



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Cuba

Caribbean Endemic Birding V

2nd – 11th December 2017 (10 days)

Trip Report



Cuban Tody by Fred Dalbey

Trip report by tour leader: Christopher J. Sharpe

Top ten birds as voted for by participants:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Cuban Tody | 6. Fernandina's Flicker |
| 2. Bee Hummingbird | 7. Cuban Trogon |
| 3. Blue-headed Quail-Dove | 8. Cuban Parrot |
| 4. Zapata Wren | 9. Cuban Green Woodpecker |
| 5. Oriente Warbler | 10. Bare-legged Owl |

Daily Diary / Tour Summary

Saturday: 2 December. Our Cuban adventure was scheduled to begin with dinner at 7 pm. Since many people arrived earlier in the day, some were able to squeeze in a spot of light birding around the grounds of the hotel, which is a good place to become acquainted with Cuban Emerald, the striking *rubripes* subspecies of Red-legged Thrush, Antillean Palm Swift and the ubiquitous Cuban Blackbird. Others headed for a tour of *La Habana Vieja* (Old Havana). After a welcome dinner and orientation, most of us were glad to get to bed in preparation for our trip. One of our number, Jane, did not get in until the early hours (not from Old Havana, from the airport)...



Cuban Grassquit by Fred Dalbey

Sunday: 3 December. After a leisurely breakfast, we loaded our bags onto the bus to begin our birding in Cuba. Our first stop was less than half an hour from the hotel at Niña Bonita Reservoir, where we counted a raft of at least 2500 diving ducks in reasonable light some 300 m away. To judge by the proportion of conspicuously upturned tails and black backs, the flock seemed to be split about 80:20 between Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup, but the mix of plumages made a precise estimate tricky. White cheeks betrayed the presence of a lone male Ruddy Duck. The cormorants were Double-crested, though both are found here.

Our next stop was in the Sierra del Rosario Biosphere Reserve, one of six Cuban sites inscribed in UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme. Entirely logged and cleared prior to the revolution, the denuded landscape was reforested in 1968 with more than eight million trees – sown, nurtured and planted out tree by tree. To minimise erosion on the steep slopes, bulldozers were used to create terraces, an aspect that gives its name to the area of Las Terrazas. Our guide, Otis, awaited at the entrance barrier to take us straight to a pig farm that has been one of the best places to see Cuban Grassquit. *It did not disappoint.* At least a dozen males and almost as many females were making short work of a pile of maize meal, together with Yellow-faced Grassquits. Besides a diverse array of very healthy looking livestock, the farm provided our first Loggerhead Kingbird and Cuban Pewee. Next we proceeded to the lake for complimentary rum cocktails and coffee, and our first taste of authentic Cuban music. Lakeside trees held our first Greater Antillean Grackles. A short walk produced a Northern Flicker (a beautiful bird of the endemic subspecies *chrysocaulosus*, sometimes called 'Cuban Flicker'), Cuban Green Woodpecker, Red-legged Honeycreepers, Yellow-headed Warblers, a fabulous 'fleur-de-lys' (Roberta's aptly-coined phrase) Cuban Trogon, Cuban Bullfinch

and some bright male Summer Tanagers and Black-throated Blue Warblers. Eating meals while serenaded by talented local musicians is a feature of travel in Cuba, and, as we ate our delicious local lunch and quaffed our first well-earned *Bucaneros*, two excellent local groups improvised songs about “birdwatchers” and “friends who visit from the USA”. A quick stop after lunch at a grove of Caribbean Pines gave us good looks at two pairs of Olive-capped Warblers, and a final stop to drop off and bid farewell to Otis gave us fly-by looks at Fernandina’s Flicker! After that show, we drove on westwards, pausing to watch Caspian Terns and Snail Kites.

Soon we were getting acquainted with our local guide, César, in his home town of San Diego de los Baños. We spent the last couple of hours of light at the ostentatious former Hacienda Cortina, nationalised after the revolution and opened to the public as Parque La Güira. Our first bird was another Olive-capped Warbler, but most of the rest



Cuban Pewee by Fred Dalbey

of the birds were wintering migrants, with a super male Cape May Warbler amongst a nice selection of warblers, including Prairie and Yellow-throated, at the bridge. Four Cuban Green Woodpeckers gave us the looks we were seeking, while the lake held eight Purple Gallinules. As dusk fell, we left the exotic statues to the drinkers and revellers and headed to our hotel to reflect on a wonderful first day.

Monday: 4 December. A dawn start had us at Cueva de los Portales at the ideal time to hear the otherworldly song of Cuban Solitaire. It was unexpectedly breezy and the palms were swaying, making observation of our quarry quite a challenge. Even the larger birds were being blown about, with White-crowned and occasionally Scaly-naped Pigeons scudding across the sky. César suggested that we walk through to the other side of the cave where there would be less wind – and he was right. Peter,



Cuban Green Woodpecker by Fred Dalbey

curiously exploring one of the side branches of the cave, flushed us a Barn Owl, which flapped across the river to more private sleeping quarters. Out of the wind, we swiftly located a male Cuban Solitaire that gave us reasonably good views as it sang from a tree on the other bank. The eroded limestone caves were used as a base by Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara and his Western Army during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and we were able to look at his erstwhile sleeping quarters and office. *Would he have welcomed his comradely neighbours, the Jamaican Fruit-eating Bats and Brazilian Free-tailed Bats?*

Dallying at the cave entrance, we picked up nice views of Cuban Vireo, Cuban Tody and Cuban Oriole – the endemics were putting up very little resistance. On our way back to the hotel for an early lunch, we made an additional stop at Hacienda Cortina to try to add some of the less common boreal migrants, but it was very quiet, with yet another Olive-capped Warbler the only bird of note. Our early lunch was

interrupted by the shrill cries of Antillean Palm Swifts, the source of their alarm proving to be a marauding Merlin, which made repeated passes at the enveloping flock.

After lunch, on our drive eastwards towards Zapata Swamp, we made a rest stop once again at Niña Bonita Reservoir. The numbers of birds were very similar to our outgoing tallies, with at least 500 (and maybe 2000) Ring-necked Duck and some 500 Lesser Scaup, plus a couple of Ruddy Duck. We arrived at the hotel in Playa Larga at sunset, with enough light to get to our rooms and evict the less innocuous wildlife.



Cuban Vireo by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Tuesday: 5 December. Our first taste of Zapata Swamp wildlife came just before first light, at a blind in Bermejas Wildlife Refuge. As we entered the forest, a Bare-legged Owl perched at eye-level before continuing to its day roost site. An hour-and-a-half's vigil gave us good looks at two Blue-crowned Quail-Doves and saturation studies of Zenaida Doves. Cuban Parakeets repeatedly flew over the canopy and eventually we had good unobscured views. Having taken our fill, we continued down the road by bus to an open spot affording clear views over the surrounding marsh. We soon saw our target, Red-shouldered



Cuban Pygmy Owl by Fred Dalbey

Blackbird: uncharacteristically good close views of a male and superficially similar, black female. The marsh, roadside bushes and standing water made this a birdy spot and we quickly encountered three dozen additional species, with excellent looks at Cuban Pygmy Owl and four Great Lizard Cuckoos, as well as Tawny-shouldered Blackbirds and the rather uncommon Magnolia Warbler. Buoyed by our success, we returned to Bermejas to walk the semi-deciduous forests of the reserve. Almost immediately we were on to three Worm-eating Warblers, together with a Swainson's on wintering territory in a patch of vines. *Half of the species we saw here are migrants from North America, showing just how important these Cuban protected areas are for American birds.* A quick check of a reliable site for Bee Hummingbird revealed an absence of blossoms – and birds – so we took that as a cue for lunch, spotting a perched Red-tailed Hawk (this is resident subspecies *solitudinis*) on the way to our lunch at a beautiful coastal buffet.

