



*The exquisite Red-billed Streamertail is surely one of the best looking hummingbirds (Mark Van Beirs)*

# **HISPANIOLA (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC) & PUERTO RICO with JAMAICA & THE BAHAMAS**

**26 MARCH / 2 APRIL – 15 / 20 APRIL 2017**





*The cute Broad-billed Tody is endemic to Hispaniola (Mark Van Beirs)*

**LEADER: MARK VAN BEIRS**

Our recent Greater Antilles island hopping tour produced all the single island endemics of Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and The Bahamas (with the exception of the very recently split Inagua Woodstar of the southern Bahamas) and all the participants on this sun-drenched tour saw these specialities



very well. The highlights of the Jamaica pre trip included the gorgeous Red-billed Streamertail, Jamaican Owl, the exquisite Crested Quail-Dove and the charming Jamaican Tody. The main part of the tour visited the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico where the splendid Ashy-faced Owl, La Selle Thrush, Ridgway's Hawk, Puerto Rican Amazon and the cracking White-winged Warbler (or *Xenoligea*) took our fancy. The Bahama extension produced superb views of Bahama Woodstar, Cuban Parrot, Great Lizard Cuckoo, Bahama Swallow and Bahama Yellowthroat. Next to the endemics we observed a great variety of multi island endemics, water and marshbirds (including Yellow-breasted Crake and Spotted Rail), a good selection of migrant warblers and for the first time ever we found Audubon's Shearwater and Black-capped Petrel while sea-watching off one of the southern capes in the Dominican Republic. One of the main attractions of this tour is the occurrence of two endemic Caribbean bird families: the incredibly endearing Todies (*Todidae*), of which we observed four of the five species and the boisterous Palmchat (*Dulidae*), which is the only member of its family and is restricted to Hispaniola. Recently however, some authorities have created three other families that are restricted to these islands: the *Phaenicophilidae* which contains the White-winged and Green-tailed Warblers and the Black-crowned and Grey-crowned (Palm) Tanagers (all endemic to Hispaniola), the *Calyptophilidae*, which harbours the two Chat-tanagers (also endemic to Hispaniola) and the *Nesospingidae*, which was created to hold just one species, the unusual Puerto Rican Tanager (endemic to Puerto Rico). It is worth mentioning that three Critically Endangered (by BirdLife International) birds were seen very well: Ridgway's Hawk, Puerto Rican Amazon and Bahama Oriole! Every island that we visited oozed a very different atmosphere, had a totally different mentality and offered different food. Next to the birds we observed quite a variety of reptiles, amphibians and butterflies and collected a fair number of endemic beers...



*The smart Orangequit is placed in its own genus (Mark Van Beirs)*

The Jamaica section of our Greater Antilles tour started at Kingston airport in the middle of a hot March day. From here we drove along the big lagoon and through infamous Kingston towards the hilly centre of the island, picking up Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Turkey Vulture, Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, Northern Mockingbird and Greater Antillean Grackle on the way. We arrived at the well-known Great White House at Marshall's Pen near Mandeville in mid-afternoon, where we were warmly welcomed by Ann, our knowledgeable host. A first recce of the gardens was ruined a bit by rain, but we still managed to observe several specialities like Caribbean and Zenaida Doves, splendid endemic Red-billed Streamertails (males without tail streamers, with one tail streamer and fully plumaged), Olive-throated (or Jamaican) Parakeet, a female Jamaican Becard, displaying Jamaican Orioles and a lovely, rather unusual-looking Orangequit. More widespread species included Common Ground Dove, Common Starling, a fabulous male Black-throated Blue Warbler and Yellow-faced and Black-faced Grassquits.



*The lovely Jamaican Oriole is a near endemic (Dave Williamson); the subtly-plumaged Jamaican Elaenia is only found on Jamaica (Mark Van Beirs)*

Next morning, at dawn, we were sipping our coffee and only managed to walk about a hundred metres from the veranda in the next two hours. We saw several more of the Jamaican endemics: a Jamaican Owl was found on its day roost, a Jamaican Mango was driven off by a feisty male Red-billed Streamertail, several adorable Jamaican Todies begged to be admired, Sad and Rufous-tailed Flycatchers sat up, White-eyed and White-chinned Thrushes played hide and seek and subtly-plumaged Jamaican Euphonias fed on small red fruits. A Merlin was scoped and we also noted Loggerhead Kingbird (of the distinctive Jamaican race), Black-whiskered Vireo (the most common sound of the morning), Northern Parula and perky Bananaquits (of the smart nominate race). After a hearty breakfast we walked a little further through rough meadows and along copses of dense woodland where we heard Crested Quail-Dove and obtained good looks at great birds like Chestnut-bellied and Jamaican Lizard Cuckoos, a tiny Vervain Hummingbird, Jamaican Elaenia, Jamaican Vireo, Cave Swallow, Ovenbird, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Prairie Warbler, Greater Antillean Bullfinch, Jamaican Spindalis and a rare Summer Tanager. Lunch was interrupted by a female Ruddy Quail-Dove that had flown into the house and which Ann showed to us in the hand. In the afternoon we drove to the Upper Black River Morass where we observed a good selection of waterbirds. A Least Bittern showed well and we heard the gruff calls of a Spotted Rail. More widespread species included Blue-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebe, American White and Glossy Ibises, Black-crowned Night Heron, Green and Little Blue Herons, Great Blue Heron (one was struggling with a huge catfish), Great and Snowy Egrets, Western Osprey, Common Gallinule, Limpkin, Black-necked Stilt, Northern Jacana, Antillean Palm Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Sand Martin, Northern Rough-winged and Barn Swallows and a Common Yellowthroat. An introduced Small Indian Mongoose showed its inquisitiveness. In late afternoon it started raining, so we



returned to our lodgings, where a Jamaican Crow briefly appeared. After dinner we took a short stroll in the garden and obtained excellent scope views of a bizarre, very well-behaved Northern Potoo.



*An adult and a fledgling Jamaican Owl; a tiny Bananaquit of the nominate race (Mark Van Beirs)*

Our morning in the famous “cockpit” country was quite productive. Situated in the northern central part of the island, this unique limestone area is dotted with hills and sinkholes and looks like a giant eggboard. It harbours the largest number of endemic plants in Jamaica and is the stronghold for the two endemic Amazon parrots. It didn’t take too long to get excellent views of both Yellow-billed and Black-billed Amazons and we managed to observe them both perched and in flight. Very satisfactory moments! We also obtained perfect scope views of a perched, endemic Ring-tailed Pigeon and admired other specialities like Stolid Flycatcher, Jamaican Crow, the charming Arrowhead Warbler and the beautiful Yellow-shouldered Grassquit. We had more good looks at already seen endemics like Jamaican Tody, Jamaican Spindalis, Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo and the raucous Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo. A Red-tailed Hawk circled over and we enjoyed magnificent scope studies of a perched tersel Merlin. In the afternoon we wanted to bird the gardens, meadows and copses at Marshall’s Pen, but persistent rain sabotaged most of our efforts. Best of all were the splendid Jamaican Owls that showed very well in their big tree. An adult and a fledged, but still downy youngster were sitting side by side high in the canopy. Truly glorious. While it was raining, Ann took us on a guided tour of the Great White House. History galore!

On our final morning at Marshall’s Pen we had more great looks at the adult and the young Jamaican Owl in the bright morning light and some lucky, persistent participants connected with a rather shy Crested Quail-Dove. We said goodbye to Ann and thanked her for her gracious hospitality. We drove to the Portland Peninsula in the extreme south of the island where we found dry scrubby woodland, mangrove-fringed mudflats and very hot conditions. Not a sniff of the Bahama Mockingbird was had, but we did see dozens of Northern Mockingbirds! We obtained nice scope looks at several endemic Jamaican Mangoes and smiled at an excellent performance of a Clapper Rail. A white morph Reddish Egret was prancing about on the mud. In the afternoon we drove via Kingston to the north coast and arrived at our base in Port Antonio in time for a quick exploration. Another Jamaican Mango showed well, as did Yellow-crowned Night Heron and several White-collared Swifts.



*The Jamaican Spindalis is an extremely stylish species (Mark Van Beirs)*

The celebrated Ecclesdown Road skirts the base of the John Crow Mountains in the extreme east of the island. Our main target here was the endemic Black-billed Streamertail, a splendid hummingbird, of which we soon saw several males and females. We managed to appreciate the subtle differences with its close relative, the Red-billed Streamertail. We also had extremely good views of a gorgeous endemic Crested Quail-Dove quietly walking along the track. A truly exquisite bird! A Jamaican Blackbird, in contrast, allowed only frustrating glimpses. Many other Jamaican endemics were noted and a migrant Worm-eating Warbler flitted about in the mid storey. After lunch in Port Antonio, we drove up into the Blue Mountains along a scenic road longing a lovely boulder strewn river. Endless bends later we arrived at our hotel in the higher reaches of these famous mountains. We were truly surprised to find that building was in full swing and we were not really sure they were expecting us, but not too much later we all had our well-appointed rooms. The final hour of the day gave us a very cooperative Jamaican Pewee and a very obliging Blue Mountain Vireo. Next to these two endemics we also had superb looks at Red-billed Streamertails (eye-ball to eye-ball studies of interacting males and females), Jamaican Spindalis, Orangequit and a pair of delightful Arrowhead Warblers. At the end of the day we realized we had recorded 27 out of the 29 Jamaican endemics today. Wow!!

On our full day at the higher elevations of the famous Blue Mountains we explored patches of remaining indigenous cloud forest and shady coffee plantations. We were quite relaxed as only a few bird targets were left. It didn't take too long before we all got excellent, prolonged close up views of a foraging, endemic Jamaican Blackbird, which was not grovelling in a bromeliad like usual, but working the lichen-covered bark of a big forest tree like a woodpecker. We sure enjoyed those mega views of the rarest of the Jamaican endemics! Another stretch of forest gave us a gorgeous, well-behaved Rufous-throated Solitaire. This great songster is not an endemic, as it also occurs on Hispaniola and on several islands in the Lesser Antilles. Arrowhead and Wilson's Warblers performed very well and in late afternoon at least 60 American Black Swifts swooped in fast flight over our hotel.





