



*Blue-headed Quail-Dove – Bird of the Trip (Chris Kehoe)*

# CUBA

## 17 – 28 March 2019

### **LEADER: CHRIS KEHOE**

Our recent tour to Cuba produced all of the expected national endemics plus a wonderful selection of regional Caribbean specialities and a host of overwintering North American migrants. Bee Hummingbird, the world's smallest bird, showed very well indeed with delightful males performing wonderfully. However, our Bird of the Trip was the sensational Blue-headed Quail-Dove, one of four Quail-Dove species seen, a pair of which fed almost around our feet at one point. Sometimes tricky endemics such as Zapata Wren showed exceptionally well and a single Gundlach's Hawk, undoubtedly the most difficult and unpredictable endemic, was seen briefly too, though it necessitated an emergency stop by the bus. The two members of the recently recognised family Teretistridae, (Cuban Warblers) showed very well while stunners such as Cuban Tody and Cuban Trogon were seen regularly. Although widespread in Latin America, Stygian Owl is more reliably seen in Cuba than anywhere else and we had repeated views of a bird at our hotel each evening and enjoyed even better views of a roosting bird near there. The northern Caribbean is a major wintering area for many American Wood Warblers and we saw a total of 19 species, most in their spectacular breeding finery. Wetlands held regional specialities such as West Indian Whistling Ducks, Clapper Rails, 'Great White' Herons and American Flamingos along with large numbers of migratory waterbirds such as Short-billed Dowitchers, Stilt Sandpipers, Piping Plovers and an unexpected American Avocet.

Our tour began at Havana airport in the evening, from where we drove westwards for a couple of hours for an overnight stay at San Diego del los Banos. As it was already dusk as we set off nothing of note was seen along the way apart from a couple of Cuban Martins high above the airport car park.



*Olive-capped Warbler and Zapata Sparrow (Chris Kehoe)*

We were on our way to La Guira NP just before sunrise. Our first destination this morning was the attractive Cueva del los Portales where we were soon seeing our first Cuban endemics such as Cuban Emerald, Trogon, Tody and Green Woodpecker. Our top target here though was the localised Cuban Solitaire and after a short search we had one in the scope for great and prolonged views as its marvelous song echoed around the karst landscape. Cave Swallows overhead were joined by a couple of Cuban Martins while a few overwintering wood warblers were seen before we moved on towards Hacienda Cortina. A stop at some roadside pines along the way gave us fine views of Olive-capped Warblers plus our first La Sagra's Flycatcher and a couple of smart Yellow-headed Warblers, one half of Cuba's recently elevated endemic family, the Teretistridae. In the attractive parkland at Hacienda Cortina we found a Least Grebe, several Black-whiskered Vireos, Red-legged Honeycreepers and a brief Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Cuban Blackbirds and Tawny-shouldered Blackbirds fed together in a bottlebrush tree allowing good comparisons and a couple of Cuban Orioles, Cape May Warbler, Cuban Pewee, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and West Indian Woodpecker also appeared. After lunch, during which many Antillean Palm Swifts were zooming about, we began the return journey towards Havana, making several stops along the way, firstly at some roadside fish ponds where several Snail Kites showed well along with Western Ospreys, Caspian Terns and a few other bits and pieces including our first Eastern Meadowlark of the rather distinctive Cuban race which may ultimately be elevated to species status. Our main stop though was at Las Terrezas where the locals have begun putting out food to attract Cuban Grassquits and we had wonderful close views of up to 20 of the stunning birds along with smaller numbers of their Yellow-faced cousins. A Northern Flicker of the endemic Cuban race was also seen here before we moved on. Two stops at large reservoirs gave us a good selection of wetland species including wintering Lesser Scaups, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks, Brown Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, American Coots and a Pied-billed Grebe. By mid-evening we were checking into our fancy Havana hotel after an excellent first day in the field.

Early the next morning we were heading east at the start of a long travelling day to Camaguey. After a couple of hours we reached Hato de Jicarita on the northern edge of Zapata Swamp where we spent 90 minutes birding along the approach road. Zapata Sparrows were seen quickly and very well here but our other main target, Red-shouldered Blackbird proved less cooperative though we eventually secured good scope views of a singing male. Also seen here were our first Cuban Vireos, a Limpkin, Purple Gallinule,



Smooth-billed Anis and several others. Stops for coffee along the way, and lunch in Santa Clara, gave us a small selection of wintering warblers including Cape May, Black-throated Blue, American Redstarts and Palm Warblers before we finally reached our hotel in the historic centre of Camaguey not long before sunset.



