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## Cuba People to People Tour April 14-23, 2016

### Tour Bird and Species List

Guide Gustavo Puig, Peg Abbott (NJ host) with 16 participants: Rich, Richard and Casey, Linda, Grant, Ken, Sue, Robert, Ellen, Phil, Richard and Pat, Eunice, Richard and Janet, and Arlene

- April 14 Arrivals to Santa Clara, Drive to Cayo Coco, Sol Cayo Coco hotel**
- April 15 Cayo Coco, Cayo Guillermo, Cayo Paredon Grande**
- April 16 Trinidad, Topes de Collante, Hotel Los Helachos**
- April 17 Trail of the Giants, Coffee Farm, Farm Visit Hotel Los Helachos**
- April 18 Topes de Collantes to Playa Largo with Birding at Bermijas and near Playa Giron**
- April 19 Birding at Sopillar, Zapata, Crocodile Facility near Zapata, on to Soroa, Hotel Villa Soroa**
- April 20 Vinales Valley and National Park, Tobacco Farm, Hotel Villa Soroa**
- April 21 Soroa Orchid Garden, Las Terrazas, Havana, Melia Cohiba Hotel on the Malecon**
- April 22 Havana, Melia Cohiba Hotel on the Malecon**
- April 23 Havana, departures**

**Brown Pelican** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Small numbers, two or three at a time, were seen on the causeway to Cayo Coco, and at the light at Paredon Grande. We picked them up again at the large reservoirs driving to the West and in Havana off the Malecon.

**Double-crested Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Seen in small rafts of 5-10+ birds at the bridges of the Cayo Coco causeway, on our return, not seen going out to the cays due to high surf. Some individuals were also flying at a distance, in with the feeding flamingoes. They were present on the small lagoon by our hotel, seen the first three days of the tour.

**Magnificent Frigatebird** (*Fregata magnificens*) – Several were seen on the causeway to Cayo Coco, and from Cayo Paredon Grande, all flying. Richard spotted one as we drove along the southern coast towards Cienfuegos the day we left Topes de Collantes to go to Zapata. A surprise was seeing a large group of females and young over freshwater at the large reservoir as we returned from Soroa towards Havana, they were flying acrobatically – at least 7 in all.

**Great Blue Heron** (*Ardea herodias*) – Seen in small numbers our first two days from the Cayo Coco causeway, always single birds. One white morph, Great White Heron, seen in the scope, spotted by our local guide Oody off Paredon Grande.

**Great Egret** (*Ardea alba*) – First seen off Cayo Coco, with green ceres indicating breeding. 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. We had one regal one peering at us from behind the

Red-shouldered Blackbird sighting at Zapata. Seen on five days in total.

**Snowy Egret** (*Egretta thula*) – Seen in small, scattered numbers from the Cayo Coco, Cayo Paradon Grande, Cayo Guillermo causeways. Seen only on our first two days.

**Little Blue Heron** (*Egretta caerulea*) – Seen in good number, both white and blue morphs in the marine environment from Cayo Coco causeway. Seen inland at Topes de Collante with bright turquoise ceres indicating to us that they were breeding. Three days noted sightings in total.

**Tricolored Heron** (*Egretta tricolor*) – Seen on our first two days, off the Cayo Coco causeway, less common than Little Blue Heron but regular. Mainly seen in flight, perhaps 3-5 per day while there.

**Reddish Egret** (*Egretta rufescens*) – More common this April than in we see in winter months, we stopped to scan for waders en route to Cayo Guillermo and had several in view. We watched their erratic behaviors of feeding. One white morph, most were blue morphs, maybe half a dozen in total.

**Cattle Egret** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – A regular species seen on our travel days. Seen in a small farm of Topes de Collantes. A flock of 20+ fed in the open savanna, then driving to the tobacco region we'd have groups of 50+. Seen on five days in total.

