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Naturalist Journeys & International Expeditions
CUBA SPECIES LIST
People to People Tour for Nature and Culture - March 2013

(E= endemic, NE = near endemic of Cuba plus 1-2 other islands, CRE = Caribbean Regional endemic)

Taxonomic order follows the Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba by Orlando H. Garrido and Arturo Kirkconnell.

Brown Booby—*Sula leucogaster*—One seen flying low out from the sea wall of the Malecón in Havana.

Brown Pelican—*Pelecanus occidentalis*—A common companion and fun to watch diving for fish, preening and otherwise just being pelicans! Seen on six of our days, basically everywhere we were by the sea. One memorable sighting was a large flotilla passing over our patio seating for dinner the final night, just at sunset!

Double-crested Cormorant—*Phalacrocorax auritus*—Seen on three days, common in coastal areas, best seen at Cienfuegos and Playa Larga.

Neotropical Cormorant—*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*—Seen in a picturesque pose on a trunk of a palm, leaning over a small cove as we walked a boardwalk trail on our lunch stop while at the Crocodile Farm, at the island where we looked at sculptures and learned a bit about pre-Columbian indigenous cultures of the Taino-Ciboney people.

Anhinga—*Anhinga anhinga*—We first encountered this elegant bird, perched boldly as it sunned itself on a high limb above the Guanaroca Lagoon, as we struggled to get into our very small, low to the water boats. We saw males and females, and again got good looks while at the Crocodile Farm at Guamá. Other sightings were in the Zapata wetlands.

Magnificent Frigatebird—*Fregata magnificens*—Only Jonathan spotted them at Cienfuegos, but Gingy saved the day pointing out an individual high on the wing above the seawall of the Malecón in Havana. We saw a few others the next day from Havana as well.

Great Blue Heron—*Ardea herodias*—Seen as individuals on several days around Zapata and the Vinales Valley, as we did our activities and from the bus windows while in transit.

Great Egret—*Ardea alba*—Seen on four days, one at Guanaroca Lagoon, around Zapata and at the ponds near Las Terrazas.

Snowy Egret—*Egretta thula*—Seen in similar areas to the larger Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons, individuals here and there.

Little Blue Heron—*Egretta caerulea*—We had great looks at one individual while walking to lunch at Guamá, at the Crocodile Farm. It was feeding intently on a small arm of the pond quite close, and just ignored us.

Cattle Egret—*Bubulcus ibis*—Abundant, seen daily except in urban Havana.

Green Heron—*Butorides virescens*—Seen at Guanaroca Lagoon and the ponds at the Crocodile Farm.

Black-crowned Night-Heron—*Nycticorax nycticorax*—Guanaroca Lagoon - seen by one of our boats, and then at the pond of the Crocodile Farm.

White Ibis—*Eudocimus albus*—Guanaroca Lagoon, and then several were seen feeding on the lawn of our hotel in Playa Larga.

Turkey Vulture—*Cathartes aura*—Seen every day in abundance, causing us all to ask what do they eat? They must love the land crabs and find palm fruit as well as carrion, as the island lacks large land mammals, there is simply not enough carrion to sustain them...

Greater Flamingo—*Phoenicopterus ruber*—A life bird for Jonathan coming from Costa Rica, and a thrill for all of us to see 100 or more, feeding in orchestration, at the Guanaroca Lagoon. We first saw them from the viewing tower, but our local guides powering our small boats by rowing with strength on a very windy day got us up close and personal. Wonderful!

Northern Shoveler—*Anus clypeata*—Several in with the flamingoes at Guanaroca Lagoon.

American Wigeon—*Anus americana*—A group of six spied in the pond we had Snail Kites in as we drove to Havana towards the end of our trip.

Osprey—*Pandion haliaetus*—Seen at Cienfuegos, Zapata, and at the Crocodile Farm Lynn spied a pair, one of them perched and ready to fly.

Snail Kite—*Rostrhamus sociabilis*—We saw two at a pond en route back to Havana, young birds coming into adult plumage, they had dark bodies and juvenile head patterns that caused us to pause and get the scope on them.

