



Field Guides Tour Report

Jamaica II 2018

Mar 4, 2018 to Mar 10, 2018
Tom Johnson & Dwayne Swaby

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



Can you spot the Northern Potoo? We ended up seeing a bounty of these marvelously camouflaged creatures during our time in Jamaica. Photo by guide Tom Johnson.

This splendid week in Jamaica took us on an exploration of the natural beauty of this island. From our comfortable base at Green Castle Estate, we managed to see all of the island's endemic bird species as well as many regional specialties, too. Day trips to the Blue Mountains, the John Crow Mountains, and Cockpit Country supplemented the excellent birding on the grounds of Green Castle Estate. In between the birds, there was plenty of great Jamaican food like jerk chicken, bammy, festival, ackee and saltfish, and much more - we certainly didn't go hungry. And the smooth, rich Blue Mountain coffee helped us stay awake through it all!

Some of the many birding highlights included the close looks at the rare Jamaican Blackbird, the gargoyle-like Northern Potoos that sat just outside while we ate our dinner at Green Castle, the amazing views of Crested Quail-Doves, and repeated experiences with Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoos and Chestnut-bellied Cuckoos. Our local guide Dwayne Swaby and driver Raymond Condappa helped us get to know the island better and were excellent companions along the way - many thanks to Dwayne and Raymond.

Until next time - good birding!

Tom

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*) – Three of these scarce regional specialties were waiting for us in the dark near the entrance to Green Castle Estate. We got to see them in a flashlight beam and hear their squeaky calls.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*) – We found dozens of these small dabblers at Green Castle Estate and the Montego Bay sewage ponds.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – Hundreds were at the Montego Bay sewage ponds.

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*) – Nine were with other waterfowl at the Green Castle reservoir.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – These stiff-tails were at Green Castle Estate and Montego Bay sewage ponds.

Podicipedidae (Grebes).

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – Our first were at the Green Castle Estate reservoir, and then we had some closer views of birds at a nest in a small pond amidst sugar cane fields near Cockpit Country.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Good views at several freshwater locations.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds).

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon lepturus*) – Dwayne took us to a secret spot on the north coast where we got to see some courting tropicbirds flying around just offshore.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds).

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – Excellent sightings at close range near some fishing boats along the northern coast.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets).

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*) – One immature bird was sitting on pilings at Annotto Bay, where we were able to study it closely in the scope.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans).

BROWN PELICAN (SOUTHERN) (*Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis*) – Common in coastal areas.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns).

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – One was at the Wag Water River Mouth.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Widespread along roadsides at the coast.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Scattered around in fields, rivers, and ponds.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Common and widespread.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – We saw one from the van as we were driving back in to Montego Bay from Rocklands on the final day.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Common in open fields with livestock.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – These small herons were a frequent sighting along the edges of waterways.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Our best views were of birds mixed with Yellow-crowned Night-Herons at the Swift River Mouth.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – These handsome herons were along the Drivers River and the Swift River (where they were nesting).

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills).

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Seen mostly in transit along the northern coast.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures).

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Known as "John Crow" locally. Widespread, especially at Ecclesdown Rd.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

RED-TAILED HAWK (JAMAICENSIS) (*Buteo jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – A few good sightings overhead. The Latin name of this widespread hawk honors Jamaica.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – One walked around with its tail cocked up along the edge of the Green Castle Estate reservoir.

PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyrio martinica*) – One drab immature bird crashed around in the marsh near the Wag Water River Mouth at Annotto Bay.

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*) – These freshwater marsh birds were at Green Castle Estate and Montego Bay sewage ponds.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – These familiar waterbirds were at Green Castle Estate and Montego Bay sewage ponds. We saw both red-fronted and white-fronted (formerly referred to as "Caribbean Coot") birds.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Plenty were scattered in freshwater ponds between Montego Bay and Green Castle Estate.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – We saw these big plovers along the beaches near Annotto Bay.

WILSON'S PLOVER (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – The one we saw with the bum leg at Annotto Bay was an uncommon sighting there.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – One was on a gravel bar near Annotto Bay.

Jacanidae (Jacanas).

