



Field Guides Tour Report

Dominican Republic 2013

Mar 17, 2013 to Mar 24, 2013
Jesse Fagan

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.

This was probably my most successful trip to the Dominican Republic. Seeing (or even encountering) every DR endemic is quite a challenge. The nightbirds especially present many difficulties. This year we managed quite well with good looks at Least Pauraque and an exceptional Ashy-faced Owl; unfortunately, it was heard only for the nightjar. In years past, we have missed seeing Hispaniolan Crossbill or the siskin, but this year we persisted and had especially nice looks at both: the crossbill (at Aceitillar) and several siskins at Zapoten. The owl was the group's favorite, but other top honors included the crossbill (thanks to Tonya and Mike!), the Bay-breasted Cuckoo (just another 100 meters!), the tiny Broad-billed Tody (that lime green color is something else), the rare and threatened, Ridgway's Hawk, and Bicknell's Thrush (Karen especially wanted to see this species on its wintering grounds).

However, we all came away from this trip with other non-birding highlights, and some affected us in profound ways: the Haitian border comes to mind. We also saw some amazing night skies, shooting stars, and heard the ethereal, haunting sounds of the Rufous-throated Solitaire. The Sharp-shinned Hawk bathing in a small pool of water in the early morning was memorable for several. And Amy really liked all the hiking and walking we did! (Me too; in two days we did 17,000 steps!). Indeed, DR is always an experience.

Finally, I would like to thank Mike (our driver) and Kate Wallace for all their hard work. And I would also like to thank the group for spending a nice time with me in the DR. Let's do it again soon!

--Jesse a.k.a Motmot (from Edisto Beach, South Carolina)

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

WEST INDIAN WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna arborea*) – Ten or so at the botanical gardens in SD. Rare and local in the Caribbean.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – A pair along the Rabo de Gato trail.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon lepturus*) – Several along the cliffs outside of Santo Domingo on our way to Los Haitises.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*)

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*)

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – One at Lago Enriquillo.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*)

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Six in flight over Lago Enriquillo, but seen from the car only.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – One in the southwest was somewhat noteworthy. We saw more in the open eastern part of the country.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – A couple on Lago Enriqueillo. They appeared to be migrants/wintering birds.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – Singles over a couple of days including a highlight for many: one taking an extended bath at El Cachote.

RIDGWAY'S HAWK (*Buteo ridgwayi*) – A pair at a nest site near Los Limones was an amazing experience. This is one of the rarest raptors in the world. The Peregrine Fund has done a lot of work with monitoring the species and educating locals about its conservation importance. [E]

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*)

Aramidae (Limpkin)

LIMPKIN (*Aramus guarauna*) – Odd hearing this species up at Zapoten in the early morning. [*]

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – Several along the stream at the botanical gardens in Santo Domingo.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – One was on the edge of Lake Enriqueillo.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Two were with the Greater Yellowlegs at Lake Enriqueillo.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – A couple over Lake Enriqueillo.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*)

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

SCALY-NAPED PIGEON (*Patagioenas squamosa*) – The common large pigeon seen in the highlands of the Sierra de Barahuco.

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Several flying across the road as we climbed to Aceitillar.

PLAIN PIGEON (*Patagioenas inornata*) – Great experience calling in one while birding at Los Limones. Pretty good looks in the scope.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*)

ZENAIDA DOVE (*Zenaida aurita*) – This species seemed to be found at higher elevations, whereas Mourning Dove was much more widespread at lower elevations.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*)

KEY WEST QUAIL-DOVE (*Geotrygon chrysis*) – One flushed up from the trail as we were leaving Rabo de Gato. We had it briefly (for some) in our binoculars before it melted away into the understory. In general, all of the quail-doves were quiet, possibly due to the dry conditions this year.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

MANGROVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus minor*) – Singles on a couple of days.

BAY-BREASTED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus ruficularis*) – Awesome experience. We really worked hard to find a fairly responsive bird way down the track we were walking. It growled, flew over us, then climbed and settled for a few seconds in full view. Nice! One of the more sought after endemics on this tour. [E]

HISPANIOLAN LIZARD-CUCKOO (*Coccyzus longirostris*) – Our first was in the botanical gardens. Thankfully this species is fairly common on our tour. Love those lizard-cuckoos! [E]

SMOOTH-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga ani*) – Seen every day.

