

Birding on a budget in the Greater Antilles.

Jamaica, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico

8-23 May 2010

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Coastline in southwestern Dominican Republic

The Greater Antilles are probably best known for their beaches and tropical climate, as their birdlists are not very large, but what is lacking in quantity is more than made up for in quality, with a good number of endemics, both single island and regional (Greater Antilles/Caribbean). Both Jamaica and the Dominican Republic holds 28 single island endemics and Puerto Rico 13, depending on taxonomy, and the majority are not difficult to see, even on a short visit.

Cuba is also part of the Greater Antilles, but logistically more challenging, so I decided early on to leave out this island for another trip. Some of the more notable endemics were Todys, Lizzard Cuckoos and Palmchat, that are exclusive to this region.

The three islands are very different, with Jamaica being English-speaking (sort of), African and very lush, The Dominican Republic is Spanish-speaking, more barren (especially the southwest) and feels like somewhere in Central America. Puerto Rico is also Spanish-speaking but could otherwise just as well be somewhere in the US, with lots of cars, highways, shopping malls and fast food joints.

A trip in March would have yielded a good number of wintering birds from North America, including several warblers and waterbirds, but as my priority was the endemics, I chose to visit in May, when many birds were breeding.

For questions and further information please feel free to email me : jethalund@yahoo.dk.

Flights: I booked all my flights on www.travelocity.com and saved nearly 1000 USD by making two separate bookings. The flights from Denmark to Jamaica and from Puerto Rico to Denmark was booked on Delta Airlines/ KLM at 1087 USD, and the flights from Jamaica to the Dominican Republic and on to Puerto Rico was booked on American Airlines at 362 USD, a total of 1559 USD.
If I tried to collect all my flights in a single booking the price was 2500 USD!

Car Rental : I used www.travelocity.com and www.momondo.com to search for a rental car on the islands. In Jamaica I hired through Island Car Rental (recommended), in Dominican Republic I used Europcar (not recommended – see note), and in Puerto Rico I got a car through Charlie Car Rental www.charliecars.com (recommended).

My experience with Europcar in the Dominican Republic was not very satisfying. When I went to pick up the car at the airport in San Juan it took nearly an hour to sort out problems with the computer and the connection to the Credit Card company. When I had to change a damaged tyre in Barahona, I wasn't able to get through to the two listed telephone numbers for the airport office – twice – and when I finally spoke to someone at the office in Santo Domingo, they didn't see any problem, as I had already put on the spare wheel! I told them, that there were big yellow stickers on the wheel, informing me that the wheel was only good for emergencies, low speed and short distances. Then I was told to go back to the airport to switch cars, but as I was 4-5 hours away from there, that wasn't a solution to me. I just wanted to get permission to change the damaged tyre at a local shop, but I was then put on hold for more than 10 minutes, before the line went dead. Another call to the same person got me on hold once more, and as I couldn't be bothered more, I went ahead and got the tyre changed in 15 minutes (only 25 USD).

On the morning of my departure from the Dominican Republic I went to hand in the car, and despite having booked the car as an all inclusive, they suddenly found some charges for road assistance and taxes (?) that needed to be paid, before they would settle the bill. Despite much arguing, I had a plane to catch, so in the end I had to pay, or the rental period would continue, until I paid up!

To make a long story short : **Do not use Europcar in the Dominican Republic!!**

Logistics : driving on the islands was not nearly as bad, as the travel guides suggest, with pot holes and lacking signs with directions probably the most annoying problems. Jamaica was the most challenging because you drive on the left, the country roads are often narrow with no shoulder, and road signs mostly absent, but generally the speed was low, which left plenty of time to avoid too close encounters. One feature of all three islands was speedbumps, where you really needed to slow down, no matter how insignificant they looked. Some were pretty run down and un-marked, but still did the job, so when entering and exiting towns and villages, it was good to be alert.

As for lodging, there was no shortage of hotels and b&b's along the coasts, but many were rather expensive and resort-like, but smaller places could often be found away from the bigger holiday-areas. I spent several nights in the car on this trip, both to be on location early in the morning and to save a little money along the way. On Puerto Rico I was fortunate enough to be able to stay with family near Guanica.

Litterature : the best fieldguide to the area during my trip was **Birds of the West Indies** by H. Raffaele et al., and for a good idea about birding locations I used **Where to Watch Birds in Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean** by N. Wheatly and D. Brewer.

After my visit a couple of new books have been published – **Field Guide to the Birds of the West Indies** by Norman Arlott and **Prion's Birdwatcher's Guide to Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico and the Caymans** by Guy Kirwan et al, both books that will probably set the standard in the next few years.

Both Lonely Planet and Rough Guide have travel guides covering the different islands, with Lonely Planets usually being my favorite, and I found the map in the books adequate to get around, though the map provided by Charlie Car Rental in Puerto Rico came in handy on the smaller roads.

A lot of travel reports can be found on the internet, and I mainly checked out www.travellingbirder.com, www.surfbirds.com and www.maybank.tripod.com.

For sound recordings I bought Cornell's **Bird Songs in Jamaica**, and downloaded as many Hispaniolan and Puerto Rican endemics as possible from www.xeno-canto.com on to my mobile phone/mp3.