NORTHERN JACANA (*Jacana spinosa violacea*) – These peculiar shorebirds were on freshwater marshes at several locations on our journey, including the reservoir at Green Castle Estate.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – These widespread shorebirds were at several sites along the northern coast of Jamaica.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – These coastal sandpipers were mixed with other shorebirds at Annotto Bay.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – We saw these tiny sandpipers along the coastline at Annotto Bay.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – Common along rivers and on the coast, especially near mangroves.

WILLET (*Tringa semipalmata*) – Two were on flats adjacent to mangroves along the island's northern coast.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Our only ones were at the Montego Bay sewage treatment ponds.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Common around Montego Bay.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – These large, orange-billed terns were fairly common along the northern edge of the island.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Seen in towns and cities. [I]

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Common in forest and edge habitat; seen each day of the trip.

RING-TAILED PIGEON (*Patagioenas caribaea*) – These large, endemic pigeons were common in the mountains. We saw them both in the Blue Mountains and on Ecclesdown Road. [E]

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina jamaicensis*) – Fairly common; seen frequently flushing along the roadsides.

CRESTED QUAIL-DOVE (*Geotrygon versicolor*) – The Mountain Witch! This is probably the toughest endemic bird to find on Jamaica, and we found six! After some quick glimpses in the Blue Mountains, we had two birds that sat side-by-side for us as we admired their lovely plumage in the scope. [E]

RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE (*Geotrygon montana*) – These compact forest doves rocketed past us at Green Castle Estate and we heard a few others singing.

CARIBBEAN DOVE (*Leptotila jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – We heard these fine doves all over the place, but they were fairly hard to see until we got to Rocklands, where we had them at our feet.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Common and widespread on the island.

ZENAIDA DOVE (*Zenaida aurita*) – Very common on the island.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – A pair was seen almost every day as they walked in the middle of a road near Annotto Bay. Much less common on the island than *Zenaida Dove*.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

SMOOTH-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga ani*) – Common in open country, seen mostly during our drives around the island.

MANGROVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus minor*) – Ours were in the forest at Green Castle Estate.

CHESTNUT-BELLIED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus pluvialis*) – Wonderful views of multiple birds in the Blue Mountains, Ecclesdown Road, and at Stewart Town. These big cuckoos have tremendous voices and can be heard from great distance. [E]

JAMAICAN LIZARD-CUCKOO (*Coccyzus vetula*) – Excellent views in the forest at Green Castle Estate on the trails leading down to the reservoir. [E]

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (AMERICAN) (*Tyto alba furcata*) – One flew across the road near Annotto Bay during one of our early morning departures from Green Castle Estate.

Strigidae (Owls)

JAMAICAN OWL (*Pseudoscops grammicus*) – These fine, strange owls were vocal each night at Green Castle Estate. We tracked them down a few times and eventually had some nice views of those spooky eyes. [E]

Nyctibiidae (Potoos)

NORTHERN POTOO (CARIBBEAN) (*Nyctibius jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – We had a remarkable tour for this species - on our first evening, one hunted from the roof of the main house at Green Castle Estate. On subsequent evenings, we saw up to 3 there. We also scoped day-roosting birds in the Blue Mountains and at Rocklands. Awesome!

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-COLLARED SWIFT (*Streptoprocne zonaris pallidifrons*) – Good views overhead at the Green Castle Estate and also in the foggy skies above the Blue Mountains.

ANTILLEAN PALM-SWIFT (*Tachornis phoenicobia phoenicobia*) – Scattered sightings around the island, with especially nice views at the Montego Bay Sewage Ponds.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

JAMAICAN MANGO (*Anthracothorax mango*) – Good views at the Green Castle Estate feeders, but also very common in the flowering trees at the Errol Flynn Marina in Port Antonio. [E]

VERVAIN HUMMINGBIRD (*Mellisuga minima minima*) – These tiny, drab hummingbirds were frequently heard singing from the tops of trees. We scoped several of them and watched as they sang feverishly.

STREAMERTAIL (RED-BILLED) (*Trochilus polytmus polytmus*) – This is the widespread, familiar subspecies of Streamertail that we fed by hand at Rocklands and saw most of the other days of the tour, too. [E]

STREAMERTAIL (BLACK-BILLED) (*Trochilus polytmus scitulus*) – This subspecies (or maybe species?) of Streamertail is found east of the Rio Grande - we saw it on Ecclesdown Road in the John Crow Mountains. [E]

Todidae (Todies)

JAMAICAN TODY (*Todus todus*) – These sprites were common in forests, with great views at Green Castle Estate. [E]

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – A few brief sightings along the north coast of the island.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

JAMAICAN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes radiolatus*) – Quite common and widespread. [E]

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras).

