

*Victor Emanuel Nature Tours*

# CUBA

January 23 – February 3, 2018



Cuban Grassquit, *Tiaris canorus*. Photo: D. Ascanio.

**Leaders: David Ascanio & Victor Emanuel**

Local guides: Camilo, Odey Martinez, Orlando Ramirez,  
Frank Medina and Idalmys Gonzales.

Compiled by: David Ascanio.

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Cuban Trogon, *Priotelus temnurus*. Photo: D. Ascanio

We took our first Cuba style meal at the Miami airport with plenty of fried plantains, black beans and *moros y cristianos* (rice with black beans). As we boarded the plane it seemed to everyone that so many years of wait had come to a reality: Cuba was only 103 miles away!

Soon after the plane touched the runway in Camaguey airport we were introduced to a Cuban tradition: an explosive hand-clapping and smiles erupted from the Cubans, some shouting “after all, I am back home”. There was a grandfather willing to meet his grandchildren and a lady almost in tears ready to see relatives that were last seen probably more than a decade ago. Dozens of Cubans were outside the airport greeting and waving to friends, colleagues or siblings. There were smiles in all of them.

As we walked off of the airport we were already embedding ourselves in this educational, birding and cultural experience. And, as much as we avoided, the unavoidable Turkey Vulture was the first Cuban bird species for the tour. Once in Camaguey we walked about three blocks to admire the wonderful architecture, enjoy the tiles on the floor inside various houses and were sprayed with the smoke of an old Chevy as we got to see our first endemic bird flying overhead, the Cuban Martin.

As much as we enjoyed Camaguey's architecture we also started the tour in this part of the island to access some key birding areas and were rewarded with views of several pairs of Cuban Palm Crow (at one point we counted about 26 individuals flying together), an active pair of Giant Kingbird, added scope views of Plain Pigeon and also saw more widespread endemics including Cuban Parrot, Cuban Parakeet (in flight), Cuban Crow, Cuban Trogon (Cuba's national bird) and Caribbean specialties such as La Sagra's Flycatcher and Loggerhead Kingbird. While seeing some of the distinctive flora, we discussed gigantism as an island-isolation effect and amazed ourselves with the huge Hibiscus trees (Called Blue Mahoe in English-speaking Caribbean nations). We also observed a selection of Neotropical migrants including Black-and-white, Yellow-throated, Black-throated Green and Magnolia Warblers. Also, Northern Parula and American Redstart. We left Camaguey with its amazing architecture and contemporary artists and drove north, towards Cayo Coco in the Jardines del Rey archipelago.



Zapata Sparrow, *Torreornis inexpectata*. Photo: D. Ascanio

Thinking back in time, when we heard of the damage caused by hurricane Irma in September 2017 we got concerned about the birdlife in Cayo Coco. Our worries were confirmed when we noticed the level of destruction in the vegetation around Cayo Coco. I got the idea that the strong winds may have displaced several birds from its original territory. To start, various pairs of birds were not defending their "apparent new territory" and many seemed to be moving with apprehension. Also, species that were common in previous tours became scarce and vice versa, some rare species were

quite conspicuous. To mention few examples, we struggled to find a pair of Cuban Gnatcatcher (which we eventually saw and photographed well) and there was no sign of Bahama Mockingbird nor any West Indian Whistling-Duck. But, the secretive Zapata Sparrow was conspicuous and we nailed about 5 pairs (including heard individuals). Odey, our local guide showed surprise when we found Cuban Emerald (almost wiped out in Cayo Coco and very common in previous years) as well as a pair of Western Spindalis. Despite much of the damaged caused by Irma, we managed to see the target species and left with great satisfaction and the security that over the course of few years Cayo Coco's bird populations will thrive and survive.



Great Lizard Cuckoo, *Coccyzus merlini*. Photo: D. Ascanio.