(E) Gundlach's Hawk—*Accipiter gundlachi*—Peg had read of a pair nesting near the botanical garden of Cienfuegos another year, so was on the alert, and called out as a smaller hawk was seen harassing a Red-tailed Hawk. We watched its agile flight and could study the geometry of head and wing and suspect there may be a nest there once again by the behavior. Great to see this bird!

Broad-winged Hawk—*Buteo platypterus*—We heard and saw this migrant raptor, above the ridge we stopped on to see our first trogons on atop Topes de Collantes.

Red-tailed Hawk—*Buteo jamaicensis*—Seen well at the Cienfuegos Botanical Garden, Topes de Collantes and at Zapata, where we had one flying and other perched that we put the scope on.

No. Crested Caracara—*Caracara cheriway*—Great scope views while with Orlando, our local guide at the Bermejas Reserve near Playa Larga.

American Kestrel—*Falco sparverius*—We saw our first individual while at the art museum up on Topes de Collantes, and then from the Bermejas Reserve near Playa Larga onward, we saw them daily.

Peregrine Falcon—*Falco peregrinus*—Peg and Gingy spied one, glassing the mogotes during lunch at the organic farm. It was flying below the skyline, on a mission as only Peregrines can do.

Helmeted Guineafowl—*Numida meleagris*—Several pair were seen around farms while in travel, and at the tobacco farm while talking with our Guajiro host, one pranced by in the company of a rooster, hard to call these introduced birds wild, but they are well dispersed in Cuba and breeding...

(HO) Clapper Rail—*Rallus longirostris*—We first heard their long incessant call while watching raptors with Orlando at Bermejas, and then another called as we watched the Limpkin from the porch outside the restaurant of the Crocodile Farm.

Purple Gallinule—*Porphyrio martinica*—Seen at the Crocodile Farm and at the reservoir en route back to Havana.

Common Moorhen—*Gallinula chloropus*—This bird caused quite a distraction to Gustavo trying to tell us about Taino-Ciboney culture on the island we took a boat to while at the Crocodile Farm. There were many, and they were running about as if playing soccer, causing many of us to have a laughing fit. Also seen at Las Terrazas.

American Coot—*Fulica americana*—Seen only at the pond by the artist we visited at Las Terrazas, a dozen or so present this day.

Limpkin—*Aramus guarauna*—A great spot by Diane, from the porch outside lunch at the Crocodile Farm, which is in the greater Zapata Swamp area.

Killdeer—*Charadrius vociferus*—Seen on the lawn of our hotel at Playa Larga, and then on grassy lawns of the Hotel Nacional in Havana.

Black-necked Stilt—*Himantopus mexicanus*—Guanaroca Lagoon and at the Bermejas Reserve of Zapata.

Greater Yellowlegs—*Tringa melanoleuca*—Seen on a wetland area between Trinidad and Cienfuegos as we were driving.

Spotted Sandpiper—*Actitis macularia*—Lynn spotted one while at Guanaroca Lagoon. Another was seen as we stopped to view the Snail Kites on the reservoir outside of Havana.

Laughing Gull—*Larus atricilla*—Very common at Cienfuegos, spotted at Guanaroca Lagoon and present in the harbor at Havana.

Herring Gull—*Larus argentatus*—Guanaroca Lagoon, and common off the seawall of the Malecón in Havana.

Gull-billed Tern—*Gelochelidon (formerly Sterna) nilotica*—One calling and seen well in the harbor at Havana.

Royal Tern—*Sterna maxima*—Cienfuegos and Guanaroca Lagoon.

Rock Pigeon—*Columba livia*—Cienfuegos, Trinidad, and Havana

(CRE) Scaly-naped Pigeon—*Columba squamosa*—First seen as we joined our local guides in Russian trucks to ascend the road up to Topes de Collantes, flying by in the early morning. We had a few more in the Vinales Valley region.

(CRE) White-crowned Pigeon—*Columba leucocephala*—We encountered a high-perched individual feeding on palm fruits while walking the boardwalk trail at the Crocodile Farm, but got really good looks in and around the hotel grounds of Villas Soroa. They were fairly common throughout the mountainous area in the Pinar del Rio region.

