



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Cuba Trip Report

### Caribbean Endemic Birding II

*20<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> March 2013 (10 days)*



Oriente Warbler by Rich Lindie

Trip report compiled by tour leader: Rich Lindie



Our second tour of the year to Cuba was a resounding success. With a full sweep of Cuban and available Caribbean endemics, a wonderful group of friends, great transport, fascinating cultural scenery and history and great weather throughout, we couldn't have asked for better. For more on this highly successful and wonderfully enjoyable tour, read on...

Leaving the charming capitol of Havana behind, we began the short journey to Soroa, making only brief stops along the way to admire some Eastern Meadowlarks and a host of waterbirds including Forster's and Caspian Terns, Ruddy Duck and Blue-winged Teal.

In Soroa itself, we had a very productive and thoroughly enjoyable day's birding, seeing our first Cuban Grassquits, 4 species of woodpecker, a dark race American Kestrel, stunning Black-throated Blue Warblers, a handful of magnificent Cuban Trogons, Cuban Blackbirds, Western Spindalis up close, a surprise Giant Kingbird, our first Greater Antillean Grackles, Red-legged Thrush, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Cuban Oriole, Yellow-headed Warbler and Northern Parula to name just a few! In fact, we recorded 66 species on this day, all before our afternoon drive to San Diego.

The next morning we headed straight to the Cuevas de los Portales in the limestone hills nearby. Once there, it took us no time at all to track down a wonderful little Cuban Pygmy Owl, perched right out in the open for full scope views and great pictures. Getting our fill of this bird we then made our way to the mouth of the cave system where we also found our main target for the morning without any trouble at all. Naturally, the ethereal calls of the Cuban Solitaire were heard before the bird was seen, but there's no doubt that it's the song that makes up for this species' otherwise very drab appearance. Also in the lovely surroundings of the cave area we watched some nesting Cave Swallows, had scope looks at White-crowned and Scaly-naped Pigeons, and even our first Cuban Martins of the tour.

Just outside the Cave complex, we stopped in a small stand of pine trees where some Olive-capped Warblers performed nicely and some Indigo Buntings provided extra distraction, before we made our way back toward San Diego for our final stop of the morning. Here, in a small agricultural field only meters from the road, we finally all caught up with some stunning Cuban Grassquits, including some great males looking somewhat like Gold-ringed Tanagers through the scope!

Our afternoon stop was timed perfectly, as the rain set in just as we were climbing back onto the bus. In only a few short hours at Hacienda Cortina we had racked up our final woodpecker species of the tour - the very unusual Fernandina's Flicker - and enjoyed some more common species at a very relaxed pace. Highlights included hunting Green Herons, a pair of Least Grebes, nesting Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Cuban Green Woodpeckers, Belted Kingfisher and various resident and migratory warbler species.





The following morning we left San Diego for the relatively long journey to the Zapata Peninsula. Fortunately, aboard our very spacious bus, the journey didn't feel like much at all, though this was greatly aided by one of the best sightings of the trip. While en route, a Gundlach's Hawk crossed the road, right in front of the bus to land in a field by the roadside. Scrambling from the vehicle, most of us managed to get good looks at this often very tricky endemic. A great deal of pressure relief for some of us and a wonderful bird to have in the bag!

Checking into our accommodation in Playa Larga for three nights, we ate lunch and headed out for our first birding excursion in the Zapata area. Our intention was to make our way directly to a roosting Bare-legged Screech Owl but, as is often the case in birding, we had other things to look at before getting there. Beginning with another Cuban Pygmy Owl, Cuban Trogons and a Swainson's Warbler, we then found ourselves in the presence of a very cooperative Cuban Tody. Following this little gem through the forest, clicking hundreds of photos along the way, it conveniently led us straight to the spot where we were to stand and watch a Bare-legged Owl peering from its roost in a dead palm trunk.

Deciding to use the remainder of the day in search of roosting Stygian Owls, we consequently drew a blank on the target, but did end up seeing our first Grey-fronted Quail-Dove, feeding quietly in the track!