**Green Heron** (*Butorides virescens*) – Two were seen together, in the shallow marine bay by our hotel at Cayo Coco. Another was seen in a pond the day we went to Las Terrazas.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – One seen on the buildings around the lagoon by our hotel, another spotted en route to Vinales as we checked some fish ponds.

**White Ibis** (*Eudocimus albus*) – First seen in flight, and then feeding around other wading birds off the causeway of Cayo Coco and adjacent islands. Another group of seven was seen flying over the shallow lagoon at Playa Larga hotel.

**Roseate Spoonbill** (*Ajaia ajaja*) – Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo, we saw a small group take flight as we stopped to observe them, and then scattered individuals among mangroves of the causeway.

**Wood Stork** (*Mycteria americana*) – Seen on our second day in the Cayo Coco area, on one of our stop along the causeway.

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

**Greater Flamingo** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) – We saw flocks in big numbers feeding, we saw them first from the causeway, first 30, then 40, then we realized there were hundreds, 600 or more, one group packed into the end of one of the outer islands appeared like a peninsula. They breed off Cayo Paredon Grande. We saw them each of our first three days, some close enough to photograph.

**(RE) West Indian Whistling Duck** (*Dendrocygna arborea*) – We had good luck with this lovely species close to our hotel on the cays, up to a dozen individuals on the quite bay of the ocean, six roosting close to shore gave us photo opportunities. Noted on all three days at Cayo Coco.

**Red-breasted Merganser** (*Mergus serrator*) – Three individuals, first one and then a pair, seen quite close to the edge of the causeway of Cayo Coco in the marine environment as we left, in the last mile or so of the causeway with the exit station in view.

**Neotropic Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – One individual in the pond at the Crocodile Farm and Rest stop we stopped at as we left Zapata.

**Snail Kite** (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) – LO Two were seen on our drive west to Soroa, as it was getting late we did not stop at their typical spot at one of the reservoirs, sadly upon return when we did stop, not there.

**(E) Gundlach's Hawk** (*Accipiter gundlachi*) – We were very fortunate to observe a nest, in a grove of Casuarina trees near a lunch restaurant of Santa Clara. We had great scope views, flying views, heard the calls as the bird circled us, hungry, calling its mate. It was a juvenile plumage bird in transition to adult plumage. We asked several of our biologists met on the People to People encounters about this and all seemed as confused as we were, for the bird appeared to be a breeding, paired adult, calling to another we could not see. What a great species to see on our first day in Cuba, quite a find.

**(E) Cuban Black Hawk** (*Buteogallus gundlachii*) – We saw several as we drove to Paredon Grande from Cayo Coco, two were an obvious courting pair, calling and flying together. One perched for scope inspection. Then we found another at a pool we stopped to observe Roseate Spoonbills and both species of yellowlegs at. We watched it dismember a crab.

**Broad-winged Hawk** (*Buteo platypterus*) – We caught sight of a few individuals, one right out of the airport, perched. We had one flying with two Red-tailed Hawks above our walk on the Trail of the Giants in Topes de Collantes, and another at sunset the second night, seen from the porch of Hotel Los Helachos.

**Red-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Two soared above our hike on the Trail of the Giants, in Topes de Collante.

**Crested Caracara** (*Caracara plancus*) – We had good views, perched and flying, at several spots on the causeway out to Cayo Coco and vicinity. We had another off the south coast near Cienfuegos in an agricultural area. Seen on four days of the journey.

**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 close, taking a dust bath in the dirt near the coffee shop at Topes de Collantes, fun to watch as we perceived its great satisfaction. We had one from the Museo de Arte, another from the Mirador, both at Topes de Collantes. At Zapata, we got good views of a male red-breasted form, and there seemed to be several nesting in the area, alongside flickers and small owls, a precious area of savanna and palms. Seen on six days of the journey.

**Peregrine Falcon** (*Falco peregrinus*) – One individual seen in the greater Havana area, dashed across the view from the front of the bus, on the hunt.

