

# **St Lucia update 1 – 15 June 2003**

## **Neil Tovey**

Travelled here on a two-week all-inclusive package based at St James's Morgan Bay Resort, near Choc Bay. The purpose of the trip was my wedding and honeymoon so birding time was going to be at a premium!

As it turned out the birding in and around the resort was excellent and a few day trips, whilst not producing all of the endemics, were still very good. A fellow birder on the resort, who also got married on the island, saw Masked Duck and Greater Yellowlegs at the golf course near Rodney Bay.

Driving was quite an experience – be aware that Castries is a bit of a pain to travel through! We travelled from the north to the south of the Island in about 1½ hours but took our time. Unleaded petrol is cheaper than the UK – surprise, surprise!

## **St James's Resort**

I found the resort boundaries to be very good. Excellent areas included:

- The scrubby area behind the adult pool;
- The River Choc just to the south of the resort;
- A rough track that led behind the various restaurants;
- A northerly path that led through open forest to the next beach. The security guards mentioned that this track should not be taken alone, as there have been some muggings. However I doubt there would be any problems if you were walking this track at 5am in the morning which is what I did several times;
- The small pier that led into the bay.

## **Pigeon Island**

A very enjoyable morning's birding in this area. Burgot Rock was very good, with good views of the various seabirds. The island itself also yielded good birds, but nothing that I didn't eventually see around the resort. Worth it just for the seabirds. A well-earned beer was taken in the Captain's Cavern – don't miss it!

## **Moule a Chique**

Stunning views from the top with the Atlantic on one side and the Caribbean on the other. After the very interesting drive to the top the seabird colony on Maria Islands could be seen well but the birds were somewhat distant.

## **Point Sable**

Much better viewing of the seabirds on the Maria Islands from here with 100s and 100s of Sooty and Bridled Terns, plus eventually, 6 R B Tropicbirds. The birding around the various bars etc was also good with Eared Doves being seen well.

## **Mamiku Gardens**

Far quieter than the more touristy Diamond Fall Gardens on the west side of the Island. The entrance fee was about £4 and there was only a handful of people here. The birding was good, including excellent views of P T Carib and many St Lucia Warbler.

## **Fostriere Rain Forest**

A rain forest walk with a guide was a bit touristy but several species were seen including the St Lucia Peewee, Lesser Antillean Euphonia, B W Vireo, St Lucia Blackfinch and excellent views of L A Swifts.

## **Species List**

**Red Billed Tropicbird:** at least 6 birds seen over Maria Islands Reserve from Anse Sable Beach on 13/06/03.

**Brown Booby:** several birds seen past St James's Morgan Bay resort on various dates and circa 40 birds seen on Burgot Rock, Pigeon Island on 08/06/03.

**Magnificent Frigatebird:** seen daily from St James's Morgan Bay Resort and also high numbers around Castries harbour. Highest count in Soufriere (c30 birds) on 11/06/03 and Frigate Island Nature Reserve (c60 birds) on 13/06/03. Most birds seen were 1<sup>st</sup> summer birds.

**Green Heron:** seen daily along waterfront at St James's Morgan Bay and at nearby River Choc estuary. Singles at Mamiku Gardens on 13/06/03, Marigot Bay 11/06/03, Soufriere on 11/06/03 and Pigeon Island on 08/06/03.

**Little Blue Heron:** Seen daily in and around St James's Morgan Bay Resort and nearby Choc River. Max counts of 5 birds incl 2 1<sup>st</sup> summer birds on most days. A heronry on cliffs between Anse Chastanet and Canaries on 11/06/03. Common on East coast – seen at several locations on 13/06/03.

**Great Blue Heron:** A small number of birds seen most days in and around St James's Morgan Bay.

**Yellow Crowned Night Heron:** Seen daily in and around St James's Morgan Bay and also at Savannes Bay On 13/06/03, Mamiku Gardens on 13/06/03 and Maria Islands on 13/06/03.

**Cattle Egret:** Common in all areas. Biggest count was of 100+ birds flying to roost on 03/06/03.

**Black Crowned Night Heron:** Seen most days flying from Choc river mouth past resort and also seen near Savannes Bay and at Maria Islands on 13/06/03.

**Turnstone:** Up to 4 birds seen daily at St James's Morgan Bay.

**Laughing Gull:** Seen daily in various numbers in and around St James's Morgan Bay. Also seen at Maria Islands on 13/06/03. Biggest count at Soufriere on 13/06/03 was of c50 birds.

**Royal Tern:** Seen most days of St James's Morgan Bay (max count 18). Also at Pigeon Point (several birds) on 08/06/03.

**Sooty Tern:** Up to 30 birds seen on Burgot Rocks off Pigeon Point on 08/06/03. Circa 200 birds seen on Maria Island on 13/06/03.

