



Field Guides Tour Report

**JAMAICA | 2018**

Feb 25, 2018 to Mar 3, 2018

Eric Hynes & local guide Dwayne Swaby

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*As a guide, the last target to fall is often the most memorable one. Once everyone has seen the bird well, it is usually followed with a big sigh of relief. Black-billed Parrot was that bird on our adventure. If I knew the best way to find one was ask a mechanic, I could have saved us a lot of time! Photo by guide Eric Hynes.*

Thank you all for choosing Field Guides for your birding adventure in Jamaica. It was a pleasure sharing all 27 endemic species, plus many regional specialties, with each of you. I couldn't have done it without the help of my Jamaican friends: local guide Dwayne Swaby, driver Raymond Condappa, and all the wonderful staff at Green Castle Estate.

Our first full day together in Jamaica was spent exploring the network of trails at Green Castle Estate. From the very first walk, we tallied a number of fabulous endemics such as Sad Flycatcher, Jamaican Elaenia, Jamaican Tody, Jamaican Crow, Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo, Yellow-shouldered Grassquit and Jamaican Woodpecker. A number of regional endemics, species only found in the Greater Antilles, were observed as well like: Loggerhead Kingbird, Vervain Hummingbird, and Greater Antillean Bullfinch. An afternoon walk down to the reservoir was well worth it since we scored our only Stolid Flycatcher on the way down, plus looks at the uncommon West Indian Whistling-Duck, Northern Jacana, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, and Ruddy Duck.

The next day we ventured up into the Blue Mountains birding in the Hardwar Gap area. We hit the jackpot at our very first stop with good looks at Crested Quail-Dove and Jamaican Blackbird -- two of the most challenging endemics to find. Seeing White-eyed Thrush straight away was thrilling as well. Later on we picked up Jamaican Pewee, Jamaican Spindalis, Ring-tailed Pigeon, Arrowhead Warbler and Blue Mountain Vireo to name a few. After our picnic lunch, we descended back down to the coast and added Brown Booby, Ruddy Turnstone and Semipalmated Plover.

Day four of our adventure was split between a morning in the foothills up at Vinery, some coastal birding, then another visit to the reservoir at Green Castle Estate in the afternoon. As we headed to Vinery, a quick stop at sunrise in Annotto Bay yielded our most unlikely bird of the trip: Lesser Black-backed Gull. Jamaica only has a couple previous records, including one on our tour last year. This species seems to be expanding in the Caribbean. Hearing the enchanting vocalizations of Rufous-throated Solitaire is no challenge but getting a clear view of this regional specialty can be tricky. Our easy stroll up at Vinery produced just that: a fantastic look at a gorgeous thrush. Jamaican Tody was particularly obliging up there as well. Our stop in Annotto Bay again on the way back added White Ibis, which is a species rarely seen in that part of Jamaica.

We ventured to the northeast corner of Jamaica on day five with a visit to the foothills of the John Crow Mountains. En route we scored an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at a pit stop, which turned out to be our only one of the tour. Ecclesdown Road is a famous birding destination for good reason. We really enjoyed our walk there where we added some wintering warblers, but more importantly: the endemic Yellow-billed Parrot and Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo.

Saying goodbye to the delightful staff at Green Castle Estate the next morning meant our exciting visit to Jamaica was winding down. We traveled west across the inland and headed to Cockpit Country in search of our last endemic: Black-billed Parrot. Hearing the more uncommon of the two Jamaican parrots happened straight away but we really struggled to get some in view. Picking up a mostly silent Greater Antillean Elaenia was a bonus. We had just started to load up the bus and chalk Black-billed Parrot up as a heard only bird when one declared its close proximity with a raucous call. Vegetation kept it out of view for us until a local came to our rescue. After negotiating our way through the disassembled cars, we were guided to a nice clear view and the endemic sweep was complete! Visiting Rocklands Bird Sanctuary in the afternoon was the cherry on top. We marveled at the iridescent "Doctorbirds" alighting on our fingers, while elegant Caribbean Doves walked in and out of view and Orangequits visited feeders at arm's reach.

Thanks again for visiting Jamaica with Field Guides and I sincerely hope our birding paths cross again someday.