*The adorable Arrowhead Warbler (Dave Williamson)*

Our final morning on Jamaica was spent looking for the lovely Crested Quail-Dove. Although we had seen it well, and everyone had observed all of the Jamaican endemics very well, we wanted to give this elusive bird another try. We flushed one along a quiet side track till Dave found it preening itself on the forest floor. Satisfactory looks, but, as we left the hotel on our drive to the airport we encountered this jewel walking unperturbed along the road offering brilliant views. A very fitting end of the Jamaica part of the tour!

The Hispaniola section started at Santo Domingo airport where Miguel, our man on the spot, welcomed us to his sun-drenched island. We got our transport organized and soon our three 4x4 vehicles were on their way to the distant southwest corner of the Dominican Republic. The drive took most of the afternoon and the only birds of note were some Caribbean Martins. The Hispaniolan birding really got going early next morning in the nearby sierra, where, just before dawn we were admiring an usually hard to see Hispaniolan Nightjar hovering only feet away. A great start! As soon as the sun appeared other endemics followed, but best of all was the remarkable Eastern Chat Tanager that eventually showed very well to everyone! This ace skulker sure tested our perseverance. We also had good looks at the endemic Green-tailed Warbler, which isn't really a warbler and is now often called Green-tailed Microligea. The glorious, endemic White-winged Warbler showed exceptionally well. It is also not usually considered a warbler anymore and is now called Highland Tanager(?) or White-winged Xenoligea. Both species are often placed in a family of their own together with the two endemic Palm Tanagers. In the course of the morning we collected an amazing series of other Hispaniolan endemics like Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo, adorable Broad-billed and Narrow-billed Todies (and a strange 'in between' Tody that Miguel is still investigating...?), the unusual Antillean Piculet (an endemic genus), the loud Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Hispaniolan Amazon (in flight only), Hispaniolan Pewee, Black-crowned (Palm) Tanager and the exceedingly handsome Hispaniolan Spindalis. Other interesting species included Sharp-shinned Hawk, Scaly-naped Pigeon (only in flight), Burrowing Owl, Antillean Mango, a very friendly, tiny Vervain Hummingbird, Greater Antillean Elaenia, Stolid Flycatcher, the smart-looking Red-legged Thrush, an attractive Cape May Warbler and a subtly-plumaged Pine Warbler.

While enjoying a seafood lunch overlooking the azure waters of Barahona Bay we saw our first, much wanted, angry-looking, endemic Palmchat. Much wanted because this unusual species is placed in its own family! Our evening night birding session produced a very nice, but always rather bizarre-looking Northern Potoo, that allowed in depth scope views and we also heard the whistle of a Hispaniolan Hutia. A fine ending of a splendid first day in the field on Hispaniola!



*The White-winged Warbler (or White-winged Xenoligea) is one of the prizes of the highland forests of the Dominican Republic*  
(Mark Van Beirs)

Dawn found us at the picturesque cliffs of the southern Cabo Rojo peninsula, where we observed several lovely White-tailed Tropicbirds while munching our picnic breakfast. Small numbers of Cave Swallows flew overhead, Antillean Mangoes flitted through the bushes and the first Palm Warbler of the tour was noted. Suddenly Dave pointed out a distant interesting looking seabird and soon all the scopes were picking up several faraway specks that showed dark upperparts and pure white undersides: Audubon's Shearwaters! Several other seabirds towering high in a more dashing flight and showing distinctive white rumps were confidently identified as Black-capped Petrels. Miguel was over the moon as he had never seen these species before and although they were rather distant we all felt privileged being able to observe these localized seabirds. The Black-capped Petrels breed on inaccessible cliffs in the highlands of Hispaniola and also on several islands of the Lesser Antilles. A Pomarine Skua harassing terns added to the fun and several Brown Boobies flew past. We then drove up into the pine forests of the Baoruco National Park. A flock of endemic Palm Crows showed very well and we were able to admire several pretty Golden Swallows at close range above their nesting area. This very attractive hirundine is now extinct on Jamaica, making it a Hispaniolan endemic. A couple of Plain Pigeons showed all too briefly and a pair of Hispaniolan Amazons sat quietly in a pine tree. We waited in vain for a couple of hours at a known drinking spot for Hispaniolan Crossbills, so we walked about in good pine habitat, but had to satisfy ourselves with just hearing some distant calls of this endemic. A pair of smashing Hispaniolan Trogons were inspecting a large woodpecker hole in a dead tree and could be studied in detail. On the drive down the mountains we bumped into a flock of twittering Hispaniolan Parakeets that showed off their red underwing coverts and white eye-rings. Another endemic secured! We enjoyed a relaxed, late seafood lunch on the beach in the heat of the day and afterwards returned to our base near Barahona.





*Cabo Rojo, a headland in the extreme south of the Dominican Republic (Mark Van Beirs)*

Miguel had convinced us to do a boat trip on the Laguna Rincon, a substantial freshwater lake with large expanses of cattails and marsh. It was very birdy and held lots of waterbirds, but our main target was the rarely seen Yellow-breasted Crake that was recently found to be regular here. Our boat man really knew how to get this tiny rail to perform in front of us. We got fantastic views as this little crake swam, walked and flew in its marshy habitat. A truly excellent observation of a tremendous bird! Other uncommonly seen species included Least Bittern (regular here), Spotted Rail (brief looks only) and a drake Ring-necked Duck. American Coot were common and we saw both the Caribbean form and the American variety (with the lumping of Caribbean Coot into American Coot...). The lake also gave us Northern Shoveler, lots of Pied-billed Grebes (including cute stripy young), Killdeer, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, hundreds of Barn Swallows, a few Sand Martins and Northern Rough-winged Swallows and several introduced Village Weavers. In the heat of the day we drove up into the Sierra de Baoruco and picked up some introduced Olive-throated Parakeets on the way. We checked in into the cozy Barancoli lodge and later drove further up into the evergreen zone, where we soon managed superb looks of the rare and threatened Bay-breasted Cuckoo as it hopped about in the canopy. A splendid bird! Lower down we walked slowly along a track through quite open forest where we connected with the often difficult to see White-fronted (or Hispaniolan) Quail-Dove. Miguel showed us a tiny, endemic Pygmy Gecko and at dusk a male Least Poorwill gave a sterling performance as it perched for a minute or so right in front of us! A magical experience! The bird list kept growing as Plain Pigeon, Hispaniolan Emerald, very vocal, red eyed White-necked Crows, Hispaniolan Oriole, Ruddy Quail-Dove and Antillean Piculet showed very well.



*A tiny, endemic Pygmy Gecko (Dave Williamson); the brilliant La Selle Thrush (Mark Van Beirs)*

Our day in the higher reaches of the Sierra de Baoruco started with a predawn drive along a truly atrocious track. Just as the sun was showing we were scoping a couple of extremely stylish La Selle Thrushes hopping about. These rare, endearing endemics showed ever so well. It took a while longer to get to grips with the regularly heard, but extremely skulking Western Chat Tanager, but eventually we all had very satisfactory views. Lovely, endemic Antillean Siskins were foraging in fruiting trees and swift Hispaniolan Emeralds were flitting from flower to flower. A well-groomed Rufous-throated Solitaire also performed nicely. In mid-morning we drove higher up into the pine zone to try for our final high altitude target, but we only managed brief glimpses of Hispaniolan Crossbill. Hispaniolan Trogons showed brilliantly on several occasions and Narrow-billed Todies were marvellously common. A pair of Loggerhead Kingbirds of the distinctive, uncommon Hispaniolan race *gabbii* performed ever so well. Several Antillean Euphonias were feeding on tiny fruits and Green-tailed Warblers (Microligeas) foraged deliberately in the mid storey. In the afternoon we walked a few metres into neighbouring Haiti and observed the disastrous ecological rampage (a total lack of trees) compared to the Dominican Republic.



*Green-tailed Warbler (Green-tailed Microligea) and Narrow-billed Tody are endemic to the highlands of Hispaniola (Mark Van Beirs)*

On our final morning in the Sierra de Baoruco part of the group went up to revisit the pine zone, where after a bit of anxious waiting everyone got excellent scope views of a male and two female Hispaniolan Crossbills. They were very quiet and moved very little, so it took a while before everyone got good looks at these endemic beauties as they were tackling the tough pine cones. Great moments! A male Antillean Euphonia also obliged. Several participants had opted to stay in the camp area and enjoyed some relaxed bird and butterfly watching in the dry woodland and nearby palm-dotted agricultural areas. The unique, peculiar Palmchats were particularly obvious and adorable Broad-billed Todies were everywhere. A lucky soul



connected with a Key West and a couple of White-fronted Quail-Doves and he also found a splendid male Hooded Warbler. A Magnolia Warbler was foraging at the camp, where Miguel showed us an incredibly cute looking, endemic Desert Croaking Gecko that was eating his own old, shedded skin. After lunch we paid a visit to the southern shore of Lake Enriquillo, which is situated at c -30m below sea level. Three West Indian Whistling Ducks perched on dead palm trees and two Mangrove Cuckoos paraded beautifully in front of us.



