

Report Of A Birding Trip To
Guadeloupe & Martinique

from March 16th till March 30th 2006

Participants:

Jan van der Laan
Marieke Wiringa
Joop van der Laan
Bob van der Laan



Green-throated Carib - Eulampis holosericeus - Le Diamant, Martinique © Jan van der Laan 2006

Introduction

Between 16 March and 30 March I went to Guadeloupe and Martinique (part of French Antilles) for a holiday. I was there with my girlfriend Marieke Wiringa, our daughter Joop and son Bob. Our main objective was to have a nice pleasant holiday, for me also on the agenda was to see all island endemics plus some photographing. We had a very pleasant holiday with most birds seen after some effort.

Birds

Birding on Guadeloupe and Martinique is rather easy. Birds are everywhere, in the hotel garden, in the nature reserves, in the mountains and along the coast. Both islands hold one single-island endemic. Guadeloupe has the Guadeloupe Woodpecker and Martinique has the Martinique Oriole. The woodpecker is common and easy to find on Guadeloupe, the oriole on Martinique is difficult and requires some preparation and effort, but in the end I managed to see one very well.

Recommended Literature and Trip Reports

For birding I used *Birds of the West Indies* by Herbert Raffaele, James Wiley, Orlando H. Garrido, Allan Keith, Janis Raffaele, Tracy Pedersen and Kristin Williams, published in 1998 (ISBN 0-7136-4905-4) and *Where to Watch Birds – Central America & The Caribbean* by Nigel Wheatly and David Brewer, published in 2001 (ISBN 0-7136-4687-X). For directions we used *Lonely Planet's Eastern Caribbean* by Kevin Anglin et al, third edition published in 2001 (ISBN 186450-3-5-X). Useful trip reports can be found at www.birdtours.co.uk.

The Species Accounts

The order and nomenclature of *Birds of the World, A Checklist* by James F. Clements (2000, 5th edition plus updates till December 2005) is followed.