It was time to move to the south of the island and for that we drove to the famous city of Trinidad. A delicious early dinner allowed us for another early departure (the day-after) to Cienfuegos. There, we added Antillean Palm Swift but the main targets were the very difficult-to-see Gundlach's Hawk as well as the spectacular Stygian Owl. As we were discussing the nesting structure of the palm-swift a distinctive cry raised my eyebrows: a Gundlach's Hawk was calling! Soon after we called it back this individual flew overhead various times and eventually landed on a branch. We enjoyed several views of an apparent female (given its size). This experience rounded-up a magic morning. Close to noon we drove to the wonderful city of Cienfuegos where appreciated great architecture a listened a lecture by Danilo about historical hints of this small but charming city. After lunch, we drove back to Trinidad and spend the rest of the day walking across the cobblestone streets and we learned much of its rich past related with sugar cane plantations.

The following location was one of the most important bird areas in the Caribbean, the Ciénaga de Zapata. This protected area is one of the six RAMSAR areas of Cuba and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve as well. It is also the largest and best protected areas in the Caribbean. Our day started with incredible views of Cuban Nightjar showing its prominent white tail spots. Then, it followed some reasonable drives between locations and in stops along the road we secured superb views of the endemic Fernandina's Flicker perched at the entrance of the nest and a pair of Bare-legged Owl coming out from the inside of their roost (hollow tree). As we enjoyed a wonderful sunset we appreciated the scarlet wrist of the Cuban Parakeet and the contrasting magenta color in the throat of the Cuban Parrot throughout the scope. This was another magic day followed by a delicious dinner that got us ready for the next day.



Cuban Gnatcatcher, *Polioptila lembeyi*. Photo: D. Ascanio

The full day in the Zapata peninsula began with great expectations as two of the most-wanted endemic birds were included in our target list of the day. Those were the Blue-headed Quail-Dove and the diminutive Bee Hummingbird. As soon as we joined Orlando (park ranger famous for setting up a hide where he feeds the quail-doves) we walked into the forest and our jaws dropped when noticing four Blue-headed Quail-Doves and a single Gray-fronted Quail-Dove that were picking rice seeds and thus, ignoring our presence. A full hour and a half gave us several photo opportunities including views of a male Blue-headed Quail-Dove displaying. Later, a short drive took us to La Cuchilla where we saw four Red-shouldered Blackbirds perched and two other individuals in flight. And, another sighting of Fernandina's Flicker followed. This time, we saw a pair and such views complemented a successful morning. Still, we were missing one of the greatest target species of the trip, the Bee Hummingbird.



Blue-headed Quail-Dove, *Starnoenas cyanocephala*. Photo: D. Ascanio.

To look for the smallest bird in the world we drove back to Bermeja and explored the flowers of several native shrubs and trees. We found two Bee Hummingbirds in female plumage and celebrated to have seen this amazingly small hummingbird. But, you know how it is. We had seen a female but everyone wanted to see a male. So, to please our eyes we drove further west along the Bay of Pigs to Bernabé's house, a man that has various hummingbird feeders in his garden. As soon as we arrived there was a young and an adult male Bee Hummingbird. There were also various females. Every sighting was followed by a *wow!* expression and the cameras clicking never stopped. As we observed the Bee Hummingbirds we were also delighted with views of Cuban Oriole, Black-throated Blue-Warbler and Tawny-shouldered Blackbird. What followed was a remarkable story. Bernabé brought his mobile and showed us a video demonstrating how he saved the Bee Hummingbirds that visit his house at the time of hurricane Irma. As Irma touched the Zapata Peninsula, the strong winds were blowing away (and throwing to the ground) the bee hummers that were seeking protection inside a thick tree in his backyard. One of his relatives noticed that several individuals were injured on the ground and they were so weak that Bernabé and his relatives were able to pick six individuals and brought them into his room, more specifically

under the mosquito net that covers his bed. For five consecutive days, Bernabe fed these individuals with his hummingbird feeders and released them once the hurricane threat was gone. This story is remarkable but the afterwards were more impressive. Once released in the garden, these six hummingbirds kept flying to the inside of his house and into his bedroom and probably they did it in search of the feeders! I have not heard about such creative way to protect a bird anywhere in the world. To complement an incredible morning, we visited the Bay of Pig museum and Danilo gave us a review of the events that occurred in those days.