*'Western' Red-legged Thrush – a three-way split of this species has been suggested (Chris Kehoe)*

We were on our way south towards Najasa long before dawn and arrived at a small palm grove just south of the town just as the sun rose. The hoped-for Plain Pigeons were soon on show and gave prolonged scope views as several noisy Cuban Crows amused us with their weird gurgling voices. Moving on a short distance to the cemetery area we found numerous West Indian Woodpeckers, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-throated Warbler and a showy Cuban Amazon along with many more Cuban Crows and our first, sensible sounding, Cuban Palm Crows. We spent the rest of the morning walking the trails in nearby La Belen Reserve where it didn't take long to locate our remaining primary target, the scarce and localised Giant Kingbird. Further highlights before we retired to La Belen Ranch for welcome cold drinks, included a couple of Cuban Pygmy Owls, Great Lizard Cuckoo, Cuban Todys and Trogons, Limpkin, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue and Cape May Warblers and many more crows of both species. After lunch we drove back to Camaguey with a short stop along the way to view a couple of Northern Jacanas and Purple Gallinules. An hour long visit to Bakalloa Reservoir gave us our first Belted Kingfisher, Neotropic Cormorants and others while nearby scrub held Northern Parula, Black-and-white and Palm Warblers as several Northern Crested Caracaras flew by. Later in the evening several of the group joined Yusi, our local guide, on a short walking tour in the city.

After a leisurely breakfast we set off north to Sierra de Cubitas, arriving there forty minutes later just as the sun was hitting the trees. Our target here, the delightful Oriente Warbler, was quickly on view and showing very well along with our first Worm-eating Warbler and a couple of showy Cuban Vireos and a nice mixture of wintering warblers including our first Ovenbird. Further exploration of the area gave us several flight views of Scaly-naped Pigeons. A Broad-winged Hawk of the Cuban endemic race appeared overhead along with a migratory movement of 15 Western Ospreys. After 90 minutes here we proceeded to Cayo Coco where we arrived in time for lunch. After a short break we visited a nearby coastal site, stopping along the way to view our first Cuban Black Hawk, where many American Royal Terns were on view along with Grey Plovers, Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones. After a careful search, we eventually located three Piping Plovers.

Moving on, we found a pair of dapper Cuban Gnatcatchers at the second attempt before visiting Cueva de Jabile where food and water are provided to attract Key West Quail-doves, two or three of which eventually showed up and performed very well along with a supporting cast that included Zenaida Doves, Cape May and Black-throated Blue Warblers and a Zapata Sparrow of the isolated local race *varonai*. We ended the day with a visit to a lagoon near our hotel where about 30 West Indian Whistling Ducks were on view and becoming active in anticipation of a nocturnal feeding session.



Oriente Warbler (Chris Kehoe)

Our full day on the cays began with a short and unsuccessful search for Thick-billed Vireo near our hotel so we quickly moved on to the prime site for this very localised bird at Cayo Paredon Grande where, after a short search we enjoyed close views of two survivors of the 2017 hurricane that devastated the vast majority of their very limited habitat, leading to serious concern that they may have become extinct in Cuba. Hopefully the few remaining birds can repopulate the regenerating coastal scrub in the area. Heading back towards Cayo Coco we stopped at a large wetland on Cayo Romano where up to 30 American Wigeons were mixed in with hundreds of Blue-winged Teal. Our first American White Ibises were here along with a Reddish Egret and a 'Great White' Heron (the taxonomic status remains unclear, currently just a colour morph but quite possibly a valid species) plus many commoner herons. Back on Cayo Coco we stopped to admire a very pale-headed Western Osprey of the Caribbean race *ridgwayi* before visiting a wooded road where our first Cuban Bullfinches were coaxed into view and a classy Mangrove Cuckoo was a splendid bonus. Roadside wetlands further on held a few American White Pelicans, eight Willet and a surprising collection of gulls including eight each of American Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, three Ring-billed Gulls and hundreds of Laughing Gulls. In the afternoon we drove west to Cayo Guillermo where a Bahama Mockingbird was quickly found and showed very well. Wetlands nearby held an excellent collection of shorebirds with many Short-billed Dowitchers and smaller numbers of Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, Stilt Sandpipers, Red Knots, Semipalmated Plovers and Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers. A couple of Clapper Rails were persuaded to show themselves as high visibility American Flamingos loafed Around. A total of three different Merlins were seen this afternoon while a migratory movement of Barn Swallows, Tree Swallows and Northern Rough-winged Swallows passed through.



A pre-breakfast session gave us brief views of a couple of Cuban Nightjars despite the breezy and overcast conditions. After breakfast we began the long journey to Zapata. After a lunch stop in Santa Clara, where we made a brief photo stop at the impressive Che Guevara memorial there. Continuing westward we made a rapid stop when a Gundlach's Hawk was spotted soaring around beside the highway where it gave brief but quite good views before drifting off. Near Horquitas, a roadside wetland held a couple of hundred Glossy Ibises and four scarce Solitary Sandpipers. Before reaching our hotel we visited a couple of areas favoured by Bee Hummingbirds and savored a series of excellent views of a dazzling full plumaged and improbably tiny male. After dinner a quick scout about near our rooms revealed a Stygian Owl atop a large tree to end the day in fine style.



