

# Newsletter: The First National Bird Count of Aruba.

March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

*This newsletter is a first synoptic publication of the results of the National Bird Count held on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The next Bird Count will be held on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2013. This newsletter is compiled by Parke Nacional Arikok, Aruba Birdlife Conservation and the Central Bureau of Statistics of Aruba. Aruba, updated version March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013.*

## ***The coming about of the First National Bird Count in Aruba.***

In the third quarter of 2010, Aruba Birdlife Conservation approached the Minister of Economic Affairs, Social Affairs and Culture, Mrs. Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar, with the request for support to hold a national bird count. The Minister fully supported the effort and called for the first national bird count to be held on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011. March 18<sup>th</sup> is Aruba's national day. Many cultural activities are held around the island on this day of celebration. By choosing this date, the Minister gave significant importance to the bird count. It was scheduled to be the first cultural event of the day.

The model used for Aruba's national bird count is based on different bird count systems used around the world, such as the Great Backyard Bird Count, the Christmas Bird Count and the Tuinvogeltelling (translated 'Garden Bird Count') carried out by Vogelbescherming Nederland. Aruba's national bird count is derived from these concepts. It is a simplified model based on popular participation, intended to improve awareness and bring about insight in the state of affairs of Aruba's birds.

## ***Who worked on this project?***

Many have given a hand in some way or the other in pulling this project together. It was sanctioned by the Government of Aruba through the Minister of Economic Affairs, Social Affairs and Culture. The concept was designed by Diego Marquez of Parke Nacional Arikok and Greg Peterson and Annette Peterson-Bredie of Aruba Birdlife Conservation. The Department of Culture designed, arranged and sponsored the printing of the bird count forms, organized the information and press events and took care of the distribution and collection of the bird count forms. Special words of recognition go to Zahira Zaandam for the design of the bird count form and the employees at the Department of Culture who worked extra hard to meet the given deadlines. The first screening of the forms was performed by Diego Marquez. Ruud Derix of the Central Bureau of Statistics performed the data input and analysis and produced the charts and tables found throughout this newsletter. The compilation of this newsletter is by Ruud Derix, Diego Marquez and Greg Peterson.

### ***The choice for 15 birds.***

A pragmatic choice was made to limit the bird species taken along in the bird count to the 15 best known birds on the island. Fourteen species are permanent dwellers. The American Kestrel (Kinikini) is the only migratory bird taken along in the bird count. Participants were given the option in the form to add other bird observations as well.

### ***The bird count.***

The count took place on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011, between 7:00 – 9:00 a.m. for the duration of 15 minutes. Participants were requested to choose a strategic location in their gardens or on their pieces of property and after doing so to first wait a few minutes before commencing their bird count.

### ***A rainy morning.***

March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011, started off as a bit of a rainy day. It is assumed that this might have caused birds to be a little less active on that specific morning.

## ***The results.***

### **Number and distribution of participants.**

A total of 905 households participated in the first national bird count, an estimated 2.6% of the households on Aruba. Such a participation of the population was above expectation. The participants' addresses were linked by the Central Bureau of Statistics to their Geographical Information System (GIS) system. This gave insight into the spread of participants around the island as well as which birds were counted at which locations. The participation rate is well represented in most administrative zones of



Aruba. The distribution of participants around the island was also above expectation. The first graph demonstrates the distribution of the participants around the island. The

northern coast line area is the least inhabited area of the island. With two exceptions, no counts were carried out in Parke Nacional Arikok.

