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Cuba People to People Tour December 3 – 14, 2015

Guides Gustavo Puig, Peg Abbott (NJ) with 16 participants:
M.J., Marjory, Jim, Don, Bonnie, Norman, Marianne, Ganga, Hosahalli, Sue, Judi, Sandy, Pete, Joan, Alice and Gary

Bird List

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podylimbus podiceps*) – We saw three individuals among the thousands of ducks at a roadside reservoir, Nina Hermosa, between Havana and Soroa. Had one other in a pond off the Vinales area.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – First seen on the causeway to Cayo Coco, just as we encountered the ocean at close range, and then seen regularly offshore, in small numbers. Also seen around Havana.

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Seen in small rafts of 30 – 40 birds at the bridges of the Cayo Coco causeway, and seen in most of the lagoons we stopped at to scan for various species.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) – Several seen on the causeway to Cayo Coco, flying.

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) – Great looks from the Cayo Coco causeway, then seen on our travel day to Topes de Collantes, later at the small pond across from the Crocodile Facility. Seen on three days.

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) – Seen in small ponds of the farm fields on travel days, seen in lagoons of the Cayo Coco causeway and then a regular at most locations of the tour. They were often seen on travel days in small farm fields and ponds, and present at most wetland areas.

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) – A large group was seen at one point on the Cayo Coco causeway, then a few picked up in flight in the rock reef portion of the causeway going to Cayo Guillermo. We saw them again in the Zapata area at several locations. And in the Vinales area, seen almost daily.

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) – Seen as singles, fresh and salt water. Seen on two days.

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) – Seen off the Cayo Coco causeway, just a few individuals. Seen again in the Zapata area.

(LO) Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*) – Peg spotted one as we left Cayo Coco, at a distance while driving along; it was agitated and feeding in its characteristic style. Sadly not a place to stop the bus for all to see.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – The most common egret, as cattle and other livestock are widespread, so are they. Often seen in groups of 30+.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) – Two were seen on the walk with Armando in the wet part of Zapata Swamp near Mera, south of Playa Larga. We had one posing for us at the pond by the Crocodile Farm.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – We flushed one from the Sea Grape trees to the left of the hotel on the beach at Playa Larga, early one morning of our stay.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) – A half dozen or so were present in the Flamingo Lagoon of Cayo Guillermo. Alice and Gary spied three at Playa Larga, walking there one morning.

Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*) – Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo, we were lucky to find a few feeding at close range, where we could appreciate all their colors, including the orange of the tail. We had them more distant but lovely against blue sky further along the causeway.

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) – Numerous, abundant, and everywhere present. Seen daily.

Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) – A group of 20 or so were using a large lagoon on Cayo Guillermo.

(RE) West Indian Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*) – We had to search for this one, trying several lagoons. Our first look was a distant bird across a lagoon that kept disappearing in thick vegetation. Our local guide was happy to find six at the lagoon with flamingos on Cayo Guillermo, and Peg got them in the scope.

Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) – Good numbers were seen in small lagoons on Cayo Guillermo.

Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) – A group of over 100 was seen on Cayo Coco, the first at a sewage lagoon with open water, and then in smaller number at several other lagoons. Present in fair number at the reservoir with a rest stop outside of Havana.

American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) – One individual seen in flight, at the lagoon with flamingos on Cayo Guillermo.

Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) – We found two very large rafts of ducks at the Nina Hermosa reservoir outside of Havana, we estimated about 750 of this species, intermingled with Lesser Scaup.

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*) – We encountered what we estimated to be a thousand of these handsome ducks, some still in bright plumage, in large rafts on the reservoir near Havana. They were mixed in mainly with Ring-necked Ducks.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) – Norman picked up one on a lagoon where we searched for West Indian Whistling Duck, in the company of coots. We had another at sea just offshore at Playa Larga.

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – At least two spotted at the large reservoir where we stopped to scan en route to Havana.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) – We heard and saw them on the coast at Cayo Coco and vicinity, and got great looks as one skimmed the ocean just offshore.

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) – One individual, spotted on a travel day as we drove by agricultural fields.

