

BIRDS CARIBBEAN BIRDWATCHING TRIPS TO CUBA 2016

JOIN BIRDS CARIBBEAN & ACCLAIMED CUBAN BIRD GUIDE, ERNESTO REYES MOURIÑO, ON THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

Cuba is well-known for its amazing landscapes, vibrant culture and unique biodiversity. According to the new *Endemic Birds of Cuba: A Comprehensive Field Guide*, **371** birds have been recorded in Cuba, including **27** which are endemic to the island and **30** which are considered globally threatened. Due to its large land area and geographical position within the Caribbean, Cuba is also extraordinarily important for Neotropical migratory birds—more than **180** species pass through during migration or spend the winter on the island.



Cuban Tody by Ernesto Reyes

Our itinerary takes you to several of the best and most beautiful birding locations in Cuba, providing opportunities to see many of Cuba's endemic species and subspecies as well as many migrants. Along the way, we will meet people in local communities, stay mainly in Bed & Breakfast establishments (*casas particulares*) and eat in private restaurants (*paladars*), allowing you to experience Cuba's rich culture, delicious food, friendly people, and generous hospitality.

BirdsCaribbean is offering two tours in 2016: an 8-day trip in January and a 10-day trip in March. Information on the March trip is below. Traveling with us helps Caribbean birds as a portion of the proceeds from the trip supports our bird conservation programs in Cuba and the Caribbean. With new relations opening up, this is the perfect time to take your birding trip to Cuba, don't delay!

ITINERARY (10 DAY TRIP) – 6-16 MARCH 2016

Day 1 (Havana & Vinales): Meet up with our Cuban bird guide, Ernesto Reyes. Lunch in Havana and departure to **Viñales Valley**, the land of tobacco farms and beautiful landscapes with limestone formations called *mogotes*. Bird watching along the way, looking for Snail Kites and waterbirds in dams built near to the highway. Check-in at B&B.

Day 2 (Viñales): Morning birding nearby in pursuit of endemic Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Grassquit, Western Spindalis, Cuban Tody, Cuban Trogon, Cuban-Green Woodpecker, Yellow-headed Warbler, Olive-capped Warbler, as well as some migrant species like warblers, tanagers and buntings. During the afternoon, visit to a tobacco farm and sunset and cocktails at the home of Nils Navarro, renowned Cuban wildlife artist and naturalist and author of newly-published *Endemic Birds of Cuba: A Comprehensive Field Guide*.

Day 3 (Zapata): Breakfast. Departure to **Zapata Swamp** (+ 5 hours), the third largest wetland in the Americas and one of the best places to birdwatch in Cuba. About 254 species have been recorded for Zapata. It is a Biosphere Reserve and a Ramsar Site, where it is possible to see more than 20 Cuban endemics. Bird watching along the way. Check-in at B&B.

Afternoon bird watching session in **Los Hondones**. Evening birdwatching for Stygian Owl, Bare-legged Owl and the Greater Antillean Nightjar.

Day 4 (Zapata): Early breakfast and departure for **Bermejas** (45 minutes) for birding in mixed forest habitat (flat, easy-walking trail system 2+ miles). Excellent chance for Bee Hummingbird, Grey-fronted Quail-Dove, Key West Quail-Dove, Ruddy Quail-Dove, Cuban Parrot, Cuban Blackbird, Cuban Bullfinch, Loggerhead Kingbird, Bare-legged Owl and Cuban Pygmy Owl. The threatened Cuban Parakeet, Fernandina's Flicker, and Blue-headed Quail-Dove are also likely.



Viñales Valley with *mogotes* by Carrol Henderson

Afternoon birding in the exquisitely beautiful **Enigma de las Rocas Trail**, with its "cenotes" (sink holes), where there is an excellent chance for the Key West Quail-Dove, Western Spindalis, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Peewee, La Sagra's Flycatcher, and Barn Owls.

Day 5 (Zapata): Breakfast and early departure for **La Turba** to look for the Red-shouldered Blackbird, Zapata Wren and Zapata Sparrow, among Cuba's most limited range endemic birds. We should also see Cuban Vireo and Cuban Oriole. We also hope to spot the Red-legged Honeycreeper, Quail-Doves and others.

Afternoon to **Las Salinas Refuge** (nearby flat, dry-dirt roadway 1+ miles). Habitat is varied among low, dense forest, mangrove, marsh, and open wetlands. Here we are likely to encounter the endemic Cuban Black Hawk as well as numerous shorebirds and waterbird species, including Roseate Spoonbills and American Flamingos.