**Clapper Rail** (*Rallus longirostris*) – We found one individual of this species as our local biologist contact and guide Oody, was most persistent, and he shared a location with us he'd seen them before. We gave up trying and were about to leave when he heard one, so we headed back to the bridge for a view. With some vocal encouragement, it came out, to SWIM along the Canal bank and over to a mangrove island where it called with determination. Really fun to see it so well, and swimming!

**Purple Gallinule** (*Porphyryla martinica*) – One individual was seen off the road as we traveled inland from Cayo Coco to Topes, still in the flat sugar cane area, in a major canal with aquatic vegetation, quick travel day look from the bus. Another three individuals seen on the day we stopped at the Crocodile rest stop, posing for our photos it seemed!

**Common Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Seen at the Crocodile facility in good number out in the shallow ponds where the crocodiles sunned themselves.

**Limpkin** (*Aramus guarauna*) – One individual spotted as we returned from an afternoon walk at Topes de Collantes, near our hotel, digging up invertebrates in the greenery around one of the small homes nearby, great looks!

**Killdeer** (*Charadrius vociferous*) – Seen in the bay near our hotel at Cayo Coco on two days. Seen on the grounds of the Playa Largo hotel.

**Black-necked Stilt** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – A large flock at Cayo Guillermo mixed w/the flamingos, and several groups of 3-4 in scattered areas of mangrove habitat off the causeway.

**Greater Yellowlegs** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Seen one or two at a time in the mangrove area of the cays, and then in the same pond we saw the Cuban Black Hawk dining on a Hawk as we returned from Cayo Paradon Grande, we found a group of 20 or more, as they flew we did not break down whether these were Greater or Lesser, though some of each were seen before they flew.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** (*Tringa flavipes*) – Seen as individuals in mangrove and coastal areas of the causeway to Cayo Coco, and then see note above for those seen as a larger group with Greater Yellowlegs mixed in.

**Solitary Sandpiper** (*Tringa solitaria*) – A lone individual was spotted in with the Common Moorhens at the Crocodile facility. In this dry year, water was scarce.

**Spotted Sandpiper** (*Actitis macularia*) – One individual seen in the bay near our hotel at Cayo Coco.

**Ruddy Turnstone** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Six seen at one of the bridges that allowed for water flow soon after we started out the causeway to Cayo Coco.

**Laughing Gull** (*Larus atricilla*) – Seen at the bridges of the causeway to Cayo Coco where the waters were agitated by the constriction and current. Seen at Playa Pillar with 30 or more in the group on the beach. Seen all days in the cays of the archipelago of Cayo Coco.

**Ring-billed Gull** (*Larus delawarensis*) – One individual seen with Laughing Gulls, useful for size comparison, on the beach at Playa Pillar on Cayo Guillermo.

**Royal Tern** (*Sterna maxima*) – Quite common on the causeway to Cayo Coco, concentrated at the bridges where water currents cut through. Two to eight at each crossing. Two were seen off the south coast driving to Cienfuegos, and one flew over as Frank Medina gave us a talk on the ecology of Zapata National Park overlooking the Bay of Pigs (on the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion!). They were present off the Malecon in Havana.

**Rock Pigeon** (*Columba livia*) – Urban areas, Trinidad, Santa Clara, Cienfuegos, Havana.

**(RE) Scaly-naped Pigeon** (*Columba squamosa*) – Very good views, flying and perched in topos de Collantes, with flocks of a dozen or more flying over the hotel at dawn and dusk. We saw them on the Trail of the Giants in the park. We saw and heard them in Soroa, our best looks here.

**(RE) White-crowned Pigeon** (*Columba leucocephala*) – Our first sighting was a quick fly-by noted by Armando as we were walking a track of the Zapata area, looking for a variety of species. Seen also 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, along the South Coast approaching Cienfuegos. Havana. Seen on five days of the tour.