Waking up early the next day with the intention of going out to search for Zapata Wren, we soon learned that a large group of 'researchers' were heading in the same direction and so quickly changed our plans. Instead, we headed to an area known as Bermeja for some much easier birding and a very productive morning indeed. Making it to the trail before dawn, we only had a few moments to wait before the first Key West Quail-Doves came out to feed on the track - one down, two to go! Then, in quick succession, both Grey-fronted and the stunning Blue-headed Quail-Doves were feeding mere meters from our feet, along with a supporting cast of Zenaida Doves and Ovenbirds, much to everyone's delight. After getting our fill of these lovely birds, we headed through the forest for more looks at Yellow-headed Warbler and our first Prairie Warblers, before heading to a roadside patch of flowers for another waiting game. Distractions in the form of Cuban Parakeets and more confiding Cuban Trogons may have kept most of us very busy, but time seemed to pass very slowly for me until our first sighting of Bee Hummingbird came. Fortunately, it was a gorgeous little (obviously!) male that came in and perched nearby and for an extended period. Fully satisfied with our views, we still decided to be a bit greedy and we waited for a little while longer for the bird to return and repeat views and cheers to be had. A definite highlight on the tour and of any visit to Cuba! And then, with recent word about the "missing" Stygian Owls, we decided to delay our lunch a little, eventually finding a cracking adult, perched above our heads and in full view. Great stuff indeed!





A little list-padding was in order that afternoon as we made our way to the bird-filled salt pans known literally as Las Salinas. Improving on our views of Cuban Black Hawk, we didn't add any new endemics to our list before nightfall, but we did see a great selection of water-associated species including Tri-colored Heron, Reddish Egret, Gull-billed Tern, Wilson's Snipe, Dunlin, Roseate Spoonbill, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, American Flamingo, American White Ibis, Western Osprey and Stilt Sandpiper. As night fell, we found ourselves standing on the road, listening to the call of Cuban Nightjars nearby. Our first two attempts to draw one in were only met with flyovers but, while walking back to the bus, we caught sight of one hanging around the vehicle and we decided to try for that one instead. Turning off all lights and playing only a few short moments of the call, we saw a dark shadow flutter in and land a few meters away from our feet. Powering up our lights, we watched in awe as one sat there, motionless in the beam, for fantastic views and a stream of photographs...a great way to end the day!

We had three targets the next morning, one of which we fully expected to put up a fight, and fight it did. In fact, today it came out the winner. Zapata Wren is not only a species low in number and restricted in range, but its habits and poor accessibility to territories makes it even more difficult to observe. Standing in the very early morning cool at the edge of the swamp, we tried to glimpse a few calling birds but eventually gave up the search in view of the impossible task at hand. Admitting defeat for this morning at least, we moved on to see the delightfully confiding Zapata Sparrow and some Red-shouldered Blackbirds before leaving the swamp. Not to mention the real surprise - a Spotted Rail standing motionless in the track!

Birding the area around the crocodile farm, we then added Anhinga, Cape May Warbler, Solitary Sandpiper and "real" Cuban Crows to our burgeoning list, while also getting great views of some Cuban Amazons.

A quick "recce" to the swamp that afternoon was all we needed to lift our spirits for the next and final attempt at Zapata Wren. Discovering that the wetland had dried out just enough, we decided that first thing the following morning we would walk out to the birds instead of trying to get them to us!

And so it was, with the sun still below the horizon, that we set out through the swamp. Without much of a challenge, apart from a spider web of orange 'weeds' in one area, we were duly rewarded with fantastic views of singing adults, sometimes only meters away! Spirits high, we set off for the day's drive to Najassa in the East.





We woke up early the next day in advance of a short drive to La Belén, south of the city of Najassa. There, amidst the mixed palm and woodland habitat, we found our first of many Cuban Palm Crows (side-by-side with Cuban Crows), pairs of Giant Kingbirds, a couple of Limpkins and a trio of Plain Pigeons to complete our set of targets. We then took some time to photograph Cuban Amazons, Cuban Parakeets and Cuban Green Woodpeckers before undertaking the drive to Cayo Guillermo in the north.