Having seen most of the Zapata Peninsula target birds we were now focused to find the jewel in the crown, the Zapata Wren. This bird is so secretive and unpredictable that always require quite a of time to locate and furthermore, to see it. Accompanied by Frank Medina, the head of the park, we were able to achieve amazing views of the wren but, as it turned out to be the trend in this tour for several rare species, we located not only an individual but two and in both occasions, we got to see them extremely well! Having taken amazing photos and videos it was time to drive to Havana, pay a visit to Hemingway's house and continue west, to Soroa in the rugged terrain of the Cuban Mogotes.



Bee Hummingbird, *Mellisuga helenae*. Photo: D. Ascanio

The last day of January welcomed us with a cold sunrise and an orange-yellow moon, partially eclipse by planet Earth. We stopped along the highway to Viñales to see the moon hiding behind distant mountains. After we took the exit another Gundlach's

Hawk was observed but this time flying fast across the road. We continued our drive to the mogotes and our search was rewarded with scope views of Cuban Solitaire singing. There was also a Cuban Trogon perched in the open and a pair of Olive-capped Warbler. I am sure that everyone was delighted being serenaded by the suit song of the solitaire. Later in the day we visited a tobacco farm and enjoyed lunch with Nils Navarro, the author of the *Endemic Birds of Cuba*. An afternoon quick stop along the highway at sides of a fish farms allowed us to add Snail Kite, several Black-necked Stilt and other sandpipers to our daily checklist.

The last full day of birding in Cuba opened with a late breakfast (first for the tour!). Later, Dr. Ernesto Mujica guided us inside the wonderful orchid house in the small but charming Soroa Botanical Gardens. We also met the official garden's guide that toured us across the fascinating collection of plants there. The day continued with a drive to Las Terrazas community where a pair of Stygian Owl roosting in a pine tree brought smiles to everyone. The visit to the community also gave us the opportunity to meet local artists, enjoy local coffee and have lunch accompanied by views of Black-faced Grassquit, Cuban and Tawny-shouldered Blackbirds, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers and Greater Antillean Grackle. The afternoon opened with impressive views of the last of the endemics, the amazing and astonishing Cuban Grassquit. Although once near-threatened, the populations seem to be recovering but risks persist due to the high value in the illegal pet trade market. Having celebrated a successful birding part of the tour it was time to add some fascinating cultural aspects of Cuba. For that we visited the Revolution Square and saw some highlights of Havana.



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

The last full day in Cuba exposed us to the amazing history of Havana, from its colonial time to the current days. We discussed and analyzed so much of Cuba's contemporary

and colonial history. I am sure we will need days, if not weeks, to digest everything we saw in this remarkable and educational tour.

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 wonderful ship to explore the Amazon and its tributaries. Using skiffs, we distinctive Amazonian habitats such as the sedimentary river islands, Varzea and Igapo forest types. 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. Photos and video of our 2016 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. Enjoy short walks plus a boat trip to the Chagres River. We visit the famous Pipeline road and the Canopy Tower, where we can see canopy species at eye level. Photos and video of our 2015 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 from cloud forest to lowland rain forest, all in slow pace. We include a ride along the aerial tram. This tour is designed for seeing gaudy species such as tanagers and honeycreepers as well as many hummingbirds. We visit hummingbird feeder stations. 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 2018 Cuba Tour**  
**Prepared by David Ascanio**

