



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**JAMAICA II 2020**

Mar 1, 2020 to Mar 7, 2020

Eric Hynes & local guide Dwayne Swaby

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



*Streamertail is known as "Doctorbird" in Jamaica, and it is their national bird. Participant Jen Wong caught this gorgeous male of the "red-billed" subspecies feeding at a Hong Kong Orchid Tree.*

You were one lucky bunch -- I want you on all my tours. We would have to really reach to find something that didn't fall in our favor on this run around Jamaica. In fact, we set a new record for this company in Jamaica with 122 species, which of course included a clean sweep of the 27 endemics! Thanks so much for choosing Field Guides for your Jamaica birding adventure.

Many of you arrived ahead of the tour start, so we were able to hit the ground running right from day one. Perhaps the most remarkable sighting of the tour occurred at our first stop: Danielle spotted an eel (sp?) consuming a crab in a tide pool! After enjoying our first tastes of traditional Jamaican cuisine at Father Bull, we collected a few coastal species for the checklist and eventually landed at Green Castle Estate (GCE). A great look at a Northern Potoo after dinner was a wonderful way to cap a strong start.

Monday morning we met my dear friend and top local guide, Dwayne Swaby, and hit the trails of GCE. Jamaica's endemic species showed up left and right, highlighted by a Streamertail nest (good spotting Linda)! In the afternoon, we hiked down to the reservoir and tacked on some ducks, grebes, and herons. Almost half the endemics were on the list by the end of our first full day together.

Day three we traveled to the northeast corner of the island and birded the foothills of the John Crow Mountains along Ecclesdown Road. This birding hotspot did not disappoint. We scored fabulous and hard-to-come-by endemics like Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, Crested Quail-Dove, Jamaican Blackbird and the "black-billed" subspecies of Streamertail. After an authentic Jamaican Jerk lunch in Boston Bay, we leapfrogged our way back to GCE, stopping in Port Antonio and at the bridges over the Spanish and Swift rivers.

We stuck closer to "home" the next morning, venturing to a secret coastal spot of Dwayne's at sunrise to marvel at elegant White-tailed Tropicbirds and a swarm of Cave Swallows. The rest of the morning we tallied new coastal and wetland species like Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, Northern Jacana, Yellow Warbler, and Northern Waterthrush, while White-collared Swifts arced and swirled overhead. We also got to study a roosting Barn Owl practically out in the open.

Thursday morning started off with a bang as we cleaned up the endemic Jamaican Owl before we even exited GCE. Next was a beeline to elevation in the Blue Mountains. Killer looks at Crested Quail-Dove, Blue Mountain Vireo, Arrowhead Warbler, Jamaican Becard, Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, and Ring-tailed Pigeon had us cheering as we made our way to Hardwar Gap. Jamaican Pewee, Orangequit, Jamaican Vireo, White-eyed Thrush, Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo, and others kept us entertained until a hot lunch was delivered to us at Woodside. Who could forget the perched "Mountain Witch" there that we scoped to our hearts' content?! The hundreds, perhaps thousands, of White-collared Swifts overhead were equally memorable.

Day six we said thank you and goodbye to the fantastic GCE staff and made our way to Cockpit Country. After a productive walk in Stewart Town, we headed to Montego Bay. A favorite detour near the airport added Tricolored Heron and Greater Yellowlegs. Our afternoon session at Rocklands Bird Sanctuary was special as always, with endemics literally in the palms of our hands. Our last stop was the Montego Bay waste water treatment facility, and it was absolutely worthwhile as we added West Indian Whistling-Duck!

Thanks again for choosing Field Guides and joining me in Jamaica. I hope this triplist triggers many happy memories.

Take care,

Eric a.k.a. Eagle

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## 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

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## BIRDS

### *Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)*

**WEST INDIAN WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna arborea*) – This regional specialty is one of the more difficult species to come by so we were thrilled to catch up to four at the Montego Bay waste water treatment facility. Good spotting Linda!