**Bridled Tern:** Up to 30 birds seen on Burgot Rocks off Pigeon Point on 08/06/03. Circa 200 birds seen on Maria Island on 13/06/03.

**Brown Noddy:** Up to 4 birds seen distantly off Pigeon Point on 08/06/03 and 2 birds near Soufriere on nest on 13/06/03.

**Common Tern:** Seen occasionally from St James's Morgan Bay. Up to 20 birds seen along coast to Soufriere on 13/06/03.

**Roseate Tern:** Up to 20 birds near Soufriere on 13/06/03.

**Broad Winged Hawk:** Seen most days from rear of St James's Morgan Bay resort and also at Fostriere on 10/06/03.

**American Kestrel:** Seen on several occasions at St James's Morgan Bay Resort. Also at Castries on 01/06/03, Rodney Bay on 06/06/03 and Pigeon Point on 08/06/03.

**Common Black Hawk:** 1 low over road between Castries and Dennery on 13/06/03. Apparently v rare on St Lucia with the nearest population found on St Vincent.

**Feral Pigeon:** Seen around Castries.

**Red Necked Pigeon:** Large numbers (c 100 birds) seen flying across from Maria Islands inland on 13/06/03.

**Zenaida Dove:** Very common in and around St James's Morgan Bay and throughout north of the Island.

**Common Ground Dove:** Up to 15 birds seen daily at St James's Morgan Bay and most locations throughout the Island.

**Eared Dove:** Only seen around Point Sable Natural Park on 13/06/03 – max 20 birds.

**Caribbean Elaenia:** Seen in small numbers at most areas near forest or forest edges on a number of dates.

**St Lucia Peewee:** 3 seen on Forestry trail at Fostriere on 10/06/03.

**Lesser Antillean Flycatcher:** 1 bird seen near the Sulphur Springs at Soufriere on 11/06/03.

**Grey Kingbird:** Very common at St James's Morgan Bay and common on all roadsides.

**Purple Throated Carib:** 2 birds seen at Fostriere on 10/06/03 and 5 birds seen at Mamiku Gardens on 13/06.03.

**Green Throated Carib:** Common around St James's Morgan Bay and at all lower elevations.

**Antillean Crested Hummer:** Common at all locations.

**Lesser Antillean Swift:** Seen occasionally around St James's Morgan Bay, but highest counts was in areas of rainforest - c60 birds at Fostriere on 10/06/03.

**Caribbean Martin:** Fairly common around St James's Morgan Bay and also common at Pigeon Point, c20 birds 08/06/03 and at Moule a Chique, c15 birds on 13/06/03.

**Bare Eyed Thrush:** Fairly common, but shy bird. Seen most days at St James's Morgan Bay, Pigeon Island on 08/06/03 and Mamiku Gardens on 13/06/03.

**Tropical Mockingbird:** Common at all locations.

**Scaly Breasted Thrasher:** Common around St James's Morgan Bay and at all locations also.

**Grey Trembler:** Seen on a number of occasions around St James's Morgan Bay. One also seen at Mamiku Gardens 13/06/03.

**Black Whiskered Vireo:** Common around edges of St James's Morgan Bay. Also seen at Pigeon Island on 08/06/03, Fostriere on 10/06/03 and Mamiku Gardens on 13/06/03.

**St Lucia Warbler:** Seen on a number of occasions at edge of St James's Morgan Bay and also at Pigeon Island on 08/06/03, Soufriere Mineral Falls on 11/06/03 and 4 birds at Mamiku Gardens on 13/06/03.

**Yellow Warbler:** Seen on occasions in and around St James's Morgan Bay. Also at Pigeon Island (6 birds) on 08/06/03. Interestingly none of the birds were of the red cap race that is apparently commonplace on the island!

**Bananaquit:** Everywhere!!

**Lesser Antillean Euphonia:** Quite audible at Fostriere Forest on 10/06/03 and one bird seen very well here high in canopy.

**Lesser Antillean Salator:** Seen around St James's Morgan Bay on most days. Also at Pigeon Island on 08/06/03 and Mamiku Gardens on 13/06/03.

**Black Faced Grassquit:** Very common bird at St James's Morgan Bay Resort and at all other localities.

**Lesser Antillean Bullfinch:** Extremely common and widespread.

**St Lucia Blackfinch:** 1 male seen briefly at ground level on 10/06/03 at Fostriere Forest.

**Carib Grackle:** Commonest bird on the island by far!

**Shiny Cowbird:** Several birds seen around St James's Morgan Bay most days.

**St Lucia Oriole:** 2 birds seen in flight in front of car only, both on the 13/06/03 and both just south of Dennery. The second almost became roadkill it was so close!

If I can provide any information regarding the Island, sites or the birds feel free to contact me by e-mail on: [neil.tovey@eurorscg-riley.co.uk](mailto:neil.tovey@eurorscg-riley.co.uk)