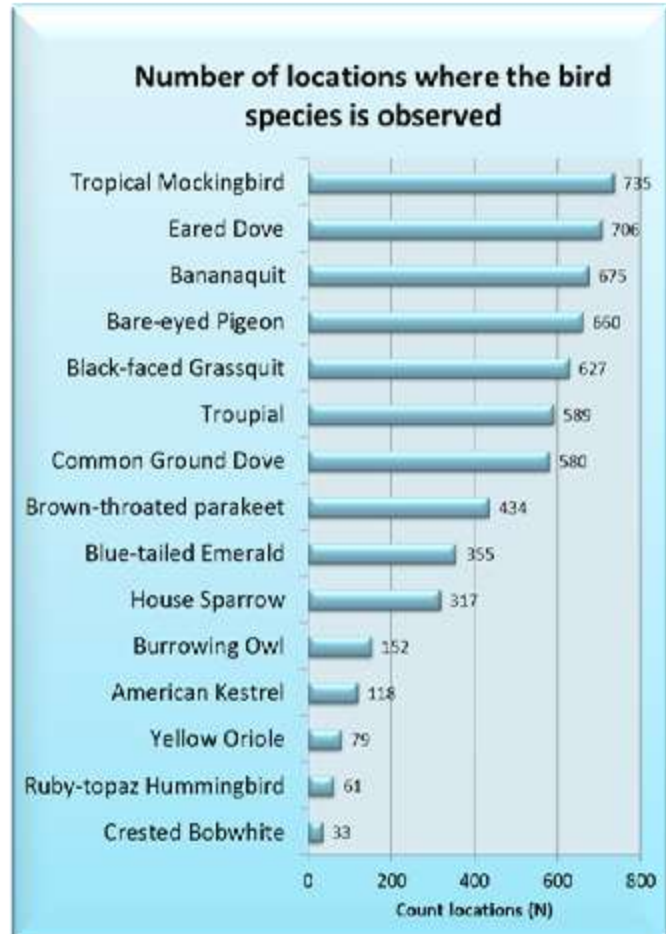
**Total birds counted.**

Of the 15 pre-selected bird species, a total of 23,490 birds were counted at the 905 locations on Aruba. Records were entered of an additional 20 species of birds counted at 271 of the 905 locations, good for an additional 1,565 birds counted.

In all, a total of 25,055 birds were counted.

**Most abundant birds.**

The results indicate that the Tropical Mockingbird (*Chuchubi*) is the most abundant bird species found on Aruba. It was observed at 735 or 81.2% of the locations. It is closely followed by the Eared Dove (*Buladeifi*) at 706 (78.0%) of the locations, the Bananaquit (*Barica hel*) at 675 (74.6%) of the locations, the Bare-eyed Pigeon (*Barbacoa*) at 660 (72.9%) of the locations and the Black-faced Grassquit (Moffi) 627 (69.3%) of the total of 905 locations where observations were made.



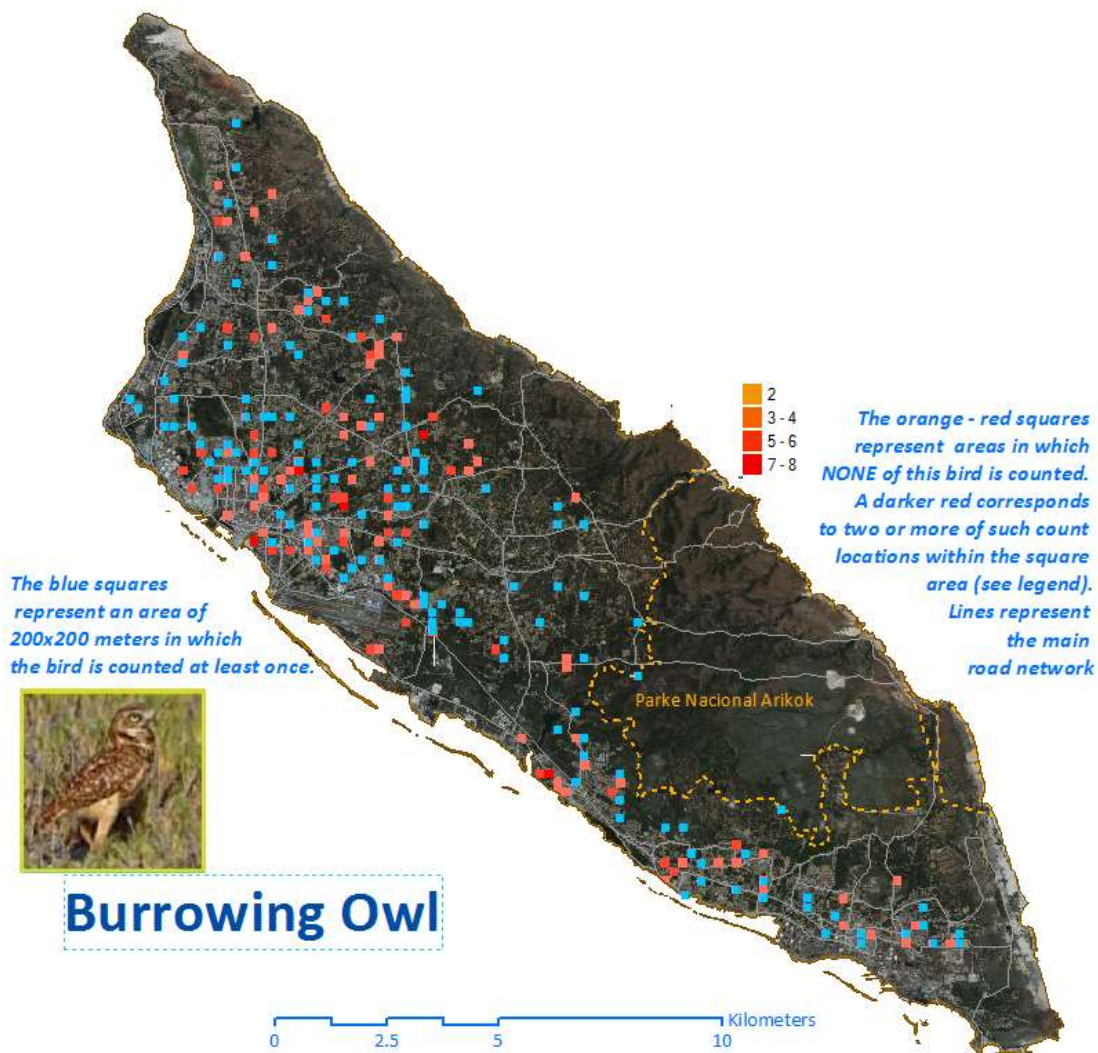
The Eared Dove (*Buladeifi*) scores the highest when it comes to just the numbers of a birds counted; 4,114 of these birds were counted. It is followed by the Bare-eyed Pigeon (*Barbacoa*) at 3,357, the Bananaquit (*Barica hel*) at 2,543, the Common Ground Dove (*Totolica*) at 2,472, the Black-faced Grassquit (Moffi) at 2,425 and the Tropical Mockingbird (*Chuchubi*) at a total of 2,417 birds.

