

Jamaica

14-16 January 2010



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General

I birded on Jamaica for 2.5 days only with the intention of bagging as many endemics as possible. It was highly successful, as I managed to get good views of all but one of the specialties. For some reasons the Jamaican Mango eluded me completely, as it was not recently present at the target site. The arrangements were made by Ann Sutton (resident bird guide), who also accompanied me in the field.

The highlights of the trip were the good views of difficult birds such as Yellow-shouldered Grassquit and Jamaican Blackbird, but of course also the stunning Crested Quail-Dove, Streamertails, *Amazona* parrots and Jamaican Owl. I also completed the Tody family, birds that are amazingly cool guys.

Itinerary

14/1

Ann picked me up at 6.00 at my hotel in Kingston and within an hour we were birding at Hardwar Gap on a winding road high above Kingston. The lifers came thick and fast and we had good views of Ring-tailed Pigeon, several Crested Quail-Doves, Arrow-headed Warblers. The trickiest of the endemics eluded us and we only heard it briefly. The forest was surprisingly quiet and shortly after midday we left the area for a long drive via Kingston around the eastern coast to Port Antonio on northeastern Jamaica.



A short stop at some beautiful cliffs did not produce any White-tailed Tropicbird during a two minutes stop. In Port Antonio we checked in at a hotel east of town and went for an excellent dinner in the harbor of Port Antonio. As a post-postres, we stopped at hotel Frenchman's Cove and saw a pair of Jamaican Owls.

15/1

In the early morning we made the short drive to Ecclesdown Road where we arrived well before dawn. No Owls nor Potoos, but as dawn emerged we got good views of both parrots and picked up some more endemics. We spent the full morning until noon and found two pairs of Jamaican Blackbirds, but only frustrating glimpses of Yellow-shouldered Grassquits.

By noon we returned to Port Antonio and checked some flowering bushes for Jamaican Mango at Mockingbird Hill Hotel. No Mango in sight since recently, which was alarming. Instead of birding at Ecclesdown the next morning, we took the decision to return to Kingston and go west from there to Ann's property at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville. It was a long five hour drive, so in the evening we rewarded ourselves with another excellent dinner at a restaurant in Mandeville. However, first we spotlighted a Northern (or Jamaican?!) Potoo, which was one of the reasons for going to Marshall's Pen.

16/1

This was the final morning and chance to get the remaining endemics. It took a while to find the beautiful Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, but eventually a pair gave themselves up. The Elaenia gave us a hard time and it took us until the very last minute to nail one down, so that we could leave for the final destination; the dry coastal forest. Near Portland Ridge along the south coast of Jamaica is a good site for Bahama Mockingbird and we only had an hour, tops, to get it. Caribbean Dove and Stolid Flycatcher were seen rather quickly, but it wasn't until the nervous return drive that we got a response from a pair, literally on overtime. Then it was a direct drive back to Kingston airport for the afternoon flight departure.

Weather

The weather was unusually cool for the season, but therefore also extremely pleasant. No rain, limited wind, and in general very nice.

Logistics

The entire arrangements were made by Ann Sutton asutton@cwjamaica.com, a long-time resident birder in Jamaica. Everything worked out very well, and I was very happy with the entire arrangements.

Site descriptions

Hardwar Gap

Hardwar Gap is along a narrow winding mountain road above Kingston. The road used to lead across to the north coast, but has been closed for many years now. It is said that it will open again very soon. The road has very limited traffic and is excellent road-side birding for most of the Jamaican endemics, (bar parrots and crow). The forest is at times rather hacked, but there are several lush gullies that provide good habitat for Blackbird, Crested Quail-Dove, etc.



Kingston viewed from Hardwar Gap

Ecclesdown Road

ER is situated near the northeast corner of Jamaica and is a narrow road through good foothill forest. There is virtually no traffic along the road, except for the occasional farmer. This place has virtually all the endemics, although some species are easier at Hardwar Gap, e.g. Blue Mountain Vireo, Crested Quail-Dove. Key birds are the parrots that are reasonably common, the crow that is rather conspicuous, as well as Black-billed Streamertail. The latter is not uncommon in the entire northeastern tip of Jamaica, and we actually saw a couple of birds with intermediate bills.

Marshall's Pen

MP is an old cattle farm and holds many, but not all, the endemics. It seems particularly good for Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, a species that seems to become more and more unpredictable. There are also several Potoos in the area.

Portland Ridge

PR is along the south coast between Kingston and Mandeville. We birded along the north foot of the ridge, which is bordering the mangroves. In the dry forest there are Stolid Flycatcher, Bahama Mockingbird and Caribbean Dove.