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Spatula discors*) – This species winters in good numbers on Jamaica

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Spatula clypeata*) – The concentration of these colorful dabblers in the impoundments at the Montego Bay waste water treatment facility is truly impressive. Thanks for helping me count them.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*) – We saw a few on two different occasions

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Stiff-tailed rubber duckies

### *Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**LEAST GREBE** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – Just a few

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Good looks from the Swift River Bridge

### *Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Around the towns and cities [I]

**WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Common, particularly along the coast

**RING-TAILED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas caribaea*) – This pale endemic is restricted to the montane forests [E]

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – A few are starting to show up in Jamaica. We saw ours in Ocho Rios. It was missing most of its tail. [I]

**COMMON GROUND DOVE** (*Columbina passerina jamaicensis*) – The dove that got hit by a shrink ray

**CRESTED QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon versicolor*) – "Mountain Witch" -- we had tremendous luck with this normally difficult species to find. My favorite was the one that thought we couldn't see it so we got to study (and do some stretching!) at lunch in the Blue Mountains. [E]

**RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon montana*) – I don't think of the color ruddy as bright but some of the fly-bys were striking

**CARIBBEAN DOVE** (*Leptotila jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – A gorgeous bird; underfoot at Rocklands

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Common and widespread

**ZENAIDA DOVE** (*Zenaida aurita*) – Another easy to come by species

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – Few and far between in Jamaica

### *Cuculidae (Cuckoos)*

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*) – Funny-sounding cuckoos

**MANGROVE CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus minor*) – Some of you saw this species; for others it was just a heard bird

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus pluvialis*) – One of my favorite endemics; we caught up to this tremendous species on three different days but the most memorable for me was the foraging bird at our first stop in the Blue Mountains. [E]

**JAMAICAN LIZARD-CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus vetula*) – Not as large as the previous endemic but just as striking [E]

### *Nyctibiidae (Potoos)*

**NORTHERN POTOO (CARIBBEAN)** (*Nyctibius jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – This species could be the poster child for the word cryptic

### *Apodidae (Swifts)*

**WHITE-COLLARED SWIFT** (*Streptoprocne zonaris pallidifrons*) – I have never seen so many in Jamaica. We marveled at hundreds overhead on several occasions

**ANTILLEAN PALM-SWIFT** (*Tachornis phoenicobia phoenicobia*) – Their speed and agility are stunning

### *Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)*

**JAMAICAN MANGO** (*Anthracothorax mango*) – Hefty and dark; one or two endemic hummingbird species [E]

**VERVAIN HUMMINGBIRD** (*Mellisuga minima minima*) – Nearly the smallest bird in the world but they sure are vocal

**STREAMERTAIL (RED-BILLED)** (*Trochilus polytmus polytmus*) – "Doctorbird" - Jamaica's national bird [E]

**STREAMERTAIL (BLACK-BILLED)** (*Trochilus polytmus scitulus*) – This subspecies is restricted to the northeast corner of the island. We saw it along Ecclesdown Road. [E]

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).*

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*) – Excellent views in Annotto Bay

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – At the reservoir at GCE

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).*

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Lanky and elegant

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).*

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A few were waiting out the tide with the roosting Royal Terns on the reef after lunch on our last day

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – A one day wonder

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Bookending the tour on days one and six

*Jacanidae (Jacanas).*

**NORTHERN JACANA** (*Jacana spinosa violacea*) – How about those outrageous toes

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).*

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Good looks in Annotto Bay

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – Tragically, one was entangled in some fishing net

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – The mudflats in that little cut near the airport was crawling with them

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – Almost daily

**SOLITARY SANDPIPER** (*Tringa solitaria*) – We had just one on day one in Discovery Bay

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Our best look was from the Spanish River Bridge

**WILLET** (*Tringa semipalmata*) – One was in Salt Marsh on our way back to Montego Bay

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – In good numbers at the Montego Bay waste water treatment facility

