 1/2 - 5 inches long with a dark, almost black body, glittering green wings and a slightly darker green tail. Under its chin is a large, ruby red patch. The male and the female of this species look exactly the same. Like most Hummingbirds they have a slender curved beak with which they drinks the nectar from the flowers.

The third species of Hummingbird seen here is the Green-throated Carib, Sericotes holosericeus. This bird is a bit smaller than the Purple-throated Carib. The feathers on its body and head are mostly green. Its tail is a purplish-black colour and there is a bright spot of violet-blue on its chest. The male and female of this species are also alike.

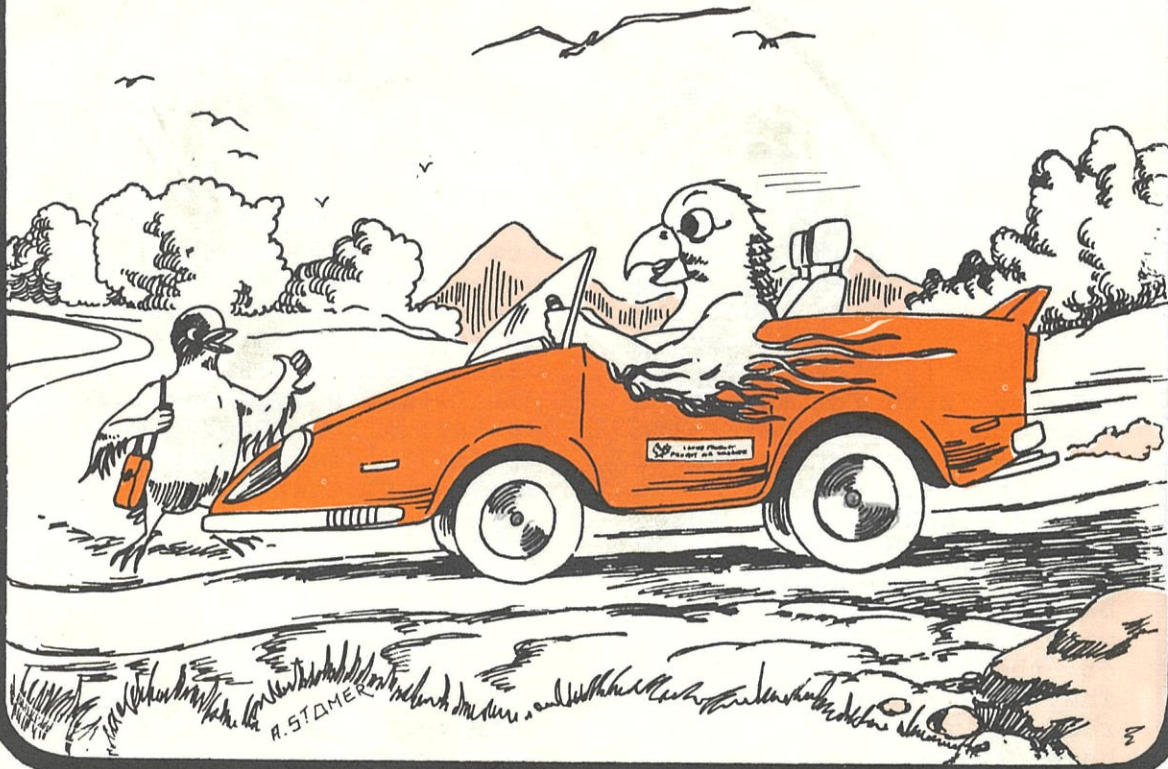


Hummingbirds got their name from the humming noise made by their wings as they fly along. Their wings beat faster than those of any other bird and they can go backwards as well as forwards! Mind you there is a price to pay for this, their feet are so small they can only be used for perching.

Hummingbird nests are daintly little mossy cups often held together with cobwebs. They are placed securely under the leaves of a vine or in the lower branches of a bush. In it, the female will lay 2 tiny white eggs, each no bigger than your smallest fingernail. She will sit on them until they hatch which will take about 19 days. Then she alone will have the responsibility of feeding and protecting them for 3 1/2 weeks, until they are ready to fly away. The male is a flighty fellow who doesn't care much for house building or baby minding. He is not very sociable either and will chase off other birds if they invade his territory. But, zipping around the garden he is like a bright jewel flung through the air to flash and sparkle in the sunlight. The garden would be a duller place without him.

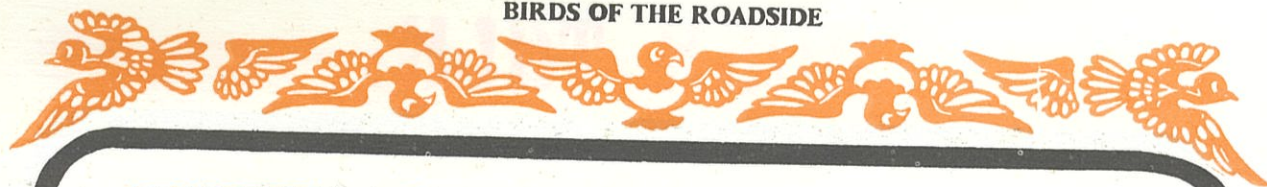
# BUSH TALK

GIVE OUR WILDLIFE  
A HELPING  HAND



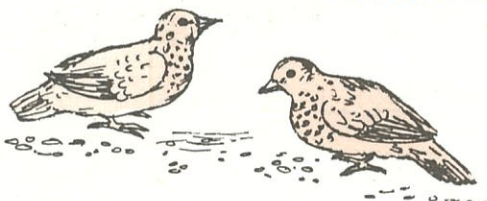
## BIRDS OF THE ROADSIDE

1. The Ground Dove
2. The American Kestrel
3. The Mangrove Cuckoo
4. The Streaked Saltator
5. The Cattle Egret



# THE GROUND DOVE

*Columbina passerina*



The little Ground Dove, Columbina passerina, belongs to the bird family called the Columbidae. It is only 6 or 7 inches long and is found throughout the Caribbean. You will hardly ever see it alone. It is usually with its mate or a few others of the same species, scuttling about beneath the trees and shrubs looking for food. They bob about on their short legs eating the berries and fruits of the wild plants and the seeds of the different grasses. They will often go onto the road to pick up seeds that have fallen or been blown there by the wind. They also pick up little bits of grit or gravel which helps them to digest their food.

When they are feeding they are very hard to see. The grey-brown feathers on their head and back make a perfect camouflage against the dusty brown of the dry leaves. But, when they fly, the dark red feathers under their wings and at their wing-tips make a bright blurr on each side of their body. They don't fly far. With their whirring wings hardly raising them above the ground they soon land among the nearby trees or bushes and become invisible once again.

The nests of the Ground Dove come in all shapes and sizes. Some are flimsy, made of a few pieces of grass, others are strong and well-shaped, built of twigs. They may be on the ground among the dead leaves or in the safety of a tree. The parents will take turns sitting on the 2 small white eggs until they hatch. After about 2 weeks, when the eggs hatch, the male will continue to help by finding food for the chicks. They are ready to take their first flight when they are about 11 days old.

Another of our doves is the Zenaida Dove, Zenaida aurita. This is a large bird, 11 or 12 inches long that will often fly out from the bushes along the side of the road. Its feathers are a rosy reddish brown with a lighter brown head. There are blue-black feathers on its back and patches of white on its tail and its wings. Its nest is as likely to be on the ground as in a tree and its two white eggs take 14 days to hatch. You will easily be able to recognise the Zenaida Dove by its loud, sad call... Cuacoo... coo...coo. Cuacoo...coo...coo. This species seems to have become more numerous since the law that made trapping illegal was introduced.



# THE AMERICAN KESTREL

*Falco sparverius*

The American Kestrel belongs to the same family as the Broad-winged Hawk or Malfini, the Falconidae. It is smaller, only 9 or 10 inches long and can often be seen perching on the telephone wires along the roadside. Like all other birds of prey, the Kestrel has a heavy, curved beak for tearing at his food and sharp talons or claws to grab and hold it. Instead of the shrill, loud scream of the Malfini, its cry is a much softer "killi... killi...killi", so that in some places its local name is the Killy Hawk. Its Latin name though, Falco sparverius, means the falcon that eats sparrows.

The feathers on the Kestrel's back and tail are a reddish-brown. Those on his head are dark. If you see it close up it looks as if the bird is wearing a neat little black cap. Its large round eyes, like black beads, miss nothing. From its perch on the wire it will dart out to catch a passing insect. It will also keep a sharp eye on the ground hoping to see a lizard or perhaps a mouse. Occasionally as his name suggests the Kestrel may catch a small bird and if there are young bats around it may even stay up a bit later than usual to catch one or two.

The Kestrel is not a nest builder. The female may lay her four pale pink eggs, with their splotches of reddish-brown in another bird's abandoned nest. Often, she will just set them on a protected ledge high up in a building or under the overhang of a roof. Only the female will incubate the eggs and she has to do this for 30 days. During this long period, the male will catch food for both of them, bringing her a share of everything he gets. After the young birds hatch, both parents will hunt for them. It will be 4 weeks or even more before they are ready to fly off and find food for themselves.

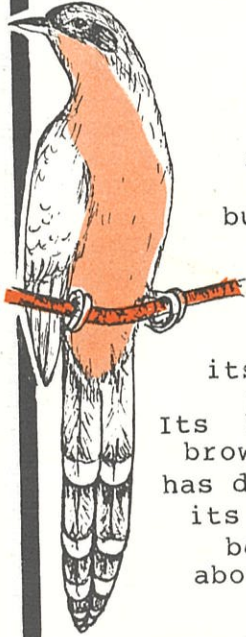
The next time you see a large, long-tailed, brown bird perched on the telephone wires, check it out. If it has a black cap, a curved beak and bright, dark eyes that seem to watch every move you make, it might be Falco sparverius.





# THE MANGROVE CUCKOO

*Coccyzus minor*



If you have ever heard a strange noise like a duck quacking in the bush it might have been a mangrove Cuckoo, *Coccyzus minor*.

