Cuba Birdwatching Tour Trip Report

March 2022

15th to 27th March 2022
The Team

Mike Clarke (MCI)
Vince Kinsler (VK)
Martin Cracknell (MCr)

Guide: Cesar Suarez  (Cuba 360 Holidays)

Origins

With a love of overseas birding in our bones, but with the responsibilities of family to balance as well, we usually like to have an overseas birding adventure every other year and are indebted to our very understanding wives in making this possible. During the pandemic we all turned 50 and as our last adventure was to Peru in 2018, we were all desperate to see a new country and new birds. With travel restrictions lifting we wanted to get away as soon as we could... just one question – “where?”.

The trip to northern Peru was amazing, but also relentless, with well over 500 species seen in 2 weeks, but this time we needed to consider accessibility and timing. VK’s holiday year expired at end of March and he had days to take, we fancied somewhere with a ringfenced number of target birds and preferably somewhere warm and reasonably relaxing. In early January VK and MCI met up to come up with a plan. After a really enjoyable trip to Taiwan in 2016 we liked the idea of birding an island with a good range of endemics, the Caribbean sounded a good bet for March and pictures of Cuban Tody and Cuban Trogon tipped the balance to look at Cuba! Destination decided!!

Logistics

We prefer to use local tour operators where possible to help promote eco tourism in the countries we visit, as well as finding them more flexible in terms of arranging custom tours. After a bit of web based research and reaching out to some local operators we liked the look of a custom 10 day tour run by Cuba 360 for $2,300 USD (Cuba Birding Tours - Discover Cuba and its unique avifauna [cuba360tours.com]). We contacted the company and were very impressed with the service provided by Cesar (our guide’s son in fact) and his ability to accommodate our trip. Due to the pandemic they confirmed private tours would be limited to the group requesting the booking (ie the 3 of us – but I think they can do private tours for up to 8) and that the price would be $2,300 regardless of number of participants. One of our party wanted a single room, which attracted a supplement of $270 USD. (All prices current as at March 2022, but obviously subject to change). He also arranged an additional
day in Havana for sightseeing. The cost was inclusive of transportation, guiding, accommodation and breakfast and lunch. We would need to get our own drinks and dinners (estimated at $20 per day, but actually much cheaper) as well as pay tips. Additionally we learned that they would use specialist local guides at each site which we also liked the idea of as it encourages spreading of birding knowledge and local revenue.

One tweak we did make was to the Cayo Coco arrangements. The tour price included accommodation on the mainland, but as it only cost an additional $65 to spend the 3 nights at one of the many all inclusive resorts actually on the Cayos we thought that made much more sense as it was balanced by having dinners (and beers!!) then included.

I have to say I was very impressed with the service Cuba 360 provided from the father and son Cesars! Cesar jnr replied promptly to all email correspondence in the planning of the trip and was always very friendly and helpful. Both Cesars met us on arrival at the airport to ensure all was well and Cesar jnr also came to bid us farewell when we left the President Hotel to leave for the airport. Our guide Cesar was very friendly and accommodating throughout the trip. He was able to resolve all issues which came up along the way (more of those later)!

One thing to note is that drinking water was not included on the tour. Although tap water is ok for residents to drink it is recommended visitors drink bottled water but that wasn’t always easy to find!. It would be useful if the Cuba 360 tour built in supplying water for the tour into their price.

There was one unfortunate misunderstanding on the tour where we only discovered as we were nearing Cayo Coco, that we were not booked into the agreed Cayo Coco hotel, but one on Cayo Guillermo instead. This was a bit frustrating as we had done a bit of research (ie on snorkeling), near to the original hotel and the alternative was so much further away. That said when I spoke to Cesar jnr about this he was very apologetic at the oversight (he thought he had emailed regarding the change enforced due to availability, but hadn’t). In compensation Cuba 360 very kindly included a classic car Havana tour plus guided city walk on our last day, which was very generous and most enjoyable. The alternative Cayo Guillermo hotel was actually very nice, just not the most convenient location.

**Flights and admin**

Flights were not as easy to book as we had hoped as UK companies seemed yet to be flying back to Cuba. We did see that TUI operated direct flights, but out of Manchester (a long way from Essex!) and being chartered could be subject to cancellation. Virgin were not yet flying (due to start again October 2022 apparently) and nothing on BA. Even the search engines were not showing London to Cuba as a viable route. A bit of research led to a tip that it was possible to fly with Iberia using their website directly to book and this is who we ended up booking with at £477 for return economy flights Heathrow to Havana. (Apparently it is now currently not even possible to book direct with Iberia).

One thing we had at check in which was annoying was that because the London -Madrid flight is so busy on a small plane they wanted us to check hand luggage. not something we want to do with expensive optics and cameras! It seemed that rucksack type bags were fine, but trolley type bags had to be checked, even if within the size range. Luckily my bag was already a rucksack type and VK had a rucksack type daysack in his bag he transferred everything into and so checked an almost empty trolley bag into the hold!! But something to consider when choosing bags going forward.
Note: when flights are all back to normal a good option might be to fly into Cayo Coco and out of Havana (or Vice Versa) as this would save a very long full day car journey at the end. Probably wouldn’t save much money as the driver and guide would still need to do it, but if short on time it would help and certainly saves a sore bum!!!

All UK entrants to Cuba have to have a Cuban Tourist card in advance. We used an agency to get ours (VisaCuba.com) and found it to be a very swift and easy service for £27. Covid restrictions meant we had to fill in a Cuban health form, which was understandable. Less so was the need to fill in Spanish forms for the 2 hours in transit there and back! Additionally at the airport in Cuba there was quite a long queue prior to passport control to check the form, although then passport was quick. Also note you have to go through security after passport control, which is unusual, but is due to the strict controls Cuba has about what can be brought into the country. We had hoped that all the time taken doing these things would mean our bags would be ready and waiting.... no such luck! It actually took almost 3 hours from landing before all our bags finally emerged on the carousel!!

**Money**

The main costs being the tour and the flights, we only needed cash for evening meals (other than at Cayo Coco where included), drinks (including water), tips and souvenirs.

Cuba 360 requested a 10% deposit in advance of the tour payable by bank transfer. The balance being paid in cash on arrival.

We saw no ATMs in Cuba and very few places seemed to accept card. We took USD to change to Cuban Pesos (CUP), but apparently EUR and GBP also easily changed. We learned that official govt exchange rates were fixed and very low (ie c 25 CUP to 1 USD), but black market rates much better at c90 CUP to the dollar, which made things a whole lot cheaper!

In terms of costs, mojitos varied in price from 100 CUP to 250 CUP. A can of beer cost from 200-350 CUP (at Playa Larga for example it was c100 CUP more expensive at a beachside bar rather than a town bar (food costs similarly inflated). A decent meal could be had for c500 CUP. Obviously the real cost of all these things very dependent on the fx rate secured above!