**White-winged Dove** (*Enaida asiatica*) – Seen on travel days on the wire, on roads in agricultural areas near Trinidad and on wires adjacent to the road en route to Cienfuegos. Soroa. Seen on four days total.

**(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 of the Wild Boar at the water drip feature of the on Cayo Coco, both mornings. We had one in the trail as we started walking at Bermejas. Seen on five days.

**Common Ground Dove** (*Columbina passerina*) – Seen several times on Cayo Coco with local biologist Oody. We saw them in Topes in the farm lands, but biggest numbers were in the palm savannas of Zapata, where we saw 30 or 40 as we walked around looking for nests of other species.

**Mourning Dove** (*Enaida macroura*) – Seen at all locations, common on travel days, more numerous in agricultural areas. Seen on the palm savanna of Zapata. Seen on six days in total.

**(RE) Key West Quail Dove** (*Geotrygon chrysis*) – Marvelous looks at seven individuals, three displaying with wings upright and spread. They were coming into a water drip by the Cave of the Wild Boar.

**(E) Blue-headed Quail Dove** (*Starnoenas cyanocephala*) – A marvelous find that we did not expect, walking a long way with Frank, past the blinds and along trails, until finally rounding the corner there it was, great views, one individual in Zapata.

**(E) Cuban Parakeet** (*Aratinga euops*) – Two flew over us very low, as we stopped at the monument to Che Guevara, a surprise! They were then seen from the restaurant Mi Retiro at Topes de Collantes, first a few flying around a prominent limestone outcrope, and then several perched and feeding in small trees in view of the restaurant. As we had limited time we did not look for roosting individuals at Bermejas reported there of late.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo** (*Coccyzus americanus*) – One individual appeared just after the group observed Cuban Pygmy Owls at their nest hole on the palm savanna of Zapata. Dick got a good photo showing bill shape and color as Orlando sees these mainly in this time of migration we checked it carefully with the book. This is a first record for a Naturalist Journeys/Caligo Ventures group in Cuba, part of the fun of an April tour when migration is in swing.

**(NE) Great Lizard Cuckoo** (*Saurothera merlini*) – Heard on several days at the beginning of the tour, its distinctive call always notable. We finally got good looks on the walk by Bermejas with Orlando, one posing for us for some time high in the tree canopy. Bob found another mid-canopy, and as we left the Bee Hummingbird site, we had views of one furtively hunting along the fencerow. It came up with a lizard, posed for a minute then flew off likely to a nest mate. Also seen at Soroa.

**Smooth-billed Ani** ( ) Seen regularly in lower elevation agricultural areas on travel days.

**(E) Cuban (Bare-legged) Screech Owl** (*Otus lawrencii*) – We had quick looks from one in the palm savanna that Orlando wanted to acclimate. She was not as good at subtle signals as his favorite back on the Bermejas trail, but with two tries we all got good looks at this impossibly cute little face.

**(E) Cuban Pygmy Owl** (*Glaucidium siju*) – We also found this species where it nests in cavities in good density in the palm savanna of Zapata, within a few hundred yards of the Bare-legged Screech Owl.

**Stygian Owl** (*Asio stygius*) – Rick and Casey were the lucky ones, walking down to dinner at Soroa, they had two of these large owls fly over the restaurant roof, over them, wow! They may have been feeding young, as guards kept watch for us, our only calls were up the hill and across the road.

**Greater Antillean Nighthawk** (*Caprimulgus cubnensis*) – Seen on four days, first encountered as we checked into our hotel near dusk at Topes de Collantes. Also seen at Playa Largo.

**(RE) Antillean Palm-Swift** (*Tachornis phoenicobia*) – We had about twenty of them flying over the rest stop we took at Los Cayanes restaurant. Two were seen from the farm of the Colorados at Topes de Collantes, alerting us by sound. Seen on four days of our journey.