Cheers,

Eric

---

#### 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*) – We were lucky to see a pair standing on the bamboo at the reservoir since Dwayne said they hadn't been around lately.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Spatula discors*) – We had good looks at the GCE reservoir and at the Montego Bay sewage impoundments.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Spatula clypeata*) – This dabbler winters in the hundreds at the Montego Bay water treatment plant.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*) – Nice scope views at GCE reservoir

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Nice scope views at GCE reservoir

#### *Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**LEAST GREBE** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – Our only ones were the pair on the random roadside pond as we traveled through cane fields near Clark's Town.

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Nice scope views at GCE reservoir

#### *Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)*

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*) – These remarkably large kleptoparasites were in view at most coastal locations.

#### *Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)*

**BROWN BOOBY** (*Sula leucogaster*) – This was a first for me on this tour. We had an individual perched on a piling in Annotto Bay, then again the next day in flight in the same area.

#### *Pelecanidae (Pelicans)*

**BROWN PELICAN (SOUTHERN)** (*Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis*) – Seen on multiple days along the coast.

#### *Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – Seen along the coast in multiple locations.

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – Hunting for insects in roadside ditches as well as in the water at coastal sites.

**SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*) – A common wintering species.

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*) – It is fun to see this species stalking the pools in rivers.

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*) – We didn't catch up to this species until the last full day but once we spotted our first one, we seemed to find them at every stop after that.

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Hundreds were flying to a roost when we were at the Montego Bay waste water complex.

**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*) – Jamaicans call this patient species "Snipper." When you watch their lightning fast strikes at a prey item, it is easy to see how they landed on that name.

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – A fortuitous pick up at a rest room stop in Port Antonio.

#### *Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**WHITE IBIS** (*Eudocimus albus*) – This species was a first for this tour. We had one individual fly over us in Annotto Bay. This species is easier to come by on the south side of the island.

**GLOSSY IBIS** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – We watched several foraging roadside shortly after leaving Sangster airport.

#### *Cathartidae (New World Vultures)*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – "John Crow" to Jamaicans; we studied two leucistic birds during our walk in Cockpit Country.

#### *Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – It was surprising to only see this species on one day.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

**RED-TAILED HAWK (JAMAICENSIS)** (*Buteo jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – The nominate race.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*) – Good scope views at GCE reservoir.

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – Formerly a full species, the white-shielded "Caribbean" types were among the red-shielded birds on the reservoir at GCE.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Dozens lined the edge of the last impoundment in Montego Bay.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – It was nice to finally pick up this wintering species behind the Total.

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – An even dozen skittered along Long Beach near GCE.

Jacaniidae (Jacanas).

**NORTHERN JACANA** (*Jacana spinosa violacea*) – A couple juveniles were conspicuous at the GCE reservoir.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – We had excellent views in Annotto Bay.

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – The Sanderlings were right alongside the Ruddy Turnstones in Annotto Bay.

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – We picked up the peep on Long Beach near GCE as we returned from our day trip to the John Crow Mountains.

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – This one was an overdue new species for me in Jamaica. We scoped them along the north shore on our return to Montego Bay.

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – About an every other day bird.

**WILLET** (*Tringa semipalmata*) – We enjoyed a very cooperative bird right along the north shore on our way back to Montego Bay.

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – We didn't catch up to this elegant shorebird until the Montego Bay sewage facility.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers).

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Lots in the Montego Bay area.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus fuscus*) – For the second year in a row, we scored this rarity in Jamaica. Our mature bird was in flight over Annotto Bay one morning.

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – The default tern along the coast in Jamaica.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Around the human settlements. [H]

**WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Most common along the coast.

**RING-TAILED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas caribaea*) – The large, ghostly endemic Columbidae found at elevation. Our first looks were from a precarious perch along a narrow trail during our descent in the Blue Mountains. [E]

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina passerina jamaicensis*) – The were literally under foot at Rocklands.

**CRESTED QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon versicolor*) – The "Mountain Witch," one of Jamaica's most challenging endemics to find, was no match for Raymond's banana peel trick -- haha. [E]

**RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon montana*) – We came upon this species on several days but all brief views.

**CARIBBEAN DOVE** (*Leptotila jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – Another species seen best at Rocklands; what a gorgeous dove.

