

Cuba and Grand Cayman

8 – 22 January 2016

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This report covers a fortnight trip to Cuba which also included a brief visit to Grand Cayman. The reason for including Grand Cayman was twofold: first and foremost, I turned 50 years of age and wanted to celebrate this with memorable, exquisite fine dining, and secondly, I wanted to get Vitelline Warbler for my life list. The trip was not a 100 percent birding trip, and thus I chose to exclude the Najasa area from the itinerary.

On Cuba, we suffered bad weather on several occasions, and I was told that this January had been the coldest one for 30 years! For instance, on our first day on Cayo Coco, the hotel beach was closed due to very rough conditions, and our two days in Varadero were literally washed away.

Accommodation

In Cuba, we primarily stayed in hotels, but a far better alternative is to stay in the Cuban version of bed & breakfast, *casa particular*, which we did in La Habana and in Viñales. In Zapata, we opted to base ourselves in Playa Larga and chose the namesake Hotel Playa Larga. There are, however, *casas particulares* available here too. On the cays, however, all-inclusive hotels is the only option.

Casas particulares all over Cuba can be found on www.MyCasaParticular.com. In La Habana, we stayed in the Vedado area, at Casa José Ojeda (email jose.ojeda@nauta.cu, phone (53)7830-508 or (53)525297 – José speaks English), and in Viñales at the nicely located Casa La Campiña Agrotourism (email liche59@nauta.cu, phone (53)58695761). Both these are strongly recommended.

On Grand Cayman, we chose Holiday Inn Resort a few miles north of George Town, on West Bay Peninsula.

Car rental

We rented a car on Cayo Coco, and collecting it was quite an experience which lasted for about an hour – a seemingly endless amount of documents were filled in manually, and the car we got was bumped and scratched all over, so the normal procedure of visual checking of the car was pointless.

Renting a car on Grand Cayman was, of course, a much smoother process. Note that driving here is to the left.

Internet access

Of course, internet access is no problem on Grand Cayman. On Cuba it is a completely different matter, and actually quite charming. You will have to buy a wifi-card, sold in ETECSA (the state-owned phone company) shops and in some hotels. Then you will have to find a place where there is internet access - the easiest way is to just ask any youngster, they will know.

Money matters

Most readers are probably aware that on Cuba there are two currencies, one, Convertibles (CUC), for tourists and another, Pesos (CUP), for locals. Changing USD to CUC would add an extra 10 percent “penalty fee” to the amount – we brought EUR. None of the ATM's we found worked for Mastercard, only Visa. Buying CUC using Mastercard can be done in the counters at the international airport, José Martí.

Money would never be an issue on Grand Cayman, apart from running out of it, it's not cheap here.

Guiding

Originally, my plan was to employ either Chino or his brother Angel while in Zapata. However, it turned out both were occupied, why I had to find someone else. I remembered having come across the name Pedro Regalado in a trip report, so I contacted him, and he was available. We agreed he and his son Alai, who did the driving, would pick us up in La Habana when we returned there from Cayo Coco. Initially, the plan was to head to San Diego, but Pedro informed us that it was too dangerous to drive there in the dark due to parts of the road having been washed away in the recent heavy rains, so we spent the night in Viñales instead.

Pedro lives in Najasa, and speaks English (his son does not, much to the delight of my wife who got an excellent opportunity to practice her Spanish with Alai when Pedro and I were birding), and is, of course, well acquainted with the Cuban avifauna. Pedro has conducted lots of research on Cuban birds, and has been deeply involved in making Zapata a protected area. Furthermore, he described to science the *varonai* subspecies of Zapata Sparrow, and is probably the last person to see Ivory-billed Woodpecker on Cuba! Pedro is highly recommended.

Timing

January is clearly not the best time to go to Cuba if you want to nail all endemics, as this is the time of year Cuban Martin spends in its unknown winter quarters. I failed quite a few endemics (apart from those in Najasa area), certainly as a result of the unusual weather situation - for instance, there was no known territorial Cuban Nightjar in the Zapata area at the time

Sites visited

Birding sites were chosen from the excellent book *A Birdwatchers' Guide to Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico & The Caymans* by Guy Kirwan, Arthur Kirkconnell & Mike Fleig. All sites listed below, except for those around Viñales, are covered in the book.