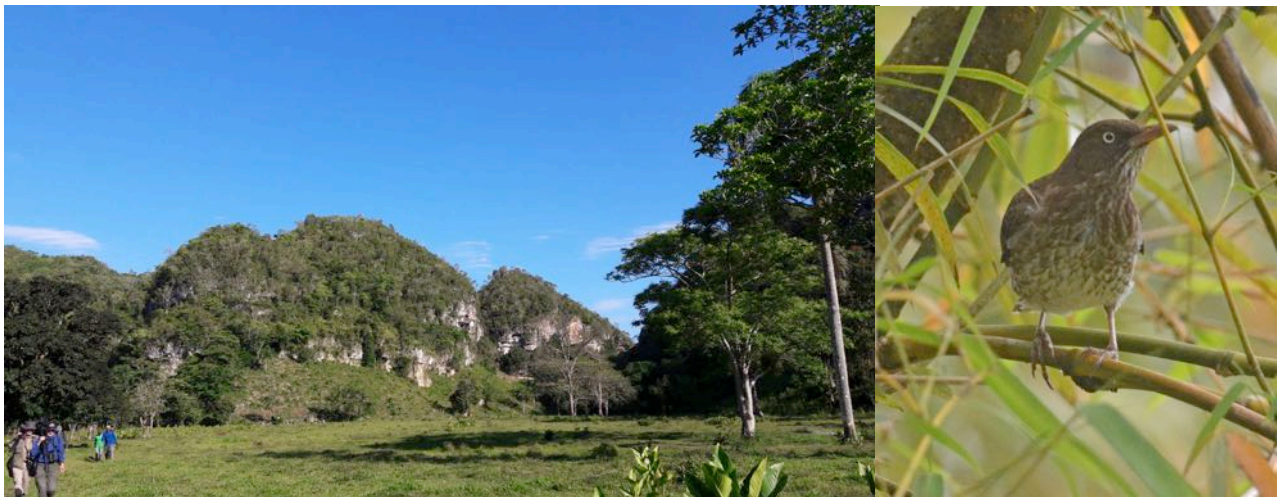
*A magnificent, moulting, endemic Desert Croaking Gecko (Dave Williamson)*

An early morning visit to Laguna Rincon resulted in nice flight views of a Spotted Rail, that our man on the spot managed to flush from the dense water hyacinth vegetation, where it had been calling from. We also noted Purple Gallinule, Semipalmated Plover, Least Sandpiper and a Mangrove (Golden) Warbler. We then drove diagonally across the country from the southwest to the northeast. The vegetation changed quite drastically from dry thorny, cactus studded woodland to lush tropical growth. In late afternoon we arrived at our splendid, rather quaint hotel at the edge of the Los Haitises National Park. In the gardens we admired an isolated tree holding a busy colony of rather tame and very vocal Hispaniolan Woodpeckers. An after dinner owling session produced fantastic views of a beautiful, endemic Ashy-faced Owl at point blank range! What a bird! A terrific experience!



*The rare Ridgway's Hawk and the splendid Antillean Piculet are both endemic to Hispaniola (Mark Van Beirs)*

Our final birding day in the Dominican Republic started with a leisurely walk into the limestone country of the Los Haitises National Park. Noisy Palmchats were decidedly abundant and often seen carrying oversized twigs to their bulky nests in the palms. This unique bird is the national bird of the country and is often attributed to have the same characteristics as its people: a bit garrulous, very social and very vocal. But the highlight of the morning was the glorious pair of Ridgway's Hawks that posed so well in the canopy of a cecropia tree. Just 2 to 300 pairs of this small Buteo are known, making it by far the rarest Hispaniolan endemic and one of the rarest hawks in the world. We spent quite a while studying and admiring this much sought after species. The last Dominican Republic endemic was in the proverbial bag! As the sun was starting to heat up, butterflies became abundant. The rest of the day was spent relaxing, getting more views or photos of some of the endemics or trying to identify some of the many lizards and butterflies. After dinner we wanted to improve the already marvellous looks we had enjoyed of the Ashy-faced Owl, but not a sniff was had. We only heard a couple of calling Spotted Rails.



*Los Haitises National park scenery; a mean-looking Pearly-eyed Thrasher (Mark Van Beirs)*

The following day was mainly a travelling day, as we first drove to Santo Domingo airport, where we said goodbye to Miguel and the Dominican Republic. We took a short flight east to San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico, which amazed us by its very smooth and efficient immigration. Puerto Rico has a very American feel with its wide highways, large billboards and well-known fast food outlets. We picked up our minibus and drove to the northeast corner of the island. A first exploration of the area gave us good looks at Green-throated Carib and Antillean Crested Hummingbird (of the green crested race) in a flowering tree. These two



specialities are mainly confined to the Lesser Antilles, but also occur in the northeast of Puerto Rico. A Pearly-eyed Thrasher posed nicely in the hummingbird tree.



*A striking Puerto Rican Woodpecker (Dave Williamson); a Loggerhead Kingbird of the Puerto Rico race at its nest (Mark Van Beirs)*

Our day in the splendid forests of the El Yunque Reserve got off on a good start as, at dawn, we found the winding road up the mountain blocked by a fallen tree. As soon as we got out of the minibus we heard the distinctive tremulous trills of a Puerto Rican Screech Owl. Sue easily found the culprit and we all had great scope views of this cute, endemic nightbird. Meanwhile the fallen tree had been winched off the road and we managed to drive further up. We had a fun time observing a series of endemics at one of the clearings and at several more stops in the forests. Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoo gave its raucous calls, a male Puerto Rican Emerald was scoped, delightful Puerto Rican Todies were active at an earth bank, attractive Puerto Rican Woodpeckers obliged at close range, a pair of Puerto Rican Orioles were feeding youngsters in a palm and Puerto Rican Bullfinches posed at length. The Puerto Rican Tanager got our very special attention, as it is now sometimes placed in its own family. Pleasingly-patterned Scaly-naped Pigeons were all over the place and offered excellent scope opportunities. Several American Black Swifts zoomed over the ridges, a pair of Loggerhead Kingbirds (of the Puerto Rico race) were active around their nest and Red-legged Thrushes obliged. The most common sound in these forests was the monotonous song of the Black-whiskered Vireo. The musical calls of the little Coqui Frog were also commonly heard. In late afternoon we descended to the coast and found attractive Antillean Crested Hummingbirds and Green-throated Caribs in the hotel gardens.



*Puerto Rico Bullfinch and Puerto Rico Oriole (Mark Van Beirs)*

Early next morning we drove transversely across Puerto Rico from the wet northeast to the very dry southwest. A stop on the way gave us our first charming, endemic Adelaide's Warblers. We checked into our colonial, rather old fashioned hotel at San German, where Caribbean Martins showed well and introduced White-winged Parakeets foraged in a mango tree. Later we moved south to the seaside village of La Parguera, where, after a fair amount of searching we got great looks at the endangered, endemic Yellow-shouldered Blackbird. The mangroves and nearby scrub also gave us Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Antillean Mango (of the Puerto Rico race) and Mangrove and Myrtle Warblers. We enjoyed a relaxed lunch in the heat of the day and in the afternoon checked the nearby freshwater Cartagena marsh where Sora, Ruddy Duck, West Indian Whistling Duck, several Ospreys and lots of Green Iguanas showed. In late afternoon we made our way to the Guanica Forest Reserve, where along the coast we identified Cabot's Tern, Ruddy Turnstone and Semipalmated Plover. We walked into the dry scrubby woodland and savoured a picnic dinner at our favourite Puerto Rican Nightjar spot, which gave us a Venezuelan Troupial. At dusk we heard several of these endemic nightjars call and after a bit of waiting and looking we obtained great scope views and photographs of a male Puerto Rican Nightjar perched inside a bush. A glorious encounter!



*The threatened Yellow-shouldered Blackbird; the endearing Puerto Rican Nightjar (Mark Van Beirs)*

The following morning, before daybreak, we stopped for breakfast and heard the distinctive calls of Antillean Nighthawks. As the light was getting better we were able to observe a displaying pair of these recently arrived summer visitors over the flat roof of a supermarket. A great start of the day! We drove along a twisting mountain road to the cool, evergreen hill forests of the Maricao Forest Reserve, where we strolled about and soon obtained scope views of an endemic Green Mango and had great looks at a singing Puerto Rican Vireo. A couple of young Elfin Woods Warblers caused a tiny bit of confusion at first, but in next to no time two adults of this very smart endemic performed beautifully. In the afternoon we paid a visit to the Cabo Rojo mudflats in the extreme southwest corner of the island where Semipalmated, Least and Stilt Sandpipers, Gull-billed and Least Terns and modestly-plumaged Caribbean Elaenias were found. A late afternoon return visit to Laguna Cartagena resulted in an excellent sighting of a couple of Masked Duck trying to remain invisible within the floating marsh vegetation. Several Ruddy Duck and three lovely Sora were much more cooperative and a trio of Western Ospreys showed off their always spectacular fishing skills. Cartagena is a famous venue for introduced birds and we noted both Pin-tailed Whydah and Northern Red Bishop. Our mammal list increased a bit with the sighting of a scurrilous Black (or House) Rat preening itself on top of a small bush.





*A critically endangered Puerto Rican Parrot (Dave Williamson); a modestly-plumaged Puerto Rican Vireo (Mark Van Beirs)*

On Easter Friday we travelled in the early morning to the northern side of the island and encountered many Puertoricans doing their Easter procession along the main highway. We checked in at our hotel and drove straight to the Rio Abajo Forest Reserve. After a bit of searching and asking about, we walked to the general area of the aviaries, where the successful reintroduction programme of the critically endangered Puerto Rican Parrot is taking place. On earlier tours, we used to see the parrots sometimes from a viewpoint in the El Yunque forest, but sadly not anymore. The Rio Abajo Forest Reserve protects a large area of limestone hill forest and offers some amazing scenery with impressive rock formations. We walked along the main track through lovely forest and positioned ourselves in a strategic spot. A Lesser Antillean (formerly Puerto Rican) Pewee showed quite well and Puerto Rican Vireo and a couple of Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoos really obliged. Suddenly we heard the distinctive flight calls of the parrots quite nearby. It took quite a while to see them in flight through the dense leaf cover and eventually sharp-eyed Stuart managed to find a pair quietly perched in the dense canopy. The scope views were very much appreciated, even if the birds were radio tagged and ringed. The red forehead and very obvious white orbital ring could be studied in detail. We really enjoyed these great looks at Puerto Rico's rarest and hardest to see endemic. While observing the parrots it started raining cats and dogs, so we happily retreated to our vehicle: we had seen all the Puerto Rico endemics. A bit of birding around the hotel gave us lots of Glossy Ibises and some lucky people observed American Oystercatcher, Solitary Sandpiper and an introduced Monk Parakeet.

A travelling day followed and at Miami airport we said goodbye to several of our co-travellers.