Birds

Brown Pelican, *Pelecanus occidentales*

Many around Kingston.

Magnificent Frigatebird, *Fregata magnificens*

Many around Kingston.

Great Egret, *Ardea alba*

One near Port Antonio, several around Kingston.

Tricolored Heron, *Egretta tricolor*

One at Portland Ridge.

Little Blue Heron, *Egretta caerulea*

One between Kingston and Port Antonio.

Snowy Egret, *Egretta thula*

A few along the coast.

Western Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis*

Common in the lowlands.

Glossy Ibis, *Plegadis falcinellus*

One near Kingston.

Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*

Common in the lowlands.

Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*

One pair at Ecclesdown Road and two near Mandeville.

American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*

Two east of Port Antonio, one east of Kingston and a few at Mandeville and Portland Ridge.

Merlin, *Falco columbarius*

One at Hardwar Gap.

Black-necked Stilt, *Himantopus mexicanus*

20 at Portland Ridge.

Sanderling, *Calidris alba*

One between Kingston and Port Antonio.

Laughing Gull, *Larus atricilla*

Many around Kingston.

Royal Tern, *Sterna maxima*

Several east of Kingston.

White-crowned Pigeon, *Patagioenas leucocephala*

A few east of Port Antonio, one at Ecclesdown Road and one at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

Ring-tailed Pigeon, *Patagioenas caribaea*

One seen well at Hardwar Gap, two at Ecclesdown Road.



Ring-tailed Pigeon

Mourning Dove, *Zenaida macroura*

A few around Kingston.

Zenaida Dove, *Zenaida aurita*

Many around Kingston, a few around Port Antonio and Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

White-winged Dove, *Zenaida asiatica*

One near Portland Ridge.

Common Ground-Dove, *Columbina passerine*

A few between Kingston and Port Antonio, many at Portland Ridge.

Caribbean Dove, *Leptotila jamaicensis*

One seen and a few heard at Portland Ridge.

Crested Quail-Dove, *Geotrygon versicolor*

A total of five seen and a few more heard at Hardwar Gap, and one seen at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Crested Quail-Dove

Ruddy Quail-Dove, *Geotrygon montana*

One heard at Ecclesdown Road.

Olive-throated Parakeet, *Aratinga nana*

Three near Kingston, many at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville. and a few at Portland Ridge.

Green-rumped Parrotlet, *Forpus passerinus*

One at Ecclesdown Road.

Yellow-billed Parrot, *Amazona collaria*

A few plus a flock of about 20 at Ecclesdown Road. Less numerous than next species.



Yellow-billed Parrot

Black-billed Parrot, *Amazona agilis*

Many at Ecclesdown Road, often larger flocks.



Black-billed Parrot

Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo, *Saurothera vetula*

One seen at Hardwar Gap, two at Ecclesdown Road.



Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo

Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, *Hyetornis plumalis*

One seen at Hardwar Gap and one seen at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo

Smooth-billed Ani, *Crotophaga ani*

Two at Portland Ridge.

Jamaican Owl, *Pseudoscops grammicus*

A total of three at Frenchman's Cove east of Port Antonio, one juvenile heard at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville. in the evening and then seen at dawn and in daylight the morning after, when also one of its parents were seen.

Northern Potoo, *Nyctibius jamaicensis*

One seen at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville. Taxonomy of the Greater Antilles taxa is unresolved.

Red-billed Streamertail, *Trochilus polytmus*

Many at Hardwar Gap and a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Female Red-billed Streamertail

Black-billed Streamertail, *Trochilus scitulus*

Many at Ecclesdown Road, where also some half red-billeds were seen. A few at Mockingbird Hill, Port Antonio.



Black-billed Streamertail

Vervain Hummingbird, *Mellisuga minima*

One at Ecclesdown Road and one at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

Belted Kingfisher, *Ceryle alcyon*

One east of Port Antonio.

Jamaican Tody, *Todus todus*

Two at Hardwar Gap and one at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Jamaican Tody

Jamaican Woodpecker, *Melanerpes radiolatus*

Three heard at Hardwar Gap, one seen east of Port Antonio, several at Ecclesdown Road and a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Jamaican Woodpecker

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, *Sphyrapicus varius*

One heard at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

Jamaican Elaenia, *Myiopagis cotta*

One was eventually seen at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville. in the eleventh hour.