**(NE) Cuban Emerald** (*Chlorostilbon ricordii*) – Several in our group were pleased to find they could become experts of Cuban hummingbirds with ease, only two species being available at this time of year. We found Cuban Emerald at our first stop, and then at almost every stop, sometimes several individuals on a flowering tree. They were at each blooming bottlebrush tree (ornamental) that we encountered. They liked blooming shrubs in the coastal scrub the Paradon Grande lighthouse. One was not as popular with us as it bullied the Bee Hummingbird away from its favorite food tree, but we got good looks despite its aggression. Seen on all days in rural areas, and one of our city days in Havana.

**(E) Bee Hummingbird** (*Mellisuga helenae*) – A lovely bright male was seen at Las Bermijas, territorial and singing, even from the telephone wire where we could photograph and see it well. It chased off another at one point, and then it was chased by the Cuban Emerald. It has been dry so these shrubs carefully watered by Orlando and his brother provide an important oasis of flowers.

**(E) Cuban Trogon** (*Priotelus temnurus*) – Our first sighting was at the Mirador at Topes de Collantes driving up from Trinidad. Three were calling to each other, flying at eye level for great views of their marvelous “pagoda” shaped tails. They are really vocal in April, much moreso than other months. While walking down the Trail of the Giants we noted 15 different individuals by sight or sound, incredible! They were around Hotel Los Helachos, and we heard four on the trail at Bermejas, several across the road at Playa Largo from our hotel.

**(E) Cuban Tody** (*Todus multicolor*) – A very tame individuals was once again our first sighting near the water drip at the Wild Boar Cave on Cayo Coco. Later in the day along the causeway we had a pair that afforded us excellent views and photos. We had one call close to the trail at Bermejas.

**Belted Kingfisher** (*Ceryle alcyon*) – One individual came up out of a wide pool in stream, following two Little Blue Herons. Many small fish likely made for an easy life for this winter resident species.

**(NE) West Indian Woodpecker** (*Melanerpes superciliaris*) – Our first sighting was at the roadside rest stop where we walked around a small pond, it was nesting. We saw them each day at Cayo Coco and vicinity, at with its hole at eye-level. Several were there at Topes de Collantes, often vocal. We found them at just about every stop at Topes Collantes, and at the savanna palm area near Playa Giron we found at least six pairs nesting, and multiple other individuals. They called regularly from the grounds at Playa Largo.

**(E) Cuban Green Woodpecker** (*Xiphidiopicus percussus*) – We had one observation of a pair working on a net on a termite mound. One quiet individual was seen feeding on the Trail of the Giants in Topes de Collantes. We observed one while on the trail at Bermejas.

**Northern Flicker** (*Colaptes auratus*) – We had one individual feeding on the ground at our hotel in Cayo Coco. Seen again in the palm-studded grasslands we walked with Frank at Zapata.

**(E) Fernandina's Flicker** (*Colaptes fernandinae*) – April and its nesting activity brought us very good luck with this species, in contrast to our other tours over the winter months. We found two nests with ease, and had a flyover of another adult in the palm savanna outside of Playa Giron. Females were on nests with males nearby, at one we could hear young inside. Very encouraging to hear that at least at this location, breeding is on the increase, with at least six nests active right now in this area. We had another pair on the following morning's walk with Frank.

**(NE) Crescent-eyed (Cuban) Pewee** (*Contopus caribaeus*) – We spotted our first one as we watched the nesting Gundlach's Hawk near Los Cayenes restaurant. We had another on the Bermejas trail. Seen a total of four days on our journey.

**(NE) La Sagra's Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus sagrae*) – First seen on our early morning outing to Cave of the Wild Boar at Cayo Coco. Seen in coastal scrub at Paredon Grande. Then found again on the trail at Bermejas, Ellen noticed the crest and several that had not seen it before got onto this one. Seen at Zapata.

**(RE) Loggerhead Kingbird** (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus*) – First seen distinctly on Cayo Paredon Grande, nice comparison with Gray Kingbird nearby. We then saw them at many stops, and their upturned trill brightened our montings, one of the first birds to start singing.