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers).*

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Companions during our lunches at Father Bull

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Common in Jamaica

**SANDWICH TERN** (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – Few and far between

*Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds).*

**WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon lepturus*) – Watching these elegant seabirds in the morning sun was magical

*Fregatidae (Frigatebirds).*

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*) – Watching them effortlessly soar is always a treat

*Pelecanidae (Pelicans).*

**BROWN PELICAN (SOUTHERN)** (*Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis*) – Waiting for scraps from the fishermen in Greenwood

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

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – Uncommon but observed on multiple days

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – Widespread

**SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*) – Restricted to wet places

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*) – Daily

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*) – Only seen on the last day in Montego Bay

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Numerous

**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*) – Best looks in Annotto Bay

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – The immature bird at the reservoir at GCE was an unexpected addition

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – Easier to see in Jamaica than the previous species

*Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills).*

**GLOSSY IBIS** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – We saw a few sizable flocks

*Cathartidae (New World Vultures).*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – We saw a leucistic individual; likely a result of a limited gene pool on an island

*Pandionidae (Osprey).*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – A few flyovers

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).*

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

*Tytonidae (Barn-Owls).*

**BARN OWL (AMERICAN)** (*Tyto alba furcata*) – Wow - what an incredible view of that roosting bird

*Strigidae (Owls).*

**JAMAICAN OWL** (*Pseudoscops grammicus*) – We cleaned up this endemic nicely predawn on our way to the Blue Mountains [E]

*Todidae (Todies).*

**JAMAICAN TODY** (*Todus todus*) – Always a crowdpleaser; that pair in the coffee at breakfast in the Blue Mountains was particularly memorable [E]

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**JAMAICAN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes radiolatus*) – An everyday endemic [E]

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL (HISPANIOLAN)** (*Falco sparverius dominicensis*) – This tiny falcon does well in Jamaica

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – An individual buzzed the valley during our walk in Stewart Town

*Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)*

**BLACK-BILLED PARROT** (*Amazona agilis*) – Our best looks were in Cockpit Country [E]

**YELLOW-BILLED PARROT** (*Amazona collaria*) – The more common endemic parrot [E]

**GREEN-RUMPED PARROTLET** (*Forpus passerinus*) – Their sharp calls drew our attention in Stewart Town and we eventually spotted these emerald sprites [I]

**OLIVE-THROATED PARAKEET (JAMAICAN)** (*Eupsittula nana nana*) – This bird might be split someday

*Tityridae (Tityras and Allies)*

**JAMAICAN BECARD** (*Pachyrhamphus niger*) – The male at Hardwar Gap was our best view [E]

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**JAMAICAN ELAENIA** (*Myiopagis cotta*) – More days than not for this endemic flycatcher [E]

**GREATER ANTILLEAN ELAENIA (JAMAICAN)** (*Elaenia fallax fallax*) – Heard calling up in the Blue Mountains but we never got bins on this regional specialty [\*]

**JAMAICAN PEWEE** (*Contopus pallidus*) – This endemic was easiest to see in the Blue Mountains [E]

**SAD FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus barbirostris*) – This endemic was named for its vocalizations [E]

**RUFOUS-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus validus*) – More days than not [E]

**STOLID FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus stolidus stolidus*) – A regional specialty we saw at GCE

**LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (LOGGERHEAD)** (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus jamaicensis*) – Daily

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

**BLUE MOUNTAIN VIREO** (*Vireo osburni*) – Appropriately, our best looks were up in the Blue Mountains [E]

**JAMAICAN VIREO** (*Vireo modestus*) – Heard more than seen but all over the place [E]

**BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** (*Vireo altiloquus altiloquus*) – This species was just arriving to breed

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**JAMAICAN CROW** (*Corvus jamaicensis*) – I love hearing their vocalizations. We caught up to this species in Cockpit Country [E]