A total of 1,844 House Sparrows were observed at 317 (35.0%) different locations.

### ***The Shoco and the Prikichi.***

The Burrowing Owl (*Shoco*) and the Brown-throated Parakeet (*Prikichi*) are both endemic subspecies. Both are birds of concern. Signs are that the numbers of both are on the decline. In the past for instance, flocks of Prikichi's could be as large as 100 birds. Many concerns have been uttered that the size of the flocks as well as the numbers of flocks are on the decline. Similarly so, concerns are frequently uttered as to the decline of the numbers of the Shoco.

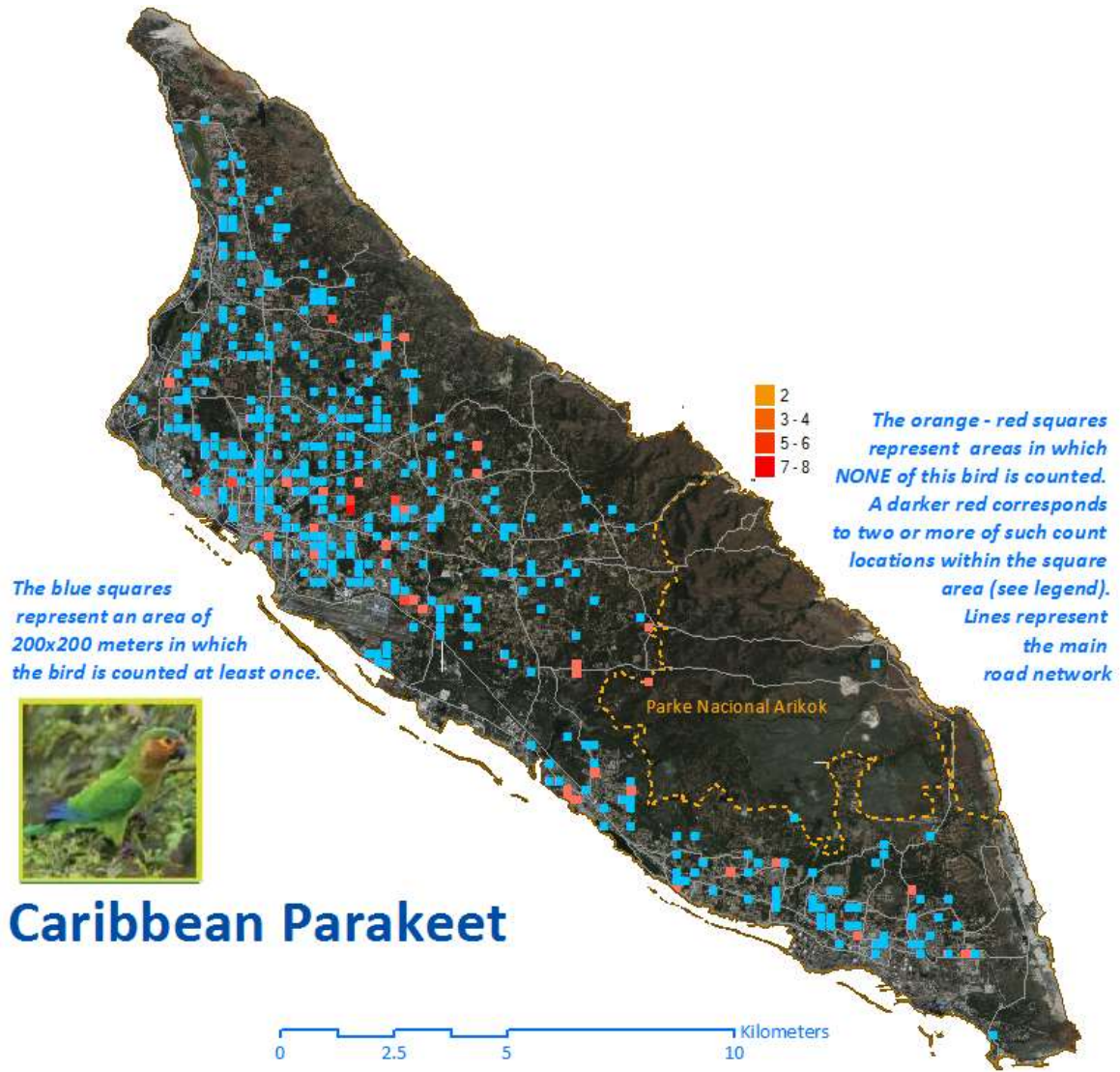
A total of 259 Shoco's were counted at 152 different locations. In 50.7% of locations it was observed as a single bird and in 36.2 % seen as two individuals.



