

Trip Report — Fall in Jamaica 2024

November 16-23, 2024 with Cory Gregory & local guide



There may be no other species in Jamaica as quintessential as the streamertail. A couple of years ago these were split into two species, both still endemic to Jamaica. This is the Red-billed Streamertail, photographed by guide Cory Gregory.

Jamaica, sitting just south of Cuba, is a birders paradise. It doesn't matter the season or which side of the island you go to, you're sure to see some fantastic birds. Hosting 28 endemic bird species, Jamaica has incredible biodiversity for its size. For all of these reasons, Field Guides created this tour so that birders can enjoy what this island nation has to offer. On this particular trip our group consisted of 8 participants, myself, our local guide Dwayne, and our excellent driver Raymond. Together we had a quick trip in November and I have to say, it was one of the better birding trips I've ever had there.

Our adventure together got underway in Kingston where we had been staying right on the water (where we enjoyed an authentic Jamaican dinner but also watched frigatebirds from our hotel!). We gathered that next morning and drove west to the Hellshire Hills. Although our path forward was a bit damp (as in lake-sized puddles in the road), we hitched a ride and eventually made our way down the trail where we had

quick looks at one of the rarest Jamaican breeders, the Bahama Mockingbird! We enjoyed many other species, though, including Jamaican Mango, Vervain Hummingbird, Stolid Flycatcher, Jamaican Vireo, and our first of many Bananaquits. After a quick trip up and over the mountains, we stopped at the Westmoreland Bridge where we added a variety of shorebirds and herons to our budding island lists. Just around the corner, in Annotto Bay, we stopped along the north shore of the island to check out some shorebirds, terns, and frigatebirds. Wouldn't you know it, a nonbreeding Forster's Tern came by! A megararity for the north shore, this was even a new bird for our local guide! We closed out the day by making our way to the lovely Villas at Goblin Hill, our home for the next four nights.



Rated one of our favorite birds of the trip, the Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo entertained us with its antics and clever hunting techniques. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

The first full day around the eastern side of the island was a memorable one. We started by birding at Ecclesdown Road where we promptly found nearly 20 of the endemics. Highlights included an awesome Crested Quail-Dove, our first Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoos, the range-restricted Black-billed Streamertail, Jamaican Woodpecker, both endemic Amazons, and even the rare Jamaican Blackbird which was icing on the cake. The birding along this 1-2 miles of road was exceptionally productive for us,

netting us other endemics like Jamaican Pewee, Sad Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Flycatcher, Blue Mountain Vireo, Jamaican Crow, and the list goes on and on. After an authentic Jamaican jerk lunch, we had a lovely siesta back at the villas before a bit more afternoon birding nearby on the grounds. It was another productive hour of birding; we saw Jamaican Mango, Sad Flycatcher, White-chinned Thrush, Jamaican Euphonia, and even a quick Yellow-shouldered Grassquit. Back at the villas, we enjoyed owling a little bit after dinner where we heard multiple Jamaican Owls. But to see them properly, we'd have to try once more.



The Orangequit, a Jamaican endemic, has been a curious case in recent years, often stumping biologists as to its closest relatives. Currently, it's placed in Thraupidae along with the Tanagers and allies.

Photo by guide Cory Gregory

This was another memorable day of birding. We started early, predawn, and drove up into the Blue Mountains to be positioned for birding at the peak time. We arrived and more Jamaican specialties rained down on us. Ring-tailed Pigeon, Red-billed Streamertail, Jamaican Tody, Jamaican Woodpecker, Jamaican Becard, Jamaican Pewee, basically a lot of species with Jamaican in the name! Of particular interest was our first encounters with the endemic Arrowhead Warbler and our views of those were outstanding! As the day progressed, we enjoyed repeat views of many of the specialties. Ring-tailed Pigeon was seen well, Jamaican Tody spotted again, Jamaican

Spindalis, White-chinned Thrush, but also a very cooperative Swainson's Warbler which, for such a secretive species, is saying something! Farther down the road, but still in the Blue Mountains, we focused our efforts until we uncovered a nice White-eyed Thrush that allowed for scope views. Rarest, though, was a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a rare winter visitor, that popped into view briefly. On our way back to our villas, we stopped at the Spanish River Bridge for a bit where we enjoyed a change of scenery. This change of scenery included Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, Black-bellied Plover, Green Heron, Belted Kingfisher, and swarms of Greater Antillean Grackles. After a nice dinner back at Goblin Hill, we tried the owls once more and came away with stunning views of one right outside our rooms! A great ending to a great day of birding.