Grand Cayman

Mastic trail: An important site, which I walked for about a kilometer. For most of this stretch, the trail is quite narrow, and visibility in the dense vegetation is somewhat limited. Nevertheless, some good birds were seen here, including Vitelline Warbler, Cuban Amazon and Cuban Bullfinch.

Queen Elisabeth II Botanic Park: Located near Mastic trail. An entrance fee of USD 10 is required. Birds encountered similar as at Mastic trail.

Willie Ebanks' pig farm: This is *the* site for West Indian Whistling-Duck, where they come in numbers to be fed, especially in the morning. We saw only a handful during our afternoon visit. No fee is charged, but tipping will come in handy.

Cuba

Cayo Coco: This island is connected to mainland Cuba via a 27 kilometer causeway, however we flew there from La Habana. All-inclusive resorts are scattered across the island. Birding here was done at Cueva del Jabali

and Vereda Oeste (both clearly marked in the map on page 63 in the aforementioned site guide). Highlights were Key West Quail-Dove (first site), Zapata Sparrow and Oriente Warbler.

Cayo Paredón Grande: Linked to Cayo Coco via Cayo Romano, roughly a 45 minute drive from the hotel. As is suggested in the site guide (page 69), I parked by the lighthouse and walked the southeast-heading trail. This cay holds Cuban Gnatcatcher and the recently described *cubensis* subspecies of Thick-billed Vireo.

Cayo Guillermo (page 70): The northwestern part of this island, slightly shorter a distance to drive from the hotel on Cayo Coco than to the preceding site, is the area where to look for Bahama Mockingbird. The road ends in a construction area where a new hotel is being built, and the stretch of road leading to it from where the other hotels are located, is the core area for the species, but the birds can be tricky to find. I was lucky to locate a singing male very close to the construction area.

Soplillar, Zapata: A good area to find Fernandina's Flicker, along with a host of other endemics.

La Turba, Zapata: This is the most easily reached part to look for Zapata Wren and Red-shouldered Blackbird. Sadly, the morning I went there was very windy, and effectively prevented hearing anything but the very closest birds, and thus I failed both species. Best bird was the only Yellow-headed Warbler of the trip.

El Cenote, Zapata: More precisely, Cueva de los Peces, is where you want to go. It is a natural pool with a restaurant conveniently located next to it. The prime target at this site is the Blue-headed Quail-Dove, which is attracted to the restaurant surroundings by the personnel throwing rice for them to feed on.

Pálpite, Zapata: A late morning visit in the forest trying for Gray-headed Quail-Dove, but in vain. Bee Hummingbird was seen at a stake-out in the village.

Maravillas de Viñales, Parque Nacional Viñales (km 14): A very nice area located on the northern side of the road heading west from Viñales towards Santa Maria. Park wisely, then pass the gate and walk the short trail to a platform. The trail continues in a loop for 4.8 km (which we did not walk), as is signposted by the road. The only Cuban Solitaire of the trip was seen here. Only a few hundred meters back along the road towards Viñales, and where the forest ends and is replaced by pasture, is a good spot for Cuban Grassquit. Cuban Trogon was seen here too.

Road to Valle Ancon, Viñales: Situated north of Viñales, and coming from there you turn left following the road sign. Drive a few kilometres to where pines start occurring. Park here and bird the road for Olive-capped Warbler.

Finca San Vicente: This is a recreational area including a restaurant north of Viñales, and you will drive past it when heading for the previous site. Apparently there is a birdwatching trail, although we never walked it. We just made a short stop to look for Scaly-naped Pigeon which can be found in the forested hill overlooking the open areas.

Daily log

Jan 8: Travel day from Gothenburg, via Paris, to La Habana, taxi to José Ojeda's *casa particular* in Vedado, La Habana.

Jan 9: Slow day in La Habana.

Jan 10: Afternoon flight to George Town on Grand Cayman.

Jan 11: Morning birding on Mastic trail, and then in the Botanic Park. Afternoon visit to Willie Ebanks Pig Farm, passing Downy Pond en route. Had a fabulous dinner in The Wharf Restaurant in George Town in the evening.