Note that you shouldn’t leave it until the departure lounge to spend outstanding CUP – we were caught out by this as most of the outlets didn’t accept CUP!

**The Cuban Experience – good and bad!**

We found every person we met to be very friendly and we all felt extremely safe wherever we went. Even in Havana there was very little pressure on us to buy anything from hawkers and the like. Money changers were the most direct in their approach. There were a few beggars in Havana (none seen anywhere else), but not as many as in London and certainly a lot less pushy.

Roads were not too bad, although potholes quite common. Highways were pretty fast, but single lane roads have to be shared with trucks, pedestrians, cyclists, horse & carts etc, so progress can be quite slow. Barrierless train level crossings seemed to confuse all and everyone stopped completely before crossing even though it was plain to see there were no trains for miles in either direction (we never encountered a train at a crossing the entire trip)! Driving itself seemed to be a pretty good standard and very courteous. Our driver, Jose, made us feel very safe. He looked after the vehicle as best he could, but we still got 2 (probably pot hole related) flat tyres. The actual vehicle was a 5 seater taxi. This was quite cosy for us all plus bags and even more so when we had to fit in a local guide using the pop up seat in the boot! The black-out windows in the back, although good for
keeping cool, were not helpful for driving birding. Especially as the passenger side rear window didn’t work. The petrol gauge/speedometer/temperature gauge also didn’t work! The petrol gauge being a particular issue.

Petrol seemed to be generally in very short supply and this really was the biggest annoyance of the trip. Although it couldn’t be helped, this (combined with the broken fuel gauge meaning not knowing how much petrol we actually had) meant we spent quite a lot of time searching for petrol stations with petrol. Even ones which did have fuel, tended to be limiting supply to only 20l, which meant looking for several stations on days with long drives. One day in Camaguey we even had to spend 3 hours waiting at a govt building to get special permission to get some (again only 20l) of reserved fuel as we were completely out. Cesar was very apologetic about all of this and we said it had even been an issue in the UK back in October.

Birding tours always get you to more out of the way places than, generally, the usual tourist circuits and we really enjoyed seeing all aspects of the country. The varied accommodation in small Casas in some of the places was lovely. But what we were surprised at was the contrast of that to the big tourist resort area at the Cayos around Cayo Coco! Here everything was grand, plush and pristine in comparison to what we had seen elsewhere. Food was plentiful, beer was on tap and you could even get petrol quite easily! To enter the Cayos there is actually a policed barrier to apparently restrict access to local people unless they were working there or staying there. Our guide had to wear a badge to prove he was guiding us. This was in stark contrast to elsewhere (Playa Larga for example), where restaurants didn’t have half the things on the menu, or on some nights, any beer!

Cesar explained to us that cars, due to their short supply, are actually more expensive than houses! Newer ones being c$90k, but even the older 1950s types costing c$30k. The taxi we were in was essentially govt owned, with Jose being a licensed driver to use it.

Useful links

- Cuba 360: Cuba tours for any group size - Hosted by Cuba 360 (cuba360tours.com)
- Cuba Tourist Card: Cuba Tourist Visa Online - Visa Cuba
- Cuba passenger form: DViajeros (gob.cu)
- Iberia: IBERIA.COM in United Kingdom - The best prices for Iberia flights - Iberia
- Spanish passenger form: Spain Travel Health (spth.gob.es)
The birding highlights

The birding it has to be said was excellent! With 25 endemics and 28 near endemics as well as plenty of wintering North American waders and passerines there was never a shortage of something to look at! We saw all the possible 23 Cuban endemics (Cuban Kite and Zapata Rail being near mythical species) and all the 25 reasonably expected near endemics (Antillean Nighthawks not being in yet and Caribbean Martin and Bahama Swallow being rarely recorded). Additionally we saw 20 species of American wood-warbler & allies in our trip total of 161.

Gundlach’s Hawk took until the final day, when fortunately our guide tracked down another guide who knew the whereabouts of an active nest. MCr had glimpsed a hawk on our 1st day from the road before we had even reached our 1st destination, in hindsight we would advise to stop the car and check out all hawk sightings as your best chance of seeing this species (without our stroke of luck at the end) is to bump into it.

Also of concern was the habitat destruction on Cayo Paredon – the site for Thick-billed Vireo. This is now really difficult to see with very few birds left and apparently getting harder. We luckily found
one after almost 3 hours very hard searching, but sadly I don’t think this species will feature much longer on Cuban trip reports.

The only possible resident species we would have liked to have seen but missed was Ruddy Quail-Dove. It is however, the hardest of Cuba’s Quail Doves and as is quite widespread elsewhere we were more than happy to have this as our only “miss”.

Votes for bird of the trip were actually quite varied with the 3 of us having 11 distinct species across our top 5’s, but on a league table basis the outcome was:

1st  Cuban Tody (front cover)
2nd  Fernandina’s Flicker
3rd  Bee Hummingbird

4th  Mangrove Cuckoo

5th (joint)  Cuban Parrot / Cuban Trogon
**Day by day account**

**Day 1 – March 15**

After waiting almost 4 years since the last overseas birding adventure, a very excited VK and MCi met at Leigh-on-Sea station at 6.30am to start the train journey to Heathrow T5. With the various Covid restrictions in place still, excitement hadn’t really been able to build too much previously as without a negative PCR test we weren’t going anyway, so that was a relief to get the day before, but until we were on the plane we still even now felt apprehensive. At Benfleet (next stop) we expected MCr to be waiting at the platform.. but no sign!!! Just as the train doors were about to close he, gazelle like, leapt on board and we were off! Our first glitch was at West Ham, where we got off the train to hear that the Jubilee Line was suspended – so we quickly jumped back on the mainline and headed to Fenchurch St. and a plan B route via Circle line and Piccadilly line to T5. We actually made good time and headed straight for the relatively short BA check-in queue, where MCr slunk off on a detour to the business class check-in and onto the lounge! Us economy classers went through the usual check in where VK had the Cabin bag check in issue. After repacking his bag, we were all checked in and through to security. Where VK got pulled over and had to unpack and repack his bag again. Finally we were in the departure lounge where we headed to the traditional waiting area of all our overseas birding trips… Wetherspoons for a pint (or 2) and full English!

We had a short, 2 hour hop over to Madrid where we had to go to the transit area and through another security area. VK must have been wearing his lucky pants as yet again he was made to unpack and repack his bag! We waited at the Burger King for our Havana flight to be called, unexpectedly seeing a Raven flying over the terminal building whilst having our burger. Unfortunately the flight was slightly delayed, but eventually we were Havana bound! MCr enjoying the pampering in business in his fully reclinable seat/bed, while MCI was sat next to a screaming baby and VK next to him was in a seat where even the limited recliner didn’t work – the joys of economy!

