

Caribbean Birding Trail Interpretive Guide Training Program

Launched 2013 in St. George's, Grenada, W.I.



The Caribbean Birding Trail (CBT)

Globally, the tourism market for birdwatching and photography is growing. Also on the rise is the desire for independent and responsible travel; increasingly individuals are preferring to go “off the beaten path” and seek out **authentic and transformative experiences that give back to communities.**

The CBT seeks to attract these markets to the Caribbean and encourage them to **explore what is beyond the beach.** Integral to this is having well-trained guides on every island that can help connect these travelers with the cultural and natural resources of the island, including birds.

CBT Interpretive Guide Training Program

The CBT is partnering with operators and guides throughout the region to organize **one of the most comprehensive guide training and certification programs in the region.**

Participants not only learn to identify the local bird species and their connection to the environment, but also how to effectively communicate information to audiences in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

The course is facilitated by Certified Interpretive Trainers through the National Association of Interpretation of the U.S.

Objectives of the training

1. Increase participant knowledge about bird ecology and skills in bird identification
2. Provide information on birdwatching market and how to develop tours
3. Teach basic principles of environmental interpretation and its application to ecotourism and conservation
4. Discuss the Caribbean Birding Trail and how it can support local communities and contribute to sustainable tourism development.

Photos above: Participants of the CBT guide training in Grenada, 2013.

Of the 564 Caribbean bird species, **148 (26%)** are **endemic**, meaning **they exist nowhere else in the world.**

These unique species represent the richness of the Caribbean's heritage and are a focus of the Caribbean Birding Trail and its guide training program.

Top: Lesser Antillean Bullfinch. Bottom: Barbuda Warbler. By Ted Eubanks.



Guide Training in Grenada

Grenada is the first country to receive the CBT training, and was held from 17-21 June 2013 in St. George's, Grenada, attended by 24 participants—staff from local tour operators, non-profit organizations and the Forestry and National Parks Department.

Facilitating the training were interpretation and bird guiding professionals Rick Morales and Beny Wilson. Assisting Rick and Beny were Lisa Sorenson, Executive Director of BirdsCaribbean, Holly Robertson, Project Manager of the CBT, and Anthony Jeremiah, Wildlife Conservation Officer with the Forestry and National Parks Department of Grenada.

The training provided time in the field, utilizing the distinct ecosystems of Grenada to demonstrate the relationship between birds and habitat.



Rick Morales



Beny Wilson

The week culminated in a day of presentations, with the participants making use of their new knowledge to give a 10-minute talk tailored for a specific audience.

The feedback on the training was very positive from participants (see comments below). Since June, two have led their first bird tour and another is working with a resort to develop on-site birdwatching opportunities.

In addition, the group of trainees formed a bird club, organize weekly field trips to hone their skills and attract new members, and submit observations to eBird. They also collaborate on how to tackle major issues in Grenada that negatively impact the environment and their livelihoods as tour guides, such as littering.

The CBT is being organized by BirdsCaribbean (formerly the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds). For more information on how to participate in a training or to support the program, visit www.caribbeanbirdingtrail.org or contact us at info@caribbeanbirdingtrail.org.



Leon Charles, training participant, giving his final presentation

Comments from Participants



Vaughan Francis, Guide for Henry's Safari Tours

"This workshop helped me develop a passion for something I didn't even know I would have a passion for!"



Anne Campbell, Owner of Caribbean Horizons Tours

"This workshop was fantastic. It's given us the tools to revamp the tours that we have, put more emphasis on interpretation, and of course add the bird tours which we think are a great means to help raise environmental awareness for our guests as well as our local visitors."