Jan 12: Mid day flight back to La Habana, staying at Hotel Club Acuario, located close to the domestic airport from where the flight to Cayo Coco is departing.

Jan 13: Early morning flight to Cayo Coco, check in at Iberostar Mojito Hotel. The hotel proved to have a nice garden, as well as a big lagoon with accommodation and restaurants along the wooded walkways crossing it. Got our rental car.

Jan 14: Morning birding on Cayo Paredón Grande, with stops on Cayo Romano on the way back to Cayo Coco. Drove to mainland Morón via the causeway.

Jan 15: Morning birding on Cayo Guillermo. Afternoon birding at Vereda Oeste and Cueva del Jabali.

Jan 16: Slow day on the beach. Evening flight to La Habana, where Pedro and Alai waited to drive us to Viñales.

Jan 17: Terrible weather in the morning, so we had to wait a few hours to go birding in the Viñales area. By noon, we headed for Playa Larga on Peninsula Zapata.

Jan 18: Birded Soplillar till about noon. Enjoyed a superbly delicious lunch in Restaurant Chuchi El Pescador in Playa Larga village.

Jan 19: Spent a few hours at Cueva de los Peces, without seeing Blue-headed Quail-Dove, which was the target bird here. Birded some spots in Pálpite, before picking up my wife in the hotel and go back to Cueva de los Peces, this time with luck. Had our lunch here, and the enjoyed a lazy afternoon.

Jan 20: The last morning in Zapata was spent in La Turba, but the strong winds prevailing had very negative impact on bird activity. After a few hours, we gave up, and headed for the last destination of the trip, Varadero, where we said goodbye to our hosts.

Jan 21: Slow day in Varadero.

Jan 22: A few slow hours in Varadero before heading for the airport to catch our flight back to Europe.



Cuban, or Rose-throated, Amazon, left nominate *leucocephala*, and *caymanensis* to the right. On the latter, the rose-red of cheeks and throat are separated from each other.

Species list

A total of 122 bird species were seen, with 109 on Cuba and 49 on Grand Cayman. If known, the subspecies observed is mentioned for each polytypic species. Brief notes are given on distribution for endemics or near-endemics. IOC taxonomy is followed.

West Indian Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna arborea*



Grand Cayman: 3 at Willie Ebanks Pig Farm.

A West Indian endemic found in Greater Antilles, Bahamas, Turks & Caicos, Cayman Islands, Virgin Islands and Antigua.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

Cuba: 40+ Cayo Romano.

Grand Cayman: 4 Downy Pond.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana*

Cuba: Common at Cayo Romano.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Cuba: 5 Cayo Romano.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Cuba: About 30 along the Causeway.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

Grand Cayman: 1 at Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park

American Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Cuba: 6 Cayo Guillermo.

American White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*

Cuba: 1 on Cayo Romano.

Ssp: nominate *albus*

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Cuba: 2 at La Turba, Zapata, were the only ones seen.

Ssp: *hoactli*

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*



Cuba: 2 Hotel Iberostar Mojito, Cayo Coco.

Ssp: *bancrofti*

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

Cuba: A few recorded on Cayo Coco and in Zapata area.

Grand Cayman: 2 in Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: *virescens*

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Seen most days on Cuba, but none on Grand Cayman.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Cuba: 2 on Cayo Romano and 1 on Cayo Coco.

Ssp: *occidentalis*

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Cuba: Few records.

Grand Cayman: A total of 5 individuals.

Ssp: *egretta*

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*

Cuba: 1 on Cayo Romano.

Ssp: nominate *rufescens*

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

Few records in Cuba, and only a single bird on Grand Cayman.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

Cuba: Seen in Morón and Zapata only.

Ssp: *thula*

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Readily seen along coasts in Cuba, whereas only one found on Grand Cayman.

Ssp: nominate *occidentalis*

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*

Cuba: Observed in La Habana and on the cays.

Grand Cayman: A few along the shore opposite Downy Pond.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Cuba: Fairly common along the Causeway, only other record was of one on Cayo Romano.

