



*Cuban Tody (Craig Robson)*

# CUBA

**12 – 25 MARCH 2022**

**LEADER CRAIG ROBSON**

After a Covid-enforced two-year hiatus, it was a great pleasure for all of us to embark on the latest Birdquest to Cuba. Thanks to the knowledge and efforts of our principal guide Alejandro, our local guides Merlin, Camillo, Odey, Mario and Orlando, and our very competent driver Luis, we clocked-up a potentially record-breaking total of 178 birds, including all of the expected endemics. The many avian highlights ranged from the superb Blue-headed Quail-Dove (one of four quail-doves seen) to the incredible Cuban Tody, and tiny Bee Hummingbird, and also included: the awesome Stygian Owl, Bare-legged and Cuban Pygmy Owls, the lovely Cuban Trogon, displaying Fernandina's Flickers, Giant Kingbird, a very showy and vociferous Zapata Wren, and the unusual Oriente Warbler (along with Yellow-headed Warbler, now part of an endemic family). There was also a supporting cast of 18 species of overwintering and passage New World warblers, including Worm-eating, many Cape May's, Prairie, and unexpected Tennessee and Orange-crowns. The most

surprising visitor from the north however, was a 'Black' Brant (*nigricans* Brant Goose) that Cindy picked-out amongst the flamingos at Laguna de las Salinas, Zapata - a first for Cuba.

As well as the birds we were also able to identify a respectable 29 species of butterflies and 13 species of reptiles amphibians, including some very nice endemics.



*A confiding Blue-headed Quail-Dove (Craig Robson)*

The tour began at Jose Marti International Airport. As the final two tour participants landed and seamlessly exited the airport, the rest of the group had a brief introduction to the local avifauna around the airport perimeter. The first additions to the trip list included Antillean Palm Swift, Cuban Emerald, Red-legged Thrush, Tawny-shouldered and Cuban Blackbirds and Greater Antillean Grackle.

From the airport, in our surprisingly large, comfortable and spotless bus, we headed south-west to our accommodation at San Diego de los Baños. A brief but bird-filled stop at Pinar del Río Farming Ponds yielded the expected Snail Kites, as well as a nice variety of large waterbirds, including a good number of American White Pelicans. Our first 'Cuban' Eastern Meadowlark was noted in a rank grassy area.

After a relaxing lunch at our hotel, we spent the afternoon at Hacienda Cortina, accompanied by our local guide Merlin. New birds came thick-and-fast in the varied habitats here, and we notched-up some real crackers, with Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Cuban Pewee, the rare Giant Kingbird (collecting nest-material), Cuban Oriole, Yellow-headed Warbler, and Yellow-faced Grassquit. Our only Olive-capped Warblers of the trip were spotted in some tall conifers. Also of note were Least Grebe, and our first White-crowned Pigeon, Great Lizard-Cuckoo, Loggerhead Kingbird, Black-whiskered Vireo, and Western Spindalis. A couple each of Tennessee and Orange-crowned Warblers were unexpected, as was Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Our first full morning of Cuban birding was spent in the vicinity of Cueva de los Portales. A cave in this National Monument is the site of Che Guevara's headquarters during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 (when he commanded the Western Army), while other caves held a roosting American Barn Owl and a colony of

Mexican Free-tailed Bats. Surrounding the cave system is some natural and semi-natural forest and woodland - home to our primary avian target here, Cuban Solitaire, a number of which were very vocal and easily seen. Other additions to our growing tour-list included Scaly-naped Pigeon, Broad-winged Hawk, West Indian Woodpecker, Grey Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, a nesting colony of Cave Swallows, and Cuban Bullfinch. Purple-type martins hawking high above the caves were thought to be the tricky-to-ID Cuban Martin.



*Giant Kingbird (Craig Robson)*

After lunch we twitched Cuban Grassquit at a good spot that Alejandro knew in the Las Terrazas area. Several birds popped-up into view as soon as we arrived, and gave some great close views. A nearby trail produced a nice Worm-eating Warbler, as well as our first Great Lizard-Cuckoo and Cuban Vireo. Checking several reservoirs on our way back to Havana, there were few significant highlights; rafts of wintering/passage Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup, Common Gallinule (American Moorhen), Double-crested Cormorant, Tricoloured Heron, and Brown Pelican amongst other species.

Early the following morning we headed south-east towards Camagüey, with a selection of birding stops en route. Our first port of call was Río Hatiguanico, at the edge of the Parque Nacional Ciénega de Zapata. A pleasant stroll down the main track with the rising sun at our backs brought Zenaida Doves, Limpkin, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 'Cuban' American Kestrels, La Sagra's Flycatcher, and a fly-by Cuban Martin. Cindy spotted our first Cuban Pygmy Owl, and we also had excellent views of the scarce endemic Red-shouldered Blackbird. A selection of American warblers included the smart Yellow-throated.

Stopping for lunch at a popular resort-restaurant in Santa Clara, there were a few odds-and-ends in the gardens, and journey birds also included Crested Caracara and Peregrine Falcon.

Not long before reaching Camagüey we made a short detour to Manuel Ascunce Reservoir. This was an excellent spot, with a nice selection of birds. Blue-winged Teal, Purple Gallinule, small numbers of the expected freshwater shorebirds, herons and egrets, Belted Kingfisher, *carolinensis* Western Osprey,

Northern Rough-winged Swallow, smart Shiny Cowbirds, and Northern Parula and Prairie Warblers. We continued to our hotel in Camagüey.



*Cuban Pygmy Owl (Robert Lockett)*

Next morning, we rendezvoused with local birding guide Camillo, for a morning excursion at Sendero de las Aves, Sierra del Chorillo. Camillo was straight on the case, pointing out new birds. Plain Pigeon and a nesting pair of Cuban Amazon's were scoped, and we also enjoyed better views of Cuban Pygmy Owl (including one that popped-up right next to the track with a lizard in its beak), rather fleeting Cuban Parakeets, both Cuban Palm and Cuban Crows, which gave superb vocal comparisons, and Cape May, Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers. Just as we were leaving in the bus, our guides spotted a couple of circling Gundlach's Hawks, and we all jumped off the bus to get our first views of this potentially tricky endemic.