*Picnic dinner in the Guanica Forest Reserve (Mark Van Beirs)*



*The Abaco forests produced mega views of Bahama Warbler and Bahama Yellowthroat (Mark Van Beirs)*

The Bahama extension started at the airport of Marsh Harbour on the island of Abaco, where the very relaxed atmosphere of these islands immediately became very obvious. We piled into our minivan and eventually found our luxurious villa at the yacht harbour in town. After a very tasty seafood lunch with lots of Laughing Gulls about, we explored the southern part of the island, which is mainly covered in fairly open pine woods. We found our first specialities in a stretch of disturbed shrubby woodland and these included a male Cuban Emerald, a cooperative West Indian Woodpecker, a pair of Loggerhead Kingbirds (of the distinctive Bahama race), the attractive, endemic Bahama Swallow and Grey Catbird. A not very successful housing development produced magnificent looks at rather tame, very attractive Cuban Amazons. We observed these marvellous conservation icons of the island of Abaco at very close range. La Sagra's Flycatcher, Cuban Pewee, Thick-billed Vireo and improbably beautiful Western Spindalises provided even more entertainment. In a stretch of well-preserved pine forest clothed with a dense undergrowth of palmetto we located two of our main targets: the endemic, fairly secretive Bahama Yellowthroat and the endemic Bahama Warbler (a recent split from Yellow-throated Warbler). Both of these showed well at close range. Red-legged Thrush (of the nominate race) and Olive-capped (of Cuban fame) and Pine Warblers were also noted.



*A glorious Bahama Swallow; a colourful Western Spindalis (Mark Van Beirs)*





*A fabulous Red-legged Thrush (Mark Van Beirs)*

The following morning we thoroughly explored the southern part of Abaco, which is mainly covered in rather open pinewoods with a dense undergrowth of ferns and palmetto (the so called “pine barrens”). Three endemics showed extremely well: the smart Bahama Warbler with its distinctly long bill was seen creeping on trunks like a nuthatch, the Bahama Yellowthroat gave a splendid eye-ball to eye-ball performance and striking Bahama Swallows were busy around their nest in an electricity pole. Other specialities included Northern Bobwhite, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, Bahama Mockingbird, Olive-capped Warbler and very well-groomed Western Spindalises. Saline ponds and the rocky and sandy shoreline produced White-cheeked Pintail, Double-crested Cormorant, American Oystercatcher and Willet. An offshore feeding frenzy held dozens of Laughing Gulls, a few Magnificent Frigatebirds, some Royal Terns and a dozen very elegant Roseate Terns. After lunch we kept watch at a patch of promising looking bottlebrush bushes which were visited by several feisty Cuban Emeralds and Palm and Cape May Warblers and a Baltimore Oriole. At dusk we stood at the edge of a pine wood and listened to the calls of several Chuck-will’s-widows but they remained voices in the distance.

On our last morning on Abaco we remained in Marsh Harbour, where we kept checking flowering trees and bushes. We obtained good looks at beautiful male Cape May Warblers, Cuban Emeralds, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and Grey Catbird. A stylish, very attractive Red-legged Thrush showed well. At midday we flew to the island of New Providence and onwards to the island of Andros. The very relaxed attitude of this island was very apparent. We picked up our rental car and drove to Andros Town where we were happily surprised to find our really lovely accommodation at the edge of a forest reserve. Just a few birds like Bahama Swallow and Greater Antillean Bullfinch made it to the list, before we enjoyed a very tasty fish and cracked conch dinner overlooking the ocean.



*We found this Great Lizard Cuckoo at its nest (Mark Van Beirs)*

The following day we ignored the wide expanses of pine forest and concentrated on some of the stretches of dense evergreen woodland. The rare, endemic Bahama Oriole is critically endangered and allowed several excellent observations. Both adults and a dingy youngster showed very well at close range. The ungainly-looking Great Lizard Cuckoo performed at length at minimal distance and we also found a nest of this rather dull-looking form (compared to the Cuban race). We had brief looks at a couple of Key West Quail-Doves while Black-whiskered Vireo and Greater Antillean Bullfinch behaved perfectly. In the afternoon we drove around thinly inhabited Andros island. Along the coast we scoped a Western Osprey of the Caribbean form *ridgwayi* (with its distinctive white head!). Eventually, we returned to the same track where suddenly we heard the high pitched calls of a Bahama Woodstar. We located an unobtrusive young male in the mid canopy next to a tree dotted with tiny white flowers. Very unobtrusive behaviour! The bird showed a tiny bit of a purple gorget. The final endemic of the Bahamas and the final endemic of the tour had fallen!

The last day of the tour was mainly a travelling day. We transferred pre-dawn to the San Andros airport where we were casually told that our scheduled flight was cancelled, but that we would fly a nine seater plane instead. A short, exciting flight later we were on the island of New Providence where we visited the lovely The Retreat nature reserve. The main attraction here are the hummingbird feeders that are regularly visited by exquisite Bahama Woodstars. We admired one or two magnificent males and several females and young birds at minimal distance, providing a fitting end to this superb island hopping tour.





*A fantastic male Bahama Woodstar (Mark Van Beirs)*



*The much wanted Palmchat showed very well (Mark Van Beirs)*

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

The islands where the birds were observed are marked as follows Jamaica (J), Dominican Republic (DR), Puerto Rico (PR) and The Bahamas (B).



Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

**CR** = Critically Endangered, **EN** = Endangered, **VU** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened.

**West Indian Whistling Duck** ♦ *Dendrocygna arborea* (**VU**) Few at Lago Enriquillo (DR) and Laguna Cartagena (PR).

**Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Regular in small numbers.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* A drake was observed at Laguna Rincon (DR).

**White-cheeked Pintail (Bahama P)** *Anas bahamensis* (B) We only saw it on the islands where it was described from.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* A drake was found on Laguna Rincon (DR).

**Masked Duck** *Nomonyx dominicus* Good looks at a male (non-breeding) and a female at Laguna Cartagena (PR).

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* Several showed well at Laguna Cartagena (PR).

**Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* (H) We heard this introduced bird in the Sierra de Baoruco (DR).

**Northern Bobwhite** *Colinus virginianus* (B) Seen and heard on Abaco.



*A young Pied-billed Grebe (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* Regular in small numbers.

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* Several were displaying around their breeding cliffs in the southern DR.

**American White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus* (J)(B) A few were noted on Jamaica and in the Bahamas.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Regular in small numbers.

**Least Bittern** *Ixobrychus exilis* Seen on J, the DR and PR. Particularly common at Laguna Rincon.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* Regular in small numbers.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* Singles were noted on J, the DR and PR.

**Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* Fairly common.

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Abundant, but only one in The Bahamas.

**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* A handful of observations.  
**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Regular.  
**Reddish Egret** *Egretta rufescens* (NT) White morphs were seen on J and in the DR.  
**Tricoloured Heron** *Egretta tricolor* Regular in small numbers.  
**Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* Regular.  
**Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* Fairly common.  
**Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis* Regular along the coasts.  
**Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* Fairly common along the coasts, but only a few in B. See Note.  
**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* Three were seen off Cabo Rojo (DR).  
**Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* (B) Six were noted on Abaco.  
**Black-capped Petrel** *Pterodroma hasitata* (EN) c10 showed distantly off Cabo Rojo (DR).  
**Audubon's Shearwater** *Puffinus lherminieri* A few showed distantly off Cabo Rojo (DR).  
**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura* Common on all the islands, but decidedly rare in the southwest of the DR.



*The American and Caribbean forms of Western Osprey (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Western Osprey (American O)** *Pandion [haliaetus] carolinensis* 14 observations on J, the DR and PR.  
**Western Osprey** ♦ **(Caribbean O)** *Pandion [haliaetus] ridgwayi* (B) Two of this distinctive form on Andros.  
**Sharp-shinned Hawk** *Accipiter striatus* A single sighting in the Sierra de Baoruco (DR).  
**Ridgway's Hawk** ♦ *Buteo ridgwayi* (CR) Great looks at a pair in the Los Haitises NP (DR). See Note.  
**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis* Small numbers on all islands visited.  
**Clapper Rail** ♦ *Rallus longirostris* (J) Excellent looks at a responsive bird in southern Jamaica.  
**Sora** *Porzana carolina* Heard in the DR and seen very well at Laguna Cartagena in PR.  
**Yellow-breasted Crake** *Porzana flaviventer* Good looks at this diminutive species at Laguna Rincon (DR).  
**Spotted Rail** *Pardirallus maculatus* One showed quite well in flight at Laguna Rincon (DR). We heard it in J.  
**Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinicus* A few were noted in the DR and PR.  
**Common Gallinule** *Gallinula galeata* A handful on J, the DR and PR.  
**American Coot** *Fulica americana* Regular in the DR and PR. Both 'Caribbean' and 'American' forms. See Note.  
**Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna* Regular on J, the DR and PR. More often heard than seen.  
**American Oystercatcher** *Haematopus palliatus* Seen on PR and on Abaco (B).  
**Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus* Regular in small nos. on J, the DR and PR. Many at Cabo Rojo (PR).  
**Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* Just a few in the DR and PR.  
**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* Small numbers in the DR, PR and B.  
**Northern Jacana** *Jacana spinosa* (J) We only saw the lily trotter on Jamaica.  
**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* Just a few sightings.  
**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Singles were seen in the DR and on PR.  
**Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* (NL) Two were observed on PR.