After a short rest, our afternoon visit to Soplillar began with a stroll between flooded fields, where we had lovely views of three Fernandina's Flickers, another Northern Flicker (atop a utility pole) and a further four Great Lizard Cuckoos. Cuban Parrots and Parakeets showed extremely well, both flying over and perched up obligingly in the saturated colours produced by the low sun. A distant Northern Jacana was spotted across the wet pastureland. With all the standing water, we had to

choose our birding options carefully. After a while, we hopped on the bus again and drove to another side of the woodland, where we followed Mario on a veritable odyssey, by the end of which we had tired ourselves out and muddied our boots – but had fabulous looks at Bare-legged Owl and decent looks at Cuban Nightjar too. *Quintessential birding with Mario!* At exactly 18:36, as we admired the creamiest of Milky Ways and stared into the darkness after nightjars, a huge fireball of a meteor went down over the north-west horizon, presumably somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico.

Wednesday: 6 December. After coffee and eggs, we set off in the dark along the narrow road to the village of Santo Tomás – the type locality for the Zapata Rail, Zapata Sparrow and Zapata Wren – about an hour and a quarter from our hotel. A stop along the track that cuts through the dry forest gave us close spotlit views of Cuban Nightjar. The village of Santo Tomás was just waking up when we arrived, but our boatmen were ready and eager to go, punting poles in hand. We walked briskly to the boats, glad that a new boardwalk had been built alongside the now flooded track to the boat dock. Songs and calls emanated from the vegetation at the side of the cut as we punted our way into the heart of the swamp. Our first birds were more Yellow-headed Warblers, followed by Prairie Warblers and then a spectacular Grey-fronted Quail-Dove singing from a low branch right on the water's edge. Curious Zapata Sparrows (of the nominate subspecies) were next, and then we focussed on the main target: Zapata Wren. Initially, we could hear no singing birds – perhaps an effect of a cold front that was making its presence felt by the clouds now creeping over the sky. The purpose-built platform was flooded, but, unperturbed, the boatmen simply manhandled our boats into a suitable area of the swamp, off the beaten track. After some effort (to be



Zapata Wren by Forrest Rowland



Cuban Oriole by Clayton Burne

honest, rather more on the part of our boatmen), we did hear a bird singing distantly, but a little too far off behind bushes and tussocks. Mario eyed the cloud anxiously: general bird activity had died. The boats were dragged back to the main channel once more, and we poled our way back along the cut, stopping here and there to listen for the wren. Eventually, we were rewarded with good looks at a bird in bushes right by the cut. After that it was time for lunch at another beach-side restaurant, this time spotting a resident Broad-winged Hawk (subspecies *cubanensis*) en route.

For a sweet, low-calorie dessert, we stopped at a house in Pálpite specifically to see Bee Hummingbird, renowned as the world's smallest warm-blooded animal. The owner has planted plenty of nectar-producing bushes and provided sugar-feeders, which attracted not only five tiny Bee Hummingbirds, but also Tawny-shouldered Blackbirds and Cuban Orioles (our best views yet), as well as two very

approachable Black-throated Blue Warblers.

After a quick rest in the afternoon, we treated ourselves to some easy birding on our drive out to the Salinas de Brito. Here we had unobstructed views of impressive numbers of large, showy waterbirds: at least 4000 Blue-winged Teal, 6 West Indian Whistling Duck, American White Pelicans, Brown Pelicans, American White Ibis, Reddish Egrets, American Flamingos, Roseate Spoonbills. A lone Forster's Tern foraged over a distant pool, and an Osprey of pale-headed resident subspecies *ridgwayi* provided nice contrast with half a dozen winter visitors (subspecies *carolinensis*). We had several views of Cuban Black Hawks and a quick look at the resident 'Mangrove' Yellow Warblers (subspecies *gundlachi*, part of what I prefer to call the Golden Warbler group). With the sun going down amongst clouds, this was an exhilarating celebration of coastal bird life!



American Flamingo by Dennis Palafox

Thursday: 7 December. We set off for Najasa, the easternmost locality on our itinerary, after a leisurely breakfast. The day's drive was largely uneventful, except for an Anhinga at a bridge over the River Zaza, Northern Jacanas and several Eastern Meadowlarks (of endemic subspecies *hippocrepis*) on fenceposts as we got nearer to our destination. To stretch our legs and enjoy the final half-hour of sun, we walked the last half-mile to the Rancho La Belén. Limpkins called noisily, answered by Great Lizard Cuckoos and a Cuban Pygmy Owl, which set off a Summer Tanager. Crows were streaming to roost: Cuban Crows, giving their extraordinarily human songs from the crowns of palm trees, and Cuban Palm Crows flying past us with a simple, hoarse caw.



Giant Kingbird by Adam Riley

Friday: 8 December. A half-hour's pre-breakfast stroll with our guide Camilo around the Rancho La Belén installations gave us great looks at our first target bird, Giant Kingbird, which we were able to compare with nearby Loggerhead Kingbirds. Talkative Cuban Crows and Cuban Parrots vied with noisy Limpkins. We had satisfying looks at Cuban Palm Crows and Cuban Green Woodpeckers, and flying views of Plain Pigeons. A pair of Western Spindalis looked splendid, lit by the rising sun.

After breakfast, our morning excursion to the Sierra del Chorrillo Managed Resources Protected Area was prefaced by the news that Gundlach's Hawk had not been observed since Rockjumper tours in March, despite targeted searches performed every three days by Camilo. Cuban Crows and Cuban Palm

Crows were everywhere as we walked the Interpretive Bird Trail, but Plain Pigeons were nervous, taking off from the palm crowns and giving brief flight views only. Cuban Parrots showed well, though. There were plenty of wintering migrant warblers flitting about in the morning sun in the crowns of the large trees. A pair of Cuban Pygmy Owls bided their time at the top of a large Raintree. The walk was rather pleasant; but at length, we decided to retrace our steps and give the Gundlach's Hawk a token effort. Without the cloud of the previous couple of days, the sun was particularly intense, and we sought whatever shade was available as we prepared for a short vigil. Most of us were keeping an eye on the sky, where circling Turkey Vultures tried our concentration. Camilo was scanning the emergent trees and soon had some enormously distant Scaly-naped Pigeons in the scope. Not long afterwards, he asked me to take a look at another silhouette. This one was larger, and no sooner had I got on to it than it dropped out of the large tree on the skyline, extended its long tail and made a few flaps of its rounded wings – Gundlach's Hawk! Having commented that the species did not soar, this large female headed for the nearest Turkey Vulture kettle and began to circle, showing other fieldmarks, including bulging secondaries. We were treated to about four minutes of circling, gliding and direct flight until the bird was lost over the forest canopy.