Day 6 (Sancti Spiritus): Breakfast, check out and drive to Sancti Spiritus, with stops for birding along the way and sightseeing in the famous historical cities of **Cienfuegos** and **Trinidad** (both World Heritage sites). Over night in Sancti Spiritus

Day 7 (Cayo Coco): Breakfast and departure to **Cayo Coco** in Cuba's northern archipelago, with some birding stops along the way. Possibly observe West Indian Whistling-Duck. We are now in an area of Cuba that is being exploited for tourism and where the habitat of many important species is more and more fragile. Lunch along the way. Dinner and accommodation in a local hotel.

Day 8 (Cayo Coco): Morning bird study on **Cayo Paredon Grande**. Early morning search for Bahama Mockingbird and observation of migratory species on Paredon Grande Key, the most northeastern key in the Coco Key archipelago, which is one of Cuba's important migratory landfalls. Cuban Gnatcatcher, Oriente Warbler, Gundlach's Hawk, Scaly-naped Pigeon, Mangrove Cuckoo, Thick-billed Vireo and possibly a subspecies of Zapata Sparrow are target birds for the archipelago. Lunch at the hotel. Afternoon spent spotting migratory

birds on Guillermo Key mangrove flats, low coastal scrub and pristine white sand shoreline (roadside, flat walking).

Day 9 (Cayo Coco/ Havana): Early morning birding, check out and drive to Havana. Check in at casas and dinner in Havana with option to experience Cuban music at a local club.

Day 10: Full day in **Havana** with diverse cultural activities, including city tour, old fashion cars, walk in Old Havana, visits to art galleries and museums, historical buildings and monuments, central park, walk on Malecón, shooting of canon at Cabaña Fort, etc. We will also visit with Orlando Garrido, greatly respected *emeritus* ornithologist and author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba* for meaningful interaction about the history of ornithology in Cuba and protection of Cuban endangered and endemic species.

Day 11: Departure to your country.

Number of Travelers: 8 to 12 plus guides

Possible birds to see on this trip include: Bare-legged Owl, Cuban Oriole, Bee Hummingbird, Blue-headed Quail-Dove, Gray-fronted Quail-Dove, Cuban Black- Hawk, Cuban Blackbird, Cuban Grassquit, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Parrot, Cuban Pewee Cuban Pygmy-Owl, Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Tody, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Vireo, Fernandina’s Flicker, Giant Kingbird, Gundlach’s Hawk, Cuban Meadowlark, Cuban Nightjar, Red-shouldered Blackbird, Tawny-shouldered Blackbird, Yellow-headed Warbler, Olive-capped Warbler, Oriente Warbler, Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow (also Cayo Coco population, *T. inexpectata varonai*), Cuban Crow, Cuban Emerald, Cuban Gnatcatcher, Cuban Bullfinch and Plain Pigeon.

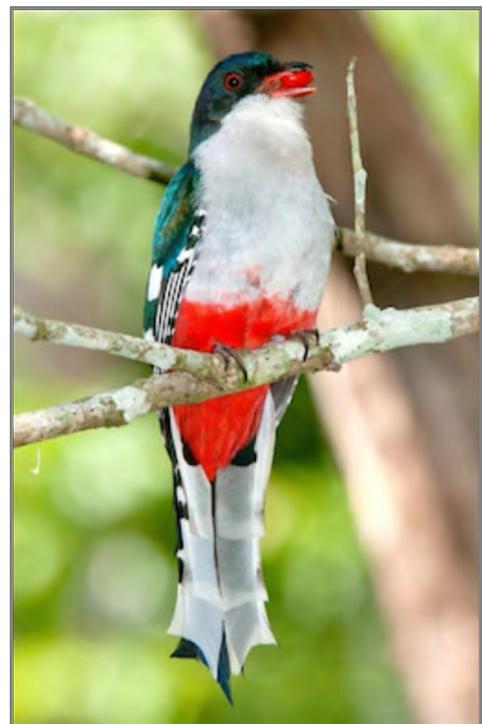
Other species of interest include: Great Lizard-Cuckoo, La Sagra’s Flycatcher, Loggerhead Kingbird, Key West Quail-Dove, Ruddy Quail- Dove, Zenaida Dove, Stygian Owl, Thick-billed Vireo, Bahama Mockingbird, American Flamingo, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, and a great variety of wading birds, and numerous other migratory and resident species.

The cost of the 10-day trip is \$4,000. This covers the following:

- Airfare from Miami to Havana and return
- Visa
- Health insurance while in Cuba
- In-country transportation and driver through duration of trip
- Professional bilingual specialized bird guide (Ernesto Reyes)
- Group leader (Lisa Sorenson)
- All lodging
- All meals and non-alcoholic beverages while in Cuba

Not included:

- Airfare to Miami and possible overnight in Miami to be in position to depart for Havana from MIA on March 6th at 12 noon.



