

*Victor Emanuel Nature Tours*

# CUBA

**A special departure for BirdNote**

April 18- 29, 2017



Gray-fronted Quail-Dove, *Geotrygon caniceps*. Photo: D. Ascanio.

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As we unloaded the bus I heard birds flying while giving a distinctive *Check-ke-re-KE, Check-ke-re-KE* and, looking above our heads I pointed out our first target species of the tour: Antillean Nighthawk. Soon after checking-in the hotel we walked the narrow streets of Camaguey to reach the restaurant for dinner which was complemented with Flamenco dancers giving a notorious show that closed with dancers and tour participants mixed on the stage. Is there a better way to start a tour?

This was the first night of the tour and, it was clear to us that it had a special meaning: to see as many endemic and restricted distribution birds while melting our culture with theirs and learning about their passion for music. At the end, I can say that we accomplished this goal all the way through this unforgettable trip.

The tour started in the famed *Rancho La Belén*, an active cattle ranch where a population of the little-known Giant Kingbird remains. As we enjoyed a picnic breakfast we perceived the cacophony given by the voices of Cuban Palm Crow, Cuban Crow, Cuban Parrots and Cuban Parakeets. There were also Greater Antillean Grackle, Cuban Blackbird, a Cuban Green Woodpecker and the widespread West Indian Woodpecker. Eventually we nailed the famous Giant Kingbird and enjoyed its monstrous bill size (reminded me to the bill of Boat-billed Flycatcher). We kept busy for about 3 hours in order to secure that everyone had seen the target species. Before it was time to head back we added to our list Cuba's national bird, the Cuban Trogon and the rufous morph of the American Kestrel but unfortunately no good view of the shy Plain Pigeon (we had seen it only in flight). There is a saying that luck is about keeping your eyes opened in the right place and the right time and that's exactly what we did. As we kept alert, during the drive back to Camaguey we achieved our goal: we

saw half a dozen Plain Pigeon foraging at small bush at side of the road. Once in Camaguey we enjoyed a great lunch at a curious square where a man that reads his daily newspaper was the inspiration for an artist to made a sculpture of him.



Following Camaguey, we headed to Jardines del Rey archipelago. Here, we focused in three habitats: desert scrub, coastal wetlands and moist forest, where we found two of the emblematic birds. The first one was the secretive Zapata Sparrow and the second was the always-challenging Bahama Mockingbird. For the second one we owed a big thank you to Odey for his incredible persistence in finding it. After we saw each of the target species we were relaxed to look for other targets, namely the Cuban Gnatcatcher, Great Lizard-Cuckoo and the reliable West Indian Whistling-Duck. At one evening, we had to wait until 08.00PM to give a try for the Cuban Nightjar. Although one individual flew over our heads we failed to see it perched. We rounded up our visit to Jardines del Rey with astonishing views of the always-elegant American Flamingo, in a flock of 600+ individuals, a pair of responsive Clapper Rail and 20+ Key West Quail-Dove walking around us.

After an extensive birding in Jardines del Rey it was time to move to the southern side of the island. Our first location was the Ancon peninsula, facing the Caribbean Sea. Here we added more waterbirds to our list and enjoyed views of Northern Harrier flying over a low growth of red mangrove. But the best experience of the day was about to come. In Cienfuegos we spent time searching for two target species but time and heat weren't in our side. But again, luck is about a continuous effort in the right place and you bet it paid well. First, we nailed a female Gundlach's Hawk hopping

among tree branches. We enjoyed superb views with the scope and even got closer to it to take photos. And, as we were being delighted with this species someone came running to shout “Gustavo found the Stygian Owl”. We moved to there and saw this distinctive owl under foliage of a thick tree. Two of the most important target species of the tour were seen extremely well in less than an hour! The day continued in the right track giving us the opportunity to see our first Cuban Pygmy-Owl, Fernandina’s Flicker nesting, Cuban Martin and the endangered Red-shouldered Blackbird singing from the top of a tree.