At Havana we joined a queue for passport control, via a Health Check desk where we had to scan our health forms. A bit shambolic as there were 3 queues and 5 checkers; 1st queue had a dedicated 2 checkers, 3rd queue had a dedicated 2 checkers, but as queue 2 was so much shorter even with only 1 checker it must be quicker right? Wrong!! As it turned out this wasn’t a dedicated checker but one shared with queue 3, so we only had half a person and it took ages! We were almost the last through to passport control from the entire full plane! But then straight through to baggage collection….Wrong!! As Cuba has many restrictions as to what can be brought into the country we had to go through an arrivals security check! VK got to see the contents of his bag yet again!! After all this time though at least we would just be able to collect our awaiting bags and go and meet our guides…. Wrong!! There was still an almighty throng of passengers at the carousel and hardly any bags. Every 15 minutes there seemed to be a flurry of a whole new 5 bags rolling onto the carousel. It took ages, but eventually we all had our bags, well almost all. VK had his empty checked in cabin bag, but his main bag hadn’t appeared. So we waited.. and waited...the odd bag was still being added to the carousel... we were just beginning to think this was going to be a really bad start to the trip with a lost bag, when it finally appeared! It honestly took over 3 hours from landing to finally leaving the airport. Thankfully at the exit we saw a sign with
my name on it and Cesar jnr (who I had liaised with during the course of the booking) introduced himself and his dad (also Cesar), who was to be our guide for the next 11 days. They took as to our awaiting cab and our first taste of Havana as the cab was a classic old 1950s style car and a fun way to end a very long day! About a 25 min drive later we arrived at the Hotel Inglaterra in central Havana at about 2am. Much later than expected, but we were grateful to be able to grab some sleep.. eagerly awaiting seeing our first birds of the trip in the morning.

**Day 2 – March 16th**

We met at the café at 7am for breakfast. In the light of day we could see the hotel was a very colonial looking building and a great way to start the trip. Whilst enjoying a fairly basic breakfast we were serenaded by some live piano music! We of course bolted down breakfast as quick as we could to get outside and see our first exotic species of the trip.....Collared Dove, House Sparrow and Feral Pigeon were not the hoped for first trip list additions! Thankfully though our first near endemic quickly followed as some Greater Antillean Grackles flew over. In the park opposite VK glimpsed a Parula... now things were hotting up! And whilst waiting for our guide outside the hotel, Cave Swallows and Antillean Palm Swifts flew over. Cesar arrived at 7.45 with our car and driver for the week, Jose. We quickly loaded the car, a reasonably new, by Cuban standards, yellow 5 seater taxi and jumped in – the point where we started to get an insight that although Cuba worked in many ways, it was not necessarily an easy ride! The rear windows were both completely blacked out, not a problem when you could wind them down, except the one on my side didn’t work! The 3 of us let’s say “well-proportioned” chaps on the rear seat was a bit of a squeeze and none of the seats were particularly comfy, especially the middle one, which lucky VK seemed to inherit for the most part of the trip! But none of that mattered... we were here and we were off! We were to drive about 3 hours to Rancho San Vincente, just outside Vinales. As frustrating as it was not really being able to see out of the window, we still managed to add Red-legged Thrush from the drive. En route Cesar located somewhere for us to get some bottled water (a task far harder than we imagined!) and we also changed some money into CUP along the way. Just outside Vinales MCr glimpsed an accipiter type hawk from his window, but being first day we didn’t appreciate the significance of this and ploughed onwards, eager to reach our first destination and start birding. In hindsight we should definitely have stopped and checked out the hawk. Apart from Turkey Vultures, raptors are not all that common and Gundlach’s Hawk is very difficult to get as you need to almost rely on bumping into one. As the trip went on we rued this more and more and were worried this could have been the one that got away.

Eventually we arrived at Rancho San Vincente – a lovely little location in the hills outside of Vinales and a bit of a tourist spot with a small waterfall. Our target here was Cuban Solitaire, as this was our only chance for this very localised species, but we were excited and looking at everything that crossed our path! Cesar spotted our first true endemic and called us over to where he had spotted a Lizard Cuckoo, rather bizarrely skulking in some long grass literally a few feet in front of him. We could hear the Solitaire, but in the dense cover around the falls it was difficult to pinpoint, especially with the noise of the tourists. Other birds provided great distraction though as
we saw Cuban Tody and Cuban Trogon – both highly desired and neither disappointed! Although we were to discover both are also quite common! We actually saw 9 species of “Cuban” prefix species whilst searching for the Solitaire as well as a host of American warblers. VK was elated to spot his first Yellow-throated Warbler – a particularly stunning species! VK also pulled it out of the bag when he finally

spotted a perched Solitaire – distant, but unmistakable. He then spotted another.. and another! Quickly earning him the highly imaginative nickname – Solitaire Man! We quickly found that one of Solitaire Man’s superpowers was being able to run away very rapidly to avoid an angry horse!! 😊 In the grounds of a rather plush hotel next to the falls we saw a couple of lovely Olive-capped Warblers, before enjoying a late lunch just outside of town – and an absolute feast! After lunch we returned to the same area enjoying seeing more of the same introductory species.

At Vinales we checked into Casa Leyanis and although we weren’t expecting much, were pleasantly surprised to find a pool and a pool table! VK and I were able to keep our tradition going of managing to play some frames on our overseas birding trips. Our pizza dinner in town was good...especially the very strong, 100CUP Mojitos accompanying it!

Bird of the Day = Cuban Tody
Day 3 – March 17th

After a 6am breakfast we left Vinales for what would be a long drive ultimately to the famed Zapata region, but with plenty of birding stops along the way. The first of which was some roadside fields where Cesar had heard Eastern Meadowlark. One of which eventually perched up nicely on top of a bush. Cesar explained that researchers think there are 3 distinct Cuban subspecies of Meadowlark, with one on the East potentially a full split. Also here a Grey Kingbird perched obligingly on top of a sign. A little further down the road we stopped again beside a fish farm where our target specie was Snail Kite – several of which were duly seen, along with several hundred White Pelican; an unusually high number for this site apparently. Then it was onto our main morning stop; the attractive Ecotourism park of Las Terrazas and more importantly a site Cesar had for Stygian Owl. A particularly sought after species for us after we missed it in our North Peru tour in 2018. As we walked to the spot, our first Cuban Pewee of the trip performed nicely and we were also surprised to see people tearing across the sky overhead on ziplines! Cesar though came up trumps and pointed out a pine a short distance away, where there sitting beside a nest (containing 3 large chicks), was a lovely adult Stygian Owl. The only slight annoyance was that it was looking away from us the whole time and changing angle was not really possible due to the sun. The area was generally very productive, with our only Broad-winged Hawk of the trip, a smart Red-legged Honeycreeper, more warblers (yellow-throated/Olive-capped/black&white/etc) and VK had a brief Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – a tick for MCI who unfortunately only glimpsed the back of it as it flew off. Nearby we got permission to
enter a govt pig farm where the grain attracted one of the star birds of the trip and our only Cuban Grassquits! Greatly outnumbered by Yellow-faced, which were also very smart, these small finches were very colourful. As well as seeing them at the grain, we also saw them in more natural surroundings along nearby wooded trails. Fernandina’s Flickers have also been seen in this area, but not on this day. Although we did see a rather stupid West Indian Woodpecker doggedly trying to excavate a small crack in a concrete water tower!