After lunch we tried Parque Botánico de Camagüey. It proved to be rather quiet, with Common Ground Dove, Solitary Sandpiper, Roseate Spoonbill, Ovenbird, and several Cape May Warblers amongst the few highlights.

Departing Camagüey, we headed north and west towards Cuba's North Cays. Crossing a low hill-range, the Sierra de Cubitas, we stopped at a high point to search for the local form of the endemic Oriente Warbler which, along with Yellow-headed Warbler is now placed in a new endemic family, Teretristidae (Cuban Warblers), which are not closely related to the New World warblers. It wasn't too long before a small group of these attractive passerines appeared out of nowhere and flitted-in for point-blank views. In the distance we could hear our first Key West Quail-Dove calling tantalizingly from the forest interior, and we were lucky enough to get a good scope view of Scaly-naped Pigeon. We continued onwards to the coast, arriving at our hotel on Cayo Coco in time for lunch. Brief stops along the causeway prior to our arrival produced a nice

range of coastal species, including Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Laughing Gull, Royal and Cabot's Terns, the "Great White" *occidentalis* form of Great Blue Heron, American White Ibis, and Magnificent Frigatebird.



*Oriente Warbler (Heidi Doman)*

After meeting-up with our local guide Odey, we spent the afternoon exploring a number of sites around Cayo Coco. Some neat roosting West Indian Whistling Ducks were first on the agenda, followed by an attractive coastal site with wintering Piping Plovers, supported by American Oystercatcher, and Semipalmated and Grey Plovers. Initial tries for Clapper Rail drew a blank, but we had more luck at the Wastewater Treatment ponds, where we found American Avocet amongst a good range of waterfowl and shorebirds. Finally, we were treated to a rather tame Mangrove Cuckoo and close views of Northern Waterthrush.

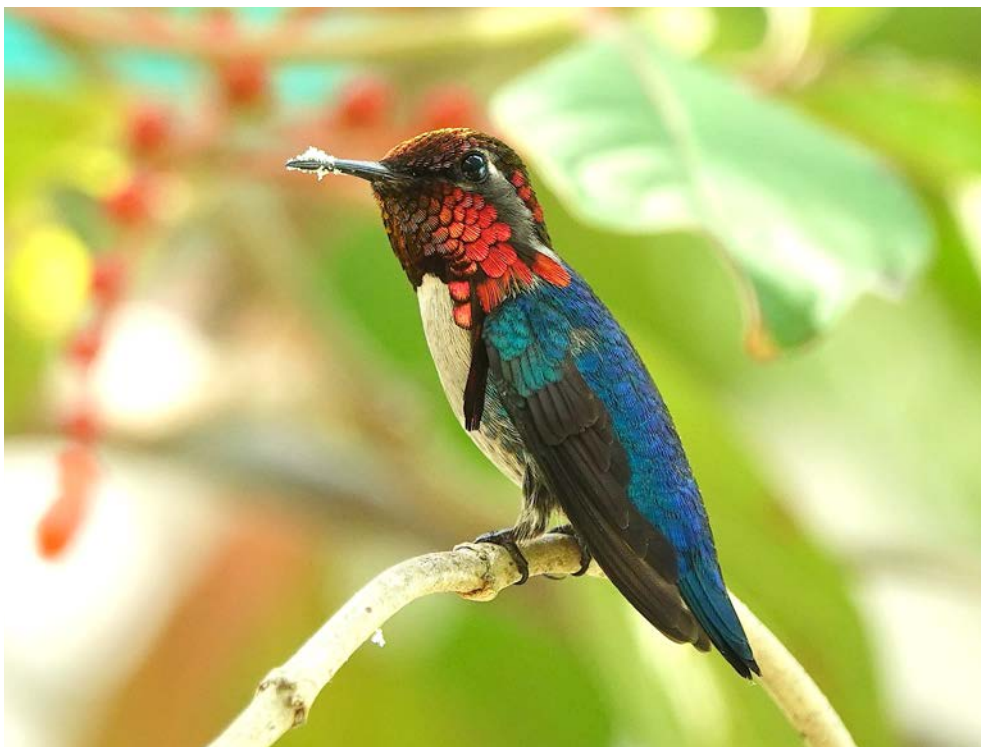
Our next morning's birding was spent at the Cueva del Jabali bird feeding area. The highlights here were an excellent Key West Quail-Dove and the North Cays form of Zapata Sparrow, both of which showed really well, as did Zenaida Dove and Grey Catbird. Next-up was our first Cuban Black Hawk, before Odey successfully tempted-in a singing Bahama Mockingbird. Our first White-eyed Vireo and Magnolia Warbler were also noted nearby. Scanning the lagoons, we added good numbers of shorebirds, including two more Piping Plovers, Short-billed Dowitcher, Willet, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Reddish Egret, and American Flamingo. In the afternoon we were taken to some excellent coastal woodland where Cuban Gnatcatcher and the North Cays form of Oriente Warbler both showed well, and we finished off by finally tracking-down our first 'Cuban' Northern Flicker.

Before leaving the cays behind, we made an early morning excursion to Cayo Paredon Grande, which is still thought to be the best area to search for the range-restricted Thick-billed Vireo. This species only has a very small and vulnerable population in Cuba and, according to some sources, they had suffered from the ravages of recent hurricanes and might even have become extinct! Happily, we can confirm that the latter scenario is certainly not the case, as a singing bird soon piped-up after our arrival, and showed very nicely. Feeling well satisfied, we embarked on our drive to Playa Giron, close to the Zapata swamp.