Turkey Vulture by Rich Lindie



Mangrove Cuckoo by Fred Dalbey

The six-hour drive to Cayo Coco was broken by a couple of light birding stops. The first was at the Paso de Lesca, in Sierra de Cubitas, where we enjoyed some very spruce wintering warblers, together with our first pair of Oriente Warblers, all agreeing that they are far prettier than the illustrations would have one believe. Other stops gave us good looks at Crested Caracaras and Eastern Meadowlarks. The Cayo Coco causeway is always good to savour, and this traversal was no exception, despite the obvious recent hurricane damage – such as the mass die-off of mangroves. On the other hand, the lack of leaves gave us good views of duck and shorebirds that are not normally visible. We counted at least 600, and quite possibly over 1000 Black-necked Stilts, and more than 260 Red-breasted Mergansers; while Stilt Sandpipers and Short-billed Dowitchers were new for our trip.

On arrival on Cayo Coco, we picked up our guide, Odey. Leaving Alejandro to check into the hotel and deliver bags to rooms, we headed out for a couple of hours' birding close to the hotel. Our first stop at a flooded (and mosquito-ridden!) biological station gave us the best views any of us have had of Mangrove Cuckoo: a bird perched up perfectly in unobscured

view in the evening light just 15 feet away. *Here we also learned a valuable life lesson, that flip-flops can catapult mud at least five feet up onto the back of the unsuspecting wearer, no matter how elegantly dressed.* After that, we played around with some uncooperative Clapper Rails, near a perched Cuban Black Hawk, before getting to a weed-strewn beach just as light was fading. Amongst a group of mixed shorebirds were six Piping Plovers. We spent some moments gazing north across the ocean that Hemingway had referred to as the "great blue river", before boarding the bus for our hotel.

Saturday: 9 December. After coffee and pre-breakfast snacks, we were soon heading into the sunrise *en route* to the Cayo Paredón Grande lighthouse. Our first stop was leaving Cayo Coco, where we found a pair of Cuban Gnatcatchers together with a nice selection of endemics, including the cays subspecies (*varonai*) of Zapata Sparrow. As we drove eastwards, the full extent of the



Cuban Black Hawk by Dennis Palafox

devastation caused by the eye of September's Category 5 Hurricane Irma, which made landfall right here, became apparent: houses were demolished or missing roofs, while vegetation had been reduced in height, stripped of leaves and killed over vast swathes by saltwater. There were some diverse warbler flocks at Cayo Paredón Grande lighthouse itself, with Myrtle, Cape May and Prairie Warblers in good numbers, but no sign of a Thick-billed Vireo. Bahama Mockingbird was confiding, allowing us to photograph it for more than ten minutes from a distance of not more than 15 feet. By 09:00, the sky began to cloud over and the wind strengthened: the sign of another incoming cold front. Bird activity dropped, so we cut our losses and headed for lunch. By midday the light began to fail, and soon after the rain came down, with heavy squalls driven landwards by a fierce cold wind. The prospect of finding Thick-billed Vireo or Key West Quail-Dove in the afternoon looked slim, but we nevertheless



Bahama Mockingbird by Christopher J. Sharpe

drove to Cayo Guillermo. In the event, blustery wind and pelting rain made it almost impossible to get out of the bus, but we still managed to see a new bird: a group of Willets that (to my surprise, at least) had all the hallmarks of 'Western' Willets (subspecies *inornata*). On the drive back we stopped briefly, braving the rain to take photographs of the Ernest Hemingway statues on the bridge between Cayo Guillermo and Cayo Coco. The wind and rain did not let up over dinner, and many of us arrived at our rooms soaked to the skin!

Sunday: 10 December. Weather dictated our final morning on the cays, with wind and drizzle eliminating the option of putting in further time to search for the two semi-endemics that still eluded us. Instead, we loaded our bags onto the bus, enjoyed a full buffet and then settled down for the eight-hour drive back to Havana. An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull and a flock of Black Skimmers raised heads on the causeway back to *terra firme*, but our

only other new bird was a Herring Gull in the bay as we reached Old Havana. Our stroll around the historic UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site was illuminating, not just for the history and the architecture, but for the fabulously curvaceous vintage cars, the associations with Ernest Hemingway and much besides. We certainly made the most of our two-hour walking tour of the colonial heart of the old city, even drinking *mojitos* at Hemingway's erstwhile residence, the Hotel Ambos Mundos. After dinner at a rather good restaurant, with some very talented local musicians, we said our goodbyes and went to bed well contented.

Monday: 11 December. Morning departures went smoothly, with most of the group having the chance to make the most of a buffet breakfast before departing. Others had a lie-in; while Jane drew the short straw again, with an early morning pick-up. Fortunately, promises of new fines and other penalties for US citizens proved to be empty threats, and all those living in the USA were able to re-enter without a problem.

Annotated List of species recorded

Note: Number in brackets () indicate number of days on the tour the species was recorded.

List powered through the report generator of our partner iGoTerra.

Birds (151 in total: 150 seen, 1 heard)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows Gill, F and D Donsker (Eds). 2017. IOC World Bird List (v7.3)

Status codes: **E** = Endemic, **NE** = Near-endemic, **I** = Introduced

IUCN codes: **CR** = Critically endangered, **EN** = Endangered, **VU** = Vulnerable, **EW** = Extinct in the Wild, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient

Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl *Anatidae*

West Indian Whistling Duck (NE, VU) *Dendrocygna arborea*

(1) 6 Salinas de Brito 6.12. Perhaps the most beautiful Whistling Duck, endemic to the West Indies.

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors*

(3) Large flocks, comprising at least 4000 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 70 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and 3 Cayo Guillermo 9.12. The most common wintering duck in Cuba.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

(1) 1 Salinas de Brito 6.12. Fred's pick-up.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana*

(1) 40 Salinas de Brito 6.12.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

(2) At least 500 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12 and a similar number Niña Bonita Lake 4.12. Under the circumstances, these were conservative estimates for this species among a flock of at least 2500 *Aythya* duck, and true numbers were likely a lot higher. A subsequent full count made by Chris on the final day of the tour 11.12 produced 3000+ individual Ring-necked Duck, a high count for this site.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

(3) c. 500 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, c. 500 Niña Bonita Lake 4.12 and 8 Salinas de Brito 6.12. Again, conservative estimates – the ratio of duck seemed to be about 80:20, with this species making up the smaller proportion.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

(3) 262 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12, 2 Cayo Coco 8.12, 50 on cays 9.12 and 80 Causeway Cayo Coco

10.12. As Don pointed out, all were ♀-plumaged birds, a fact noted long ago by James Bond, who asserted that virtually all West Indian specimens are ♀♀ and immatures.