A short distance back along the main road we had a short stop at a lake where we picked up, amongst other things, Lesser Scaup and Pied-billed Grebe. We also grabbed a roadside lunch here of pork rolls which were very tasty!

From here it was a solid long drive (c3.5 hours) to Playa Larga and our home for the next 3 nights at Casa Ana Birding. This was a lovely little guest house with very friendly hosts – Ana and Adrian. We arrived around 5pm and Cesar asked us to hang about the veranda for a few minutes whilst he and Jose went to check into their guest house nearby. Ana though had other ideas and insisted we followed her into the backyard...where this rather basic guest house from the front took on a whole new light! As in the garden was a whole set up of feeders...more importantly – hummingbird feeders....and even more importantly – complete with Bee Hummingbirds! These were little superstars! We had been keenly anticipating seeing these
special birds – the smallest species on the planet – and we were not disappointed. There were at least 4 zipping to and fro to the many feeders and as well as being cute in terms of their small size, were stunning when the sun caught them showing off the iridescent blue body, and crimson head. The area also held plenty of American warblers, with Prairie and Cape May being particularly stunning. Cesar seemed to take the loss of his “surprise” quite well when he saw how happy we were with the birding! After a quick log, Cesar left for his digs and the 3 of us took a stroll around the small town, infamous as the landing site of the Bay of Pigs conflict. At the beach we picked out Cuban Black Hawk and Reddish Egret, before Night Herons coming off their roost prompted us to find a restaurant for dinner. The Tiki restaurant was very nice – particularly the chilli beef!

**Bird of the day = Bee Hummingbird**

**Day 4 – March 18th**

After an early 5.45 breakfast of fresh fruits, eggs and a lovely sort of honey toast, we waited by the road for our 6am pick up. An hour later we were still waiting!! VK rather impressively jogged down the road to find out what was happening… the news was not good – a flat tyre was causing the delay! Fortunately Jose managed to get it sorted and a little while later we were on our way to La Turba, where we met up with local guide, Mario. As we were late our limited time with the guide was cut very short, but he still managed to take us to a stake out for Zapata Wren, where a bird showed very nicely! Better still whilst watching it he heard Red-shouldered Blackbirds a short distance down the track and very soon we were also watching a pair of this, sometimes, tricky species. He then had to leave us, but explained to Cesar where a good spot was for the other Zapata named species targeted for today – Zapata Sparrow. Zapata Rail incidentally is almost mythical and probably only seen by 10 people since its
discovery in this vast area so isn’t a viable target on any short trip, considering researchers have spent months trying to find them without success! The trail (an old track originally used to harvest peat out of the swamp), was actually very birdy, with many warblers and the like in the thankfully shady vegetation as we trekked. We also saw a few waterthrushes, which always seemed to turn out to be Northern, when we were keen to also see Louisiana and the opportunity to see these 2 similar species in close proximity. MCr eventually saw one, but it couldn’t be located when the others arrived. We did, however, eventually locate a pair of Zapata Sparrows, which performed very nicely almost at the end of the trail.

We stopped at a sort of govt rest area on the way back to Playa Larga for some lunch, after which we took a stroll around the area and tried to look at the pools opposite which were part of a crocodile farm. Although we couldn’t see much, one lily covered pond we could see held a really smart Louisiana Waterthrush! We all got to enjoy this for sometime as it showed very nicely and it was actually noticeably different form the Northern we had been seeing earlier. We also got Purple Gallinule, Cuban Crow and Anhinga in this area.

Back at Casa Ana we checked out the feeders again and then also had a Cuban Pygmy Owl which was nesting in the garden. Adrian took us for a walk in the forest out the back of the garden, where we got good views of a Trogon and managed to find a single West Indian Whistling Duck in amongst the Blue-winged Teal on a small lake.

Mike and Martin headed out to dinner at the Tiki restaurant again.

Bird of the day = Louisiana Waterthrush

Day 5 – March 19th

After breakfast we picked up local guide Silvario and drove out to Las Salinas – actually a long drive 20kms along dirt track out to the salt pans, where it was already then quite hot by the time we arrived (in hindsight we would recommend an early start to get to the watchpoints for dawn here). There were though plenty of waterbirds to enjoy here including American flamingo, Roseate Spoonbills, Skimmers, Frigatebirds, Wood Storks and a Clapper Rail MCI picked up foraging along the mangrove roots. The mangrove bushes themselves held the Cuban form of Yellow Warbler and we only ever saw this species near mangrove (here and on Cayo Coco). Sadly MCI started to not feel great with a dodgy tummy gurgling up – imodium seemed to do the trick in keeping it in check so as not to impact any birding, but it wasn’t comfortable for the rest of the trip... not that it let him be put off any of the food or beer in that time! From Las Salinas the local guide took us to some savanna just outside town Playa Larga where 3 Limpkins were rather surprisingly foraging in the grass!

After lunch in Playa Larga (Celeton cafe) we enjoyed a long needed siesta before going out again at 3pm. We went to Soplillar, where sadly no nightjar was on the roost anymore, but we did get 2 bare legged owls in nest holes. We also saw our first Cuban parakeets as well as fantastic views of Cuban Parrots feeding in their own comical manner almost at eye level in some roadside bushes. But after hours of tramping around in the bush there was no sign of Fernandina’s Flicker...... only to find a pair right by car when we got back which Jose had been watching all afternoon having no idea what they were!

After a shower/Internet break back at the digs, we went out to look for nightjar old school, with a
spotlight.....but no luck. We went for a quick drink at Tiki cafe before bed..... but disaster...no beer!! So made do with Cuba Libre and Mojitos instead! During the night as well as the bad tummy, MCI awoke to an itching on his leg – the culprit a tick enjoying his dinner! Some squirting with insect repellent seemed to do the trick as it had dropped off by morning.

**Bird of day = Fernandina’s Flicker**

**Day 6 – March 20th**

After early breakfast the plan was to drive to Bermejas, for first light and quail doves, but another flat tyre put a spanner in the works! Luckily this was only a half hour delay in the end – but would it scupper our chances of seeing the Quail-doves – a family we had always associated with dawn vigils? On the way there were hundreds of crabs crossing the road between Playa Larga and Playa Guron, which was quite a sight. We met local guide Orlando at the entrance to the forest and at the screen just inside a pair of Key West Quail-Dove were on show straight away (with a couple of Zenaida Doves), then the absolutely stunning Blue-headed appeared literally just under the screen shortly after. They remained on show for the cameras and we eventually had to walk away ourselves to go and try and search out Grey-fronted Quail Dove, which didn’t sound like they ever came to the screens. Orlando heard a male calling and went off the trail into the forest looking for it. A little later his beckoning hand indicated success and we were soon onto the bird calling on a nearby branch. After a short while it flew off and we relocated it back on the trail where it showed very well. As we left the forest MCI spotted some movement on the forest floor, which turned out to be an often tricky to see Swainson’s Warbler.