Alkmaar, June–October 2006

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Guadeloupe



Martinique

Itinerary

- 16 March** Departure from Amsterdam at 8:05 hours with flight AF 8229 (Air France). Arrival at Charles de Gaulle International Airport at Paris at 9:30 hours, the luggage had not arrived, due to a mistake at the check-in in Amsterdam (thanks to KLM). Our plane for Guadeloupe was scheduled to depart from Orly Airport at 12:00 hours, but we arrived there at 12:00 hours without our luggage. However, the next flight departed at 15:00 hours. We arrived around 19:00 hours at Guadeloupe. There a taxi brought us to Deshaies where we would stay for a week at Les Terrasses de la Baie in a nice bungalow with good forest in the surroundings. On our way we picked our rental car and finally we arrived at around 21:00 hours very tired.
- 17 March** Deshaies and surroundings. First birds were Bananaquit and Lesser Antillean Bullfinch. The only Lesser Antillean Swiflets were seen after a short thunderstorm. Other birds seen today were Magnificent Frigatebird, American Kestrel, Zenaida Dove, Green-throated Carib, Antillean Crested Hummingbird, Guadeloupe Woodpecker, Caribbean Elaenia, Gray Kingbird, Black-whiskered Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Grassquit, Lesser Antillean Saltator and Carib Grackle.
- 18 March** Deshaies and surroundings. We visited also Grand Anses, a large beach north of Deshaies. Almost same birds as yesterday, but with Ruddy Quail-Dove (heard), Ringed Kingfisher, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Purple-throated Carib, Brown Pelican and Brown Boobies.
- 19 March** We toured the northern part of the island, with a short stop at Plage de Clouny, where we saw a distant Red billed Tropicbird at sea. Also we checked Corossol and Bras David (places for the wet forest birds), but this was so crowded we did not even leave our car. In the afternoon at Deshaies I tape-lured a Plumbeous Warbler.
- 20 March** The usual routine at Deshaies, visiting the beach, some birding around the bungalow . The usual birds were seen, except for the first Mangrove Cuckoo and, very strange, a singing Forest Thrush near the Bungalow - although at that time I didn't realize that (more later).
- 21 March** In the morning I drove to the Vernou Area along road D23. First I birded the trails at the Picnic area at Rivière Corossol, where I found Brown Trembler, Pearly-eyed Thrasher, Scaly-breasted Thrasher, Plumbeous Woodpecker, Scaly-naped Pigeon, Ruddy Quail-Dove (heard), Guadeloupe Woodpecker and Purple-throated Carib. Next I visited the area north of the D23, as explained in Where to Watch Birds in Central America & the Caribbean (page 326), but I did find only some more Brown Tremblers and heard another Ruddy Quail-Dove. I could not find any Bridled Quail-Dove, nor any Lesser Antillean Pewee, Lesser Antillean Flycatcher or Lesser Antillean Euphonia. In the afternoon I saw a Royal Tern in the harbour of Deshaies and a Northern Waterthrush in the mangroves at Grand Anses. In the evening I heard the Forest Thrush again at Deshaies, but I still didn't believe it.
- 22 March** Usual routine around Deshaies. In the late afternoon I heard the Forest Thrush again. I quickly ran to patch of forest where I heard it and managed to record its song. During playback it only called back, but it was too dark to see it, although I was certain it was a Forest Thrush!
- 23 March** In the early morning I returned to the forest patch where I heard the Forest Thrush. After some listening I suddenly found this beautiful thrush skulking on the forest floor and I saw all diagnostic field marks! At noon we returned our rental car, took a taxi to the airport and took the 14:40 flight to Martinique (AF 3943). There we arrived at 15:15 hours in time, went to Avis to collect our car (VW Polo) and went straight to Domaine de Sainte Marie at Sainte Marie on the eastern site of Martinique. A round 16:30 we arrived at the hotel, which proved to be a resort, with no restaurant and quite boring surroundings, but with a beautiful swimming pool (and close to the Presqu'île de la Caravelle). Most notable bird was a Grey Kingbird, feeding in the dark at the parking lot of the hotel!
- 24 March** Some vacation activities and birding from the hotel veranda. Highlights were a Merlin flying past, Bare-eyed Thrush, a heard-only Martinique Oriole, Scaly-breasted Thrasher, Caribbean Elaenia, good sightings of a Mangrove Cuckoo, Purple-throated Carib and Tropical Mockingbird.
- 25 March** In the afternoon we drove north, finding no restaurant open. Usual birds were seen.
- 26 March** In the morning I went to the Presqu'île de Caravelle. Just before where the ruins start there is a small path to the left. After a few 100 meters there are information signs telling which birds can be found. At the sign with the Martinique oriole, I managed to find the White-breasted Thrasher. I did not want to tape-lure them, but when I tried to tape-lure Lesser Antillean Flycatcher, a pair of Thrashers responded vigorously and showed itself very well. Other birds seen were Yellow-headed Warbler (chestnut-headed race), Mangrove Cuckoo, Lesser Antillean Saltator, Bare-eyed Thrush, Scaly-breasted Thrasher, White-breasted Thrasher and Zenaida Dove. I couldn't find any Martinique Orioles, but a French birdwatching family advised me to try the Trace de Jésuites, which

is also good for wet forest species. They also told me that Antillean Euphonia was most easy in the northern outskirts of Fort-de-France. In the afternoon we (Marieke, Joop, Bob and I) had lunch between Marigot and Sainte Marie and at the restaurant we had good close looks of Purple-throated Carib and saw the only Shiny Cowbird of the holiday.

27 March In the morning the usual activities. In the afternoon we drove into the mountains, but Bob got car-sick. During the stop just west of Tamarin, we heard a singing Rufous-throated Solitaire. At Tartanes we looked for a restaurant to eat, but everything opened at 9:00 PM and with little children this was not an option. So again we had dinner in our bungalow.