*Zapata Wren (Chris Kehoe)*

Our first full day at Zapata began with a rather lengthy drive westwards to Santo Tomas, deep in the heart of Zapata swamp. After watching a Cuban Pygmy Owl and our first Louisiana Waterthrush we boarded two punts that took us along a narrow channel to a small platform in the heart of a territory of the locally endemic Zapata Wren. After a few minutes a wren appeared and went on to perform admirably at close range. Pleased with this we set off back towards the village but with a couple of stops along the way to view Zapata Sparrows, Prairie, Black-and-white and Yellow-headed Warblers, Cuban Bullfinches and others. Nearer the village the Louisiana Waterthrush was again on view along with Northern Waterthrushes for comparison and a Cuban Tody showed very well. In the afternoon we visited a wooded trail at Soplillar where we had great views of a pair of Bare-legged Owls at their nest, a fantastic Stygian Owl (the first seen at day roost in this area for 10 months!), Northern Flicker and a small selection of wintering warblers. Leaden skies and an increasing breeze indicated rain was on the way so we hastened back towards the bus just in time to avoid a soaking. Later in the evening the Stygian Owl was again on view in the hotel grounds.

Another pre-dawn start, during which Jupiter and Saturn were viewed in the scope, saw us returning to Bermejas where, once it was light enough to see, we took up positions at a small screen overlooking a stretch of trail which Orlando, a local guide, baits with food and water to attract Quail-doves. Several Zenaida Doves were immediately on view but after just a few minutes a Blue-headed Quail-dove appeared, initially rather distantly but eventually, along with its mate, virtually around our feet for truly memorable views of this outstanding species. A couple of Ruddy Quail-doves then appeared but kept a more respectable distance,

though seen well in the scope. Finally, a pair of Grey-fronted Quail-doves showed up and, after a while, approached quite closely, enabling their wonderful purple mantles to be fully appreciated. Well pleased with this haul we drove a short distance to an open swampy area where a Sora or two were seen briefly on a couple of occasions and a pair of Red-shouldered Blackbirds appeared in roadside trees along with the likes of Cuban Green Woodpecker. Not far away we scanned an area of palms where two pairs of Fernandina's Flickers showed well, completing our list of feasible Cuban endemics. Along one of the well wooded trails back at Bermejas we found a good selection of wintering warblers, including several Northern Parulas and a couple of Magnolia Warblers. Lunch at Buena Caleta gave us greatly improved views of 'Caribbean' Cave Swallows that were nesting on rafters above the bar there. In the afternoon we visited a small private garden in the village of Palpitte where a flowering bush and hummingbird feeders attract many Cuban Emeralds but also Bee Hummingbirds, at least five of which were on view today, including a couple of stunning males at extremely close range. Also here were a couple of Black-throated Blue Warblers, Northern Waterthrush and Cuban Orioles. Returning to Sopllillar we were pleased when our hard-working local guide Mario tracked down a roosting Cuban Nightjar that gave wonderful scope views while the supporting cast included several overwintering warblers, Cuban Todys and others. Once again, the Stygian Owl was calling from its favourite perch in the hotel grounds after dinner.



*Cuban Pygmy Owl and Bare-legged Owl (Chris Kehoe)*

After much forest birding in the preceding days we visited the open wetlands at Las Salinas the next morning. There was inevitably much overlap with the species composition at the northern cays, including the likes of Clapper Rails, both Yellowlegs, Caspian Terns and American Flamingo's but new for our list were a Long-billed Dowitcher amongst a group of Stilt Sandpipers, Roseate Spoonbills, fly-by Northern Harriers and Wood Storks, showy Mangrove Warblers, Gull-billed Terns and a surprise American Avocet. In the afternoon we birded along the well wooded La Turba track and at the crocodile farm where we found good numbers and variety of overwintering warblers and resident species while back at our hotel a large migratory movement of Tree Swallows was noted.



We began our final full day with a return visit to Horquitas Road where cranes and rails evaded us though we did have greatly improved views of White-crowned Pigeons, a couple of showy Limpkins and another Cuban Pygmy Owl. A brief return to the Fernandina's Flicker site failed to produce a fly-over Gundlach's Hawk but the flickers showed well again, including three individuals doing their strange head-waving display. We combined a coffee stop with further scanning for raptors but instead saw a couple of smart Cuban Parrots. Along the trails in Bermejas we found a selection of wintering warblers and an unexpected Desmarest's Hutia before heading to Buena Caleta, with its breeding Cave Swallows, for lunch. In the afternoon we visited a new trail in the southern section of Bermejas forest where many wintering warblers, including Magnolia and Worm-eating, trogons, todys and an unexpected Bee Hummingbird were on view but we had a frustrating encounter with a very mobile and silent Swainson's Warbler which, despite an extended search, only showed itself to the leader and local guide. As we returned towards the hotel several Cuban Amazons were flying to roost.

After breakfast, just before which a Yellow-crowned Night Heron was seen by some, we began the return journey to Havana. An hour long visit to the crocodile farm gave us final views of many wintering warblers, including a fine Louisiana Waterthrush, plus group of Purple Martins perched atop an antenna. Hopeful scanning of the skies from the bus failed to produce another Gundlach's Hawk but did result in a pair of superb Swallow-tailed Kites, a rarity in Cuba and a write-in on our checklists. Close to Havana we diverted to the East Beach where our only Cabot's Tern was seen offshore and three Spotted Sandpipers were new for most. After a hearty lunch in a pleasant restaurant, we set off on a walking tour of historic Old Havana in the company of our local guide Yusi. After dropping off those remaining in Cuba at their hotel the rest of us continued to Jose Marti Airport where the tour ended in the evening.