Ssp: *heuretus*

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Recorded daily in Cuba, none seen on Grand Cayman where the species is a casual visitor only.

Ssp: nominate *aura*

Cuban Black-Hawk *Buteogallus gundlachi*



Singles on Cayo Coco and Cayo Paredón Grande.

A Cuban endemic, previously regarded a subspecies of Common Black-Hawk, *B. anthracinus*.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Cuba: 1 on Cayo Guillermo, 2 on Cayo Coco and 1 on mainland Cuba.

Ssp: *umbrinus*

Clapper Rail *Rallus crepitans*

Cuba: 1 in the mangrove at Hotel Iberostar Mojito on Cayo Coco.

Ssp: *caribaeus*

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata*

Grand Cayman: Readily seen in suitable habitat.

Ssp: *cerceris*

American Coot *Fulica americana*

Cuba: About 15 on Cayo Romano.

Grand Cayman: A few in a pond at the airport, and fairly common at Downy Pond.

Ssp: nominate *americana*

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*

Cuba: 1 in Playa Larga, Zapata.

Ssp: *pictus*

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

Grand Cayman: 25 at Downy Pond, and a single bird at North Sound Golf Course close to our hotel. Strangely none seen in Cuba.

Ssp: *mexicanus*

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Cuba: 10 on Cayo Romano.

Grand Cayman: A few at North Sound Golf Course.

Ssp: *cynosurae*

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*



Cuba: Seen on Cayo Romano only, where common.

Grand Cayman: 25-30 at the beach at Holiday Inn Resort.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*

Cuba: Seen daily in Zapata area.

Ssp: *ternominatus*

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Cuba: Quite a few on Cayo Coco, and a single in Playa Larga, Zapata.

Grand Cayman: 2 on the beach at Holiday Inn Resort.

Ssp: *morinella*

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Cuba: Recorded from Cayo Coco only.

Ssp: *rubida*

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

Cuba: Common at Cayo Romano.

Grand Cayman: 2 on the beach at Holiday Inn Resort.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

Cuba: It took some effort, but finally one was located in the stint flock on Cayo Romano.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

Cuba. About ten amongst the Least on Cayo Romano.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

Grand Cayman: 1 at Willie Ebanks Pig Farm. None in Cuba.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*

Cuba: A single on Cayo Paredón Grande.

Ssp: *solitaria*

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

Cuba: 10 on Cayo Romano.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

Cuba: 3 on Cayo Romano.

Willet *Tringa semipalmata*

Grand Cayman: 1 on the beach at Holiday Inn Resort.

Ssp: nominate *semipalmata*

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*

Easily seen along the coasts on Cuba, none on Grand Cayman.

Ssp: nominate *atricilla*

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

Cuba: 2 along the Causeway between Cayo Coco and mainland Cuba.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*

Small numbers in Cuba and on Grand Cayman.

Ssp: *maximus*

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

Cuba: 1 in the port area in La Habana was a surprise find.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Yes, on Cuba and on Grand Cayman.

White-crowned Pigeon *Patagioenas leucocephala*

Cuba: Recorded daily at Hotel Iberostar Mojito, Cayo Coco, and 1 at Cueva de los Peces, Zapata.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Readily seen on Cuba, none on Grand Cayman. Spreading rapidly in the region.

Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerina*

Cuba: Recorded from La Habana and Cayo Coco.

Grand Cayman: Scattered records.

Ssp: *insularis*

Blue-headed Quail-Dove *Starnoenas cyanocephala*

2 of this beautiful Cuban endemic were at Cueva de los Peces, Zapata.



Blue-headed Quail-Dove



Key West Quail-Dove

Key West Quail-Dove *Geotrygon chrysia*

Cuba: 1 at Cueva del Jabali, Cayo Coco.

Having disappeared from Florida Keys, this is now a West Indian endemic found in Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico and Caicos.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*

Cuba: Singles in La Habana, PN Viñales and Varadero.

Ssp: *macroura*

Zenaida Dove *Zenaida aurita*

Cuba: Several at Vereda Oeste, Cayo Coco, 1 at Soplillar, Zapata, and 1 at La Turba, Zapata.