28 March In the early morning I drove into the mountains to hike a part of the trail called Trace de Jésuites. During a stop along the route D1, just before the route N3 I had excellent views of a Martinique Oriole, heard Scaly-naped Pigeon and several Rufous-throated Solitaires and Grey Tremblers. Along this very nice trail I saw Blue-headed Hummingbird (at least one at the start), Green-throated Carib, Grey Tremblers (1 seen close), Rufous-throated Solitaires (1 seen beautifully!), Lesser Antillean Flycatcher (heard only), Ruddy Quail-Dove (heard-only) and several Broad-winged Hawks. On my way back I heard another Lesser Antillean Flycatcher, Martinique Oriole and the only Lesser Antillean Pewee (stopping along the road was not possible, around every corner a driver with suicidal tendencies lurks!) and lots of Caribbean Elaenia. Because we had seen enough of Sainte-Marie, we drove south to le Diamant, took a nice small hotel. From our room we could see the rock called Rocher du Diamant with at least twenty Red-billed Tropicbirds flying around it!

29 March Relaxing day, swimming pool etc. Birds seen where Green-throated Carib, Antillean Crested Hummingbird, Magnificent Frigatebird, Broad-winged Hawk, Zenaida Dove, Eurasian Collared Dove, Bananaquit, Grassquit, Lesser Antillean Saltator, Red-billed Tropicbird (nine at the rock), Sandwich Tern and Cattle Egret (flock of 24 flying to evening roost).

30 March Last day. Evening flight to Paris at 21:10 hours (AF 657). Plane was full, but flight was quiet.

31 March Arrival at Orly Airport in Paris at 11:00 hours. Next we took the shuttle bus to Charles de Gaulle and from there we departed for Amsterdam in time at 14:15 hours (A F 1940) and arrived at 15:35 hours. My father picked us up at the airport and brought us home. After a long traffic jam, we arrived at around 18:00 hours in Alkmaar.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following persons: Jur en Netty van der Laan, Annet Meijers, Anthony Levesque and the French birders I met at the White-breasted Thrasher and who advised me to go to the Trail de Jésuites.