Ruddy Duck*Oxyura jamaicensis jamaicensis*

(2) 1 ♂ Niña Bonita Lake 3.12 and 1 ♂ Niña Bonita Lake 4.12. There may have been more nestling quietly within the large rafts of *Aythya* duck.

Guineafowl Numididae**Helmeted Guineafowl (I)***Numida meleagris galeatus*

(2) 30 Rancho la Belén 7.12 and 10 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. Introduced in the 16th century, but still looks incongruous...

Grebes Podicipedidae**Least Grebe***Tachybaptus dominicus dominicus*

(2) 2 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12 and 1 Niña Bonita Lake 4.12.

Pied-billed Grebe*Podilymbus podiceps*

(3) 8 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, 8 Niña Bonita Lake 4.12 and 2 Salinas de Brito 6.12.

Flamingos Phoenicopteridae**American Flamingo***Phoenicopterus ruber*

(2) 300 Salinas de Brito 6.12 and 3 Cayo Guillermo 9.12. September's Hurricane Irma, with its direct hit on the cays, is known to have caused significant flamingo mortality, perhaps explaining why we saw so few birds here.

Storks Ciconiidae**Wood Stork***Mycteria americana*

(1) 3 Salinas de Brito 6.12. Not a common bird in Cuba.

Ibises and Spoonbills Threskiornithidae**American White Ibis***Eudocimus albus albus*

(2) 15 Salinas de Brito 6.12 and 6 Cayo Guillermo 9.12.

Roseate Spoonbill*Platalea ajaja*

(3) 6 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 10 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and 5 on cays 9.12.

Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns Ardeidae**Black-crowned Night Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax hoactli*

(2) 2 Santo Tomás 6.12, 2 Salinas de Brito 6.12 and 1 Cayo Coco 9.12.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron*Nyctanassa violacea bancrofti*

(1) 2 Hotel Playa Larga 6.12. Consolation birds feeding the hotel lawns on our fruitless Stygian Owl search.

Green Heron*Butorides virescens virescens*

(5) 2 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 Fishponds en route 3.12, 1 Soplillar 5.12, 5 Santo Tomás 6.12, 5 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 3 en route 7.12 and 1 en route 8.12.

Western Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

(6) 20 La Cuchilla 5.12, 10 Sierra del Chorrillo 7.12 and 50 en route 7.12.

Great Blue Heron*Ardea herodias occidentalis*

(7) 1 Fishponds en route 3.12, 2 La Cuchilla 5.12, 1 Soplillar 5.12, 2 Santo Tomás 6.12, 3 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 2 en route 7.12, 2 en route 8.12, 1 Cayo Coco 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Several white morphs ('Great White Heron') on this trip, at Salinas de Brito, but particularly on the

cays.

Great Egret*Ardea alba egretta*

(7) 50 Fishponds en route 3.12, 50 Fishponds en route 4.12, 7 La Cuchilla 5.12, 10 en route 7.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Reddish Egret (NT)*Egretta rufescens rufescens*

(2) 7 Salinas de Brito 6.12 and 2 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12. Both reddish and white morphs.

Tricolored Heron*Egretta tricolor ruficollis*

(3) 15 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 30 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Little Blue Heron*Egretta caerulea*

(7) 2 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 Hacienda Cortina 4.12, 2 Fishponds en route 3.12, 5 Santo Tomás 6.12, 9 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 10 en route 7.12, 2 Cayo Coco 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Snowy Egret*Egretta thula thula*

(6) 2 Fishponds en route 3.12, 2 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, 10 en route 7.12, 56 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Pelicans Pelecanidae**American White Pelican***Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

(1) 7 Salinas de Brito 6.12.

Brown Pelican*Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis*

(3) 2 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 20 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Frigatebirds Fregatidae**Magnificent Frigatebird***Fregata magnificens*

(2) 7 Salinas de Brito 6.12, Fairly Common on cays 9.12 and 16 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12.

Cormorants and Shags Phalacrocoracidae**Neotropic Cormorant***Phalacrocorax brasilianus mexicanus*

(4) 2 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, 40 Salinas de Brito 6.12 (very nice studies of plumage and structure), 10 en route 7.12 and 12 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12. The smaller, longer-tailed cousin of Double-crested, Neotropic Cormorant is said to prefer freshwater over saltwater, but most of the birds we saw on this trip were on brackish lagoons or the sea.

Double-crested Cormorant*Phalacrocorax auritus*

(5) 5 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, 2 Niña Bonita Lake 4.12, 1 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 3 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Anhingas Anhingidae**Anhinga***Anhinga anhinga leucogaster*

(1) 1 en route 7.12.

New World Vultures Cathartidae**Turkey Vulture***Cathartes aura aura*

Observed 7 days in total. Ubiquitous. Observed every day. Curiously, the Cuban name for the bird is ‘*aura tiñosa*’, the first word derived from a native Mexican name for Turkey Vulture, ‘*aurouá*’, which found its way into the scientific name coined by Linnaeus in 1758. According to Nilsa, the same name is used in Puerto Rico, which is no surprise, since the species was introduced onto the island from Cuba in 1880.

Osprey Pandionidae

Western Osprey*Pandion haliaetus
carolinensis:*

(2) 5 Salinas de Brito 6.12. and 1 Fishponds en route 3.12. The North American migrant subspecies.
ridgwayi:

(3) 1 Salinas de Brito 6.12., 1 Cayo Coco 8.12 and 1 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12 (an unusual record here). The resident breeding subspecies, easily identified by the largely white head with dark post-ocular band reduced to a thin line. We got to compare the two subspecies side-by-side at Salinas de Brito.

Hawks, Eagles, and Kites Accipitridae**Gundlach's Hawk (E, EN)***Accipiter gundlachi*

(1) 1 ♀ Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. An unusually extended view of a big ♀ circling above the canopy at the celebrated Gundlach's Hawk stake-out. The least dependable of the Cuban specialties, this was, according to our guide Camilo (who monitors the species here), the first sighting for nine months. When the relevant studies have been done Gundlach's Hawk may yet turn out to be merely a subspecies of the North American Cooper's Hawk *A. cooperi*.

Snail Kite*Rostrhamus sociabilis*

(1) 8 Fishponds en route 3.12.

Cuban Black Hawk (E, NT)*Buteogallus gundlachi*

(3) 4 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 2 Cayo Coco 8.12 and 6 on cays 9.12. Some very nice studies. Long considered a subspecies of Common Black Hawk *B. anthracinus*, but may be more closely related to South American mangrove-inhabiting Rufous Crab Hawk *B. aequinoctialis*.

Broad-winged Hawk*Buteo platypterus cubanensis*

(2) 1 Punta Perdiz 6.12 and 2 en route 7.12. The endemic resident subspecies *cubanensis*.

Red-tailed Hawk*Buteo jamaicensis solitudinis*

(2) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12 and 1 en route 5.12. Resident subspecies *solitudinis* is restricted to the Bahamas and Cuba.

Rails, Gallinules, and Coots Rallidae**Clapper Rail***Rallus crepitans caribaeus*

(1) 2 heard Cayo Coco 8.12.