There is only one warbler endemic to Jamaica and that is this very special Arrowhead Warbler. We saw these many times and we all came away happy with the views we had. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

As morning broke to the sounds of Loggerhead Kingbirds squabbling outside, we gathered up for some birding down to the San San Forest. This was a productive road and only a few minutes away. We finally encountered the big Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo nicely here along with its cousin, the Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo. In fact, we saw this particular lizard-cuckoo do some strange things indeed! After lunging for a lizard

to eat, the bird grabbed the anole... but the anole kept hanging on to the branch. Pretty soon, the cuckoo was simply hanging by its bill around the lizard! Although this was eventually bad for the anole, it was certainly fascinating to see how the lizard-cuckoo hunted. The road was, unsurprisingly, very birdy. We saw several species of warblers here including Ovenbird, Worm-eating, Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Parula, and Black-throated Blue Warblers. The Jamaican endemics were of course well-represented, and we had repeat views of Yellow-billed Amazon, Jamaican Becard, White-eyed Thrush, and Jamaican Spindalis. That afternoon we swung by the Errol Flynn Marina where we focused on the several special species of hummingbirds. We all came away with photos of Jamaican Mango, Vervain Hummingbird, and Black-billed Streamertails but also some other regional specialties like Olive-throated Parakeet, Jamaican Euphonia, and a sharp Yellow-throated Warbler. After a nice mid-afternoon siesta, we birded a little more around the grounds and had repeat views of many of the specialties including Yellow-shouldered Grassquit.

Today was a big day. Although we had to leave our homes at the Goblin Hill Villas, we still started with some birding nearby. It's a good thing too because we added Jamaican Elaenia! With that endemic in the bag, we had then tallied each and every Jamaican endemic bird! After saying goodbye to the staff at Goblin Hill, we were off to the west, towards Montego Bay. Although we enjoyed some Antillean Palm Swifts along the way, it was mostly quiet until we reached the Rocklands Bird Sanctuary. This birding hotspot, located near Montego Bay, will be remembered by all of us. After all, how often can you feed Jamaican Mangos and Red-billed Streamertails from your hand! The views of the hummers were point-blank and so were the encounters of Caribbean Dove, Common Ground Dove, and even a day-roosting Jamaican Owl. After Rocklands, we made one last birding stop and that was the Montego Bay Sewage Ponds. We tallied a quick 22 species which included a key target, the West Indian Whistling-Duck. We saw ducks such as teal, shovelers, scaup, and ruddies, but also some shorebirds like Black-necked Stilt and Northern Jacana.



We had such a fun group of birders. Dwayne, pictured here getting us on a bird, along with Raymond, took such good care of us. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

Our final day of birding started in Montego Bay where we had an early start. We drove east to the Falmouth Bypass area where we caught a view of the Plain Pigeons on their morning commute into the hills. It was especially nice to get to see these side-by-side with White-crowned Pigeons. After tallying this uncommon species, we headed off to Stewart Town, tucked away in the Cockpit Country. Our final birding outing was another pleasant one. We had our picnic breakfast to the sounds of Jamaican Crows flying overhead, Yellow-billed Amazons climbing around in trees near us, and more of the endemics like Olive-throated Parakeets (that will get split someday) and the introduced Green-rumped Parrotlet. Up the trail, we saw some handsome Jamaican Becards as well as a giant sinkhole, probably hundreds of feet deep! But before long, it was time to head back to Montego Bay where we closed out our trip together. Our final bit of birding was the final morning from the balcony; we enjoyed our final looks at the White-crowned Pigeons atop nearby trees, Antillean Palm Swifts zipping overhead, and Olive-throated Parakeets screeching nearby.

I did want to share our mammal list for the trip... but it's a pretty short list! The only mammal was the introduced **Small Indian Mongoose** (*Urva auropunctata*)!