*Thick-billed Vireo (Robert Lockett)*

Stopping at the same restaurant in Santa Clara for lunch, we were surprised to see a large roost of Jamaican Fruit Bats in the apex of the reception roof! Somehow, we had missed these on our first visit. Not far from our destination we stopped for a birding visit to Palpite Casa de Bernabe, the location of some famous hummingbird feeders. Once inside the compound, we were soon face-to-face with our first Bee Hummingbird, one of the most amazing and sought-after Cuban endemics. What a treat to see these tiny gems at such close range, and there were superb views of Cuban Emeralds too.



*Bee Hummingbird (Heidi Doman)*

We were up well before sunrise on the following morning and met up with our very experienced local guide Mario at the outskirts of the Parque Nacional Ciénega de Zapata. We headed straight off down a track with Mario at the helm, in the hope of bagging nightbirds before daybreak. It proved to be the sensible option, with Bare-legged Owl and Cuban Nightjar both showing well - the latter through the scope at its roost.

Continuing onwards, we eventually arrived at Mario's spot for the elusive and endemic Zapata Wren, one of the must-see endemics! Mario skillfully brought the bird into view with a minimum of effort, and we had fantastic views of this unique mono-generic wren. Our walk culminated at a good place for the nominate form of Zapata Sparrow, which again showed very well, with two birds frequenting the track right in front of us. Ruddy Quail-Dove was seen rather fleetingly, but a decent variety of other Cuban specialities included Great Lizard-Cuckoo, Cuban Pygmy Owl, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Cuban Pewee, La Sagra's Flycatcher, Loggerhead Kingbird, Cuban Vireo, Black-whiskered Vireo, Red-legged Thrush, and Yellow-headed Warbler.



*Zapata Wren (Craig Robson)*

In the afternoon we visited Cueva de los Peces, and had our first encounters with the huge numbers of swarming Black Land Crabs - which were to be a feature of the remainder of our travels in this area. At certain points, particularly in the afternoons, massing thousands of these large crabs covered the roads, with small groups of Turkey Vultures feasting on those that didn't make it to the other side. Our day ended at Soplillar with a superb displaying pair of Fernandina's Flickers and close-ups of Cuban Amazon.

Refugio de Fauna Bermeja was our destination the next morning, where we positioned ourselves behind a screen constructed by 'local' local guide Orlando who, over the years, has developed methods of attracting the very shy quail-doves that we all wanted to see. First to come trundling down the path towards us was a smart Key West Quail-Dove, but it wasn't too long before the main caste arrived, in the form of several stunning Blue-headed Quail-Doves, and a rather more stand-offish Grey-fronted. The Blue-headed's were so confiding that they even came in behind the screen to join us!! Other bird highlights during the morning included a couple of Bee Hummingbirds, two more Gundlach's Hawks (showing perched at times), more Bare-legged and Cuban Pygmy Owls, another 'Cuban' Northern Flicker, superb close-ups of Cuban Parakeet, and Summer Tanager.

A relatively uneventful afternoon was followed by after-dinner efforts for nightbirds in the hotel grounds. The much-wanted Stygian Owl was only heard rather fleetingly, and we had better luck with two American Barn Owls and a couple of unexpected Yellow-crowned Night Herons.

Our next morning was spent at the excellent Laguna de las Salinas, with its wide variety of coastal wetland and mangrove species. The local form of Clapper Rail finally gave-in and showed really well, while tidal related gatherings of shorebirds included Stilt Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, both species of yellowlegs, and Willet, as well as Caspian, Gull-billed and Royal Terns, and a neat group of Black Skimmers. Large waterbirds were very well represented, and included our highest concentrations of American Flamingos (including plenty of juveniles), a number of Wood Storks, lots of American White Ibises, and our first obvious Neotropic Cormorants. Also of interest were Cuban Black Hawk and Mangrove Warbler. The biggest surprise of the morning however, came when Cindy declared that she was watching a Brent Goose, and to everyone's utter surprise, we realized that she had just clapped-eyes on a first for Cuba!



*Fernandina's Flicker (Heidi Doman)*

Various local sites were visited after lunch, with a good range of species noted but no major highlights. A more concerted effort to see Stygian Owl after dinner finally came up trumps, with Mario's dogged efforts resulting in superb prolonged views of this cracking nightbird.

Orlando joined us for our final morning's birding, as we tried our luck at the Babiney Rice Fields. A handful of excellent King Rails performed well, giving great views, and we enjoyed the likes of Northern Jacana, Glossy Ibis, Northern Harrier, and yet another Gundlach's Hawk. Tree Swallow was new, and some of us were lucky enough to see some Savanna Sparrows. Nearby, we could hear the distant bugling of Sandhill Cranes, but the birds remained elusive. A flock of Red-shouldered Blackbirds provided further views of this scarce endemic.

In the afternoon, at Refugio de Fauna Bermeja, we enjoyed much better views of Grey-fronted Quail-Doves, but there was no sign of the elusive, though more widespread Ruddy.



Our final day saw us drive back to Havana in time for an early lunch, after which Alejandro performed very adeptly as he gave us a tour of the very attractive and well-maintained parts of the old city. A very enjoyable and successful tour drew to a close as we respectively departed for our hotels and the airport.



*Touring old Havana (Craig Robson)*

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

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

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

### BIRDS

Total of bird species recorded: 178.

West Indian Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna arborea* 24 in the North Cays.

Brant Goose (Brent G, Black Brant) *Branta [bernicla] nigricans* One at Laguna de las Salinas.

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors* A high count of 62 at Canal de Zapata.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* 20 at Cayo Coco WTP.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana* A few on Cayo Coco.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* 20 on reservoirs west of Havana.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* 150 west of Havana.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* Two at Cayo Coco.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* Eight at Cayo Coco WTP

Helmeted Guineafowl (introduced) *Numida meleagris*

Cuban Nightjar *Antrostomus cubanensis* One seen and another heard at Zapata--La Turba.

Antillean Palm Swift *Tachornis phoenicobia* Widespread.

Bee Hummingbird *Mellisuga helenae* Endemic. Fabulous encounters at Palpite Casa de Bernabe. Also at Bermeja.