Weather : May is the beginning of the Rainy season, but I only encountered a few showers during my stay, and lost very little birding-time because of this. It was mostly sunny, with clouds building during the day, a cooling breeze from the northeasterly trade winds, and temperatures around 30 C along the coast and slightly cooler in the mountains.

Site notes : I reckon that all sites mentioned are being covered in the newly published **Prion's Birdwatcher's Guide to Cuba** by Guy Kirwan et al., so I won't go into details in this report.

Itinerary:

7 May – flight Billund-Amsterdam-Atlanta-Montego Bay (Jamaica) arriving around 8 pm, without my backpack. Stayed at View Guest House (55 USD).

8 May – picked up backpack at airport late morning, before driving to Rocklands Bird Feeding Station (15 USD), birding around the garden and feeders for a couple of hours. Drove to Elim Pools in St Elizabeth parish, taking wrong turns a few times along the way, only to find the area being mostly cane-fields and tall grassland around the fish ponds. Birded until sunset, and found a secluded parking spot down a farm track, to spend the night in the car.

9 May – tried the area around Elim Pools once more at sunrise, but nothing exciting, so I headed towards the Portland peninsula, taking the B12 south from Sandy Bay, along the eastern side of the peninsula. Couldn't find the turn to the lighthouse, but birded the dry scrub along the dirt road, south of the last village instead, despite the late morning heat. Headed back to the main road towards Kingston (A2), and somehow managed to find my way through the city, despite the lack of road signs. The map in the Lonely Planet guidebook proved adequate, as long as you could find the street names at intersections. Finally found my way on to the very winding B1 towards Newcastle and Buff Bay, arriving at Hardwar Gap around 2 pm, where I got permission to camp/sleep in car at the Holywell Recreation Area (1 USD), part of the Blue Mountains-John Crow National Park.

The rest of the afternoon was spent birding on foot along the main road back towards Newcastle.



Blue Mountains (Hardwar Gap) and John Crow Mountains (Ecclesdown Road), Jamaica.

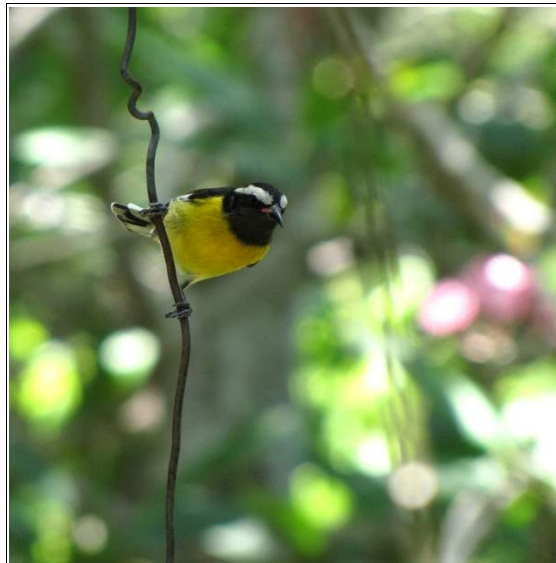
10 May – once more birding on foot along the road down to Newcastle in the morning, before driving down to Buff Bay on the North coast. I had been told that the road was open, but not that it involved two detours, that were loose gravel road, rather steep in places and with major potholes. Thankfully the detours were rather short, but I'm not sure I could have made it going up.

Took the coastal road A4 eastwards to Long Bay, where I stayed at Fisherman's Park (20 USD), and spent the rest of the day birding the whole length of Ecclesdown Road.

11 May – the first half of the day was again spent birding along Ecclesdown Road, but only as far as where the road reaches it's highest. After an hours internet in Port Antonio, I drove west along the A4 to Falmouth, wich took quite some time despite the good road, but large parts of the road had speed limits of 50 km/h. From Falmouth I headed inland towards Windsor Caves, and quickly took a wrong turn, but after some driving back and forth and asking directions I made it to the caves at dusk, at which time I was so tired, that found a spot by the river, and slept in the car (many fireflies).

12 May – most of the day was spent birding around Windsor Caves, along the different farm and forest tracks, and there

was also time for a nice siesta at the river. Drove the last stretch back to Montego Bay, with a stop for chicken jerky along the coast, turned in the car and made myself comfortable in the departure hall, as I had an early flight the following morning.



Windsor Caves, Cockpit Country and Bananaquit, Rocklands, Jamaica.

13 May – flight Montego Bay-Miami-Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) where I arrived mid afternoon, once more without my backpack! As the next flight from Miami would arrive 4 hours later, that gave me time to pick up my rental car and go to a supermarket nearby to buy water, fruit and biscuits. The plane turned out to be delayed, and by the time I had my backpack it was around 10 pm, so I decided to spend the night in the car in the airport parking lot

14 May – headed out towards Barahona at first light, and made it through Santo Domingo in very light traffic. With a few stops for breakfast and a little birding I arrived in Barahona around 10 am, filled up the tank and headed further south, but just outside the city I had a flat tyre. Luckily I was able to put on the spare and head back to Barahona in just 20 minutes, where I had the damaged tyre changed (25 USD) and was on my way once more, less than an hour after the incident.

