



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Puerto Rico 2013**

Mar 24, 2013 to Mar 30, 2013

Eric Hynes & Pepe Rojas

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

Our Puerto Rico tour was a smashing success thanks to a wonderful group of birders, pleasant weather, and cooperative birds.

We started with a delicious meal at a Peruvian restaurant, Lima, just down the street from our comfortable hotel in San Juan. The next morning, charismatic endemics like Puerto Rican Tody and Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo were around us right from the start at Cambalache. The rainforest up at Rio Abajo in the Haystack Hills was lush and birdy. Thank goodness that Puerto Rican Screech-Owl was still roosting in the bamboo. Lunch at Guajataca was highlighted by a streaking Peregrine Falcon and White-tailed Tropicbirds.

On day two, an early walk around the village of Parguera produced an absurdly cooperative Clapper Rail, a tree full of hummingbirds, and the endemic Yellow-shouldered Blackbird. Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge was full of waterbirds, including tough to find Masked Duck and West Indian Whistling-Duck.

A morning in the Maricao Highlands with Julio Gallardo resulted in the bird of the trip: the highly endangered venator subspecies of Sharp-shinned Hawk. Picking up Lesser Antillean Pewee, Green Mango, and Puerto Rican Tanager helped as well. And who could forget that pair of brilliant Antillean Euphonias from the tower?

Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge really padded our list with lots of shorebirds before we headed back east across the island. A detour to Comerio for the poorly named Plain Pigeon was definitely worthwhile en route to Casa Cubuy.

The hummingbirds, waders, coots, warblers, and ducks of Humacao rounded out our checklist nicely before wrapping up our birding in Fajardo.

Pepe and I are truly appreciative of the respect and cooperation you shared with each other. We had a blast and sincerely hope to see you all again on another tour soon.

Peace, Love, and Papayas,

--Eric



*The Puerto Rican Tody might be the most beloved of Puerto Rican endemics.  
(Photo by guide Eric Hynes)*

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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*) – Good looks at more than a dozen birds from the tower at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas discors*) – Seen well at Laguna Cartagena NWR and Humacao

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – A lone drake at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL** (*Anas bahamensis*) – Our best looks at this striking dabbler were at Cabo Rojo NWR

**MASKED DUCK** (*Nomonyx dominicus*) – Several hens remained well hidden in the vegetation at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – The drakes in full breeding plumage at Humacao were worthy of a long look.

*Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**LEAST GREBE** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – This tiny grebe was an unusual find at Humacao.

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Good looks at Humacao and hearing their strange call was a real bonus

*Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)*

**WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon lepturus*) – This spectacular seabird flew by the cliffs at Guajataca during our first picnic lunch.

*Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)*

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*) – I could watch those dynamic soarers all day long.

*Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)*

**BROWN BOOBY** (*Sula leucogaster*) – We enjoyed perched and in flight views at Fajardo.

*Pelecanidae (Pelicans)*

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Almost an everyday bird

*Ardeidae (Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**LEAST BITTERN** (*Ixobrychus exilis*) – What an amazing spot by Ildiko at Humacao! The second bird in flight was a treat as well.

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – Laguna Cartagena NWR provided our best looks at this large wader.

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – This species turns up almost everywhere on Puerto Rico.

**SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*) – In the river on the approach to Casa Cubuy and at Humacao

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*) – The piebald immature in the rice paddies was our only encounter surprisingly

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*) – Several at Humacao

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Have you ever seen so many in your life?

**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*) – Plenty at Laguna Cartagena NWR but the raised crest at Humacao really stands out in my memory

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Laguna Cartagena NWR

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – The bold adult at the end of the road in Guanica at sunrise was memorable.

*Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**GLOSSY IBIS** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Laguna Cartagena NWR and Humacao

*Cathartidae (New World Vultures)*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – They are most conspicuous in the southwest part of the island.

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Great looks from the tower at Laguna Cartagena NWR

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (CARIBBEAN)** (*Accipiter striatus venator*) – What an amazing experience we shared with that pair at Maricao thanks to Julio Gallardo.

**RED-TAILED HAWK (JAMAICENSIS)** (*Buteo jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – The other subject of Julio's PhD research; this nominate race found on Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico and the northern Lesser Antilles occurs in higher concentrations here than anywhere else in the species' substantial range.

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**CLAPPER RAIL (CARIBBEAN)** (*Rallus longirostris caribaeus*) – Wow, can you believe that bird? Talk about cooperative!