That afternoon was spent mostly relaxing at our all inclusive resort, though we didn't fail to add a few more birds to our very healthy list. Seeing both Sora and Clapper Rail very well, we also added Semipalmated Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, Northern Jacana, Magnificent Frigatebird and Black-necked Stilt.

Our full day in the Keys saw us cleaning up on all the remaining targets and, in doing so, becoming successful in seeing the complete set of possible Cuban Endemics!

Starting with great close up views of West Indian Whistling Duck and Cuban Martin at another local resort, we moved slowly east in search of Cuban Gnatcatcher, Thick-billed Vireo and Oriente Warbler. Finding all three of these species in a small area on Cayo Paredon, we had time to stop for Lesser Black-backed Gull and Double-crested Cormorant before heading back to Cayo Coco. Seeing us through to lunch, we photographed some more Oriente Warblers and had looks at a second form of Zapata Sparrow.

Then, as one feels obliged to in a place like this, we took most of the rest of the afternoon off before heading out to successfully track down Bahama Mockingbird and to take pictures of Cuban Vireo and Playa Pilar – of Hemmingway fame.

Fully relaxed and with all our targets in the bag, we drove to the airport after breakfast the next day for the short hop to Havana, where we enjoyed another great meal prior to heading out on a walking tour of the city. Enjoying this fascinating place, filled with its array of vintage cars and vibrant colors, we sat down to enjoy a wonderful farewell dinner before the nine o'clock canon sent us to bed. Talk about going out with a bang!

**Photo Credits:** Cuban Tody, Bare-legged Owl, Cuban Nightjar and Cuban Amazon – all photos taken by Rich Lindie.



## Annotated List of Birds recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC 3.3 list of: Gill, F. and Wright, M. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

### Total species recorded: 161

E = Endemic to Cuba, CE = Caribbean Endemic, I = Introduced.

#### Guineafowl Numididae

**Helmeted Guineafowl (I)** *Numida meleagris*  
We saw small flocks on three days of the tour.

#### Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

**West Indian Whistling Duck (CE)** *Dendrocygna arborea*  
We had great looks at this species on Cayo Coco.

**Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors*  
Common at Las Salinas and in the Keys.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*  
As with the above species, but also seen at Niña Bonita.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis*  
Good numbers were seen at Niña Bonita, between Havana and Soroa.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*  
Seen together with the previous species, at Niña Bonita.

#### Grebes Podicipedidae

**Least Grebe** *Tachybaptus dominicus*  
A pair of these little birds were seen at Hacienda Cortina.

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps*  
We first saw this species at Niña Bonita.

#### Flamingos Phoenicopteridae

**American Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*  
Seen at Las Salinas in the Zapata area, and in the Keys.

#### Ibises, Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

**[American] White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus*  
Common in Zapata and the Keys, where it was seen daily.

**Roseate Spoonbill** *Platalea ajaja*  
Small flocks were seen at Las Salinas and in the Keys area.

#### Hérons, Bitterns Ardeidae

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*  
Recorded in Zapata, where quite common in the La Turba area.

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax violacea*  
We all got to see this species at Las Salinas.

**Green Heron** *Butorides virescens*  
Seen almost daily.



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<b>[Western] Cattle Egret</b>	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Common throughout.	
<b>Great Blue Heron</b>	<i>Ardea Herodias</i>
Almost all sightings came from Las Salinas and the Keys.	
<b>[Western] Great Egret</b>	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Seen daily in small numbers.	
<b>Reddish Egret</b>	<i>Egretta rufescens</i>
Seen in Zapata, where common at Las Salinas, and in the Keys.	
<b>Tricoloured Heron</b>	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>
Seen in the Zapata area and in the Keys.	
<b>Little Blue Heron</b>	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>
Seen in Soroa, Zapata and the Keys.	
<b>Snowy Egret</b>	<i>Egretta thula</i>
Seen almost daily, at scattered wetlands throughout the tour.	

### Frigatebirds Fregatidae

<b>Magnificent Frigatebird</b>	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>
Seen only in the Cayo Coco area.	