## 2018 VENT Cuba.

### A people-to-people tour

January 23 – February 3, 2018

Leader: David Ascanio

### ITINERARY

23 January. Miami.

24 January. Flight to Camaguey.

25 January. Rancho La Belen. Drive to Cayo Coco.

26 January. Jardines del Rey: Cayo Coco, Cayo Paredon Grande & Cayo Guillermo.

27 January. Cayo Coco, Trinidad (Ancon peninsula).

28 January. Parque El Cubano. Drive to the Zapata Peninsula.

29 January. Zapata Peninsula: Bermeja, Palpite and Soplillar.

30 January. La Turba, Havana & Soroa.

31 January. Viñales.

01 February. Las Terrazas & Havana.

02 February. Old Havana.

03 February. Departure.

### THE BIRDLIST

Taxonomy follows the American Ornithological Society (AOS) Check-list of North American Birds with all current supplements.

Photo album for all tours:

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

Photo album for this tour:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidascanio/albums/72157664051619327>

### Waterfowl / Anatidae

**Blue-winged Teal.** *Anas discors*. 10+ individuals. Cayo Coco.

**Red-breasted Merganser.** *Mergus serrator*. Commoner in Cayo Coco than previous years. During the day-and-a-half in Cayo Coco we might have seen more than 300 individuals.

### Guineafowl / Numididae

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

### Grebes / Podicipedidae

**Least Grebe.** *Tachybaptus dominicus*. Cayo Coco. Adult with 3 chicks.

### Pigeons and Doves / Columbidae

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

**Scaly-naped Pigeon.** *Patagioenas squamosa*. Soroa. Two pairs.

**White-crowned Pigeon.** *Patagioenas leucocephala*. Zapata peninsula, mainly.  
**Plain Pigeon.** *Patagioenas inornata*. Rancho la Belen. 2 individuals scoped.  
**Eurasian Collared-Dove (I).** *Streptopelia decaocto*. Widespread in urban areas.  
**Common Ground-Dove.** *Columbina passerina*. Few scattered pairs.  
**Blue-headed Quail-Dove (E).** *Starnoenas cyanocephala*. One of the favorite species. 4 individuals were seen at Orlando's stakeout in Bermeja. A big thanks to him for this!  
**Gray-fronted Quail-Dove (E).** *Geotrygon caniceps*. Bermeja. We enjoyed wonderful views of one individual.  
**Key West Quail-Dove.** *Geotrygon chrysa*. Cayo Coco. A single individual. Amazing drop of numbers compared with previous years. Probably due to hurricane Irma last year.  
**Zenaida Dove.** *Zenaida aurita*. Cayo Coco, Trinidad and Zapata península.  
**Mourning Dove.** *Zenaida macroura*. Common and widespread in open areas.

### Cuckoos / Cuculidae

**Mangrove Cuckoo.** *Coccyzus minor*. Cayo Coco. Extended views of a single individual.  
**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 Cayo Coco, Trinidad, the Zapata peninsula and Cienfuegos.  
**Smooth-billed Ani.** *Crotophaga ani*. A fairly common species found in lowland open habitats.

### Nightjars and allies / Caprimulgidae

**Greater Antillean Nightjar (Cuban Nightjar).** *Antrostomus cubanensis*. Trinidad. Having a male soaring overhead was one of the highlights of the tour.

### Swifts / Apodidae

**White-collared Swift.** *Streptoprocne zonaris*. Trinidad. Distant views of various individuals in flight.  
**Antillean Palm-Swift.** *Tachornis phoenicobia*. Cienfuegos, Zapata and Soroa. Nice studies of a nest embedded with a fallen palm leaf.

### Hummingbirds / Trochilidae

**Bee Hummingbird (E).** *Mellisuga helenae*. Zapata peninsula. We nailed a total of 9 individuals, in two locations. This is THE smallest bird in the world (1.97-2.36 inches) and only slightly larger than the Vervain Hummingbird (*Mellisuga minima*), found in Hispaniola with a size varying 2.4-2.76 inches). Until the discovery of the Bee Hummingbird, the Verian Hummingbird was considered the smallest bird in the world (for nearly 150 years).  
**Cuban Emerald.** *Chlorostilbon ricordii*. Cayo Coco, Trinidad, Zapata and Soroa. Common elsewhere but in Cayo Coco.