Arrived at the Alcoa Road on the southern side of Sierra de Bahoruco in the early afternoon, and spent a couple of hours at the artificial pool at La Charca before going all the way up to the view point at Hoyo de Pelempito. Drove back towards La Charca after dark, trying to listen for night birds along the way (only Antillean Nighthawks). Spent a cool and mosquito free night in the car at La Charca.

15 May – in the morning the first few hours were spent birding around La Charca, before I slowly walked down the road to KM 27. I met Swedish birder Samuel Hansson in the morning, who invited me to join him for a trip up the northern side of Sierra de Bahoruco to Zapoten, as he had a car with high ground clearance. We drove back to Barahona, where we filled up the cars and continued on to Duverge, only stopping at a flooded field approx. 25 km East of Duverge. In Duverge I got permission to park my rental car at a secure spot by the Fire Department, before we continued up to Puerto Escondido in Samuel Hansson's car.

In Puerto Escondido we bought our entry tickets to the National Park at the NP office on the right hand corner by the entrance to the village, before continuing to Villa Barrancoli near the Rabo de Gato trail just outside the village. Here we each got a tent with sleeping mats and blankets for 200 DOP. Late afternoon we birded the Rabo de Gato trail.



Alcoa Road and forest at Zapoten, Sierra Barauco, Dominican Republic.

16 May – we headed out an hour before sunrise in search of nightbirds, and tried a few stops down towards Duverge and further uphill towards La Placa, but very little result. As far as La Placa the road was in OK condition for 2WD, but from then on it got pretty bad, and high wheel clearance was a necessity, but not 4WD. Progress was slow, but we made it to the border station, where the road was still blocked with rocks and logs for the night. A sleepy guard removed the obstacles and we ascended a few kms more.

We left the car and birded on foot up to the guard station at Zapoten, where they told us, it would be better to park the car there, because of risk of a break-in in the car. We walked back and drove up to Zapoten, where we left the car and walked further up the road. As the birds were active all morning we walked the road until mid morning, before turning back.

In the meantime one of the tyres on the car had had a flat, so we had to get out the spare, and drive slowly and carefully downhill, to avoid another puncture. We went all the way down to Duverge to have the tire fixed, and despite it being Sunday and election day, we managed to find a repairman (*Gomero*).

After a brief and late lunch we drove to the picnic site/disco at La Zurza a few kms West of Duverge and birded the fields down towards the lake.

Night was again spent at Villa Barrancoli in Puerto Escondido again.

17 May – up well before sunrise to listen for nightbirds on the way to La Placa, but limited luck. At La Placa we walked the road for a few kms as it got light, before venturing into the forest along the marked trail at the La Placa sign. On the way back to Duverge we tried to find Flat-billed Vireo in the dry scrub, but the heat was too oppressive for us to really make an effort.

I picked up my car in Duverge, and other than a stop at the flooded field east of Duverge, I drove straight back to Santo Domingo. Going through the capitol in the afternoon was much more hectic, but went smooth and slow. I followed the highway past the airport turn-off and on to Boca Chica approx 8 km further, and took a room at Mondo VIP (30 USD).

18 May – flight Santo Domingo - San Juan (Puerto Rico) was a brief one hour affair, and I quickly got my backpack and rental car, and drove eastwards along the coast to Humacao a couple of hours away. Here I birded the Humacao NWR in the afternoon, both the main area south of Rt 3, and also the less visited area to the north along Rt 925. Late afternoon I drove up Rt 191 to the southern entrance to El YunqueNP, all the way to the gate, where the road ends. Spent the night here in the car.

19 May – from sunrise I birded uphill from the gate on the southern side of El Yunque NP to where the road became completely overgrown. Late morning I had another go at the northern part of Humacao NWR for a few hours, before driving down to Cuanica in the southwest of Puerto Rico, and the rest of the day was spent with family, who have a holiday apartment in the area.



Cleared forest, Sierra de Bahoruco, Dominican Republic and lush rain forest, El Yunque NP, Puerto Rico

20 May – departure was delayed in the morning because of rain, and a visit to the mountains was postponed because of low clouds. Instead I first went to La Parguera, and from there to Laguna Cartagena NWR, where I spent a couple of hours birding the wetlands. Next a visit to Cabo Rojo, for seabirds and a few waders, before driving up to Maricao SF, in the mountains behind Sabana Grande, where bird activity was fairly high despite it being the middle of the afternoon. Elfín-wood's Warbler became one of the first birds I saw at the visitor centre.

21 May – the first half of the day was spent at various stops along the road up to Maricao SF between KM 9 and KM 17, where I ran into a group of US birders. In the late afternoon I met the same group of birders at the entrance to Guanica SF along Rt 334, and hooked up with them trying to catch up with the endemic nightbirds. Very little response to playback, but walking a bit further along the road myself, I caught up with both Puerto Rican Nightjar and Screech-Owl, after the small microwave transmitter.



Cabo Rojo and Guanica SF (Rt 334), Puerto Rico.

22 May – in the morning I visited Sousa SF east of Sabana Grande, but only after some driving around, as I had overlooked the wooden sign at the turn off from Rt 368. I birded along the entrance road and around the lodges and camp sites for a few hours, before a long siesta and shopping trip. Late afternoon was again spent along Rt 334 in Guanica SF.