Cuban Emerald *Riccordia ricordii* Widespread regional endemic, but lovely nonetheless!

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani* Widespread.

Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor* One seen very well and another heard on Cayo Coco.



Mangrove Cuckoo (Craig Robson)

Great Lizard Cuckoo *Coccyzus merlini* Regular encounters (endemic nominate form).

Rock Dove (introduced) *Columba livia* Small numbers most days.

White-crowned Pigeon *Patagioenas leucocephala* Occasional sightings of small numbers.

Scaly-naped Pigeon *Patagioenas squamosa* Seen on 3 days; scoped at Sierra de Cubitas.

Plain Pigeon *Patagioenas inornata* Seen on 4 days; scoped at Sendero de las Aves (endemic nominate form).

Eurasian Collared Dove (introduced) *Streptopelia decaocto* Regularly encountered, especially the first week.

Common Ground Dove *Columbina passerine* Regularly encountered throughout (near-endemic *insularis*).

Blue-headed Quail-Dove *Starnoenas cyanocephala* At least five at Refugio de Fauna Bermeja. Endemic.



*Great Lizard-Cuckoo (Cindy Lawes) & Key West Quail-Dove (Craig Robson)*

**Ruddy Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon montana* One rather too briefly at Zapata--La Turba (widespread *montana*).

**Grey-fronted Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon caniceps* Three at Refugio de Fauna Bermeja. Endemic.

**Key West Quail-Dove** *G. chrysis* 1 Cayo Coco, 1 R. de F. Bermeja; heard Sierra de Cubitas & Zapata--La Turba.

**Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* Common and widespread (incl. regional endemic nominate).

**Zenaida Dove** *Zenaida aurita* Widespread sightings and some great views (regional endemic *zenaida*).

**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* A few on five dates (nominate).

**Clapper Rail** *Rallus crepitans* Seen well at las Salinas. Others heard there & in N Cays (regional endemic *caribaeus*).

**King Rail** *Rallus elegans* Close encounters at Babiney Rice Fields; at least 6 present (endemic *ramsdeni*).

**Common Gallinule (American Moorhen)** *Gallinula galeata* Widespread sightings.

**American Coot** *Fulica americana* Widespread sightings.

**Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinica* One at Manuel Ascunce Reservoir & 3 en route from N Cays to Playa Giron.

**Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis* (H) Bugling in grasslands NE of Playa Giron (endemic *nesiotes*).

**Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna* A couple at Zapata sites and others near Camagüey (regional endemic *pictus*).

**Least Grebe** *Tachybaptus dominicus* 2 at Hacienda Cortina & 14 at Cayo Coco WTP (regional endemic nominate).

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* Singles at Las Terrazas and Laguna de las Salinas.

**American Flamingo (Caribbean F)** *Phoenicopterus ruber* Maxima of 500+ at Cayo Coco & Laguna de las Salinas.

**American Oystercatcher** *Haematopus palliatus* Two on Cayo Coco.

**Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus* Common in suitable habitat.

**American Avocet** *Recurvirostra americana* 17 at Cayo Coco WTP.

**Grey Plover (Black-bellied P)** *Pluvialis squatarola* Several on the N Cays, and 50 at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* Over 50 Cayo Coco, and a few at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferous* Widespread. Recently fledged young at Soplillar.

**Piping Plover** *Charadrius melodus* 14 of these endangered plovers at Cayo Coco.

**Northern Jacana** *Jacana spinosa* A few scattered sightings; best at Babiney Rice Fields (regional endemic *violacea*).

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* Small numbers at the coast.

**Stilt Sandpiper** *Calidris himantopus* Just five at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Nine on Cayo Coco.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* Two at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* Typically widespread.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* Just one on Cayo Coco.

**Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus* One on Cayo Coco and 230+ at Zapata area sites.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* Two at Manuel Ascunce Reservoir, and 3 Cayo Coco WTP.

**Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* Just one at Camagüey Botanical Gardens.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Scattered sites in reasonable numbers.

**Willet** *Tringa semipalmata* 25 on Cayo Coco and a couple at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* Typically scarcer than Lesser.

**Black Skimmer** *Rynchops niger* At least 20 at Laguna de las Salinas; an erratic visitor to Cuba.

**Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla* Fairly numerous at the coast.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* Two on Cayo Coco; an increasing winter visitor.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelocheilidon nilotica* Just eight at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* Quite widespread, with maximum of 60 at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* Similar abundance to the previous species, but strictly coastal.

**Cabot's Tern** *Thalasseus acuflavidus* Three on the North Cays.

**Wood Stork** *Mycteria americana* About 12 at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* Occasional in small numbers on the coasts.

**Neotropic Cormorant** *Nannopterum brasilianum* Small numbers at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Double-crested Cormorant** *Nannopterum auritum* Widespread and often in good numbers.

**American White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus* Reasonable numbers on the coasts, with 50 at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* 80 at Babiney Rice Fields.

**Roseate Spoonbill** *Platalea ajaja* Scattered sightings of small numbers.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* Three at Zapata--La Turba.

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* Two in the hotel garden Playa Giron.

**Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* Noted on many days.

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Widespread, especially as we travelled.

**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* Noted on four days.

**Great Blue Heron (G White H) *Ardea [herodias] occidentalis*** At least 3 on the North Cays. Potentially a full species.

**Great Egret (American G E) *Ardea [alba] egretta*** Noted on 10 dates.

**Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*** Several on the North Cays and at Laguna de las Salinas.

**Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*** More frequent than the last species, at the same locations.

**Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*** Common and widespread.

**Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*** Quite common and widespread.

**American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*** 55 Pinar del Río Farming Ponds, 30 N Cays, 30 las Salinas.

**Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*** 20 west of Havana, and frequent in the North Cays.

**Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*** Widespread and abundant.

**Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*** Many carolinensis; one “Caribbean” ridgwayi at Playa Maceo, E of Playa Giron.