(E) Gundlach's Hawk (*Accipiter gundlachi*) – Peg spotted one in flight over the busy highway west of Havana about KM 120. It flew slowly enough that we got the bus pulled over and all got a view as it flew over farm fields and then into a dense group of palms several hundred yards off the road. It flew low, so we could see markings well.

(E) Cuban Black Hawk (*Buteogallus gundlachii*) – One vocal individual was calling loudly from the hotel roof one morning as we walked into breakfast. Several more were seen perched on rock mounds and prominent vegetation. We watched as a juvenile flew by close to the lighthouse, quickly tracked by a calling adult. Great to see a species so limited in range. This species has been split since publication of the field guide.

Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) – We had three individuals of this species on our day to Vinales: one perched on the road, one calling from the tobacco farm, and one flying into the small pine woodland we explored after lunch at the Agroecological National Park.

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Seen on our travel day as we passed through rural areas, one or two at a time. Two soared above our lunch spot, El Retiro, in Topes de Collante. Seen on three days.

Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*) – The first was seen where we stopped on Cayo Coco to scan for shorebirds and two close-in Roseate Spoonbills. Up and down the causeway we picked up three more, at a greater distance.

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) – We had the white-breasted form daily, often on wires along roadsides, or in trees around the hotel. One was very picturesque in an agave bloom out by the lighthouse on Cayo Coco. We had one very close atop a light pole at the art museum in Topes de Colante and another by the trailhead, a third on a picturesque dead snag visible from the porch during lunch at El Retiro. We saw them daily, mainly the white-breasted form, but one red-breasted individual was perched on a palm at a stop we made to photograph a billboard with Che Guevara and one of his sayings.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) – One individual seen (adult) our final stay in Havana. It was using the tall hotel buildings along the beach to hunt Rock Pigeons. Peg spotted it from her 5th floor window and saw it while walking both mornings there.

(I) Helmeted Guineafowl (*Numida meleagris*) – We saw a group of this introduced, now feral species at one of our rest stops early on, then again on two other days.

(HO) Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*) – One teased us with a call our second day in the Cayo Coco area.

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryla martinica*) – One individual was seen well in a roadside pond by the Crocodile Farm in the Zapata region. Another at Las Terrazas.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Seen in the afternoon of our day on the Cays, in a lagoon of Cayo Guillermo. Also seen on the Crocodile Farm pond, main area.

American Coot (*Fulica americana*) – Good numbers seen on freshwater, groups of thirty to forty birds at a time. Three hundred or so were on the reservoir near Havana.

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Two birds seen on the beach where we stopped to check for Piping Plover fairly close to our hotel.

Semi-palmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Several seen at the rocky shorebird area we stopped on at a narrow point in the causeway.

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) – Seen at the sewage lagoon at Cayo Coco.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – A large flock at Cayo Guillermo mixed with the flamingos.

Northern Jacana (*Jacana spinosa*) – Two were spotted on our afternoon walk in wet flooded areas of the Zapata area.

Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Seen in most areas we checked while on the Cays, one to six or so at a time.

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) – Five or so were seen in a lagoon that had a variety of shorebirds, including Greater Yellowlegs, and many Black-necked Stilts, handy for size comparison.

Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*) – A lone individual was spotted on the beach where we tried to find Piping Plover, close to our hotel on Cayo Coco.

Willet (*Catoptophorus semipalmatus*) – Several were seen in the rock reef area as we headed between Cays on the causeway.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) – Seen at three places on Cayo Coco: two at lagoons and one on the causeway.

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) – One individual in with other shorebird species, seen from the causeway to Cayo Coco.

Semi-palmated Sandpiper (*Calidrus pulsilla*) – Seen in the rock reef area we scanned for shorebirds, estimated fifteen birds in and out of the other species.

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) – A few individuals in the rock reef area, mixed in with other species, but discernable with the scope.

Stilt Sandpiper (*Caladris himantopus*) – Our keen-eyed local guide picked this species out of the more abundant dowitchers, and got several in the scope.

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Linodromus griseus*) – A flock of 20+ was seen at the rock reef area between Cays on the causeway.

Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) – Seen at the bridges of the causeway to Cayo Coco where the waters were agitated by the constriction and current.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) – Fewer this year or time of year, one was seen out by the fishing boats going into Hemingway's Marina by our hotel, another couple were seen from the Malecon in Havana.

Royal Tern (*Sterna maxima*) – One flew by as we scoped shorebirds on a lagoon in the Cayo Coco area. A few were offshore at Playa Larga. Several were seen from the sea wall at Havana and near our hotel.

Common Ground Dove (*Columbina passerina*) – Seen our second day on Cayo Coco with Gustavo, and local biologist Oody, who shared his birding knowledge with us. Several seen in the Bermijas area along the roadside, and in Mera, south of Playa Larga. Seen in the Vinales area around farms.

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) – First seen when we stopped to look at crows while driving to Trinidad. Seen in most towns, and at Playa Larga. They seemed quite common to the west in towns we passed through.

(RE) Scaly-naped Pigeon (*Columba squaosus*) – Fleeting glimpses of this large dark pigeon were a tease off the trail to La Batata. We saw another fly over the road descending from Topes de Collantes. We saw and heard them in Soroa, and near the Indian Cave at Vinales. Best looks in and around the garden at Soroa.

(RE) White-crowned Pigeon (*Columba leucocephala*) – Our first sighting was a quick fly-by noted by Armando as we walked a track of the Zapata area looking for a variety of species. Also seen at Soroa at the garden, best looks.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Seen in the parking lot around our hotel at Cayo Coco. Also seen on travel days, and near the Bay of Pigs where we stopped for a sobering visit at the museum.

White-winged Dove (*Enaida asiatica*) – Seen preening atop palm trees at Soroa. A few at Las Terrazas, but not seen elsewhere.

(RE) Zenaida Dove (*Enaida aurita*) – The first dove seen, on wires on our travel day, at the rest stop, and then good close looks at the Cave parking lot on Cayo Coco, both mornings. Several popped up off the small roads at Playa Larga. Seen flying by on travel days, and in Soroa and Vinales. Widespread and common.

Mourning Dove (*Enaida macroura*) – Seen at all locations, common on travel days, more numerous in agricultural areas.

(RE) Key West Quail Dove (*Geotrygon chrysis*) – Marvelous looks at a lone bird coming into a water drip by the Cave parking lot on Cayo Coco, very early morning.

(E) Blue-headed Quail Dove (*Starnoenas cyanocephala*) – A marvelous find that we did not expect, but certainly enjoyed, from a small blind at the start of one of the trails at the Bermijas Reserve. We had lots of time with it and walked away, leaving it for others to enjoy!

(E) Gray-fronted Quail Dove (*Geotrygon caniceps*) – We made an effort to see them on a small woodland trail near Villas Soroa hotel, going down just at first light. The clearing had been widened with some large logs present at a landing. We got distracted by a very close trogon and Pete, who stayed focused got to see one individual of this secretive species, crossing one of the small trails around the clearing. This species was split from the one on Hispaniola in 2004.

(E) (HO) Cuban Parakeet (*Aratinga euops*) – Heard only, a small flock zipped through as we were focused on finding the Bee Hummingbird, and we thought we'd find the parakeets in roosting trees later, no luck on visual though!

(NE) Cuban Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala*) – Early morning walkers found the first parrots at Los Helechos, then we had them throughout the day, calling, flying, perched up on dead snags, feeding on fruits at the farm we visited. We saw them again at Mera of Zapata as we walked in the late afternoon, feeding on large red fruits at eye-level, but in the distance. By sunset they came up to the treetops, calling loudly.

(NE) Great Lizard Cuckoo (*Saurothera merlini*) – Our arrival at Playa Larga changed our luck from quick glimpses at Cayo Coco, heard only at Bermijas, to a five Great Lizard Cuckoo day, three perched for a long time, showing us all their plumage, and uttering some great, long-drawn-out calls. They were present on the grounds of Villa Soroa Hotel, and vocal. Seen when finding the Cuban Bullfinch our last day of birding at Las Terrazas. Overall seen on six days, a great bird!

Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*) – Seen daily, often on the roadside, feeding and hopping on fence posts. For many, the first good view was where Peg spotted crows (both species!) about 20 KM from Trinidad. Here we had a nice view of rural life, a man on a horse with a hoe and a flashlight, and a big smile, across from a man walking two bulls. We had them in the Las Bermijas area of Zapata. They were common in the tobacco region west of Havana to Vinales.

(E) Cuban (Bare-legged) Screech Owl (*Otus lawrencii*) – The wonderful roost tree close to the trail in Las Bermijas was still being good to us. An individual, damp with the rain we walked through to reach it, poked out of its hole to survey us, big eyes curious, in no hurry to descend back into its lair. What a highlight for this day!

(E) Cuban Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium siju*) – Armando introduced us to our first sighting on our afternoon walk; it stayed high in trees and was an art to find, but everyone in time got on it, a great little bird!

(RE) Antillean Palm-Swift (*Tachornis phoenicobia*) – Numerous and vocal, descending to eye-level by the swimming pool at our lunch stop the first day. We had them at Montecino's tobacco farm, above palms that broke up the smaller tobacco fields just planted.

(NE) Cuban Emerald (*Chlorostilbon ricordii*) – We saw this species at our first stop, just before the explosion of warblers. Bonnie found a nest with two young too large to allow the female to incubate, close to a sitting area at the Melio hotel. Tame and confiding, we saw them often. Several worked flowering shrubs at La Batata (crayfish) Trail in Topes de Collantes. At Bemijas, Alice, Joan, and a few others got flashed, a male showing off all his colors. This species was seen and heard daily.

(E) Bee Hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) – A lone female was seen at Las Bermijas, feeding in the white flowering trees and in small purple vervains along the roadside of a private farm. The owner came out to meet us and help us find it, quite the community event. In time this female came in and eventually posed for us, curious.

(E) Cuban Trogon (*Priotelus temnurus*) – Peg, M.J., and Ganga found one early our first morning at Topes de Collantes, then part of our group saw one on La Batata Trail. We had stunning looks while at the farm on the picturesque ridgeline of Topes de Collantes. They were fairly tame on the grounds of Villa Soroa, and we admired one in a secretive clearing where we'd gone to try to see quail doves.

(E) Cuban Tody (*Todus multicolor*) – A singing male was quite cooperative in the corner off to the side of the water drip, at the Wild Boar Cave on Cayo Coco. One vied for our attention at the farm in Topes de Collanes when we were viewing a most cooperative trogon.

Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) – One individual seen at the large reservoir west of Havana, another seen crossing the busy highway west of there.

(NE) West Indian Woodpecker (*Melanerpes superciliaris*) – Sandy saw our first on the hotel grounds at Cayo Coco, then once at Los Helechos we saw them around the grounds, and at the coffee farm we

visited later that day in the afternoon. We had one in Zapata on the walk at Mera. Seen at the Crocodile Farm, and at most of our stops once in Soroa and Vinales.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – Seen well at the start of the trail at the coffee shop of Topes de Collantes.

(E) Cuban Green Woodpecker (*Xiphidiopicus percussus*) – Our first was a lone individual at Wild Boar Cave in the early morning. Great looks at a pair in photo range, calling, near Mera of Zapata. We had a pair on our early walk at Zapata, posing for photos and inspection. Seen on four of our days.

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) – Jim and Margie had one outside their door at the Melio hotel on Cayo Coco that loved to pound on the railing, making an immense noise. It was answered by another, likely not welcomed by the hotel maintenance staff, but putting on a good show for us. We also heard them across one of the lagoons we checked on the island. We heard them in Topes de Collantes. We heard one as we came out of the Sendero Mirador near Villas Soroa.

(E) Fernandina's Flicker (*Colaptes fernandinae*) – We tried repeatedly to see this species, but had luck with only one individual, seen by Peg and by Pete, early one morning from the cabins at Soroa, in the line of vegetation along the small stream. It was feeding at palm fruits, and there was also a pair of Northern Flickers on the grounds. We took the group back to try, but found only the Northern at that time. They are getting very scarce, perhaps displacement by Northern Flicker now a concern?

