



Aruba Birdwatching and Nature Tours

(Hosted by Michiel Oversteegen)

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/birdwatchingaruba>

Tripadvisor: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ReviewExpress-g147248-d17393518-c1-Bird_Watching_Bird_and_Nature_Photos_Tours_on_Aruba-Oranjestad_Aruba.html

All tours are private, only you and yours will take part. Please call or contact for rates and availability.



Birding in Aruba; expect the unexpected

Because of a “sun, sea and entertainment” approach in marketing, Aruba is not known for birding. Only few people know that this little island has about 270 different species registered, which is an amazing variety for an island with a surface area of only 70 mi² (180km²). Due to Aruba’s geographic location, migratory birds visit Aruba during both cycles. In addition, Aruba is a mere 15 miles (24 km) from the coast of Venezuela. Therefore sightings of migrants and blown-overs from the Latin continent are not uncommon.



(Whistling Heron)

Nature, Birding and Photography tours

During the past few years I hosted many private nature tours. Due to my personal affection for birds and nature photography -in addition to knowledge of the island- I got specialized as a guide for birdwatching and wild bird photography tours. My tours offer participants the opportunities to enjoy the wonders of Aruba’s nature under expert guidance. As important, my service’s philosophy is to raise public perception of the value of Aruba’s natural environments and to help preserve them for future generations.

For many reasons I only provide private tours and no more than 4 people, so both nature and my clients get a front-row seat.

Because of my small groups, the pace of the tour is “how you like it.” We can do intensive birding, keep a relaxed pace, or even a little of both. Each of my tours is tailored to the wishes of the participants. And even though the focus is birding, I never ignore the cultural, scenic and other features of Aruba.

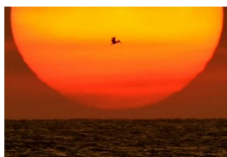


(Shaco’s / Aruba Burrowing Owls)

Tell me what you want, and I’ll do my best to put together a tour to fit your needs.

Your guide: Michiel Oversteegen

I was born and raised in The Netherlands. After finishing my studies “Mechanical Engineering” and “Business Management” in 1995, I moved to Aruba. Shortly after my arrival I discovered Aruba has more to offer than sun, sea and entertainment; one of its relatively unknown features is its diversity in wildlife both on land and in the water, magnificent fauna, stunning landscapes and peerless moonrises.



Around 2012 I started to take pictures of those moments that most of us do not get to see when in Aruba. No images of the beaches, the malls, the casino’s but photos taken in the middle of nature. For me, the birds carry a special place in the heart. By far most of my time spent outside, is with observing and photographing birds.

Thanks to a precious network of local and international experts, ornithologist, doctors I learned what I know now. More importantly, because of these friends I have access to what I do still not know!



Which birds to expect (for indication purpose only)

Year round (residents with a fair chance to observe):

White-cheeked Pintail - Neotropic Cormorant - Brown Pelican - Magnificent Frigatebird - Green Heron - Pied-billed Grebe - Crested Caracara - American Kestrel - Common Gallinule - American Coot - Killdeer - American Oystercatcher - Eared Dove - Bare-eyed Pigeon - Common Ground Dove - Brown-throated Parakeet - Groove-billed Ani - Burrowing Owl - Blue-tailed Emerald - Ruby-topaz Hummingbird - Northern Scrub-Flycatcher - Brown-crested Flycatcher - Grey Kingbird - Tropical Mockingbird - Yellow Warbler - Bananaquit - Black-faced Grassquit - Carib Grackle - Shiny Cowbird - Venezuelan Troupial

Common migrants (frequent visiting birds during one or both migration cycles):

Black-bellied Whistling Duck - Blue-winged Teal - Great Blue Heron - Cattle Egret - Snowy Egret - Great Egret - Tricolored Heron - Little Blue Heron - Black-crowned Night Heron - Roseate Spoonbill - Osprey - Peregrine Falcon - Southern Lapwing - Black-bellied Plover - Semipalmated Plover - Collared Plover - Black-necked Stilt - Greater Yellowlegs - Lesser Yellowlegs - Solitary Sandpiper - Spotted Sandpiper - Willet - Whimbrel - Ruddy Turnstone - Semipalmated Sandpiper - Least Sandpiper - White-rumped Sandpiper - Pectoral Sandpiper - Sanderling - Stilt Sandpiper - Short-billed Dowitcher - Wilson's Snipe - Laughing Gull - Royal Tern - Cayenne Tern - Common Tern - Least Tern - Black Skimmer - Barn Swallow - Northern Parula - Blackpoll Warbler - American Redstart - Northern Waterthrush

Lucky you! (both migratory/residents with a high ratio of luck to observe):

Crested Bobwhite - American Flamingo - Brown Booby - Least Bittern - Yellow-crowned Night Heron - Sora - Roseate Tern - Brown Noddy - White-tipped Dove - Mangrove Cuckoo - White-tailed Nightjar - Caribbean Elaenia - Cattle Tyrant - Brown-crested Flycatcher - Fork-tailed Flycatcher - Black-whiskered Vireo - Cliff Swallow - Chestnut-sided Warbler - Hooded Warbler - Great-tailed Grackle - Yellow Oriole

A complete list can be downloaded from the Dutch Caribbean Biodiversity dBase website:

<https://www.dcbd.nl/document/aruba-bird-checklist-version-march-2018>



What to bring/wear

My birding trips are relatively short, up to 5 hours on average when started around sunrise. It wouldn't surprise you that after 1 PM it can get really hot, both for us and the birds. When you arrive by cruise, we are bound to their schedule, and we might need to start on a time that's not the best for birding. In this case we can hopefully end before sunset, which time there is an increase in activity again.