This bird, with its unmusical voice is very handsome. Its head and back are brownish-grey and it has darker patches over its ears. Its strong beak is shiny black above and orange with a black tip below.

Its chest feathers are a light rusty-red colour fading away to white and its long tail feathers are black with a wide white band at the edge. It is a big bird, about 12 inches long and would be easy to identify if it sat around peacefully on a branch waiting to be seen. But the Mangrove Cuckoo is quite secretive and prefers mangrove swamps where it can skulk around with little fear of being observed. You will probably only hear its loud, croaking cry as it flaps away through the undergrowth.

The coucou maniok, to give it its patois name, is one of the few birds that will eat hairy caterpillars. Most other species leave them well alone, but the Cuckoo enjoys this delicacy and seems to come to no

harm for eating it. It will also catch and eat grasshoppers and any other insects that come its way. Like all insect-eating birds, this species helps to keep Nature in balance. When Man interferes with this balance by the widespread use of poisons, he not only kills the harmful insects but also many others that are useful to him. He also endangers birds like the Cuckoo that are entirely dependant on the insects for their food.

Like many larger birds, this one is not too good at nest-building. Its nest is a flimsy thing roughly made of a few twigs and sticks pushed together among the branches of a tree. The female lays 2 or 3 blue-green eggs in it that she sits on until they hatch. No-one seems to know how long this takes, but when the young ones do arrive they are probably fed by both parents like most other species.

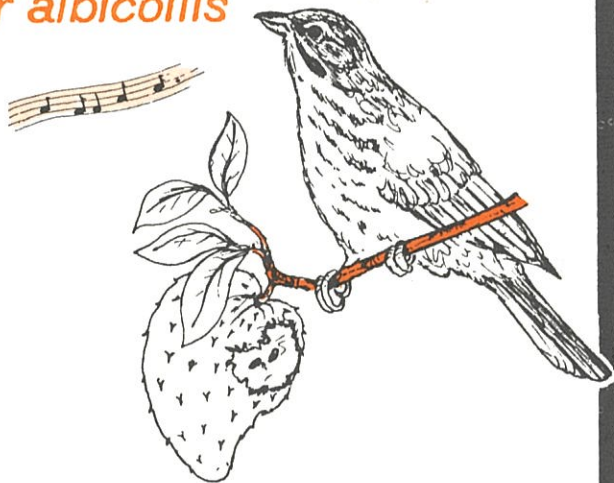
Because the Mangrove Cuckoo likes to hide away, especially among the mangroves, it could quickly become rare if too much of its habitat was destroyed. Some birds, like the Carib Grackles and the Bananaquits have learned to live close to man, but the Mangrove Cuckoo needs the peace and privacy of its special habitat if it is to survive.

# THE STREAKED SALTATOR

*Saltator albicollis*

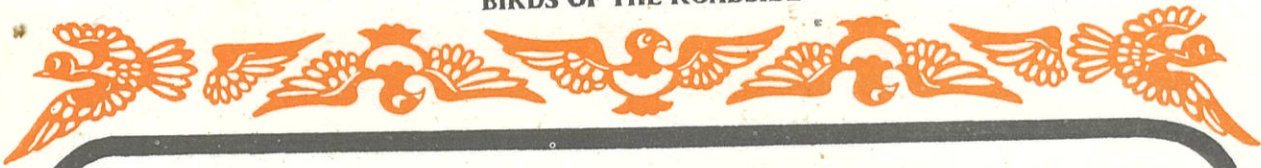
Like the Mangrove Cuckoo, the Streaked Saltator, Saltator albicollis may be a bird that you have heard but not seen. Its song is not much to boast about, usually a collection of 5 notes whistled one after the other with no particular tune. You will often hear this bird late in the afternoon, just as it is getting dark. It will whistle its 5 notes over and over again, long after the other birds have gone quietly to roost.

The Streaked Saltator is a small, chunky, olive-green bird with a white breast streaked with green and a white stripe over each eye. It belongs to the same family as the Lesser Antillean Bullfinch, Loxigilla noctis and the tiny Black-faced Grassquit, Tiaris bicolor. This bird family is called Fringillidae and its members can usually be recognised by their short heavy beaks that are used for crushing seeds. The Saltator will also eat fruit if it has a chance. If you have noticed something taking large mouthfuls out of your sour-sops or helping themselves to your beans, listen for that tell-tale song. If there is a Saltator around you may not be quick enough to see it but you will certainly hear it whistling.



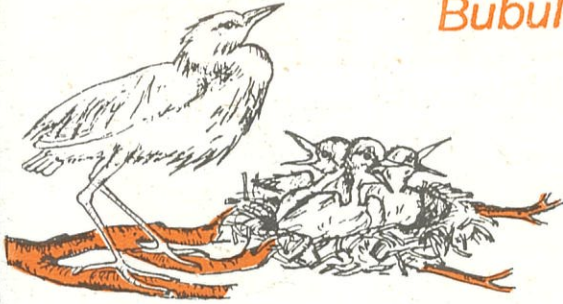
The patois name for the Saltator is gwiv gwobek and although it is not much of a singer it can certainly build a fine nest. It is usually set in the branches of a tree about 6 to 8 feet above the ground and shaped like a deep cup. It is made of twigs and leaves and then lined with smaller twigs. The 2 or 3 eggs that the female lays in it are blue with black markings at the big end as if some-one had been scribbling on them. Only the female will incubate but her mate will bring her food and guard the nest if she should leave it for a while. The young hatch after about 13 days and then he will help to feed them.

The Streaked Saltator is found in secondary forest or in areas of scrub and bush in the drier parts of the island. It is a solitary bird and will usually be alone except at nesting time.



# THE CATTLE EGRET

## *Bubulcus ibis*



The Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis*, is one bird that you won't have to search very hard for. Look in any field where cattle are grazing or on the rubbish dumps and you are sure to see them. Wobbling about on long, thin, yellow legs they move through the grass, bobbing their heads from side to side as they poke around with their yellow beaks searching for food. What do they eat? They gobble up cockroaches and maggots in the refuse. They catch the grasshoppers and other insects that are disturbed by the cows as they walk around. Spiders, lizards, small frogs, even a tick or two will provide them with a very good meal. It will also help the farmer to rid his fields of some of these pests.

Because the Cattle Egret is so often seen with cattle it is sometimes called the 'tick bird' but in patois its name is kwabyé gaday bef. It is a beautiful sight to see these graceful white birds flying home in the evening. Although they spend the day feeding on the mainland they return to their roosting places at night. This might be in the safety of a

mangrove swamp, or on a high cliff or even on one of the small offshore islands. Many of the Cattle Egrets that can be seen around Vieux Fort have their home on the Maria Islands. They live in large groups and it is possible to find as many as a thousand nests or more in one colony. In Saint Lucia, the Cattle Egret is a very recent immigrant and so the colonies are smaller but they are growing all the time.

The Cattle Egret's nest is a poor specimen. Just a rough platform of twigs and reeds stuck in the branches of a tree. In it the female will lay 2 or 3 pale blue eggs that will take about 3 weeks to hatch. Both parents will incubate them. The young are ready for their first flight when they are a month old, but many of them die at this stage and the parents seldom have to rear more than one chick.

Cattle Egrets are found all over the world but they were seen for the first time in the Americas less than 100 years ago. They came from Africa a distance of over 3,000 miles! When Christopher Columbus sailed to the New World he crossed the ocean in a boat. The ancestors of the Cattle Egrets that we see today, did it on the wing! They were probably blown off course by a storm, just like the locusts that came with hurricane Joan in 1988.



# BUSH TALK



## BIRDS OF THE FOREST

1. The Rufous-throated Solitaire
2. Pigeons and Doves
3. Flycatchers
4. Thrashers and Tremblers
5. Wood Warblers and Tanagers



# THE RUFIOUS-THROATED SOLITAIRE

## *Myadestes genibarbis*

The Rufous-throated Solitaire, *Myadestes genibarbis* belongs to the group of birds known as Passeriformes. About half of the 8,600 bird species known to man are in this group. They are divided into smaller groups or families. The Rufous-throated Solitaire is one of the 306 members of the family of Turridae or Thrushes.

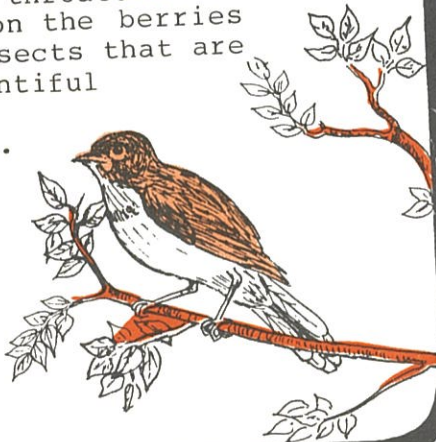
Although Thrushes are found all over the world, this species is only found in the Caribbean. In St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Martinique and Dominica, it makes its home in the high rainforest. In Jamaica and Hispaniola, where it is also found, winter in the mountains can get quite cool. Then, the 'Fiddler' as they call him, will come down from the mountains to the lower warmer parts of the forest. In St. Lucia its name is 'mountain whistler' or, in patois, siffleur montagne. Some people think the birds clear, musical song sounds like the notes of a flute. They say it is the most beautiful of all Caribbean birdsongs.

Now a beautiful voice does not always come from a beautiful bird. The splendid, colourful peacock with his horrible croak is proof of that! Even our National bird, *Amazona versicolor* is more easily recognised in the forest by his harsh

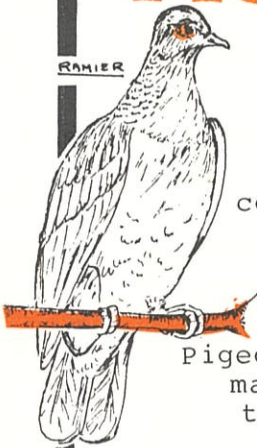
cries than by his fine feathers. But the siffleur montagne has both - fine feathers and a fine voice. It is about 7½ inches long with a dark grey back and head and a pale, almost white breast. Beneath its chin and under its tail are patches of bright red. And, when it spreads its tail to fly, you will see that it has an edge of white feathers. If you manage to get close enough, you will also see the white patches under its eyes and on its chin. These give the bird a comical expression.