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

ASHY-FACED OWL (*Tyto glaucops*) – Another endemic we really worked hard for (nothing is easy in DR!). This late, last hour bird topped off a very successful day for us. I guessed it would be in a palm plantation, and sure enough, one soared in and perched for several minutes in the light. Amazing. [E]

Strigidae (Owls)

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – Fairly common along the roads at night.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

LEAST PAURAQUE (*Siphonorhis brewsteri*) – A pair (one perched, the other hawking insects) made for some exciting drama as we left Kate's Camp. We had heard them very well near Barahona and behind the cabins at Kate's camp (where we glimpsed one dash over our heads), but we saw them fairly well in the spotlight and scope at the edge of the dry forest just down from the camp. A tough one to see...ever. [E]

GREATER ANTILLEAN NIGHTJAR (HISPANIOLAN) (*Antrostomus cubanensis ekmani*) – Heard at the higher elevations near Zapoten, and only just before dawn. Otherwise silent and unresponsive. [E*]

Apodidae (Swifts)

ANTILLEAN PALM-SWIFT (*Tachornis phoenicobia*) – Common throughout the tour.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

ANTILLEAN MANGO (*Anthracothorax dominicus*) – Seen nearly every day. Our first at the botanical gardens.

VERVAIN HUMMINGBIRD (*Mellisuga minima*) – This diminutive hummingbird liked to sit up on the tops of palm trees (on the emerging fronds) and sing at the top of his lungs! One of the tiniest hummingbirds in the world.

HISPANIOLAN EMERALD (*Chlorostilbon swainsonii*) – Good looks at Zapoten and again at a few other sites. [E]

Trogonidae (Trogons)

HISPANIOLAN TROGON (*Priotelus roseigaster*) – Heard mainly, but we had good looks at Zapoten. [E]

Todidae (Todies)

BROAD-BILLED TODY (*Todus subulatus*) – This is the one found at lower elevations. Our first was at the botanical gardens, where it is somewhat rare. It does overlap in habitat and elevation with the next species at a few spots, e.g. Rabo de Gato trail. [E]

NARROW-BILLED TODY (*Todus angustirostris*) – Seen at the higher elevations. Our first was at Zapoten. It sounds very different from Broad-billed. [E]

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

ANTILLEAN PICULET (*Nesocittes micromegas*) – Seen fairly well perched in a tree. It was heard a few other times, but unresponsive. [E]

HISPANIOLAN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes striatus*) – Very common on the island. [E]

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – Several wintering Merlins were seen on this trip.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – One hunting bats (or pigeons) over the old city of Santo Domingo. Seen from our rooftop hotel.

Psittacidae (Parrots)

HISPANIOLAN PARAKEET (*Aratinga chloroptera*) – Fairly common and seen (or heard) most days. [E]

HISPANIOLAN PARROT (*Amazona ventralis*) – Seen or heard on two different days. Our best looks were singles perched and seen in the scope at Aceitillar. [E]

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

GREATER ANTILLEAN ELAENIA (*Elaenia fallax*)

HISPANIOLAN PEWEE (*Contopus hispaniolensis*) – Fairly common in the Sierra de Barahuco. [E]

STOLID FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus stolidus*) – Every day.

GRAY KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus dominicensis*)

Vireonidae (Vireos)

FLAT-BILLED VIREO (*Vireo nanus*) – One responsive individual was seen in the taller dry forest as we descended from Zapoten. To my eyes, it looks very similar to Scrub Greenlet (also a vireo) from the mainland. [E]

BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO (*Vireo altiloquus*) – Rey-k-javik!!

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

PALM CROW (HISPANIOLAN) (*Corvus palmarum palmarum*) – At least six were around Lake Enriquillo on our final morning. A nice spot by our driver, Mike! [E]

WHITE-NECKED CROW (*Corvus leucognaphalus*) – A gas-station stop in the town of Paraiso produced this species! Also heard along the Rabo de Gato trail. Widespread but rare to uncommon on the island. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

CARIBBEAN MARTIN (*Progne dominicensis*) – A few around Lake Enriquillo. They leave for the winter, but some had already returned in mid-March.

GOLDEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta euchrysea*) – Seen well at Zapoten and again at a few other sites, e.g. Aceitillar.

CAVE SWALLOW (CARIBBEAN) (*Petrochelidon fulva fulva*) – At a stop outside of Santo Domingo on our way to Los Limones.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

RUFOUS-THROATED SOLITAIRE (RUFOUS-THROATED) (*Myadestes genibarbis montanus*) – Heard throughout the Barahuco, but our best looks were at El Cachote.

BICKNELL'S THRUSH (*Catharus bicknelli*) – A highlight for Karen. This species only winters on the island of Hispaniola. It is a treat to see it anywhere, but especially so on its wintering grounds.

LA SELLE THRUSH (*Turdus swalesi*) – One of the big endemics to see on this tour. We had several on the road in the early morning at Zapoten. A very special bird; local and rare, only found at this spot. [E]

RED-LEGGED THRUSH (EASTERN) (*Turdus plumbeus ardosiaceus*)

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

Dulidae (Palmchat)

PALMCHAT (*Dulus dominicus*) – Another reason why "big listers" come to the island: this is a monotypic family. [E]

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*)

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – One responsive bird was along the stream at the botanical gardens.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*)

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (EASTERN) (*Geothlypis trichas trichas*) – One in the containment pond at Aceitillar. Amazing how birds find these microhabitats!

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*)

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*)

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*)

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – Numerous females up high at Zapoten. A few males were sprinkled in as well. Seems the sexes separate out a bit on the wintering grounds, females preferring higher elevations?

PALM WARBLER (*Setophaga palmarum*)

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus chrysoleuca*) – A resident subspecies on the island. Seen well at Zapoten and Aceitillar in the pine habitat.

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*)

WHITE-WINGED WARBLER (*Xenoligea montana*) – A monotypic genus. This odd warbler was seen well at Zapoten a couple of different times; though it is definitely less common than Green-tailed. [E]

GREEN-TAILED WARBLER (*Microligea palustris*) – Fairly common at Zapoten and Aceitillar. Also in a monotypic genus. [E]

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN) (*Coereba flaveola bananivora*)

YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT (*Tiaris olivaceus*)

BLACK-CROWNED PALM-TANAGER (*Phaenicophilus palmarum*) [E]

WESTERN CHAT-TANAGER (*Calyptophilus tertius*) – Common by voice at Zapoten in the early morning. This skulky bird can be difficult to see; though we had no trouble this year! [E]

EASTERN CHAT-TANAGER (*Calyptophilus frugivorus*) – Seen very well at several spots near El Cachote. [E]

HISPANIOLAN SPINDALIS (*Spindalis dominicensis*) – Seen a couple of different times on the tour. A sharp looking bird with a very high-pitched song. [E]

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

GREATER ANTILLEAN GRACKLE (*Quiscalus niger*)

HISPANIOLAN ORIOLE (*Icterus dominicensis*) – A pair seemed to be on territory near our hotel. Also seen in a palm tree along Lake Enriquillo. Sometimes this can be a tough species to pin down.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

ANTILLEAN EUPHONIA (*Euphonia musica*)

HISPANIOLAN CROSSBILL (*Loxia megaplaga*) – Thanks to Tonya and Michael for pinning down this species for us at Aceitillar. Sometimes it pays to just sit down and wait! Nice work all. [E]

ANTILLEAN SISKIN (*Spinus dominicensis*) – This species can easily be missed since it is very nomadic and not terribly common. We had two female-plumaged individuals at Zapoten and one again at Aceitillar. [E]

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The Rhinoceros Iguana (*Cyclura cornuta*) that we saw along the road on our return from Aceitillar is a threatened species of iguana found primarily on the island of Hispaniola, though two other subspecies are also found on Mono Island and Navassa Island.

Totals for the tour: 101 bird taxa and 0 mammal taxa