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01. **Red-billed Tropicbird** – *Phaethon aethereus mesonauta*
 19 March 1 flying at sea, Plage de Cluny, Guadeloupe
 28 March c 20 Rocher du Diamant, Martinique
 29 March 9 Rocher du Diamant, Martinique
02. **Brown Pelican** – *Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis*
 Seen daily (c 25 each day) on Guadeloupe in the harbour of Deshaies and at Grande Anse beach and at Tartane, Martinique.
03. **Brown Booby** – *Sula leucogaster leucogaster*
 Seen each day during seawatching at Deshaies and Grande Anses, Guadeloupe with numbers between c 5-20 birds. On Martinique, c 20 birds were seen at Tartanes.
04. **Magnificent Frigatebird** – *Fregata magnificens*
 Seen daily on Guadeloupe and Martinique with c 25 birds each day.
05. **Snowy Egret** – *Egretta thula brewsteri*
 18 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
06. **Cattle Egret** – *Bubulcus ibis ibis*
 A few on Guadeloupe (c 10) and rather common on Martinique (c 20 max each day)
07. **Green Heron** – *Butorides virescens*
 18 March 1 harbour of Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 20 March 1 (fishing at night) harbour of Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 23 March 1 feeding in the rubbish containers of Restaurant Canons de La Bar, Deshaies, Guadeloupe
08. **Broad-winged Hawk** – *Buteo platypterus rivieri*
 28 March 3 Trace de Jésuites, Martinique 29 March 1 Between Le Diamant and La Cherry, Martinique
09. **Merlin** – *Falco columbarius*
 24 March 1 hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
10. **American Kestrel** – *Falco sparverius brevipennis*
 17 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 18 March 2 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 20 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
11. **Sandwich Tern** – *Sterna sandvicensis*
 29 March 1 Feeding at sea, Le Diamant, Martinique
12. **Royal Tern** – *Sterna maxima maxima*
 19 March 1 Harbour of Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 21 March 1 Harbour of Deshaies, Guadeloupe
13. **Rock Pigeon** – *Columba livia*
 Seen daily on Guadeloupe and Martinique.
14. **Scaly-naped Pigeon** – *Columba squamosa*
 21 March 3 (2 seen briefly, 1 heard) Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
 28 March 1 (heard) along the route D 1, just 3 km before the junction with the N 3, Martinique
15. **Eurasian Collared-Dove** – *Streptopelia decaocto*
 Seen on the west coast of La Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe and the southern coast of Martinique.
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16. **Zenaida Dove** – *Zenaida aurita aurita*
Rather common on Guadeloupe and Martinique, with c 10 birds each day.
17. **Common Ground-Dove** – *Columbina passerina nigrirostris*
22 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
23 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
18. **Ruddy Quail-Dove** – *Geopila striata martinica*
18 March 1 (heard only) Deshaies, Guadeloupe
21 March 2 (heard only) Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
22 March 1 (heard only) Deshaies, Guadeloupe
28 March 2 (heard only), Trace de Jésuites, Martinique
19. **Mangrove Cuckoo** – *Coccyzus minor*
20 March 1 Grande Anse, Guadeloupe
24 March 1 seen well, at the hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
20. **LESSER ANTILLEAN SWIFT** – *Chaetura martinica*
17 March 2-3 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
21. **PURPLE-THROATED CARIB** – *Eulampis jugularis*
18 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
19 March 2 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
21 March c 10 Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
22 March 2 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
24 March 1 hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
25 March 2 hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
26 March c 5 La Philippe (northwest of Sainte-Marie), Martinique
26 March c 5 Presqu'Île de Caravelle, Martinique
26 March 2 La Philippe (northwest of Sainte-Marie), Martinique
28 March 3 Trace de Jésuites, Martinique
22. **GREEN-THROATED CARIB** – *Eulampis holosericeus holosericeus*
17 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
18 March 2 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
28 March c 5 Trace de Jésuites, Martinique
28 March 1 Le Diamant, Martinique
29 March 2 Le Diamant, Martinique
30 March 1 Le Diamant, Martinique
23. **ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD** – *Orthorhyncus cristatus exilis*
Seen daily 17-23 March at Deshaies, with maximum number of c 5 each day. At Rivière Corrosol area c 10 seen on 23 March. On Martinique small numbers at Sainte-Marie and Le Diamant (2-3 birds seen daily).
24. **BLUE-HEADED HUMMINGBIRD** – *Cyanophaea bicolor*
28 March 1 (probably 2 more) along the N3 where the Trace de Jésuites starts
25. **Ringed Kingfisher** – *Ceryle torquatus stictipennis*
18 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
26. **GADELOUPE WOODPECKER** – *Melanerpes herminieri*
17 March 2-4 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
18 March 2 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
21 March c 6 Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
23 March 2 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
27. **Caribbean Elaenia** – *Elaenia martinica martinica*
Common on Guadeloupe and Martinique, with c 15 birds seen daily. Most common along the route D 1, Martinique.
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28. **LESSER ANTILLEAN PEWEE** – *Contopus latirostris brunneicapillus*
 28 March 1 (heard singing) along the D 1, c 3 km east of the junction with the D 1.
29. **LESSER ANTILLEAN FLYCATCHER** – *Myiarchus oberi sclateris*
 28 March 1 (heard singing), start of the Trace de Jésuites, Martinique at the route N 3.
 1 (heard singing) along the D 1, c 5 km east of the junction with the D 1.
30. **Grey Kingbird** – *Tyrannus dominicensis vorax*
 Rather common on Guadeloupe and Martinique. On Martinique one was seen on two occasions at night (after sunset) feeding insects that were attracted to the lights of the parking place.
31. **CARIBBEAN MARTIN** – *Progne dominicensis*
 17 March 2 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 19 March c 3 in the harbour of Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 28 March c 10 en route between Sainte-Marie and Le Diamant, Martinique
32. **Tropical Mockingbird** – *Mimus gilvus antillarum*
 Only seen (1-3 birds daily) on Martinique at the hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, on 24-28 March.
33. **WHITE-BREASTED THRASHER** – *Ramphocinclus brachyurus brachyurus*
 26 March 4 (seen very well) Presqu'Île de Caravelle, Martinique
34. **GREY TREMBLER** – *Cinlocerthia gutturalis gutturalis*
 28 March c 10 heard singing along the D 1 (Morne du Lorain), Martinique
 c 8 1 seen beautifully, rest heard, Trace de Jésuites, Martinique
35. **BROWN TREMBLER** – *Cinlocerthia ruficauda tremula*
 21 March c 10 Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
 c 5 North of the D 23 near the Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe (see Where to Watch Birds, Central America & the Caribbean, page 326)
36. **SCALY-BREASTED THRASHER** – *Allenia fusca*
 21 March c 25 (subspecies *hypenema*) Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
 24 March 1 (subspecies *fusca*) hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
 26 March c 5 Presqu'Île de Caravelle, Martinique
37. **Pearly-eyed Thrasher** – *Margarops fuscatus densirostris*
 21 March c 5 Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
38. **FOREST THRUSH** – *Cichlherminia lherminieri lherminieri*
 20 March 1 heard singing, Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 21 March 1 heard singing, Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 22 March 1 heard singing, Deshaies, Guadeloupe; song tape-recorded
 23 March 1 finally seen, Deshaies, Guadeloupe
 Location was atypical, dry coastal forest along a road; however, I got very good views.
39. **RUFOUS-THROATED SOLITAIRE** – *Myadestes genibarbis genibarbis*
 27 March 1 heard singing along the D 2 just west of Tamarin, Martinique
 28 March c 10 heard singing along the D 1 (Morne du Lorain), Martinique
 c 5 1 seen beautifully, rest heard, Trace de Jésuites, Martinique
40. **Bare-eyed Thrush** – *Turdus nudigenis nudigenis*
 24 March 1 hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
 26 March c 5 Presqu'Île de Caravelle, Martinique
 27 March 3 hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
 28 March c 5 Trace de Jésuites, Martinique
41. **Black-whiskered Vireo** – *Vireo altiloquus altiloquus*