From the Ancon Peninsula we drove to one of the most important birding and historical sites of Cuba, the Zapata peninsula. Here, we visited the Ciénaga de Zapata (Zapata swamp), one of the six RAMSAR areas of Cuba. The Zapata swamp is also a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and is the largest and best preserved protected area of the Caribbean. This is where we nailed the famous and astonishing Blue-headed Quail-Dove as well as the smallest bird in the planet, the Bee Hummingbird. Also, we enjoyed great views of the endemics Bare-legged Owl and Cuban Oriole. In one afternoon, many of us decided to take the snorkeling option and others went to see the leucistic population of Blue-headed Quail-Dove. There is a great debate whether the leucism in these individuals is due to lack of proper nutrients since they’re fed with cooked rice from a restaurant.

We closed our visit to the Zapata Peninsula with a visit to La Turba where a single and responsive Zapata Wren provided glorious views of it. Once we seen the wren we took a ride to the outskirts of Havana where enjoyed a great lunch at El Divino restaurant and visited Hemingway’s farm. Continuing our drive after lunch, we took the highway west to Soroa, where we spent a couple of nights there.

In west Cuba, we focused our birding and people-to-people experiences in two locations: Viñales and Las Terrazas community. In both locations, we combined birding and cultural activities. In Viñales we were astonished with the level of economic touristic development and the beauty of *Los Mogotes*, a unique geological formation. In these *mogotes* is where we enjoyed the suit song of the Cuban Solitaire that reverberated along the walls of it. Hearing its unique ascending whistle offered a unique moment to all. In the following day, Las Terrazas offered a different perspective of a community based in social commitment and organization. We learned about the wonderful work of various artists, tasted a delicious *Las Terrazas Coffee* and shared a great time with the kids of the maternal school. That day ended with superb views of the last endemic bird, the Cuban Grassquit, one that we saw pretty well with individuals in male, female and juvenile plumage.



The tour concluded with a day-long visit to Old Havana. Here we learned much of Cuba's colonial times history and independence period. We also enjoyed great architecture that offered wonderful photo opportunities and provided to all a different side of Cuba, a country we will see in the years to come with different eyes.

Now that you have learned much of Cuba's flora, fauna and culture I want to invite you to join us in other destinations, equally interesting and beautiful but remarkably different from that of the Greater Antilles.

### **The Amazon Cruise**

We sail aboard a small ship to explore the Amazon and its tributaries. Using skiffs we reach the flooded forest and other distinctive Amazonian habitats such as the sedimentary river islands and the igapo forest. We offer an optional walk to terra firme forest. Non-birding spouses like to join this cruise because of the variety of wildlife including several species of primates and an optional visit to a community. You can enjoy the photos and the video of our 2016 Amazon Cruise in:

Photo album

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidascanio/albums/72157663616158820>

Video link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b3xYG0cPSo>

### **The Panama Canal: *a relaxed and easy tour.***

Panama is to enjoy first class birding at a relaxed and easy pace. We spend most of the nights in a small inn located in the town of Gamboa (Panama Canal). Enjoy short walks around the town plus a boat trip to the Chagres River. We visit the famous Pipeline road and visit the Canopy Tower, where we can see canopy species at eye level. See the photos and the video of our 2015 Panama Canal tour in:

Photo album

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidascanio/albums/72157648765567967>

Video link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgnkUxwd5kw>

### **Costa Rica: *a relaxed and easy tour.***

Our *relaxed and easy* Costa Rica tour is for those who wish to see birds at various altitudinal levels, from cloud forest to lowland rain forest, all in slow pace. We include a ride along the aerial tram and we also learn about the flora and other fauna of this spectacular country. This tour is designed for seeing gaudy species such as tanagers and honeycreepers as well as many hummingbirds. We visit various hummingbird feeder stations. See the photos and video of our 2015 tour in:

Photo album

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidascanio/albums/72157659475059484>

Video link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzgD6NfVNSE>

I hope to see you again!



