

Trip Report — Puerto Rico 2025

February 9-15, 2025 with Cory Gregory



The Puerto Rican Bullfinch is one of more than a dozen endemics found in Puerto Rico. Our group had repeated looks at this species and some of them performed nicely! Photo by participants David and Judy Smith.

The beautiful climate, the spectacular birds, the ease of travel to/fro, all of these are great reasons to visit Puerto Rico. We gathered on this small island for a week of birding and came away with a great list and a full sweep of the endemic birds! We first gathered in San Juan where our trip began. Heading west a bit predawn the first morning, we birded the Rio Abajo area for our first full morning. Right off the bat we tallied at least 8 of the endemics! We heard Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo, played tag with a couple of Puerto Rican Owls predawn, photographed Puerto Rican Tody,

Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Puerto Rican Flycatcher, and that rarest of the bunch, the Puerto Rican Amazons. The endemic subspecies of Broad-winged Hawk was a great pickup as was the endemic subspecies of Lesser Antillean Pewee. A little down the road, we found a Venezuelan Troupial nest (in a traffic light, no less), encountered our first Greater Antillean Grackles, and of course the ubiquitous Gray Kingbirds dotted the power lines. Our next stop at the Cambalache area netted us some more specialties like the endemic Adelaide's Warbler, Puerto Rican Bullfinch, and Puerto Rican Flycatcher. Another stop, this one overlooking the Caribbean off the north shore of the island, provided us with 1-2 dozen White-tailed Tropicbirds as they soared around offshore. And finally, our last stop before continuing to the SW corner of the island was in the town of Mayaguez where we added dozens of Royal and Sandwich terns, distant Brown Boobies, and a collection of gulls that included Ring-billed, American Herring, and Lesser Black-backed.



Yet another species with Puerto Rico in the name is this Puerto Rican Woodpecker, an island endemic. Of all the woodpeckers in this part of the world, surely this one is right up there with the most distinct and striking of them all. Photo by participants David and Judy Smith.

Our next morning was an important one; we drove way up into the mountains so that we could bird the Maricao Forest and surrounding areas. As dawn broke, it was a very birdy place indeed. It didn't take long for us to start hearing the Elfin-woods Warblers singing overhead! This species, only described in the 1970s, is an endemic and one sporting a pretty awesome name as well. The other Puerto Rican endemics started to pile it on; Puerto Rican Spindalis, Puerto Rican Tanager, Puerto Rican Euphonia, Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rican Tody, and many more! We had Green Mango perched high in a tree, had a quick glimpse of a Puerto Rican Emerald, tracked down some Pearly-eyed Thrashers, and all of this goes without saying, Bananaquits were everywhere! Nearby, at the La Torre de Piedra, Caribbean Martins flew overhead, giving their soft chortling calls. That afternoon, after a lovely siesta at our beachside hotel, we took a stroll down the road to see what we could find. Our list ended up with Puerto Rican Mango, an awesome Clapper Rail experience, a flock of Bronze Mannikins, calling Northern Waterthrushes, and even some of the "Golden" Yellow Warblers. That evening we enjoyed a different specialty, the endemic and range-restricted Puerto Rican Nightjar! Our views couldn't have been better, it was perched right above us on a power line!



Of all the endemics in Puerto Rico, perhaps the rarest is the Yellow-shouldered Blackbird. Some population estimates list 400 as the total population! Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

The following day our group enjoyed a different kind of habitat. We made our way out to the Cabo Rojo area where the many salt lagoons and coastal scrub kept us busy. We encountered Bronze Mannikins, Indian Silverbills, White-crowned Pigeon, a Puerto Rican Mango, Barn Swallows, and the endemic Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds en route. Once we arrived and started to bird the coastal scrub, we started adding more endemics and more specialties. The Caribbean Elaenias put on a superb show, the Puerto Rican Flycatchers weren't shy either, and the views we had from all the various egrets and herons were quite impressive. Black-faced Grassquit, the "Golden" Yellow Warber, more Venezuelan Troupials, and Common Ground Doves were more species we added. Nearby, we visited a wetland that was full of ducks, wading birds, and shorebirds. Through the hundreds of birds we tallied some Northern Shovelers, 100-200 Blue-winged Teal, 100+ White-cheeked Pintail, shorebirds like Stilt Sandpiper and Black-necked Stilt, sneaky Least Grebes, and some exotics like Bronze Mannikin and Indian Silverbill. Lunch this day was spent at a restaurant right on the water, a

beautiful and relaxing scene for sure! That afternoon we visited the very birdy Laguna Cartagena and added a myriad of new species. West Indian Whistling-Duck was a highlight, as were Sora and Purple Gallinules, Limpkin, Least Bittern, and Orange-cheeked Waxbill. We finally returned to our beachside hotel in La Parguera and had a nice dinner in town.