23 May – big travel day, with flight from San Juan – New York JFK – Amsterdam – Billund.

Birdlist : The list contains a few new or (possible) future splits, from the species mentioned in **Birds of the West Indies** by H. Raffaele et al. Jamaica (Ja), Dominican Republic (DR) and Puerto Rico (PR). Introduced species are not highlighted.

Least Grebe (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) - 3 birds on a small artificial pond near Azua and another 2 at Puerto Escondido (DR).

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) - one bird seen on the Portland peninsula (Ja) and 6 at Humacao NWR (PR).

White-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaeton lepturus*) - at Cabo Rojo (PR) a minimum of 5 birds were seen in display-flight along the cliffs west of the lighthouse.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) - 9 immature birds were roosting on the cliffs at Cabo Rojo (PR).

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) - small numbers seen along the coast on all three islands.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) - seen in small numbers along the coasts of all three islands.

Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) - a single male seen along a stream on Portland Peninsula (Ja).

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) - seen at most of the same sites as Snowy Egret, with most (50+) coming to roost at Elim Pools (Ja).

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) - seen at wetland sites on all three islands.

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) - 3 at Elim Pools (Ja) and 4 at Humacao NWR (PR).

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) - a single on Portland peninsula (Ja) and 3 at Humacao NWR (PR).

Western Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) - fairly common to common on all three islands.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) - singles seen at several sites on all three islands, with most at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR) where 15+ were feeding on floating plants.

Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) - 6 birds were seen at dusk at Elim Pools (Ja) and three were 2 at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*) - one adult bird at Puerto Escondido (DR) and two adults and one juvenile at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR).

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) - in (DR) a flooded field east of Duverge held a flock of 47 birds and a single was at La Zurza, while another single was seen at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR).



West Indian Whistling-Ducks at Laguna Cartagena NWR, Puerto Rico.

West Indian Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*) - at least 9 birds, both adults and juveniles, seen at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR), with some birds perching on the boardwalk at the little hide.

White-cheeked Pintail (*Anas bahamensis*) - 5 birds in a flooded field east of Duverge (DR) and 10 at both Humacao and Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR).

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) - 19 birds were seen at both Humacao and Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR).

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) - common in (Ja) and in the southwest of (PR).

American Osprey (*Pandion carolinensis*) - a single bird seen at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR). New World Ospreys are now often split from **Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*).

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) - singles seen at several sites on all three islands.

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) - single or pairs seen at several sites on all three islands.

Helmeted Guineafowl (*Numida meleagris*) - four birds were seen along the road at El Yunque (PR) - introduced.

Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) - one bird was heard calling at Zapoten (DR) – introduced.

Sora (*Porzana carolina*) - a single bird was heard calling at Humacao NWR (PR).

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*) - 6 birds were seen at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR).

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) - small numbers seen in wetlands on all three islands, with most at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR) 25+. In (DR) an odd sighting was of a single bird standing in the middle of the road in dry shrub country west of Azua.

American Coot (*Fulica americana*) - a few seen at both Humacao NWR and Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR), as well as a few birds that might have been hybrids with the following species.

Caribbean Coot (*Fulica caribaea*) - in (PR) at least 3 were seen at Humacao NWR and there were also at least 5 at Laguna Cartagena NWR.

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*) - singles heard at both Puerto Escondido and La Placa (DR).

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) - in (PR) a few birds were seen at Cabo Rojo and Guanica.

Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) - at Cabo Rojo (PR) there were 6 birds on the sandflats.

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*) - 13 birds were counted at Cabo Rojo and a couple of birds were seen at Guanica (PR).

Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) - a single bird was seen at Cabo Rojo (PR). New World populations are now often split from **Kentish Plover** (*Charadrius alexandrinus*).

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) - single and pairs seen at several sites in (DR) and (PR), with a maximum of 18 at the flooded field east of Duverge (DR). Most often seen in farmland.

Northern Jacana (*Jacana spinosa*) - a pair with 3 large young were found at a stream on the Portland Peninsula (Ja).

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) - small numbers seen at several wetland sites on all three islands.

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) - a single bird at Cabo Rojo (PR).

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) - 4 birds on Portland Peninsula (Ja) and 17 at Cabo Rojo (PR).

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) - 5 birds were feeding in a flooded field east of Duverge (DR).

Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) - two adults seen along the coast in the southwest of (DR) and up to 50 flying to roost at Humacao NWR (PR).

Royal Tern (*Sterna maxima*) - a single bird was seen along the northern coast of (Ja).

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) - 5 birds were seen off Cabo Rojo (PR). New World Sandwich Terns, including Cayenne Tern, are to be split as **Cabot's Tern** (*Thalasseus acufavidus*) according to a recent article in Neotropical Birding.

Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) - only seen in (PR) with 3-4 around Guanica and 6 feeding off Cabo Rojo.

Rock Dove (*Columba livia*) - a few seen around larger towns – introduced.

Scaly-naped Pigeon (*Columba squamosa*) - in (DR) common in Sierra de Bahoruco and also seen commonly in forests in (PR).

White-crowned Pigeon (*Columba leucocephala*) - most common in (Ja) where the first bird were seen flying over outside the airport. Seen at most sites visited in (Ja) though only a few in the mountains. In (DR) small flocks (10+) seen in the morning along Alcoa Road.