We drove further down the road to rice paddies, where we picked up Northern Jacana and Glossy
Ibis. MCr picked out a ringtail Northern Harrier (our only one of the trip), then a small flock of our target species - Tricoloured Munia flew over.

We stopped again at Bermejas as we returned to see if we could find Ruddy Quail-Dove, before getting some lunch at Playa Guron. Back for a third time lucky Ruddy Quail-Dove attempt - sadly again unsuccessful! Seeing the other species though all through the day put pay to the thought that these needed a dawn vigil – indeed Orlando seemed to think late afternoon was actually better for Ruddy. We did add Worm-eating and Magnolia Warbler and Summer Tanager to the list though from this afternoon’s visit. Back at digs, we had a quick rest then out for another, and last ditch, look for nightjar. After picking up Silvario again, we headed to the Soplillar area. Along the way we had to literally kick crabs off the road as they were everywhere! Feisty things too! On arrival we got a Bare-legged Owl in a low tree, which was nice, as fireflies danced in the bushes around us. Then we heard a nightjar – a quick blast from the tape and then there it was! On the dusty trail in front of us! Relief! Back in town VK and MCl celebrated with a couple of beers and cheese toasties at a beach bar! (It was noticeable how much more expensive food and drink was at the beachside bars/cafes than the town ones... but at least they actually had beer and food!!)

**Bird of the day = Blue-headed Quail Dove**

**Day 7 – March 21st**

After goodbyes to our lovely hosts, Adrian and Ana, we left the Zapata area to head to Carmaguey, which would be another long drive, made all the longer in our less than comfy rear seat! En route stopped at the Botanical Gardens at Cienfuegos, c2 hours into drive. This is an area where Cesar had seen Gundlach’s Hawk in the past, but sadly we had no definite sightings. Two distant small hawks flying in the distance were most likely this species though. While we were waiting MCl had a nice White-collared Swift buzz overhead and MCr/VK saw a male purple martin sp.

After stopping for a nice lunch in Trinidad (Jose’s home town), we continued on the long drive to Camaguey. We also became aware that Jose was getting more and more anxious about getting petrol as there was becoming a nationwide shortage – not having a functioning fuel gauge didn’t help ease his anxiety!

At Camaguey we got horribly and frustratingly lost in the labyrinth of streets!! After numerous sets of directions Jose found the Casa! Which was really quite basic, but did the job for the one night we were there. On the drive we had been speaking to Cesar about seeing Cuban Martin as we thought that they should be “in” and we would have seen them by now. The bird seen earlier being a male was indistinguishable from Purple Martin so ideally a colony would be best where there would be females. A guide book mentioned that there was actually a colony in Camaguey and although Cesar didn’t know of it he made some calls and eventually got the information we needed, so after settling in to the digs off we went! We found the Cuban Martin colony at the town square of Plaza San Juan de Dios and had good views of males and females. We stopped for Pizza on the way back to the B&B.

**Bird of the day = Cuban Martin**
Day 8 – March 22nd

After a bit of frustration in the morning with Jose looking for petrol (why didn’t he do so last night!), we persuaded him to drive to Najassa and get petrol later as he had enough to get us to the site and back. We picked up a local guide (Camillo) in Najassa and saw the 3 targets really easily! Plain Pigeon was as plain as it sounds; Cuban Palm Crow was almost indistinguishable from Cuban Crow, even when seen pretty much together and only reliably separable by voice, although Camillo added that the Palm crow tends to walk whereas Cuban Crow tends to hop when on the ground. Even Giant Kingbird was a little disappointing, looking not too dissimilar to Loggerhead – perhaps large-billed kingbird would have been a more accurate name! But even so these were still 3 very good birds and we were pleased to have seen them. It was then back to Camaguey along the very bad and bumpy road.

We learnt of the ridiculous situation that the government insist Jose uses Special gasoline in the taxi, but as the shortage has got worse no petrol station seemed to have any left. Although the taxi will run on normal gas, he needed government/ party permission to do so; we then had a frustrating wait to get this permission at the govt building in Camaguey. Worse still he probably had enough to get to Moron, where petrol apparently was available, just as the fuel gauge doesn’t work he couldn’t be sure!

We eventually got permission to go to a garage with govt reserved Special petrol – and so after a 3hour wait Jose finally managed to get ....15L of fuel!! But at least we were on our way again to the delightfully named town of Moron. At Moron though Jose was still worried about fuel and contrary to the earlier reports there was none readily available here either. The govt office in town was closed as it was gone 5pm, so we couldn’t get it that way. Apparently it was now a big problem all over the country. We also at this point were disappointed to find out too we were not staying at our designated Cayo Coco hotel, but at Iberostar Daquiri at Cayo Guillermo instead. Which was not only an issue because Cayo Coco was more central to the birding spots and we had done research on good snorkelling spots, but was also a further 60km away in terms of the fuel issue! Cesar persuaded
Jose to give it a go as a big petrol station on Cayo Coco might be good for fuel…. it was!!! Well for 20 litres at a time, but still a relief! A 30km causeway built from rock connects the Cayos to the mainland, which is quite impressive. The hotel might not have been the one expected, but it was lovely so all good. Cesar jnr had also called from the office and was very apologetic over the misunderstanding saying he just couldn’t get us booked into the original choice and he forgot to let us know. We enjoyed a fair few of the all-inclusive Cervezas/Pina Coladas/Cuba Libres that evening to allay the discomfort of the long journey and its petrol-based frustrations!! Even if there was no further fuel for the next few days we were at least stuck in a very nice hotel!

Bird of the day was not an easy choice due to the rather unspectacular nature of the main targets! Yellow-throated Warbler/Cape May Warbler/Giant kingbird all tied for the first vote. Yellow-throated won on a 2nd vote.

**Bird of the day = Yellow-throated Warbler**

**Day 9 – March 23rd**

Cesar got to the hotel at c8.20 with local guide Ray. They also managed to get more gas from the same petrol station on Cayo Coco along the way – really handy as they were actually staying in Moron, which was almost 100km away from our hotel!