**Bird of the Trip:**

1 – Blue-headed Quail Dove	28 points
2 – Bee Hummingbird	26 points
3 – Cuban Trogon	14 Points
4 – Cuban Tody	12 points
5 – Stygian Owl	10 points





*Havana skyline from East Beach and Cuban Trogon (Chris Kehoe)*





*Bee Hummingbird (Chris Kehoe)*

## 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).

## BIRDS

Number of species recorded: 169

**West Indian Whistling Duck** ◊ *Dendrocygna arborea* Up to 35 on the northern cays, mainly on Cayo Coco.

**Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* A pair along the Horquitas Road; rare in Cuba and the first seen by Birdquest in many years.

**Blue-winged Teal** *Spatula discors* About two hundred on Cayo Romana and smaller numbers at a few other sites.

**Northern Shoveler (W)** *Spatula clypeata* At similar sites to the last species but in smaller numbers.

**American Wigeon (W)** *Mareca americana* About 30 on Cayo Romano, a large number for Cuba.

**Ring-necked Duck (W)** *Aythya collaris* Six near Havana.

**Lesser Scaup (W)** *Aythya affinis* About 10 on the reservoirs near Havana, fewer than usual.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* Small numbers on the northern cays.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* About 30 near Havana.

**Helmeted Guinea fowl (introduced)** *Numida meleagris* Presumed feral birds at a few sites.

**Least Grebe** *Tachybaptus dominicus* One at Hacienda Cortina.

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* Singles near Havana and Camaguey.

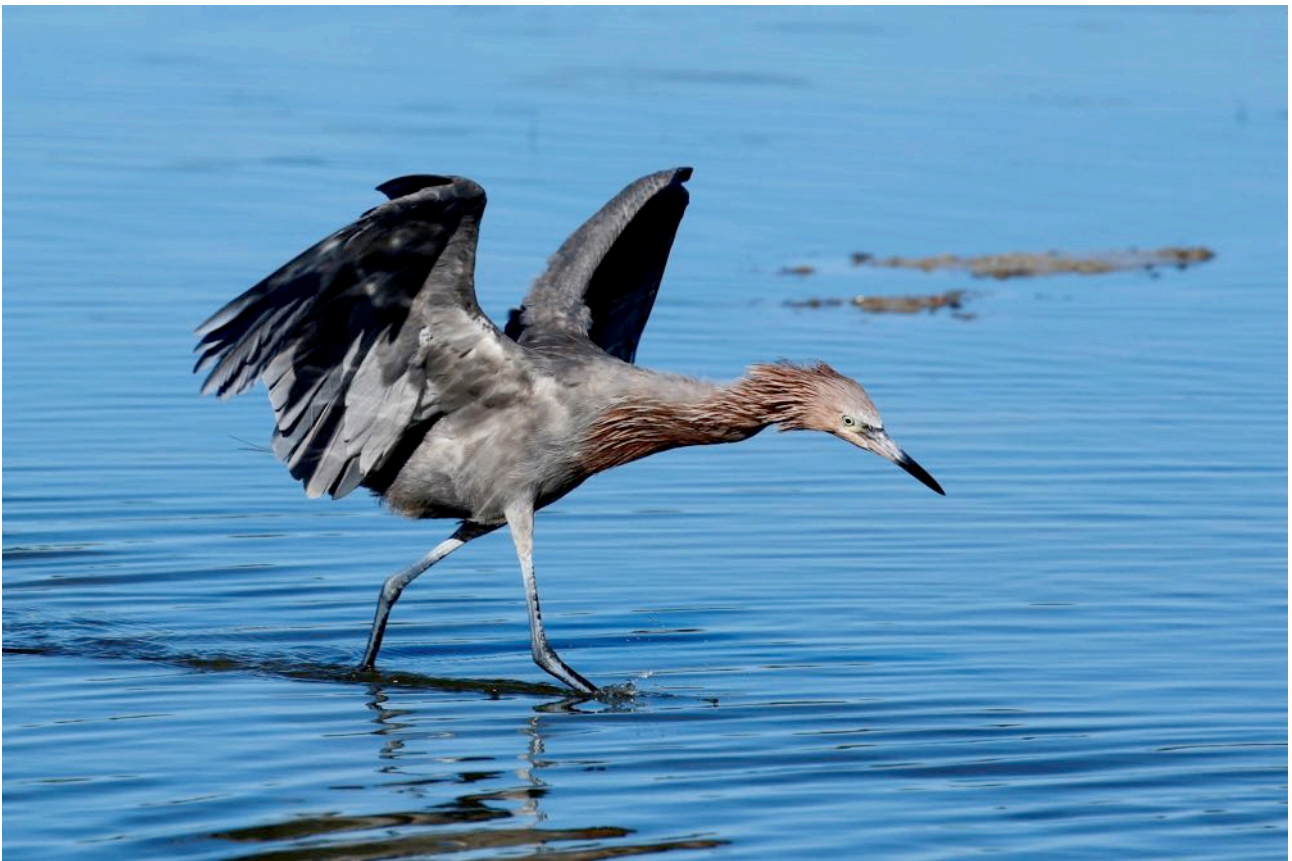
**American Flamingo (Caribbean F)** *Phoenicopterus ruber* Hundreds on Cayo Guillermo and at Las Salinas.