**(E) Cuban Vireo** (*Vireo gundlachii*) – A pair was seen and heard on the trail at Bermejas with Orlando. Another sang in the hedgerow across the street from Playa Largo hotel near Zapata.

**(RE) Thick-billed Vireo** (*Vireo crassirostris*) – We were surprised to have one at the Cave of the Wild Boar in a flock with Cuban Bullfinch and other species. We then saw them in coastal scrub, a tall patch where we got excellent views on Cayo Paredon Grande. Development now encroaching here is of real concern for this species.

**Black-whiskered Vireo** (*Vireo altiloquus*) – Seen on four days, at the cave area of Cayo Coco, in Topes, and at all locations in and around Zapata.

**(NE) Cuban Crow** (*Corvus nasicus*) – We stopped at the spot near Trinidad known to have both crow species overlapping, but found just a few individuals. We got great looks at one feeding on fruits of a palm, by vocalization knew we had Cuban Crow here. Pairs were active at Playa Largo, their distinctive call fun to hear from our porches there.

**Cuban Martin** (*Progne cryptoleuca*) – First seen at the restaurant Los Cayenes east of Santa Clara, then at several bridges, along the coast, and along the highway as we drove to Cienfuegos. Havana.

**Tree Swallow** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Richard spied the first one while we were at Topes de Collantes, then several were present along the Southern Coast driving to Cienfuegos, and above the palm savanna at Zapata.

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Our first were spied from a balcony viewpoint, flying over the colorful buildings of Trinidad. A group of a dozen or more were seen on the travel day to Cienfuegos at a river crossing.

**Barn Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Seen as we left the Cayo Coco area.

**(E) Cuban Gnatcatcher** (*Polioptila lembeyei*) – Out along the road at Cayo Paredon Grande, we had excellent looks of a pair.

**(E) Cuban Solitaire** (*Myadestes elisabeth*) – Gustavo did a great job locating two individuals along the lush limestone mogotes near Vinales, singing and perched for good viewing.

**(RE) Red-legged Thrush** (*Turdus plumbeus*) – Common and striking. Their metallic calls often alerted us to their presence. Seen on seven days.

**Gray Catbird** (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – We had one individual at the water drip at Cave of the Wild Boar on Cayo Coco and one in coastal scrub near the hotel there. We had them on the morning walk with Frank in Zapata, giving all another chance to view them.

**Northern Mockingbird** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Despite seeing many of them in cages, we found this to be a numerous species, seeing them regularly in our travels, on small farms, on phone wires, in coastal scrub where we hoped to find the more secretive Bahama Mockingbird. Seen almost daily.

**(RE) Bahama Mockingbird** (*Mimus gundlachii*) – We worked hard for this one, stopping at several hopeful locations. And finally, almost giving up we found one near the parking lot of Playa Pilar on Cayo Guillermo.

**Cedar Waxwing** (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – HO. We heard a small flock as it started to rain on our afternoon walk at Topes de Collantes, up in the pines.

**Tennessee Warbler** (*Vermivora peregrine*) – Seen on two days, the most notable as musicians played with gusto at a great lunch we had while visiting Las Terrazas.

**Northern Parula** (*Setophaga americana*) – On two days of the trip, we saw several bright individuals, starting with our rest stop at Los Hoyos east of Santa Clara. They were present on Cayo Coco.

**Yellow Warbler** (*Setophaga petechial*) – Seen at Cayo Coco at the Canal at the Tryp Hotel where thick mangroves lined the waterway.

**Magnolia Warbler** (*Dendroica pennsylvanica*) – Seen our first day at one of the rest stops.

**Cape May Warbler** (*Setophaga tigrina*) – First seen in bottlebrush at Los Hoyos rest stop, our first warbler and a very bright male one – beautiful. We had several others while at Cayo Coco.