We quickly got a surprisingly good looking Bahama Mockingbird nearby on Cayo Guillermo, along with Mangrove Cuckoo, which was high on VK’s wish list and with brilliant views too! As we crossed the bridge to Cayo Coco we had good views of the local white-headed form of Osprey and we then birded the abandoned airport on Cayo Coco, where we had some nice bits and pieces, but nothing new. A water treatment lagoon nearby held American Avocet (long awaited lifer for MCI) as well as Ruddy Duck and Least Sandpiper - the latter bringing up the trip list target of 150!! Frustratingly on the way MCr glimpsed a small hawk - almost certainly Gundlach’s.. but all too brief! This time we did stop and all leap out the car, but it had long gone. We visited a cave nightclub, but were too late for Quail Doves there (it is a good site for Key West and occasionally Ruddy too). The caves themselves though were pretty cool...2 species of bat (long nosed and small
brown) were roosting inside – strange to see them amongst the tables/chairs/dancefloors and bar of the venue which was a club in the evening. Unfortunately the bar itself was not open as by now it was very hot! Our final birding stop of the day yielded some surprisingly lovely Cuban Gnatcatchers.

We got back to the hotel for lunch and a free afternoon. Relaxation is usually a rare indulgence on a birding trip, so we enjoyed beer by pool, sunbathing by the sea (watching Brown Pelicans/Laughing Gulls/Royal Terns patrol the beach), but we were too late to hire snorkels. An eat as much as you like (can!!?) buffet dinner was followed by a few (?) evening drinks!

**Bird of day = Bahama Mockingbird**

**Day 10 – March 24th**

After breakfast we set straight off to Cayo Paredon, again with local guide Ray, and was almost an hour drive. Sadly this area has become very degraded with new hotel development and it has made seeing the Thick-billed Vireo very hit and miss as Ray thinks there are now only a couple left in this once reliable site. It took hours of searching, but eventually we got a Thick-billed Vireo! Ray picked up it’s call first and we then managed to track it down to small area of scrub, where it eventually showed for us all to see, but it was very elusive at all times.

Another stop as we passed through Cayo Romano yielded the lovely Oriente Warbler.

A look at a beach failed to find any Piping Plovers and a pool near the hotel unsurprisingly got no Clapper Rails in the heat of day, but we were just very happy to have seen the vireo. Again the afternoon was spent relaxing at the hotel. Snokelling around the pier was quite nice and VK even got barracuda further out. Late afternoon we went back to the rail pool by ourselves. On the mud opposite VK picked out a Semipalmated Sandpiper and then some Stilt Sandpipers. Then the rails showed (2) so quite a successful hour pre dusk – although then the mozzies started biting so we headed quickly back to the hotel.

We decided to eat at the Mexican themed a la carte restaurant tonight to be a bit more
sophisticated. It was very nice except it wasn't the hoped for Mexican menu as tonight was Cuban night! Also torrential rain forced us to swap tables as a puddle developed under ours even though the restaurant was inside.

We eventually turned in for the night after enjoying a few Pina Colada night caps.

**Bird of the day = Oriente Warbler**

**Day 11 – March 25th**
After breakfast we started the long drive back to Havana. We had a quick stop on the causeway for Sandwich Tern of the American form and potentially split as Cabot’s Tern. We then drove to Ciego de Avila for a last ditch attempt at our only outstanding target species – Gundlach’s Hawk! Cesar had used his various sources to discover a local guide was monitoring an active nest, so in the town we picked up our guide, Yaro. C20km out of town we headed into some agricultural land (flushing a Northern Bobwhite as we drove) and saw a chick in a Red-tailed Hawk nest Yaro was also monitoring. At the Gundlach’s nest, the female got off nest as we got there giving only a very brief flight view. There were though 3 chick’s visible in the nest, so we waited from a safe distance for the adult to return. After c1 hour she came back to feed the chick’s giving excellent views. A lovely way to end the birding element of the trip!! Well actually not quite as on the way back to drop off Yaro, he spotted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker showing really well in roadside palms just outside town! Yaro himself at his house had an impressive aviary of Cuban birds in his large aviary.

Then we had the remainder of our long drive back to Havana with lots of chaotic gas stops as Jose wanted to maintain a full tank to drive back to his home town of Trinidad... another 4 hours after our 5 hours to Havana!!

As the Inglaterra hotel had mysteriously closed down since our stay on night one, we were now booked into Presidents hotel. We got there about 10.30pm and it was actually quite a nice hotel (better than Inglaterra), only although the restaurant was meant to close at 11, it wouldn't serve us at 10.45!! Luckily we found a place to eat a few blocks down the road and enjoyed some pizza before turning in.

**Bird of the day = Gundlach’s Hawk.**

**Day 12 – March 26th**
A lie in! Breakfast at 9am being a real treat after yesterday’s very long travel day. At 10am we were met by Cesar and our Havana guide, Beberly. The Cuba 360 office had very kindly arranged a driving and walking tour of Havana as an apology for the misunderstanding regarding the hotel booking at Cayo Coco. Outside a 1959 Chevrolet Impala with driver Raul awaited to take us on an hours guided
drive around the city, which was really enjoyable (we even added American Herring Gull to the trip list from the car). It ended in the old Town, where Beberly continued the guiding on foot. He was very knowledgeable and it was great to learn a bit more about the country and its history after being a visitor for almost 2 weeks. Ernest Hemmingway featured a bit and we visited the La Bodeguita del Medio bar where he is alleged to have regularly drank Mojitos... so we had to try one and they were really good and only 140 CUP. After Beberly left us, Cesar took us to a lovely restaurant opposite the capitol building for lunch, after which we went to the Floridita bar where Hemmingway enjoyed a Daiquiri or 2.... again it would have been rude not to sample for ourselves and the house special at 180CUP was excellent. Entertainment was a lively 5 piece Cuban band. The afternoon was spent relaxing back at the hotel followed by pizza again for dinner. Cesar met us again at 9.30pm along with his son Cesar jnr for a quick hello and goodbye before heading to the airport. We said our goodbyes to Cesar Snr and prepared for the long, but uneventful journey home, finally back in Southend around 8.30pm Sunday night (March 27th)! A fantastic trip sadly at an end....now where next???? 😊
The Warblers and allies
Systematic List

**RED** = Cuban endemic; **BLUE** = Caribbean endemic

**Helmeted Guineafowl** (*Numida meleagris*)
- 2 at Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.
  - Also several seen from car on Drive to Camaguey 21/03/2022.

**Northern Bobwhite** (*Colinus virginianus*)
- 1 at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

**West Indian Whistling Duck** (*Dendrocygna arborea*)
- 1 at Playa Larga – Ana’s Guest house on 17/03/2022.
- 2 at Cayo Coco on 23/03/2022.

**Ruddy Duck** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)
- 6 at Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

**Ring-necked Duck** (*Aythya collaris*)
- Vinales to Havana roadside stop on 17/03/2022.

**Lesser Scaup** (*Aythya affinis*)
- Vinales to Havana roadside stop on 17/03/2022.

**Blue-winged Teal** (*Spatula discors*)
- Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
- Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
- Cayo Coco on 23/03/2022 and 24/03/2022.
- 1 at Cayo Guillermo on 24/03/2022.