This quick trip to the Caribbean nation of Jamaica really was a lot of fun and I want to thank each of you for coming along with me on this Field Guides trip. We ended with an impressive 110-120 species including a full endemic sweep! Much of the success on this trip is due to our wonderful local guide and driver, Dwayne and Raymond. This duo showed us birds, kept us safe, kept us entertained, and were all-around great stewards of Jamaica. Last but not least, thanks also to all the help from Sharon and Maria in Austin! This trip couldn't have happened without them. Once again, I sincerely thank you all and I hope to bird with you again on a future Field Guides trip!

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/295578>

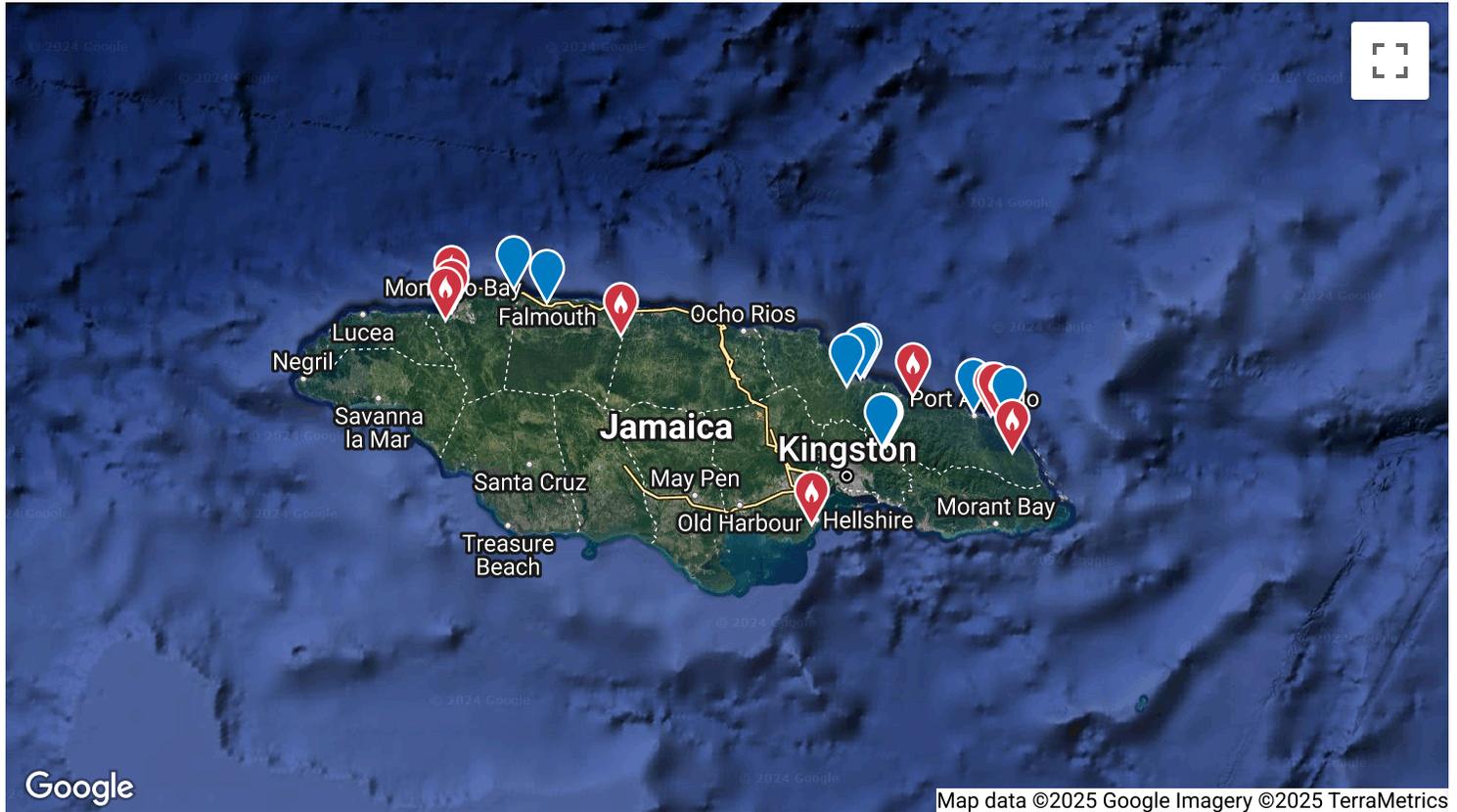
-- Cory Gregory (Curlew)