### Pelicans Pelecanidae

<b>Brown Pelican</b>	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>
Seen at scattered locations throughout the tour, including the Zapata area and around the Keys.	
<b>American White Pelican</b>	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>
Small numbers were seen at Las Salinas in Zapata.	

### Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae

<b>Neotropic Cormorant</b>	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>
Common at reservoirs and inland waters.	
<b>Double-crested Cormorant</b>	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>
Most commonly encountered in the Keys area.	

### Anhingas, Darters Anhingidae

<b>Anhinga</b>	<i>Anhinga anhinga</i>
Seen only near Playa Larga in the Zapata area, where we had our first encounter at the crocodile farm.	

### New World Vultures Cathartidae

<b>Turkey Vulture</b>	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
Very common throughout.	

### Ospreys Pandionidae

<b>[Western] Osprey</b>	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Seen at a handful of sites, including Las Salinas and Cayo Guillermo.	

### Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

<b>Snail Kite</b>	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>
Seen in good numbers at a roadside wetland near Soroa.	
<b>Northern Harrier</b>	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>



Seen quartering over the Zapata swamp on our third afternoon there.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk** *Accipiter striatus*

Seen very briefly in the road, during our drive to the Cayo Coco airport.

**Gundlach's Hawk (E)** *Accipiter gundlachi*

What a lucky find! As a result of a lack of active nests during our visit, we were thrilled to see one on the drive between San Diego and Zapata.

**Cuban Black Hawk (E)** *Buteogallus gundlachii*

Seen well on numerous occasions, at Las Salinas and in the Keys.

**Broad-winged Hawk** *Buteo platypterus*

Seen well, near the caves.

**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis*

Seen on just three separate days, starting with a few individuals in the Soroa area.

### Caracaras, Falcons Falconidae

**Northern Crested Caracara** *Caracara cheriway*

Recorded almost daily and seen very well in the Keys.

**American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius*

Widespread in Cuba; we saw both pale and red morph birds in different areas.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

One of us spotted this bird in San Diego.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

Our first individual was seen flying over our accommodation in Najassa.

### Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae

**Clapper Rail** *Rallus longirostris*

We had wonderful views of this species on Cayo Guillermo.

**Sora** *Porzana carolina*

Also seen very well on Cayo Guillermo.

**Spotted Rail** *Pardirallus maculatus*

A huge surprise to see this species standing in the road in the Zapata area!

**Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinica*

We saw this species around San Diego and in the Zapata area.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

First seen in the canals bordering the Zapata swamp.

**American Coot** *Fulica americana*

Seen on most days of the tour, beginning with large numbers at Niña Bonita, between Havana and Soroa.

### Limpkin Aramidae

**Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna*

Seen once in the Zapata area and again at La Belén.

### Stilts, Avocets Recurvirostridae

**Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus*

Seen in good numbers in the Keys.

### Plovers Charadriidae

**Grey (Black-bellied) Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*



Seen in small numbers in the Keys and at Las Salinas.

**Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*

A few were seen on Cayo Coco.

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferous*

Seen in the Soroa area, Zapata and in the Keys.

### Jacanas Jacanidae

**Northern Jacana** *Jacana spinosa*

Our driver took us to a site for our first sighting, just outside Najassa.

### Sandpipers, Snipes Scolopacidae

**Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago delicata*

Only moments after having found one in the open at Las Salinas, the bird disappeared!

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

We managed to find two individuals of this species, mixed in with the next, at Cayo Guillermo.

**Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus*

Seen in fair numbers on Cayo Guillermo.

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca*

Seen at Las Salinas and in the Keys.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*

Also seen at Las Salinas and in the Keys.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*

Seen only at Las Salinas.

**Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria*

We saw a handful of these birds at the crocodile farm in Zapata.

**Willet** *Tringa semipalmata*

Seen on our visits to Las Salinas and Cayo Guillermo.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

Seen well at Las Salinas and in the Keys.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla*

We briefly saw this species at Cayo Guillermo, on our first afternoon there.

**Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla*

Flocking in small numbers with other waders at Las Salinas in Zapata, and also at the Keys.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

Only a few were seen at Las Salinas.