**Willet** *Tringa semipalmata* Seen on PR and B.  
**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* A handful of observations.  
**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* A few on PR.  
**Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* (NT) A few together with the next species on PR.  
**Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* A nice flock at Cabo Rojo (PR).  
**Stilt Sandpiper** *Calidris himantopus* 100+ showed well at Cabo Rojo (PR).  
**Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla* Seen on all the islands, but particularly common on The Bahamas.  
**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* We observed two at the Cabo Rojo mudflats on PR.  
**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* Small numbers were seen on all the islands visited.  
**Cabot's Tern** *Thalasseus acuflavidus* Only seen off southern PR. See Note.  
**Least Tern** *Sternula antillarum* Eight showed quite well at the Cabo Rojo mudflats (PR).  
**Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* (B) 13 were with a feeding frenzy off the southern tip of Abaco.  
**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* A single bird was seen off Cabo Rojo (DR).  
**Rock Dove** *Columba livia*



White-crowned Pigeon and White-winged Dove (Mark Van Beirs)

**White-crowned Pigeon** *Patagioenas leucocephala* (NT) Regular in small numbers on all islands visited.  
**Scaly-naped Pigeon** ♦ (Red-necked P) *Patagioenas squamosa* Fairly common in the highlands of the DR and PR.  
**Ring-tailed Pigeon** ♦ *Patagioenas caribaea* (J)(VU) Several excellent observations of this Jamaican endemic.  
**Plain Pigeon** ♦ *Patagioenas inornata* (NT) None on J, but several showed well in the DR. See Note.  
**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* Seen on PR, B and also at Santo Domingo airport (DR). See Note.  
**Common Ground-Dove** *Columbina passerina* Regular on all the islands. See Note.  
**Crested Quail-Dove** ♦ *Geotrygon versicolor* (J)(NT) Excellent looks at this smart Jamaican endemic.  
**Ruddy Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon montana* Several were seen on J, the DR and PR.  
**White-fronted Quail-Dove** ♦ (Hispaniolan Q-D) *Geotrygon leucometopia* (EN) Wow looks at this endemic.  
**Key West Quail-Dove** ♦ *Geotrygon chrysia* Seen in the DR and B, but usually rather brief looks.  
**Caribbean Dove** ♦ *Leptotila jamaicensis* (J)(B) Excellent observations on J and on B.  
**Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* Small numbers on all the islands.  
**Zenaida Dove** *Zenaida aurita* Common on J, the DR and PR. See Note.  
**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* Common on J, the DR and PR, but just a few on B.  
**Smooth-billed Ani** *Crotophaga ani* Regular on all the islands visited.  
**Mangrove Cuckoo** *Coccyzus minor* Seen very well in the DR and PR and heard on J and B.  
**Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo** ♦ *Coccyzus pluvialis* (J) Several excellent encounters with this Jamaican endemic.  
**Bay-breasted Cuckoo** ♦ *Coccyzus ruficularis* (EN) Cracking views of this Hispaniolan endemic. See Note.  
**Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo** ♦ *Coccyzus vetula* (J) Several nice observations of this Jamaican endemic. See Note.  
**Great Lizard Cuckoo** ♦ *Coccyzus [merlini] bahamensis* (B)(NT) Fantastic views on Abaco.  
**Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoo** ♦ *Coccyzus vieilloti* This endemic showed regularly on PR.  
**Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo** ♦ *Coccyzus longirostris* Many sightings of this Hispaniolan endemic in the DR.



*Chestnut-bellied and Bay-breasted Cuckoos (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Ashy-faced Owl** ♦ *Tyto glaucops* A superb encounter with this Hispaniolan endemic in the Los Haitises NP (DR).

**Puerto Rican Screech Owl** ♦ *Megascops nudipes* Perfect scope studies at El Yunque (PR).

**Burrowing Owl** *Athene cunicularia* Four observations in the DR.

**Jamaican Owl** ♦ *Pseudoscops grammicus* (J) Fantastic scope views of an adult and a young. A Jamaican endemic.

**Northern Potoo** *Nyctibius jamaicensis* Scope views of this unusual-looking species on J and the DR.

**Antillean Nighthawk** ♦ *Chordeiles gundlachii* Excellent looks just after dawn in the southwest of PR.

**Least Poorwill** ♦ (L Pauraque) *Siphonorhis brewsteri* (NT) A splendid sighting of this Hispaniolan endemic in DR.

**Chuck-will's-widow** *Antrostomus carolinensis* (B)(H) We heard several of these migrants at dusk on Abaco.

**Hispaniolan Nightjar** ♦ *Antrostomus ekmani* Eye-ball to eye-ball views of a female in the Sierra de Baoruco (DR).

**Puerto Rican Nightjar** ♦ *Antrostomus noctitherus* (EN) Scope views of this PR endemic at Guanica. See Note.

**American Black Swift** *Cypseloides niger* 60+ in late afternoon in the Blue Mountains (J). Also at El Yunque (PR).

**White-collared Swift** *Streptoprocne zonaris* Small numbers were noted on J and in the DR.

**Antillean Palm Swift** ♦ *Tachornis phoenicobia* Common on J and in the DR.

**Antillean Mango** ♦ (Puerto Rican M) *Anthracothorax [dominicus] aurulentus* Three observations in southern PR.

**Green Mango** ♦ *Anthracothorax viridis* Several scope views of this Puerto Rican endemic in the highlands.

**Jamaican Mango** ♦ *Anthracothorax mango* (J) Seven nice observations of this often elusive Jamaican endemic.

**Green-throated Carib** ♦ *Eulampis holosericeus* Great looks at several in northeastern Puerto Rico.

**Antillean Crested Hummingbird** ♦ *Orthorhyncus cristatus* Good views of the green crested form in NE Puerto Rico.

**Red-billed Streamertail** ♦ *Trochilus polytmus* (J) This fantastic Jamaican endemic showed very well.

**Black-billed Streamertail** ♦ *Trochilus scitulus* (J) Good looks at several of these endemics in the east of Jamaica.

**Cuban Emerald** ♦ *Chlorostilbon ricordii* (B) Regular on Abaco and Andros.

**Hispaniolan Emerald** ♦ *Chlorostilbon swainsonii* A handful of observations of this Hispaniolan endemic.

**Puerto Rican Emerald** ♦ *Chlorostilbon maugaeus* Regular encounters with this Puerto Rican endemic.

**Bahama Woodstar** ♦ *Calliphlox evelynae* (B) Scope views of a young male (Abaco) and many on New Providence.

**Vervain Hummingbird** ♦ *Mellisuga minima* The world's second smallest hummer showed well on J and in the DR.

**Hispaniolan Trogon** ♦ *Priotelus roseigaster* (NT) Great looks at this Hispaniolan endemic.

**Belted Kingfisher** *Megaceryle alcyon* We saw this migrant on J, the DR and PR.

**Broad-billed Tody** ♦ *Todus subulatus* Great looks at this Hispaniolan endemic in the lowlands of the DR. See Note.

**Narrow-billed Tody** ♦ *Todus angustirostris* Many great looks at this Hispaniolan endemic in the highlands of the DR.

**Jamaican Tody** ♦ *Todus todus* (J) Many splendid observations of this endemic cutie on Jamaica.

**Puerto Rican Tody** ♦ *Todus mexicanus* Regular encounters with this endemic all over Puerto Rico.

**Antillean Piculet** ♦ *Nesocittes micromegas* Several very nice sightings of this Hispaniolan endemic in the DR.

**Puerto Rican Woodpecker** ♦ *Melanerpes portoricensis* This smart PR endemic showed well on several occasions.

**Hispaniolan Woodpecker** ♦ *Melanerpes striatus* This Hispaniolan endemic was common and easy to see in the DR.

**Jamaican Woodpecker** ♦ *Melanerpes radiolatus* (J) Many encounters with this vocal Jamaican endemic.

**West Indian Woodpecker** ♦ *Melanerpes superciliosus* (B) Three sightings on Abaco.





*A magnificent male Red-billed Streamertail and a young male Bahama Woodstar (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Hairy Woodpecker** *Leuconotopicus villosus* (B) Singles showed well on Abaco and Andros.

**American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius* Commonly encountered on all islands visited. See Note.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius* Three were seen on J and two in the DR. A northern migrant.



*A male Hispaniolan Trogon and a Hairy Woodpecker (Mark Van Beirs)*





*A feisty Hispaniolan Woodpecker (Mark Van Beirs)*



**Monk Parakeet** *Myiopsitta monachus* (NL) This introduced species was seen in northern PR.  
**White-winged Parakeet (Canary-winged P)** *Brotogeris versicolurus* Regular in southwest PR. Introduced.  
**Black-billed Amazon** ♦ *Amazona agilis* (J)(VU) Scope views of this Jamaican endemic in the cockpit country.  
**Yellow-billed Amazon** ♦ *Amazona collaria* (J)(VU) Scope views of this Jamaican endemic in the cockpit country.  
**Cuban Amazon** ♦ (Bahama A) *Amazona [leucocephala] bahamensis* (B)(NT) Fantastic close up looks on Abaco.  
**Hispaniolan Amazon** ♦ *Amazona ventralis* (VU) Small numbers of this Hispaniolan endemic were noted.  
**Puerto Rican Amazon** ♦ *Amazona vittata* (CR) This very rare endemic gave excellent scope views at Rio Abajo.  
**Olive-throated Parakeet** *Aratinga nana* Regular on J and in the DR.  
**Hispaniolan Parakeet** ♦ *Aratinga chloroptera* (VU) Small numbers of this Hispaniolan endemic were seen.  
**Jamaican Elaenia** ♦ *Myiopagis cotta* (J) This unobtrusive Jamaican endemic gave great views.



Caribbean Elaenia and Cuban Pewee (Mark Van Beirs)

**Caribbean Elaenia** ♦ *Elaenia martinica* Great looks at this subtly-plumaged species in southwestern PR.



Jamaican Pewee and Grey Kingbird (Mark Van Beirs)

**Greater Antillean Elaenia** ♦ (Hispaniolan G A E) *Elaenia [fallax] cherriei* Several sightings in the DR highlands.  
**Cuban Pewee** ♦ (Crescent-eyed P) *Contopus [caribaeus] bahamensis* (B) Three observations on Abaco.  
**Hispaniolan Pewee** ♦ *Contopus hispaniolensis* Regular sightings of this Hispaniola endemic in the DR highlands.  
**Jamaican Pewee** ♦ *Contopus pallidus* (J) Nice observations of this Jamaican endemic in the Blue Mountains.  
**Lesser Antillean Pewee** ♦ (Puerto Rican P) *Contopus [latirostris] blancoi* Eventually seen well at Rio Abajo (PR).  
**Grey Kingbird** *Tyrannus dominicensis* Rare on J, but common in the DR, PR and B.  
**Loggerhead Kingbird** ♦ (Bahama L K) *Tyrannus [caudifasciatus] bahamensis* (B) Several excellent encounters.  
**Loggerhead Kingbird** ♦ (Jamaican L K) *Tyrannus [caudifasciatus] jamaicensis* (J) Common and obvious.  
**Loggerhead Kingbird** ♦ (Puerto Rican L K) *Tyrannus [caudifasciatus] taylori* Our best views were in the northeast.  
**Loggerhead Kingbird** ♦ (Hispaniolan L K) *Tyrannus [caudifasciatus] gabbii* Good looks in the highlands of DR.  
**Sad Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiarchus barbirostris* (J) Regular observations of this Jamaican endemic.  
**Rufous-tailed Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiarchus validus* (J) Regular sightings of this nice Jamaican endemic *Myiarchus*.