**Black-throated Blue Warbler** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – We saw three individuals while at Cayo Coco, male and female and then a male near the Hotel Helachos in Topes de Collantes.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** (*Setophaga coronata*) – We had a single individual in trees at Los Cayenes near Santa Clara. Another flew over us at Zapata's palm savanna as we watched Red-shouldered Blackbirds.

**Black-throated Green Warbler** (*Setophaga virens*) – HO by a few of the group just as Frank called out Blue Quail Dove! We turned to that and did not go back but the call is distinct.

**(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 two different groups, one a threesome with some chasing going on, and then a lone one that posed for better looks farther along the walk.

**Prairie Warbler** (*Septophaga discolor*) – A few bright males were seen and heard on Cayo Coco, one male was singing on the Trail of the Giants in Topes de Collantes.

**Palm Warbler** (*Septophaga palmarum*) – Two individuals were seen on the hotel grounds in Cayo Coco.

**American Redstart** (*Septophaga ruticilla*) – The most common warbler species we encountered at this time in April. We had a few bright males, a few bright females and a good number still showing juvenile plumage. Seen on six days of our tour.

**Black-and-White Warbler** (*Mniotilt varia*) – Seen at one of our rest stops and then as we traveled from Zapata to Soroa, again at a rest stop.

**Ovenbird** (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – One individual seen at the water feature at Cave of the wild Boar, excellent views in the early morning hours.

**Northern Waterthrush** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Seen at the bridge just before the orchid garden at Soroa.

**Louisiana Waterthrush** (*Parkesia motacilla*) – Gustavo found this as did the first to arrive at the small pond across from the Crocodile facility and rest stop leaving Zapata and heading north.

**Common Yellowthroat** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Seen at the Crocodile facility roadside reststop.

**(E) Yellow-headed Warbler** (*Teretistris fernandinae*) – We saw this vocal specialty of the island on two days, both in the Zapata area. One sighting was a noisy family group.

**(E) Oriente Warbler** (*Teretistris fornsi*) – We had very good looks, at several stops, while birding Cayo Coco. The first area was in coastal scrub. Then going inland on Cayo Guillermo, we walked a back road where they were very common, seeing or hearing at least 8 individuals, including one family group.

**Red-legged Honeycreeper** (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) – Gustavo spotted a bright male on the Trail of the Giants at Topes de Collantes, a quick view feeding in trees that arced over the trail. We then had better looks on the hotel grounds, and then at the orchid garden in Soroa. Beautiful bird!

**(RE) Stripe-headed Tanager (Western Spindalis)** (*Spindalis zena*) – This species soon became a favorite of the group. We first saw them at Cave of the Wild Boar on Cayo Coco, then at several places in coastal scrub. We had a pair in lovely light on Cayo Guillermo very low along the road. And then another also feeding low as we took a morning walk at our hotel in Topes de Collantes. A bright male greeted us on the trail at Bermejas. Seen on three days of the tour.

**Summer Tanager** (*Piranga rubra*) – One individual heard as we started a walk near the Hotel Los Helachos in Topes de Collantes. Then seen and heard in the larger trees on the grounds of Villas Soroa.

**(NE) Cuban Bullfinch** (*Melopyrrha nigra*) – We found this species to be quite common on Cayo Coco, at several locations, we found them in groups and as pairs at almost every stop on the cays. Sadly, this bird was also seen caged at several locations.

**(E) Cuban Grassquit** (*Tiaris canora*) – Peg remembered seeing them at Soroa her first trip, and with luck we found a pair, stunning male tending to his female.

**Yellow-faced Grassquit** (*Tiaris olivacea*) – Seen at a view of our stops on the cays, and then very well near the steps of the Mirador in Topes de Collantes.

**(E) Cuban (Zapata) Sparrow** (*Torreocornis inexpectata*) – We had to work harder this year to find this species, eventually they were very cooperative, though furtive and hard to photograph, on quiet side road we explored on Cayo Guillermo.

