

ITINERARY
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
February 15-23, 2024



The Hispaniolan Parakeet is one of 30-plus endemic species we'll seek. These small parrots are classified as Vulnerable, as their population is decreasing in many parts of the island, however, they seem to be doing well in the capitol city of Santo Domingo, where this pair was seen. Photograph by participant Doug Clarke.

We include here information for those interested in the 2023 Field Guides Dominican Republic 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

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- 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 web site)
- 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 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

The Dominican Republic—the eastern half of the island of Hispaniola—does not leap to mind as a primary destination for Caribbean travelers. Yet for birders interested in the West Indies, it is an important place to visit: depending on whose taxonomy you follow, there are roughly 31 endemics here, more than are found in Cuba!

Our tour focuses primarily on the high mountains and foothills of the western part of the country, where virtually all of the Dominican Republic's endemics occur. Here we'll bird the lovely and rugged Sierra de Bahoruco, where habitats range from deciduous scrub and mesquite in the hot and arid lowlands to cool and moist epiphyte-laden montane forest and, at the highest elevations, tall pines and agaves. The bird life is correspondingly diverse. Some of the more common

species we should see include Hispaniolan Lizard-Cuckoo, Narrow-billed and Broad-billed todies, Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Green-tailed Warbler, and Black-crowned Palm-Tanager. Other birds are less abundant or more difficult to locate, but with luck we'll find White-fronted Quail-Dove, Bay-breasted Cuckoo, Hispaniolan Trogon, La Selle Thrush, and White-winged Warbler as well as other endemics. Many of the most interesting species here are still enigmas to ornithologists: Antillean Piculet, so different from other piculets that it is placed in its own genus; Palmchat, a gregarious species and sole member of the family *Dulidae*, which builds huge stick nests and is perhaps related to the waxwings and silky-flycatchers; and Flat-billed Vireo, so unlike other vireos in behavior and bill shape that it was originally described as an *Empidonax* flycatcher! The Sierra de Bahoruco is one of the most remote and unspoiled regions of the country.

In addition to our birding in the southwest, we will make a visit to Los Haitises National Park, which is one of the last strongholds of the endemic Ridgway's Hawk.



*The Palmchat is abundant in the lowlands, where it builds huge communal nests, most often in palm trees.
Photograph by participant Doug Clarke.*

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:** We will spend some time walking on flat to moderately steep trails/roads, and in some places they may be rocky, wet, or muddy. Care should be taken when walking on slippery or uneven ground.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We will likely stand for long periods to observe birds. Dominican Republic has several military checkpoints outside of Santo Domingo (they function more or less as immigration control), and occasionally travelers will be asked to provide proper documentation.
- **PACE:** ***This tour involves several very early starts (4:00-5:00 a.m.) with long travel times between some birding sites (e.g. Santo Domingo to Puerto Escondido and very early morning to El Aguacate/ Zapoten)*** There will be at least one nighttime excursion to look for owls.

- **WEATHER:** Climate is warm and humid; Temperatures usually range around 81-87 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the year, sometimes warmer, but mornings in the mountains and foothills are chilly. Rain is a possibility.
- **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:** We will do our best to make appropriate stops for bathroom breaks, but on occasion, participants must 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.

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 one of the guides.



About the Birding Areas

Sierra de Bahoruco—Located in the extreme southwest corner of the island, we'll have three full days (starting early each morning) to bird the higher elevations of the Sierra de Bahoruco, which reaches 6700 feet, the habitat gradually changing from deciduous woodland to humid montane forest and finally Caribbean Pine forest at the highest point. This cross section of habitats harbors a corresponding cross section of birds, and all but a few of the D.R.'s specialties are found in the Sierra. We should note Hispaniolan Parrots passing overhead, colonial Palmchats attending their huge stick nests, Narrow-billed Todies displaying, La Selle Thrush and Western Chat-Tanager singing on territory at the higher elevations, Bay-breasted Cuckoo skulking in the brush, Flat-billed Vireo or White-winged Warbler in a small flock, a male Hispaniolan Emerald feeding at a nearby flower, or a pair of Antillean Siskins chattering from a treetop.