Purple Gallinule*Porphyrio martinica*

(3) 8 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 7 La Cuchilla 5.12 and 2 en route 7.12.

Common Gallinule*Gallinula galeata cerceris*

(4) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12, 1 La Cuchilla 5.12, 10 en route 7.12 and 2 en route 8.12.

American Coot*Fulica americana americana*

(3) 10 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, 10 Niña Bonita Lake 4.12 and 100 Salinas de Brito 6.12.

Limpkin Aramidae**Limpkin***Aramus guarauna pictus*

(4) 2 heard La Cuchilla 5.12, 2 heard Soplillar 5.12, 6 heard Santo Tomás 6.12, 1 Rancho la Belén 7.12 and 5 Rancho la Belén 8.12.

Stilts and Avocets Recurvirostridae**Black-necked Stilt***Himantopus mexicanus mexicanus*

(2) 610 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12. Thousands of birds on the keys, presumably mostly winter visitors.

Plovers and Lapwings Charadriidae**Grey Plover***Pluvialis squatarola cynosurae*

(1) 5 Cayo Coco 8.12. Known as Black-bellied Plover in America.

Killdeer*Charadrius vociferus ternominatus*

(6) 6 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, 10 Soplillar 5.12, 2 Santo Tomás 6.12, 2 Hotel Playa Larga 7.12, 2 Cayo Coco 8.12, 6 en route 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Piping Plover (NT)*Charadrius melodus melodus*

(1) 6 Cayo Coco 8.12. Scarce and local in Cuba, where a total of 150–250 birds are thought to winter.

Jacanas Jacanidae**Northern Jacana***Jacana spinosa*

(2) 1 Soplillar 5.12 and 2 en route 7.12.

Sandpipers and Allies Scolopacidae**Ruddy Turnstone***Arenaria interpres morinella*

(2) 25 Cayo Coco 8.12 and 5 Cayo Guillermo 9.12.

Stilt Sandpiper*Calidris himantopus*

(1) 18 with the dowitchers at the start of Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12.

Sanderling*Calidris alba rubida*

(1) 10 Cayo Coco 8.12.

Short-billed Dowitcher*Limnodromus griseus*

(2) 35 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and 5 Cayo Guillermo 9.12.

Spotted Sandpiper*Actitis macularius*

(2) 1 Fishponds en route 3.12 and 1 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12.

Lesser Yellowlegs*Tringa flavipes*

(2) 4 Salinas de Brito 6.12 and 20 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12.

Willet*Tringa semipalmata*(1) 21 Cayo Guillermo 9.12. To my surprise, this flock of large, leggy, long-billed, godwit-like birds, which we were able to study well from the bus, had all the appearance of ‘Western’ Willets *T. (semipalmata) inornata*. Multiple lines of evidence suggest that ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ Willets are almost certainly good species.**Greater Yellowlegs***Tringa melanoleuca*

(3) 3 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 30 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers Laridae**Black Skimmer***Rynchops niger niger*

(1) 28 Causeway Cayo Coco 10.12. A nice view of a flock roosting on the mud opposite our bus.

Laughing Gull*Leucophaeus atricilla atricilla*

(4) 7 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 30 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12, 10 Cayo Coco 8.12, Fairly Common on cays 9.12 and 61 Causeway Cayo Coco 10.12.

American Herring Gull*Larus smithsonianus*(1) 1 1st winter flying over the harbour at La Habana Vieja 10.12.**Lesser Black-backed Gull***Larus fuscus graellsii*(1) 1 adult Causeway Cayo Coco 10.12. This is the NW European subspecies *graellsii*, which is increasingly common on the Atlantic coast of North and northern South America, and in the Caribbean.**Caspian Tern***Hydroprogne caspia*

(3) 3 Fishponds en route 3.12, 5 Salinas de Brito 6.12 and 3 en route 7.12.

Royal Tern*Thalasseus maximus maximus*

(4) 3 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 46 Causeway Cayo Coco 8.12, 20 Cayo Coco 8.12, Fairly Common on cays 9.12 and 9 Causeway Cayo Coco 10.12.

Forster's Tern*Sterna forsteri*

(1) 1 Salinas de Brito 6.12. A scarce winter visitor to Cuba, this bird was rather distant, but the characteristic facial mask identified it even at long range.

Pigeons and Doves Columbidae**Rock Dove***Columba livia var. domestica*

(5) en route 7.12, en route 8.12 and en route 10.12. An alternative name is 'Feral Pigeon', and there are others less complimentary.

White-crowned Pigeon (NT)*Patagioenas leucocephala*

(2) 10 Cueva de los Portales 4.12 and 1 Soplillar 5.12. Mostly flight views. Throughout much of its range, mainly a bird mangroves and therefore restricted to the coast, in Cuba it is found in the mountains as well.

Scaly-naped Pigeon (NE)*Patagioenas squamosa*

(2) 2 Cueva de los Portales 4.12 and 6 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12.

Plain Pigeon (NE, NT)*Patagioenas inornata*

(1) 5 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. Not as plain as its name suggests.

Eurasian Collared Dove*Streptopelia decaocto decaocto*

(1) Fairly Common Cayo Coco 9.12. First recorded in Cuba on Cayo Coco in 1989, it is now fairly common in Havana as well, and those who spent any time in our Miramar hotel grounds will have seen and heard them.

Common Ground Dove*Columbina passerina insularis*

(4) 5 Hacienda Cortina 3.12 and 3 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12.

Blue-headed Quail-Dove (E, EN)*Starnoenas cyanocephala*

(1) 2 Bermejas 5.12. Unforgettable! One of the smartest looking and most popular Cuban endemics. Recently postulated, on the basis of morphology and behaviour (and awaiting molecular confirmation), to be of Australasian origin!

Grey-fronted Quail-Dove (E, VU)*Geotrygon caniceps*

(1) 1 Santo Tomás 6.12 (the pale forecrown and violet and purple sheen on the body showing very well on this close singing bird). Formerly widespread throughout the island, but now much reduced in range. Besides being vulnerable to habitat loss, all Cuban quail-doves are highly prized by hunters. Until recently White-fronted Quail-Dove *G. leucometopia* of Hispaniola considered a subspecies of *G. caniceps*, the combined species being known as Grey-headed Quail-Dove.

Mourning Dove*Zenaida macroura macroura*

(7) 5 Las Terrazas 3.12, en route 7.12, en route 8.12 and en route 10.12.

Zenaida Dove*Zenaida aurita zenaida*

(3) 2 Las Terrazas 3.12, 9 Bermejas 5.12, 2 Soplillar 5.12 and 1 Salinas de Brito 6.12. A more richly-coloured and exquisitely marked version of Mourning Dove.

White-winged Dove*Zenaida asiatica asiatica*

(1) 1 en route 5.12.

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

(7) 3 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, en route 7.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Mangrove Cuckoo*Coccyzus minor*

(1) 1 Cayo Coco 8.12. Undoubtedly the best and closest view that any of us had ever obtained, and the light was absolutely perfect as well.