AMERICAN KESTREL (HISPANIOLAN) (*Falco sparverius dominicensis*) – These pale kestrels were fairly common around our drives around the island - and a pair lived just outside our rooms at Green Castle Estate.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – Sightings of single birds at Ecclesdown Road, Stewart Town, and Rocklands.

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots).

BLACK-BILLED PARROT (*Amazona agilis*) – Great views of this scarce endemic parrot at Ecclesdown Road and again near Stewart Town in Cockpit Country. [E]

YELLOW-BILLED PARROT (*Amazona collaria*) – Plenty of these fine parrots streamed by, screeching, at Ecclesdown Road in the John Crow Mountains. However, our best view was certainly the one that perched low and in the open at Stewart Town in Cockpit Country. [E]

GREEN-RUMPED PARROTLET (*Forpus passerinus*) – These small, stubby parrots were flying around and whistling at Stewart Town and Ecclesdown Road. [I]

OLIVE-THROATED PARAKEET (JAMAICAN) (*Eupsittula nana nana*) – Common around the island, including on the first full day at Green Castle Estate.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers).

JAMAICAN ELAENIA (*Myiopagis cotta*) – When keying in on this small flycatcher's voice, we had an easy time finding it in the subcanopy of forest at Green Castle, the Blue Mountains, and Ecclesdown Road. [E]

GREATER ANTILLEAN ELAENIA (JAMAICAN) (*Elaenia fallax fallax*) – This species is typically rather quiet and inconspicuous during the month of March, so we were lucky to see and hear one at Stewart Town in Cockpit Country.

JAMAICAN PEWEE (*Contopus pallidus*) – Bold and approachable along the road cuts in the Blue Mountains and at Ecclesdown Road in the John Crow Mountains. [E]

SAD FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus barbirostris*) – These small, phoebe-like *Myiarchus* flycatchers were rather common in the island's forests. [E]

RUFOUS-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus validus*) – These dark and colorful *Myiarchus* flycatchers were stealthy but let us admire them at Green Castle, on Ecclesdown Road, and elsewhere on the island. [E]

STOLID FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus stolidus stolidus*) – This *Myiarchus* called and showed off for us on the trails at Green Castle Estate.

GRAY KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – Our only ones were calling and seen flying over near the Mynt Retreat in Montego Bay on our final day.

LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (LOGGERHEAD) (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus jamaicensis*) – Common, noisy, and widespread in forested areas.

Tityridae (Tityras and Allies).

JAMAICAN BECARD (*Pachyrhamphus niger*) – Nice views at Green Castle, Ecclesdown Road, and Stewart Town. [E]

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

BLUE MOUNTAIN VIREO (*Vireo osburni*) – This vireo is a skulker in forested habitats. We had a good view of one near the really showy Jamaican Blackbird at Hardwar Gap in the... wait for it... Blue Mountains. [E]

JAMAICAN VIREO (*Vireo modestus*) – Plenty of these small vireos chanted their repetitive (though varied) songs from the forests at Green Castle Estate, Ecclesdown Road, and elsewhere on the island. [E]

BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO (*Vireo altiloquus altiloquus*) – Very common in the forests at Green Castle Estate and elsewhere on the island.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies).

JAMAICAN CROW (*Corvus jamaicensis*) – Our first one of these "Jabbering Crows" was next to the KFC in Ocho Rios. We found more of them in the forest of Cockpit Country at Stewart Town. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows).

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Also common; usually seen in the company of Cave Swallows.

CAVE SWALLOW (CARIBBEAN) (*Petrochelidon fulva poeciloma*) – Fairly common along coastal lowlands and over the forest at Stewart Town.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

RUFOUS-THROATED ALLITAIRE (RUFOUS-THROATED) (*Myadestes genibarbis solitarius*) – We heard a few of these lovely songsters in the Blue Mountains and in the John Crow Mountains, but only a few people had a quick view.