*La Sagra's and Puerto Rican Flycatchers (Mark Van Beirs)*

**La Sagra's Flycatcher** ♦ (Bahama F) *Myiarchus [sagrae] lucaysiensis* (B) Quite common on Abaco. One on Andros.  
**Stolid Flycatcher** ♦ (Hispaniolan S F) *Myiarchus [stolidus] dominicensis* Regular encounters in the DR.



*Black-whiskered and Blue Mountain Vireos (Mark Van Beirs)*



**Stolid Flycatcher** ♦ (Jamaican S F) *Myiarchus [stolidus] stolidus* (J) Fairly common on Jamaica.  
**Puerto Rican Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiarchus antillarum* Good looks at two in the south of PR. Endemic.  
**Jamaican Becard** ♦ *Pachyramphus niger* (J) Males and females of this Jamaican endemic showed well.  
**Thick-billed Vireo** ♦ *Vireo crassirostris* (B) Regular, excellent sightings on Abaco and Andros.  
**Jamaican Vireo** ♦ *Vireo modestus* (J) A commonly recorded endemic on Jamaica.  
**Puerto Rican Vireo** ♦ *Vireo latimeri* This PR endemic showed well at Maricao and at Rio Abajo.  
**Flat-billed Vireo** ♦ *Vireo nanus* Three sightings of this Hispaniolan endemic in the hills of the DR.  
**Blue Mountain Vireo** ♦ *Vireo osburni* (J)(NT) Great looks at this Jamaican endemic in ... the Blue Mountains.  
**Black-whiskered Vireo** *Vireo altiloquus* Recorded on all the islands visited. The most common bird sound of the trip.



*White-necked Crow (Dave Williamson); a resplendent Golden Swallow (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Hispaniolan Palm Crow** ♦ *Corvus palmarum* (NT) A Hispaniolan endemic. Common in the Sierra de Baoruco (DR).  
**Jamaican Crow** ♦ *Corvus jamaicensis* (J) Regular encounters with this well-voiced Jamaican endemic.  
**White-necked Crow** ♦ *Corvus leucognaphalus* (VU) A fairly common Hispaniolan endemic. See Note.  
**Palmchat** ♦ *Dulus dominicus* The national bird of the DR was commonly observed. Hispaniolan endemic. See Note.  
**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* Singles were seen on Jamaica and in the Dominican Republic.  
**Golden Swallow** ♦ *Tachycineta euchrysea* (VU) Hispaniolan endemic; gave fantastic looks at a colony. See Note.  
**Bahama Swallow** ♦ *Tachycineta cyaneoviridis* (B)(EN) Many excellent sightings of this smart Bahama endemic.  
**Caribbean Martin** ♦ *Progne dominicensis* Regular in the DR and PR.  
**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* Small numbers were noted on J and in the DR.  
**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* Regular on all the islands visited. Especially common at Laguna Rincon (DR).  
**Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva* Fairly common on J, the DR and PR.  
**Blue-grey Gnatcatcher** *Polioptila caerulea* (B) Several nice observations on Abaco and on Andros.  
**Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos* Very common on all islands visited.  
**Bahama Mockingbird** ♦ *Mimus gundlachii* (B) This speciality showed very well on Abaco.  
**Pearly-eyed Thrasher** ♦ *Margarops fuscatus* Regular observations on PR.  
**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* (J)(B) A few were noted on Jamaica and on The Bahamas.  
**Rufous-throated Solitaire** ♦ *Myadestes genibarbis* Very nice scope views in the highlands of J and the DR.  
**White-eyed Thrush** ♦ *Turdus jamaicensis* (J) This Jamaican endemic showed well on several occasions.  
**La Selle Thrush** ♦ *Turdus swalesi* (EN) Perfect scope views of this attractive Hispaniolan endemic. See Note.  
**White-chinned Thrush** ♦ *Turdus aurantius* (J) Regular observations of this Jamaican endemic.  
**Red-legged Thrush** ♦ (Bahaman R-I T) *Turdus [plumbeus] plumbeus* (B) Fairly common and fine-looking.  
**Red-legged Thrush** ♦ (Hispaniolan R-I T) *Turdus [plumbeus] ardosiaceus* Regular in the DR and on PR.



*Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and Bahama Mockingbird (Mark Van Beirs)*

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* This introduced species was fairly common on all the visited islands.

**Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus* Quite common in the DR. Another introduced species.

**Northern Red Bishop (Orange B)** *Euplectes franciscanus* A single bird showed at Laguna Cartagena. Introduced.

**Scaly-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata* A few were seen on PR. Introduced.

**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* A single bird showed at Laguna Cartagena. Yet another introduced bird.

**Hispaniolan Crossbill** ♦ *Loxia megaplaga* (EN) Good looks in the highlands of the DR. A Hispaniolan endemic.

**Antillean Siskin** ♦ *Spinus dominicensis* Excellent views of this Hispaniolan endemic in the hills of the DR.



*Antillean Siskins are endemic to Hispaniola (Mark Van Beirs)*



**Jamaican Euphonia** ♦ *Euphonia jamaica* (J) Regular sightings of this modestly-clad Jamaican endemic.

**Antillean Euphonia** ♦ *Euphonia musica* A few nice observations in the highlands of the DR.

**Ovenbird** *Seiurus aurocapilla* Small numbers were noted on J and in the DR.

**Worm-eating Warbler** *Helmitheros vermivorum* (J) A single bird was seen in eastern Jamaica.

**Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* We saw this unusual species on J, the DR and PR.

**Bahama Yellowthroat** ♦ *Geothlypis rostrata* (J) Excellent close up views of this Bahama endemic on Abaco.

**Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* Small numbers were recorded on J and in the DR.

**Elfin Woods Warbler** ♦ *Setophaga angelae* (VU) Very nice views of this PR endemic at Maricao. See Note.



Arrowhead and Cape May Warblers (Mark Van Beirs)

**Arrowhead Warbler** ♦ *Setophaga pharetra* (J) Several brilliant encounters with this Jamaican endemic.

**Hooded Warbler** *Setophaga citrina* (NL) A male was seen in the Sierra de Baoruco (DR).

**American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla* Seen on all the islands visited, but most common on Jamaica.

**Cape May Warbler** *Setophaga tigrina* Fairly common in B and a single in the DR.

**Northern Parula** *Setophaga americana* It was seen on all islands visited.

**Magnolia Warbler** *Setophaga magnolia* A single male was found in the DR.

**Mangrove Warbler (Golden W)** *Setophaga petechia* Seen in the DR and PR and heard on J.

**Black-throated Blue Warbler** *Setophaga caerulescens* Quite common on J and in the DR.



Palm and Pine Warblers (Mark Van Beirs)

**Palm Warbler** *Setophaga palmarum* Quite common in B and a single in the DR.

**Olive-capped Warbler** ♦ *Setophaga pityophila* (B) Regular sightings in the pine barrens of The Bahamas.

**Pine Warbler** *Setophaga pinus* Quite common in the pines of the DR and B.

**Myrtle Warbler** *Setophaga coronata* Singles were seen in PR and B.

**Bahama Warbler** ♦ *Setophaga flavescens* (B)(NT) Great looks at this recently split Bahama endemic.

**Prairie Warbler** *Setophaga discolor* (J) Regular observations on Jamaica.



Adelaide's Warbler and Bahama Oriole (Mark Van Beirs)

**Adelaide's Warbler** ♦ *Setophaga adelaidae* Superb looks in the dry areas of PR. A PR endemic.  
**Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* (J)(NL) A male showed well in the Blue Mountains (J).  
**Green-tailed Warbler** ♦ (G-t Microligea) *Microligea palustris* Regular in the DR highlands. A Hispaniolan endemic.  
**White-winged Warbler** ♦ (W-w Xenoligea) *Xenoligea montana* (VU) Magnificent looks at this Hispaniolan endemic.  
**Jamaican Oriole** ♦ *Icterus leucopteryx* (J) Many great looks on Jamaica.  
**Venezuelan Troupial** *Icterus icterus* This introduced species was seen several times on PR.  
**Bahama Oriole** ♦ *Icterus northropi* (B)(CR) Cracking looks at this smart and very rare Bahama endemic on Andros.  
**Hispaniolan Oriole** ♦ *Icterus dominicensis* Two showed well at the Barancoli Camp (DR). A Hispaniolan endemic.  
**Puerto Rican Oriole** ♦ *Icterus portoricensis* Very nice looks at foraging birds at El Yunque. A PR endemic.  
**Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula* (B) A single bird was seen in B.



Jamaican Blackbird and Yellow-faced Grassquit (Mark Van Beirs)

**Jamaican Blackbird** ♦ *Nesopsar nigerrimus* (J)(EN) Splendid looks at one in the Blue Mountains. Jamaican endemic.  
**Yellow-shouldered Blackbird** ♦ *Agelaius xanthomus* (EN) PR endemic; showed well in the southwest. See Note.  
**Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus* (B) A few were noted in B.  
**Shiny Cowbird** *Molothrus bonariensis* Small numbers were seen in the DR, PR and B.  
**Greater Antillean Grackle** ♦ *Quiscalus niger* Very common on J, the DR and PR.  
**Bananaquit** *Coereba flaveola* This diminutive species was seen on all the islands visited. See Note.  
**Yellow-faced Grassquit** *Tiaris olivaceus* Regular on J, the DR and PR.