**Wood Stork** *Mycteria americana* A couple in flight at Las Salinas.

**American White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus* Fairly common on the northern cays and at especially at Las Salinas.



*American Flamingos (Chris Kehoe)*



*Reddish Egret (Chris Kehoe)*



**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* About 200 east of Horquitas.

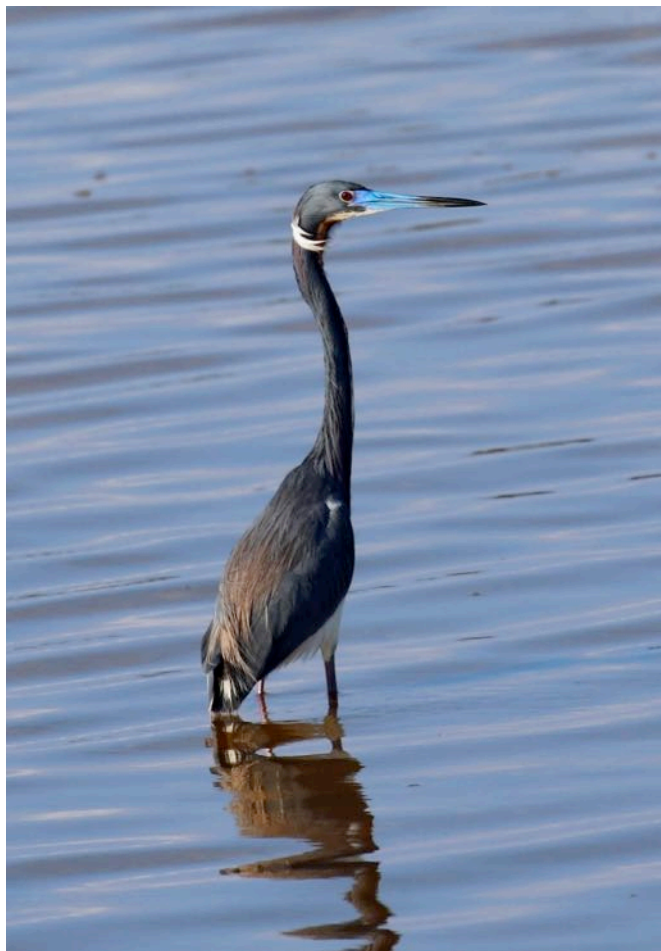
**Roseate Spoonbill** *Platalea ajaja* About 10 at Las Salinas.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* A couple at Zapata sites.

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* One at Playa Larga before dawn on our final morning.

**Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* Present at several wetlands on nine dates.

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Fairly common and widespread, usually with livestock.



*Tricolored Heron in courtship colour and adult Broad-winged Hawk of the scarcer, migratory race from North America (Chris Kehoe)*

**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* Small numbers on nine dates, 'Great Whites' on the northern cays and Las Salinas.

**Great Egret (American G E)** *Ardea [alba] egretta* Noted on nine dates, often in double figures.

**Reddish Egret** *Egretta rufescens* Several on the northern cays and especially at Las Salinas.

**Tricolored Heron** *Egretta tricolor* Noted on six dates, particularly common on Cayo Guillermo and at Las Salinas.

**Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* Widespread in wetter areas, sometimes common, noted on nine dates.

**Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* Noted on seven dates, especially numerous at Las Salinas where c. 200 were present.

**American White Pelican** *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* Eight on Cayo Coco.

**Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis* Noted on the north coast and some larger inland wetlands on five dates.

**Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* Many on the northern cays with a few at Las Salinas and off Havana.

**Neotropic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* Noted at Bakalloa, Cayo Guillermo and Las Salinas.

**Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* Numerous on the northern cays, a few elsewhere.

**Anhinga** *Anhinga anhinga* A couple at Bakalloa and one at Zapata's crocodile farm.

**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura* Abundant and very widespread.

**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* Up to 15 migrants at Sierra de Cubitas. A few others included one *ridgwayi* bird.