**Least Grebe** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*)
- c30 at Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

**Pied-billed Grebe** (*Podilymbus podiceps*)
- Vinales to Havana roadside stop on 17/03/2022.
  - Also seen near La Turba on 18/03/2022.

**Caribbean Flamingo** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*)
- Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
- Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
- Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

**Feral Pigeon** (*Columba livia 'feral')
- Common throughout.

**Eurasian Collared Dove [decaocto]** (*Streptopelia decaocto*)
- Fairly common around towns.

**White-crowned Pigeon** (*Patagioenas leucocephala*)
- 1 at Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.
- 1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

**Scaly-naped Pigeon** (*Patagioenas squamosa*)
- Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.
- Las Terrazes on 17/03/2022.
- 1 at Botanical Gardens on 21/03/2022.

**Plain Pigeon** (*Patagioenas inornata*)
- Najassa on 22/03/2022.

**Blue-headed Quail-dove** (*Starnoenas cyanocephala*)
- 7 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

**Grey-fronted Quail-dove** (*Geotrygon caniceps*)
- 2 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

**Key West Quail-dove** (*Geotrygon chrysia*)
- 4 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

**Zenaida Dove** (*Zenaida aurita*)
- 2 at Soplillar on 19/03/2022.
  - Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
**Systematic List**

RED = Cuban endemic; BLUE = Caribbean endemic

### Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)
Fairly common throughout.

### White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)
- Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.
- Playa Larga on 19/03/2022.

### Common Ground Dove (*Columbina passerina*)
Fairly common throughout.

### Cuban Nightjar (*Antrostomus cubanensis*)
- 1 at Soplillar on 20/03/2022. At the cow farm

### White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*)
- 1 at Botanical Gardens on 21/03/2022.

### Antillean Palm Swift (*Tachornis phoenicobia*)
Fairly common throughout.

### Cuban Emerald (*Chlorostilbon ricordii*)
Fairly common throughout.

### Bee Hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*)
- Playa Larga – Ana’s Guest house on 17/03/2022.

### Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*)
Fairly common throughout.

### Mangrove Cuckoo (*Coccyzus minor*)
- 1 at Cayo Guillermo on 23/03/2022.

### Great Lizard Cuckoo (Cuban) (*Coccyzus merlini*)
Seen at most sites in small numbers.

### Clapper Rail (*Rallus crepitans*)
- 1 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
- 2 at Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

### American Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinicus*)
- 2 at La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022. At govt restaurant area
- 1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
- 1 at Najassa on 22/03/2022.

### Common Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*)
Seen in 1’s and 2’s at suitable locations.

### American Coot (*Fulica americana*)
- 2 at Vinales to Havana roadside stop on 17/03/2022.
- Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
- 1 at Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

### Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*)
- 3 at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022. In Savanna just outside Palpite
- 3 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022. In Savanna outside Playa Larga
- 1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
- 1 at Botanical Gardens on 21/03/2022.
- 1 at Cayo Coco from 23/03/2022.

### Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)
- Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
- 2 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

### Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*)
- Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
- Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
- Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Systematic List
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White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Playa Larga on 20/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)
Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)
Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

Green-backed Heron (*Butorides striata*)
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

Green Heron (*Butorides striata [virescens-group]*)
1 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Coco on 23/03/2022 and 24/03/2022.
1 at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)
Common throughout.

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)
Seen at most suitable habitats in small numbers.

[Great White Heron (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*)
1 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Coco on 23/03/2022 and 24/03/2022.]

American Great Egret (*Ardea alba egretta*)
Fairly common in suitable habitat.

Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*)
Seen in small numbers in suitable habitat.

Tricoloured Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)
Seen in small numbers in suitable habitat.

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*)
Seen in small numbers in suitable habitat.

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*)
Seen in small numbers in suitable habitat.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)
Fairly common around the coast and also seen on larger inland waters.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)
c250 at Taso Real De San Diego Fish Farm on 16&17/03/2022.
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*)
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 23/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo on 24/03/2022.

Double-crested Cormorant (*Nannopterum auritus*)
Fairly common in suitable habitat.

Neotropic Cormorant (*Nannopterum brasilianus*)
Taso Real De San Diego Fish Farm on 17/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)
1 at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)
12 at Cayo Coco from 23/03/2022.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus mexicanus*)
Fairly common in suitable habitat.

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)
3 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)
Seen in 1’s and 2’s at most sites – including a pair with 4 chicks at Soplillar.

Northern Jacana (*Jacana spinosa*)
1 adult and 1 juvenile at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
1 from car en route to Cayo Coco on 22/03/2022.

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)
3 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Coco on 24/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*)
c15 at Cayo Guillermo on 24/03/2022.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)
Cayo Coco on 24/03/2022 and 25/03/2022.

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*)
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*)
1 at Cayo Guillermo on 24/03/2022.

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*)
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*)
3 at Taso Real De San Diego Fish Farm on 17/03/2022.
1 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
4 around Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*)
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*)
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
**Systematic List**

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**Greater Yellowlegs** *(Tringa melanoleuca)*  
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.  
1 at Cayo Guillermo on 24/03/2022.

**Black Skimmer** *(Rynchops niger)*  
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.

**Laughing Gull** *(Larus atricilla)*  
Fairly common at coastal locations.

**American Herring Gull** *(Larus smithsonianus smithsonianus)*  
1 1st winter at Havana on 26/03/2022.

**Gull-billed Tern** *(Gelochelidon nilotica)*  
2 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.

**Caspian Tern** *(Hydroprogne caspia)*  
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.

**Forster's Tern** *(Sterna forsteri)*  
6 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.

**American Sandwich Tern** *(Thalasseus sandvicensis acuflavidus)*  
6 at Cayo Coco on 25/03/2022.

**Royal Tern** *(Thalasseus maximus)*  
Fairly common at coastal locations.

**(American) Barn Owl** *(Tyto alba furcato)*  
1 at Sopililar on 19/03/2022.  
1 at from car on drive to Havana 25/03/2022.

**Cuban Pygmy Owl** *(Glaucidium siju)*  
1 at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.  
1 at Sopililar on 19/03/2022.  
1 at Botanical Gardens on 21/03/2022.