Great Lizard Cuckoo (NE)*Coccyzus merlini*

(5) 2 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 4 La Cuchilla 5.12, 4 Soplillar 5.12, 2 Santo Tomás 6.12, 3 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 2 heard Rancho la Belén 7.12 and 2 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. Multiple close encounters with this species, and some interesting display behaviour.

Barn-Owls *Tytonidae***American Barn Owl***Tyto furcata*

(2) 1 Cueva de los Portales 4.12 (rudely flushed from its day roost in the cave) and 2 Santo Tomás 6.12 (ghostly shapes flying across the road in the dark).

Owls *Strigidae***Bare-legged Owl (E)***Margarobyas lawrencii*

(1) 1 Bermejas 5.12 (a brief encounter just before first light) and 3 Soplillar 5.12 (super spotlight looks, thanks to the magic of Mario). Formerly known as Cuban Screech Owl *Otus lawrencii*.

Cuban Pygmy Owl (E)*Glaucidium siju siju*

(3) 1 La Cuchilla 5.12, 2 Rancho la Belén 7.12 and 2 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12.

Nightjars and Allies *Caprimulgidae***Cuban Nightjar (E)***Antrostomus cubanensis cubanensis*

(2) 3 Soplillar 5.12, 1 Santo Tomás 6.12 (this pre-dawn bird providing probably our best look) and 2 Salinas de Brito 6.12. Traditionally Hispaniolan Nightjar *A. ekmani* has been lumped with *cubanensis*, the combined species taking the name Great Antillean Nightjar; vocalisations differ markedly, however.

Swifts *Apodidae***Antillean Palm Swift (NE)***Tachornis phoenicobia iradii*

(6) 10 Las Terrazas 3.12, 5 San Diego de los Baños 3.12, 20 San Diego de los Baños 4.12, 1 La Cuchilla 5.12, 10 Rancho la Belén 7.12 and en route 7.12.

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

(7) 3 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 5 Las Terrazas 3.12, 3 Cueva de los Portales 4.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Bee Hummingbird (E, NT)*Mellisuga helenae*

(1) 5 ♀ Palpite 6.12. The world's smallest bird and, indeed, warm-blooded vertebrate! We saw only ♀♀ suggesting that adult ♂♂ may vacate the area at this time of year.

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

(4) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12, 2 Hacienda Cortina 4.12, 4 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 1 Bermejas 5.12, 1 Soplillar 5.12 and 2 heard Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. A worthy choice as Cuba's national bird.

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

(5) 1 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, 3 La Cuchilla 5.12, 2 Soplillar 5.12, 6 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 2 Cayo Coco 8.12, 2 en route 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

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

(3) 1 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 2 La Cuchilla 5.12, 2 Bermejas 5.12 and 2 heard Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. Some very good looks at this colourful, diminutive Cuban endemic. This is (the most striking) one of five extant species of Tody, the family extending some 30 million years ago into North America and the Palaearctic (Old World).

Woodpeckers *Picidae***West Indian Woodpecker (NE)***Melanerpes superciliaris superciliaris*

(6) 2 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 Hacienda Cortina 4.12, 3 Las Terrazas 3.12, 2 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 1 heard Rancho la Belén 7.12, 3 Rancho la Belén 8.12 and 3 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*Sphyrapicus varius*

(3) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 Hacienda Cortina 4.12, 2 Las Terrazas 3.12 and 1 La Cuchilla 5.12. We found ample evidence of the sap-drilling habits of these wintering birds on the trunks of a wide diversity of trees from Gumbolimbo *Bursera* to *Cecropia*.

Cuban Green Woodpecker (E)*Xiphidiopicus percussus percussus*

(5) 4 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 Las Terrazas 3.12, 1 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 3 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12, 1 Cayo Coco 8.12, 1 Cayo Coco 9.12 and 3 Rancho la Belén 8.12. An attractive and obliging endemic that allowed us some great looks. Six subspecies have been described, but there is much variation and only two of these appear to be valid. Related to *Melanerpes* woodpeckers and *Sphyrapicus* sapsuckers, nectar forms an important part of the diet of this rather unusual woodpecker.

Northern Flicker*Colaptes auratus chrysocaulosus*

(2) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12 and 1 Soplillar 5.12. Resident endemic subspecies *chrysocaulosus* sometimes accorded species status as Cuban Flicker, but more often considered a subspecies of Yellow-shafted Flicker *C. auratus*. Whatever the case, this is a natty-looking bird.

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

(2) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12 (flight views as it flew back and forth across the road) and 3 Soplillar 5.12 (the perched scope view we had been waiting for). A strikingly elegant flicker that is not well served by the illustrations in field guides. This Cuban endemic formerly much more widespread, but now local and scarce with a global population of 600–800 birds.

Falcons and Caracaras *Falconidae***Northern Crested Caracara***Caracara cheriway*

(4) 1 Soplillar 5.12, 1 en route 7.12, 1 en route 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

American Kestrel*Falco sparverius sparverioides*

(8) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 2 Las Terrazas 3.12, Fairly Common on cays 9.12 and en route 10.12. We had really good looks at both rufous and white morphs of this resident subspecies.

Merlin*Falco columbarius*

(2) 1 San Diego de los Baños 4.12 (chasing Antillean Palm Swifts, whose alarm calls alerted us to the presence of the falcon) and 1 Santo Tomás 6.12.

African & New World Parrots *Psittacidae***Cuban Amazon (NE, NT)***Amazona leucocephala leucocephala*

(3) 20 Soplillar 5.12, 2 heard Rancho la Belén 7.12 and 9 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. A beautiful psittacid, also known, more appropriately, as Rose-throated Parrot.

Cuban Parakeet (E, VU)*Psittacara euops*

(1) 30 Bermejas 5.12 and 40 Soplillar 5.12. A palm-nesting species described as ‘abundant’ in the 19th century, when Gundlach described the ease with which chicks were lifted out of nest holes with

loops of string affixed to the end of long sticks, warning that capture rates were unsustainable; its population is now highly fragmented and reduced to 1300–2000 birds.

Tyrant Flycatchers *Tyrannidae*

Cuban Pewee (NE)

Contopus caribaeus

(4) 3 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 3 Las Terrazas 3.12, 2 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 3 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12, 3 Rancho la Belén 8.12 and 1 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12. A distinctive pewee with a conspicuous eye-ring, perhaps better known as Crescent-eyed Pewee. This endearing bird accompanied us throughout the tour.

morenoi:

Observed 2 days in total.

Giant Kingbird (E, EN)

Tyrannus cubensis

(1) 4 Rancho la Belén 8.12 (its conspicuous song, right at the dining room, drew our attention to the first of two rival pairs). Vocalisations, aptly described by Don as ‘Kiskadee-like’, easily distinguish it from the superficially similar Loggerhead Kingbird. Formerly widespread, but increasingly local and rare: fewer than 1000 adult birds are thought to remain.

Loggerhead Kingbird (NE)

Tyrannus caudifasciatus caudifasciatus

(7) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 2 Hacienda Cortina 4.12, 2 Las Terrazas 3.12, 6 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, en route 7.12, 2 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12, 1 Cayo Coco 8.12, 1 Rancho la Belén 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12. We had comparative looks with Giant Kingbird at Rancho la Belén.