Field Guides Birding Tours -- JAMAICA III, 2024 (with Cory Gregory and local guide Dwayne Swaby)



17 – 23 Nov 2024 (7 days) Link-only



Jamaica

Portland | Saint Mary | Trelawny | Saint James | Saint Catherine

Cory Gregory



For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional...

 115

Species Observed

 24

Checklists

 39

Species with Photos

Species Observed

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8	West Indian Whistling-Duck <i>Dendrocygna arborea</i>	  1
40	Blue-winged Teal <i>Spatula discors</i>	  1
130	Northern Shoveler <i>Spatula clypeata</i>	  1
1	Ring-necked Duck <i>Aythya collaris</i>	  1
5	Lesser Scaup <i>Aythya affinis</i>	  1
15	Ruddy Duck <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	  1
7	Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i> *	  2
44	White-crowned Pigeon <i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>	  9
9	Plain Pigeon <i>Patagioenas inornata</i>	  1  1
42	Ring-tailed Pigeon <i>Patagioenas caribaea</i>	  1  8

21	Common Ground Dove <i>Columbina passerina</i>	▶  2  8
1	Crested Quail-Dove <i>Geotrygon versicolor</i>	▶  1  1
7	Caribbean Dove <i>Leptotila jamaicensis</i>	▶  1
30	White-winged Dove <i>Zenaida asiatica</i>	▶  4
21	Zenaida Dove <i>Zenaida aurita</i>	▶  7
2	Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	▶  1
3	Smooth-billed Ani <i>Crotophaga ani</i>	▶  1  3
2	Mangrove Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus minor</i>	▶  1
3	Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus pluvialis</i>	▶  1  2
5	Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus vetula</i>	▶  1  3
1	Northern Potoo <i>Nyctibius jamaicensis</i>	▶  1
11	Antillean Palm Swift <i>Tachornis phoenicobia</i>	▶  2
12	Jamaican Mango <i>Anthracothorax mango</i>	▶  1  5
5	Vervain Hummingbird <i>Mellisuga minima</i>	▶  1  3
18	Red-billed Streamertail <i>Trochilus polytmus</i>	▶  3  5
14	Black-billed Streamertail <i>Trochilus scitulus</i>	▶  4
19	Common Gallinule <i>Gallinula galeata</i>	▶  3
8	American Coot <i>Fulica americana</i>	▶  1
23	Black-necked Stilt <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	▶  3
1	Black-bellied Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	▶  1

4	Killdeer <i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	▶  1
1	Northern Jacana <i>Jacana spinosa</i>	▶  1
8	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  3
2	Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i>	▶  1
5	Greater Yellowlegs <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	▶  2
1	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	▶  1
13	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	▶  1
17	Laughing Gull <i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	▶  3
1	Forster's Tern <i>Sterna forsteri</i>	▶  1
27	Royal Tern <i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	▶  5
6	Least Grebe <i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i>	▶  1
41	Magnificent Frigatebird <i>Fregata magnificens</i>	▶  5
8	Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	▶  3
4	Yellow-crowned Night Heron <i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	▶  2
8	Little Blue Heron <i>Egretta caerulea</i>	▶  3
3	Tricolored Heron <i>Egretta tricolor</i>	▶  2
5	Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	▶  4
7	Green Heron <i>Butorides virescens</i>	▶  3
9	Western Cattle-Egret <i>Ardea ibis</i>	▶  1  5
9	Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	▶  7