Plain Pigeon (*Columba inornata*) - only seen in (DR) with one bird at La Charca on the Alcoa Road and 10+ in the late afternoon at La Zurza west of Duverge.

Ring-tailed Pigeon (*Columba caribaea*) - up to three birds seen at Hardwar Gap (Ja).

Ringed Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia risoria*) - a couple of birds seen along the North coast of (Ja), and common to very common in the South West of (PR) – introduced.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) - seen on all three islands, and especially common in the southwest of (PR) with feeding flocks of 100+.

Zenaida Dove (*Zenaida aurita*) - fairly common in low numbers on all three islands, mostly inside or near forest as opposed to the following species.

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) - seen on all three islands in rather open habitat, but never numerous.

Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*) - common on all three islands.

Caribbean Dove (*Leptotila jamaicensis*) - single birds were seen at Rocklands and Portland Ridge and one bird was heard on Ecclesdown Road (Ja).

Key West Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon chrysia*) - in (DR) a single bird was heard on the Rabo de Gata trail at Puerto Escondido, and at La Placa one bird was seen in flight with another 3 heard.

Ruddy Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon montana*) - in (Ja) single birds were heard at Ecclesdown Road and Windsor Caves, two were heard on Alcoa Road (DR), and in (PR) there were 3 at El Yunque, 4 in Maricao SF and 4-5 in Sousa SF, of which several were seen feeding along the roadside in the morning.

Crested Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon versicolor*) - endemic to (Ja) with 2-3 birds along the road at Hardwar Gap, one bird flushed from the roadside on the drive from Hardwar Gap to Buff Bay, and a single bird on Ecclesdown Road.

Hispaniolan Parakeet (*Aratinga chloroptera*) - in (DR) up to 4 were seen on Alcoa Road and 5 at La Placa, but several were also heard.

Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) - two birds seen near San Juan (PR) – introduced.

Olive-throated Parakeet (*Aratinga nana*) - only seen in (Ja) where two were seen at Elim Pools, at least 25 at Ecclesdown Road and 15+ at Windsor Caves. Birds in Jamaica are sometimes split from birds in Central America as **Jamaican Parakeet** (*Aratinga nana*).

White-winged Parakeet (*Brotogeris versicolurus*) - 6 birds flew across the highway near Ponce (PR) – introduced.

Green-rumped Parrotlet (*Forpus passerinus*) - on (Ja) a single was seen on Ecclesdown Road and another near Ocho Rios – introduced.

Yellow-billed Parrot (*Amazona collaria*) - endemic to (Ja) where 12+ were seen at Ecclesdown Road and 2+ were found at Windsor Caves.

Hispaniolan Parrot (*Amazona ventralis*) - several seen in Sierra de Barahuco (DR) with up to 12 on Alcoa Rd, 6 at Zapoten and 3 at La Placa.



Hispaniolan Parrot, Alcoa Road, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Guanica SF Puerto Rico.

Black-billed Parrot (*Amazona agilis*) - another endemic parrot to (Ja) with 20+ at Ecclesdown Road and 4 at Windsor Caves.

Mangrove Cuckoo (*Coccyzus minor*) - only seen in (PR) where a pair with a newly fledged young were found at Humacao NWR, and one was seen at Guanica SF.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) - while searching for a calling Bay-breasted Cuckoo at La Placa (DR) a single Yellow-billed Cuckoo was seen instead.

Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo (*Saurothera vieilloti*) - seen at most forest-sites in (PR), but easiest at Guanica SF, with up to 4 seen and 3 heard.

Hispaniolan Lizard-Cuckoo (*Saurothera longirostris*) - in Sierra de Bahoruco (DR) 4-5 birds were on Alcoa Road, one at Puerto Escondido and 3 at La Placa. Not difficult to see with a little patience.

Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo (*Saurothera vetula*) - this Jamaican endemic was heard a few times at Hardwar Gap and Ecclesdown Road, before three were seen extremely well at Windsor Caves, where another 2-3 could be heard.

Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo (*Hyetornis pluvialis*) - in (Ja) two birds were seen on Ecclesdown Road, and at Windsor Caves another 3 were seen and one heard only.

Bay-breasted Cuckoo (*Hyetornis ruficularis*) - a single bird was heard giving the loud cua-call a few times early morning at La Placa (DR), but remained hidden.

Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*) - regularly encountered on all three islands, mostly in riparian habitat.

Puerto Rican Screech-Owl (*Otus nudipes*) - following the slightly maniacal laughing call, a pair was found at Guanica SF (PR), where they perched only a few meters from the road. The call was a little reminiscent of Laughing Kookaburra in Australia. Another bird was calling just a few hundred meters inside the forest from the gate on Rt 334.

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) - night-drives around Puerto Escondido (DR) revealed several birds feeding from the road.

Hispaniolan Nightjar (*Caprimulgus ekmani*) - a single bird was heard at Villa Barrancoli near Puerto Escondido (DR), and what could have been the same bird was seen flying along the road the next morning.
Endemic to Hispaniola after being split from **Greater Antillean (Cuban) Nightjar** (*Caprimulgus cubanensis*)

Puerto Rican Nightjar (*Caprimulgus noctitherus*) - at Guanica SF (PR) birds would begin to call around 7.15 pm, but despite 8+ birds being heard, only seen once in response to playback.

