

LIME
WONDERFUL
WILDLIFE

Puerto Rican
Emerald, feeding on
the nectar of the
Star Vine flower
RAFY RODRIGUEZ

FOCUS ON...

BONDS THROUGH BIRDS

Hit the **Caribbean Birding Trail**, which connects visitors *and* locals with the region's brilliant birds

If you look out of the plane window, you'll see what the Caribbean is most famous for: golden sands and vibrant turquoise waters. But there are even more colourful and exquisite treasures beyond the beach. Puerto Rican Emerald, Rufous-throated Solitaire, Ruby Topaz... just some of the astonishing birds found in the region. And there's no better way to experience them than on the Caribbean Birding Trail.

BirdsCaribbean, the largest regional bird conservation organisation, has developed the Caribbean Birding Trail (CBT) in partnership with local groups and governments. It's a pathway to appreciation of the region's avifauna and to the creation of a

sustainable economy around these rare species. The CBT promotes authentic experiences by engaging locals and visitors with the natural heritage of the Caribbean.

Taking the time to see the Caribbean's native birds can enrich any visitor's experience – and you don't have to be an expert. By seeking out birds, you'll find yourself off the beaten path too. A journey on the CBT is always an unforgettable adventure.

Through the CBT, you'll get to know an island, its heritage, its customs and its people from a unique perspective. Ecotourism that benefits local communities and promotes conservation is growing in popularity. This is not mass-market tourism, and as such

does not have a negative impact on the islands' fragile ecosystems.

One goal of the CBT is to train local naturalist guides to interpret birds and their habitats for visitors. This builds sustainable livelihoods, empowering individuals and small businesses through community tourism.

The CBT conducts workshops, giving trainees the skills to be successful CBT guides. The workshops also ignite new-found enthusiasms. Vaughan Francis (*pictured right*), owner of Tropical Adventurers who attended the Grenada workshop said, "This has helped me develop a passion for something I didn't even know I would have a passion for!"

Once you've experienced the CBT, it's easy to relate to Vaughan's new perspective. Appreciating the natural beauty of Caribbean birds is a shared experience that brings joy to visitor and guide alike.

*CARIBBEANBIRDINGTRAIL.ORG

CARIBBEAN CONSERVATION

GUIDING THE GUIDES

The first guide-training workshop hosted by the CBT took place in St Georges, Grenada. During the week-long training camp, the 24 participants took trips to different sites around Grenada to practise their field skills and interpret the relationship between birds and habitat. Each participant received a pair of waterproof 8 x 42 Eagle Optics Vortex binoculars, a copy of the *Field Guide to the Birds of the West Indies* and other resources.

The response from attendees was very positive. Anne Campbell, owner of Caribbean Horizons Tours said, "This workshop has given us the tools to revamp our tours, put more emphasis on interpretation, and add new bird tours, which we think are a great way to help raise environmental awareness for our guests and local visitors."

The group has kept in contact after the workshop and has formed a bird club, which goes on weekly field trips.

THANKS TO JESSICA ROZEK, EMMA LEWIS AND LISA SORENSON (BIRDSCARIBBEAN). VISIT WWW.BIRDSCARIBBEAN.ORG AND FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM (SEARCH: 'CARIBBEAN BIRDS'). BIRDSCARIBBEAN IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION COMMITTED TO CONSERVING CARIBBEAN BIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS.