Eurasian Collared-Dove—*Streptopelia decaocto*—Very common in urban areas, particularly Cienfuegos and Havana. They were courting and mating around our hotel in Cienfuegos so more are on the way...

Common Ground Dove—*Columbina passerine*—First seen while with Orlando, looking for Cuban Parakeets in a residential area of Bermejas, seen in and around Vinales and Villas Soroa, and again seen at the Hemingway House as we returned to Havana.

White-winged Dove—*Zenaida asiatica*—Fairly common, we got good looks on our excursions with local guides around Playa Larga, at the Crocodile Farm and they were seen in urban Havana.

(CRE) Zenaida Dove—*Zenaida aurita*—Seen in Playa Larga, Vinales, and on the Malecón of Havana.

Mourning Dove—*Zenaida macroura*—Cienfuegos and Topes de Collantes.

(E) Cuban Parakeet—*Aratinga euops*—Our first sightings were quick as two flocks flew over our heads on the ridge of Topes de Collantes. Luckily, Orlando showed us a roosting flock at Bermejas and they were wonderfully cooperative as we photographed them.

(NE) Cuban Parrot—*Amazona leucocephala*—We were very fortunate to see a nesting pair with Orlando, and we viewed and left quickly not to disturb them. To our surprise, the next day we saw a dozen or so sunning themselves in the morning, outside the Playa Largo hotel on our walk with Frank Molino. A stunning parrot and Frank tells us their numbers are on the rise.

(NE) Great Lizard-Cuckoo—*Saurothera merlini*—This audacious cuckoo quickly endeared itself to many, with its intent red eye, crazy acrobatic movement and bold temperament. Certainly a specialty of Cuba not to miss. It was present at most locations, seen on five of our days.

Smooth-billed Ani—*Crotophaga ani*—Seen in farm areas in their typical social groups, at Cienfuegos and in and around the Zapata region. They were also seen around the extensive tobacco farms at Vinales, and at Las Terrazas.

(E) Cuban (Bare-legged) Screech Owl—*Gymnoglauz (formerly Otus) lawrencii*—This sighting was a real treat, one that Orlando, our local guide, enabled. He took us to a roost spot and basically introduced us to a friend, a wild but very accommodating owl that he'd visited on and off over the course of 18 years. He urged it to come up from deep in a head-high stump. It popped up with its big eyes bright, checked us out and Orlando said quietly, "Que pasa?" He talked to it gently and it went back down to rest. Pretty wonderful!

(E) Cuban Pygmy Owl—*Glaucidium siju*—We had a two-owl day with Orlando at Bermejas, and got great looks at this species as its active during the day. The male was calling loudly and a female answered from some ways away. Great looks and photos. We also saw one with Frank Molino the next morning, again quite active, and flying perch to perch.

Stygian Owl—*Asio stygius*—The very friendly night watchmen at the Villas Soroa had fun showing us this owl. A pair was very active on the hotel grounds, and we got super looks at them perched and flying. With two nights there everyone who wanted to see them could. Gingy said all she did was walk out her porch, alerted by the loud, raspy call!

Common Nighthawk—*Chordeiles minor*—Peg caught site of one individual that was obviously roosting at tree-top level next to our table at Las Terrazas. As we filed in, it flew out – likely a migrant resting up for a northward journey.

(CRE) Antillean Palm Swift—*Tachornis phoenicobia*—We first saw these acrobatic and vocal little gems from the lookout tower at Guanaroca Lagoon. We soon learned they were common everywhere, just listen for the chatter and voila. They liked cities and countryside, seen often.

(NE) Cuban Emerald—*Chlorostilbon ricordii*—Our first sighting was in the dry forest on a walk at Guanaroca Lagoon our second day and we then saw them daily. We got super looks at their brilliant colors. Perched they showed off a lovely forked tail. They fed on a variety of blooms, and we watched a few taking webbing, indicating nesting.

(E) Bee Hummingbird—*Mellisuga helenae*—They really are tiny! We were very happy to see this iconic bird, the world's smallest hummingbird. They look and sound very much like Costa's Hummingbirds, yet smaller. We first saw a male that cooperated well by perching, we even got the scope on it. Leaving the area, a hedge row in Bermejas, we watched a female feed on flowers.