Antillean Nighthawk (*Chordeiles gundlachii*) - in (DR) displaying birds were found at the end of Alcoa Road (3) and around Puerto Escondido (4+), and in (PR) up to 3 could be seen around Guanica, often beginning displaying well before sunset.

White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) - fairly common in (Ja) with small feeding flocks (3-10) seen on Portland Peninsula, Hardwar Gap, Ecclesdown Road and Windsor Caves.

Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*) - in (Ja) around 25 were found feeding low over Ecclesdown Road in the morning and 3 were seen at Maricao SF (PR).

Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) - a single bird was feeding low down over a clearing near Windsor Caves (Ja).

Antillean Palm Swift (*Tachornis phoenicobia*) - seen fairly commonly on both (Ja) and (DR).



Black-billed Streamertail, Ecclesdown Road, Jamaica and Puerto Rican Tody, Sousa SF, Puerto Rico.

Jamaican Mango (*Anthracothorax mango*) - endemic to (Ja) with single birds seen at Rocklands, Portland Peninsula and at Windsor Caves.

Antillean Mango (*Anthracothorax dominicus*) - in (DR) at least 3 birds were found on Alcoa Road and one at Zapoten, and in (PR) there were two at Sousa SF and one in Guanica SF.

Green Mango (*Anthracothorax viridis*) - in (PR) three birds were found along the main road in Maricao SF, often perched high up on a bare branch.

Hispaniolan Emerald (*Chlorostilbon swainsonii*) - fairly common around Zapoten (DR) with at least 5 birds.

Puerto Rican Emerald (*Chlorostilbon maugaeus*) - in (PR) two male were seen at El yunque, two male and a female at Maricao SF and a female at Guanica SF.

Black-billed Streamertail (*Trochilus scitulus*) - endemic to the easternmost part of (Ja) where up to 9 birds were seen on Ecclesdown Road, of which only one female.

Red-billed Streamertail (*Trochilus polytmus*) - endemic to (Ja) and found to be fairly common at Rocklands, Hardwar gap and Windsor Caves

Vervain Hummingbird (*Mellisuga minima*) - only seen in (Ja) with one bird at Hardwar Gap, two on Ecclesdown Road and 5+ at Windsor Caves – amazingly tiny bird!

Hispaniolan Trogon (*Priotelus roseigaster*) - this Hispaniolan endemic was heard commonly in the forests high in Sierra de Barhoruco (DR) both along Alcoa Raod (6+) and also in the Zapoten area (10+). Easily whistled in.

Broad-billed Tody (*Todus subulatus*) - the most widespread Tody in (DR) and fairly common in Sierra de Barhoruco, but almost abundant at La Placa in the morning (20+), with calling birds everywhere and up to 4 birds seen at one time.

Narrow-billed Tody (*Todus angustirostris*) - endemic to (DR) where it replaces Broad-billed Tody in the highlands, where 12+ where found around Zapoten.

Jamaican Tody (*Todus todus*) - as with the other Todys, common in forests, and often rather approachable. Most common at Windsor Caves with at least 11 birds seen/heard.

Puerto Rican Tody (*Todus mexicanus*) - endemic to (PR) and common at most forest-sites, especially once the call is learnt, but not difficult to see.

Antillean Piculet (*Nesocittes micromegas*) - on Alcoa Road (DR) two single birds were found at La Charca and around KM26, feeding very quietly high up. Rather large for a piculet.

Puerto Rican Woodpecker (*Melanerpes portoricensis*) - endemic to (PR) and fairly common in most forests.

Hispaniolan Woodpecker (*Melanerpes striatus*) - common Hispaniolan endemic, and easily seen in (DR).



Jamaican Woodpecker, Hardwar Gap, Jamaica.

Jamaican Woodpecker (*Melanerpes radiolatus*) - endemic to (Ja) and fairly common at most sites.

Jamaican Elaenia (*Myiopagis cotta*) - 4 birds were seen at Windsor Caves (Ja).

Caribbean Elaenia (*Elaenia martinica*) - only seen in (PR) with 2-3 birds at Guanica and Sousa SF.

Greater Antillean Elaenia (*Elaenia fallax*) - only seen in the high mountains, with 3 at Hardwar Gap (Ja) and 5+ at Zapooten (DR).

Hispaniolan Pewee (*Contopus hispaniolensis*) - 4-5 birds were seen at Zapoten in Sierra de Bahoruco (DR).

Sad Flycatcher (*Myiarchus barbirostris*) - fairly common endemic to forests in (Ja) and seen at Hardwar Gap, Ecclesdown Road and Windsoer Caves.

Rufous-tailed Flycatcher (*Myiarchus validus*) - 3-4 birds seen at both Hardwar Gap and Ecclesdown Road of this endemic to (Ja).

Stolid Flycatcher (*Myiarchus stolidus*) - a single bird was seen in dry scrub on Portland Peninsula (Ja), but more common on Hispaniola with up to 3 birds at different sites in Sierra de Bahoruco (DR).

Puerto Rican Flycatcher (*Myiarchus antillarum*) - fairly common at most forested sites in (PR).

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) - common on all three islands.