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – An every other day bird

**CAVE SWALLOW (CARIBBEAN)** (*Petrochelidon fulva poeciloma*) – The colony at the coast in Robins Bay was thrilling to watch

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – A few are around Montego Bay [I]

*Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)*

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Daily

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**RUFOUS-THROATED SOLITAIRE (RUFOUS-THROATED)** (*Myadestes genibarbis solitarius*) – Their ethereal calls are enchanting; the bird at Hardwar Gap made us work hard for a look

**WHITE-EYED THRUSH** (*Turdus jamaicensis*) – It is hard to describe a brown and gray bird and make it sound beautiful but is exactly what this species is [E]

**WHITE-CHINNED THRUSH** (*Turdus aurantius*) – "Hoppy Dick" [E]

*Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)*

**SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA** (*Lonchura punctulata*) – A few were in the trees around Mynt Retreat [I]

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – A few on the streets of Ocho Rios [I]

*Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)*

**JAMAICAN EUPHONIA** (*Euphonia jamaica*) – Not what you expect to see when you think about euphonias [E]

*Spindalidae (Spindalises)*

**JAMAICAN SPINDALIS** (*Spindalis nigricephala*) – The eye-candy endemic [E]

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)*

**JAMAICAN ORIOLE** (*Icterus leucopteryx leucopteryx*) – "Auntie Katie"

**JAMAICAN BLACKBIRD** (*Nesopsar nigerrimus*) – One of the most difficult endemics to track down but we had exceptionally good luck with this species. Watching the foraging bird at our first stop in the Blue Mountains stands out in my mind [E]

**SHINY COWBIRD** (*Molothrus bonariensis*) – Coming to the feeders at Rocklands

**GREATER ANTILLEAN GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus niger crassirostris*) – Daily - fun to watch them splash around in the bird bath at GCE

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**OVENBIRD** (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – One of the last species to make the list; a couple birds were skulking around the undergrowth at Rocklands  
**WORM-EATING WARBLER** (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – A few good looks  
**LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia motacilla*) – We found a roadside bird as we started our climb up into the Blue Mountains  
**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Love the mangroves  
**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – More days than not  
**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Almost daily  
**ARROWHEAD WARBLER** (*Setophaga pharetra*) – I like referring to this endemic as the "salt-and-pepper warbler" [E]  
**AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – This warbler winters in good numbers in Jamaica  
**CAPE MAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga tigrina*) – Mynt Retreat the last morning  
**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – Runner-up to the American Redstart for warbler sightings  
**YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN)** (*Setophaga petechia eoa*) – In the mangroves  
**BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – You can't beat the looks at Rocklands  
**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** (*Setophaga dominica*) – Uncommon in Jamaica; we saw one on the Waterfall Trail at GCE  
**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – Nearly daily

*Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)*

**INDIGO BUNTING** (*Passerina cyanea*) – On our first walk at GCE

*Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)*

**SAFFRON FINCH** (*Sicalis flaveola*) – Small populations established in Ocho Rios and Montego Bay [I]  
**BANANAQUIT (GREATER ANTILLEAN)** (*Coereba flaveola flaveola*) – Ubiquitous  
**YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris olivaceus olivaceus*) – Best looks at Rocklands  
**ORANGEQUIT** (*Euneornis campestris*) – Only member of its Genus [E]  
**GREATER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH** (*Melopyrrha violacea ruficollis*) – More days than not  
**YELLOW-SHOULDERED GRASSQUIT** (*Loxipasser anoxanthus*) – Unlike most grassquits, this species does well in forests [E]  
**BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Melanospiza bicolor marchii*) – Best looks at Rocklands

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## MAMMALS

**SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – Unfortunately yes [I]

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Streamertail was the runaway favorite species of the tour. Other species receiving multiple votes were Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo and Crested Quail-Dove.

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**Totals for the tour: 122 bird taxa and 1 mammal taxa**