(NE) Cuban Pewee (*Contopus caribaeus*) – We spotted this one on a wire, feeding, at our first rest stop, and wanted to be sure of our idea as the eye teardrop was so prominent. Voila, its other name – Cresecent-eyed Pewee. One came up as we had the scope on Cuban Parrot as we started our walk up in Topes de Collantes. We had a good comparison with La Sagra's Flycatcher as both were in a grove we visited in search of Cuban Parakeet. We had a good look again in the small pine forest we explored after lunch in Vinales.

(NE) La Sagra's Flycatcher (*Myiarchus sagrae*) – We had a quick flock as one came through at the Wild Boar Cave on Cayo Coco, but a calling Tody got our attention and we did not get back to it. Great views at Las Bermijas. A pair was feeding at the spot we watched for Cuban Solitaire near Indian Cave.

(RE) Loggerhead Kingbird (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus*) – Quick looks on our first walk with Oody on Cayo Coco, then later we started seeing their shining light breast and dapper cap on wires, in gardens, in the pines at Los Helechos. We saw them often, and they really scolded a Cuban Pygmy Owl we had in view at Zapata while with the park guard, Armando. We learned their loud, early morning trill, one of the first songs we would hear at dawn. Seen daily.

(E) Cuban Vireo (*Vireo gundlachii*) – Good looks with local guide Oody on our walk at Cayo Coco. Heard in Topes de Collantes.

(RE) Thick-billed Vireo (*Vireo crassirostris*) – Seen well in the Cayo area with the help of our local guide, we saw a couple individuals and one posed well for photos.

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) – Seen on our second area on the farther Caye of the Cayo Coco region, in a mixed flock.

(RE) Palm Crow (*Corvus palmarum*) – An exciting find as their stronghold range was not on our itinerary, and a spot reported near Trinidad was our only likely hope – success! Its vocalization was distinctive.

(NE) Cuban Crow (*Corvus nasicus*) – About twenty KM before Cayo Coco, due to reading a report, Peg was keen-eyed looking for possible crows. We had a group go over and Alexander masterfully found a spot for the bus. The locals enjoyed people watching as we worked through the calls and bill shape of both species of crow there! Just before Cienfuegos, one flew from the coastal side across the road up into the fields. Another was seen from the roof-top lookout of Ernesto's great lunchtime restaurant while Armando talked about the ecology of the Zapata Swamp. Seen at the Crocodile Farm of Zapata National Park.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*) – Bonnie had one at our first rest stop on the travel day to Cayo Coco. We found one as a group in a mixed flock in Topes de Collantes. One individual in a mixed flock near Mera in Zapata.

(E) Cuban Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila lembeyi*) – Out along the road at Cayo Coco, we had just superb looks, with a pair coming in close, then settling in to feed so we could photograph and study their plumage, nice!

(E) Cuban Solitaire (*Myadestes elisabeth*) – We had one quick fly-by at the exit of the Indian Cave, not a great look at a lifer for many. Gustavo checked another spot closer to the entrance, and here we saw a pair feeding, and enjoyed their musical calls.

(RE) Red-legged Thrush (*Turdus plumbeus*) – Common and absolutely drop-dead gorgeous. In Topes de Collantes they fed at very close range out in the open, on fruiting Cecropia trees. We had them at almost all locations, each day counting them in good number. Seen daily.

Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – We heard this species as much as we saw it, often it gave a brief appearance, or stayed just beyond sight in dense shrubbery. Common, some of our best views were at Topes de Collantes.

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Even more common than the thrush and always singing. We noticed they are being caged as we saw them in town, in Trinidad several restless ones confined, such a hard cultural affinity to change ... One greeted us off the bus at Bermijas, its repertoire of calls differing from those in the mountains. Their repertoire of calls changed as we moved west to Soroa and Vinales. Seen daily.

(RE) Bahama Mockingbird (*Mimus gundlachii*) – We worked hard for this one, visiting several known locations, and with the help of our local guide, we found a pair, near the tallest dune of the Caribbean on one of the outer Cayes.

Northern Parula (*Setophaga americana*) – One of the more common warblers we saw, at the seacoast, in the mountains. We had two in the warbler bathing pool (a small, natural limestone pool) we had in the afternoon walking on a trail near Mera at Zapata. They seem regular and common here, we got good looks again in the mixed flock we encountered in the pine woodland near the Agroecological Farm we had lunch at.

Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechial*) – Seen at Hemingway's home, in a small flock of warblers in the trees in the view towards Havana.

Cape May Warbler (*Setophaga tigrina*) – Our first look was early morning, still in bright plumage, at the water drip at Wild Boar Cave on Cayo Coco. We had one at the farm we visited in the afternoon at Topes de Collantes.

Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – One of the very common warblers, we saw mainly males out on Cayo Coco. They were in the garden of the coffee shop we relaxed at after our walk in Topes de Collantes. One entertained us as we waited for the Bee Hummingbird to appear. We saw a female near Mera in Zapata.

Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*) – Lone individuals among mixed warbler flocks was a twist, as one normally combs through many of these to find a few of other species. We had one at our first rest stop, a few on Cayo Coco. We had a single individual in the flock in the pine forest near the National Agroecological Farm of Vinales.

Black-throated Green Warbler (*Setophaga virens*) – Great looks at an adult male at Topes de Collantes, then a female and male bathing in the "warbler bathtub" on the afternoon walk at Mera in Zapata.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*) – This gorgeous warbler was still in bright attire, and we had them frequently. They seem at home in gardens, hotel grounds, habitats with flowering trees and cover.

(NE) Olive-capped Warbler (*Septophaga pityophila*) – Gustavo had a spot for these quite close to our lunch place in Vinales, a walk in the pines revealed a pair, and we celebrated this great find!

Prairie Warbler (*Septophaga discolor*) – A female in a mixed flock almost slipped by us for I.D. the first day, then we started seeing males in each flock on Cayo Coco and paid more attention. We had them at the farm in Topes de Collantes. They were widespread in small numbers, also at the warbler bathing party at Mera in Zapata, fun!

Palm Warbler (*Septophaga palmarum*) – Common, usually seen in small feeding flocks, often at the edge of the road, edge of the lagoons, on hotel grounds in Cayo Coco, and then up at Topes de Collantes we had a couple, enough to keep them an “everyday bird” for the first part of the trip. Zapata, the coast, Bermijas. They stayed with us throughout the trip, seen daily.

Bay-breasted Warbler (*Septophaga catananea*) – Seen at two locations, a dull plumaged one on Cayo Coco, and a still bright male at the trail near Mera in Zapata, both with other warblers.

American Redstart (*Septophaga ruticilla*) – Two were seen, one per day, on Cayo Coco, both females. We started seeing males up in the mountains at Topes de Collantes, with females there as well. Present at Bermijas and other areas of Zapata. Present at Soroa and Vinales, the Crocodile Farm. Seen daily throughout.

Black-and-White Warbler (*Mniotilt varia*) – Dapper and common, we enjoyed watching their nuthatch-like feeding style as we searched for other species in warbler flocks. Seen on the coast, and in the mountains. One was at the grove of mangos and avocados we checked for roosting Cuban Parakeets. We had them with most mixed flocks, one or sometimes two individuals, including our time west to Vinales in the pine woodland near the National Agroecological Farm.

Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos vermivorum*) – One individual was seen in Zapata, in the thick grove of trees where we searched for Cuban Parakeets.

Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Seen each early morning at the water drip, Wild Boar Cave, Cayo Coco. We had one at Las Bermijas in thick understory.

Northern Waterthrush (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Seen on our morning walk from Playa Larga, then again at the Crocodile Farm.

(LO) Louisiana Waterthrush (*Parkesia motacilla*) – Peg spotted a waterthrush under a bridge at La Batata trail, walking over to it, Gustavo got a glimpse of the face pattern and streaking to make the i.d., but we could not hold its attention for the group to see.

Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) – We found them regularly in water habitats, curious and confiding as they normally are. One was busy in the garden as Luis explained coffee making to the group at Topes de Collantes.

(E) Yellow-headed Warbler (*Teretistris fernandinae*) – We tried for this at two places in Zapata, finally with luck we encountered it another day in the small pine woodland near the Agroecological Farm. The first pair were low in mixed shrubbery, so we got very good looks at this endemic species. We had others in a mixed flock in pines.