La Sagra's Flycatcher (NE)

Myiarchus sagrae sagrae

(5) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12, 5 Cueva de los Portales 4.12 and 1 Cayo Coco 8.12. An easy place to identify *Myiarchus* flycatchers.

Vireos *Vireonidae*

White-eyed Vireo

Vireo griseus griseus

(1) 1 Bermejas 5.12.

Cuban Vireo (E)

Vireo gundlachii gundlachii

(2) 1 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 3 La Cuchilla 5.12 and 4 Bermejas 5.12. A neat looking vireo with an *Empidonax*-style eye-ring.

Crows, Jays, and Magpies *Corvidae*

Cuban Palm Crow (E, NT)

Corvus minutus

(2) 18 Rancho la Belén 7.12, 5 Rancho la Belén 8.12 and 23 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. Known in Cuba as the ‘cau ronco’ (‘hoarse crow’). Formerly much more widespread; now scarce, local and nationally Endangered. Usually lumped with its Hispaniolan relative as Palm Crow *Corvus palmarum*.

Cuban Crow (NE)

Corvus nasicus

(4) 2 en route 5.12, 1 Hotel Playa Larga 6.12, 14 Rancho la Belén 7.12, 8 Rancho la Belén 8.12 and 12 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12. Almost endemic to Cuba, it is also found on Turks and Caicos. A highly vocal crow, best distinguished from the preceding species by voice. We were fortunate to get good views of both species, virtually side-by-side, noting this species’ longer wings as well as the extent of the feathering on the bill.

Swallows *Hirundinidae*

Tree Swallow

Tachycineta bicolor

(4) 4 en route 4.12, 2 Soplillar 5.12, 5 Santo Tomás 6.12 and 3 en route 7.12.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow

Stelgidopteryx serripennis

(1) 8 La Cuchilla 5.12.

Wrens *Troglodytidae*

Zapata Wren (E, EN)

Ferminia cerverai

(1) 1+2 heard Santo Tomás 6.12. Our perseverance paid off, with some good close looks. Restricted to Zapata Swamp, with a population of fewer than 2500 birds.

Gnatcatchers *Poliptilidae*

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher

Poliptila caerulea caerulea

(1) 2 La Cuchilla 5.12.

Cuban Gnatcatcher (E)

Poliptila lembeyi

(1) 2 Cayo Coco 9.12. Peter's tail-twitching nemesis from a previous tour surrendered easily, and gave us some wonderful looks.

Mockingbirds and Thrashers *Mimidae*

Grey Catbird

Dumetella carolinensis

(5) 2 heard Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 2 Las Terrazas 3.12, 1 Cueva de los Portales 4.12 and 1 Rancho la Belén 7.12.

Northern Mockingbird

Mimus polyglottos orpheus

Observed 7 days in total.

Bahama Mockingbird (NE)

Mimus gundlachii gundlachii

(1) 1 at the side of the road at the Cayo Paredón Grande lighthouse 9.12. Maintaining a toehold on Cuba, restricted to the cays and losing habitat to hotel construction as well as hurricanes. Despite the evident damage to vegetation, these were the best views that Chris had ever obtained: ten minutes of open viewing from perhaps fifteen feet away.

Thrushes and Allies *Turdidae*

Cuban Solitaire (E, NT)

Myadestes elisabeth elisabeth

(1) 1+3 heard Cueva de los Portales 4.12. A reasonable view of this consummate songster, famed more for its voice than its looks.

Red-legged Thrush (NE)

Turdus plumbeus rubripes

Observed 6 days in total. A really smart looking regional endemic that shows considerable plumage variation across its range. More than one species may be involved, and indeed some authorities (notably HBW & BirdLife International) regard *rubripes* (with *coryi* of Cayman Brac) as a full species.

Old World Sparrows *Passeridae*

House Sparrow (I)

Passer domesticus domesticus

(4) 2 Havana: Miramar 3.12, 1 Niña Bonita Lake 3.12, 3 San Diego de los Baños 4.12, en route 7.12 and en route 8.12.

New World Warblers *Parulidae*

Ovenbird

Seiurus aurocapilla furvior

(2) 2 Bermejas 5.12 and 1 Santo Tomás 6.12.

Worm-eating Warbler

Helmitheros vermivorum

(1) 3 Bermejas 5.12. On winter territory, always in vine tangles with clumps of hanging dead leaves in which it forages, often – as in this case – in the company of Swainson's Warbler.

Louisiana Waterthrush

Parkesia motacilla

(2) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12 (very good looks at all fieldmarks on this classic bird: flaring eyebrow, immaculate white throat, buffy rear flanks, hefty bill and gyrating rear end – lacking only the bubblegum pink legs) and 1 Cueva de los Portales 4.12.

Northern Waterthrush*Parkesia noveboracensis*

(4) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 2 Santo Tomás 6.12, 1 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 1 Cayo Coco 8.12, 1 en route 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Black-and-white Warbler*Mniotilta varia*

(4) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 3 La Cuchilla 5.12, 3 Bermejas 5.12, 1 Santo Tomás 6.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Swainson's Warbler*Limnothlypis swainsonii*

(1) 1 Bermejas 5.12. Foraging on the ground amidst fallen leaves, while defending the winter territory to which individuals birds have been shown to return year after year.

Common Yellowthroat*Geothlypis trichas trichas*

(4) 6 La Cuchilla 5.12, 2 Bermejas 5.12, 1 Soplillar 5.12, 6 Santo Tomás 6.12, 2 Salinas de Brito 6.12, 1 en route 8.12 and Common on cays 9.12.

American Redstart*Setophaga ruticilla*

(6) 5 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 2 Hacienda Cortina 4.12, 5 Las Terrazas 3.12, 3 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 2 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12 and Fairly Common on cays 9.12.

Cape May Warbler*Setophaga tigrina*

(2) 1 ♂ Hacienda Cortina 3.12 and 4 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12. A classic winter warbler in the Caribbean.

Northern Parula*Setophaga americana*

(5) 2 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 5 Las Terrazas 3.12, 1 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 2 La Cuchilla 5.12, 2 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12, Fairly Common on cays 9.12 and 2 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12.

Magnolia Warbler*Setophaga magnolia*

(1) 1 La Cuchilla 5.12. Usually few and far between in Cuba, this was the only one we encountered this year.

Mangrove Warbler*Setophaga petechia gundlachi*

(1) 1 ♀ Salinas de Brito 6.12. Under the taxonomy used here (IOC) Mangrove Warbler *S. petechia*, comprising Golden Warbler *S. petechia* and Mangrove Warbler *S. erythachorides* groups, is treated as a separate species from North American migrant Yellow Warbler *D. aestiva*. Under other taxonomies, it is more often known as Golden Warbler. Although the entire complex undoubtedly consists of more than one species, the situation is complicated and species limits are far from clear.