*Myadestes genibarbis* is a shy bird. Its cup-shaped nest is usually well hidden in a hole in a bank or in the heart of a tree fern. The female who looks exactly like her mate, sits on her two white or greyish, spotted eggs until they hatch. When the young ones appear with their speckled feathers, they are fed by both the parents.

Like most thrushes, the Rufous-throated Solitaire feeds on the berries and insects that are so plentiful in the forest.



# PIGEONS AND DOVES



RAMIER

## The Columbidae family

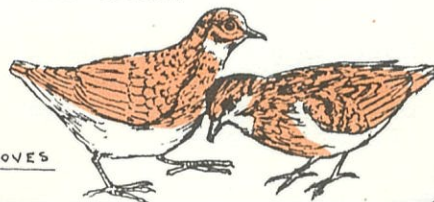
Only a few members of this family are found in the Caribbean. Some are quite common like the Ground Dove or ortolan, and the Zenaida Dove or tourterelle. Others like the Red-necked Pigeon, *Columba squamosa* may not be as familiar to you. The Ramier, as it is called in St. Lucia, is a large, handsome bird about 15 inches long. Its feathers are dark grey and glossy and its neck and head shine with the glittering metallic shades of red, purple and brown. Its strong feet and the skin at the top of its beak are red. The male also has bright red skin around his eyes but in the female this skin is yellow.

Ramiers build a rough nest of twigs, usually in the branches of a tree. The female will lay one or two white eggs in it. Then, like all the members of this bird family they will take turns to protect the nest. At night though, it is usually the female who stays on guard. The young ones, when they hatch, are quite ugly. They are naked and blind with their large mouths always open waiting for food. It is several days before their eyes open and their feathers start to grow. At first, both of the parents produce a thick milky food in their crop to feed their babies or 'squabs'. Later on they will feed them on seeds that they have partly digested.

The Ruddy Quail Dove or perdrix rouge and the bridled Quail Dove (perdrix croissant), are smaller cousins of the ramier. They are about 12 inches long. Instead of the gentle cooing noises that the pigeon makes they have a loud, booming call that is easy to recognise. The perdrix rouge, whose Latin name is *Geotrygon montana* is found in Central and South America as well as on most Caribbean islands. The male and female are both brown with a pale brown streak below the eye. The female is darker than the male.

The male and female perdrix croissant, *Geotrygon mystacea* are the same dark greeny-brown as the female perdrix rouge. But they are easy to tell apart because they have white throats and the streak under their eye is white instead of pale brown. They also have small patches of green and purple on their backs. They live only in the Caribbean and Saint Lucia is the furthest south they are found.

Quail Doves build their nests close to the ground - even on it! Their 1 or 2 pale brown eggs are cared for by both parents. Like all the other birds in the Columbidae bird family, they feed their young on 'pigeon's milk' and half digested seeds until they leave the nest.



QUAIL DOVES



## FLYCATCHERS

The Flycatchers that live in the Caribbean all belong to a large bird family called the Tyrannidae. This family has over 360 species including Kingbirds, Pewees and Eleanias. All of them live in the New World.

One member of this family is the Stolid Flycatcher or Myiarchus stolidus. It is known in St. Lucia as gwo tet. Because the St. Lucian variety is thought to be slightly different to the others it has been given a new Latin name, Myiarchus oberi.

I am sure that you have already guessed what the Stolid Flycatcher eats - flies. But they do also eat other insects. They have a broad, flattish beak that is perfect for this job and can pick an insect from the air in mid-flight. They are a bit smaller than their cousin the Grey Kingbird or pipirite, whose Latin name is Tyrannus dominicensis. Their feathers are dark grey with a slightly darker head and lighter coloured belly. Toward the tail the underparts are yellowish, but the tail itself is more of a reddish-brown. These flycatchers like to build their nests in holes in trees. The female lays three or four spotted eggs that she sits on until they hatch. Her mate helps her to feed the young ones until they are ready to leave the nest.

Another member of the flycatcher family is the Lesser Antillean Pewee, Contopus latirostris. In patois its name is gob mouche. This small grey-brown bird usually has a yellowish chest but the St. Lucian variety has a pretty rusty red colour instead. It is a cheeky little bird, with a crest on its head and a high, piping voice that repeats over and over, "Peet, pee..t, pee..t". It lives in the forest or on hillsides that are well-covered with trees and is found on only five Caribbean islands. Saint Lucia is one, the others are Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe and Puerto Rico. The male and his mate both take a great deal of care in building their cup-shaped nest. They will fix it firmly to the branches of a tree or wedge it securely in the fork made by the branches. The female lays just two eggs and as usual, she is the one who has the job of incubating them. Once the fledgelings arrive however, the male will help her to feed them until they are ready to fly.

The birds that belong to the Tyrannidae family often have a crest of feathers on the crown of their head. They raise this when they are alarmed or threatened. The gwo tet and the gob mouche live in the rain-forest but other members of this family have adapted to live in almost every kind of habitat.



PEARLY-EYED  
THRASHER

# THRASHERS AND TREMBLERS

The Pearly-eyed Thrasher, Margarops fuscatus, the Scaly-breasted Thrasher, Margarops fuscus and the Trembler, Cinclocerthia ruficauda, all belong to the same family as the Mockingbird, Mimus gilvas. It is a small family with only 31 species called the Mimidae. Some of them, like the four mentioned here, are only found in the West Indies.

The Pearly-eyed Thrasher or gwo gwive is about the same size as a Blackbird and has dark brown feathers with markings like scales on its white breast. Its beak is large and yellow-brown and its eyes are pale.

These birds build their nest in a bush, on a branch or even in a hole in a tree trunk, like a parrot. The female sits on her 2 or 3 greeny-blue eggs for about 12 days. When they hatch, the young birds are fed by both the parents. The gwo gwive eats insects, berries and seeds. It finds them by digging about in the fallen leaves on the forest floor.

Margarops fuscus, the Scaly-breasted Thrasher, looks a lot like the gwo gwive. It is rather shy and only found in the Lesser Antilles. It is smaller and has a black beak and a softer voice.

The Trembler is slightly bigger than Scaly-breasted Thrasher. Its grey feathers are dark on the back and much paler on its belly and underparts. Its patois name

is twomblay because it has a habit of trembling or shaking when it lands on the ground. It is only found in the Caribbean and ranges from St. Vincent in the South to the little island of Saba in the North.

The female Trembler is even fussier than gwo gwive about where she puts her nest. She feels safest in the little hollow made by the leaf of a palm tree where it joins the trunk, or in a hollow tree. She also lays 2 or 3 greenish-blue eggs that she sits on for 12 days. Like the offspring of the gwo gwive, her young ones will also be ready to leave the nest when they are about two weeks old.

Thrashers are birds that spend more time on the ground than in the air. When they are threatened they will often run away instead of flying. But they are brave creatures who will defend their nest or their young ones from being attacked, even from humans if they have to.

In Saint Lucia, Thrashers and Tremblers live mainly in the rainforest but they can occasionally be seen in other places.



TREMBLER



## WOOD WARBLERS AND TANAGERS

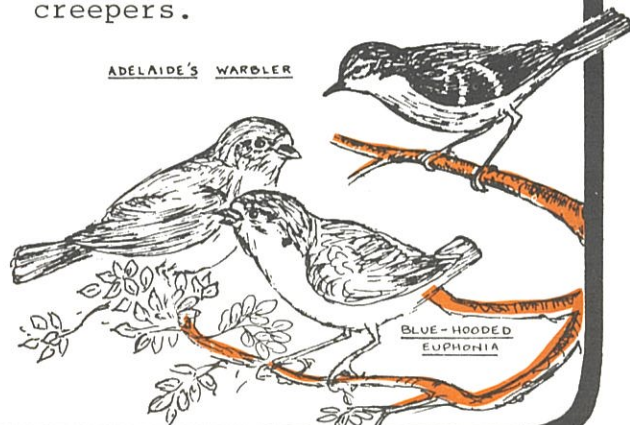
Wood Warblers live only in the New World and belong to a family called the Parulidae. There are 119 species in this bird family and they are divided into two groups. The first group contains the 109 species that eat insects. The second group is made up of the other 10 who sip nectar or honey from the flowers. The bright little black and yellow Bananquit, Coereba flaveola belongs to this last group. The Adelaide's Warbler, Dendroica adelaidae belongs to the first group.

In Saint Lucia this small bird is called sikwyé barbad. It is found only on three other islands. They are Puerto Rico, Vieques and Barbuda. It is a bit larger than the sikwyé or Bananaquit and has grey feathers on its back and tail instead of black. Both of them have a bright yellow belly but the sikwyé barbad has white stripes on its wings. It also has a yellow streak running up from its bill.

The male helps his mate to build their nest. It is a flimsy cup, sometimes lined with a few feathers, that they place in a bush or a small tree just a few feet above the ground. The female lays 2 or 3 spotted eggs in it and it is her job to sit on them until they hatch. When the young ones appear her mate will help her once more. The two hunt for insects to feed their hungry brood.

The Blue-headed Euphonia, Euphonia musica, is a tanager. It belongs to a much larger family called the Thraupidae, that has 222 species. They are also inhabitants of the New World and are found on most Caribbean islands as well as in Central and South America. The perouche, as it is called in patois, is a brightly coloured little bird less than five inches long that is known for its beautiful plumage. Sometimes the male and the female of this species are different colours but in Saint Lucia they are the same. As their name tells you, their heads are bright blue with a patch of orange just above their beak. Their back feathers are a pretty shade of green and their underparts are yellow. Like the other members of this family, the Blue-hooded Euphonia lives on berries and ripe fruit.