**Stygian Owl** *(Asio stygius)*  
1 adult and 3 chicks at Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.

**Bare-legged Owl** *(Margarobyas lawrencii)*  
2 at Sopililar on 19/03/2022. 2 different nest holes  
1 at Sopililar on 20/03/2022. At the cow farm

**Turkey Vulture** *(Cathartes aura)*  
Abundant throughout.

**Osprey** *(Pandion haliaetus)*  
Seen at most locations, including a white headed form at Cayo Coco.

**American Harrier** *(Circus hudsonius)*  
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022. Ringtail

**Gundlach's Hawk** *(Accipiter gundlachi)*  
(Vinales on 18/03/2022. A hawk seen from the car as we approached Vinales probably of this species, but not certain.)  
(Botanical Gardens on 21/03/2022. 2 distant hawks probably of this species, but not certain.)  
1 adult Female and 3 chicks at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

**Snail Kite** *(Rostrhamus sociabilis)*  
Taso Real De San Diego Fish Farm on 17/03/2022.

**Cuban Black Hawk** *(Buteogallus gundlachii)*  
2 at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.  
4 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.  
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.  
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Systematic List

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Caribbean Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus [brunnescens-group]*)
1 at Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)
1 at Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
2 seen during drive to Havana 25/03/2022.
1 chick in a nest at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

Cuban Trogon (*Priotelus temnurus*)
Common in small numbers in suitable habitat throughout.

Cuban Tody (*Todus multicolor*)
Common in small numbers in suitable habitat throughout.

Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*)
Seen at most suitable locations.

Fernandina’s Flicker (*Colaptes fernandinae*)
2 at Soplillar on 19/03/2022.

Yellow-shafted Flicker (Cuban) (*Colaptes auratus chrysocaulosus/gundlachi*)
2 at Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.
Heard at Cayo Romano on 24/03/2022.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*)
1 at Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.
2 at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022 in roadside palms just outside of the town.

Cuban Green Woodpecker (*Xiphidiopicus percussus*)
Seen frequently throughout.

West Indian Woodpecker (*Melanerpes superciliaris*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*)
1 at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)
Seen frequently throughout of both the nominate and the “white” form.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)
1 at Camaguey on 21/03/2022.
2 at Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
1 at Cayo Guillermo on 24/03/2022.
1 at Cayo Paredon on 24/03/2022.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)
1 at Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.

Cuban Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala*)
1 at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
Soplillar on 19/03/2022.
2 at Havana on 26/03/2022.

Cuban Parakeet (*Psittacara euops*)
Soplillar on 19/03/2022.
Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
Najassa on 22/03/2022.

Grey Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*)
1 at Vinales to Havana roadside stop on 17/03/2022.
Several around Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
1 at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.
Systematic List
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Loggerhead Kingbird (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Giant Kingbird (*Tyrannus cubensis*)
2 at Najassa on 22/03/2022.

La Sagra's Flycatcher (*Myiarchus sagrae*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Cuban Pewee (*Contopus caribaeus*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Black-whiskered Vireo (*Vireo altiloquus*)
Seen and heard frequently throughout.
Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*)
1 at Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.
1 at Cayo Coco on 23/03/2022.

White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*)
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
Heard at Cayo Coco on 23/03/2022.

Thick-billed Vireo (*Vireo crassirostris*)
1 at Cayo Paredon on 24/03/2022.

Cuban Vireo (*Vireo gundlachii*)
1 at Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.
2 at La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.
2 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
1 at Botanical Gardens on 21/03/2022.
1 at Cayo Coco from 23/03/2022.
1 at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

Cuban Crow (*Corvus nasicus*)
1 at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
2 at La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022. At govt restaurant.
Sopillar on 19/03/2022.
Najassa on 22/03/2022.

Cuban Palm Crow (*Corvus palmarum minutus*)
Najassa on 22/03/2022.

(Caribbean) Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Cuban Martin (*Progne cryptoleuca*)
c12 at Camaguey on 21/03/2022. Around church square

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)
1 at Botanical Gardens on 21/03/2022.

Cuban Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila lembeyei*)
2 at Cayo Coco from 23/03/2022.

Zapata Wren (*Ferminia cerverai*)
1 at La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.

Grey Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Bahama Mockingbird (*Mimus gundlachii*)
1 at Cayo Guillermo from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
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Cuban Solitaire (*Myadestes elisabeth*)
2 at Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.

West Cuban Red-legged Thrush (*Turdus rubripes*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Black-headed Munia [malacca] (*Lonchura malacca*)
c10 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Zapata Sparrow (*Torreornis inexpectata*)
3 at La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.
2 at Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.

Yellow-headed Warbler (*Teretistris fernandinae*)
Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.
Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.
Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

Oriente Warbler (*Teretistris fornsi*)
4 at Cayo Romano on 24/03/2022.

Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*)
1 at Vinales to Havana roadside stop on 17/03/2022.
1 at Najassa on 22/03/2022.
2 at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

Cuban Oriole (*Icterus melanopsis*)
Seen frequently throughout in singles or pairs.

Tawny-shoulered Blackbird (*Agelaius humeralis*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Red-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius assimilis*)
4 at La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.

Cuban Blackbird (*Ptiloxena atroviolacea*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Greater Antillean Grackle (*Quiscalus niger*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*)
1 at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
1 at La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.
1 at Soplillar on 19/03/2022.
3 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
1 at Cayo Coco on 23/03/2022.
1 at Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorum*)
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
1 at Cayo Coco from 23/03/2022.

Louisiana Waterthrush (*Parkesia motacilla*)
1 at La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022. At govt restaurant area
1 at Havana on 26/03/2022.

Northern Waterthrush (*Parkesia noveboracensis*)
La Turba - Zapata on 18/03/2022.
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
2 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
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Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*)
Present at most locations in small numbers.

Swainson’s Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*)
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

Tennessee Warbler (*Leiothlypis peregrina*)
1 at Cayo Coco on 25/03/2022.

Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*)
Seen frequently throughout.

American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Cape May Warbler (*Setophaga tigrina*)
1 adult summer Male; 1 adult Female at Playa Larga - Anas Guest house on 17/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Najassa on 22/03/2022.
Cayo Paredon on 24/03/2022.
Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

Northern Parula (*Setophaga americana*)
Present at most locations in small numbers.

Magnolia Warbler (*Setophaga magnolia*)
2 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*)
Las Salinas on 19/03/2022.
Heard at Cayo Coco on 23/03/2022.

Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Setophaga caerulescens*)
Present at most locations in small numbers.

Palm Warbler (*Setophaga palmarum*)
Seen frequently throughout.

Olive-capped Warbler (*Setophaga pityophila*)
2 at Rancho San Vicente - Vinales on 16/03/2022.
1 at Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*)
Present at most locations in small numbers.

Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*)
Present at most locations in small numbers.

Western Spindalis (*Spindalis zena*)
2 at Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.
Cayo Coco from 22/03/2022 to 25/03/2022.
Ciego de Avila on 25/03/2022.

Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)
1 adult Female at Cayo Guillermo from 23/03/2022.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)
1 at Bermejas on 20/03/2022.

Red-legged Honeycreeper (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*)
3 at Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.
1 adult Male at Cayo Coco from 23/03/2022.

Yellow-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris olivaceus*)
Present at most locations in small numbers.

Cuban Bullfinch [nigra] (*Pyrrhulaga nigra*)
Present at most locations in small numbers.
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Cuban Grassquit (*Phonipara canora*)
Las Terrazas on 17/03/2022.