The National Bird Count suggests that the Prikichi can still be found island wide. A total of 1,514 Brown-throated Parakeet were counted at 434 locations. However, large flocks have not been observed anymore. To the contrary, in 16.8% of the observations a



single bird was observed and in 30.9% of the cases, only two birds were counted. Of the 52.3% remaining observations only a few refer to a flock size larger than 9 individuals



## The Troupial and the Gonzalito.

There is a significant difference between the observation numbers of the Troupial (*Troupial*) and the Yellow Oriole (*Gonzalito*).

A total of 1,429 Troupials were observed at 589 (65.1%) of the locations. Whereas a total of 143 Yellow Orioles were observed at 79 (8.7%) of the locations. The Yellow Oriole seems absent in major parts of Aruba. And while the Yellow Oriole is observed predominantly as a single individual, the Troupial is often seen in pairs or small groups.

## The hummingbirds.

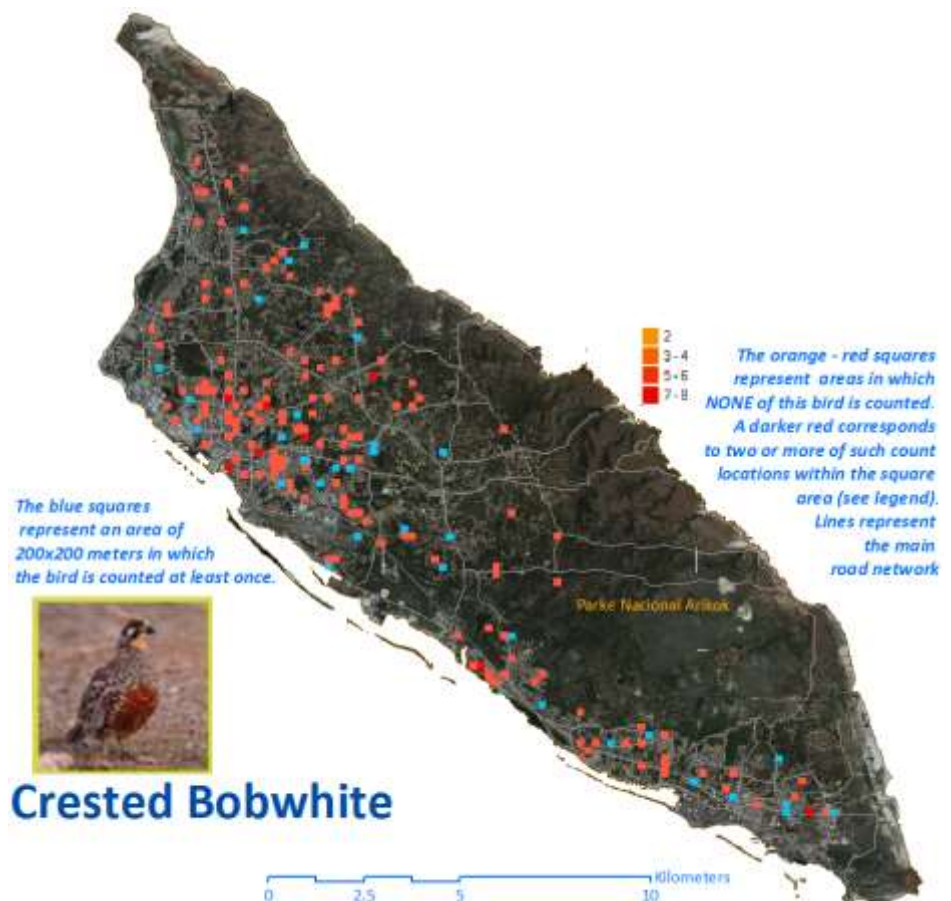
Aruba knows two species of hummingbirds, the Blue-tailed Emerald (*Blenchi berde*) and the Ruby Topaz Hummingbird (*Dornasol*). A total of 623 Blue-tailed Emeralds were observed at 355 (39.2%) of the locations. Whereas a total of 105 Ruby Topaz Hummingbirds were observed at 61 (6.7%) of the locations.