Jamaican Elaenia

Jamaican Pewee, *Contopus pallidus*

Two at Hardwar Gap, a few at Ecclesdown Road and one at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Jamaican Pewee

Sad Flycatcher, *Myiarchus barbirostris*

One at Ecclesdown Road and two at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Sad Flycatcher

Rufous-tailed Flycatcher, *Myiarchus validus*

Two at Ecclesdown Road and two at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Rufous-tailed Flycatcher

Stolid Flycatcher, *Myiarchus stolidus*

One at Portland Ridge.

Loggerhead Kingbird, *Tyrannus caudifasciatus*

Two at Hardwar Gap, two east of Kingston, several at Ecclesdown Road, several at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville. and one at Portland Ridge.

Jamaican Becard, *Pachyramphus niger*

One male at Hardwar Gap.

Cave Swallow, *Petrochelidon fulva*

A few near Portland Ridge.

Bahama Mockingbird, *Mimus gundlachii*

One pair was eventually brought in at Portland Ridge.



Bahama Mockingbird

Northern Mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*

A few around Kingston and many at Portland Ridge.

Rufous-throated Solitaire, *Myadestes genibarbis*

Many at Hardwar Gap, a few at Ecclesdown Road and one heard at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Rufous-throated Solitaire

White-eyed Thrush, *Turdus jamaicensis*
Several at Hardwar Gap.



White-eyed Thrush – giving away its name

White-chinned Thrush, *Turdus aurantius*
Many at Hardwar Gap, several at Ecclesdown Road and a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



White-chinned Thrush – not really giving away its name

Jamaican Crow, *Corvus jamaicensis*
At least three pairs or small groups at Ecclesdown Road.

European Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*
Heard in Kingston.

Jamaican Vireo, *Vireo modestus*
One heard at Hardwar Gap, three at Ecclesdown Road and a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

Blue Mountain Vireo, *Vireo osburni*
One at Hardwar Gap.

Northern Parula, *Parula americana*
Two at Hardwar Gap, one at Ecclesdown Road.

Black-throated Blue Warbler, *Dendroica caerulescens*
Several at Hardwar Gap, a few at Ecclesdown Road, a few at Mockingbird Hill, Port Antonio and a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

Prairie Warbler, *Dendroica discolor*
One at Ecclesdown Road and one at Portland Ridge.

Arrow-headed Warbler, *Dendroica partera*
Several at Hardwar Gap, several at Ecclesdown Road and two at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Arrow-headed Warbler

Black-and-white Warbler, *Mniotilta varia*

One at Ecclesdown Road.

American Redstart, *Setophaga rutinilla*

Three at Hardwar Gap, several at Ecclesdown Road, a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville and one at Portland Ridge.

Worm-eating Warbler, *Helminthos vermivorus*

One at Hardwar Gap, one at Ecclesdown Road and one at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

Common Yellowthroat, *Geothlypis trichas*

A few at Hardwar Gap.

Bananaquit, *Coereba flaveola*

Many at Hardwar Gap, a few at Ecclesdown Road, many at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville and a few at Portland Ridge.

Jamaican Spindalis, *Spindalis nigricephala*

Many at Hardwar Gap, a few at Ecclesdown Road.



Jamaican Spindalis

Jamaican Euphonia, *Euphonia jamaica*

Three heard at Hardwar Gap, four at Ecclesdown Road, two at Mockingbird Hill, Port Antonio and a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

Yellow-faced Grassquit, *Tiaris olivacea*

One at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.

Black-faced Grassquit, *Tiaris bicolor*

One in Kingston, many at Hardwar Gap.

Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, *Loxipasser anoxanthus*

One pair at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville. This beautiful species is monotypic in its genus and completely different compared to the plate in Birds of the West Indies.



Yellow-shouldered Grassquit –poor shot of a great bird

Orangequit, *Euneornis campestris*

Several at Hardwar Gap, a few at Ecclesdown Road and a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Orangequit – eating its oranges

Greater Antillean Bullfinch, *Loxigilla violacea*

One at Hardwar Gap.

Jamaican Blackbird, *Nesopsar nigerrimus*

Three plus two at Ecclesdown Road. Feeding like Treerunners on mossy branches and bromeliads. This is one of the trickiest of the endemics, as it is generally an uncommon bird.



Jamaican Blackbird

Greater Antillean Grackle, *Quiscalus niger*

A few at Mockingbird Hill, Port Antonio, and two at Portland Ridge.

Jamaican Oriole, *Icterus leucopteryx*

Three at Hardwar Gap, a few at Ecclesdown Road and a few at Marshall's Pen at Mandeville.



Jamaican Oriole

Mammals

Small Indian Mongoose, *Herpestes javanicus*.

A few of this introduced species were seen.