

# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## INTRODUCTORY SHEET

The Caribbean is home to over 700 species of bird, including 171 species that are endemic to the region and found nowhere else in the world. In fact, there are over 110 bird species in the Caribbean that only live on one island. Overall, half of the resident birds—the ones that don't migrate—in the region are endemic. The abundance of endemic species is one reason why the region is considered a biodiversity hotspot, and why conservation in the region is so important. The region is also the seasonal home for over 150 migratory species that winter in the region after breeding in North America during the summer or travel through the region on their way to South America. Unsurprisingly Birds have been celebrated in many B.W.I. stamp issues over the years.

This thematic exhibition comes in the form of a quiz and asks you:

- Which bird is most widely featured on stamps across the Caribbean?
- To name some of the National Birds of British West Indian countries
- To identify any unreal or non resident birds that are featured on stamps and why
- Guess which are the earliest stamps featuring birds in the Caribbean?
- Why are Trinidad and Tobago known as the Humming Bird Islands?
- How are the birds of Montserrat helping the island?
- How did Millie the Macaw embarrass Guyanese Officials
- Which islands first made a display of their birds in a stamp series?
- Can you identify any Caribbean bird stamps with high face values or unusual flaws?



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## PETE THE B.W.I. UNIVERSITY PELICAN



The bird most widely featured on stamps of the British West Indies is a pelican (*Pelecanus Occidentalis*). This is because the first Principal of the University of the West Indies, Doctor Taylor, suggested a pelican for the Coat of Arms as “a bird found all over the Caribbean that is traditionally a symbol of piety”. The inauguration of the University College of the West Indies was marked by an Omnibus Issue of two stamps depicting the Arms of the College and H.R.H. Princes Alice, University Chancellor. Examples of the 3c Arms stamp are shown here. The university pelican became fondly known as “Pete the Pelican” after a student publication in 1951 took this name. Today the university boasts a medical school of world renown and is attended by persons from the 17 English speaking territories of the Caribbean

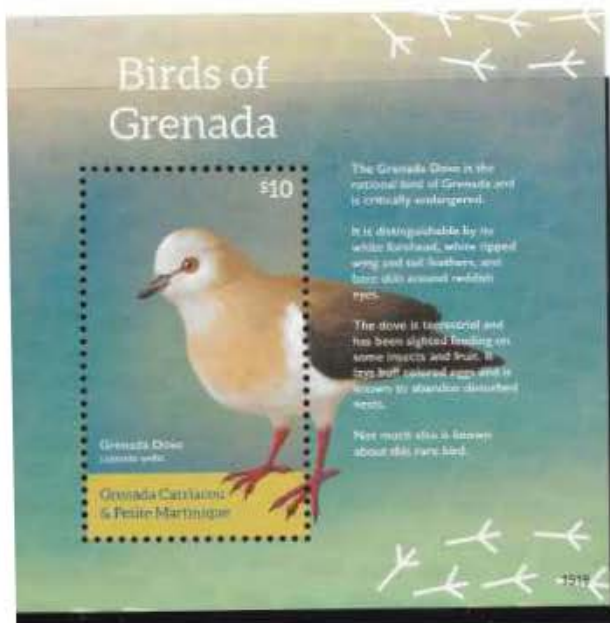
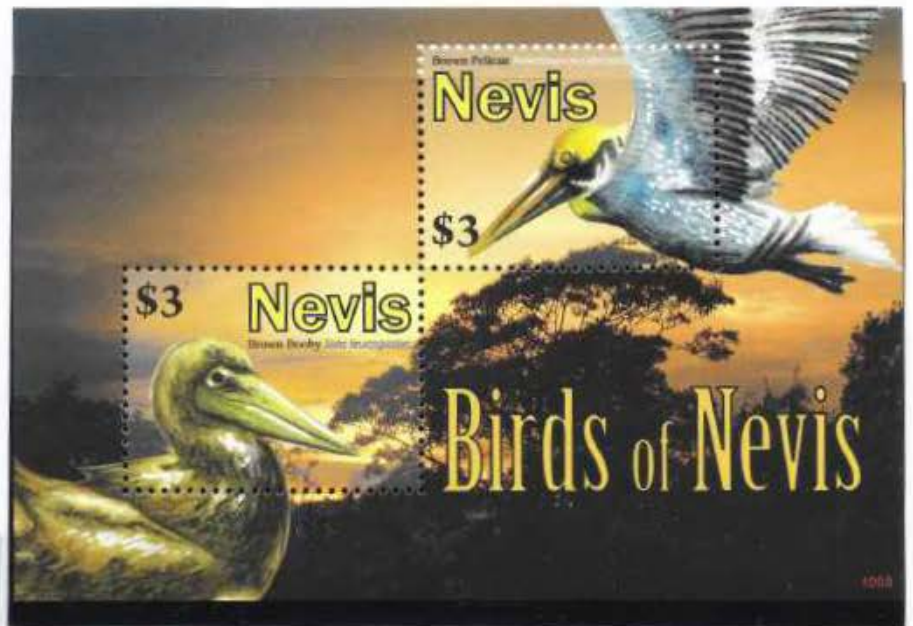


# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

- Antigua & Barbuda Frigate Bird
- St Kitts Nevis Pelican
- Dominica Sisserou Parrot
- Jamaica Doctor Bird
- St Lucia Amazonia Parrot
- Montserrat Oriole
- Barbados Pelican
- St Vincent Amazona Parrot
- Trinidad & Tobago Cocrico and Scarlet Ibis
- Guyana Canje Pheasant
- Grenada Dove



## NATIONAL BIRDS



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## NON RESIDENT/FICTIONAL BIRDS

Little Tobago is a small island off the NE corner of Tobago.. In 1909 Sir William Ingram imported 47 Greater Birds of Paradise to the Brid Sanctuary island, in an effort to protect the species from extinction in New Guinea where its feathers were hunted for headdresses. The colony of birds was filmed, still in existence , in 1958, by the National Geographic Society. However the birds disappeared after 1963'S Hurricane Flora.



On 19/20 June 1948 a catastrophic fire destroyed much of Castries, capital city of St Lucia. A poem, by local man, Derek Walcott, described the scene in a poem. Three years later, on 18 June 1951 a postage stamp showing a phoenix rising from the ruins was issued to mark the reconstruction of the city.

"After that hot gossamer has levelled all but the churchd sky,

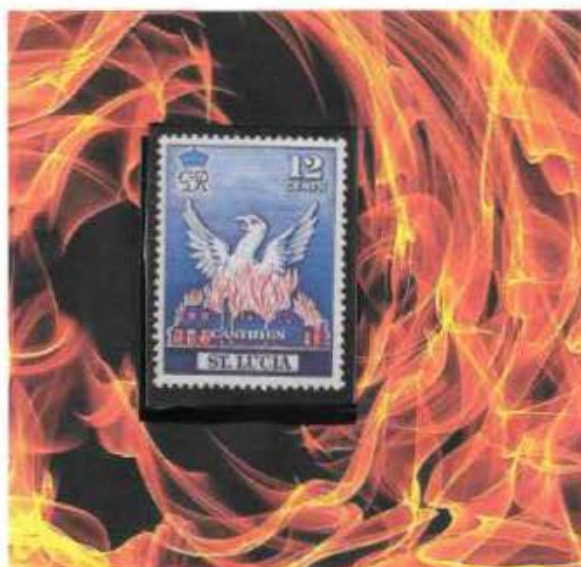
I wrote the tale by tallow of a city's death by fire;  
Under a candle's eye, that smoked in tears, I  
Wanted to tell, in more than wax, of faiths that were  
snapped like wire.

All day I walked abroad among the rubbled tales,  
Shocked at each wall that stood on the street like a liar;  
Loud was the bird-rocked sky, and all the clouds were  
bales

Torn open by looting, and white, in spite of the fire.  
By the smoking sea, where Christ walked, I asked, why  
Should a man wax tears, when his wooden world falls?  
In town, leaves were paper, but the hills were a flock of  
faiths;

To a boy who walked all day, each leaf was a green breath  
Rebuilding a love I thought was dead as nails,  
Blessing the death and the baptism by fire."

