

ITINERARY

BAHAMAS: Endemics & Kirtland's Warbler

March 18-23, 2023



The endangered Bahama Warbler is found only on Grand Bahama and Abaco islands. The species was only recently recognized as distinct from the similar Yellow-throated Warbler of the mainland US. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.

We include here information for those interested in the 2023 Field Guides Bahamas tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our website)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Lying just across the Straits of Florida, the Bahamas are home to more than 21 species that have rarely or never been recorded in the US. Our tour visits three of the richest islands, where all of these West Indian specialties can be found. We'll begin on Abaco; with its extensive Caribbean Pine forest and mixed hardwood coppice, it is home to many species including the endemics Bahama swallow, warbler, and yellowthroat, Cuban Pewee, and the Bahamian subspecies of Cuban Parrot. And while hummingbirds are few, they include the sparkling Cuban Emerald and the endemic, purple-and-rose-gorgeted Bahama Woodstar.

From Abaco we'll travel to Eleuthera Island. Among the birding highlights are the oversized Great Lizard-Cuckoo that haunts the tall coppice, and possibly a Kirtland's Warbler, an endangered species recently found wintering on just a few islands. (We found five individuals of this rare warbler in 2009, another in 2010, three in 2011, eight in 2013, three in 2014, and four in 2015!) In the process, we'll have time to enjoy some West Indian butterflies including such beauties as the Atala and Polydamas Swallowtail, along with another 30 species or so that we have recorded on our trips. From Eleuthera we visit the island of Andros for two nights where we can hope to find the endemic Bahama Oriole (*Icterus northropi*). This species is only found on Andros (now extirpated from Abaco), with a population estimated to be around just 250 individuals.

If island endemics, cracked conch, and Kalik beer all sound like a good time (they are), then join us in the Bahamas.



*The Great Lizard-Cuckoo is a spectacular forest-dweller that we'll watch for on Eleuthera Island.
Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.*

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one). Having a vaccinated group will greatly diminish but not eliminate the possibility of the group and individual participants being adversely affected by COVID-19. **We are requiring all of our staff guides to be vaccinated, including getting the booster.** Note too, that many travel destinations are or soon will be requiring proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may become a requirement for some travel destinations if they choose to declare that vaccinations do not last indefinitely. And having a booster means your risk is lowered and your travel plans and those of our group are less likely to be disrupted.

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking (up to 1.5 miles per outing), some of it on paved, dirt, or gravel/limestone roads, some on fairly wide trails. Roads and trails are relatively level in the Bahamas, with few obstacles.

- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Our time in vans or other vehicles is not extensive (usually less than an hour between destinations), but we may be cramped for these drives (especially when we are with luggage). On the small planes used for inter-island travel, space (for people and luggage) is rather limited as well.
- **PACE:** Fairly early mornings (6:30-7:30 a.m. breakfasts), with afternoon breaks on several occasions.
- **WEATHER:** Early spring weather is pleasant in the Bahamas. Expect temperatures in the low 60s in the evening, with days ranging from the low 70s to high 80s F. Rain showers are possible. It will be sunny (this is the Caribbean!), so prepare to use sun block, wear wide-brimmed hats, and drink plenty of water.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but on occasion, participants should be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

Other considerations: We have chartered a plane for our flight to Eleuthera from Abaco, and will take scheduled flights from Eleuthera to Andros (via Nassau), and return. In general, space (for people and luggage) is limited on these smaller planes used for inter-island travel and there may be some crowded conditions, but it is only for short periods of travel between islands or between birding sites. The birds and butterflies will more than make up for this!

If you are uncertain whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

About the Birding Areas



Great Abaco Island and Abaco National Park—Just a 45-minute drive south of Marsh Harbour, Abaco National Park is home to four Bahamian endemics: Bahama Woodstar, Bahama Swallow, Bahama Warbler and Bahama Yellowthroat. These species are found nowhere else except in the Bahamas. The entire park is covered in 5000 acres of Bahamian pine (*Pinus caribaea bahamensis*)—savanna with smaller areas of dry coppice woodland. This habitat is home to the northern most population of the Cuban Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*), found on only two islands in the Bahamas: Abaco and Great Inagua. We will spend several days in the pine forest where, in addition to the endemics and the parrot, we hope to see West Indian Woodpecker, Cuban Emerald, La Sagra's Flycatcher, Cuban Pewee, Thick-billed Vireo, Olive-capped Warbler, and Western Spindalis. We will also want to spend some time in the coppice habitat surrounding the park where we have good chances for

nominate Red-legged Thrush and Greater Antillean-Bullfinch. There are some cool endemic subspecies, too, like the larger, paler, and vocally different Bananaquit (*C. f. bahamensis*).

Eleuthera Island—there are no pines on Eleuthera, just extensive coppice habitat and beautiful pink sand beaches. Though the birding may seem less intense (fewer species overall on Eleuthera), there are two species in particular that we will be keen on seeing—the Great Lizard-Cuckoo, found only on Andros, New Providence (near extirpated), and Eleuthera in the Bahamas, and the federally endangered Kirtland's Warbler. Both species require a good bit of effort to find, especially the warbler. The Kirtland's was recently discovered to be wintering on Eleuthera in larger numbers than encountered anywhere else on its wintering grounds, which is comprised of just a few Bahamian islands. Our birding efforts for these two important species will take place primarily between Governor's Harbour and Tarpum Bay, but we will also spend time birding to the north, near Gregory Town.