'Caribbean' Western Osprey (Craig Robson)

**Gundlach's Hawk *Accipiter gundlachi*** 2 at Sendero d. l. Aves, 2 at Bermeja, 1 Babiney R F. Endemic (nominate).

**Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*** Two at Laguna de las Salinas, and one at Babiney Rice Fields.

**Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*** Five at Pinar del Río Farming Ponds. Regionally endemic *plumbeus*.

**Cuban Black Hawk *Buteogallus gundlachi*** Seven on the North Cays and one at Laguna de las Salinas. Endemic.

**Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*** 2 at Cueva de los Portales; 1 on way to Cayo Coco. Endemic *cubanensis*.

**Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*** Occasional sightings of near-endemic *solitudinis*.

**American Barn Owl *Tyto furcata*** 1 roosting Cueva de los Portales, pair Playa Giron. Regionally endemic *furcata*.

**Bare-legged Owl (Cuban Screech O) *Margarobyas lawrencii*** Five seen in the Zapata area. Endemic (nominate).

**Cuban Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium siju*** This feisty endemic was recorded into double figures across 6 dates (nominate).

**Stygian Owl *Asio stygius*** A superb individual spotlighted at Playa Giron. Endemic *siguapa*.

**Cuban Trogon *Priotelus temnurus*** This lovely endemic was quite common in most wooded areas. Nominate race.

**Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*** Scattered sightings of a few.

**Cuban Tody *Todus multicolor*** This remarkable little endemic was commonly heard and often seen in wooded areas.

**West Indian Woodpecker *Melanerpes superciliosus*** Locally common regional endemic (nominate race).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*** Several sightings across four dates.

**Cuban Green Woodpecker *Xiphidiopicus percussus*** A common endemic (nominate race). Several occupied nests.

**Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*** 2 Cayo Coco, 1 Bermeja, heard Soplillar. Splitable endemic *chrysocaulosus*.

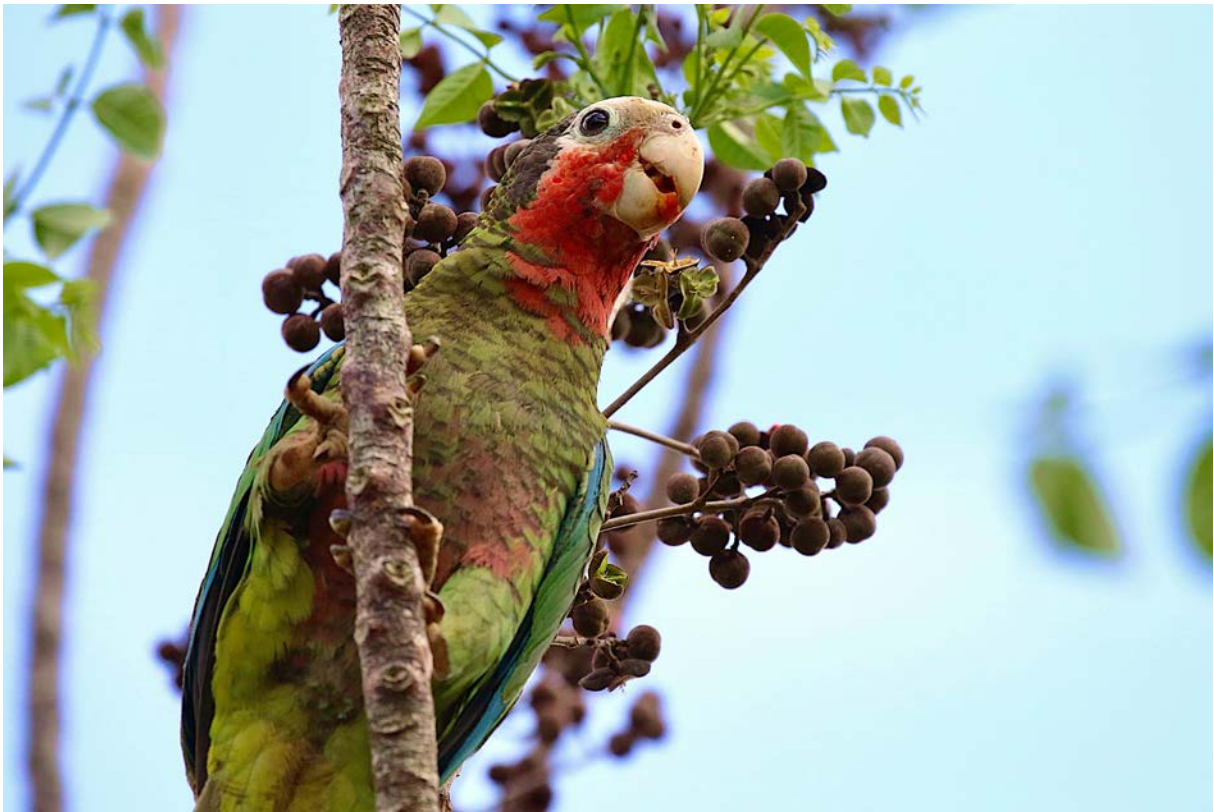
**Fernandina's Flicker *Colaptes fernandinae*** A superb displaying pair at Soplillar. A very distinctive endemic.