Poem by Derek Walcott



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## THE HUMMINGBIRD ISLANDS

For centuries, Trinidad was known as "Ière" – or the land of hummingbirds – to the Arawak people. Trinidad and Tobago is home to 19 species of hummingbirds, Trinidad also has the highest diversity of hummingbirds in the West Indies. You'll even see the hummingbird on the national Coat of Arms, currency and passport, and is an important symbol used by the country. The Humming Bird Medal is a National Award for loyal and dutiful service, beneficial to the state, in any field or for acts of conspicuous gallantry or other outstanding humane action.



Humming bird series published 17 April 2002 ( SG 924 to 927), Also SG 296, 344, 346 and SG 419, 443 (medals)



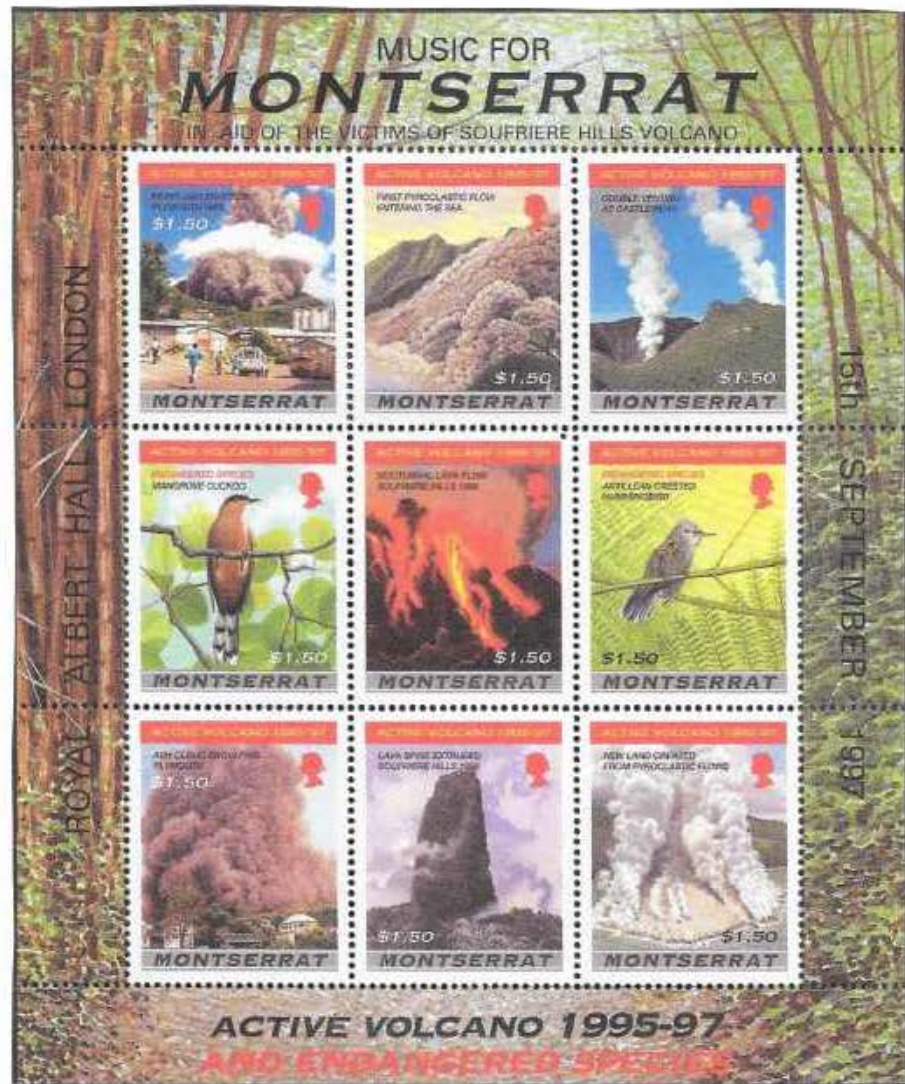
# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## THE BIRDS OF MONTSERRAT

Between July 1995 and 2010 the Soufrière Hills volcano erupted several times. Pyroclastic flows buried Plymouth and the whole southern half of the island was rendered too dangerous for habitation. Roughly sixty percent of the island's population lost their homes and chose to migrate to the United Kingdom. This miniature sheet SG 1046a illustrates the active volcano, along with endangered bird species of the island. It was part of a 1997 fundraising effort.