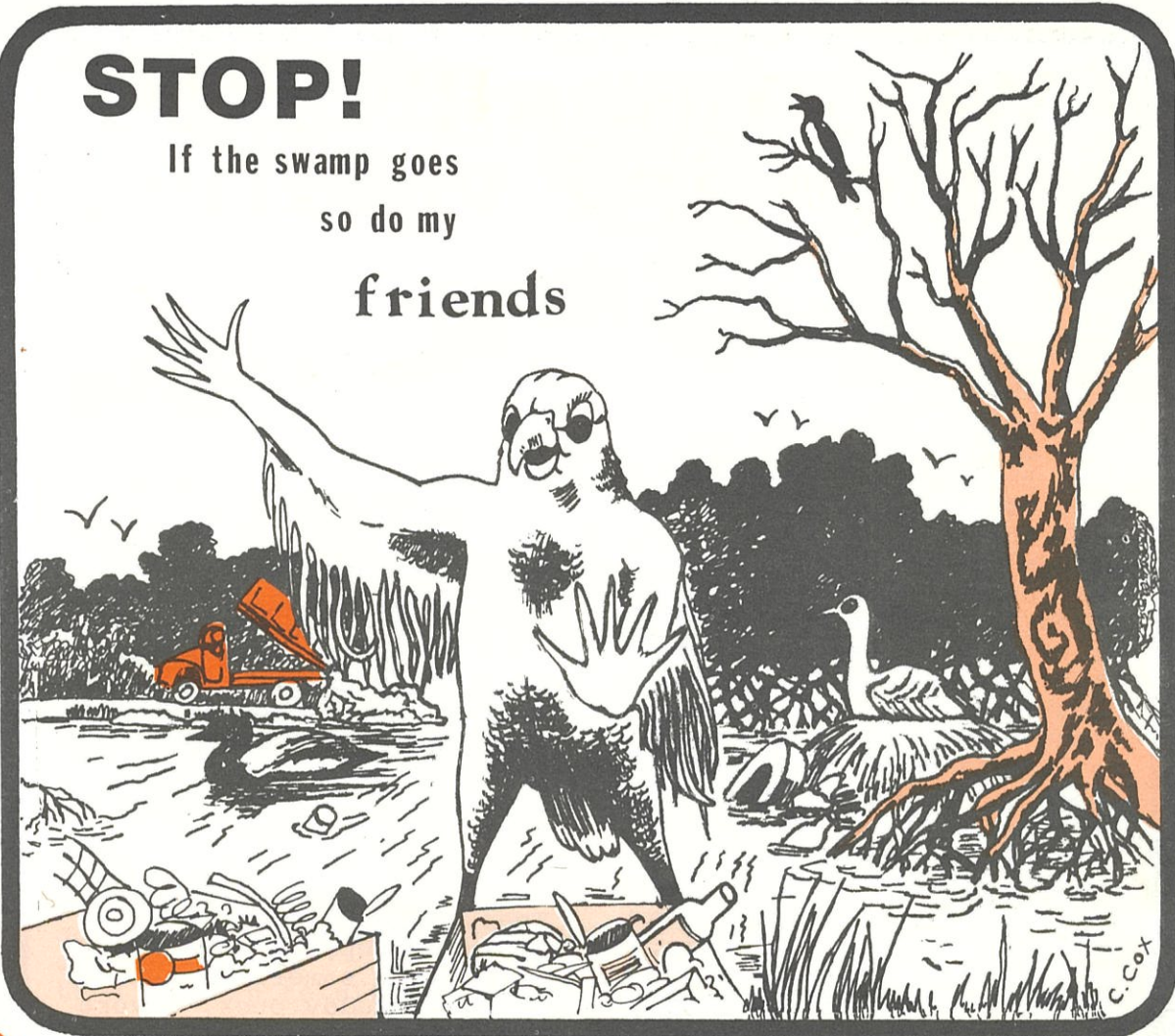
Its small, round nest with its four spotted eggs is usually carefully hidden in a tree or among forest creepers.



# BUSH TALK

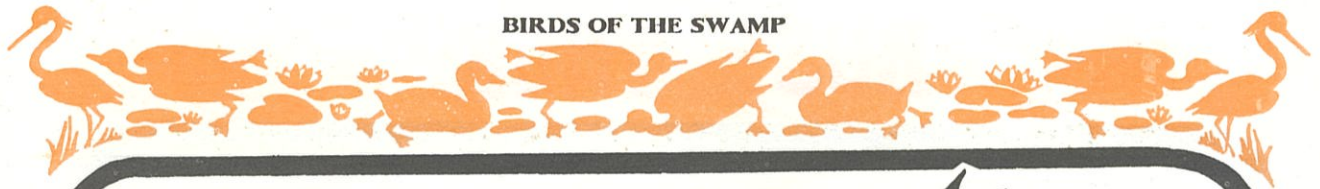
## STOP!

If the swamp goes  
so do my  
friends



## BIRDS OF THE SWAMP

1. Ducks and other Visitors
2. The Kingfisher
3. Herons and Egrets
4. More Wood Warblers
5. Coots and Gallinules



# DUCKS AND OTHER VISITORS

In most parts of the world, when people think of marshes or wetlands they also think of ducks. Ducks need water to survive. They live on it, nest on it and get their food from it. Most of the species that we see in Saint Lucia are winter visitors. They spend the summer months on the lakes and marshes of North America and Canada where they breed and lay their eggs. They raise their young ones there also, but at the end of the summer they fly to places where it is always warm like the Caribbean. The only places they can stop to rest and feed along the way are on lakes and other wetlands. As the wetlands vanish or become polluted by man, their journey becomes more and more difficult.

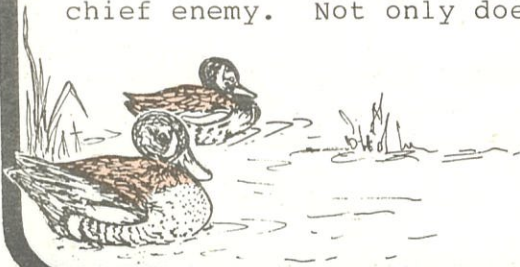
Other species can sometimes adapt to changes in their environment. For the duck, this is difficult. If the swamps and marshes disappear, they will go too. Some will keep on flying until they find another resting place, but many, already weak and tired from their long flight, will die on the way.

Man has become the ducks' chief enemy. Not only does

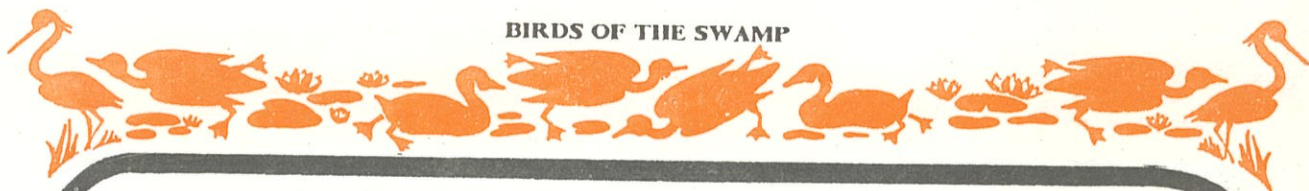
he destroy their habitat and their source of food, he also shoots them for sport. At nearly every place where they stop along the way the hunters lie in wait with their guns. Each year the visiting flocks become smaller.

At one time, large mangrove swamps were common around Saint Lucia's coast. Teal, Canvasbacks, Pintails, Shovellers and the American Widgeon were often seen. Now, many of these areas have been drained or cleared to make way for houses or boats. The marshes that remain are nearly all threatened and ducks are rare. Only the Blue-winged Teal, Anas discors and the Lesser Scaup, Aythya affinis, are sometimes seen. Even the Ruddy Duck, Oxyura jamaicensis, our only local species, seems to have vanished.

At Bois D'Orange, owners of the new houses going up close to the swamp are using it as a dumping ground for garbage. Even the Corinth River that flows through it is choked with rubbish. The river also carries fertiliser and other agro-chemicals that have been washed off the land by the heavy rain. All these things help destroy the bird's natural habitat. Just a few years ago there were still a few ducks to be seen resting at the Bois D'Orange swamp on their long migration south. Today there are none.

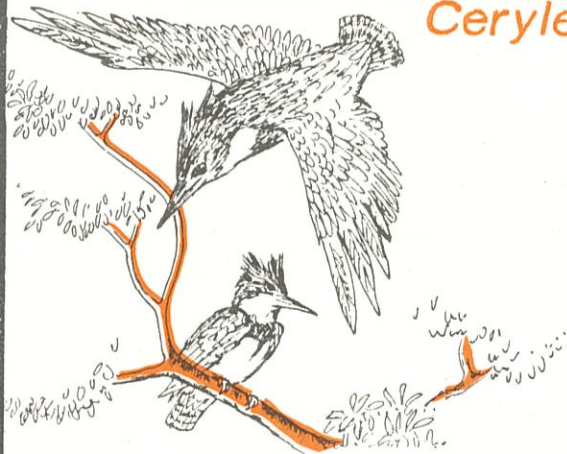






# THE KINGFISHER

## *Ceryle alcyon*



The Belted Kingfisher, *Ceryle alcyon* is another inhabitant of marshy areas. This pretty bird is sometimes called pipirite day-mang. If you study it very closely you will see why. Perched on the low branches of a tree, the Kingfisher will watch the water with its beady black eyes. Every now and then, it will swoop out to catch something, then return to sit in the same place and watch again. It does not usually eat flies like the Grey Kingbird, it eats fish. When a fish is sighted, the bird will dive under the surface to come up with it held firm in its large, sharp beak. Then it will throw back its head and swallow the fish head first. Although the Kingfisher has good eyesight, if fish are scarce or if the water is not too clear you may see it hovering in one place right over the water so that it can get a better view.