## The Kinikini.

The American Kestrel (*Kinikini*) is the only migratory bird taken along in the bird count. A total of 171 Kinikini's were observed at 118 (13.0%) of the locations. The observations of the American Kestrel are well spread over the island. Most observations involve a single bird, in 62.4 % of the cases. In 34.2% of cases two birds were counted.

## The Patrishi.

The **Crested Bobwhite** (*Patrishi*) is a bird of concern. This shy creature was hunted in the past by humans and it is believed that the invasive Boa constrictor is having its way with them. A mere 78 Patrishi were counted at 33 (3.6%) of the locations. Although the Patrishi is known to be a bird living in small family groups, in 59.4% of the observations, the *Crested Bobwhite* is recorded as an individual bird.



A paper with a more detailed overview of the findings of the First National Bird Count, including some remarks about the quality of the data, can be downloaded as of March 15, 2013, at:

[www.cbs.aw](http://www.cbs.aw)

[www.arubabirdlifeconservation.com](http://www.arubabirdlifeconservation.com)

[www.arubanationalpark.org](http://www.arubanationalpark.org)

*This table lists the names and frequency of all counts and count locations per bird species.*

English	Latin	Papiamentu	Dutch	Total count		Count locations		
				N	Rank	N	%	Rank
<i>Tropical Mockingbird</i>	<i>Mimus gilvus</i>	Chuchubi	Tropische Spotlijster	2,417	6	735	81.2%	1
<i>Eared Dove</i>	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>	Buladeifi	Geoorde treurduif	4,114	1	706	78.0%	2
<i>Bananaquit</i>	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>	Barica hel	Suikerduifje	2,543	3	675	74.6%	3
<i>Bare-eyed Pigeon</i>	<i>Patagioenas corensis</i>	Barbacoa	Naaktoogduif	3,357	2	660	72.9%	4
<i>Black-faced Grassquit</i>	<i>Tiaris bicolor</i>	Moffi	Maskergrondvink	2,425	5	627	69.3%	5
<i>Troupial</i>	<i>Icterus icterus</i>	Trupial	Oranje troepiaal	1,429	9	589	65.1%	6
<i>Common Ground Dove</i>	<i>Columbina passerina</i>	Totalica	Musduif	2,472	4	580	64.1%	7
<i>Brown-throated parakeet (Caribbean parakeet)</i>	<i>Aratinga pertinax arubensis</i>	Prikichi	Maisparkiet (West indische parkiet)	1,514	8	434	48.0%	8
<i>Blue-tailed Emerald</i>	<i>Chlorostilbon mellisugus</i>	Blenchi berde	Blauwstaartsmaragd-kolibrie	623	10	355	39.2%	9
<i>House Sparrow</i>	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Parha di Joonchi	Huismus	1,844	7	317	35.0%	10
<i>Burrowing Owl</i>	<i>Athene cunicularia arubensis</i>	Shoco	Holenuil	259	11	152	16.8%	11
<i>American Kestrel</i>	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	Kinikini	Amerikaanse torenvalk	167	12	118	13.0%	12
<i>Yellow Oriole</i>	<i>Icterus nigrogularis</i>	Gonzalito	Gele troepiaal	143	13	79	8.7%	13
<i>Ruby-topaz Hummingbird</i>	<i>Chrysolampis mosquitus</i>	Dornasol	Muskietkolibrie	105	14	61	6.7%	14
<i>Crested Bobwhite</i>	<i>Colinus cristatus</i>	Patrishi	Kuifbobwhite (-kwartel)	78	15	33	3.6%	15
				23,490		905		