**SORA** (*Porzana carolina*) – Distant looks but we got it at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**PURPLE GALLINULE** (*Porphyrio martinicus*) – Plenty at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*) – They were thick at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – At Laguna Cartagena NWR

**CARIBBEAN COOT** (*Fulica caribaea*) – Good looks at the extensive frontal shield at Humacao

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Cabo Rojo NWR

**WILSON'S PLOVER** (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – They marched right up to us! Pepe's lifer

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Cabo Rojo NWR

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Heard more than seen

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)*

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – This elegant shorebird was abundant at Cabo Rojo NWR.

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – Several locations

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – We enjoyed a great study of the two different Yellowlegs side-by-side in the rice paddy as well as at Cabo Rojo NWR.

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – We enjoyed a great study of the two different Yellowlegs side-by-side in the rice paddy as well as at Cabo Rojo NWR.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Along the shore at Parguera

**SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris pusilla*) – Many at Cabo Rojo NWR

**WESTERN SANDPIPER** (*Calidris mauri*) – At least one teased out of the Semi Sands at Cabo Rojo NWR; a rarity for this tour

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – Nice comparisons with Semi Sands at Cabo Rojo NWR

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris fuscicollis*) – Two were across the cove at Cabo Rojo NWR

**STILT SANDPIPER** (*Calidris himantopus*) – Hundreds at Cabo Rojo NWR

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – Good spotting Hans. Several were seen by Pepe and a few participants at Cabo Rojo NWR at our first stop but they flushed and never returned.

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – Hans seemed to have the eye for Phalaropes. We got a great look at one bird in winter plumage among the Stilt Sandpipers at Cabo Rojo NWR.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – A couple dozen at Fajardo

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – In flight at Humacao and Fajardo

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Common [I]

**SCALY-NAPED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas squamosa*) – An everyday bird

**PLAIN PIGEON** (*Patagioenas inornata wetmorei*) – A Greater Antilles specialty and well worth the side trip; what a terrible name for such a subtly beautiful bird

**AFRICAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia roseogrisea*) – Paler and smaller than the Eurasian Collared-Dove; these guys were thick in Parguera [I]

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Abundant

**ZENAIDA DOVE** (*Zenaida aurita*) – An everyday bird

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – Only in the southwest

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina passerina portoricensis*) – The dove that was zapped by a shrink ray

**KEY WEST QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon chrysis*) – Heard well at Susua but could not be teased into the open

**RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon montana*) – Great looks at Susua

*Cuculidae (Cuckoos)*

**MANGROVE CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus minor*) – A gorgeous bird seen most days

**PUERTO RICAN LIZARD-CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus vieilloti*) – A very charismatic and active bird seen well right from the start at Cambalache [E]

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*) – Never numerous but an everyday bird

*Strigidae (Owls)*

**PUERTO RICAN SCREECH-OWL** (*Megascops nudipes*) – The reaction of the local girls we shared the scope with was almost more fun than seeing the bird ourselves. [E]

*Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)*

**PUERTO RICAN NIGHTJAR** (*Antrostomus noctitherus*) – We heard at least ten and got fleeting glimpses of an individual several times [E]

*Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)*

**ANTILLEAN MANGO** (*Anthracothorax dominicus aurulentus*) – Common in the coastal lowlands

**GREEN MANGO** (*Anthracothorax viridis*) – We found a nest up at Maricao! [E]

**GREEN-THROATED CARIB** (*Eulampis holosericeus*) – The fastest hummingbird in the world or so it seemed; with patience we all got a good look at Humacao

**PUERTO RICAN EMERALD** (*Chlorostilbon maugaeus*) – Our best looks were at the flowering tree in Parguera but we had it at Rio Abajo and up at Maricao as well [E]

**ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD (LESSER ANTILLES)** (*Orthorhynchus cristatus exilis*) – Our first was just after stepping out of the vans at Humacao but the bird in the gardens at the Fajardo Inn stuck around for longer looks

*Todidae (Todies)*

**PUERTO RICAN TODY** (*Todus mexicanus*) – Aren't those little guys just the best?! [E]

*Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)*

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – A few people picked one out along the river below Casa Cubuy

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**PUERTO RICAN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes portoricensis*) – A gorgeous woodpecker reminiscent of its cousin - Lewis's Woodpecker [E]

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL (EASTERN CARIBBEAN)** (*Falco sparverius caribaeorum*) – Seen most frequently in the southwest

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – Always in a hurry

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – An adult buzzed the picnic area at Guajataca and another was in flight south of Mayaguez

*Psittacidae (Parrots)*

**MONK PARAKEET** (*Myiopsitta monachus*) – Seven were in the parking lot at Cambalache the first morning. [I]

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**CARIBBEAN ELAENIA** (*Elaenia martinica*) – We enjoyed some good looks along the south side of Guanica

**LESSER ANTILLEAN PEWEE (PUERTO RICO)** (*Contopus latirostris blancoi*) – Hearing that lovely trill up at Maricao was a thrill.