**Map of locations**  
**VENT-BirdNote**  
**Cuba People-to-People Tour**  
**April 18-29, 2017**  
**Prepared by David Ascanio**

## 2017 VENT-BirdNote Cuba.

### A people-to-people tour.

April 18-29, 2017

Leader: David Ascanio

### ITINERARY

18 March. Miami.

19 March. Flight to Camaguey.

20 March. Rancho La Belen. Drive to Cayo Coco.

21 March. Jardines del Rey: Cayo Coco, Cayo Paredon Grande & Cayo Guillermo.

22 April. Cayo Coco, Trinidad (Ancon peninsula).

23 April. Parque El Cubano. Drive to the Zapata Peninsula.

24 April. Zapata Peninsula: Bermeja, Palpite and Soplillar.

25 April. La Turba, Havana & Soroa.

26 April. Viñales.

27 April. Las Terrazas & Havana.

28 April. Old Havana.

29 April. Departure.

### THE BIRDLIST

The order, and common and scientific names are those given by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist of North American Birds, 7<sup>th</sup> edition with all current updates.

Photo album for all tours:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidascanio/albums/>

Photo album for this tour:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidascanio/albums/72157684783800776/page1>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidascanio/albums/72157684783800776/page2>

### Waterfowl /Anatidae

**West Indian Whistling-Duck.** *Dendrocygna arborea*. Cayo Coco.

**Fulvous Whistling-Duck.** *Dendrocygna bicolor*. Great views of 2 individuals. First time reported for a VENT tour.

**Blue-winged Teal.** *Anas discors*. 20+ individuals near Cayo Coco.

**Northern Shoveler.** *Aythya collaris*/*Anas clypeata*. 20+ near Cayo Coco.

**Red-breasted Merganser.** *Mergus serrator*. Pairs and a dozen individual were seen from the causeway to Cayo Coco.

### **Guineafowl / Numididae**

**Helmeted Guineafowl.** *Numida meleagris*. Widespread in farmland. Semi-captive.

### **Flamingos / Phoenicopteridae**

**American Flamingo.** *Phoenicopus ruber*. Dozen and up to hundreds (600+ individuals) were observed in Cayo Guillermo and along the causeway out of Cayo Coco.

### **Grebes / Podicipedidae**

**Least Grebe.** *Tachybaptus dominicus*. 1. Cayo Guillermo.

### **Pigeons and Doves / Columbidae**

**Feral Pigeon (Rock Pigeon) (I).** *Columba livia*. Common in urban areas.

**White-crowned Pigeon.** *Patagioenas leucocephala*. Zapata peninsula and Soroa.

**Plain Pigeon.** *Patagioenas inornata*. 10+ individuals were observed at eye level foraging on a seeding scrub near Najasa.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove (I).** *Streptopelia decaocto*. Widespread in urban areas.

**Common Ground-Dove.** *Columbina passerina*. Pairs were observed in scrubby vegetation in all locations. Seen almost everyday.

**Blue-headed Quail-Dove (E).** *Starnoenas cyanocephala*. One of the favorite species. Three individuals were seen at a stakeout in Bermeja. A big thanks to Orlando for this! Later, in Punta Ballena we saw 5 other individuals in melanistic plumage. According to our local guide, this is probably due to some food deficiency.

**Gray-fronted Quail-Dove (E).** *Geotrygon caniceps*. We enjoyed wonderful views of one individual in Bermeja and later a male singing from a branch in Soplillar.

**Key West Quail-Dove.** *Geotrygon chrysa*. 20+ individuals were observed in Cayo Coco.

**White-winged Dove.** *Zenaida asiatica*. Anc'on Peninsula.

**Zenaida Dove.** *Zenaida aurita*. Cayo Coco.

**Mourning Dove.** *Zenaida macroura*. Common and widespread in open areas.

### **Cuckoos / Cuculidae**

**Great Lizard-Cuckoo.** *Coccyzus merlini*. Lizard-cuckoos are amazing birds. Not only because of their extravagant size and behavior but also for their voice. We enjoyed views of it in the Zapata peninsula, Trinidad and Cienfuegos.