These West Indian Whistling-Ducks were a highlight for sure! Although not endemic to Puerto Rico, this is a great place to hope to see this regional specialty. Photo by participants David and Judy Smith.

Laguna Cartagena was such a birdy spot, and one with some remaining targets, we returned there the next morning to see if we would have any better luck. The highlight was a Yellow-breasted Crake although it was heard only by a few. However, we also added Grasshopper Sparrow which is a very uncommon breeding bird in Puerto Rico. But before long we had to continue east. In Aguirre, we had a brief Antillean Crested Hummingbird and

then headed to Villa Borinquen to try for the rare and hard-to-find Plain Pigeon. Though it look a little luck, we indeed found the Plain Pigeons and we all had fantastic scope views! After dinner, we wound our way up to Casa Cubuy, our ecolodge home for the next two nights. We weren't quite done birding though; we did some owling nearby and were successful in getting to actually see the endemic Puerto Rican Owl!



Always a favorite in these parts, the Puerto Rican Tody is tiny but colorful. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

Staying up in the mountains at Casa Cubuy comes with many benefits, one main one being the great birding immediately nearby. That next morning, we explored some good habitat and had repeat views of many of the specialty birds like Puerto Rican Tody, Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Puerto Rican Tanager, and Puerto Rican Bullfinch. We also tracked down Louisiana Waterthrush, a wintering warbler favoring the rushing water in the nearby streams. The main portion of our morning though was spent in the lowlands near Medio Mundo and Daguao. We walked through the forest, which

blended into mangroves, and eventually provided us with a great view of the tidal lagoons. We enjoyed the company of Mangrove Cuckoos, Adelaide's Warblers, 8 species of shorebirds, a brief Green-throated Carib, and a wintering Northern Waterthrush. The songs of Black-whiskered Vireos filtered through the trees whilst Caribbean Elaenias caught flies in the clearings. Later that day we visited a different park with one mission, to see Antillean Crested Hummingbird well. What we ended up with was the best experience I've ever had with this amazing little specialty. We had scope views, took copious photos, and just soaked up this tiny gem before we departed and headed down a nearby road. Even though it was a longshot, we looked for Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo and, shockingly, we DID find one! We all had great looks as it climbed through the trees and even sang a couple of times.



We stayed at a remote ecolodge for two nights. Highlights there included having Puerto Rican Owls right on the grounds! Photo by participants David and Judy Smith.

There wasn't much of a list of other wildlife but we did encounter:

Small Indian Mongoose (*Urva auropunctata*)

Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*)

This was a great trip to this easternmost of the Great Antilles with you all. We swept the endemics nicely, saw many sights and sounds, stayed at some beautiful spots, and enjoyed each other's company. Although Puerto Rico is a small island, relatively, we took our time and enjoyed many repeat views of the specialties and came away with some fun photos (and memories!) as well. I do want to thank each of you for coming with me on this Caribbean adventure. We, at Field Guides, appreciate it and hope to see you again on another one of our trips! Until then, be safe and good birding!