**PUERTO RICAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus antillarum*) – An everyday bird [E]

**GRAY KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – "Pitirre" Puerto Rico's national bird

**LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (PUERTO RICAN)** (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus taylori*) – This one is a likely split candidate

### Vireonidae (Vireos)

**PUERTO RICAN VIREO** (*Vireo latimeri*) – We had several responsive birds at multiple sites but that killer look was elusive. [E]

**BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** (*Vireo altiloquus*) – "Poor-John-Hewitt" was heard throughout the trip

### Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**CARIBBEAN MARTIN** (*Progne dominicensis*) – Overhead at Parguera

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – A quick flyby at Cabo Rojo

**CAVE SWALLOW (CARIBBEAN)** (*Petrochelidon fulva puertoricensis*) – Substantial colonies under many of the overpasses

### Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**RED-LEGGED THRUSH (EASTERN)** (*Turdus plumbeus ardosiaceus*) – An everyday bird and one of the more striking thrushes around

### Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – An everyday bird

**PEARLY-EYED THRASHER** (*Margarops fuscatus*) – Found in a wide variety of habitats and locations

### Parulidae (New World Warblers)

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Eventually that chipping bird came out at the bridge at Humacao

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – Mary spotted one for us in the canopy at Cambalache

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Seen at the tower at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**ELFIN-WOODS WARBLER** (*Setophaga angelae*) – The Maricao Highlands remains the stronghold for this elusive bird that wasn't described to science until 1972. [E]

**AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – A female came in at the bridge at Humacao

**CAPE MAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga tigrina*) – A female was a pleasant surprise; also seen from the bridge at Humacao

**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – More heard than seen

**YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*) – Around Parguera

**PALM WARBLER** (*Setophaga palmarum*) – A "western" at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – At Laguna Cartagena NWR and Humacao

**ADELAIDE'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga adelaidae*) – We couldn't have asked for a better look at Laguna Cartagena NWR [E]

### Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

**BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN)** (*Coereba flaveola portoricensis*) – Everywhere!

**YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris olivaceus bryanti*) – Great looks as we exited Laguna Cartagena NWR

**BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris bicolor omissus*) – An everyday bird

**PUERTO RICAN BULLFINCH** (*Loxigilla portoricensis*) – A wonderful song; seen well at Cambalache carrying nesting material [E]

**PUERTO RICAN TANAGER** (*Nesospingus speculiferus*) – Maricao and El Yunque; the only member of its genus [E]

**PUERTO RICAN SPINDALIS** (*Spindalis portoricensis*) – A beautiful bird seen most days [E]

### Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

**INDIGO BUNTING** (*Passerina cyanea*) – Two females at Laguna Cartagena was a pleasant surprise

### Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

**YELLOW-SHOULDERED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius xanthomus*) – The feeding station at the general store in Parguera provided close views [E]

**GREATER ANTILLEAN GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus niger brachypterus*) – Ubiquitous

**SHINY COWBIRD** (*Molothrus bonariensis*) – An everyday bird but never in large numbers

**PUERTO RICAN ORIOLE** (*Icterus portoricensis*) – The two males perched together up at Maricao are probably the most memorable [E]

**VENEZUELAN TROUPIAL** (*Icterus icterus*) – A gorgeous oriole, even if it is introduced [I]

### Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

**ANTILLEAN EUPHONIA** (*Euphonia musica sclateri*) – Wow, that pair from atop the tower up at Maricao was spectacular!

### Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – An everyday bird [I]

### Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

**ORANGE-CHEEKED WAXBILL** (*Estrilda melpoda*) – A good-sized flock along the entrance to Laguna Cartagena NWR [I]

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## MAMMALS

**RHESUS MONKEY** (*Macaca mulatta*) – Upon review, the monkey Ildiko spotted in the tree at Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge was not a Patas. Rhesus is the proper ID based on the facial structure, pelage, and tail length. Rhesus were also introduced to Puerto Rico and have been the focus of much research.

**SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – Humacao - digging up the iguana eggs [I]

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The Green Iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) we saw all over the island are introduced and they now number in the millions. The Puerto Rican government considers them a pest and a threat to agriculture. Puerto Ricans do not have a taste for this reptile but the government is promoting them as an export to

Central America where they are considered a delicacy by many people.

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**Totals for the tour: 117 bird taxa and 2 mammal taxa**