**Smooth-billed Ani.** *Crotophaga ani*. A fairly common species found in lowland open habitats.

### **Nightjars and allies / Caprimulgidae**

**Antillean Nighthawk.** *Chordeiles gundlachi*. Few individuals were observed singing on flight in Camaguey, Trinidad and the Zapata Peninsula. Later, we enjoyed great views of an individual perched on a wire near Vinales.

**Greater Antillean Nightjar (Cuban Nightjar).** *Antrostomus cubanensis*. Seen in flight in Cayo Coco. Later, we observed an individual roosting in Soplillar and along the road we nailed 14 other individuals at night!

### Swifts / Apodidae

**Antillean Palm-Swift.** *Tachornis phoenicobia*. A fairly common species in Cienfuegos botanical gardens.

### Hummingbirds / Trochilidae

**Bee Hummingbird (E).** *Mellisuga helenae*. We saw three individuals in two locations, Bermeja and Palpite. This is THE smallest bird in the world and only slightly larger than the Vervain Hummingbird, found in Hispaniola.

**Cuban Emerald.** *Chlorostilbon ricordii*. A very common endemic hummingbird found in Cuba. It was seen every day.

### Rails, Gallinules and Coots / Rallidae

**Clapper Rail.** *Rallus crepitans*. Cayo Coco. A pair was observed in Red Mangrove along the causeway from moron to Cayo Coco. Heard in the Ancon Peninsula.

**Purple Gallinule.** *Porpyrio martinicus*. Cayo Coco.

**Common Gallinule.** *Gallinula galeata*. It was seen along the road near Moron, the Ancon Peninsula and near Soroa.

### Stilts and Avocets / Recurvirostridae

**Black-necked Stilt.** *Himantopus mexicanus*. Cayo Coco and the Ancon Península.

### Oystercatchers / Haematopodidae

**American Oystercatcher.** *Haematopus palliatus*. 1 individual. Cayo Paredon Grande.

### Plovers and Lapwings / Charadriidae

**Black-bellied Plover.** *Pluvialis squatarola*. Cayo Coco and Ancon peninsula.

**Wilson's Plover.** *Charadrius wilsonia*. We observed two individuals having a territorial confrontation in the Ancon Peninsula.

**Killdeer.** *Charadrius vociferous*. Seen in various lowland locations.

### Jacanas / Jacanidae

**Northern Jacana.** *Jacana spinosa*. Najasa and Soroa.

### Sandpipers and Allies / Scolopacidae

**Stilt Sandpiper.** *Calidris himantopus*. Cayo Guillermo.

**Least Sandpiper.** *Calidris minutilla*. 12+ Ancon peninsula.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper.** *Calidris pusilla*. A single individual was seen in the Ancon Peninsula.

**Short-billed Dowitcher.** *Limnodromus griseus*. 200+ individuals. Cayo Guillermo.

**Long-billed Dowitcher.** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*. 3 individuals were observed molting to breeding plumage in a freshwater pond in Cayo Coco.

**Spotted Sandpiper.** *Tringa solitaria*. Parque El Cubano river edge.

**Willet.** *Tringa semipalmata*. Few individuals were observed in Cayo Coco.

**Lesser Yellowlegs.** *Tringa flavipes*. Cayo Coco.

### **Gulls, Terns and Skimmers / Laridae**

**Laughing Gull.** *Leucophaeus atricilla*. A common species throughout the tour.

**Royal Tern.** *Thalasseus maximus*. A common species throughout the tour.

**Black Skimmer.** *Rynchops niger*. A pair was seen along the causeway from moron to Cayo Coco.

### **Frigatebirds / Fregatidae**

**Magnificent Frigatebird.** *Fregata magnificens*. Jardines del Rey Archipelago, Ancon península and Zapata Peninsula. Also in Havana.