WHITE-EYED THRUSH (*Turdus jamaicensis*) – These endemic thrushes put in nice appearances in the Blue Mountains and also at Ecclesdown Road in the John Crow Mountains. Far less common than the White-chinned Thrush. [E]

WHITE-CHINNED THRUSH (*Turdus aurantius*) – This so-called "Hopping Dick" is widespread and we saw many of them on the ground, especially during the drive into the Blue Mountains. [E]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers).

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Common and widespread.

Sturnidae (Starlings).

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Our only sightings were around the Mynt Retreat in Montego Bay. [I]

Parulidae (New World Warblers).

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – We had nice sightings at Green Castle Estate and Ecclesdown Road.

WORM-EATING WARBLER (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – Scattered sightings in dry woodlands, mostly at Green Castle Estate but also in other forested sites.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia motacilla*) – One was a surprise in a small stream that flowed to the sea at Strawberry Fields, near Green Castle Estate.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – A few were wintering in coastal mangroves near Annotto Bay and the Drivers River mouth.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Common in forested habitats.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – A few scattered sightings of this wintering warbler.

ARROWHEAD WARBLER (*Setophaga pharetra*) – This endemic warbler was common in montane forest. We saw about 10 in the Blue Mountains and 5 in the John Crow Mountains. [E]

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Common in forested habitats.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – A handful of sightings - one in particular had a bottlebrush tree at Green Castle Estates staked out.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – Common; one of the widespread warblers that we saw in many places on the island.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – One was a nice find on the trail to the reservoir at Green Castle Estate.

YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN) (*Setophaga petechia eoa*) – A few responsive birds were in mangrove edges near Green Castle Estates.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – Plenty of good views in forests. Remember the males that approached us so closely at Rocklands? The bulk of the population of this species winters in the Caribbean.

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*) – A fairly common winterer in a mix of habitats.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – A male was wintering along the Woodside Track in the Blue Mountains.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies).

BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN) (*Coereba flaveola flaveola*) – Common and widespread.

YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT (*Tiaris olivaceus olivaceus*) – Common along grassy edges across the island - great looks at the Rocklands feeders.

BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT (*Tiaris bicolor marchii*) – Heard in a variety of spots, but seen particularly well at the Rocklands feeders.

ORANGEQUIT (*Euneornis campestris*) – Common and widespread. Peculiar and the only member of its genus. [E]

GREATER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla violacea ruficollis*) – Heard and seen most days, with our best looks in the higher montane forests.

YELLOW-SHOULDERED GRASSQUIT (*Loxipasser anoxanthus*) – Our best sightings were on the grounds of the Green Castle Estate. After following the buzzy song of one around for a while, we eventually had some wonderful views, fully out in the open. [E]

Spindalidae (Spindalises).

JAMAICAN SPINDALIS (*Spindalis nigricapilla*) – Great views, especially in the Blue Mountains and the John Crow Mountains. [E]

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies).

JAMAICAN ORIOLE (*Icterus leucopteryx leucopteryx*) – This lovely oriole seems to be everywhere on the island. Its local name is "Aunty Katie."

JAMAICAN BLACKBIRD (*Nesopsar nigerrimus*) – Two pairs of these rare blackbirds showed up in front of us in the Blue Mountains between Section and Hardwar Gap. We got to see one particularly close and admired its glossy blue-black plumage and its odd tendency (odd for a blackbird, anyway) to forage in bromeliads up in rainforest trees. [E]

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – A female was strolling around the entrance of Montego Bay Airport at the very beginning of the tour. While well-known from the Kingston area, the species has only recently arrived here in Montego Bay. Presumably introduced here.

GREATER ANTILLEAN GRACKLE (*Quiscalus niger crassirostris*) – Common; these compact grackles were seen every day.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

JAMAICAN EUPHONIA (*Euphonia jamaica*) – Fairly widespread; particularly good views at eye level in the Blue Mountains near Section. [E]

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies).

SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA (*Lonchura punctulata*) – A flock was in a grassy lot near the Mynt Retreat on our final morning. [I]

MAMMALS

NORWAY (BROWN) RAT (*Rattus norvegicus*) – One of these introduced rats put in an appearance on the final day. [I]

SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – We saw these introduced predators every day, with a total of 14 sightings. [I]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 120 bird taxa and 2 mammal taxa