Grand Cayman: 2 at Mastic trail

Ssp: *zenaida*

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*

Cuba: Only a handful seen.

Grand Cayman: 3 at Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: nominate *asiatica*

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani*

Cuba: Primarily roadside sightings while driving.

Grand Cayman: Fairly common.

Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor*

Grand Cayman: 1 Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Great Lizard-Cuckoo *Coccyzus merlini*



Cuba: 2 at Vereda Oeste, Cayo Coco, and up to ten daily in Zapata area.

Ssp: *santamariae* on Cayo Coco, *merlini* in Zapata. Other than in Cuba, this species occurs only in Bahamas.

Bare-legged Owl *Margarobyas lawrencii*

1 at Soplillar.

This Cuban endemic is monotypic.

Cuban Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium siju*

1 in PN Viñales was the only record of this Cuban endemic.

Ssp: nominate *siju*, which is the ssp present on the Cuban mainland and the cays, while ssp *vittatum* inhabits Isla de la Juventud.

White-collared Swift *Streptoprocne zonaris*

1 in Vereda, La Habana in the afternoon of the arrival day. A highly unexpected observation as in Cuba, this species is normally found in mountainous areas only.

Ssp: *pallidifrons*

Antillean Palm Swift *Tachonris phoenicobia*

Cuba: Primarily seen in cities (La Habana, Varadero).

Ssp: *iradii*

Cuban Emerald *Chlorostilbon ricordii*

Almost daily observations in Cuba.

Endemic to Cuba and Bahamas.

Bee Hummingbird *Mellisuga helenae*



A pair of this much-desired Cuban endemic seen in Pálpite, the male being extremely busy displaying.

Cuban Trogon *Priotelus temnurus*

3 at PN Viñales and 1 at Finca San Vicente.

Ssp: nominate *temnurus*. The species is a Cuban endemic.

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

Cuba: Only one, on Cayo Paredón Grande.

Grand Cayman: 1 at Grand Cayman airport.

Cuban Tody *Todus multicolor*

Singles at Cueva El Jabali, Soplillar and Pálpite.

Endemic to Cuba.

West Indian Woodpecker *Melanerpes superciliaris*

Cuba: 1 at Finca San Vicente, 2 at Soplillar and 1 at La Turba.

Grand Cayman: 1 at Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: on Cuba nominate *superciliaris*, on Grand Cayman *caymanensis*. A West Indian endemic restricted to Cuba, Bahamas and Grand Cayman.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

Cuba: 2 at Cueva El Jabali, Cayo Coco.

Grand Cayman: 1 at Holiday Inn Resort.

Cuban Green Woodpecker *Xiphidiopicus percussus*

A Cuban endemic seen on Cayo Paredón Grande, Vereda Oeste (on Cayo Coco), and in Zapata area.

Ssp: nominate *percussus*

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*

Cuba: 1 at Iberostar Mojito Hotel on Cayo Coco, and 5 at Soplillar.

Grand Cayman: 2 at Mastic Trail, and 1 at Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: *chrysocaulosus* on Cuba, and *gundlachi* on Grand Cayman.

Fernandina's Flicker *Colaptes fernandinae*

2 of this Cuban endemic at Soplillar.



Woodpeckers, clockwise from top left: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Fernandina's Flicker and Cuban Green Woodpecker.

Northern Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*

Cuba: 2 sightings only.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Grand Cayman: a fly-by at Grand Cayman airport.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Observed seven days in Cuba.

Ssp: most birds were of the *sparveroides* race, which is found in southern Bahamas, Cuba and Jamaica.

Cuban Amazon *Amazona leucocephala*



Cuba: Fairly common in Zapata area.

Grand Cayman: Several at Mastic Trail and Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park

Ssp: nominate *leucocephala* on Cuba, *caymanensis* on Grand Cayman. Further subspecies of this West Indian endemic are found on Cayman Brac and in the Bahamas. Possibly more than one species involved.

Caribbean Elaenia *Elaenia martinica*

Grand Cayman: Several at Mastic Trail and Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: *caymanensis*. Widespread in the Caribbean (except Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica and Hispaniola), and also on Trinidad, Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao and islands off Yucatán and Belize.