Black-throated Blue Warbler*Setophaga caerulescens*

(5) 3 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 2 Las Terrazas 3.12, 3 La Cuchilla 5.12, 2 Bermejas 5.12, 2 Palpite 6.12, 2 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12, Fairly Common on cays 9.12 and 7 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12. Another classic warbler of the Caribbean in winter. ♂♂ far outnumbered ♀♀.

Palm Warbler*Setophaga palmarum palmarum*

(6) 3 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 2 Hacienda Cortina 4.12, 5 Las Terrazas 3.12, 3 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, Fairly Common on cays 9.12 and 15 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12. The commonest warbler in Cuba. Every bird that we checked was of the western subspecies *palmarum*.

Olive-capped Warbler (NE)*Setophaga pityophila*

(2) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 Hacienda Cortina 4.12 and 4 Las Terrazas 3.12. Also found in northern Bahamas, this species (like the closely similar Grace's Warbler *S. graciae*) is a pine specialist, associated with stands of Caribbean Pine in western Cuba.

Myrtle Warbler*Setophaga coronata coronata*

(1) 4 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12. Traditionally lumped with other taxa, notably Audubon's Warbler

S. (c.) auduboni as Yellow-rumped Warbler *S. coronata*.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica*

(6) 3 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 Soplillar 5.12, 1 Punta Perdiz 6.12, 1 en route 7.12, Fairly Common on cays 9.12 and 1 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12. Curiously, we saw only the white-lored *albilora* subspecies, which is supposedly less common on Cuba.

Prairie Warbler *Setophaga discolor*

(4) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 La Cuchilla 5.12, 1 Bermejas 5.12, 1 Cayo Coco 8.12, 1 en route 8.12 and 4 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12. Like Cape May and Black-throated Blue, Prairie is another warbler that winters largely in the Caribbean.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*

(2) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12 and 1 en route 8.12.

Family uncertain *Incertae Sedis* 2

Yellow-headed Warbler (E) *Teretistris fernandinae*

(3) 2 Las Terrazas 3.12, 2 La Cuchilla 5.12, 8 Bermejas 5.12 and 6 Santo Tomás 6.12. An attractive endemic that is common and easy to see. The two endemic *Teretistris* warblers – this and the following species – are best placed in their own family, Cuban Warblers (Teretistridae).

Oriente Warbler (E) *Teretistris fornsi fornsi*

(2) 2 en route 8.12 (really wonderful studies at the pass in the Sierra de Cubitas) and 2 heard Cayo Coco 9.12. The eastern counterpart of the previous species, Yellow-headed Warbler, and perhaps even better looking with its prominent pale orbital ring

Troupials and Allies *Icteridae*

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna hippocrepis*

(2) 8 en route 7.12 and 5 en route 8.12. Cuban endemic subspecies *hippocrepis* may be sufficiently distinctive to deserve species status.

Cuban Oriole (E) *Icterus melanopsis*

(3) 2 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 2 Bermejas 5.12 and 3 Palpite 6.12. Previously lumped with three other N Caribbean taxa as Greater Antillean Oriole *I. dominicensis*.

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

(4) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 2 La Cuchilla 5.12, 8 Bermejas 5.12, 10 Palpite 6.12 and 30 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12.

Red-shouldered Blackbird (E) *Agelaius assimilis*

(1) 2 La Cuchilla 5.12. ♂ very similar to (and formerly considered conspecific with) Red-winged Blackbird *A. phoeniceus*, but ♀ entirely black, as we were able to confirm. We had good, close looks at a pair that allowed us to verify the wholly black plumage of the ♀ as well as the colourful epaulette (red lesser upperwing-coverts, buffy yellow median coverts) of the ♂. Both sexes were singing.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis minimus*

(1) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12 (at the livestock-rearing facility, of course).

Cuban Blackbird (E) *Ptiloxena atroviolacea*

Observed 7 days in total. Ubiquitous, this is the standard Cuban blackbird yardstick against which all others are measured.

Greater Antillean Grackle (NE) *Quiscalus niger*

Observed 7 days in total.

Buntings, Sparrows and Allies *Emberizidae*

Zapata Sparrow (E, EN) *Torreornis inexpectata inexpectata*

(1) 4 Santo Tomás 6.12. Obliging views of the nominate race at the type locality.

varonai:

(1) 1 Cayo Coco 9.12. The cays subspecies *varonai* only discovered in the 1970s. It is quite similar to the nominate subspecies, with a darker rufous crown and bolder face pattern.

Tanagers and Allies *Thraupidae*

Red-legged Honeycreeper (I?)

Cyanerpes cyaneus

(2) 2 heard Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 1 Hacienda Cortina 4.12 and 5 Las Terrazas 3.12. Birds were also seen at our Havana hotel by Don and Bill prior to the tour. Possibly introduced.

Cuban Bullfinch (NE, NT)

Melopyrrha nigra nigra

(4) 1 Las Terrazas 3.12, 2 Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 2 Santo Tomás 6.12, 1 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12 and 1 Cayo Coco 9.12. Endemic subspecies *nigra* is fairly common in Cuba. However, trapping and trade of this species are apparently increasing and it is considered globally and nationally Near Threatened.

Cuban Grassquit (E)

Tiaris canorus

(1) 20 Las Terrazas 3.12. A strikingly-plumaged endemic, the males of which outshone the Yellow-faced Grassquits with which they were feeding. Although found throughout the island, it is now scarce everywhere except the east, due to its popularity in the cagebird trade.

Yellow-faced Grassquit

Tiaris olivaceus olivaceus

(4) 8 Las Terrazas 3.12, 8 Hacienda Cortina 4.12, 5 Bermejas 5.12 and 2 en route 8.12.

Western Spindalis (NE)

Spindalis zena pretrei

(3) 1 heard Cueva de los Portales 4.12, 2 Sierra del Chorrillo 8.12, 2 Rancho la Belén 8.12 and 1 Cayo Coco 9.12.

Cardinals and Allies *Cardinalidae*

Summer Tanager

Piranga rubra rubra

(3) 1 Hacienda Cortina 3.12, 3 Las Terrazas 3.12, 1 Bermejas 5.12 and 1 heard Rancho la Belén 7.12.

Mammals (2 in total: 2 seen)

Status codes: E = Endemic, NE = Near-endemic, I = Introduced

IUCN codes: CR = Critically endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, EW = Extinct in the Wild, NT = Near Threatened, DD = Data Deficient

Free-tailed Bats *Molossidae*

Brazilian Free-tailed Bat

Tadarida brasiliensis

(1) 50 Cueva de los Portales 4.12.

New World Leaf-nosed Bats *Phyllostomidae*

Jamaican Fruit-eating Bat

Artibeus jamaicensis

(1) 20 Cueva de los Portales 4.12.

Reptiles (1 in total: 1 identified)

Several *Anole* species were seen, but not identified to species.

Status codes: E = Endemic, NE = Near-endemic, I = Introduced

IUCN codes: **CR** = Critically endangered, **EN** = Endangered, **VU** = Vulnerable, **EW** = Extinct in the Wild, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient

Iguanas Iguanidae

Habana Anole

Anolis homolechis

(1) 1 Cayo Paredón Grande 9.12.

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