### Rails, Gallinules and Coots / Rallidae

**Spotted Rail.** *Pardirallus maculatus*. La Turba, Zapata Peninsula. Heard only.  
**American Coot.** *Fulica americana*. Cayo Coco.

### **Limpkin / Aramidae**

**Limpkin.** *Aramus guarauna*. Trinidad. Heard only.

### **Stilts and Avocets / Recurvirostridae**

**Black-necked Stilt.** *Himantopus mexicanus*. Cayo Coco and Soroa. In Cayo Coco we counted over 50 individuals in a single group. Scattered groups were seen near Soroa.

### **Oystercatchers / Haematopodidae**

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

### **Plovers and Lapwings / Charadriidae**

**Black-bellied Plover.** *Pluvialis squatarola*. Cayo Coco. 30+ individuals.

**Semipalmated Plover.** *Charadrius semipalmatus*. Cayo Coco.

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

### **Sandpipers and Allies / Scolopacidae**

**Ruddy Turnstone.** *Arenaria interpres*. Cayo Coco and Zapata Peninsula.

**Sanderling.** *Calidris alba*. Cayo Coco.

**Least Sandpiper.** *Calidris minutilla*. Wetland near wetland. 10+ individuals.

**Short-billed Dowitcher.** *Limnodromus griseus*. Cayo Coco. 400+ individuals.

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

**Willet.** *Tringa semipalmata*. Cayo Coco. 30+ individual.

**Greater Yellowlegs.** *Tringa flavipes*. Cayo Coco. 1 individual.

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

**Laughing Gull.** *Leucophaeus atricilla*. A common species in coastal wetlands during the tour.

**Royal Tern.** *Thalasseus maximus*. Zapata peninsula.

**Black Skimmer.** *Rynchops niger*. Causeway Moron-Cayo Coco. 100+ individuals.

### **Frigatebirds / Fregatidae**

**Magnificent Frigatebird.** *Fregata magnificens*. Jardines del Rey Archipelago, Ancon peninsula and Zapata peninsula

### **Cormorants / Phalacrocoracidae**

**Neotropic Cormorant.** *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*. Unlike in previous years, we found this species common and widespread.

**Double-crested Cormorant.** *Phalacrocorax auritus*. Seen only in Jardines del Rey archipelago.

### **Anhinga / Anhingidae**

**Anhinga.** *Anhinga anhinga*. Found only in Jardines del Rey archipelago and near Trinidad.

## Pelicans / Pelecanidae

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

## Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns / Ardeidae

**Great Blue Heron.** *Ardea herodias*. Common in Cayo Coco and other keys. Three white-morph individuals were observed in Cayo Guillermo.

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

**Snowy Egret.** *Egretta thula*. Seen in various locations.

**Little Blue Heron.** *Egretta caerulea*. Seen in various locations.

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

**Reddish Egret.** *Egretta rufescens*. Two individuals in white morph plumage were seen in Jardines del Rey. Individuals in regular plumage were also observed at various locations.

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

**Green Heron.** *Butorides virescens*. Jardines del Rey, Zapata peninsula and Las Terrazas.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.** *Nyctanassa violácea*. An immature was found near Rancho la Belen.

## Ibises and Spoonbills / Threskiornithidae

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

**Roseate Spoonbill.** *Platalea ajaja*. 12+ individuals. Jardines del Rey archipelago.

## 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 could be the answer to 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.** *Rothramus sociabilis*. 7 individuals were seen near Soroa. Some juveniles were noted.

**Northern Harrier.** *Circus cyaneus*. Two individuals were seen flying near Cienfuegos.

**Gundlach's Hawk (E).** *Accipiter gundlachi*. We enjoyed an amazing view of this species near Cienfuegos. It was also observed in flight near Vinales and later in Soroa.