**Stilt Sandpiper** *Calidris himantopus*

After distant views at Las Salinas, we appreciated the close-ups on Cayo Guillermo.

### Gulls, Terns and Skimmers Laridae

**Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla*

Seen in good numbers in the Keys.

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis*

Some of us found this species near our accommodation on Cayo Guillermo.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

A brief stop at Cayo Coco gave us this species.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*

We had a few of these birds at Las Salinas.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*

First seen at Niña Bonita and then again at Las Salinas.



**Royal Tern***Thalasseus maximus*

We saw this, Cuba's most common tern species, at Niña Bonita, Las Salinas and in the Keys.

**Forster's Tern***Sterna forsteri*

We saw this elegant species on both our visits to Niña Bonita.

**Pigeons, Doves Columbidae****Rock Dove (I)***Columba livia*

Common in towns and cities.

**White-crowned Pigeon (CE)***Columba leucocephala*

Seen in Soroa, San Diego and in the Zapata area.

**Scaly-naped Pigeon (CE)***Columba squamosa*

We scoped this species at the caves.

**Plain Pigeon (CE)***Patagioenas inornata*

This is one of Najasa's specialties, where we saw it in La Belén.

**Eurasian Collared Dove (I)***Streptopelia decaocto*

Seen in Havana and in the Keys.

**Mourning Dove***Zenaida macroura*

Widespread in Cuba and a common sight almost daily.

**Zenaida Dove***Zenaida aurita*

Seen in Soroa and especially well in Zapata.

**White-winged Dove***Zenaida asiatica*

We all caught up with this species in La Belén.

**Common Ground Dove***Columbina passerina*

Living up to its name, we saw this species on every day of the tour.

**Gray-fronted (-headed) Quail-Dove (E)***Geotrygon caniceps*

One of Zapata's specialties, we were treated to great views at Bermeja.

**Key West Quail-Dove (CE)***Geotrygon chrysis*

We also enjoyed great looks at this species at Bermeja, where they fed on the track only meters from our feet.

**Blue-headed Quail-Dove (E)***Starnoeanas cyanocephala*

Two of these striking doves were seen together with the previous two species, in Bermeja. A real treat!

**Parrots Psittacidae****Cuban Parakeet (E)***Aratinga euops*

Small flocks were seen in Zapata, while several more were spotted in La Belén.

**Cuban Amazon (Parrot) (CE)***Amazona leucocephala*

This lovely parrot was seen very well in Zapata and at La Belén.

**Cuckoos Cuculidae****Smooth-billed Ani***Crotophaga ani*

Common in cultivated areas throughout Cuba.

**Great Lizard Cuckoo (CE)***Saurothera merlini*

Commonly seen at almost every site visited during the tour.

**Owls Strigidae****Bare-legged (Cuban Screech) Owl (E)***Gymnoglaux lawrencii*

One of Zapata's specialties, we had nice views of an adult, peering from a dead palm tree.

**Cuban Pygmy Owl (E)***Glaucidium siju*

We managed to find this species on a few occasions while in the Zapata area, in addition to our first sighting at the caves.

**Stygian Owl***Asio stygius*

It took a little searching but we managed find one on its day roost in Zapata. A great find and a great bird!

**Nightjars Caprimulgidae****Cuban Nightjar (E)***Caprimulgus cubanensis*

We had a wonderful experience with this species as it flew in to land by our feet in Las Salinas.

**Swifts Apodidae****Antillean Palm Swift (CE)***Tachornis phoenicobia*

This species was seen on most days of the tour, most often in association with thatched buildings, rather than palms.

**Hummingbirds Trochilidae****Cuban Emerald (CE)***Chlorostilbon ricordii*

Very common and seen on most days of the tour.

**Bee Hummingbird (E)***Mellisuga helenae*

We were thrilled to see a perched male for extended periods, in the Bermeja area.

**Trogons Trogonidae****Cuban Trogon (E)***Priotelus temnurus*

Cuba's national bird, this very attractive species was delightfully common and conspicuous.