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*) – An every day bird.

**ZENAIDA DOVE** (*Zenaida aurita*) – Also an every day bird.

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – The start of Robins Bay Road remains a reliable spot to find this species.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos).

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*) – Some right around the estate house at Green Castle.

**MANGROVE CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus minor*) – We heard this species several times at GCE but it never came into view. [\*]

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus pluvialis*) – It took awhile to catch up to this spectacular endemic but we ended up with multiple fantastic views. I won't soon forget the tail-fanning behavior we witnessed at Hotel Mockingbird Hill. [E]

**JAMAICAN LIZARD-CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus vetula*) – It was nice to get this charismatic endemic almost immediately on our first walk. [E]

Strigidae (Owls).

**JAMAICAN OWL** (*Pseudoscops grammicus*) – Some people saw this endemic owl better than others but we all got to hear several birds really well. [E]

Nyctibiidae (Potoos).

**NORTHERN POTOO (CARIBBEAN)** (*Nyctibius jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – Wow - what a trip for Northern Potoos! Not only was it an every day bird but we got to hear lots of calls at night and see birds roosting during the day at multiple locations.

Apodidae (Swifts).

**WHITE-COLLARED SWIFT** (*Streptoprocne zonaris pallidifrons*) – We spotted these massive swifts occasionally overhead at Green Castle Estate.

**ANTILLEAN PALM-SWIFT** (*Tachornis phoenicobia phoenicobia*) – These acrobatic aerialists were mesmerizing to watch.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds).

**JAMAICAN MANGO** (*Anthracothorax mango*) – This endemic is a bit unusual among hummingbirds in that it is so uniformly dark. [E]

**VERVAIN HUMMINGBIRD** (*Mellisuga minima minima*) – Oh so tiny.

**STREAMERTAIL (RED-BILLED)** (*Trochilus polytmus polytmus*) – Now you can say you held one! [E]  
**STREAMERTAIL (BLACK-BILLED)** (*Trochilus polytmus scitulus*) – This isolated subspecies is a strong candidate for a split. [E]

*Todidae (Todies)*

**JAMAICAN TODY** (*Todus todus*) – Everybody loves these emerald sprites. [E]

*Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)*

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – Only a couple of sightings.

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**JAMAICAN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes radiolatus*) – A widespread and handsome endemic. [E]

**YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – Another first for this tour that was overdue. They winter in small numbers on this island. Only few of us heard and later saw one at the transition point at Vinery.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL (HISPANIOLAN)** (*Falco sparverius dominicensis*) – Several great studies of this subspecies, which is often clean white below.

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – Best looks were right from our hotel the last morning in Montego Bay.

*Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)*

**BLACK-BILLED PARROT** (*Amazona agilis*) – The last of the endemics to fall. I will admit it was starting to make me sweat. If only I had known I just needed to ask a mechanic! [E]

**YELLOW-BILLED PARROT** (*Amazona collaria*) – This endemic Amazona parrot was conspicuous in the foothills of the John Crow Mountains. [E]

**GREEN-RUMPED PARROTLET** (*Forpus passerinus*) – It is introduced but it is still a pretty neat little bird to see. [I]

**OLIVE-THROATED PARAKEET (JAMAICAN)** (*Eupsittula nana nana*) – Keep your eye out for this one to be split as well.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**JAMAICAN ELAENIA** (*Myiopagis cotta*) – Nice looks on our very first walk. [E]

**GREATER ANTILLEAN ELAENIA (JAMAICAN)** (*Elaenia fallax fallax*) – This was the first time this regional specialty was found on our tour. It might have gone unnoticed again if I hadn't been scrambling off trail to try to find an angle to spot the Black-billed Parrots we kept hearing.

**JAMAICAN PEWEE** (*Contopus pallidus*) – We saw plenty in the Blue Mountains. [E]

**SAD FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus barbirostris*) – Right out of the gate, we were enjoying good looks at this endemic Myiarchus. [E]

**RUFOUS-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus validus*) – This other endemic Myiarchus is appreciably larger (and darker). [E]

**STOLID FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus stolidus stolidus*) – The only time we spotted this regional endemic was on our walk down to the reservoir.

**GRAY KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – These migrants were just starting to return to Jamaica to breed. A few of us had one the last morning.

**LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (LOGGERHEAD)** (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus jamaicensis*) – This regional specialty is as cooperative as it is vocal.

*Tityridae (Tityras and Allies)*

**JAMAICAN BECARD** (*Pachyrhamphus niger*) – Their big, bulky pendant nest are quite a sight to see. [E]

*Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)*

**BLUE MOUNTAIN VIREO** (*Vireo osburni*) – Hardwar Gap is where we caught up to this endemic. [E]

**JAMAICAN VIREO** (*Vireo modestus*) – This endemic vireo is much easier to come across. [E]

**BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** (*Vireo altiloquus altiloquus*) – We heard the first of these migrants returning at GCE.

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**JAMAICAN CROW** (*Corvus jamaicensis*) – We were pleasantly surprised to see on right at GCE -- a first for me at that site. [E]

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – A few winged by during a bathroom break in Annotto Bay.

**CAVE SWALLOW (CARIBBEAN)** (*Petrochelidon fulva poeciloma*) – It was fun to step out of the bus at the bottom of the entrance road to GCE and have a swarm overhead.

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**RUFOUS-THROATED SOLITAIRE (RUFOUS-THROATED)** (*Myadestes genibarbis solitarius*) – We enjoyed their marvelous vocalizations but also got to see them at Vinery.

**WHITE-EYED THRUSH** (*Turdus jamaicensis*) – This was one of the first endemics we picked up in the Blue Mountains. [E]

**WHITE-CHINNED THRUSH** (*Turdus aurantius*) – The Jamaicans call them "Hopping Dick" or "Chick-man-chick". [E]

*Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)*

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – An every day bird.

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**WORM-EATING WARBLER** (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – We had one on our second walk down to the reservoir.

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Surprisingly that this species was only heard, as they winter in decent numbers. [\*]

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – Wintering in good numbers.

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – We had several at Ecclesdown Road.

**ARROWHEAD WARBLER** (*Setophaga pharetra*) – We found this endemic on more days than not. [E]

**AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – The most abundant or at least most conspicuous wintering warbler.

**CAPE MAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga tigrina*) – Great looks our last morning in Montego Bay.

**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – Almost an every day bird.

**CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – This was only the second time we have had this uncommon wintering species on this tour.

**BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – Probably runner-up to American Redstart for abundance among warblers.

**PALM WARBLER (WESTERN)** (*Setophaga palmarum palmarum*) – We couldn't have asked for a more cooperative bird than the individual on the lawn at Hotel Mockingbird Hill.

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – On several days.

*Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies).*

**BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN)** (*Coereba flaveola flaveola*) – Lots and lots.

**YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris olivaceus olivaceus*) – Rocklands feeders bring them in for great views.

**BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris bicolor marchii*) – About half the days.

**ORANGEQUIT** (*Euneornis campestris*) – An endemic in a monotypic Genus. [E]

**GREATER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH** (*Loxigilla violacea ruficollis*) – More common at elevation.

**YELLOW-SHOULDERED GRASSQUIT** (*Loxipasser anoxanthus*) – It took some work to clean up this endemic. [E]

*Spindalidae (Spindalises).*

**JAMAICAN SPINDALIS** (*Spindalis nigricephala*) – Perhaps the most beautiful endemic species. [E]

*Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies).*

**ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – A bird was giving its distinctive "chink" call from the mango tree at breakfast our first morning at GCE during Richard's intro. [\*]

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies).*

**JAMAICAN ORIOLE** (*Icterus leucopteryx leucopteryx*) – Darn close to being an endemic.

**JAMAICAN BLACKBIRD** (*Nesopsar nigerrimus*) – This endemic can be challenging to find and they are never numerous or conspicuous so it was a relief to have everyone catch up to one at our first stop in the Blue Mountains. [E]

**GREATER ANTILLEAN GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus niger crassirostris*) – All over the place.

*Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).*

**JAMAICAN EUPHONIA** (*Euphonia jamaica*) – The colors of the plumage are unlike most other Euphonias. [E]

---

## MAMMALS

**SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – Sadly, lots of quick looks. [H]

---

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

---

**Totals for the tour: 114 bird taxa and 1 mammal taxa**