The positivity of the remaining Montserrattians is impressive. They are rebuilding an economy based on volcanic sand and geothermal energy. A replacement seat of government has been established at Brades, and the John A Osbourne Airport was opened in 2005. Whilst the exclusion zone remains in place, certified guides are able to take tourists on tours of "Pompeii in the Tropics". A tourist industry, based on the volcano and the abundant wild life of the island, is emerging. Survival for this island remains in the balance...the volcano could blow again at any time; Montserrat lies in the path of the main annual hurricane season route...and now the Coronavirus Pandemic has placed everything on hold. The Montserrattians deserve some good fortune in the future after all they have endured, let's hope it works out for them.



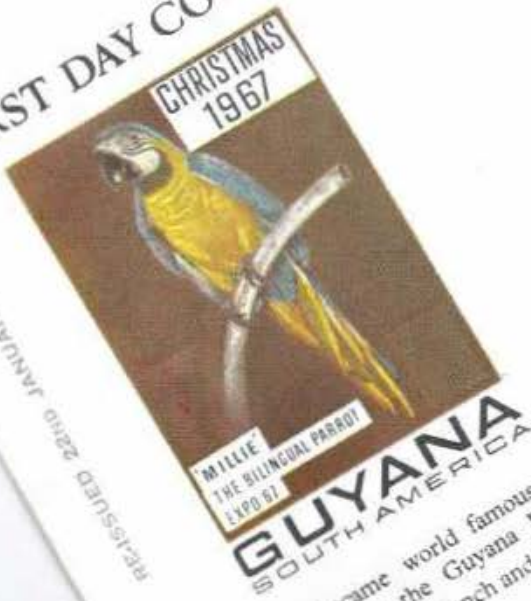
# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## MILLIE THE MACAW

Millie went to Canada to represent Guyana at Expo 67. She spent some time in her cage at the construction site ahead of the grand opening. On the big day she seriously embarrassed the Ambassador by painting the air blue with terrible blasphemies...in French and English. It would seem she had been listening to the workers. Millie was sent home in disgrace. However, for some reason it was decided to again feature Millie on Guyanese stamps – the Christmas ones. As a multi-religious country it perhaps made sense not to show a directly Christian image...however the Catholic Church was outraged that a swearing parrot was marking the birth of Christ and objected strongly. It is reported (but I am doubtful about authenticity) that upon returning home Millie was housed with a Father Drake, who already owned two parrots who were famed for saying the Rosary twice a day. The story goes that after her arrival they ceased this practice... fortunately Millie stopped cursing too and they all lived happily ever after talking "squawk-parrot" to one another.



FIRST DAY COVER



Millie became world famous when, on the opening of the Guyana Pavilion at the Guyana Expo 67, she commenced to swear in French and English.

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BRITISH PAINTS (CARIBBEAN) LTD,  
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TRINIDAD

# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## BIRDS ON LILY PADS ON DEFINITIVE STAMP SERIES BRITISH GUIANA

Definitive Series 1938 SG 319—colours

Definitive Series 1954 SG 333—norm, weed and clubbed foot

Definitive Series 1967 Independence Overprint and varieties



The earliest birds I can find appearing on stamps for the British West Indies are the long legged ...possibly Comb crested Jacamas...that appear on the \$3 1 February 1938 Definitive Stamps for British Guiana. They are standing on Victoria Regia lily pads. The same illustration appeared on the 1954 Definitive Stamps 3c (with varieties), and on the 1967-68 Independence overprints, on the 3c stamps (there were some interesting variations in the overprinting).



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1967-68 Independence 3c  
brown-olive and red brown,  
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error OPT INVERTED,  
unmounted o.g.





# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

DEFINITIVE STAMP SERIES  
ST. LUCIA 1976



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

DEFINITIVE STAMP SERIES  
MONTSERAT 1970



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

ST VINCENT 1973 AND 1974



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## BIRD STAMPS FROM ANGUILLA

On 27 February 1967 the Island Council of Anguilla declared the island independent from the Associated Statehood with St Christopher and Nevis of which it had previously been a part. The Island Council subsequently issued overprinted "Independent Anguilla" stamps. This White Crowned Pigeon 25c stamp was one of them. Subsequently, on 18 July 1968, Anguilla issued a bird series of four stamps. On 30 October 1972 the island's definitive stamps included a \$1 Frigate Bird stamp (the national bird) and a \$5 Brown Pelican stamp.