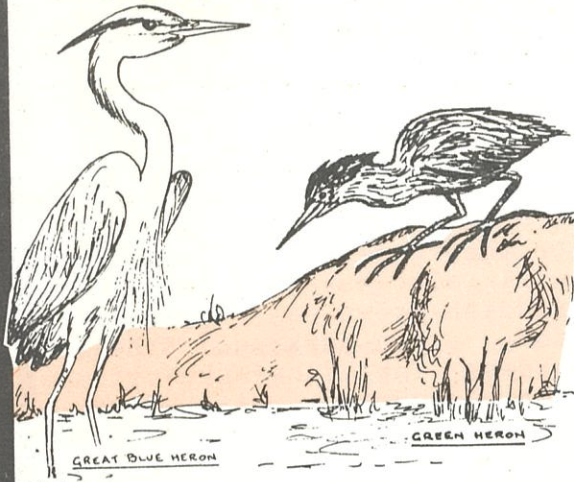
The Kingfisher is larger than the Kingbird or pipirite and more brightly coloured. It is 12 to 13

inches long with light blue feathers on its head and back. Its chest is white, with a wide band of grey-blue and its head is decorated with a feathery crest. On the female's chest there will also be a streak of reddish-brown as well as some brown markings on her sides. The Kingfisher is not a songbird. His voice is a harsh, rattling cry rather like that of the Mangrove Cuckoo.

There are 6 species of Kingfisher in the New World but only 2 of these are found in the Caribbean. The Belted Kingfisher is one. He is also another of our winter visitors. He breeds in North America, but later flies south, visiting Saint Lucia and most of the other Caribbean islands. The second species is the Ringed Kingfisher, *Ceryle torquata*. This bird is found in Central and South America as well as Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique and Trinidad, but not in Saint Lucia. It prefers to live close to freshwater streams and rivers where it can lay its eggs in a deep burrow or hole in the bank.

In Africa there are other species of Kingfishers that live in the forest. They eat insects, frogs and lizards. They will even eat small animals. They have learned to live away from water. The Belted Kingfisher has not. Like the ducks it still depends on the wetlands for its food and its survival.

# HERONS AND EGRETS



The Cattle Egret, Bubulcus ibis has already been mentioned in the section dealing with Birds of the Roadside. Now we will look at some of the other Herons and Egrets that live in the swamps.

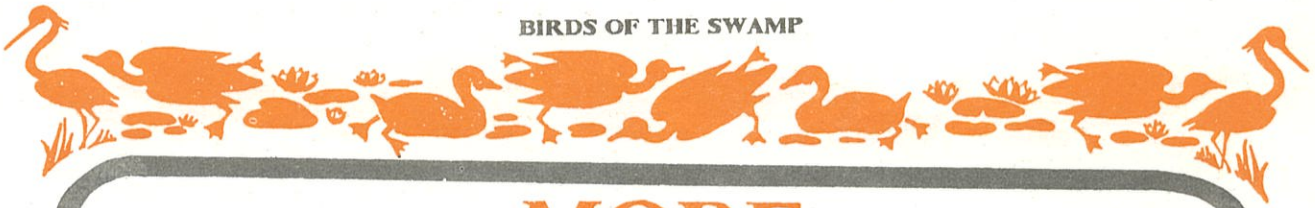
One that you might have seen is the Little Blue Heron, Florida caerulea. This bird is about 2 feet tall, long-legged and long-necked with a reddish-brown head. The feathers on its body are dark blue-grey and it is called little because its cousin, the Great Blue, is at least twice its height. Both birds nest in tall trees or deep in the mangrove swamps and live in groups or colonies. The parents take it in turn to guard their 2 or 3 pale blue eggs until they hatch. They also share the job of feeding the young ones. The Little Blue Heron, when it is very young, has pure white feathers. It is often mistaken for a Cattle Egret but the beaks of Cattle Egrets are yellow while the Little Blue Heron's beak is black.

The Great Blue Heron, Ardea herodias, and its young ones are dark grey all over with a fringe of black feathers behind. When they are feeding, these birds will stand quite still in the water for ages waiting for a fish to come along. Then, with a swift stab of their long, sharp beak, the fish is caught and just as quickly eaten. A bird the size of a Great Blue can eat several pounds of fish in a day.

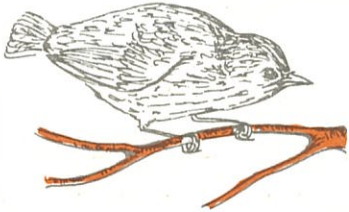
The Great Egret, Egretta alba, is another member of this family. It is slightly smaller than the Great Blue but still much bigger than a Cattle Egret. It has beautiful, white feathers and a yellow beak. It also has a habit of waving its head from side to side on its long, slender neck when it is searching the water for fish.

A bird that is quite often seen walking along the riverbanks or through the marshes is the Green Heron or kyelli. Its Latin name is Butorides virescens and it is a handsome bird but shorter than the Little Blue. You might see it stalking along a river bank or just standing quietly by the edge of a swamp. The feathers on its back are a dark, glossy green with glints of purple. Its head, neck and chest are reddish-brown and its legs and toes are greenish-yellow.

The Green Heron builds its nest in a bush or a tree. It is a full-time resident of Saint Lucia.



## MORE WOOD WARBLERS



YELLOW WARBLER

At the beginning of this book you read about the rare Semper's Warbler, found only in Saint Lucia. Later, in 'Birds of the Forest' you were introduced to the Adelaide's Warbler. Both of these birds are members of the bird family Parulidae, otherwise known as 'Wood Warblers'. Now you will learn about two more birds from this same group. These two species do not live in the forests like the others. Instead, they prefer the habitat of the marshes or wetlands.

The first is the Yellow Warbler, *Dendroica petechia*, a small yellow bird about 5 inches long. The male has streaks of brown on his chest but in flight these are hardly noticeable. All you see is a bright yellow flash as the bird whirrs through the air. Their main food is insects and these are found in plenty among the mangroves or in the bushes that grow around the edges of the swamps. Some Yellow Warblers breed in North America and come south for the winter months. In Saint Lucia many of them stay all year round. They build a neat little cup-like nest in a low tree or bush. In it the female lays 2 or 3

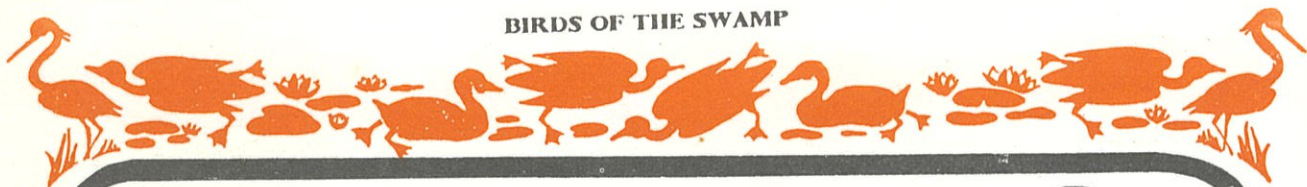
spotted eggs. Both parents take turns at caring for the eggs and the male will also help to feed the young ones when they hatch.

The second of our wetland Wood Warblers is the Northern Waterthrush, *Seiurus noveboracensis*. No its not a mistake! This bird has nothing to do with the thrush family. It probably got its name because it spends most of its time walking around, as many thrushes do. It pokes about in the moist soil, searching for insects. If the ground is covered with dead leaves, the Waterthrush will fling these aside hoping to find some juicy morsel underneath.

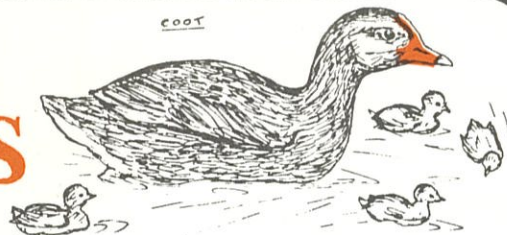
The Northern Waterthrush is a bit bigger than the Yellow Warbler but not as colourful. The male and female look the same with greenish-brown feathers on their backs and a yellow stripe on their cheeks. You won't see this bird's nest or its young ones. All the birds of this species breed in North America. Like the tourists, they fly down to the Caribbean to escape the cold winter weather.



WATER THRUSH



## COOTS AND GALLINULES



Some water birds live and breed in the Caribbean, like the Common Gallinule, Gallinula chloropus and the Caribbean Coot, Fulica caribaea. The coot is about the same size as a small duck - 15 inches - and has blackish-grey feathers. Its head and neck are darker than the rest of its body and on the top of its beak and the front of its head is a large white patch. The Gallinule is smaller and has a brownish-coloured back while the rest of its plumage is sooty-black. It also has a bright red patch at the top of its beak. In Saint Lucia they are called poule glo.

The places where the poule glo like to live are often very overgrown with reeds and other water plants. Their long, greenish legs and long toes make it easy for them to walk through the vegetation. They can even walk ON the leaves of some of the plants. They have strong beaks, shaped like the beak of a chicken and with this they pick up snails, crabs and any of the smaller insects that live in the swamp. They will also eat plants.

These water birds build large nests at the edge of the river or swamp where they live. In them they lay their spotted eggs - 3 to 9 for the Gallinules but as many as 12 for the Coot.

The young are ready to leave the nest after a few days. Until they are about one month old they will return to the nest every night.