**Swallow-tailed Kite** *Elanoides forficatus* Two soaring over the highway just east of Hato de Jicarita, a write-in.

**Gundlach's Hawk** ♦ *Accipiter gundlachi* One in flight from the moving bus nr Santa Clara led to an emergency stop.

**Northern Harrier** *Circus hudsonius* Two at Las Salinas and one as we travelled to Camaguey.

**Snail Kite** *Rostrhamus sociabilis* Ten near San Diego del los Banos and a four along Horquitas Road.

**Cuban Black Hawk** ♦ *Buteogallus gundlachi* Noted on the northern cays and at Las Salinas, about 15 in total



**Broad-winged Hawk** ♦ *Buteo platypterus* Two at Sierra de Cubitas and at Zapata sites, most were the endemic race.  
**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis* Noted on six dates. Mostly as we travelled.  
**Clapper Rail** ♦ *Rallus crepitans* Great views of six in total at Cayo Guillermo and at Las Salinas.



Clapper Rail (Chris Kehoe)



Limpkin at dawn (Chris Kehoe)

**Sora** *Porzana carolina* Fleeting views of two at Horquitas Road, heard on Cayo Guillermo.  
**Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinica* Small numbers on seven dates.  
**Common Gallinule** *Gallinula galeata* Noted on seven dates.  
**American Coot** *Fulica americana* About 20 on the reservoirs near Havana.



**Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis* (H) Heard at Las Salinas but out of reach.

**Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna* Small numbers on five dates, more than usual and some great views.

**Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus* Present at a few widespread wetlands on four dates.

**American Avocet** *Recurvirostra americana* One at Las Salinas, scarce in Cuba.



*American Avocet (Chris Kehoe)*



*Greater (left) and Lesser Yellowlegs (Chris Kehoe)*

**Grey Plover (Black-bellied P)** *Pluvialis squatarola* A few at coastal sites on three dates.

**Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* Up to 100 at Cayo Guillermo.

**Wilson's Plover** *Charadrius wilsonia* Two at Las Salinas, scarce in Cuba.

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* Small numbers on seven dates.

**Piping Plover** ♦ (W) *Charadrius melodus* Three at Cayo Coco, took some finding but eventually showed quite well.

**Northern Jacana** *Jacana spinosa* Two at a roadside puddle north of Najassa, very localised in Cuba.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* About 50 on the northern cays, singles at Las Salinas and Havana East Beach.

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* Up to 30 on Cayo Guillermo, some acquiring breeding colours.

**Stilt Sandpiper** *Calidris himantopus* Over 40 on Cayo Guillermo and about 15 at Las Salinas.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Small numbers on Cayo Coco and near Havana.

**Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* Several at coastal sites with a few inland, seen on five dates.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* About 10 on Cayo Guillermo.

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* One at Las Salinas, uncommon in Cuba.

**Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus* Several hundred on Cayo Guillermo, a few at Las Salinas.



*'American' Royal Tern – likely to be split from 'African' Royal Tern (Chris Kehoe)*

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* one at Bakalloa and three at Havana's East Beach.

**Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* Four on a roadside wetland near Horquitas.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Numerous at Las Salinas, a few elsewhere.

**Willet** *Tringa semipalmata* A handful at Cayo Coco and Las Salinas, all looked like western birds.

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* Numerous on the northern cays and especially at Las Salinas.

**Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla* Numerous on the north coast.

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* Three on Cayo Coco including, unusually, an adult.

**American Herring Gull** *Larus smithsonianus* Eight on Cayo Coco was a large count.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* Eight adults on Cayo Coco, increasing as a winter visitor to Cuba.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* About six at Las Salinas.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* Noted at four wetland sites with up to 50 at Las Salinas.

**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* Several at The northern cays, at Las Salinas and in Havana.

**Cabot's Tern** *Thalasseus acuflavidus* One offshore at Havana East Beach.

**Rock Dove (introduced)** *Columba livia* A few, mainly in towns.

**White-crowned Pigeon** ♦ *Patagioenas leucocephala* Small numbers, a couple in the scope at Horquitas Road.

**Scaly-naped Pigeon** ♦ *Patagioenas squamosa* Up to 10 in flight at Sierra de Cubitas.

**Plain Pigeon** ♦ *Patagioenas inornata* Three or four at Najassa and La Belen, excellent views.

**Eurasian Collared Dove (introduced)** *Streptopelia decaocto* A few in Havana and on Cayo Coco.



**Common Ground Dove** *Columbina passerina* Widespread in fairly small numbers, seen almost daily.

**Blue-headed Quail-Dove** ♦ *Starnoenas cyanocephala* Incredible close views of two at Bermejas, two more at Soplillar.

**Ruddy Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon montana* A couple at Bermejas.

**Grey-fronted Quail-Dove** ♦ *Geotrygon caniceps* Two at Bermejas and singles at Soplillar and Santo Tomas.

**Key West Quail-Dove** ♦ *Geotrygon chrysia* Great views of up to three on Cayo Coco and a brief bird at Las Salinas.

**Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* Very widespread, especially prominent along roads as we travelled.