(E) Cuban Trogon—*Priotelus temnurus*—Certainly "Tecororo" Cuba's national bird emerged as a favorite for many. They were so common, so accommodating to our photos, videos and observation, on a few days we saw eight or more! Peg saw the first ones as we drove along the ridgeline of Topes de Collantes, and she yelled, "stop the truck!" Little did we know how common they would be and how many times we'd get really stellar views. They make a variety of sounds, one quite like the Elegant Trogon. One source described their tails as pagoda-shaped, a great line.

(E) Cuban Tody—*Todus multicolor*—This bird was also quite common and seen in numerous sites, but it has to take the CUTE award. We found a pair right away as we started our walk at Guanaroca Lagoon and we then saw them daily outside of urban Havana. We were pleased the local artist at Las Terrazas painted them; as yet most artists we saw in Cuba have not discovered their magnificent birds as subjects.

Belted Kingfisher—*Ceryle alcyon*—Ponds at the Crocodile Farm, Daryl and Judy found on at Cienfuegos, and we all saw one perched by the Snail Kites at the reservoir en route to Havana.

(NE) West Indian Woodpecker—*Melanerpes superciliaris*—We saw the first of this species on our second day and they were with us throughout from there, often signaling us with a loud vocalization. Our best views had to be at lunch at the Topes de Collantes where one came in to feed at lunch, intrigued by the pole they used to cook the pig in Cuban tradition, roasted whole over an open fire. Another memorable sighting was the one Peg chased out of a nest hole, not intentionally, as she investigated an inviting looking snag with a hole.

(E) Cuban Green Woodpecker—*Xiphidiopicus percussus*—The first boat out at Guanaroca Lagoon saw this little beauty on our second day, but the rest of waited a bit longer. We saw them very well with Frank Molina on our morning walk from the Playa Larga hotel, flying back and forth across the road. Several were on the grounds of our hotel at Villas Soroa, and we enjoyed them at several stops in and around Vinales. They were quieter and not as plentiful as the West Indian Woodpeckers, but still present in good number.

Northern Flicker—*Colaptes auratus*—Peg heard one behind the Visitor Center in Topes de Collantes, but our first sighting was one that had taken over a Fernandina Flicker's nest that we hoped to see with Orlando. This was our only encounter with the species.

(E) Fernandina's Flicker—*Colaptes fernandinae*—Orlando called one flying by as we watched for raptors at the Bermejas Reserve and several got their binoculars on it. We had another encounter walking up the road above the orchid gardens near Villas Soroa, and this one perched for us, Peg got the scope on it. We could see the patterned back and tail well, the black moustache when it turned its head. But we never did get a drop-dead good look at a frontal view – next time!

(NE) Cuban Pewee—*Contopus caribaeus*—The Cuban Pewee is not as flashy as many of the other endemics but has a cute head and tolerant disposition. We found them on our walk through the dry forest adjacent to Guanaroca Lagoon, and then on most of our days. One great sighting, very photogenic, was at the mountainside stop on our walk at Topes de Collantes where we saw the Black-throated Green Warbler. It has the feel of a canopy tower though one's feet are on the ground, and the pewee perched close to us, flitting from one moss-covered branch to another.

(NE) La Sagra's Flycatcher—*Myiarchus sagrae*—This is perhaps the least vocal and bold Myiarchis that Peg has encountered in her travels. While one can see the resemblance, this is a shy bird from what we observed, though present at many locations, one had to be looking for it. Seen on three of our days. .

Gray Kingbird—*Tyrannus dominicensis*—This was one of our first birds sighted, after a Palm Warbler, as we came out of the airport. It seems most common in open areas, around towns, near agriculture. We saw it on five of our days. One good view was near the pond at Las Terrazas where it perched above the line to the woman's bathroom – how handy!

(CRE) Loggerhead Kingbird—*Tyrannus caudifasciatus*—Seen every day, and in every aspect it has the kingbird attitude. We witnessed a big fight between two males oblivious to us up on Topes de Collantes. One came in very close to the same lunch BBQ that we had good views of the West Indian Woodpecker from. It ate a Malachite butterfly right before our eyes. Seen daily.