**Crested Caracara (Northern CC) *Caracara [plancus] cheriway*** Noted on eight dates (*audubonii*).

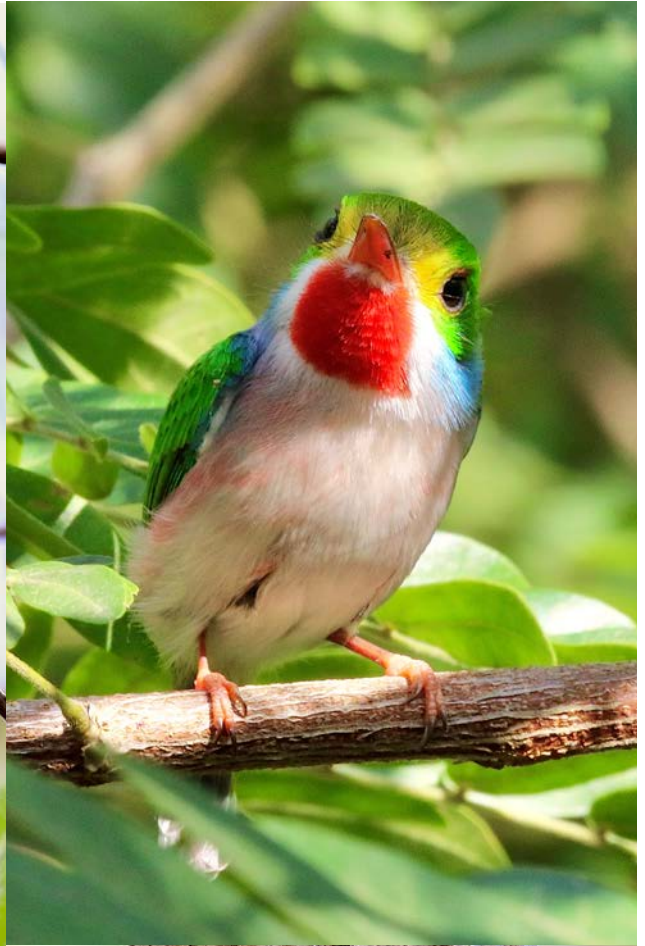
**American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*** Regular encounters with the unique regionally endemic form *sparverioides*.



*Clockwise from top left (Craig Robson): American Barn Owl, Bare-legged Owl, Stygian Owl & Cuban Pygmy Owl.*



*Cuban Amazon & Cuban Parakeet (Craig Robson)*



Clockwise from top left (Craig Robson): Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, Cuban Green Woodpecker & Fernandina's Flicker



**Merlin *Falco columbarius*** Two at Cayo Coco, and another en route to Playa Giron.

**Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*** Singles en route to Camagüey and at Babiney Rice Fields.

**Cuban Amazon *Amazona leucocephala*** Pair Sendero d. I. Aves; 14 Zapata-Soplillar. Regional endemic (nominate).

**Cuban Parakeet *Psittacara euops*** Several of these endemics at Sendero d. I. Aves, & Soplillar-Bermeja area.



*Cuban Pewee (Craig Robson)*

**Cuban Pewee (Crescent-eyed P) *Contopus caribaeus*** One of the commoner regional endemics (nominate form).

**Grey Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis*** Scattered sightings in more open areas; best at Playa Giron.

**Giant Kingbird *T. cubensis*** Best seen at Hacienda Cortina, where carrying nest material. Endangered near endemic.

**Loggerhead Kingbird *T. caudifasciatus*** Common regional endemic (nominate). Noted collecting nest material.

**La Sagra's Flycatcher *Myiarchus sagrae*** This near endemic was noted on seven dates (nominate).

**Black-whiskered Vireo *Vireo altiloquus*** Nice looks at this fairly common, migratory, regional endemic (*barbatulus*).

**Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*** One at Cueva de los Portales, and two at Sierra Cubitas.

**Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius* (NL)** Bob saw one briefly on Cayo Coco.

**White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*** One seen well at Cayo Coco. Subspecies unclear.

**Thick-billed Vireo *V. crassirostris*** One seen well at Cayo Peredon Grande. A local regional endemic (race *cubensis*).

**Cuban Vireo *Vireo gundlachii*** This fairly elusive endemic was noted on at least five dates, and more often heard.

**Cuban Palm Crow *Corvus minutus*** 20+ at Sendero d. I. Aves. Nice comparisons of this endemic with *C. nasicus*.

**Cuban Crow *C. nasicus*** 20+ comically noisy birds at Sendero d. I. Aves, and a couple at Canal de Zapata. Endemic.

**Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*** Just one picked-out at Babiney Rice Fields.

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*** Two noted at Manuel Ascunce Reservoir, Camagüey.

**Cuban Martin *Progne cryptoleuca*** Two over Cueva de los Portales, and one at Rio Hatiguanico (Zapata). Endemic.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*** A few sightings early on.

**Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*** 40 or so breeding at Cueva de los Portales, and a few elsewhere (*cavicola*).

**Zapata Wren *Ferminia cerverai*** Thanks to Mario, we had fantastic views of this Endangered must-see endemic.

**Cuban Gnatcatcher *Polioptila lembeyei*** A pair performed well on Cayo Coco. Endemic.

**Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*** Scattered occasional sightings.



*La Sagra's Flycatcher, Black-whiskered Vireo, and American Redstart (Craig Robson)*



Cuban Solitaire (Craig Robson), Bahama Mockingbird (Heidi Doman) & Red-legged Thrush (Craig Robson)

**Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos* Common and widespread (regionally endemic *orpheus*).

**Bahama Mockingbird** *Mimus gundlachii* Great views of this regional endemic (nominate form) at Cayo Coco.

**Cuban Solitaire** *Myadestes elisabeth* A handful seen very well at Cueva de los Portales. Endemic (nominate form).

**Red-legged Thrush** *Turdus plumbeus* One of the commonest and most widespread regional endemics (*rubripes*).

House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* Often seen around human habitation.  
 Tricolored Munia (introduced) *Lonchura malacca* 40+ at Babiney Rice Fields.  
 Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* (NL) John & Cindy photographed a couple at Babiney Rice Fields.  
 Zapata Sparrow *Torreornis inexpectata* 2 at Cayo Coco (*varonai*), & 2 at Zapata--La Turba (nominate). Endemic.  
 Western Spindalis *Spindalis zena* Some great views of this region endemic (*pretrei*). Noted collecting nest material.  
 Yellow-headed Warbler *Teretistris fernandinae* Occasional encounters in forest and woodland. West Cuba endemic.  
 Oriente Warbler *Teretistris fornsi* Five at Sierra de Cubitas, and two on Cayo Coco. Endemic (nominate race).  
 Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna* Many widespread sightings. Endemic race *hippocrepis*.  
 Cuban Oriole *Icterus melanopsis* An attractive and not uncommon endemic.  
 Tawny-shouldered Blackbird *Agelaius humeralis* Widespread and sometimes common near endemic (nominate).  
 Red-shouldered Blackbird *A. assimilis* 2 Rio Hatiguanico, 10 near Babiney R F. Endemic (presumably *subniger*).  
 Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* Several showed well at Manuel Ascunce Reservoir (*minusus*)  
 Cuban Blackbird *Ptiloxena atroviolacea* Widespread and often common endemic, away from the cays.  
 Greater Antillean Grackle *Quiscalus niger* A common and widespread regional endemic (*gundlachii*).