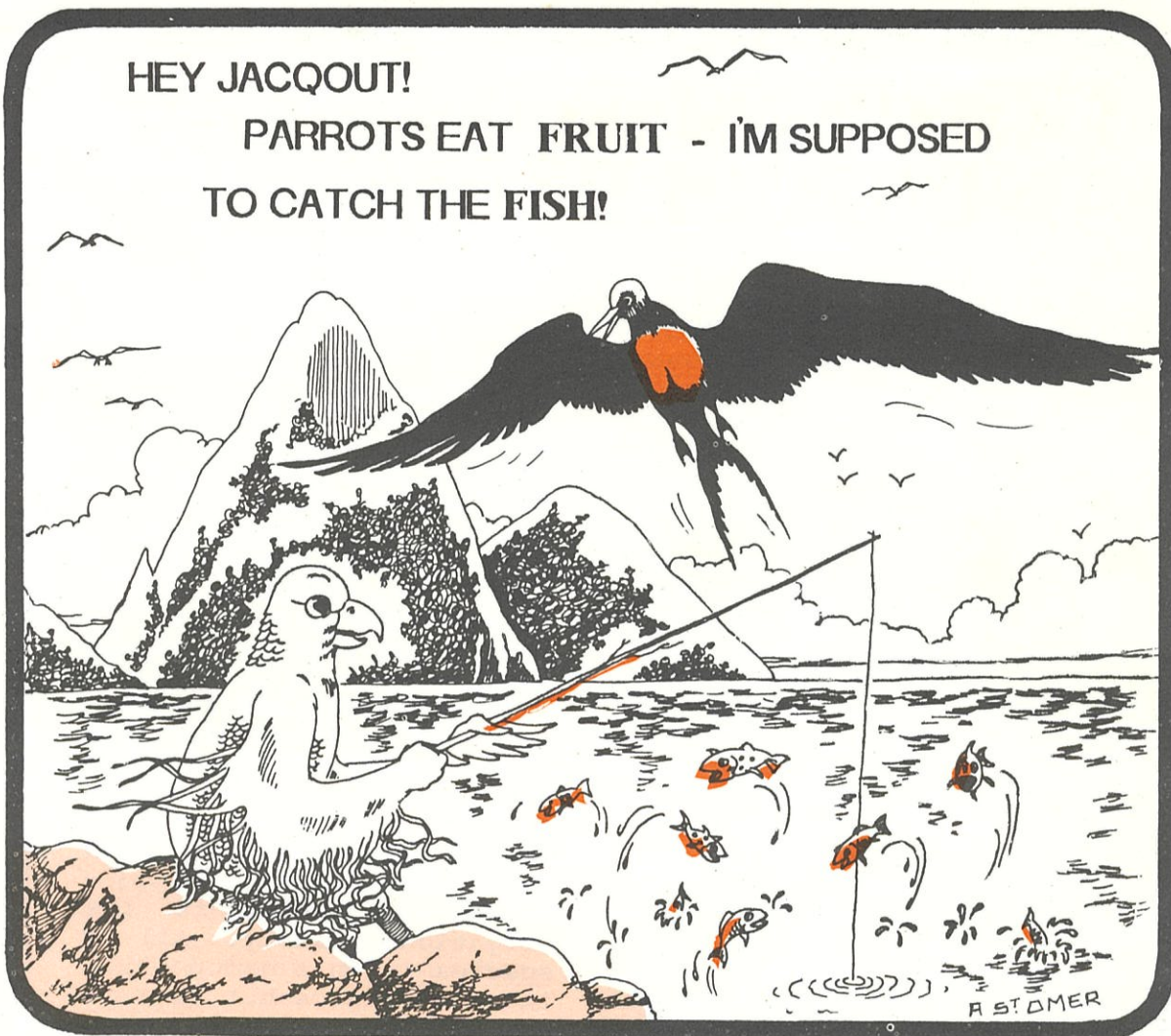
If you take a look along the edge of the Anse la Raye River just before it reaches the sea you might still see a Common Gallinule or poule glo, swimming with her young. Another place where these birds are commonly seen is the fresh-water marsh near Hewanorra. At Bois D'Orange the swamp has become so overgrown that there is very little open water left except after heavy rain. But still the poule glo's loud voice can often be heard there.

Another species of Gallinule that has been seen in Saint Lucia is the Purple Gallinule, Porphyryla martinica. This is one of the most beautiful of all water birds. Except for a white patch under its tail, the feathers of its lower body, head and neck are purple. On its back the feathers are a beautiful, shimmering green. Like the Gallinula chloropus, the Common Gallinule, it also has a red patch above its beak. But its frontal shield is bright blue and its long slender feet are yellow. It does not nest on the ground like the others. It will build its nest of grass among the mangroves or in the reeds, several feet above the water.

# BUSH TALK

HEY JACQOUT!

PARROTS EAT FRUIT - I'M SUPPOSED  
TO CATCH THE FISH!



## BIRDS OF THE SEASHORE

1. Frigatebirds and Gulls
2. The Tern Family
3. Tropicbirds
4. Boobies and Pelicans
5. Sandpipers and Curlews



## FRIGATEBIRDS AND GULLS



In this section, we will look at some of the seabirds that live around our coast. Two species that are seen quite often are the Laughing Gull, Larus atricilla and the Magnificent Frigatebird, Fregata magnificens.

The Laughing Gull is one of 43 species that belong to the family called the Laridae. These birds are found all over the world and are seen around most harbours and beaches. They live in groups or colonies, on steep cliffs or small rocky islands. The mature bird is about 18 inches long and is dark grey on the back and wings with a white belly and red legs. In the breeding season from April to June, its head which is usually black and white, turns dark grey and its hooked black beak turns red. It gets its name from the loud cackling sounds that it makes.

The female Gull lays her 2 or 3 spotted eggs in a clumsy nest on the ground or a ledge of rock and the male helps her guard them. The parents both look after the young ones until they are ready to fly. This is usually when they are a month old.

The wings of the large black Frigatebird measure 7 feet from tip to tip. The largest known wing area for a bird of this size. Because this bird opens and closes its tail like a pair of

scissors, its patois name is siso. It hovers over the sea, swooping down every now and then to grab a fish or some refuse. If there are Gulls or Boobies around, it will often steal their catch. It was because of this that sailors gave it the name of 'Man-o-War Bird'.

The Frigatebirds feathers are not waterproof. You will never see it settle on the water or dive in for its food. If it did this it would get waterlogged and be unable to take off.

The siso belongs to the Frigatidae family. All 5 species in this group live in the tropics but this is the only one that is seen in Saint Lucia. The male is easy to identify because of the orangey-red sac under his throat. In the mating season this sac turns bright red and swells up like a big balloon. This attracts the attention of the white-throated female. The birds nest in colonies on remote rocky islands like Frigate Island near Dennery. One ugly, naked chick will hatch from their single white egg and it will take 5 months before this chick has all of its feathers and is ready to fly. At first its head will be white. This will only change when it becomes an adult at 2-3 years.



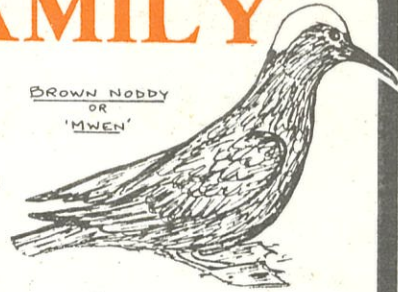
## THE TERN FAMILY

Terns belong to the same large family as the Laughing Gull, the Laridae, but they are usually smaller with longer pointed wings and forked tails. They are often called 'sea swallows' and like swallows they can fly tremendous distances. The little Arctic tern is known as the World's greatest wanderer. It will fly from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back again in a year, 22,000 miles!

If you see a bird that is mainly white or pale grey with a white belly and a dark cap on its head, it will probably be a Tern. The largest species that we get here is the Royal tern, Thalasseus maximus. It is about 20 inches long with a large orange or yellow beak and a crest of feathers at the back of its head. The Bridled Tern, Sterna anaethetus; the Sooty Tern, Sterna fuscata; the Common Tern, Sterna hirundo and the Roseate Stern, Sterna dougallii are next in size - all about 15 inches. The Sooty Tern is easy to pick out because he is darker than the rest. He is also noisy, even at night. If Sooty Terns are disturbed at their nest site, the whole flock will rise up with a great cry and then fly silently out over the sea. This is called a 'dread'. After a while, they re-group and return to the nest.

The Least Tern, Sterna albifrons, is last on the list. A tiny bird only 9 inches long, it can be seen in flocks of 170 or more.

BROWN NODDY  
OR  
'MVEN'

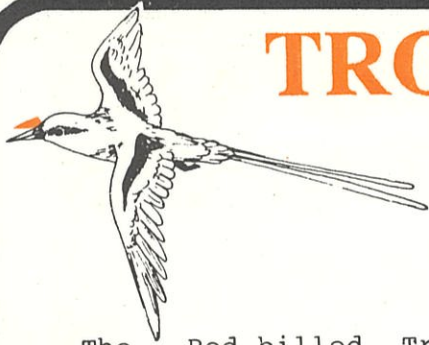
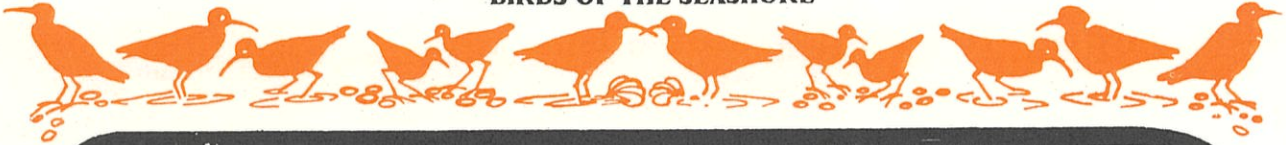


The Brown Noddy, Anous stolidus,

is another member of the Tern family. Like many other Terns it is about 15 inches long but is easily recognised because its colours are different. All of its feathers are dark brown except for a white patch on the top of its head. Its tail is also different, being shaped like a wedge instead of forked.

Most seabirds live and breed in colonies. Often, several different species of Tern can be found living together. Many lay only one spotted egg, but the Least Tern, the Common Tern and the Roseate Tern will lay as many as three. If these birds build a nest at all it is only a few twigs or a bit of seaweed or sometimes just a single feather! The eggs are often laid on the bare ground or on a ledge. The young hatch out after 4 or 5 weeks but stay close to the nest until they are ready to fly. In large breeding colonies, young birds that stray are often snatched and eaten by other adults. The parent Terns take it in turn to babysit. If their young are threatened they can become very aggressive and will peck intruders and squirt them with faeces.

A breeding colony of seabirds is one of the noisiest smelliest, places on earth!



## TROPICBIRDS

The Red-billed Tropicbird, Phaethon aethereus, is the most beautiful of all our seabirds. It is a large bird, 16 to 32 inches long with a body shaped very much like a Tern's. Much of its length is in the long, graceful tail that makes it very easy to identify. It has a big, razor-sharp beak that, as its name tells you, is red. The white feathers on the back of Phaethon aethereus are barred with black and there is a clear black stripe across its eye. Of the three species that belong to the Phaethontidae family, this is the one you will most often see.

The White-tailed Tropicbird, Phaethon lepturus, is also seen here, although it is found much more often on the larger islands. It is sometimes called the Yellow billed Tropicbird. It is not as big or as stocky as the Red-billed Tropicbird and its beak is more of an orange colour, not red. Its back is pure white and does not have any black markings but on the inside part of its wings there is a definite black band.