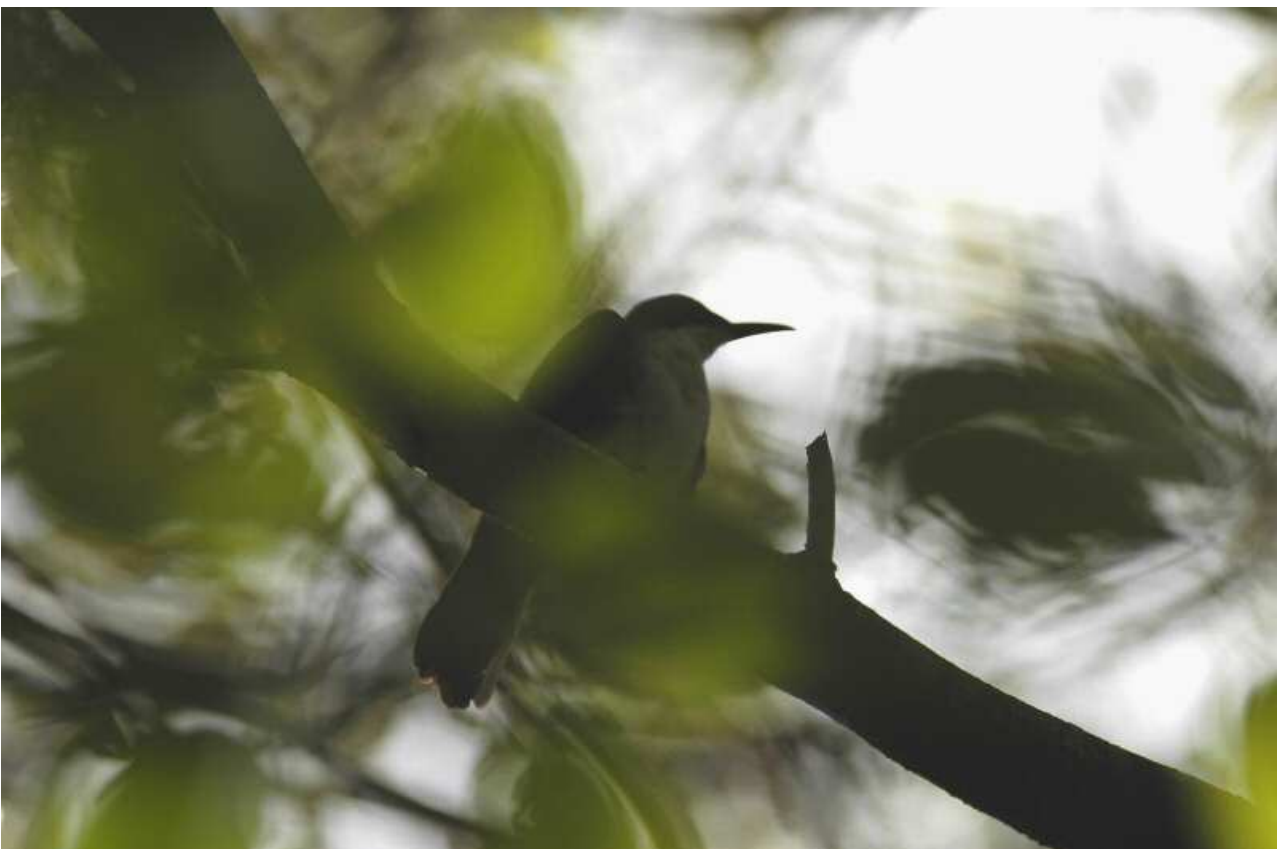
Rather common on Guadeloupe and Martinique, with c 10 birds seen daily.