**Kingfishers Alcedinidae****Belted Kingfisher***Megaceryle alcyon*

We saw a few of these lovely birds in San Diego and Zapata.

**Todies Todidae****Cuban Tody (E)***Todus multicolor*

Arguably Cuba's most beautiful bird! While more often heard than seen, we nonetheless managed to see it at almost all the sites we visited.

**Woodpeckers Picidae****West Indian Woodpecker (CE)***Melanerpes supercilialis*

This good-looking species was seen in all areas visited, except the Keys.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker***Sphyrapicus varius*

Following our initial encounters in Soroa and San Diego, we never encountered this species again.

**Cuban Green Woodpecker (E)***Xiphidiopicus percussus*

We saw this species, often attending a nest cavity, in Soroa, San Diego, La Belén and the Keys.

**Northern Flicker***Colaptes auratus*

We had some wonderful looks at this bird, in Soroa.

**Fernandina's Flicker (E)***Colaptes fernandinae*

We spent some time watching this localized bird attending its nest cavity, in Hacienda Cortina.

**Tyrant Flycatchers Tyrannidae****Cuban Pewee (E)***Contopus caribaeus*

Very common and widespread. We saw it everyday.

**Grey Kingbird** *Tyrannus dominicensis*

This migrant was commonly encountered, throughout the tour.

**Giant Kingbird (CE)** *Tyrannus cubensis*

Apart from our sightings in La Belén, we were very surprised to bump into one in Soroa, on the first day!

**Loggerhead Kingbird (CE)** *Tyrannus caudifasciatus*

Seen everyday and in good numbers.

**La Sagra's Flycatcher (CE)** *Myiarchus sagrae*

Not quite as common as the previous species, but encountered almost daily.

### Vireos, Greenlets Vireonidae

**Thick-billed Vireo (CE)** *Vireo crassirostris*

We all managed to get good looks at this species on Cayo Paredon.

**Cuban Vireo (E)** *Vireo gundlachii*

Seen on a handful of occasions, though most of us had our best views on Cayo Coco.

**Yellow-throated Vireo** *Vireo flavifrons*

We only encountered this species in Soroa.

**Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus*

A few individuals were seen during our time at the caves.

**Black-whiskered Vireo** *Vireo altiloquus*

Seen in Soroa and San Diego.

### Crows, Jays Corvidae

**Cuban Palm Crow (E)** *Corvus minutus*

This species was common at La Belén.

**Cuban Crow (CE)** *Corvus nasicus*

Seen first in Zapata, though we enjoyed being able to compare it to the previous species in La Belén.

### Swallows, Martins Hirundinidae

**Cuban Martin (CE)** *Progne cryptoleuca*

Without a doubt, our best views were of perched birds on Cayo Coco.

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

We had a small flock of these birds, flying over the Zapata swamp.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Seen on most days of the tour.

**Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva*

We got to see this species nesting in Cueva de los Portales.

### Wrens Troglodytidae

**Zapata Wren (E)** *Ferminia cerverai*

Thanks to dry conditions in Zapata, we were able to walk out into the swamp for brilliant views of some calling adults!

### Gnatcatchers Polioptilidae

**Cuban Gnatcatcher (E)** *Polioptila lembeyi*

Always a favorite, we enjoyed great views on Cayo Paredón Grande.



**Mockingbirds, Thrashers Mimidae****Grey Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis*

Commonly encountered everywhere, except the Keys.

**Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos*

A very common bird, seen everyday of the tour.

**Bahama Mockingbird (CE)** *Mimus gundlachii*

One individual was seen well on Cayo Guillermo.

**Thrushes Turdidae****Cuban Solitaire (E)** *Myadestes elisabeth*

We had no trouble at all tracking down this species at Cueva de los Portales, where everyone enjoyed great views.

**Red-legged Thrush (CE)** *Turdus plumbeus*

Seen every day of the tour.

**Old World Sparrows Passeridae****House Sparrow (I)** *Passer domesticus*

Common in towns and cities.