Most of the habitat on the Dominican side of the border remains undisturbed, and the surroundings are remarkably quiet. We'll divide our time between two productive areas: beautiful broadleaf forest above the settlement of El Aguacate and the primarily pine woodlands at a site known as El Aceitillar. This latter site is accessed by a wide, virtually unused paved road in the southern part of Bahoruco. The road traverses beautiful thorn forest, small patches of productive broadleaf forest, and finally tops out in expansive pine forest at the highest elevations. El Aceitillar is particularly good for such specialties as Plain Pigeon, Key West Quail-Dove, Hispaniolan Parakeet, Hispaniolan Trogon, Antillean Piculet, Greater Antillean Elaenia, Hispaniolan Pewee, Golden Swallow, Hispaniolan Palm Crow, Antillean Siskin, Hispaniolan Spindalis (Stripe-headed Tanager), and the endemic Hispaniolan Crossbill.

Both locales involve rather lengthy drives from our hotel, and we plan to picnic in the field or have a later lunch somewhere each day. The dirt road to and above El Aguacate is typically in terrible shape, so be prepared for a bumpy ride! Rain is likely during our outings in the mountains, so please come prepared each day for some precipitation. Almost

all of our birding will be along the roadside (dirt above Duverge, paved at El Aceitillar) and light, comfortable footwear should be adequate. On one night, we will want to remain in the field to try for the scarce Least Poorwill, while another will find us in the lowland forest to try for the elusive Ashy-faced Owl.

Los Haitises National Park—This is the best spot in the country for observing the rare and endemic Ridgway's Hawk and will be our focus here. Other species we may see include Plain Pigeon, Hispaniolan Parrot, Antillean Palm-Swift, and Hispaniolan Woodpecker, among other common Hispaniolan endemics.



The Broad-billed Tody is one of two todies endemic to the Dominican Republic. This species is found in the lowlands, while the Narrow-billed Tody inhabits the highlands. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.

Itinerary for Dominican Republic

Day 1, Thu, 15 Feb. Arrival in Santo Domingo. Upon arrival, please take a taxi to our hotel in the Zona Colonial (\$40-\$50, 40-minute ride). Afternoon arrivals are fine, but please plan to meet the group in the hotel reception at 6:30. We will go to dinner nearby and discuss plans for the following few days. Night in Santo Domingo.

Day 2, Fri, 16 Feb. Santo Domingo; to Sierra de Barohuco. We'll plan on an early hotel breakfast and depart soon after. We will make a stop outside of Santo Domingo at a wetland and saltpans site for waterbirds. We will spend a couple of hours birding here. Lunch will be at a restaurant on our way to Barahona (possibly in Azua).

In the afternoon, we will continue west to the small town of Duverge. We will check in to the hotel and later drive to Puerto Escondido for some late afternoon birding. Night in Duverge.

Day 3, Sat, 17 Feb. Sierra de Bahoruco (El Aguacate). Today will be an early departure (around 4:00 am). The "road" to El Aguacate via Puerto Escondido is a rough, high-clearance 4X4 adventure. We will need an early start to reach the higher elevation forest while the birds are active and La Selle's Thrush and Western Chat-Tanagers are singing. Other species found at this elevation include Hispaniolan Pewee, Antillean Siskin, Green-tailed and White-winged warblers, and Hispaniolan Spindalis. We will return for lunch in Duverge, then some afternoon birding until dusk. Night in Duverge.

Day 4, Sun, 18 Feb. Loma Charca Azul Nature Trail; to Barahona. We will return to Puerto Escondido (Loma Charca Azul Nature Trail) this morning for anything we may have missed (e.g. Bay-breasted Cuckoo). We will leave mid-morning and drive about an hour-and-a-half to Barahona for lunch. After lunch, we will drive to the shores of Lake Enriquillo for Hispaniolan Palm Crow, then check-in at our hotel near Barahona. Night in Barahona.