**Zenaida Dove** ♦ *Zenaida aurita* Rather widespread, noted on 10 dates but seen best at Cayo Coco and Bermejas.

**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* Noted on seven dates.

**Smooth-billed Ani** *Crotophaga ani* Widespread in open country, seen on nine dates.

**Mangrove Cuckoo** *Coccyzus minor* One on Cayo Coco showed very well.

**Great Lizard Cuckoo** ♦ *Coccyzus merlini* Small numbers on seven dates, many others heard, some great views.



*Stygian Owl and Cuban Nightjar – our local guide Mario did very well to find these! (Chris Kehoe)*

**Bare-legged Owl** ♦ (Cuban Screech O) *Margarobyas lawrencii* Two at a nest tree at Soplillar showed well.

**Cuban Pygmy Owl** ♦ *Glaucidium siju* Widespread, nine individuals seen over five dates.

**Stygian Owl** ♦ *Asio stygius* Seen each night at Playa Larga and a wonderful roosting bird at Soplillar.

**Cuban Nightjar** ♦ *Antrostomus cubanensis* Two at night on Cayo Coco and a tree roosting bird at Soplillar.

**Antillean Palm Swift** ♦ *Tachornis phoenicobia* Common at a few sites but generally absent.

**Cuban Emerald** ♦ *Chlorostilbon ricordii* Fairly common and widespread, seen on all but one day.

**Bee Hummingbird** ♦ *Mellisuga helenae* Fantastic views of up to 10 birds at three Zapata sites.

**Cuban Trogon** ♦ *Priotelus temnurus* Noted on eight dates after the first at La Guira, others heard.

**Belted Kingfisher** *Megaceryle alcyon* Small numbers on the northern cays and at Zapata after the first at Bakalloa.

**Cuban Tody** ♦ *Todus multicolor* Encountered in most woodlands visited, some marvelous views of this favourite.





*Fernandina's Flicker and West Indian Woodpecker (Chris Kehoe)*



*'Caribbean' Cave Swallows (Chris Kehoe)*

**West Indian Woodpecker** ♦ *Melanerpes superciliaris* Common and widespread, noted on 10 dates.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (W)** *Sphyrapicus varius* A high total of seven birds at widespread sites, first at La Guira.

**Cuban Green Woodpecker** ♦ *Xiphidiopicus percussus* Just eight n total though at widespread sites on six dates.



**Northern Flicker** ♦ *Colaptes auratus* Six seen and a couple more heard on five dates.

**Fernandina's Flicker** ♦ *Colaptes fernandinae* Good views of two pairs at Horquitas Road, dancing display observed.

**Northern Crested Caracara** *Caracara cheriway* Several, mainly as we travelled, noted on seven dates.

**American Kestrel** ♦ *Falco sparverius* Small numbers most days, two dark morph individuals seen.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius* Three on the northern cays and a couple elsewhere, more than usual.

**Cuban Amazon** ♦ *Amazona leucocephala* Two at Najasa and about 12 at Zapata, mostly in flight.

**Cuban Parakeet** ♦ *Psittacara euops* One at La Belen and up to 20 at Bermejas and Santo Tomas.

**Cuban Pewee** ♦ (Crescent-eyed P) *Contopus caribaeus* Fairly common in more wooded country, seen on 10 dates.

**Grey Kingbird (S)** *Tyrannus dominicensis* Widespread encounters, seen on nine dates.

**Giant Kingbird** ♦ *Tyrannus cubensis* Good scope views of one at La Belen, a couple more briefly there.

**Loggerhead Kingbird** ♦ *Tyrannus caudifasciatus* Fairly common in more wooded areas, seen most days.

**La Sagra's Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiarchus sagrae* Widespread but never very common, see on nine dates.

**Thick-billed Vireo** ♦ *Vireo crassirostris* Two hurricane survivors at Cayo Paredon Grande showed well.

**Cuban Vireo** ♦ *Vireo gundlachii* Occasional encounters after the first at Hato de Jicarita.

**Yellow-throated Vireo** *Vireo flavifrons* Singles at Sierra de Cubitas and Soplillar.

**Black-whiskered Vireo** ♦ (S) *Vireo altiloquus* Common in the west, fewer elsewhere, far more heard than seen..

**Cuban Palm Crow** ♦ *Corvus minutus* Up to 30 at Najasa and La Belen.

**Cuban Crow** ♦ *Corvus nasicus* Common at Najasa/ La Belen, a couple at Playa Larga.

**Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor* Some large gatherings at Cayo Guillermo and over Playa Larga,



*Thick-billed Vireo- this species was feared extinct in Cuba after the 2017 hurricane (tour participant Edward Paxton)*

**Cuban Martin** ♦ *Progne cryptoleuca* Noted on nine dates after the first at La Guira but never common.

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* Many over Camaguey, a few elsewhere.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* Far more than usual with double figure counts on the northern cays and in Havana.

**Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva* Seen best at Buena Caleta, where nesting above the bar, noted on six dates.