Without doubt you will bring your binoculars, your scope, your camera or anything else intended for this tour.

Some suggestions what to bring/wear:

- A bottle of water; to avoid getting dehydrated.
- A hat; offers some protection from the tropical sun.
- UV blocking sun glasses; shades that block off some of those rays and make it much easier to look up into a bright sky or out over oceanic waters.
- Quick dry, lightweight clothes; it is always warm on Aruba. I bird always in shorts and mostly on flip-flops, although I do recommend some better footwear. We will not hike extensively, still most vegetation on Aruba has thorns and those hurt!
- Bug repellent: Biting insects aren't too much of a problem on Aruba but it's always good to be prepared. Especially near the mangroves mosquitos can be aggressive at certain time. A natural and organic bug spray would have my preference.
- Sunblock; it is recommended to use sunscreen with a high SPF of 30 or more and one that protects from UVA and UVB radiation. If you plan to swim during your stay on Aruba, please use a 'reef safe' lotion, without oxybenzone.



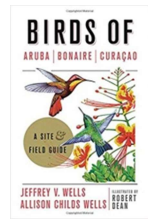
(Brown-throated Parakeet / Endemic subsp.



Publications

During the past years I posted a photo of Aruba's wildlife on a (almost) daily base on my Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/BirdwatchingAruba/>

In the Site and Field Guide "Birds of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao" by Jeffrey and Alison Wells. In this book you will find lots of my photos.



Some of my photos were used in publication of National Geographic, and some in international newspapers like the Daily Mirror and FoxNews. These are a few links:

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/stunning-photographs-show-magnificent-osprey-13955780>

<https://www.foxnews.com/science/aruba-based-photographer-captures-osprey-carrying-off-vibrant-blue-coral-reef-fish-stunning-images-show>

https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/?s=oversteegen&post_type=post

For scientific purposes I contribute many of my photos to:

- Dutch Caribbean Species Register; an initiative of Naturalis Biodiversity Center, the national research institute for biodiversity (<https://www.dutchcaribbeanspecies.org/>)
- The Macaulay Library; the world's premier scientific archive of natural history audio, video, and photographs (<https://www.macaulaylibrary.org/>)
- eBird; the world's largest biodiversity-related citizen science project, with more than 100 million bird sightings contributed each year by eBirders around the world (<https://ebird.org/home>)



Testimonials

"My first trip to Aruba was during March 2003. I came for a continuing education conference and was swept away by the people and natural history of the island. I returned again in March 2004, March 2005, October 2007, and April 2013. Shortly after my last visit, the Cornell Lab for Ornithology asked me to help with its eBird project in Aruba. It was through eBird that I (virtually) met Michiel Oversteegen. I was immediately struck by the awesome beauty of his photographs. He also proved to have an inquisitive and highly intelligent nature, which made him an ideal person to work with. I returned during April 2017, in no small part, to spend time in the field with Michiel, to meet him in person.

I had a fabulous time. He was a great companion, who showed me a number of places on the island that I'd not discovered, species of birds that I'd not yet seen on Aruba, and improved my photography. Since then, I've been honored to be able to call Michiel my friend. His abilities as a naturalist are very good. As a nature photographer, his is spectacular. As a companion, highly valued. "

Sincerely,

Steven Mlodinow, MD

Longmont CO USA

- eBird reviewer for Colorado and Aruba
- author of *Merlin Caribbean* (Cornell Lab for Ornithology)
- Member of the Colorado Bird Records Committee
- Former member of the Washington Bird Records Committee
- Former technical and regional editor for *North American Birds*
- Author of *Chicago Area Birds*
- Co-author of *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds and Birds of Washington State*

"My wife and I had our first birding experience in Aruba several months ago. We arrived by cruise ship and were met near the pier by a handsome man with binoculars and cameras hanging off his neck and shoulders. Kay had arranged for us to meet him online two months earlier. What followed were many joyful hours of birding, photography and an informal history lesson of this enchanting island.

The abundance of beautiful birds in this lovely Caribbean Island Nation was exceeded only by the abundant knowledge and kindness of our charming guide, Michiel Oversteegen. Michiel is a world class nature photographer and expert birder.

We have birded in dozens of ports of call over the last 20 years and Michiel is by far the best guide we have met. Do yourself a favor and seek out Michiel Oversteegen before you visit Aruba."

Jon Johnson

Duluth, Georgia, U.S.A.