42. **Yellow Warbler** – *Dendroica petechia*
Between 17 and 23 March c 5-10 seen daily at Deshaies, Guadeloupe (red-capped form *melanoptera*).
26 March c 5 (red-headed form *ruficapilla*) Presqu'Île de Caravelle, Martinique
43. **PLUMBEOUS WARBLER** – *Dendroica plumbea*
18 March 1 Deshaies, Guadeloupe; bird reacted to the tape. I did not know they were to be found here.
21 March c 5 Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
44. **Northern Waterthrush** – *Seiurus noveboracensis*
21 March 1 Mangroves at Grande Anse, Guadeloupe
45. **Bananaquit** – *Coereba flaveola*
Common on Guadeloupe (subspecies *bartholemica*) and Martinique (subspecies *martinica*).
46. **Black-faced Grassquit** – *Tiaris bicolor omissa*
Quite common on Guadeloupe and Martinique. A pair was building a nest at Deshaies, Guadeloupe.
47. **LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH** – *Loxigilla noctis*
Common on Guadeloupe (subspecies *dominicana*) and Martinique (subspecies *noctis*). Fearless birds, always close to humans. On Martinique the male birds lack the chestnut undertail coverts.
48. **LESSER ANTILLEAN SALTATOR** – *Saltator albicollis*
17 March 4 Deshaies, Guadeloupe (subspecies *guadelupensis*)
18 March 2 Deshaies, Guadeloupe
21 March c 5 Rivière Corrosol parking area, Guadeloupe
24 March 3 hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique (subspecies *albicollis*)
25 March 2 hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
26 March 4 Presqu'Île de Caravelle, Martinique
27 March 3 hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
29 March 2 La Cherry (c 5 km west of Le Diamant), Martinique
1 Morne Pavillon, Martinique
49. **Carib Grackle** – *Quiscalus lugubris guadeloupensis*
Common on Guadeloupe and Martinique, with c 30 birds seen each day.
50. **Shiny Cowbird** – *Molothrus bonariensis minumus*
26 March 1 (female) La Philippe (northwest of Sainte-Marie), Martinique
51. **MARTINIQUE ORIOLE** – *Icterus bonana*
24 March 1 (heard only) hotel Domaine de Sainte Marie, Sainte-Marie, Martinique
28 March 1 good views of a male bird along the route D 1, just 3 km before the junction with the N 3, Martinique
1 (heard singing) along the D 1, c 10 km east of the junction with the N 3.

(Bird names in capitals means endemic for the Caribbean (after Wheatly's and Brewer's "Where to Watch Birds, Central America & the Caribbean")



Habitat of White-breasted Thrasher at Presqu'Île de Caravelle, Martinique © Jan van der Laan 2006



White-breasted Thrasher at Presqu'Île de Caravelle, Martinique © Jan van der Laan 2006