Andros Island—We will fly to Andros for one night to look for the Bahama Oriole. This rare and local oriole, a recent split from Greater Antillean Oriole, numbers just around 250 individuals and is confined to patches of palm groves on the island of Andros (it has been extirpated from Abaco). We will also make a few short excursions into taller coppice or pine habitat with more chances to find the oriole or another Great Lizard-Cuckoo and other Caribbean specialties.



One of the objectives of our tour is to find the rare Kirtland's Warbler on its wintering grounds. We've had great success in past years, and we expect this year to be no different! Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.

Itinerary for Bahamas Endemics & Kirtland's Warbler

Day 1, Sat, 18 Mar. Arrival. Flight to Marsh Harbour (Great Abaco Island). We'll arrive in the afternoon, which gives us time to check into our hotel in Marsh Harbour and possibly have a few hours of birding nearby before our first evening dinner. Night in Marsh Harbour.

Day 2, Sun, 19 Mar. Abaco National Park. We'll spend all morning in the park with a trip down to Sandy Point. Lunch at Pete's Pub in Little Harbour, with an afternoon visit to Cherokee Bay and Bahama Palm Shores. A full day. Back at hotel in late afternoon. Night in Marsh Harbour.

Day 3, Mon, 20 Mar. Flight to Governor's Harbour (via Nassau-Elleuthera Island). We fly to Nassau to connect with our flight to Elleuthera this morning. Depending on our arrival time, we can focus on finding Kirtland's Warbler before lunch and check in to our hotel mid-afternoon. Night on Elleuthera.

Day 4, Tue, 21 Mar. Elleuthera to Andros (via Nassau). We will fly to Nassau to connect with our flight to Andros; we'll fly into Fresh Creek and be transported to Dream Villas. We will probably arrive in the early to late afternoon, but the timing will depend on flight times from Elleuthera to Nassau and again to Andros. We should have some time to search for the oriole in the evening. Night on Andros.

Day 5, Wed, 22 Mar. Andros. We will have a full day to explore the northern end of the island in search of the oriole and other goodies like Clapper Rail, shorebirds, and passerines in the forest. Night on Andros.

Day 6, Thu, 23 Mar. Departure. We will catch an early morning flight back to Nassau today. **Flights home should be made for 10am or later from Nassau.**

About Your Guide

Jesse Fagan (a.k.a. the Motmot or just “Mot”) has been passionate about birds since his teens, when he had an encounter with a flying Pileated Woodpecker. He has birded throughout the United States, including spending seven years in Texas, and since 1995 has been birding and for a time living in northern Central America.

He has birded extensively throughout North America and in 2016 published the [Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America](#) (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) with co-author Oliver Komar and illustrators Robert Dean and Peter Burke. In addition, Mot has experience in many other areas of Central and South America, Europe, and Africa. He likes to think he can bird anywhere at any time and still show you the birds, but most importantly, a good time. Jesse holds a B.S. and an M.S. in mathematics from Texas Tech University. He is currently living in Lima, Peru.

“Jesse’s a great guide: extremely knowledgeable and helpful with the birds, and a whole lot of fun!” S.P., Holiday Costa Rica: Rancho Naturalista

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Jesse’s complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$4075 from Marsh Harbour

DEPOSIT: \$400

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: September 19, 2022

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$700

LIMIT: 6

Special Note: Tour fees may be subject to change due to the global economic effects of COVID-19.

We have published the itinerary and price for this tour with the understanding that during these uncertain times we are likely to encounter unforeseen changes. Some of our tours may incur higher costs due to increases in currency exchange rate fluctuations or COVID-19 related fees imposed by countries and/or suppliers. Travel and hospitality companies all over the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and there is no guarantee that all of the lodging and transportation we have booked for this tour will still be available at the time of departure. We hope to maintain our services as indicated in our itinerary as well as our published tour fee. However, if changes are required, we will make every effort to maintain the quality of the itinerary as it is published with the most appropriate substitutions available. Should any necessary changes or other unforeseen causes result in an increase in service rates to us, we reserve the right to pass on those increases in fees to the tour participant.

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid for three months beyond the date of your return is required for US citizens to enter Bahamas. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Bahamian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client’s responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$4075 for one person in double occupancy from Marsh Harbour. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 5, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 5, the flights from Marsh Harbour to Eleuthera, from Eleuthera to Andros, and Andros to Nassau, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to Marsh Harbour and return from Nassau, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$700. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please [contact our office](#). Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$400** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by September 19, 2022**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Please note that if you are traveling on a tour **outside your country of domicile** (for example, outside the US for US residents), we will require **proof of travel insurance**. Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. If you are traveling on a tour **outside your country of domicile** (for example, outside the US for US residents), we will **require proof of travel insurance**. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs within 90 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 90 to 179 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In

addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

NCP 7/2020

8/18 JFF; 10/18 peg

5/19 JFF; 11/22 JFF