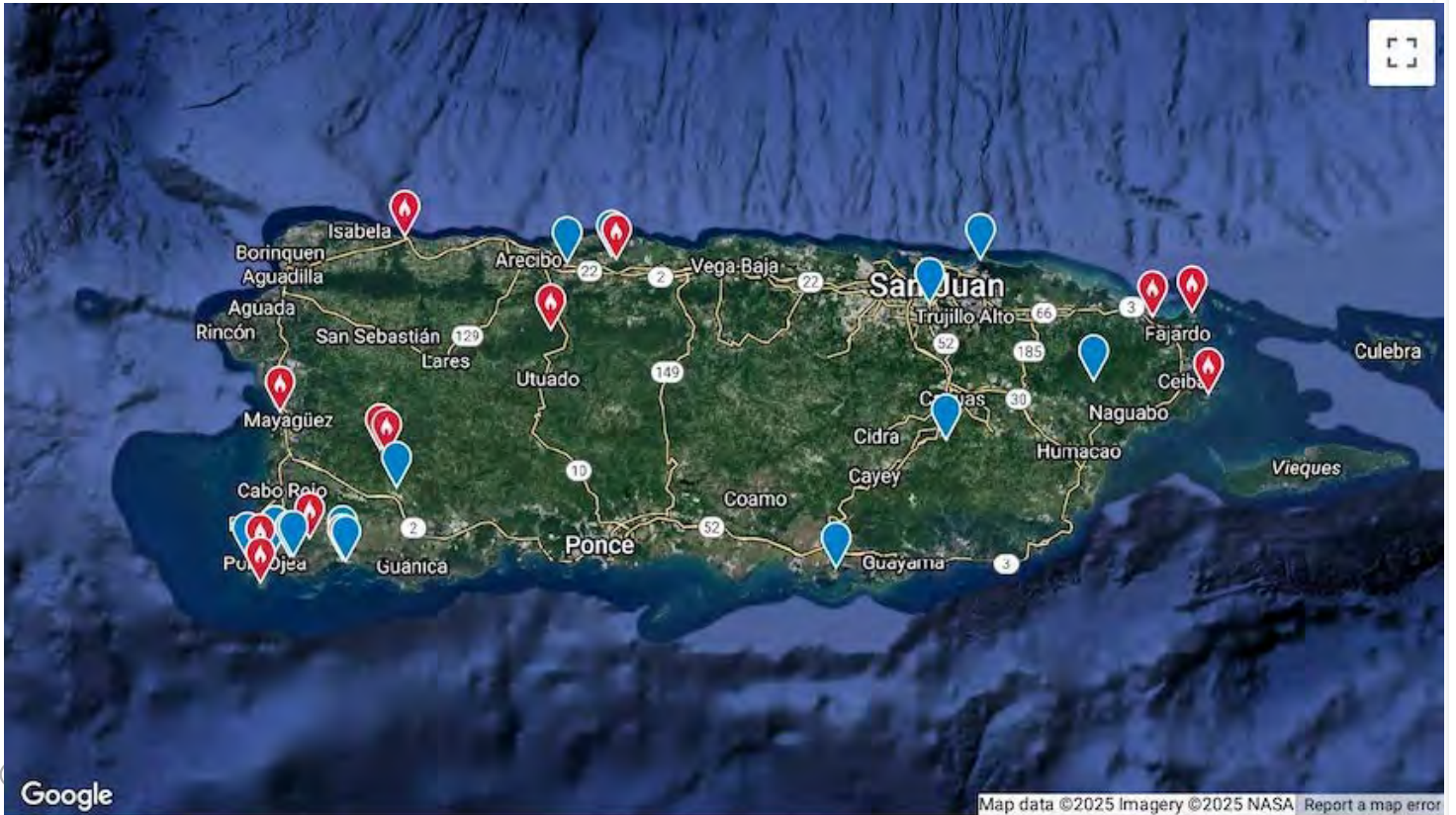
You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/332693>

-- Cory Gregory (Curlew)

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👤 Cory Gregory



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




























LIFERS 1

Species Observed






















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5	West Indian Whistling-Duck <i>Dendrocygna arborea</i>	1
375	Blue-winged Teal <i>Spatula discors</i>	2
3	Northern Shoveler <i>Spatula clypeata</i>	1
127	White-cheeked Pintail <i>Anas bahamensis</i>	2
25	Ring-necked Duck <i>Aythya collaris</i>	1
33	Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i> *	4
23	Scaly-naped Pigeon <i>Patagioenas squamosa</i>	6
5	White-crowned Pigeon <i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>	4
4	Plain Pigeon <i>Patagioenas inornata</i>	1
13	Eurasian Collared-Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> *	6
1	African Collared-Dove <i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i> *	1
14	Common Ground Dove <i>Columbina passerina</i>	3
28	White-winged Dove <i>Zenaida asiatica</i>	14
18	Zenaida Dove <i>Zenaida aurita</i>	8
9	Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	6
18	Smooth-billed Ani <i>Crotophaga ani</i>	5
4	Mangrove Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus minor</i>	1
4	Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus vieilloti</i>	1 4
7	Puerto Rican Nightjar <i>Antrostomus noctitherus</i>	1
2	Puerto Rican Mango <i>Anthracothorax aurulentus</i>	2

2	Green Mango	<i>Anthracothorax viridis</i>	▶  1
1	Green-throated Carib	<i>Eulampis holosericeus</i>	▶  1
1	Puerto Rican Emerald	<i>Riccordia maugaeus</i>	▶  1
4	Antillean Crested Hummingbird	<i>Orthorhyncus cristatus</i>	▶  2
2	Clapper Rail	<i>Rallus crepitans</i>	▶  2
2	Sora	<i>Porzana carolina</i>	▶  1
17	Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula galeata</i>	▶  3
3	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinica</i>	▶  2
4	Limpkin	<i>Aramus guarauna</i>	▶  2
169	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	▶  1
20	Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	▶  2
3	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	▶  2
15	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	▶  1
7	Short-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>	▶  1
4	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  3
7	Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	▶  2
2	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	▶  2
26	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	▶  3
51	Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Calidris himantopus</i>	▶  2
1	Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	▶  1
4	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	▶  1
1	American Herring Gull	<i>Larus smithsonianus</i>	▶  1
4	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	▶  1
30	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	▶  2