Greater Antillean Bullfinch (Mark Van Beirs)

**Black-faced Grassquit** *Tiaris bicolor* We saw it on all the islands we visited.

**Yellow-shouldered Grassquit** ♦ *Loxipasser anoxanthus* (J) Very nice views of this Jamaican endemic.

**Puerto Rican Bullfinch** ♦ *Loxigilla portoricensis* This PR endemic showed regularly.

**Greater Antillean Bullfinch** ♦ *Loxigilla violacea* Great looks on J, the DR and B.

**Orangequit** ♦ *Euneornis campestris* (J) Many excellent views of this curious Jamaican endemic.

**Puerto Rican Tanager** ♦ *Nesospingus speculariferus* Good looks at this unusual endemic in PR. See Note.

**Black-crowned Tanager** ♦ *Phaenicophilus palmarum* A Hispaniolan endemic. Quite common in the DR. See Note.

**Western Chat-Tanager** ♦ *Calyptophilus tertius* (VU) This Hispaniolan endemic showed well near the Haitian border.

**Eastern Chat-Tanager** ♦ *Calyptophilus frugivorus* (NT) Another Hispaniolan endemic that performed very well.

**Western Spindalis** ♦ (Black-backed S) *Spindalis zena* (B) Regular and very attractive in B.

**Hispaniolan Spindalis** ♦ *Spindalis dominicensis* A Hispaniolan endemic; showed very well on several occasions.

**Puerto Rican Spindalis** ♦ *Spindalis portoricensis* This very smart PR endemic was quite easy to see.

**Jamaican Spindalis** ♦ *Spindalis nigricephala* (J) A common and beautiful Jamaican endemic.

**Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* (J) A young male was seen at Marshall's Pen. A rare migrant on Jamaica.



The group in the Sierra de Baoruco (Dominican Republic) (Mark Van Beirs)

## MAMMALS

**House Rat (Black R) *Rattus rattus*** Good looks at a preening animal at Laguna Cartagena (PR).

**Hispaniolan Hutia *Plagiodontia aedium* (H)** We heard its distinctive call at night near Barahona.

**Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes auropunctatus*** We saw this introduced pest on J, the DR and PR.



Puerto Rican Racer and Northern Curly-tailed Lizard (Mark Van Beirs)

## AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES (compiled by Dave Williamson)

**Cundall's Whistling (Robber) Frog *Eleutherodactylus cundalli* (H)** Heard at Marshall's Pen (J)

**Yellow Split-toed Frog *Eleutherodactylus flavescens*** Seen at Caño Hondo (DR)

**Coqui Frog sp. *Eleutherodactylus* sp. (H)** Commonly heard on Puerto Rico

**Jamaican Snoring Frog *Osteopilus crucialis* (H)** Heard at Marshall's Pen (J)

**Jamaican Laughing Frog *Osteopilus brunneus* (H)** Heard at Marshall's Pen (J)

**Cane Toad *Rhinella marina*** We saw this introduced species on J and in the DR

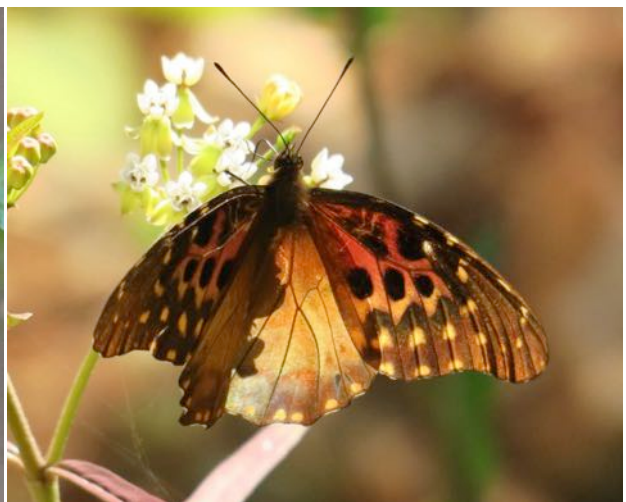
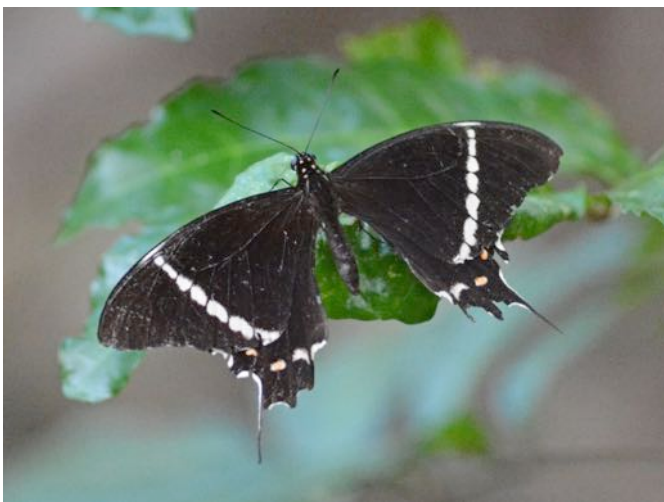
**Graham's Anole *Anolis grahami*** Seen at Marshall's Pen (J)

**Bluefields Anole *Anolis opalinus*** Seen at Marshall's Pen (J)



**Orange-earp Anole** *Anolis alliniger* Seen at Zapoten, (DR)  
**Bark Anole** *Anolis distichus* Seen at Barahona and Caño Hondo (DR)  
**Olsson's (or Desert Grass) Anole** *Anolis olssoni* Seen at Laguna Rincon (DR)  
**Shortnose Anole** *Anolis brevirostris* Seen at Barahona (DR)  
**Hispaniolan Green Anole** *Anolis chlorocyanus* Seen at Los Haitises (DR)  
**Puerto Rican Crested Anole** *Anolis cristatellus* Seen at Rio Abajo State Forest (PR)  
**Bahaman (or Brown) Anole** *Anolis sagrei* Seen on Andros (B)  
**Pygmy Gecko (Alto Velo Least Gecko)** *Sphaerodactylus altavelensis* Seen at Puerto Escondido (DR)  
**Desert Croaking Gecko** *Aristelliger expectatus* Seen shedding and eating its skin at Villa Barancoli (DR)  
**Hispaniolan Giant Gecko** *Aristelliger lar* Seen on the ceiling of Dave & Sue's room at Caño Hondo (DR)  
**Northern Curly-tailed Lizard** *Leiocephalus carinatus* Seen on Abaco (B)  
**Puerto Rican Ground Lizard** *Ameiva exsul* Seen in the hotel grounds at Fajardo (PR)  
**Green Iguana** *Iguana iguana* This introduced reptile was commonly seen on Puerto Rico  
**Puerto Rican Racer** *Alsophis (Borikenophis) portoricensis* This rear-fanged endemic was seen at Maricao (PR).  
**Jamaican Slider Turtle** *Trachemys terrapen* Seen at the Upper Black River Morass (J)

#### BUTTERFLIES (compiled by Denis O'Connor and Dave Williamson)



Prickly Ash Swallowtail (Mark Van Beirs); Jaeger's Anetia (Dave Williamson)

#### Jamaica:

**Jamaican Ringlet** *Calisto zangis*  
**Troglodyte** *Anaea troglodyte portia* or *Anaea portia*  
**Flambeau** *Dryas iulia delila*  
**Zebra** *Heliconius charitonius*  
**Hanno Blue**..*Hemiargus hanno*  
**Giant Brimstone**..*Anteos maerula*

#### Dominican Republic:

**Monarch**..*Danaus plexippus*  
**Lesser False Fritillary**..*Anetia briarea*  
**False Fritillary**..*Anetia pantherata*  
**Jaeger's Anetia**..*Anetia jaegeri*  
**Large Tiger**..*Lycorea ceres*  
**Confused Ringlet**..*Calisto confuse*  
**Saona Ringlet**..*Calisto lyceius*  
**Darlington's Ringlet**..*Calisto grannus*  
**White Y Ringlet**..*Calisto chrysaoros*  
**Silver King**..*Prepona amphitoe*  
**Haitian Cracker**..*Hamadryas februa*  
**Orion**..*Historis odis*

White Peacock..*Anartia jatrophae*  
 Malachite..*Siproeta stelenes*  
 Flambeau..*Dryas iulia hispaniola*  
 Zebra..*Heliconius melphis*  
 Guayacan Sulphur..*Kricogonia lyside*  
 Giant Brimstone. *Anteos maerula*  
 Apricot Sulphur..*Phoebis argante*  
 Straight-line Sulphur..*Phoebis trite*  
 Polydamas Swallowtail..*Battus polydamas*  
 Dusky Swallowtail..*Papilio aristodemus*  
 Androgeus Swallowtail. *Papilio androgeus*  
 Prickly Ash Swallowtail..*Papilio pelaus*  
 Ixion Skipper..*Chioides ixion*  
 Common Long-tail Skipper..*Urbanus proteus*  
 Tropical Chequered Skipper..*Pyrgus oileus*

Puerto Rico:

Monarch..*Danaus plexippus*  
 Puerto Rican Ringlet..*Calisto nubile*  
 Silver King..*Prepona amphitoe*  
 Orion..*Historis odius*  
 Haitian Admiral..*Adelpha gelania*  
 Malachite..*Siproeta stelenes*  
 Flambeau..*Dryas iulia*  
 Zebra. *Heliconius charitonius* (  
 Cassius Blue..*Leptotes cassius*  
 Florida White..*Appias drusilla*

Bahamas:

Gulf Fritillary..*Dione vanilla*  
 Atala Hairstreak..*Eumaeus atala*  
 Polydamas Swallowtail *Battus polydamas*



Orion (Mark van Beirs)





*The Beer of the Trip (Dave Williamson); the Icecream of the Trip (Mark Van Beirs)*

## **SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BEERS RECORDED (compiled by beer connoisseur Dave Williamson)**

General note: It is interesting to observe the high levels of endemism in the Bahamas compared to the other islands

### **ENDEMIC LIGHTER LAGERS ( <5.0%)**

Red Stripe (J) - A Jamaican endemic enjoyed at the very heart of its range  
 Presidente Light (DR)- This Dominican Republic endemic went down very well  
 Medalla (PR)- Native to Puerto Rico and happily competing well with the introduced beers  
 Sands Light (B) - Good numbers of this endemic were enjoyed by the group  
 Sands Light Draft (B)- A refreshing relative of Sands Light found in Marsh Harbour  
 Kalik Light (B) - Attractive blue and white markings on this one