### **Cormorants / Phalacrocoracidae**

**Double-crested Cormorant.** *Phalacrocorax auritus*. Common in Jardines del Rey archipelago. A single individual was observed in the Ancon peninsula and another one later near Soroa.

### **Pelicans / Pelecanidae**

**American White Pelican.** *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*. 3 individuals were observed along the causeway Cayo Coco-Moron.

**Brown Pelican.** *Pelecanus occidentalis*. Seen almost daily.

### **Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns / Ardeidae**

**Great Blue Heron.** *Ardea herodias*. Common in Cayo Coco and other keys. An individual in white morph was observed in Cayo Guillermo.

**Great Egret.** *Ardea alba*. Seen in various wetlands.

**Snowy Egret.** *Egretta thula*. Zapata Peninsula.

**Little Blue Heron.** *Egretta caerulea*. Seen in Cayo Coco and Las Terrazas.

**Tricolored Heron.** *Egretta tricolor*. Jardines del Rey archipelago.

**Reddish Egret.** *Egretta rufescens*. Few individuals in white morph plumage were seen in Jardines del Rey and the Ancon Peninsula. Individuals in regular plumage were also observed at various locations.

**Cattle Egret.** *Bubulcus ibis*. Seen daily.

**Green Heron.** *Butorides virescens*. Las Terrazas.

### **Ibises and Spoonbills / Threskiornithidae**

**White Ibis.** *Eudocimus albus*. Cayo Coco is named after this species (locally called coco). Seen in Cayo Coco and in the Ancon peninsula.

**Roseate Spoonbill.** *Platalea ajaja*. A pair was observed in Jardines del Rey.

### **New World Vultures / Cathartidae**

**Turkey Vulture.** *Cathartes aura*. Seen daily. A numerous species in Cuba. This country has an enormous potential to study *Cathartidae* dynamics since the lack of pesticides and fertilizers at mass-scale might be the reason why is so numerous here.

### **Osprey / Pandionidae**

**Osprey.** *Pandion haliaetus*. Seen in Cayo Coco and near Soroa. Ssp. *ridgwayi*.

### **Hawks, Eagles and Kites / Accipitridae**

**Snail Kite.** *Rostrhamus sociabilis*. 5 individuals were seen near Soroa. Some juveniles were noted.

**Northern Harrier.** *Circus cyaneus*. A single individual was seen flying over low red mangrove trees in the Ancon Peninsula.

**Gundlach's Hawk (E).** *Accipiter gundlachi*. We enjoyed an amazing view of this species when a female was observed hunting from a branch of an open tree. Seen in the scope by everyone!

**Cuban Black Hawk (E)(Common Black Hawk).** *Buteogallus anthracinus*. Seen in Jardines del Rey. Common in Cayo Guillermo. Nowadays treated as a Cuban endemic, Cuban Black Hawk *Buteogallus gundlachii* by most taxonomists.

**Red-tailed Hawk.** *Buteo jamaicensis*. Soroa. Seen along the road to the Ancon peninsula.

### **Barn-Owls / Tytonidae**

**Barn Owl.** *Tyto alba*. 2 individuals were observed in Camaguey by some tour participants.

### **Owls / Strigidae**

**Bare-legged Owl (E).** *Margarobyas lawrencii*. Two nesting pairs were observed in Rancho la Belen and Bermeja.

**Cuban Pygmy-Owl (E).** *Glaucidium siju*. This endemic owl of Cuba was seen in Parque El Cubano.

**Stygian Owl.** *Asio stygius*. We enjoyed superb views of a female near Cienfuegos.

### **Trogons / Trogonidae**

**Cuban Trogon (E).** *Priotelus temnurus*. This is Cuba's national bird. Pairs were seen in all locations. The term *Priotelus* (genus) means *an accomplished or complete saw* and refers to the rugged appearance of the tail feathers.