Ovenbird (Craig Robson)

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* Regular sightings, and some amazing close-up views.  
 Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorum* Alejandro found us one near the Cuban Grassquit site.  
 Louisiana Waterthrush *Parkesia motacilla* Singles on at least three dates.  
 Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis* Somewhat more frequent than the last species.  
 Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* Regularly encountered early on during the tour.  
 Tennessee Warbler *Leiothlypis peregrina* Two at Hacienda Cortina, rare in Cuba.  
 Orange-crowned Warbler *Leiothlypis celata* As for the last species, but a tour write-in.  
 Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* Common in some wetter areas.  
 American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* Widespread, and often quite common.  
 Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrine* Small numbers across four dates, and some fine males.  
 Northern Parula *Setophaga americana* Noted on six dates in small numbers.  
 Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia* Singles at Cayo Coco and Soplillar.  
 Mangrove Warbler *Setophaga petechia* Some nice views in the coastal mangroves.  
 Black-throated Blue Warbler *S. caerulescens* This cracker was one of the more frequently recorded warblers.  
 Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum* Widespread, and quite common.  
 Olive-capped Warbler *Setophaga pityophila* Two in pines at Hacienda Cortina. Conifer-dwelling near endemic.  
 Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica* Seen in small numbers on six dates.  
 Prairie Warbler *Setophaga discolor* Seen in small numbers on five dates.

**Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens* Two at Sendero de las Aves and one at Bermeja.  
**Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* One at Hacienda Cortina and another at Bermeja.  
**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* Two at Hacienda Cortina.  
**Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea* A single elusive bird at Canal de Zapata.  
**Red-legged Honeycreeper (introduced)** *Cyanerpes cyaneus* A number of sightings.  
**Yellow-faced Grassquit** *Tiaris olivaceus* Widespread encounters (regionally endemic nominate form).  
**Cuban Bullfinch** *Melopyrrha nigra* Small numbers of this near endemic across four dates (nominate form).  
**Cuban Grassquit** *Phonipara canora* Six seen very well at Las Terrazas. Monotypic endemic.



*Zapata Sparrow (nominate) and Cuban Grassquit (Craig Robson)*



*'Black Brant' at Laguna de las Salinas, Zapata (Robert Lockett)*

**MAMMALS**

Total of mammal species recorded: 2.

**Jamaican Fruit Bat** *Artibeus jamaicensis* At the restaurant in Santa Clara, and in a cave near Playa Giron.

**Mexican Free-tailed Bat** *Tadarida brasiliensis* Packed in a crevice at Cueva de los Portales.



Top: Jamaican Fruit Bats (Craig Robson). Bottom: Mexican Free-tailed Bats (Cindy Lawes)