**Indigo Bunting** (*Passerina cyanea*) – Seen at our first rest stop, perched atop bare branches for easy inspection.

**(E) Red-shouldered Blackbird** (*Agelaius assimilis*) – We were treated to an easy view of this species due to the scouting work of Orlando, our guide in the general Bermejas area of Zapata National Park. This group was near the nesting area for Fernandina Flicker and many West Indian Woodpeckers that we enjoyed an outing in.

**(NE) Tawny Shouldered Blackbird** (*Agelaius humeralis*) – We had good looks at these on our first day, at the rest stop with the small lake driving east from Santa Clara. We found them again at the start of the trail we walked at Bermejas. Seen on four days of the tour.

**Eastern Meadowlark** (*Sturnella magna*) – Peg spotted one and called it on the fly as we drove through the extensive sugar cane groves heading into the mountains from Cayo Coco. We also had one on our first stop with Orlando, in extensive palm savanna habitat of Zapata, as we drove towards Playa Giron. We looked for them returning to Havana, and in grassy terrain we watched them and heard them sing, very distinct song – a possibly species they may split so duly noted.

**(E) Cuban Blackbird** (*Dives atrovilacea*) – One of our first endemics, lunch on our first day at the rest stop with the small lake. We had them at many roadside stops, they were common at Topes de

Collantes, and we saw them near Bermejas in Zapata with Orlando. Tobacco country of Vinales. Also Las Terrazas. Seen on six days.

**(RE) Greater Antillean Grackle** (*Quiscalus niger*) – Everywhere! Seen daily. At Topes they were almost too common, seeming to dominate the bird life around the park Visitor Check in station, and also the area around Hotel Helachos. On our afternoon walk there, Peg pished and 25 came flying in, a “grackle whisperer” she was! Seen almost daily.

**Shiny Cowbird** (*Molothrus bonariensis*) – Seen on five days of our journey.

**(E) Cuban (Black-cowled) Oriole** (*Icterus melanopsis*) – We heard these at two locations early on before seeing them well our early morning walk at Topes de Collantes from Hotel Los Helachos. We kept seeing “pairs” with one black and yellow adult, and one yellowish partner the book identified as immature, with text stating sexes alike. Of a dozen or so pairs at various locations, we had one obvious black and yellow plumage in both birds. As most orioles the females share plumage traits with young, we started our own research on this here! Seen on five days of the journey.

**House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*) – Seen near the resorts in Cayo Coco, in urban areas, at gas stations, in small number. Havana.

**(E) Endemic, found only in Cuba**

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

**(RE) Regional endemic, found in Caribbean**

**(HO) Heard Only**

**(LO) Seen by leader only**

TOTAL APRIL 2016 Tour = xxx bird species Endemics = xx species

## Mammals

Bat, sp. – A group of bats was hanging in the thatch roof check-in hut at the restaurant Los Cayenes, to be identified

Eastern Cottontail – introduced species – One crossed the road by the home of Orlando’s brother, where we watched Bee Hummingbird and Greater Lizard Cuckoo with delight, in the vicinity of Bermejas.

## Herps

**Banana Frogs** (*Eleutherodactylus*, sp.) Frogs seen at Playa Larga (in several of our showers)

**Cuban Giant Anole** (*Anolis equestris*)

**Cuban Blue Anole** (*Anolis allisonia*) – Cayo Coco area, great views.

**Green Anole**, several species

**Brown Anole**, several species – Two were mating as we got off the bus at Topes de Collantes National Park, our welcoming committee.

**White-bearded Anole** – photographed by Richard

**Gekko**, several species

**Brown Curley-tailed Lizard** (*Leiocephalus carinatus*) – Seen on the streets of Trinidad

*Leiocephalus* sp. – a different curly-tailed lizard, waiting on id.

Gray Water Snake sp.

And a wonderous array of crabs, spiders, butterflies, moths – all awaiting our id!