89	Royal Tern <i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	▶  4
2	Least Grebe <i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i>	▶  1
18	White-tailed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon lepturus</i>	▶  1
41	Magnificent Frigatebird <i>Fregata magnificens</i>	▶  6
4	Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>	▶  1
100	Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	▶  1
6	Least Bittern <i>Botaurus exilis</i>	▶  2
11	Yellow-crowned Night Heron <i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	▶  3
18	Little Blue Heron <i>Egretta caerulea</i>	▶  3
5	Tricolored Heron <i>Egretta tricolor</i>	▶  2
22	Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	▶  3
7	Green Heron <i>Butorides virescens</i>	▶  4
64	Western Cattle-Egret <i>Ardea ibis</i>	▶  4
16	Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	▶  6
2	Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	▶  1
42	Brown Pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	▶  4
36	Turkey Vulture <i>Cathartes aura</i>	▶  8
4	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  3
1	Broad-winged Hawk <i>Buteo platypterus</i>	▶  1
6	Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	▶  6
9	Puerto Rican Owl <i>Gymnasio nudipes</i>	▶  4
19	Puerto Rican Tody <i>Todus mexicanus</i>	▶  4
4	Belted Kingfisher <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	▶  2

12	Puerto Rican Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes portoricensis</i>	▶ 5
2	American Kestrel <i>Falco sparverius</i>	▶ 2
18	Monk Parakeet <i>Myiopsitta monachus</i> *	▶ 3
3	Blue-and-yellow Macaw <i>Ara ararauna</i> *	▶ 1
6	Caribbean Elaenia <i>Elaenia martinica</i>	▶ 3
1	Lesser Antillean Pewee <i>Contopus latirostris</i>	▶ 1
11	Puerto Rican Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus antillarum</i>	▶ 7
32	Gray Kingbird <i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i>	▶ 18
5	Loggerhead Kingbird <i>Tyrannus caudifasciatus</i>	▶ 3
5	Puerto Rican Vireo <i>Vireo latimeri</i>	▶ 2
16	Black-whiskered Vireo <i>Vireo altiloquus</i>	▶ 5
14	Caribbean Martin <i>Progne dominicensis</i>	▶ 3
9	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶ 1
41	Cave Swallow <i>Petrochelidon fulva</i>	▶ 3
7	Pearly-eyed Thrasher <i>Margarops fuscatus</i>	▶ 5
9	Northern Mockingbird <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	▶ 8
12	Red-legged Thrush <i>Turdus plumbeus</i>	▶ 6
17	Bronze Mannikin <i>Spermestes cucullata</i> *	▶ 3
9	Indian Silverbill <i>Euodice malabarica</i> *	▶ 2
30	Orange-cheeked Waxbill <i>Estrilda melpoda</i> *	▶ 1
8	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶ 5
3	Puerto Rican Euphonia <i>Chlorophonia sclateri</i>	▶ 1
2	Grasshopper Sparrow <i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	▶ 1

10	Puerto Rican Tanager	<i>Nesospingus speculiferus</i>	▶  3
8	Puerto Rican Spindalis	<i>Spindalis portoricensis</i>	▶  4
1	Puerto Rican Oriole	<i>Icterus portoricensis</i>	▶  1
5	Venezuelan Troupial	<i>Icterus icterus</i> *	▶  4
8	Yellow-shouldered Blackbird	<i>Agelaius xanthomus</i>	▶  2
10	Shiny Cowbird	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>	▶  3
95	Greater Antillean Grackle	<i>Quiscalus niger</i>	▶  16
2	Louisiana Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia motacilla</i>	▶  2
6	Northern Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>	▶  3
1	Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	▶  1
4	Elfin-woods Warbler	<i>Setophaga angelae</i>	▶  1
1	Hooded Warbler	<i>Setophaga citrina</i>	▶  1
3	American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	▶  3
1	Cape May Warbler	<i>Setophaga tigrina</i>	▶  1
2	Northern Parula	<i>Setophaga americana</i>	▶  2
8	Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>	▶  3
7	Adelaide's Warbler	<i>Setophaga adelaidae</i>	▶  2
46	Bananaquit	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>	▶  14
2	Yellow-faced Grassquit	<i>Tiaris olivaceus</i>	▶  1
10	Puerto Rican Bullfinch	<i>Melopyrrha portoricensis</i>	▶  5
17	Black-faced Grassquit	<i>Melanospiza bicolor</i>	▶  8

EXOTIC: ESCAPEE

2	Muscovy Duck	<i>Cairina moschata</i> *	▶  1
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ADDITIONAL TAXA

3 hummingbird sp. *Trochilidae* sp.