**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.

**Borad-winged Hawk.** *Buteo platypterus*. Two individuals were seen soaring near Parque El Cubano.

## Owls / Strigidae

**Bare-legged Owl (E).** *Margarobyas lawrencii*. A pair was observed in Bermeja.

**Cuban Pygmy-Owl (E).** *Glaucidium siju*. This endemic owl of Cuba was seen first in Rancho la Belen and later in Parque El Cubano.

**Stygian Owl.** *Asio stygius*. We enjoyed superb views of a pair in Las Terrazas. This owl was named after the Styx, one of the underworld rivers in Greek mythology.

## 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 todies evolved from Central America but became extinct for unknown reasons. Five species remain in the Great Antilles. The todies are relatives of the motmots and more distantly to the kingfishers.

## Kingfishers / Alcedinidae

**Belted Kingfisher.** *Megaceryle alcyon*. Seen in the Ancon Peninsula and in Las Terrazas.

## Woodpeckers / Picidae

**West Indian Woodpecker.** *Melanerpes superciliaris*. Seen in lowlands. This species is a relative of Red-bellied Woodpecker (of North America) and the Red-crowned Woodpecker (of South America). It is another of the West Indies specialties restricted to the Greater Antilles.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.** *Sphyrapicus varius*. Single individuals were observed at various locations in the first half of the tour.

**Cuban Green Woodpecker (E).** *Xiphidiopicus percussus*. First seen in Cayo Coco and later enjoyed in Las Terrazas.

**Fernandina's Flicker (E).** *Colaptes fernandinae*. We observed a nesting pair in the Zapata peninsula, near Bermeja.

## Falcons and Caracaras / Falconidae

**Crested Caracara.** *Caracara cheriway*. Seen in Cayo Coco, Cayo Guillermo, the Zapata Peninsula 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.

**Merlin.** *Falco columbarius*. A single individual was spotted perched atop of a mangrove as we left Cayo Coco.

**Peregrine Falcon.** *Falco peregrinus*. There was an individual perched in the Ministry of Defense building in Havana. Quite an interesting site for a falcon to be!

### **Parrots / Psittacidae**

**Cuban Parakeet (E).** *Aratinga euops*. Groups were observed 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*. A flock of about 24 individuals was seen in Bermeja.

### **Tyrant Flycatchers / Tyrannidae**

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

**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 throughout the tour. It is usually associated with edge 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.

**Loggerhead Kingbird.** *Tyrannus caudifasciatus*. Observed almost every day. Similar to the next one but bill decidedly smaller

**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**

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

**Black-whiskered Vireo.** *Vireo altiloquus*. Called by one tour participants near Vinales.

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

**Palm Crow.** *Corvus palmarum*. Nice studies of loose groups in Rancho La Belen. It is found in large tracks of royal palm contiguous to forested areas.

**Cuban Crow.** *Corvus nasicus*. More than a dozen individuals were seen in Rancho La Belén. Later seen also in the Zapata peninsula. We noticed its loud voice.

### **Swallows / Hirundinidae**

**Cuban Martin.** *Progne cryptoleuca*. Observed in Camaguey.

**Tree Swallow.** *Tachycineta bicolor*. Camaguey, Zapata peninsula and Havana.

### **Wrens / Troglodytidae**

**Zapata Wren (E).** *Ferminia cerverai*. We enjoyed close views of two pairs 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**

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.** *Polioptila caerulea*. Cayo Coco and Soroa.

**Cuban Gnatcatcher (E).** *Polioptila lembeyei*. After much search, a pair was seen in Cayo Coco.

### **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*. A gorgeous thrush of the Greater and Lesser 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 in the second half of the tour.

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

### **Old World Sparrows / Passeridae**

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

### **New World Sparrows / Passerellidae**

**Zapata Sparrow (E).** *Torreornis inexpectata*. We enjoyed nice studies of three pairs in Cayo Coco and later observed two other pairs in La Turba. The first location was of the subspecies *varonai* (described in 1981) and the second one was *inexpectata*, from the Zapata swamp.