(E) Cuban Vireo—*Vireo gundlachii*—We first saw this species, and heard its vocalizations, walking around Guanaroca Lagoon. We had it on four of our days, with some very good looks. On the walk with Orlando in Bermejas, one came quite close.

Red-eyed Vireo—*Vireo olivaceus*—We saw just one individual, on the walk with Frank Molino near Playa Larga.

(CRE/breeding) Black-whiskered Vireo—*Vireo altiloquus*—This bird was very common, in a wide variety of habitats. It sang a lot, and we observed it on five of our days.

(NE) Cuban Crow—*Corvus nasicus*—This bird could enter a "best bird voices" contest and place. What a sound! We saw it first with Frank Molino in the morning at Playa Larga, just after dawn and it was quite vocal, we saw several individuals. But some chose (deservedly so!) to sleep in that morning and missed it, so we were quite happy when one appeared at the Crocodile Farm, just at the entry.

(E/breeding) Cuban Martin—*Progne cryptoleuca*—This was a common species, from Havana to the mountain settings and around Cienfuegos. As males are hard to decipher from migrant Purple Martins, Peg waited to inspect a female at close range. We lumped all martins seen into this species after that clarification. Also due to timing, we felt that most Purple Martins would be on their way north, with Cubans arriving in force to breed.

Tree Swallow—*Tachycineta bicolor*—Just a single individual, flying with martins near Playa Larga.

Cave Swallow—*Pterochelidon fulva*—A few individuals seen flying in and out of a turn of the seawall in Havana.

(E) Cuban Solitaire—*Myadestes elisabeth*—Don gets the prize for sighting this species, one we thought we'd likely miss as they can be quite hard to find. We'd taken a cruise through the caves in the Vinales region, and were getting out of the boats across from perfect habitat, a lush steep hillside of limestone. Don saw two birds posing on horizontal branches of vines that linked trees of the steep escarpment. Peg was in a later boat and leaped out to confirm, yahoo! They were strangely quiet, and Jonathan tried to get them to sing playing a Costa Rican relative's call but no go. We were happy to observe this species, in our minds a bonus to what endemics we might find on our route, with the time we had.

(CRE) Red-legged Thrush—*Turdus plumbeus*—Ed thinks this may be his favorite Cuban bird, and it is jaunty one with its patterned white chin. We had some really great views, and were able to take in its large repertoire of song and vocalization.

Gray Catbird—*Dumetella carolinensis*—A familiar species from home, we found this species on three days, including our first day from Guanaroca Lagoon's forested trails and then near the gardens adjacent to Villa Soroa.

Northern Mockingbird—*Mimus polyglottos*—Whether in urban or rural settings, we were rarely far from this songster. It was fun to hear its vocalizations, as it imitated the local clientele. Not surprisingly, with a lack of modern cars, it had yet to learn the car alarm call that so many do back home.

Northern Parula—*Parula americana*—Seen on three days in a variety of habitat, wearing its fine bright colors.

Yellow Warbler—*Dendroica petechial*—Seen on two days, one at Guanaroca and one at Playa Larga.

Cape May Warbler—*Dendroica tigrina*—We found one individual in a bottle brush tree, feeding on blossoms at the Crocodile Farm.

Black-throated Blue Warbler—*Dendroica caerulescens*—After Palm Warbler this was our most frequently observed warbler, seen on five days of the tour.

Black-throated Green Warbler—*Dendroica virens*—Just one bird, seen well from the ridge of the trail at the farm we visited for lunch while at Topes de Collantes. It was feeding at eye-level for us, in the canopy for it, so we got very good views.

Yellow-throated Warbler—*Dendroica dominica*—We had good looks at one individual in a mixed flock of warblers on the roadside walk with Frank Molino at Playa Larga.

Prairie Warbler—*Dendroica discolor*—We found this bright beauty in two locations, one at Guanaroca and one Playa Larga.

Palm Warbler—*Dendroica palmarum*—Seen daily. Widely distributed and common.

Black-and-White Warbler—*Mniotilta varia*—Also common, this warbler was seen most often as an individual with other species, and was seen on six days.

American Redstart—*Setophaga ruticilla*—This bright beauty was always active, flitting about, but often at close range. Seen on five days of the tour.