Cuban Pewee *Contopus caribaeus*

Cuba: Seen on Cayo Guillermo and in Zapata area.

Ssp: nominate *caribaeus*. The species occurs only in Cuba and Bahamas.

Loggerhead Kingbird *Tyrannus caudifasciatus*

Cuba: Recorded on Cayo Guillermo and in Zapata area.

Grand Cayman: 1 at Mastic Trail.

Ssp: in Cuba *caudifasciatus*, on Grand Cayman *caymanensis*. A West Indian endemic present in northern Bahamas, Greater Antilles and Cayman Islands. Possibly more than one species involved.

La Sagra's Flycatcher *Myiarchus sagrae*



Cuba: 1 at Vereda Oeste, Cayo Coco, 1 at PN Viñales, 1 at Finca San Vicente and 1 at La Turba.
Ssp: nominate *sagrae*. The species is restricted to northern Bahamas, Cuba and Cayman Islands.

Thick-billed Vireo *Vireo crassirostris*

Cuba: 2-3 on Cayo Paredón Grande.

Grand Cayman: 2 Mastic Trail and 1 Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: On Cayo Paredón Grande the recently described *cupensis*, on Grand Cayman *alleni*. The range of this species is restricted to Bahamas, Caicos Islands, Cayo Coco, Cayman Islands and Isla Tortuga off Hispaniola.

Cuban Vireo *Vireo gundlachi*

2 on Cayo Paredón Grande, 5 at Vereda Oeste, Cayo Coco and 1 at Soplillar.

Ssp: This Cuban endemic holds four subspecies, all observed were nominate *gundlachi*.

Yucatan Vireo *Vireo magister*

Grand Cayman: Quite a few at Mastic Trail and Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: *caymanensis*. Other populations are found in coastal Honduras, Belize and on Yucatán peninsula.

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*

Cuba: 1 in the garden at Iberostar Mojito Hotel on Cayo Coco.

Cuban Crow *Corvus nasicus*

2 in Playa Larga, Zapata peninsula.

Found on Cuba and Caicos Islands only.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Cuba: Wintering birds were seen in Zapata area.

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea*

Cuba: Singles at Cueva de los Peces and La Turba.

Ssp: nominate *caerulea*

Cuban Gnatcatcher *Poliptila lembeyi*

Up to 5 of this Cuban endemic were observed on Caya Paredón Grande.

Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

Regular sightings on Cuba.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Recorded daily in Cuba and Grand Cayman.

Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachi*

Cuba: A singing bird was on Cayo Guillermo.

Ssp: *gundlachi*. The species is otherwise found only in Bahamas and locally on Jamaica.

Cuban Solitaire *Myadestes elisabeth*

Superb views of a singing male at PN Viñales.

Endemic to Cuba.

Red-legged Thrush *Turdus plumbeus*



Readily seen in Cuba, does no longer occur on Grand Cayman.

Ssp: *rubripes*. Endemic to the West Indies, with various subspecies inhabiting its range over northern Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Dominica and Cayman Brac. Possibly more than one species involved.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Cuba: Easily seen, primarily in cities.

Introduced.

Zapata Sparrow *Torreornis inexpectata*



A Cuban endemic, with 4 at Vereda Oeste, Cayo Coco.

Ssp: *varonai*, which is endemic to Cayo Coco. Nominate race is found in Zapata, while a third race, *sigmani*, occurs in Guantánamo in the southern parts of Cuba.

Western Spindalis *Spindalis zena*

Cuba: A single at PN Viñales, and a pair on the Valle Ancon road.

Grand Cayman: A male at Mastic Trail, and a pair in Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: *pretrei* in Cuba, *salvini* on Grand Cayman. Resident also in Bahamas and on Isla Cozumel off Yucatán Peninsula.

Yellow-headed Warbler *Teretistris fernandinae*

1 at La Turba was the only individual found of this Cuban endemic.

Oriente Warbler *Teretistris fornsi*



1 on Cayo Paredón Grande, and 2 at Vereda Oeste, Cayo Coco.
Endemic to Cuba.

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*

Cuba: 1 near Jagüey Grande, while driving from Zapata to Varadero.