### **Todies / Todidae**

**Cuban Tody (E).** *Todus multicolor*. Todies are unique birds. To me, they seem like coming from a kid's cartoon. The one in Cuba is the most colorful of all. It was first seen in Cueva de los Jabalies in Cayo Coco and later in other locations. Fossil evidence suggests that toadies evolved from Central America but became extinct for unknown reasons. Five species remain in the Great Antilles. The toadies are relatives of the motmots and more distantly to the kingfishers.

### **Kingfishers / Alcedinidae**

**Belted Kingfisher.** *Megaceryle alcyon*. Seen in the Ancon Peninsula.

### **Woodpeckers / Picidae**

**West Indian Woodpecker.** *Melanerpes superciliaris*. Seen daily in the lowlands. This species is a relative of Red-bellied Woodpecker (of North America) and the Red-

crowned Woodpecker (of South America). It is another West Indies specialty found in all the Greater Antilles.

**Cuban Green Woodpecker (E).** *Xiphidiopicus percussus*. First seen in Rancho La Belen by some participants and later enjoyed by all in Soroa.

**Fernandina's Flicker (E).** *Colaptes fernandinae*. We observed a nesting pair in the Zapata peninsula, near Bermeja and another pair near Las Terrazas, W Cuba.

### **Falcons and Caracaras / Falconidae**

**Crested Caracara.** *Caracara cheriway*. Seen in Cayo Coco and Viñales.

**American Kestrel.** *Falco sparverius*. This common and widespread species was seen every day. The pale subspecies found in Cuba is *sparveroides*. And we observed two morphs, the pale and the rufous one.

### **Parrots / Psittacidae**

**Cuban Parakeet (E).** *Aratinga euops*. Groups were observed in various locations. Nice studies in Bermeja. We noticed its similarities with Scarlet-fronted, White-eyed and Hispaniola's parakeets. These species may be a close relative of those other similar species.

**Cuban Parrot.** *Amazona leucocephala*. Two individuals were seen in Rancho la Belen and later near Soroa.

### **Tyrant Flycatchers / Tyrannidae**

**Cuban Pewee (E).** *Contopus caribaeus*. We saw it almost every day. Fond to forest and mangrove edge.

**La Sagra's Flycatcher.** *Myiarchus sagrae*. The genus *Myiarchus* comprises similar and hard-to-tell-apart species and, is distributed from southern USA to Argentina. In Cuba, there's only one option so its identification is pretty straightforward. We came across various pairs of this flycatcher in the second half of the tour. It is usually associated with forest habitats. By the way, its common (and specific) name is after Ramón de La Sagra (1801-1871), a Cuban writer and naturalist. He authored *Historia física, política y natural de la isla de Cuba*, in 1837.

**Gray Kingbird.** *Tyrannus dominicensis*. Various pairs were observed. These are local migrants that come to Cuba to breed.

**Loggerhead Kingbird.** *Tyrannus caudifasciatus*. Observed almost every day. Similar to the previous one but plumage contrasts in head are bolder.

**Giant Kingbird (E).** *Tyrannus cubensis*. Nice studies of a pair in Rancho la Belen. This species is threatened and apparently due to loss of habitat. Further studies needed (Camilo, our local guide is currently studying the breeding biology of it).

### **Vireos / Vireonidae**

**Thick-billed Vireo.** *Vireo crassirostris*. A single individual was observed in Cayo Paredón Grande.

**Cuban Vireo (E).** *Vireo gundlachii*. Seen in 2 locations. Quite vocal!

**Black-whiskered Vireo.** *Vireo altiloquus*. It was seen in various locations.

### **Crows, Jays and Magpies / Corvidae**

**Palm Crow.** *Corvus palmarum*. Nice studies of single individuals in Rancho La Belén. It is found in large tracks of royal palm contiguous to forested areas.