## APPENDIX 1 - Other fauna & flora recorded

### REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Total of reptile & amphibian species recorded: 13.

**Cuban Tree Frog** *Osteopilus septentrionalis* Playa Giron.

**Northern Curlytail Lizard** *Leiocephalus carinatus* Playa Larga-Playa Giron area.

**Cuban Curlytail Lizard** *Leiocephalus cubensis* At the Bee Hummingbird spot etc.

**Knight Anole** *Anolis equestris* A couple at the edge of the Zapata Swamp.

**Cubitas Anole** *Anolis jubar* At the Bee Hummingbird spot.

**Cuban Green Anole** *Anolis porcatas* Havana Airport etc.

**Brown Anole** *Anolis sagrei* Widespread. Red throat-fan.

**Habana Anole (Cuban White-fanned A)** *Anolis homolechis* Las Terrazas--Finca Rosario pig farm etc.

**Auber's Ameiva** *Pholidoscelis auberi* Blue-tailed lizard in the North Cays.

**Yellow-headed Gecko** *Gonatodes albogularis* One on the restaurant wall at Mirador de San Diego.

**Tropical Gecko** *Hemidactylus mabouia* At our hotel at Playa Giron.

**Cuban Slider** *Trachemys decussata* Zapata--La Turba and Sendero Enigma--Enigma de la Rocas.

**Cuban Racer** *Cubophis cantherigerus* One at Zapata--La Turba, and two at Refugio de Fauna Bermeja.

### DECAPODS

**Black Land Crab** *Gecarcinus ruricola* Many thousands between Playa Larga & Play Giron. A remarkable spectacle.



*Knight Anole (Craig Robson)*



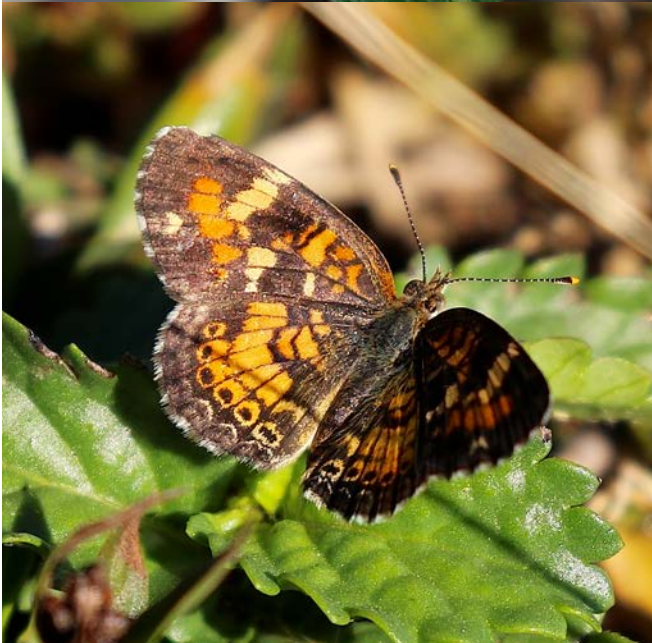
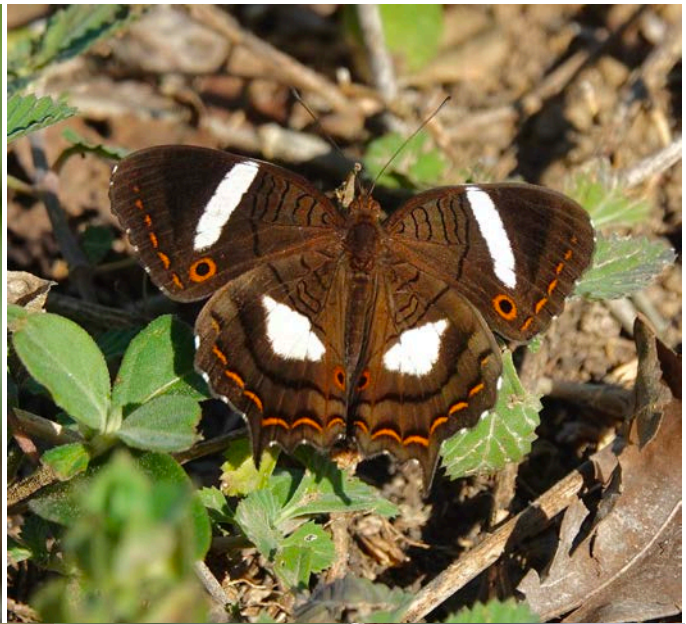
Cuban Curlytail Lizard (Cindy Lawes) & Northern Curlytail Lizard (Heidi Doman)

## BUTTERFLIES

Total of butterfly species recorded: 29.

- Polydamas Swallowtail** *Battus polydamas cubensis* Parque Botánico de Camagüey.
- Bahamian Swallowtail** *Heraclides andraemon andraemon* At the Bee Hummingbird spot.
- Dorantes Longtail** *Cecropterus dorantes santiago* Sierra del Chorillo--Sendero de las Aves.
- Monk Skipper** *Asbolis capucinus* Photographed by Cindy at Playa Giron.
- Purple-washed Skipper** *Panoquina lucas lucas* One at Zapata--La Turba.
- Baracoa Skipper** *Polites baracoa baracoa* Widespread; first seen at the airport on day one.
- Tropical Checkered Skipper** *Burnsius oileus* Parque Botánico de Camagüey & Playa Giron.
- Cuban Yellow** *Eurema amelia* Photographed by Cindy at Playa Giron.
- Large Orange Sulphur** *Phoebis agarithe antillia* Photographed by Cindy on Cayo Coco.
- Cloudless Sulphur** *Phoebis statira cubana* Several at Sierra del Chorillo--Sendero de las Aves.
- Little Yellow** *Pyrisitia lisa euterpe* Widespread and common.
- Great Southern White** *Ascia monuste eubotia* At Sierra del Chorillo--Sendero de las Aves.
- Ceraunus Blue** *Hemiargus ceraunus filenus* Widespread and common.
- Cassius Blue** *Leptotes cassius theonus* Frequently seen.
- Mallow Scrub Hairstreak** *Strymon istapa cybira* A few around Playa Giron.
- Silver Peacock** *Doxocopa laure druryi* One worn individual at Sendero de las Aves.
- Antillean Purplewing** *Eunica tatila tatilista* One briefly at Camagüey Botanical Gardens.
- Caribbean Daggerwing** *Marpesia eleuchea eleuchea* A couple at Zapata--La Turba.
- Gulf Fritillary** *Agraulis vanillae insularis* Widespread and frequently encountered.
- Mexican Fritillary** *Euptoieta hegesia hegesia* Craig and Heidi found some at Playa Giron.
- Zebra Longwing** *Heliconius charithonia ramsdeni* Frequently seen.
- Cuban Peacock** *Anartia chrysopelea* Several at Sendero de las Aves.
- White Peacock** *Anartia jatrophae guantanamo* Probably the most widespread butterfly of the trip.
- Cuban Crescent** *Anthanassa frisia frisia* Photographed by Cindy at Canal de Zapata.
- Tailed Cecropian** *Historis acheronta semele* One posed long enough for photos at Zapata--La Turba.
- Northern Buckeye** *Junonia coenia* Sendero de las Aves at least.
- Phaon Crescent** *Phyciodes phaon phaon* Seen at several locations around Playa Giron.
- Malachite** *Siproeta stelenes biplagiata* One or two at Sendero de las Aves.
- Cuban Common Calisto** *Calisto herophile* Quite frequent.





Top from left: *Ceraunus Blue* & *Cuban Peacock* (Heidi Doman). Middle from left: *Cuban Crescent* & *Tailed Cecropian* (Cindy Lawes). Bottom from left: *Phaon Crescent* & *Cuban Common Calisto* (Craig Robson)

## DRAGONFLIES

Total of dragonfly species recorded: 5.

**Great Pondhawk** *Erythemis vesiculosa* Babiney Ricefields at least.

**Seaside Dragonlet** *Erythrodiplax berenice* In the mangroves of the North Cays at least.

**Band-winged Dragonlet** *Erythrodiplax umbrata* Cueva de los Portales etc.

**Roseate Skimmer** *Orthemis ferruginea* Babiney Ricefields at least.

**Wandering Glider** *Pantala flavescens* Widespread.



*Great Pondhawk (Heidi Doman) and Seaside Dragonlet (Craig Robson)*



*Black Land Crabs (Craig Robson)*