Ssp: *hippocrepis*, which is endemic to Cuba, and perhaps worthy of species recognition.

Tawny-shouldered Blackbird *Agelaius humeralis*

Cuba: Many at Cueva de los Peces, and 2 at Playa Larga.

Ssp: nominate *humeralis*. A resident of Cuba and Hispaniola only.

Cuban Blackbird *Ptiloxena atroviolacea*

Common Cuban endemic.

Greater Antillean Grackle *Quiscalus niger*

Conspicuous in Cuba and on Grand Cayman.

Ssp: *caribaeus* on mainland Cuba, *gundlachi* on the cays, and *caymanensis* on Grand Cayman. Restricted to the Greater Antilles and Cayman Islands.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

Cuba: 1 in the garden at Iberostar Mojito Hotel on Cayo Coco, 2 at Soplillar and 1 at Cueva de los Peces, Zapata.
Grand Cayman: 2 at Mastic Trail.

Ssp: *furvior*

Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorum*

Cuba: 1 at Pálpite.

Louisiana Waterthrush *Parkesia motacilla*

Cuba: 1 on Cayo Guillermo.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*

Cuba: Singles at Iberostar Mojito Hotel, Cueva de los Peces and La Turba.
Grand Cayman: 1 Mastic Trail.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

Cuba: 1 at Iberostar Mojito Hotel, 1 on Cayo Guillermo and 1 at Cueva des los Peces.
Grand Cayman: 1 at Mastic Trail.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Cuba: Singles on the cays and in Zapata area.
Ssp: nominate *trichas*

Hooded Warbler *Setophaga citrina*

1 at Cueva de los Peces. A rare winter resident on Cuba.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

Cuba: Seen regularly.
Grand Cayman: 1 Mastic Trail.

Northern Parula *Parula americana*

Cuba: 1 Iberostar Mojito Hotel, 1 Cueva El Jabali, 1 Soplillar and 1 La Turba.
Grand Cayman: 1 at Mastic Trail.

Mangrove Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

Cuba: 1 on Cayo Guillermo.
Grand Cayman: At least 1 along Mastic Trail
Ssp: *gundlachi* in Cuba, *eo* on Grand Cayman.

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens*

Cuba: 2 on Cayo Coco and 4 in Zapata area.
Grand Cayman: 1 Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum*

Cuba: By far the commonest warbler.
Grand Cayman: 1 Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Vitelline Warbler *Setophaga vitellina*

Pleasantly easy to find in Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, and a couple also along Mastic Trail.
Ssp: nominate *vitellina*. Endemic to Cayman and Swan Islands.

Olive-capped Warbler *Setophaga pityophila*

Cuba: 3 along the Valle Ancon road.
A resident of Cuba and the Bahamas only.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica*



Cuba: Seen on Cayo Coco and in Zapata area.

Monotypic now that the Bahamas birds (*flavescens*) have been elevated to species rank.

Prairie Warbler *Setophaga discolor*

Cuba: 1 on Cayo Guillermo, 1 at Vereda Oeste, 1 at Soplillar and 1 at La Turba.

Cuban Bullfinch *Melopyrrha nigra*

Cuba: Scattered records at Iberostar Mojito Hotel on Cayo Coco, Cayo Paredón Grande, Valle Ancon road and La Turba.

Grand Cayman: Fairly common at Mastic Trail and Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.

Ssp: nominate *nigra* in Cuba, *taylori* on Grand Cayman, the latter sometimes regarded a separate species.

Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola*

Commonly found on Grand Cayman.

Ssp: *sharpei*

Cuban Grassquit *Tiaris canorus*

A group of eight of this Cuban endemic in PN Viñales.



Cuban Grassquit in captivity. Photographed in Varadero.



Yellow-faced Grassquit

Yellow-faced Grassquit *Tiaris olivacea*

Cuba: Very few seen, with records only on Cayo Guillermo, at Soplillar and Pálpite.

Grand Cayman: Several along Mastic Trail.

Ssp: nominate *olivacea* throughout.



Great Lizard-Cuckoo



Zapata Sparrow, *ssp varonai*



Male Bee Humingbird in display flight.