Cuban Trogon by Nils Navarro

- Tips, alcoholic beverages \$1-\$3
- Single supplement (may not always be available) – add US\$400

We are traveling to Cuba under a people-to-people license, which, under new regulations is now a general license. People-to-people exchange programs are licensed by the OFAC Department of Treasury and will have a full-time schedule of educational exchange activities that will result in meaningful interaction between the travelers and individuals of Cuba.

To reserve your spot on the trip, fill out the registration form at this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CubaBirdTourMarch2016>. Submit your deposit of **\$500** as soon as possible but by **Feb. 20th** latest. Balance can be paid in installments, with final payment due on **February 29th**. Any questions, please contact trip coordinator, Joni Ellis (Joni@OpticsfortheTropics.org), or trip leader, Lisa Sorenson (Lisa.Sorenson@BirdsCaribbean.org).

Click here to pay online with PayPal:

<http://www.birdscaribbean.org/2015/11/birding-tours-of-cuba-in-2016-from-birdscaribbean>

Alternatively, send US check or money order made payable to BirdsCaribbean. Mail your check or money order to:

BirdsCaribbean
c/o Jennifer Wheeler, Treasurer
4201 Wilson Blvd, Suite 110-174
Arlington, VA 22203, USA

About our Guide:

Ernesto Reyes Mourino <http://www.mycubabirdguide.com> is a biologist, award-winning wildlife photographer, conservationist, and bird tour guide with more than 15 years experience with birds in Cuba, Honduras, Dominican Republic and the Bahamas. He is well known as one of the premiere guides in Cuba with a keen ability to find and share Cuba's amazing birds and biodiversity. He is also a warm and wonderful person, taking great care to ensure that everyone enjoys the trip, with much kindness and good humor.

Recommended Field Guides:

Endemic Birds of Cuba: A Comprehensive Field Guide, including West Indian Endemics

Residing in Cuba, by Nils Navarro. Available for purchase at:

<http://www.birdscaribbean.org/2015/10/groundbreaking-endemic-birds-of-cuba-field-guide-available-now/> 2015. Ediciones Nuevos Mundos, 168 pp.

Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba, by O. Garrido and A. Kirkconnell. 2000. Comstock Publishing Associates, Ithaca, NY, 253 pp.

Who is BirdsCaribbean

We are a vibrant network of members and partners committed to conserving Caribbean birds and their habitats in the insular Caribbean through education, conservation, science and action. As the leading nonprofit conservation organization in the Caribbean, we are the “hub” for all things “Caribbean Birds.” Learn more at: www.BirdsCaribbean.org or find “Birds Caribbean on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (@BirdsCaribbean). A portion of the proceeds from this trip will help support our conservation programs in Cuba and the Caribbean.

What is the Caribbean Birding Trail

The Caribbean Birding Trail is being developed to raise global awareness of the unique birds and biodiversity of the Caribbean and to create a sustainable economy around these rare species, in an effort to protect them. This new project is an initiative of BirdsCaribbean. We have partnered with and/or trained local tour companies and guides, have first-hand knowledge of the best birding and heritage sites to visit, and know the communities and NGOs that are working to conserve Caribbean birds and nature. Our tours are well-suited for birdwatchers, nature lovers, wildlife photographers, and anyone looking for authentic, unique, and revelatory experiences. Travel with us and know that your tourism dollars will bring benefits to the organizations, communities and people that will put it to the best use. Learn more at www.CaribbeanBirdingTrail.org.

Rules, Terms and Legal Conditions:

- Participants agree to indemnify BirdsCaribbean and its representatives, from any and all third party liability for any injuries, loss, claim, action, demand or damage of any kind arising from or in connection with participating in one of our field trips. Participants are required to sign a liability release form.
- BirdsCaribbean reserves the right to adjust the price of the tour if there is an unexpected increase in costs, or if the tour is not filled to a minimum capacity.
- BirdsCaribbean reserves the right to adjust the tour itinerary if unexpected circumstances warrant a change. Every effort will be made to provide a similar high quality experience.
- In case of cancellation by BirdsCaribbean, all deposits and payments will be refunded.
- Because we need to book flights that are nonrefundable, your deposit is nonrefundable. If you cancel your reservation between 90 and 60 days prior to the tour, you will receive a 50% refund of fees paid over the deposit. If you cancel less than 60 days, all deposits and payments are non-refundable, unless you can fill your space with another participant.

Assumption of Risk and Liability Release Form – must be filled out to register for this trip.
Download it here:

<http://www.birdscaribbean.org/2015/11/birding-tours-of-cuba-in-2016-from-birdscaribbean>



Flamingo Lagoon at Cayo Coco by Carrol Henderson