Day 5, Mon, 19 Feb. El Aceitillar. We will depart the hotel early this morning, staying out for most of the day. El Aceitillar is accessed by a wide, virtually unused paved road in the southern part of the Bahoruco. The road traverses beautiful thorn forest, small patches of productive broadleaf forest, and finally tops out in expansive pine forest at the highest elevations. El Aceitillar is particularly good for such specialties as Hispaniolan Parakeet, Hispaniolan Trogon, Antillean Piculet, Greater Antillean Elaenia, Hispaniolan Pewee, Golden Swallow, Hispaniolan Palm Crow, Antillean Siskin, Hispaniolan Spindalis, and Hispaniolan Crossbill. We will make a few stops on the way back (time permitting) possibly at Cabo Rojo (for shorebirds and wetland species) and Oviedo Lagoon (for flamingos). Night in Barahona.

Day 6, Tue, 20 Feb. Sierra de Bahoruco; to Santo Domingo. We'll have another early morning departure today for El Cachote (about a two-hour drive from our hotel) where we'll try for Eastern Chat-Tanager; we'll then return for lunch near Barahona and afterwards, make the long drive back to Santo Domingo. Time permitting and with traffic considerations in SD (!), we will attempt to make a stop at a well-known Hispaniolan Parakeet roost in the city. Night in Santo Domingo.



The endangered Ridgway's Hawk is a small forest Buteo that we'll seek in Los Haitises National park, one of the areas where it seems to be doing fairly well. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.

Day 7, Wed, 21 Feb. Sabana de la Mar and Los Haitises National Park. We'll leave after breakfast this morning for Los Haitises NP, where we'll hope to see the rare and endemic Ridgway's Hawk. However, before lunch we will take a boat ride at Sabana de la Mar where we might encounter West Indian Whistling-Ducks, among a smattering of shorebirds and long-legged waders. We will check-in to our nice hotel with a siesta and then some afternoon birding and owling. Night in at Paraíso Caño Hondo.

Day 8, Thu, 22 Feb. Return to Santo Domingo. We will have breakfast at the hotel and then spend the morning looking for the Ridgway's Hawk, perhaps a second encounter if we saw it the day before. We will lunch at the hotel, then check-out and make the drive back to Santo Domingo. En route, we can stop to look for White-tailed Tropicbirds, which nest along the coastal cliffs (though often foraging offshore; no promises!). Night in Santo Domingo.

Day 9, Fri, 23 Feb. Departures. Participants can plan to depart Santo Domingo at their earliest convenience. Taxis to the airport can be arranged with our hotel.

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 extensively throughout North America and in 2016 published the published [*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 with his wife, Rocio.

"Jesse is a fantastic guide. He really knows calls, infinitely patient in getting everyone on the difficult birds, fun to be with." L.F. Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley, and Santa Marta.

Financial Information

FEE: \$4375 from Santo Domingo

DEPOSIT: \$425 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 19, 2023

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$325

LIMIT: 6

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 valid passport is necessary for US citizens to enter the Dominican Republic; you will also need a tourist card, which can be purchased upon arrival. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Dominican Republic 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.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please contact your tour manager, as direct flights may be available from your home city or attractive through fares may exist. Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please, limit your luggage to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel and a carry-on. Also, 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 **\$4375** for one person in double occupancy from Santo Domingo. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 8, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 9, all ground

transportation except arrival and departure transfers (taxis), 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 and from Santo Domingo, airport taxes, visa fees, transfers to and from the hotel on arrival and departure, 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 **\$325** (singles may not be available at Kate's Camp). 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 REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. 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 \$350** 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 August 19, 2023**. **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.**

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. 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 outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (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 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.

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