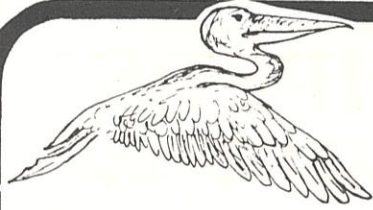
The third member of the Phaethontidae family is the Red-tailed Tropicbird, Phaethon rubricauda. This one you will not see in the Caribbean. It lives only in the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

Tropicbirds, like Terns, are pelagic. That means that they spend a good deal of their life far out at sea. They come ashore only to breed and prefer lonely, rocky places like the Maria Islands, or the cliffs at the back of Moule a Chique. If you climb the hill to the lighthouse, you will see them chasing each other through the air. Their tail feathers stream out behind them in the wind. If you are close enough, you may even hear their loud, screaming cries.

On land, Tropicbirds are clumsy and move around as little as possible on their short legs. The female will lay her one spotted egg in a hole among the rocks or on a ledge on the cliff wall. The male will then help her by taking turns to guard it, sitting on the nest for about a week at a time. The egg takes 6 weeks to hatch and the chick is born already covered with fluffy white down. It will be fed by both parents but one of them will always stay to defend the nest while the other is searching for food. They will do this until the chick is 2 or 3 months old.

Tropicbirds feed on fish and squid which they catch by diving into the sea. The young ones will make short flights at 2 or 3 months and are soon as quick and graceful as the adults. Now they are ready to fly with them over the ocean. They will not return to their rocky hideaway until the next breeding season.





## BOOBIES AND PELICANS

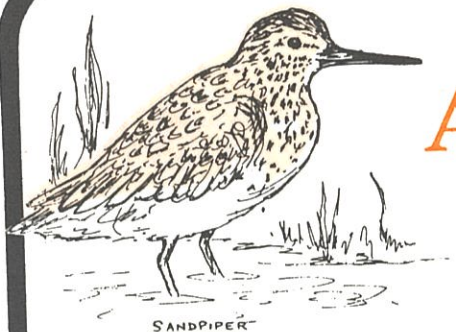
Boobies, Pelicans and Tropicbirds all belong to different families in the large bird group known as the Pelicaniformes. They are put together in the same group because they all have webs on all four toes of their feet. The six species of Booby belong in the family called Sulidae. Three out of the six are found in tropical oceans including the Caribbean. There was a time when all three could be seen around the coast of Saint Lucia. Now, the only one that is common is the Brown Booby, Sula leucogaster. The Red-footed Booby, Sula sula, and the Blue-faced Booby, Sula dactylatra are hardly seen at all. They are large heavy-bodied birds with long necks and even longer beaks. Their feathers stop just above their eyes like a rather neat hairdo. On Sula leucogaster, the face, bill and legs are yellow and they have a rather comical expression. Perhaps that's how they got their name. In patois, they are called fou brun, which is almost the same thing. Although the feathers of the Brown Booby are mostly brown its lower breast and belly are white and there are white bands on its wings.

Boobies do a lot of their fishing out at sea. They dive under the water to catch their prey and are fast enough to catch a flying fish on the wing. They swallow them whole, bones, scales, and skin.

Their stomach juices are so strong that they can easily digest everything.

Like most sea birds they are pretty awful at nest building. A few feathers or sticks or even small stones and that's good enough! Although they are not as friendly as some species, Boobies still nest in groups. They prefer rocky islands or cliffs where the female can lay her 2 eggs undisturbed. It takes 6 weeks for the eggs to hatch and her mate helps her to incubate them. The chicks do not fly until they are 3 or 4 months old but they will leave the nest before that. The parents share the job of feeding them, pushing bits of half-digested fish down their throats with their sharp beaks.

The Brown Pelican, Pelecanus occidentalis, belongs to the family Pelicanidae. These birds were once seen in large numbers around Saint Lucia's coast but not any more. The fishermen called them gwan gozyé. They killed them because of the large numbers of fish they could scoop up in their pouch. The hunters killed it for sport. We know now that the type of fish the Pelica caught were not the sort of fish the fishermen wanted anyway. Too late! This handsome bird was missing from our shores for about 20 years. Only recently have people reported seeing one or two again.



SANDPIPER

## SANDPIPERS AND CURLEWS

The birds in this section all belong to the Scolopacidae family. It is the largest of all the families of wading birds. Altogether this family has about 70 species. Unlike the other seabirds we have studied, they seldom nest here. Instead, after spending their winters in the sun, they fly thousands of miles north to their breeding grounds in America, Canada or the Arctic.

Many of the wading birds seen in Saint Lucia belong to a group called the Sandpipers. The Sanderling, Calidris alba, is one. Pale little birds about 8 inches long with a white belly and white bands on their wings. They run around in groups on their short black legs, right at the edge of the beach. You will see them poking in the wet sand with their stubby, black bills, searching for shellfish and other small marine creatures. Sometimes there may be a Ruddy Turnstone, (Arenaria interpres) there as well. He will be turning over small stones with his tipped-up beak, looking for food. He is larger than the Sanderling and darker with a brown head and orange legs.

Two other Sandpipers that you might see are the Lesser and Greater Yellow-

legs, the first, Tringa flavipes, is only 10 or 11 inches long. His cousin, Tringa melanoleuca, is 3 or 4 inches bigger. Both birds are dark brown with spots of white above and paler brown below. Their legs are yellow. Unlike most waders who only paddle in the water the Yellowlegs will go in right up to its breast. Then it will poke its head under to fish around in the mud for a tasty morsel. The beak of Tringa melanoleuca, is turned up slightly like that of the Turnstone, but Tringa flavipes' bill is shorter and straighter. In patois, the name for both of these little birds is becassin.

Another bird that is some times seen feeding with Yellowlegs is the American Dowitcher, Limnodromus griseus. Its feathers are greyish-brown with streaks of pale brown and black. Underneath its belly it is whitish. It has short, dark green legs. The female of this species is just a bit bigger than the male.

The Whimbrel, Numenius phaeopus, is a bird from another branch of the Scolopacidae family, this is the Curlews. In Saint Lucia, the Whimbrel has only been seen at places like Cas-en-Bas and Boreil's Pond. It is easy to recognise by its large, down-curving beak and thin, bluish-grey legs. Its feathers are greyish-brown, marked with white and there are dark stripes on its head and over its eyes.

# BUSH TALK

TO KILL OR NOT TO KILL  
the CHOICE is YOURS



## MIGRATORY BIRDS

1. To Kill or Not to Kill
2. Waders
3. Wigeon and Teal
4. Warblers and Raptors
5. Swallows and Martins



# TO KILL ... OR NOT TO KILL

CANADA

AMERICA

the ARCTIC

ST.  
LUCIA

S. AMERICA

Tourists are not the only ones who visit the islands of the Caribbean looking for sunshine. Every year, as the North American summer comes to an end, many species of birds start heading south. But while our human tourists are welcomed with smiles and steel bands and rum punches, some of our feathered visitors are being greeted with guns. In Saint Lucia, there has been a ban on shooting since hurricane 'Allen' in 1980. But the Hunters Association, a small group of people who hunt birds for pleasure, would like to see this ban lifted. What are their reasons for this?

One of the arguments that the hunters use is that hunting goes on all over the world. Another reason they give is that the birds they kill are not indigenous species, only visitors. Finally, they say that it is habitat destruction and not shooting that is killing off the bird life. Why do the birds need our protection?

It is true that many of the wetland habitats that are important for ducks and wading birds have already disappeared. They have been sacrificed for development vital to the island's progress. The few areas that remain are becoming more

and more polluted. Garbage is being dumped into them by people living in houses nearby. Agricultural chemicals are being carried down to them by the rivers. And topsoil, washed off the exposed land areas cleared for development is silting them up.

In many countries where there is a definite season for shooting migratory birds there are also strict rules that the hunters must obey. Large reserves or national parks provide a protected habitat for wild life at other times.

Saint Lucia is a small State with limited funds. Right now, there is neither the money to create bird sanctuaries nor the trained people to patrol them and make sure the regulations are obeyed. But we can help our visiting bird species in another way. We must do the only thing we can do - give them a fair break by banning shooting.

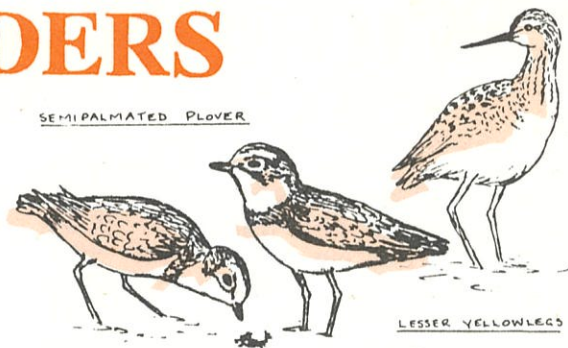
Restrictions must be enforced in order to control what happens to Saint Lucia's wildlife. Only by doing this will it be possible to preserve it for everyone to enjoy. Allowing a small group of people to kill certain species for pleasure would put all of Saint Lucia's wildlife at risk.

## WADERS

This group of birds is made up of several different families. You have read about some of them in 'Birds of the Seashore'. Many waders have long, slender beaks and long legs. This allows them to walk around in the shallow water and poke beneath it for their food. All of them can be found around the edges of swamps or lakes or on the beaches. In some places, large stretches of mud or sand are left uncovered at low tide. Waders love this. They rush to feed on the small worms or shellfish that have been stranded before the tide turns and the sea covers them up once again.

The Common Snipe, Gallinago gallinago and the Lesser Yellowlegs, Tringa flavipes, both belong to the Scolopacidae family. Most of the birds of this family live in the cold Arctic regions during the spring and summer months. At this time of year the days are long and the birds eat non-stop for 12 hours or more each day. This builds them up for their journey south for the winter months.

The Snipe is a small black and brown bird (11 inches), with a few lighter streaks on its feathers. It has a long, straight beak and fairly short, greenish legs. It lives in the marshes and when surprised will zig-zag from side to side as it flies away. Unfortunately, hunters take this as a challenge and so the Snipe is often shot at.