### **Spindalises / Spindalidae**

**Western Spindalis.** *Spindalis zena*. The spindalis are endemic to the Greater Antilles. They have been thought to belong to the cardinals and to the tanagers in the past. Today, it is treated in its own family. This lovely species was observed in Cayo Coco, Parque El Cubano and Las Terrazas.

### **Cuban Warblers / Terestitridae**

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

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

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

**Eastern Meadowlark.** *Sturnella magna*. Zapata peninsula.

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

**Baltimore Oriole.** *Icterus galbula*. Rancho La Belen and apparently this is the one seen later in the Zapata peninsula (and not Orchard Oriole, *Icterus spurius*).

**Red-shouldered Blackbird (E).** *Agelaius assimilis*. We enjoyed superb views of a pair to which the male was singing, in La Cuchilla. ENDANGERED.

**Tawny-shouldered Blackbird.** *Agelaius humeralis*. A common lowland species in open habitats. It was seen in various locations and also inside the Havana airport.

**Cuban Blackbird (E).** *Dives atrovioleaceus*. Observed in various locations. 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 members of the genus. It was seen every day.

### New World Warblers / Parulidae

**Ovenbird.** *Seiurus aurocapilla*. Our first encounter with this species was in Bermeja. Later seen in Bernabe's house and Las Terrazas.

**Louisiana Waterthrush.** *Parkesia motacilla*. Zapata Peninsula.

**Northern Waterthrush.** *Parkesia noveboracensis*. Bernabe's house and Havana.

**Black-and-white Warbler.** *Mniotilta varia*. Cayo Coco and Soroa.

**Common Yellowthroat.** *Geothlypis formosa*. Seen four times near wetlands, including the Zapata peninsula.

**American Redstart.** *Setophaga ruticilla*. A common Neotropical migrant in Cuba. Seen in about six occasions.

**Cape May Warbler.** *Setophaga tigrina*. Soroa.

**Northern Parula.** *Setophaga americana*. Common in open country and gardens.

**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 it twice. The first time in male plumage and the second time in female plumage.

**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-wumped Warbler.** *Setophaga coronata*. Cayo Coco and Las Terrazas (restaurant Buenaventura).

**Yellow-throated Warbler.** *Setophaga dominica*. Cayo Coco, Zapata peninsula and Soroa.

**Prairie Warbler.** *Setophaga discolor*. Cayo Coco, Zapata peninsula and Soroa.

**Black-throated Green-Warbler.** *Setophaga virens*. Cayo Coco and Parque El Cubano.

### Cardinals and Allies / Cardinalidae

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak.** *Pheucticus ludovicianus*. Nice studies of a pair in las Terrazas.

**Indigo Bunting.** *Passerina cyanea*. Zapata peninsula.

### **Tanagers and Allies / Thraupidae**

**Red-legged Honeycreeper.** *Cyanerpes cyaneus*. Vinales. 8+ individuals.

**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 40 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.

### **OTHER SPECIES LIST**

#### **MAMMALS**

**Waterhouse's Leaf-nosed Bat.** *Macrotus waterhousii*.

#### **REPTILES**

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

**Carolina Anole.** *Anolis carolinensis*. Cayo Coco.

**Cuban Slider.** *Trachemys decussata*.

#### **AMPHIBIANS**

**American Bull Frog.** *Lithobates catesbeianus* or *Rana catesbeiana*.

#### **TERMITES**

**Arboreal termites.** (Nasutitermes).

#### **BUTTERFLIES**

**Tropical Buckeye.** *Junonia genoveva*.

**White Peacock.** *Anarthia jatrophae*.

**Cloudless Sulphur.** *Phoebis sennae*.

**Hummingbird Hawk-Moth.** *Macroglossum stellatarum*.

**Malachite.** *Siproeta* sp.

**Zebra Longwing.** *Heliconius charithonia*.

**Sleepy Orange.** *Eurema nicippe*.