### **ENDEMIC STRONGER LAGERS ( 5.0% and above)**

Presidente (DR) - Type species of the genus and a DR classic  
 Magna (PR)- We were very pleased to get this one on our Puerto Rico list  
 Sands (B) - A common but enjoyable Bahaman endemic  
 Sands Draft (B) - Recently split from the closely related Sands Bottled  
 High Rock (B) - Newly evolved full-bodied beer from the Northern Bahamas  
 Kalik (B) - this much sought after Bahaman endemic was particularly popular with our group - easily identified by its cowbell-like call 'kalik, kalik'  
 Kalik Platinum Light (B) - Rare and elusive (and some say almost mythical!) but we nailed it on Abaco  
 Kalik Gold (B) - At a whopping 7.0% the 'Harpy Eagle' of the *Kalik* genus

### **AMBER ALES**

Snappas' Amber Draft (B) - We were extremely fortunate to encounter this very local speciality

### **SHANDIES/RADLERS & OTHER ABERRANT BEERS**

Sands Pink Radler (B) - Enigmatic but endearing pink hybrid of beer and grapefruit juice  
 Red Apple Ale (PR) - Although classified as an ale by some more correctly placed in the ciders

### **INTRODUCED BEERS**

#### **LAGERS**

(sadly these insipid introductions seem to be spreading and are in urgent need of control)

Budweiser - Happily seen only

Miller Lite - Other than the poor spelling very difficult to distinguish from Bud Light

Corona - Mexican introduction that often associates with limes  
Heineken - An unwelcome sight and sadly widespread - seen only

### **STOUTS & PORTERS**

Guinness Foreign Extra - Seen only - at 7.5% this stronger version of its Irish cousin was being enjoyed by the hard-working building crew at our hotel in the Blue Mountains, Jamaica

22 beers recorded including 3 seen only

### **BEERS OF THE TRIP:**

Jamaica pre-tour extension: Red Stripe

Main Tour (Dominican Republic & Puerto Rico): Presidente

Bahamas post-tour extension: Kalik



*The group at the Laguna Rincon (Dominican Republic)(Mark Van Beirs)*





*West Indian Woodpecker (Mark Van Beirs)*

#### NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird Names. Gill, F and Donsker, D (Eds). 2017. IOC World Bird Names (v7.2). Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

#### **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens*

These kleptoparasites have the lowest wing-loading (low weight in contrast to large wing area) of all birds, enabling them to be amongst the most nimble of fliers.



*Mangrove Cuckoo and Hispaniolan Palm Crow (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Ridgway's Hawk** *Buteo ridgwayi*

The status of Ridgway's Hawk is considered as **Critically Endangered** by BirdLife International in 'Threatened Birds of the World' and the total population is estimated at fewer than 250 birds, easily making it the rarest Buteo in the world!! The species is now most probably confined to the Los Haitises National Park and in view of the sad state of affair of the National Park – serious encroachment by squatters, virtual lack of protection – one should be extremely pessimistic about the long term survival of this bird of prey. There is some hope as a breeding and re-introduction program is being implemented. It is named after Robert Ridgway (1850-1929), US ornithologist, Smithsonian curator of birds and author of "The Birds of North and Middle America".

**American Coot** *Fulica americana*

**Caribbean Coot** *Fulica caribea* has now been lumped into this species by both the IOC and The Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW) and is considered only as a morph now.

**Cabot's Tern** *Thalasseus acuflavidus*

This is a recent split from Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*.

**Plain Pigeon** *Columba inornata*

This Caribbean endemic occurs in very small numbers in Cuba, Jamaica Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, but the healthiest populations seem to survive in Haiti.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

This is a recent introduction in the Caribbean and is still spreading. There has been some confusion about the original birds occurring in southwestern Puerto Rico, which were considered by some authors to be Ringed Turtle Dove *Streptopelia risoria* (a long domesticated form of African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea*). These birds showed a lot of variation in their plumage.

**Common Ground-Dove** *Columbina passerine*

The scientific epithet relates to the sparrow-like size of these tiny doves (passer = sparrow).

**Zenaida Dove** *Zenaida aurita*

The bird is named after Z  na  de Laetitia Julie Princesse Bonaparte (1804-1854), wife of French ornithologist Prince Charles Bonaparte, a close relative of infamous Napoleon Bonaparte.





*The exceedingly rare Bay-breasted Cuckoo (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Bay-breasted Cuckoo** *Coccyzus ruficularis*

This species is hunted for its supposed medicinal value. Its decline is probably associated with deforestation for agriculture and charcoal production, habitat degradation through high levels of grazing, hunting for food, and possibly the use of agrochemicals. The total population is extremely small.

**Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo** *Coccyzus vetula*

The four species of Lizard Cuckoos (one each on the Greater Antillean islands) show red bare skin around the eye, a long thin bill and white-tipped tail feathers. One of their local names is pajaro bobo (stupid bird), probably because they can be very confiding. They were previously placed in their own genus, *Saurothera* (= lizard hunter).

**Puerto Rican Nightjar (Puerto Rican Whip-poor-will)** *Antrostomus noctitherus*

The total population is in the order of 670-800 pairs. This species was first described in 1888 and was then considered extinct for over 70 years, till it was re-found in the Guanica forest in 1961. It is ironic that apparently a Civilian Conservation Corps camp located in Guanica Forest from 1935 to 1945 was so disturbed by the nocturnal calling of these birds that a request was made that they be chased away!

**Broad-billed Tody** *Todus subulatus*

The five species of very closely related todies comprise a family confined to the Greater Antilles. Their closest relatives are the Motmots (Motmotidae) and especially the Tody Motmot *Hylomanes momotula* of Central America. The closely related Puerto Rican Tody has been well studied and shows some remarkable characteristics. It has been found to go into torpor in the breeding season, when hormone stress levels and metabolic rates are significantly higher than at other times. This phenomenon is restricted to females. The Cuban Tody is locally known as Pedorrera, a rather malodorous term referring to the noise made when breaking wind. This name may relate to the wing-rattling behaviour of the bird. Note that fossil todids are known from Wyoming and France.

**American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius*

One of its local names in the Dominican Republic is Cernícalo, a word derived from Tsar Nicholas, a formerly 'high perched' monarch. This refers to the habit of the falcon to frequent high exposed perches from which it searches its prey.

**White-necked Crow** *Corvus leucognaphalus*

This species used to be common on Puerto Rico, where it became extinct around 1963, making it another Hispaniolan endemic.

**Palmchat** *Dulus dominicus*

The Palmchat was one of the more important birds of the trip for the 'bird family-hunters', as it is the sole member of its family and is restricted to Hispaniola. A bizarre bird, which constructs huge communal stick-nests, consisting of separate compartments which open separately to the outside. Some of the older nests are up to two metres in width!! These noisy, garrulous and very sociable birds are mainly fruit and berry eaters. They favour areas where Royal Palms (*Roystonea hispaniolana*) occur and seem to be most closely related to waxwings and silky-flycatchers. The Palmchat is the national bird of the Dominican Republic.



*A lovely Caribbean Dove (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Golden Swallow** *Tachycineta euchrysea*

This species has now totally disappeared from Jamaica (no substantiated records since 1989), making it a Hispaniolan endemic.



**La Selle Thrush** *Turdus swalesi*

This species is endemic to the mountains of Hispaniola. The bird is named after the Massif de La Selle in southern Haiti, from where it was first described in 1927 by Alexander Wetmore. It was discovered in the Dominican Republic only in 1971. The scientific name refers to Bradshaw Swales (1875-1928) US ornithologist and author (*Birds of Haiti and the Dominican Republic*, 1931).

**Elfin Woods Warbler** *Dendroica angelae*

This Puerto Rican endemic was discovered only in 1972 in the Luquillo Mountains. The total population is probably c2,700 individuals.

**Yellow-shouldered Blackbird** *Agelaius xanthomus*

This Puerto Rican endemic is one of the most threatened West Indian species, because of the brood-parasitic behaviour of the fairly recently arrived (1940s) and now common Shiny Cowbird. A major conservation program is now in action, mainly concentrating on getting rid of the Shiny Cowbirds. The total population of the Yellow-shouldered Blackbird now stands at only c650 individuals.

**Bananaquit** *Coereba flaveola*

The races seen on the tour were *flaveola* (Jamaica), *bananivora* (Hispaniola), *portoricensis* (Puerto Rico) and *bahamensis* (The Bahamas).

**Puerto Rican Tanager** *Nesospingus speculiferus*

The Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW) has now resurrected a separate family, the *Nesospingidae*, holding just this Puerto Rican endemic.

**Black-crowned (Palm Tanager)** *Phaenicophilus palmarum*:

Its local name is cuatro ojos (four-eyes), which refers to the white spots in front of the eyes, making them look as if they are in possession of an extra pair of eyes. The closely related Grey-crowned Palm Tanager is virtually confined to Haiti, although there seem to be several (not substantiated) records for the Sierra de Bahoruco in the Dominican Republic. The HBW has now created a separate Hispaniolan endemic family, the *Phaenicophilidae*, holding these two species and the Green-tailed and White-winged Warblers.



*Jamaican Euphonia and Merlin (Mark Van Beirs)*

## **BIRDS OF THE TOUR**

### JAMAICA pre-trip

- |    |                         |           |
|----|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Red-billed Streamertail | 24 points |
| 2. | Jamaican Owl            | 18        |
| 3. | Crested Quail-Dove      | 11        |
| 4. | Jamaican Tody           | 10        |
| 5. | Yellow-billed Amazon    | 6         |
|    | Jamaican Blackbird      | 6         |

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC & PUERTO RICO (main tour)

- |     |                       |           |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1   | Ashy-faced Owl        | 26 points |
| 2   | La Selle Thrush       | 17        |
| 3   | Ridgway's Hawk        | 13        |
| 4   | Puerto Rican Parrot   | 12        |
| 5   | White-winged Warbler  | 9         |
| 6   | Palmchat              | 8         |
| 7   | Hispaniolan Crossbill | 7         |
|     | Puerto Rican Nightjar | 7         |
| 9.  | Yellow-breasted Crake | 6         |
| 10. | Least Poorwill        | 5         |

### THE BAHAMAS post trip

- |    |                     |           |
|----|---------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Bahama Woodstar     | 17 points |
|    | Cuban Parrot        | 17        |
| 3. | Great Lizard Cuckoo | 7         |
| 4. | Bahama Swallow      | 5         |
|    | Bahama Yellowthroat | 5         |



*Abaco sunset (Mark Van Beirs)*