4	Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	▶  4
15	Brown Pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	▶  2
131	Turkey Vulture <i>Cathartes aura</i>	▶  15
1	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  1
6	Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	▶  1  5
6	Jamaican Owl <i>Asio grammicus</i>	▶  3  3
7	Jamaican Tody <i>Todus todus</i>	▶  1  5
4	Belted Kingfisher <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	▶  3
1	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	▶  1
21	Jamaican Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes radiolatus</i>	▶  2  9
13	American Kestrel <i>Falco sparverius</i>	▶  8
8	Black-billed Amazon <i>Amazona agilis</i>	▶  2
59	Yellow-billed Amazon <i>Amazona collaria</i>	▶  1  3
6	Green-rumped Parrotlet <i>Forpus passerinus</i> *	▶  2
27	Olive-throated Parakeet <i>Eupsittula nana</i>	▶  1  7
4	Jamaican Becard <i>Pachyramphus niger</i>	▶  1  3
2	Jamaican Elaenia <i>Myiopagis cotta</i>	▶  2  2
4	Jamaican Pewee <i>Contopus pallidus</i>	▶  3
9	Sad Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus barbirostris</i>	▶  7
10	Rufous-tailed Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus validus</i>	▶  6

3	Stolid Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus stolidus</i>	▶  1  2
1	Gray Kingbird <i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i>	▶  1  1
25	Loggerhead Kingbird <i>Tyrannus caudifasciatus</i>	▶  1  10
2	Blue Mountain Vireo <i>Vireo osburni</i>	▶  1  2
7	Jamaican Vireo <i>Vireo modestus</i>	▶  1  4
9	Jamaican Crow <i>Corvus jamaicensis</i>	▶  1  2
3	Northern Rough-winged Swallow <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	▶  1
3	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶  1
34	Cave Swallow <i>Petrochelidon fulva</i>	▶  2
4	European Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> *	▶  1
3	Bahama Mockingbird <i>Mimus gundlachii</i>	▶  1
16	Northern Mockingbird <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	▶  6
4	Rufous-throated Solitaire <i>Myadestes genibarbis</i>	▶  2
28	White-chinned Thrush <i>Turdus aurantius</i>	▶  9
2	White-eyed Thrush <i>Turdus jamaicensis</i>	▶  1  2
9	Scaly-breasted Munia <i>Lonchura punctulata</i> *	▶  2  2
14	Jamaican Euphonia <i>Euphonia jamaica</i>	▶  1  8
18	Jamaican Spindalis <i>Spindalis nigricephala</i>	▶  8
18	Jamaican Oriole <i>Icterus leucopteryx</i>	▶  2  8
2	Jamaican Blackbird <i>Nesopsar nigerrimus</i>	▶  1  2

1	Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	▶  1
37	Greater Antillean Grackle	<i>Quiscalus niger</i>	▶  6
4	Ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>	▶  4
2	Worm-eating Warbler	<i>Helmitheros vermivorum</i>	▶  2
1	Louisiana Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia motacilla</i>	▶  1
1	Northern Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>	▶  1
12	Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	▶  7
1	Swainson's Warbler	<i>Limnothlypis swainsonii</i>	▶  1  1
6	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	▶  5
7	Arrowhead Warbler	<i>Setophaga pharetra</i>	▶  2  4
27	American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	▶  11
12	Cape May Warbler	<i>Setophaga tigrina</i>	▶  7
17	Northern Parula	<i>Setophaga americana</i>	▶  9
1	Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>	▶  1
25	Black-throated Blue Warbler	<i>Setophaga caerulescens</i>	▶  1  10
1	Palm Warbler	<i>Setophaga palmarum</i>	▶  1
3	Yellow-throated Warbler	<i>Setophaga dominica</i>	▶  3
3	Prairie Warbler	<i>Setophaga discolor</i>	▶  3
1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	▶  1  1
44	Bananaquit	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>	▶  14

- 10 **Yellow-faced Grassquit** *Tiaris olivaceus* ▶  1  1
- 44 **Orangequit** *Euneornis campestris* ▶  3  10
- 8 **Greater Antillean Bullfinch** *Melopyrrha violacea* ▶  1  5
- 10 **Yellow-shouldered Grassquit** *Loxipasser anoxanthus* ▶  1  5
- 34 **Black-faced Grassquit** *Melanospiza bicolor* ▶  1  6

ADDITIONAL TAXA

- 1 new world warbler sp. *Parulidae* sp. ▶  1