**New World Warblers Parulidae****Ovenbird** *Seiurus aurocapilla*

Some individuals were rather elusive, but we had some great views at Bermeja in the Zapata area.

**Louisiana Waterthrush** *Seiurus motacilla*

Seen at scattered locations, including Zapata.

**Northern Waterthrush** *Seiurus noveboracensis*

We only saw this species in Soroa, on day one.

**Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia*

Rather uncommon during our tour and only seen in the Zapata area.

**Swainson's Warbler** *Limnothlypis swainsonii*

We were pleased to find one in the same spot as two weeks earlier, in Zapata.

**Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas*

Seen in San Diego, Najasa, the Keys and Zapata, where it is particularly common at La Turba.

**American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*

Not seen in high numbers but seen on every day of the tour nonetheless.

**Cape May Warbler** *Setophaga tigrina*

Just the one sighting at the crocodile farm in Zapata.

**Northern Parula** *Setophaga americana*

Not uncommon and seen at most sites.

**Magnolia Warbler** *Setophaga magnolia*

Sightings on our second day in Zapata were the only ones we ended up with.

**Mangrove Warbler** *Setophaga petechia*

We had a brief sighting at Las Salinas.

**Black-throated Blue Warbler** *Setophaga caerulescens*

Seen at scattered localities, including Soroa.

**Palm Warbler** *Setophaga palmarum*

Relatively common and seen on almost every day of the tour.

**Olive-capped Warbler (CE)** *Setophaga pityophila*

This localized warbler was seen near San Diego de los Baños.

**Myrtle (Yellow-rumped) Warbler** *Setophaga coronata*

Seen only during our time in San Diego.

**Yellow-throated Warbler** *Setophaga dominica*

This smart little warbler was seen in Soroa, La Belén and in the Keys.

**Prairie Warbler** *Setophaga discolor*

Most sightings came from the Zapata area.

**Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens*

Surprisingly scarce, we only saw this species around Soroa and Zapata.

**Yellow-headed Warbler (E)** *Teretistris fernandinae*

A delightful little bird and one that we saw very well in Soroa and the Zapata area.

**Oriente Warbler (E)** *Teretistris fornsi*

We admired a few different individuals in the Keys.

**Prothonotary Warbler** *Protonotaria citrea*

A pleasant surprise to find one of these striking warblers in Cayo Paredon.

### Oropendolas, Orioles & Blackbirds Icteridae

**Cuban Oriole (E)** *Icterus melanopsis*

Also surprising scarce during our tour, with few sightings only coming from Soroa and the Keys.

**Cuban Blackbird (E)** *Dives atrovioleaceus*

Common and widespread in Cuba.

**Red-shouldered Blackbird (E)** *Agelaius assimilis*

Highly restricted to Zapata, where we only saw small flocks and pairs.

**Tawny-shouldered Blackbird (CE)** *Agelaius humeralis*

Seen at a number of sites, including San Diego.

**Greater Antillean Grackle (CE)** *Quiscalus niger*

A common species seen everyday of the tour.

**Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna*

Seen particularly well at Niña Bonita.

### Buntings, New World Sparrows & Allies Emberizidae

**Zapata Sparrow (E)** *Arremon brunneinucha*

We saw this species at two separate sites, namely the Zapata Swamp and the Keys.

### Tanagers & Allies Thraupidae

**Red-legged Honeycreeper** *Cyanerpes cyaneus*

One of the first birds seen during our visit to Soroa.

**Cuban Bullfinch (CE)** *Melopyrrha nigra*

Seen well in Soroa, San Diego and in the Keys.

**Cuban Grassquit (E)** *Tiaris canorus*

This is a western Cuba specialty, and we were fortunate to see in it both San Diego de los Baños and Soroa.

**Yellow-faced Grassquit** *Tiaris olivaceus*

More common than the previous species and seen at a few more sites.

**Western Spindalis (CE)** *Spindalis zena*

Quite commonly encountered during our tour, with individuals and pairs seen in Soroa and the Keys for example.

### Grosbeaks, Saltators & Allies Cardenalidae

**Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea*

Our first sightings came from the San Diego area, while the remainder were from Zapata.



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