Loggerhead Kingbird (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus*) - 2-3 birds seen at Elim Pools, Hardwar Gap, Eccleldown Road and Windsor Caves (Ja), and single birds seen at El Yunque NP and Maricao SF (PR).

The population in (DR) and (PR) are proposed split (perhaps even double split) with birds in (PR) becoming **Puerto Rican Loggerhead Kingbird** (*Tyrannus taylori*).

Jamaican Becard (*Pachyramphus niger*) - at least two different birds (male and female) seen at Hardwar Gap (Ja).

Caribbean Martin (*Progne dominicensis*) - a single seen on the Portland peninsula (Ja), 5 on Alcoa Road (DR), and in (PR) there were 6 at Cabo Rojo and 2 at Maricao SF.

Golden Swallow (*Tachycineta euchrysea*) - 3 birds were seen around La Charca, Alcoa Road (DR) and 2 were found at Zapoten (DR). Endemic to Hispaniola now, since no birds have been seen in (Ja) in the recent decades.

Cave Swallow (*Pterochelidon fulva*) - seen in small numbers on all three islands.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) - two birds seen at Elim Pools (Ja).

Hispaniolan Palm Crow (*Corvus palmarum*) - 2-3 birds were seen in flight at sunset, near the ranger station at Hoyo de Pelempita, Alcoa Road (DR), and one was heard on the way to the lookout.

White-necked Crow (*Corvus leucognaphalus*) - a single bird was seen a few times at La Zurza, west of Duverge (DR).

Jamaican Crow (*Corvus jamaicensis*) - up to 5 birds were seen at both Ecclesdown Road and Windsor Caves (Ja).

Rufous-throated Solitaire (*Myadestes genibarbis*) - common at Hardwar Gap (Ja) and fairly common at Zapoten (DR).



Zapoten sign and Narrow-billed Tody, Siera de Bahoruco, Dominican Republic.

La Selle Thrush (*Turdus swalesi*) - one of the highlights in (DR) was seeing 2 male birds singing from opposite sides of the road, just a few hundred meters below the Zapoten-sign (showing La Selle Thrush !). The birds were singing around 9.30 am and as the song was fairly easily imitated, they could be lured in close. Most birders aim to be at Zapoten

at sunrise to catch up with this bird, but this is apparently not necessary.

White-eyed Thrush (*Turdus jamaicensis*) - at Hardwar Gap (Ja) 3 birds were seen/heard.

White-chinned Thrush (*Turdus aurantius*) - endemic to (Ja) and common at all forested sites.

Red-legged Thrush (*Turdus plumbeus*) - up to 4 seen in the forests in Sierra de Bahoruco (DR), and also fairly common in (PR) with 2-5 birds at El Yunque NP, Maricao, Sousa and Guanica SF.

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) - common on all three islands.

Bahama Mockingbird (*Mimus gundlachi*) - a single bird was finally seen flying across the road after a long search in southern Portland peninsula (Ja).

Pearly-eyed Thrasher (*Margarops fuscatus*) - seen fairly commonly in the southwest of (PR), especially at sunrise and sunset, when birds were often feeding along the roadside.

Palmchat (*Dulus dominicus*) - seen commonly while driving in (DR), with the same, slightly laboured flight-profile as a Corn Bunting, but also present at many of the visited sites like the pine forest at La Charca on Alcoa Road and at La Zurza.

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – 2 birds were seen near Boston Bay (Ja).

Jamaican Vireo (*Vireo modestus*) - 2-4 seen at Hardwar Gap, Ecclesdown Road and Windsor Caves.

Puerto Rican Vireo (*Vireo latimeri*) - this endemic was fairly common in the forest at Maricao and Sousa SF (PR).

Blue Mountain Vireo (*Vireo osburni*) - up to 3 birds seen at Hardwar Gap (Ja).

Black-whiskered Vireo (*Vireo altiloquus*) - common on all three islands, wherever there was some forest.

Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) - in (Ja) 2 were seen on the Portland peninsula, and in (PR) there were 3 at Humacao NWR, 4+ at Cabo Roja and a single at Guanica SF. All birds were found in coastal forest or mangroves. The birds breeding in the Caribbean are sometimes split as **Golden Warbler** (*Dendroica petechia*) from **Yellow Warbler** (*dendroica estiva*).

Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*) - a few singles seen in (Ja) at Rocklands, Hardwar Gap and Windsor Caves – all female.

Adelaide's Warbler (*Dendroica adelaidae*) - endemic to (PR) with a single seen at Laguna Cartagena NWR, 3 at Sousa SF and 10+ at Guanica SF.

Pine Warbler (*Dendroica pinus*) - fairly common in the pine forests, high in Sierra de Barhoruco (DR).

Arrowhead Warbler (*Dendroica pharetra*) - the only two birds were seen along Ecclesdown Road (Ja).

Elfin-woods Warbler (*Dendroica angelae*) - in Maricao SF (PR) singles were seen on three occasions – once along the entry road to the visitor centre, and once at both KM 13 and KM 14.

A very different bird from Black-and-White Warbler, moving very fast through the canopies and vine tangles. This endemic was only described about 40 years ago, and is confined to mountain forest, with a population of maybe 300 pairs.

American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) - single females seen at Rocklands, Ecclesdown Road and Elim Pools (Ja).

Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) - a single female bird at Ecclesdown Rd. (Ja).

Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*) - seen on all three islands, though relatively uncommon in (DR) compared to numbers in (Ja) and (PR).

Jamaican Euphonia (*Euphonia jamaica*) - 4-6 birds seen in the forest at both Hardwar Gap and Ecclesdown Road (Ja).



Elfin-woods Warbler, Maricao SF and Antillean Euphonia, Guanica SF, Puerto Rico.

Antillean Euphonia (*Euphonia musica*) - only seen in (PR) with a pair at KM 13.1 in Maricao SF, and 3 in Guanica SF. The call is reminiscent of European Goldfinch.

Jamaican Spindalis (*Spindalis nigricephala*) - common at Hardwar Gap and Ecclesdown Road (Ja).

Hispaniolan Spindalis (*Spindalis dominicensis*) - only seen in the higher forest in Sierra de Bahoruco (DR) with 2 on Alcoa Road and 10+ at Zapoten.

Puerto Rican Spindalis (*Spindalis portoricensis*) - fairly common at El Yunque NP, Maricao and Sousa SF (PR).

Black-crowned Palm-Tanager (*Phaenicophilus palmarum*) - fairly common to common in forests in Sierra de Bahoruco (DR).

Green-tailed Ground Tanager (*Microligea palustris*) - in the Sierra de Bahoruco (DR) a single was seen along the Alcoa Road, several were heard at La Placa at sunrise, and 3 were found around Zapoten. The bird was formerly known as **Green-tailed Warbler**.

Hispaniolan Highland Tanager (*Xenoligea montana*) - this Hispaniolan endemic was found to be fairly common (8+) around Zapoten in Sierra de Bahoruco (DR), even seen together with Green-tailed Ground Tanager on one occasion. Not nearly as skulking as some reports have suggested. This bird was formerly known as **White-winged Warbler**.

Western Chat-Tanager (*Calyptophilus tertius*) - a single bird was flushed twice from the same spot on Alcoa Road in the Sierra de Bahoruco in (DR), on the ground next to the, overgrown, KM 27 marker.

Puerto Rican Tanager (*Nesospingus speculiferus*) - fairly common endemic to forests in (PR).

Yellow-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris olivacea*) - seen on all three islands, but not as common as the next species, often favouring more open grassland.

Black-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris bicolor*) - seen on all three islands. Common on (Ja) and (PR) but only seen at Zapoten in (DR). Often also found inside forest, if there are grassy road verges or broken hillsides.

Yellow-shouldered Grassquit (*Loxipasser anoxanthus*) - endemic to (Ja) and seen at Hardwar Gap and Ecclesdown Road, with up to 4 birds. Easily overlooked when feeding singly on overgrown hillsides, but the song is quite distinctive.

Puerto Rican Bullfinch (*Loxigilla portoricensis*) - fairly common (4-10+) at all forest sites in (PR).

Greater Antillean Bullfinch (*Loxigilla violacea*) - found to be fairly common in forests in both (Ja) and (DR).

Orangequit (*Euneornis campestris*) - a common endemic in (Ja), which was seen at all forest sites.

Yellow-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius xanthomus*) - at least 6 birds were found in the Cabo Rojo area (PR).

Jamaican Blackbird (*Nesopsar nigerrimus*) – a single bird was seen at Ecclesdown Road, where it suddenly emerged from the lower canopy of a tree right above me, called once and disappeared into the canopy again.

Greater Antillean Grackle (*Quiscalus niger*) - common on all three islands, especially in towns and near the coast.

Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) - a few seen in the southwest of (DR) and 3 seen at Humacao NWR (PR).

Hispaniolan Oriole (*Icterus dominicensis*) - 2-3 birds at La Zurza west of Duverge (DR) were the only ones seen. The species is split from **Greater Antillean Oriole** (*Icterus dominicensis*).

Puerto Rican Oriole (*Icterus portoricensis*) - 1-2 birds seen at El Yunque NP, Maricao and Sousa SF (PR). Endemic to Puerto Rico after being split from **Greater Antillean Oriole** (*Icterus dominicensis*).

Venezuelan Troupial (*Icterus icterus*) - several birds seen in the coastal southwest of (PR) – introduced:

Jamaican Oriole (*Icterus leucopteryx*) - fairly common (1-4ex) at forest-sites in (Ja).

Antillean Siskin (*Carduelis dominicensis*) - fairly common around Zapoten (DR) but 5 were also seen near La Placa (DR).

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) - not present on (Ja) but seen fairly commonly in (DR) and (PR)

Village Weaver (*Ploceus cucullatus*) - a small, active colony was found near a flooded field east of Duverge (DR) – introduced.

Pin-tailed Whydah (*Vidua macroura*) - a single male seen near Humacao NWR (PR) – introduced.

Yellow-crowned Bishop (*Euplectes afer*) - a pair was seen at Humacao NWR (PR) – introduced.

Orange Bishop (*Euplectes franciscanus*) - 5+ seen at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR) – introduced.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill (*Estrilda melpoda*) - 5+ seen at Laguna Cartagena NWR (PR) – introduced.

Bronze Mannikin (*Lonchura cucullata*) - a single bird was found at Humacao NWR (PR) – introduced.



Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo, Guanica SF, Puerto Rico.