**Zapata Wren** ♦ *Ferminia cerverai* Close views of a singing bird at Santo Tomas.

**Cuban Gnatcatcher** ♦ *Polioptila lembeyei* Fabulous views of two on Cayo Coco, always a delight.

**Grey Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis* A few in the Zapata area but far fewer than usual.

**Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos* Common and widespread, seen daily, often in double figures.

**Bahama Mockingbird** ♦ *Mimus gundlachii* A very showy individual at Cayo Guillermo.



**Cuban Solitaire** *Myadestes elisabeth* Close views at Cueva de los Portales, heard singing.  
**Red-legged Thrush** ♦ *Turdus plumbeus* Common, widespread and spectacular, seen daily.  
**House Sparrow (introduced)** *Passer domesticus* Occasional encounters, mostly in towns.  
**Zapata Sparrow** ♦ (Cuban S) *Torreornis inexpectata* Ones and twos at two Zapata sites and on Cayo Coco.  
**Western Spindalis** ♦ *Spindalis zena* Noted on five dates, most prominent in the west, and scarcer than usual.  
**Yellow-headed Warbler** ♦ *Teretistris fernandinae* Great views at La Guira and at various Zapata sites.  
**Oriente Warbler** ♦ *Teretistris fornsi* Great views of two pairs at Sierra de Cubitas.  
**Eastern Meadowlark** ♦ *Sturnella magna* Noted on three dates, surprisingly localised. A very plausible split.



'Cuban' Eastern Meadowlark (small endemic race *hippocrepsis*) and Bahama Mockingbird (Chris Kehoe)



Cape May Warbler – Cuba is a major wintering area for this stunning species (Chris Kehoe)



**Cuban Oriole** ♦ *Icterus melanopsis* Handfuls were noted on nine dates, several close views.

**Tawny-shouldered Blackbird** ♦ *Agelaius humeralis* Noted on eight dates at widespread sites, sometimes numerous.

**Red-shouldered Blackbird** ♦ *Agelaius assimilis* A handful at three Zapata sites.

**Shiny Cowbird** *Molothrus bonariensis* Small numbers on three dates after the first at Las Terrezas.



*Black-throated Blue Warbler – another species that winters mainly in the Caribbean (Chris Kehoe)*



*Ovenbird and 'Eastern' Palm Warbler – most Palm Warblers in Cuba are of the whiter-bellied western race (Chris Kehoe)*

**Tawny-shouldered Blackbird** ♦ *Agelaius humeralis* Noted on eight dates at widespread sites, sometimes numerous.

**Cuban Blackbird** ♦ *Ptiloxena atroviolacea* Widespread, sometimes common, seen on nine dates.



**Greater Antillean Grackle** ♦ *Quiscalus niger* Common, widespread and noisy.

**Ovenbird** *Seiurus aurocapilla* Nine individuals over five dates.

**Worm-eating Warbler** ♦ *Helmitheros vermivorum* Ones and twos on five dates after the first at Sierra de Cubitas

**Louisiana Waterthrush** *Parkesia motacilla* A couple at Santo Tomas and a showy bird at the crocodile farm, Zapata.

**Northern Waterthrush** *Parkesia noveboracensis* Noted on seven dates.



Northern Waterthrush (above) and Louisiana Waterthrush (Chris Kehoe)



**Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* Ones and twos on five dates.

**Prothonotary Warbler** *Protonotaria citrea* One at Santo Tomas, stunning as ever and rather rare in Cuba.

**Swainson's Warbler** ◇ *Limnothlypis swainsonii* (LO) A very uncooperative and frustratingly quiet bird at Soplillar.

**Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* Common in the Zapata wetlands with a few elsewhere.

**American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla* Rather common at Zapata but seen throughout.

**Cape May Warbler** *Setophaga tigrina* Always a highlight, seen on xx with several gorgeous males

**Northern Parula** *Setophaga americana* Several at Zapata and a couple elsewhere.

**Magnolia Warbler** *Setophaga magnolia* About 10i in total at wooded Zapata sites

**Mangrove Warbler** *Setophaga petechia* Three or four obliging birds at Las Salinas.

**Black-throated Blue Warbler** *Setophaga caerulescens* Good views on seven dates.

**Palm Warbler** *Setophaga palmarum* Common throughout, a yellow-bellied eastern bird on the cays was unusual.

**Olive-capped Warbler** ◇ *Setophaga pityophila* Excellent views of a couple in pines at La Guira.

**Yellow-throated Warbler** *Setophaga dominica* Ones and twos on 10 dates.

**Prairie Warbler** *Setophaga discolor* Several at Zapata sites with a couple on the northern cays.

**Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens* One at La Belen and up to eight at two Zapata sites

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* A brief female at Hacienda Cortina.

**Red-legged Honeycreeper (introduced)** *Cyanerpes cyaneus* A handful at La Guira and one at Zapata.

**Cuban Bullfinch** ◇ *Melopyrrha nigra* Oddly scarce but seen well on Cayo Coco and at Santo Tomas.



Cuban and Yellow-faced Grassquits (Chris Kehoe)

**Cuban Grassquit** ◇ *Tiaris canorus* Fantastic views of up to 30 at Las Terrezas.

**Yellow-faced Grassquit** *Tiaris olivaceus* Widespread in generally small numbers.

## MAMMALS

Number of species recorded: 1

**Desmarest's Hutia** *Capromys pilorides* One at Bermejas was an unexpected bonus.



*The group overlooking Havana Bay (Chris Kehoe)*