(E) Oriente Warbler (*Teretistris fornsi*) – We had great looks, at several stops, while birding Cayo Coco.

Red-legged Honeycreeper (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) – We had this species very high in trees, backlit, as we watched the Cuban Solitaire by the Indian Caves. We had them again the garden at Soroa.

(RE) Stripe-headed Tanager (Western Spindalis) (*Spindalis zena*) – Some of the group spotted a small flock in higher canopy at Wild Boar Cave, but there was a lot going on, so attention was drawn to other species. We had a female on La Batata trail. We had a flock fly over, mainly hearing them and seeing silhouettes near the Indian Cave of Vinales. And then a final few in the Las Terrazas forest.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) – Several individuals seen and heard in the larger trees on the grounds of Villas Soroa.

(NE) Cuban Bullfinch (*Melopyrrha nigra*) – We found this first on Cayo Coco, at several locations, male

and female often together. We had them at a couple of our travel day rest stops. And three came in at close range in the place we looked for Bee Hummingbird. A pair gave us a start as we waited for Cuban Solitaire at the mouth of the Indian Cave in Vinales, the female also being gray, but with broad wing bar.
(E) Cuban Grassquit (*Tiaris canora*) – We tried two days near the gardens at Soroa with no luck, but on our final day, we visited a small farm where the owner seems to protect them. We watched a pair for several minutes, feeding in and around dense brush, fun!

Yellow-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris olivacea*) – First seen preening in the early morning sun at Wild Boar Cave, then seen in grass margins as we looked for Bahama Mockingbird. We had a couple of them across from the start of La Batata trail in Topes de Collantes.

(E) Cuban (Zapata) Sparrow (*Torreocornis inexpectata*) – With diligence we found them on a particularly arid part of the causeway of Cayo Coco, near the highest dune in the Caribbean (13 meters).

(E) Red-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius assimilis*) – We had a small group fly into trees and perch for some time at the small pond across from the Crocodile Farm.

(NE) Tawny Shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius humeralis*) – We had good looks at these in the introduced Skyflower vine (blue) at the start of La Batata trail. There was a group of half a dozen or so, all feeding on flowers. We had them again at the Crocodile Farm for comparison.

Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) – One was singing in the vacant lot across from our Havana hotel, perched on tall grasses. We expected to see them alongside road margins, as on previous trips, but did not. Perhaps the mild Eastern winter was keeping them from pushing south?

(E) Cuban Blackbird (*Dives atrovioacea*) – One of our first endemics, during lunch on our first day feeding on red palm fruits, close enough for phone cameras to get a shot. Seen along with the Tawny-shouldered Blackbirds at the start of La Batata Trail, Topes de Collantes, and also around our hotel. A large flock was at the field edge at Monticeno's tobacco farm.

(RE) Greater Antillean Grackle (*Quiscalus niger*) – Everywhere! Seen daily.

(E) Cuban (Black-cowled) Oriole (*Icterus melanopsis*) – Seen here and there, often quick looks, first in the Cayo Coco area. Great looks, with two males posing in tall shrub outside the home of the farmers that showed us their life in the mountains on an afternoon visit in Topes de Collantes. One joined warblers at the "bathtub" we found on our afternoon walk at Mera in Zapata. This one is also a new split since the field guide was published, a bonus bird.

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) – Alice had a good look at this species in palms outside our hotel at Cayo Coco.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) – Seen here and there, present throughout our travels such as at the gardens we walked at Palador El Divino, but not in large number. Mainly present in towns and around settlements.

(E) Endemic, found only in Cuba

(NE) Near-endemic, found in Cuba and one or two other islands

(RE) Regional endemic, found in Caribbean

TOTAL DECEMBER 2015 Tour = 135 bird species, Endemics = 22

Mammals

Two species seen, but no identification made.

Herps

Eleutherodactylus Frog, several species, seen at Playa Larga (in several of our showers)

Cuban Giant Anole (*Anolis equestris*)

Green Anole, several species

Brown Anole, several species

Gecko, several species

Cuban Curley-tailed Lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus*)