**Cuban Crow.** *Corvus nasicus*. More than a dozen were seen in Rancho La Belén. We noticed its loud voice.

### **Swallows / Hirundinidae**

**Cuban Martin.** *Progne cryptoleuca*. Observed in Camaguey and Vinales. Also in Old Havana.

**Tree Swallow.** *Tachycineta bicolor*. Camaguey.

**Cave Swallow.** *Petrochelidon fulva*. We observed nesting pairs under bridges of Parque El Cubano and Pozo Azul.

**Barn Swallow.** *Hirundo rustica*. Cayo Paredon Grande.

### **Wrens / Troglodytidae**

**Zapata Wren (E).** *Ferminia cerverai*. We enjoyed close views of a single individual in La Turba, Zapata swamp. This is the only member of its genus and both, the genus and specific name are taken from the persona that apparently first collected it, Fermín Cervera. ENDANGERED.

### **Gnatcatchers / Polioptilidae**

**Cuban Gnatcatcher (E).** *Polioptila lembeyei*. A pair was seen in Cayo Paredon Grande.

### **Thrushes and Allies / Turdidae**

**Cuban Solitaire (E).** *Myadestes elisabeth*. I think everyone agreed that seeing this bird was not as spectacular as it was hearing it. The specific name *elisabeth* was given after Queen Isabel I of Castile and Spain (1451-1504). It will remain as a mystery why the person that described this species (Lembeye) used the English equivalent (*Elisabeth*) rather than the Spanish name (*Isabel*). We enjoyed views of one individual singing from a tree contiguous to a Mogote in Viñales.

**Red-legged Thrush.** *Turdus plumbeus*. Another gorgeous species of the Greater Antilles. We saw it in every location visited during this tour. Both subspecies found in Cuba have a nice dark orange belly (*schistaceus* & *rubripes*).

### **Mockingbirds and Thrashers / Mimidae**

**Gray Catbird.** *Dumetella carolinensis*. Seen in bushy habitat at various locations.

**Bahama Mockingbird.** *Mimus gundlachii*. IF it wasn't for Odey's perseverance and capacity to find it we would have miss this species. After much effort, we saw it in Cayo Guillermo.

**Northern Mockingbird.** *Mimus polyglottos*. Common. Seen daily.

### **Waxbills and allies / Estrildidae**

**Nutmeg Mannikin or Scaly-breasted Munia.** *Lonchura punctulata*. Few individuals were seen feeding in a seeding exotic bamboo in Cienfuegos.

## Old World Sparrows / Passeridae

**House Sparrow.** *Passer domesticus*. Common in urban areas.

## New World Warblers / Parulidae

**Ovenbird.** *Seiurus aurocapilla*. Our first encounter with this species was at the roof of the reception desk of the hotel in Camaguey. Later seen in Bermeja.

**Northern Waterthrush.** *Parkesia noveboracensis*. A pair was observed in Cayo Coco.

**Black-and-white Warbler.** *Mniotilta varia*. Bermeja and Soroa.

**Common Yellowthroat.** *Geothlypis formosa*. Seen four times near wetlands.

**American Redstart.** *Setophaga ruticilla*. A common Neotropical migrant in Cuba. Despite the date of our visit, there were still some individuals that surely will leave the island to their breeding grounds few days after we left Cuba.

**Cape May Warbler.** *Setophaga tigrina*. Seen in Cayo Coco y beautiful breeding plumage.

**Northern Parula.** *Setophaga americana*. Seen in open country and gardens in urban areas. Found in three locations.

**Magnolia Warbler.** *Setophaga magnolia*. An individual was observed in the reception of Las Terrazas.

**Yellow Warbler.** *Setophaga petechia*. Cayo Coco and Ancon Peninsula.

**Black-throated Blue Warbler.** *Setophaga caerulescens*. In previous tours this year we came across this species almost in every day. This time we only nailed one individual in female plumage in Cayo Coco. Not surprisingly, most individuals are probably gone to their breeding grounds.

**Palm Warbler.** *Setophaga palmarum*. This species is among the commonest Boreal migrants in Cuba and probably the latest to leave during the breeding season. It was found in edge of forest, scrubby vegetation and gardens.

**Olive-capped Warbler.** *Setophaga pityophila*. Another specialty of the Greater Antilles. This species is only found in N Bahamas, W and E of Cuba. We enjoyed views of a pair near Viñales.