Ovenbird—*Seiurus aurocapilla*—Just one sighting, on the forest floor not far from our Cuban Pygmy Owl sighting.

Northern Waterthrush—*Seiurus noveboracensis*—Just one sighting at Bermejias Reserve.

Louisiana Waterthrush—*Seiurus motacilla*—Very good looks at one individual working along the rocks of one of the pools near the entrance to the Crocodile Farm.

Common Yellowthroat—*Geothlypis trichas*—Peg first found one individual in a mountain hedgerow by the information center we started our Topes de Collantes day by. We saw them on two other days, including one from the boardwalk where we had so many art sculptures at the Indian Village set up at Guamá.

(E) Yellow-headed Warbler—*Teretistris fernandinae*—Daryl spotted the first individual and called us back as we walked at the Bermejas Reserve. We learned its vocalization here, and heard it again to inspire good views of a pair along the roadside on our walk from Playa Larga.

Red-legged Honeycreeper—*Cyanerpes cyaneus*—Seen very well, in photographic range, at the gardens adjacent to Villas Soroa, a mountain setting.

(CRE) Western Stripe-headed Tanager (also called Western Spindalis)—*Spindalis zena*—We first spotted this handsome tanager atop the ridge at Topes de Collantes. Seen on four days in total, we were always pleased to train our field glasses on this one.

(NE) Cuban Bullfinch—*Melopyrrha nigra*—We found this species only at one location, though we heard it at a few more. This was near the pig roast and Gustavo found it and called us all over. We saw a pair, feeding meticulously amid some vines, for quite good views.

(E) Cuban Grassquit—*Tiaris canora*—A few early morning enthusiasts were able to watch a pair of this species near the entrance to the gardens adjacent to Villas Soroa.

Yellow-faced Grassquit—*Tiaris olivacea*—Fairly common, seen on five days of the tour.

Painted Bunting—*Passerina ciris*—Seen around Cienfuegos by Daryl and Judy.

(E) Red-shouldered Blackbird—*Agelaius assimilis*—Peg observed a pair of these courting, with the male bending over in full display, so much like the Yellow-shouldered in Puerto Rico. They were in with more abundant Cuban Blackbirds, but kept together and kept returning to some shrubs quite near the porch of the restaurant reached by boardwalk at the Crocodile Farm/Indian Village at Guamá.

(NE) Tawny-shouldered Blackbird—*Agelaius humeralis*—First seen en route to Topes de Collantes and then around the farm there. Most of our sightings were in and around the Zapata area.

Eastern Meadowlark—*Sturnella magna*—We saw this species on three days, each time noting its very different look with a pale cheek showing off more distinct head markings. This may be a future split but for now we'll go with Eastern Meadowlark. Our first sighting was at the entry to Guanaroca Lagoon at very close range.

(E) Cuban Blackbird—*Dives atroviolacea*—Very common, seen daily, and our first endemic spotted as we left the airport.

(CRE) Greater Antillean Grackle—*Quiscalus niger*—Seen also on our first day from the airport, and on several other days, great to watch display with its long rudder-like tail. A bold bird.

Shiny Cowbird—*Molothrus bonariensis*—Only two individuals were seen, calling and courting atop one of the sea grape trees in the lawn of Playa Larga hotel.

(E) Cuban (split from Black-cowled) Oriole—*Icterus dominicensis*—Jonathan spotted a pair as we stopped to see our first trogons atop Topes de Collantes.

House Sparrow—*Passer domesticus*—Common and seen on most days.

Chestnut Mannikin—*Lonchura malacca*—A flock of a dozen or more flew into tall grasses lining the pond outside of where we had lunch on our day at the Crocodile Farm. They lingered and fed on small seeds, then flew off like seeds in the wind.

MAMMALS

We saw several species of bats, but were not able to identify them...

OTHER VERTEBRATES

We saw a number of lizards, geckos, frogs and toads that we photographed. We'll have to study and get back to you. One that many of us photographed is this:

Curly-tailed Lizard—*Leiocephalus carinatus*—several of these lizards were on a tree near the limestone saltwater pool we had lunch by one afternoon.