"I visited Aruba in April 2016. In 5 days, I was able to see 61 different avian species, thanks in large part to invaluable help of Michiel Oversteegen.

He is a very knowledgeable birder, a superb photographer and a linguist. Michiel knows everything about Aruba and the local birds. I was very lucky to have him as my guide.

For example, on April 10, 2016, early in the morning, Michiel picked me up from my hotel and took me in his car to the Spanish Lagoon (Spaans Lagoen). That place was a birder's dream! Among different avian species there, Michiel had shown me three of my favorites: Burrowing Owl, Venezuelan Troupial and Blue-tailed Emerald. Michiel had given me some very interesting facts about the special status of the Burrowing Owl in Aruba - as one of the island's National Symbols. Having seen hundreds of different birds in various countries on different continents, I would say that the Venezuelan Troupial and Blue-tailed Emerald were among the most beautiful that I have ever seen.

Besides the Spanish Lagoon, Michiel and I went to Bubali Bird Sanctuary. It was another great place, which he knows in depth. Among the most exciting observations out there for me was to see the Whistling Heron and Southern Lapwing.

I had no troubles communicating with Mr. Oversteegen because of his fluency in English (he also speaks Dutch and Spanish). In fact, I enjoyed all our conversations on numerous topics.

I'm looking forward to seeing and birding again with my dear friend Michiel Oversteegen in the nearest future. I highly recommend him as a birding guide and photography expert."

Kind regards,

Alexander Viduetsky

Valley Village, California, USA

- Contributor to the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC Pocket Guide to BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA; Princeton University Press The WORLD'S RAREST BIRDS and other American and International publications

"I visited Aruba in early December 2018 and stayed in a local hotel. I discovered Michiel through an internet search, and found his communication, hospitality and flexibility a pleasure to work with; and with his help we racked up 12 new birds in a half day outing!

Michiel has an intimate knowledge of the various habitats around the island, as well as the habits and haunts of the specialties and endemics. He is passionate about the environment and conservation of the natural resources of Aruba.

I have used many guides around the world in my travels, and I rate Michiel highly among them. "

Jeff Haake



"Dear Michiel,

I am so excited about your new venture(s). However I am a bit jealous that I will now have to share one of the best birding guides and nature photographers I have encountered in my many travels with a wider audience.

I had been coming to Aruba for several years and doing some birding on my own but you introduced me to so many diverse species and new locations. It became clear that Aruba had far more to offer a birder, naturalist and or photographer than I previously had thought.

Your appreciation and sensitivity to the natural world of Aruba and ability to capture this in your photography is to be admired. As importantly, your make your voice heard through your many skills regarding the need and importance of continued conservation efforts in Aruba.

I look forward to birding with you the next time in Aruba !!!."

Sincerely

June Kalman

"I messaged Michiel through Facebook on Oct. 20, 2016 requesting a birding guide suggestion for my upcoming trip to Aruba, not knowing he would be willing to take me out to various birding hotspots for my first trip in December 2016. We conversed over the next few weeks and set a date and time to go birding. He picked me up at the agreed upon time at the hotel I was staying and off we went to the Bubali Bird Sanctuary. While there, he made sure I got great looks at life birds as well as other local specialties.

We then birded Balashi where Michiel got me on one of my nemesis birds – a Burrowing Owl! There were multiple owls in varying ages and he also showed me their burrows – I was thrilled! From there, we went to the Tierra del Sol golf course and saw more Burrowing Owls (the national bird of Aruba). Unfortunately, we also saw some of the destruction the off roaders and 4-wheelers do to the fragile environment. I hope in time, (soon), the tour companies will change their habits and see the negative impact on the environment.

We birded the coastline for ocean and shorebirds before bringing me back to my hotel. I have never been so pleased and surprised at how much time Michiel spent with me as well as making sure I got all of my target species. He is very professional and truly cares that I had an enjoyable experience.

*I came home with an astounding **14** life birds and a total count of **53** species!
When I get back to Aruba, Michiel will definitely be part of my plans!"*

Karen Carbiener



"On January 28, 2019, I went out birding with Michiel. Since I was within walking distance of the Bubali Bird Sanctuary, I hoped we could go elsewhere on the island. We spent a full morning together birding around the island and he took me to several interesting habitats and I was able to get on seven life birds. His overall knowledge of the bird species, the differing habitats, local politics and ongoing conservation efforts was incredibly impressive. He's an easy-going guy who knows how to bird as hard as is needed. I will be coming back next year and will reconnect with him to get that elusive White-tailed Nightjar!"

David Pettee

"Michiel is a superb birding guide; he knows Aruba, the birds, and where to find them! He is informed, fun, adventurous, and will go the extra mile to ensure you have a great experience. I birded 1:1 with Michiel twice in April 2018 while on a 2 week vacation. Michiel is among the best of international birding guides, a true pleasure."

Looking forward to my next trip to Aruba (hopefully late Spring this year). Will definitely be in touch if and when I get there, and I'll bring Sven more Salt Water Taffy 😊."

Best wishes for future success.

Beth Measley

Happy birding,


Michiel Oversteegen