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## UNUSUAL VARIETIES OF BIRD STAMPS

This 1970 St Vincent sheet of 4c Soufriere Birds contains a hard to spot variety. Third from the left, bottom row the "u" in "Soufriere" has a spur.

This 1969 set of four Cocrico 5c stamps has a broken scroll, top left.

This 1964 Doctor Bird 8d stamp should have a red beak - but the red is missing (SG224a).

The Doctor Bird also appears on this 50th Anniversary Jamaica stamp—with a face value of \$120. It has an SG value of £3.50 today.



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## BIRDS IN CARIBBEAN COATS OF ARMS

This (on the right) is the Coat of Arms for the (failed) British Caribbean Federation. It features two Brown Pelicans.

Interestingly the failed Associated Statehood between St Christopher, Nevis and Anguilla also had a Coat of Arms that featured two pelicans.

Many of the nations of The Caribbean have birds that appear on their Coats of Arms. Featured below are the Scarlet Ibis and Cocrico of Trinidad and Tobago, the Sisserou Parrot of Dominica, the Amazonia Parrot of St Lucia, and the Pelican of Barbados.

Also shown is the Conje Pheasant of Guyana. The manner in which this bird is portrayed on the Coat of Arms, over time, has changed. In 1966 it doesn't look very much like a pheasant.



Guyana  
INDEPENDENCE

1966  
Official  
First Day Cover



# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO OVERPRINTS

485 species of birds have been confirmed on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. There are few places in the world where so many bird species can be seen in such a small area, many of them unique, very rare, or of particular interest. They range from the many species of humming bird to the cave-dwelling Oilbird (which uses echolocation to fly in the dark) and the Scarlet Ibis.

It is therefore surprising that it was only in 1990 that the country finally issued a Bird Series. (There had been Scarlet Ibis stamps in 1980/1990). There must have been a surplus of these stamps as they were overprinted in subsequent years.



1999 75c  
overprint on  
1990 40c

2011 75c over-  
print on 1990  
\$2.25

2013 \$1.00  
overprint on  
1990 \$2.50

2017 \$3.25  
overprint on  
1990 \$5.00

2018 \$1.00 sur-  
charge overprint  
on 1990 40c



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BOUNDARY ROAD,  
SAN JUAN.

# BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

## DID YOU NOTICE?

On Sheet 2, one of the B.W.I. University Stamps is for 2d, not 3c as is the case for all the others. Jamaica was the last of the Caribbean Islands to move to decimal currency, on 8 September 1969. Jamaica's Coat of Arms features a crocodile, rather than the Doctor Bird, it's national bird. The below stamp SG 291 was one of the definitives overprinted on 8 September 1969 to mark decimalisation.

Also on Sheet 2 note that the stamp for Trinidad and Tobago only names Trinidad, although the two islands had been one unified country since 1 January 1899 (producing joint stamps from 1913).

Did you notice, on Sheet 3 that Trinidad and Tobago has two national birds, whereas all the other countries have only one? It was decided that the Scarlet Ibis would represent Trinidad and the Cocrico Pheasant would represent Tobago. That said it is therefore surprising that when Trinidad and Tobago marked its Independence, stamps showed the Scarlet Ibis and the Bird of Paradise ( Sheet 4).

The 1968 Anguilla Bird Series on Sheet 12 is the earliest B.W.I. Bird Series I can find.



If you look carefully at the Montserrat Miniature on Sheet 6 you will notice a reference to the "Montserrat Albert Hall Concert". This took place on 15 September 1997 to raise funds for recovery from the volcanic explosions. Phil Collins, Elton John, Eric Clapton and Paul McCartney were among the performers.

The Pelican may have appeared most widely across the Caribbean on stamps, but it has not always been a lucky symbol—given the failure of the Caribbean and St Christopher, Nevis Anguilla Unions.