SEMIPALMATED PLOVER

LESSER YELLOWLEGS

The Lesser Yellowlegs, (mentioned also in 'Birds of the Seashore' page 38) is a Sandpiper about 10 inches long. It is a brown and white bird with long, thin legs and a long, straight bill. It paddles around at the edge of the sea searching for small shellfish or other water creatures. It is one of the commonest birds on our seashore.

Another wading bird is the Semi-palmated Plover, Charadrius semipalmatus. This bird belongs to the same family as the Turnstones, the Charadriidae. Its short, thick beak has a patch of orange at the top and its legs are also an orange yellow. Its feathers are dark greyish-brown above and white below with a black streak by the eye and a wide band of orange around its neck. The Plover doesn't dig under the water for its food. It prefers the mudflats left uncovered by the tide and will run around picking up worms and shellfish and small crabs.

None of the birds in this group feeds their young. They will stay with them and guard them from danger but their young ones are born fully feathered and alert. They learn to search for their own food as soon as they are hatched.

## WIGEON AND TEAL

Some of the ducks that visit Saint Lucia have already been mentioned in 'Birds of the Swamp'. They all live on water and belong to the Anatidae family. There are 147 members of this family. Ducks are the smallest, hardly ever growing more than 24 inches long. Others, like the geese and the swans are very large and can weigh up to 40 pounds. The American Widgeon, Anas americana and the Blue-winged Teal, Anas discors, were once common visitors to Saint Lucia. Now many of their old habitats are gone and they are seldom seen.

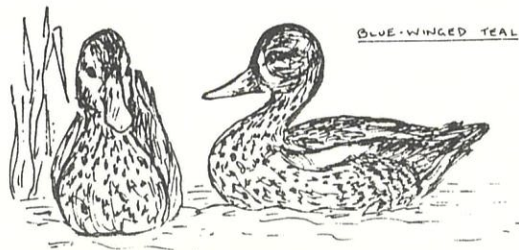
The Widgeon is about 20 inches long with speckled brown feathers, a white belly and a white patch on the top of its head. Its small beak is blue with a black tip. The Female's plumage is a richer brown and her head is spotted with black and white so that from a distance it looks grey. The male has a large white patch on the front of his wings. The female also has this patch but although it is paler than her other feathers it is not really white.

The Blue-winged Teal is a little smaller than the Widgeon. Both the male and the female are brown with patches of pale blue on their wings. The male can be recognised by the crescent-shaped mark on the front of his face. Many of the Blue-winged Teal that winter in the Caribbean come from Canada

Another species of duck that is sometimes seen here is the Green-winged Teal, Anas crecca. It is the smallest of the 3 species, only about 15 inches long. The male is a handsome grey bird, with a white stripe on the front of his body. His head is a reddish brown colour with a wide green stripe behind his eye and green feathers on the back of his wings. The female has brown feathers.

These three ducks all belong to a smaller family group of 39 species, called the Anatinae. They feed on water plants or small water creatures that they find just beneath the surface of the lake or swamp on which they live. The males are usually much more colourful than the females and easier to recognise. Both the male and female have a brightly coloured patch on their wings called the speculum. In the air, Teals are very easy to recognise because they fly very quickly unlike many of the others who fly with strong but slow strokes of their wings.

None of these three ducks breed or nest in the Caribbean. Only about 6 species of duck do this and they are rare on most of the islands.





## WARBLERS AND RAPTORS

Several Warblers have

been mentioned already in the sections on 'Indigenous Birds', 'Birds of the Swamp' and 'Birds of the Forest'. Both, the Northern Waterthrush, Seiurus noveboracensis and the Yellow Warbler, Dendroica petechia, are birds that migrate to the island during the winter months. Another of our winter visitors is the Black and White Warbler, Mniotilta varia. This bird is very easy to recognise. As its name suggests, it is neatly striped in black and white. It is most likely to be seen creeping around the trunk of a tree or along the branches looking for insects.

Raptor is another name for a predator or a bird of prey. Hawks and Falcons are both raptors. Two of our migratory birds belong in this group. The first and biggest is the Osprey or malfini la mer, This is a large bird about 24 inches long with dark feathers on its back and white on its chest and neck. Its Latin name is Pandion haliaetus and it belongs to the bird family of hawks and eagles called the Accipitridae. It hunts for fish and so it is usually see around the coast. The Ospreys that come to Saint Lucia, breed in North America. They nest in colonies and once they have found a mate, the pair

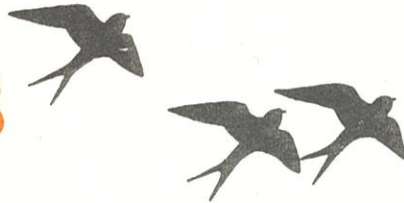


will stay together for the rest of their lives. This could be as long as 20 years or more! they also return to the same nest each year, making repairs to it if necessary before they raise their new offspring. The Osprey is becoming a rare visitor to Saint Lucia.

Our second migratory raptor or predator, is the Peregrine Falcon, Falco peregrinus. This bird looks a bit like a hawk but is larger than the Broadwinged Hawk, Buteo platypterus and has different markings. The feathers on its back are black and underneath it is yellowish-white with dark lines or spots. It is not a fish eater like the Osprey, but feeds on other birds. In some countries, falcons were trained to hunt. Different species were used by people of different social ranks. The Peregrine Falcon was the bird of the Kings.

Unfortunately, most predatory species are affected very seriously by the chemical pesticides that Man has introduced into the environment. Every creature that they eat usually has a small amount in its body. In time the amount in the body of the predator builds up. As a result, the bird will produce sickly or deformed young, or lay eggs with shells that are so thin they break before hatching. In time even the adult bird will sicken and die.

# SWALLOWS AND MARTINS



In England, people say that you can tell summer has arrived when you see the first swallows. They are only with them during the warm weather. As soon as the evenings start getting darker and colder they begin to gather in large, twittering groups, getting ready for their long, long journey south. They feed on insects and when snow and ice cover the ground up north there are very few of these to be found. Many Swallows fly right down to South America, a distance of about 2,000 miles, every winter. They sometimes stop for a few days to rest and eat. Then you may see them lining up along the telephone wires and swooping through the air to feast on gnats and flies and midges. Then, suddenly, they will be off on the next stage of their journey. In a few months time, when they are making the return trip to their summer homes you may see them again, just for a while.

The Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*, the Caribbean Martin, *Progne dominicensis* and the Purple Martin, *Progne subis*, are all migrants that you may see from time to time in Saint Lucia.

The Purple Martin is the largest of the three, about 8 inches long. The male is a glossy blue-black colour all over except for a white patch on the lower part of its belly. The female is duller and has more white.

Both male and female Barn Swallows look alike. They have shiny, blue-black bodies, with white feathers below but they also have a reddish-brown patch on their heads and throats. All of these birds have short, wide beaks, long wings and long, forked tails. In the air they can turn and wheel about with ease and will often swoop down almost to the ground to catch an insect. But they hardly ever land. Their small, weak feet and their short legs are better suited for perching on wires or branches. On the ground they are clumsy.

Swallows and Martins belong to the bird family Hirundinidae. There are about 80 species in this family and they are found all over the world. All of them are migratory. Some, like the Barn Swallow, may travel 7,000 miles away from their nesting site. Nests are built in barns or under the eaves of buildings. They are also sometimes built in holes in cliffs or river banks. Most of them are shallow open cups made of mud with a bit of grass added to make them stronger. When the swallows return from their travels they will go straight back to the nest they used the year before. Their ability to do this is a miracle of navigation that Man still does not understand.



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Now the Canadian International Development Agency has made it possible for Bush Talk to be published in book form with each book containing six or more issues dealing with related topics.

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# QUESTION TIME

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## RARE BIRDS

1. What is the scientific name of St. Lucia's National Bird?
2. Name two places where the rare St. Lucia Blackfinch might be seen.
3. What common bird belongs to the same family as the St. Lucia Oriole?
4. Why is the Rufous Nightjar easy prey for predators?
5. When was Leucopeza semperi last seen alive?

## TOWN BIRDS

1. What is the colour of the Bananaquit's eggs and how many does she lay?
2. The male and the female Lesser Antillean Bullfinch do not look alike, how do they differ?
3. How long do the eggs of the Tropical Mockingbird take to hatch?
4. What is the diet of the Grey Kingbird mostly composed of?
5. How many species of Hummingbird are found in St. Lucia? Give their names.

## BIRDS OF THE ROADSIDE

1. What is the scientific name of the Ground Dove?
2. Where does the American Kestrel like to build its nest?
3. How does man's use of chemicals endanger the Mangrove Cuckoo?
4. Name two other birds that belong to the same family as the Steaked Saltator.
5. Where was the original home of the Cattle Egret?

## BIRDS OF THE FOREST

1. What bird family does the Rufous-throated Solitaire belong to?
2. What is 'pigeons milk'?
3. Describe one thing that birds of the Tyrannidae family have in common.
4. How did the Trembler get its name?
5. What do we mean when we talk about the 'New World'?

#### BIRDS OF THE SWAMP

1. Ducks are seldom seen now in St. Lucia. Give two reasons why this is so.
2. Describe the Belted Kingfisher, what does it eat?
3. What colour are the young of the Little Blue Heron?
4. Where does the Northern Waterthrush breed?
5. How many young ones can a Caribbean Coot hatch at one time?

#### BIRDS OF THE SEASHORE

1. What happens to the head of the Laughing Gull in the breeding season?
2. Give another name for Terns. Why are they called this?
3. How many species of Tropicbird are there? How many are found in the Caribbean?
4. At what age do the chicks of the Boobies first start to fly?
5. Name three birds that belong to the Scalopacidae family.

#### MIGRATORY BIRDS

1. Explain what the word 'migratory' means.
2. Where does the plover find its food? What does it eat?
3. Ducks belong to the bird family Anatinae. How many species are there in this family?
4. Give another word that describes a bird of prey.
5. What are the nests of most swallows made from?