**Yellow-headed Warbler (E).** *Teretistris fernandinae*. A pair was observed in Bermeja and another pair in Viñales

**Oriente Warbler (E).** *Teretistris fornsi*. Seen in Cayo Paredón Grande.

## Tanagers and Allies / Thraupidae

**Red-legged Honeycreeper.** *Cyanerpes cyaneus*. Nice views of 3 individuals in the Botanical Garden of Soroa.

**Cuban Grassquit (E).** *Tiaris canorus*. We owe a big thank you to our guide of Las Terrazas for taking us to the best site for this species where we got to see more than 12 individuals!

**Yellow-faced Grassquit.** *Tiaris olivaceus*. Seen in most locations.

**Cuban Bullfinch.** *Melopyrrha nigra*. Seen mainly in forest edge in various locations. Extensively trapped for use in the bird sound contest in the West Indies and the Guianas.

## Genera INCERTAE SEDIS

**Western Spindalis.** *Spindalis zena*. The spindalis are endemic to the Greater Antilles. Some taxonomists consider them to be part of the cardinals rather than to the tanagers. This lovely species was observed in Cayo Coco; Ancon, Soroa and Las Terrazas.

### **Buntings, Sparrows and Allies / Emberizidae**

**Zapata Sparrow (E).** *Torreornis inexpectata*. We enjoyed nice studies of a pair in Cayo Coco and later in La Turba. The first pair seen was the subspecies *varonai* (described in 1981) and the second one was *inexpectata*, from the Zapata swamp.

### **Troupials and Allies / Icteridae**

**Red-shouldered Blackbird (E).** *Agelaius assimilis*. We enjoyed superb views of a male singing in Bermeja and later in la Turba. Both locations are part of the Zapata swamp.

**Tawny-shouldered Blackbird.** *Agelaius humeralis*. A common lowland species in open habitats. It was seen in various locations.

**Eastern Meadowlark.** *Sturnella magna*. Seen in Najasa and Rancho La Belén.

**Cuban Blackbird (E).** *Dives atrovioleacea*. Observed in Rancho La Belén Sometimes treated as *Ptiloxena atrovioleacea*. It was originally described as a grackle, in 1892.

**Greater Antillean Grackle.** *Quiscalus niger*. This species is widespread and tolerates human presence, like other grackles. It was seen every day.

**Shiny Cowbird.** *Molothrus bonaiensis*. Bermeja.

**Cuban Oriole.** *Icterus melanopsis*. We came across this species in, at least, six locations. The population found in Cuba was believed to be conspecific with the populations in Central America and the Caribbean. Nowadays it is accepted as an endemic species of Cuba.

## **OTHER SPECIES LIST**

### **MAMMALS**

**Waterhouse's Leaf-nosed Bat.** *Macrotus waterhousii*. Cueva de los Jabalíes.

**Big Brown Bat.** *Eptesicus fuscus*. Cueva de los Jabalíes.

### **REPTILES**

**Cuban Boa or Santa Maria Boa.** *Chilabothrus angulifer*.

**Allison's (Blue-headed) Anole.** *Anolis allisoni*.

**Knight Anole.** *Anolis equestris*.

**Carolina Anole.** *Anolis carolinensis*.

**Tropical House Gecko.** *Hemidactylus mabouia*. Introduced from Africa.

**Curly-tailed Lizard.** *Leiocephalus sp.*

### **OTHER SPECIES**

**Cuban Toad.** *Peltophryne platycephala*.

**Cuban Bronze Tarantula.** *Phormictopus auratus*.

**Tarantula Hawk.** *Pepsis sp.*

**Land crab.** *Geocarcinus sp.*

**Hermit crab.** (Paguroidea).  
**Arboreal termites.** (Nasutitermes).  
**Cuban Snail.** *Polymita sp.*  
**Dragonfly.**  
**Firefly.**  
**Needlefish.**