



**CUBA Field Trip
November 2012**



**New Mexico Ornithological Society
& Caribbean Conservation Trust, Inc.**

**Daily Log and Annotated Species List
4 – 17 November 2012**



Participants / Guides

Alan Craig – Portal, AZ

Narca Moore-Craig – Portal, AZ

Steven Drilling – Albuquerque, NM

Christopher Rustay – Albuquerque, NM

Jim Shifflet – Anacortes, WA

Jerry Oldenettel – Luis Lopez, NM

Sandy Williams – Albuquerque, NM

Patricia Mehlhop – Albuquerque, NM

Michael Allen – Oak View, CA

Richard Wagner – Tucson, AZ

Dale Stahlecker – Santa Fe, NM

Bruce Neville – College Station, TX

Janet Ruth – Corrales, NM

Dave Krueper – Corrales, NM (NMOS leader)

Gary Markowski – Cuban Conservation Trust, Inc. leader and organizer

Raydali Pérez O’Farrill – Havanatur guide and interpreter

Girálido Alaron – Overall trip guide

Cesár – Local guide in and around San Diego de los Baños

Abél – Local guide in Guanahacabibes National Park

Orlando – Local guide at Bermejas and La Cuchilla

Frank Medina – Local guide and Manager of Zapata Swamp Biosphere Reserve

Paulino – Local guide in the Camagüey area

Camilo – Local guide while at La Belén

Francisco – Primary bus driver

Eduardo – Alternate bus driver (one day near Camagüey)

Daily Log

4 November 2012

This was primarily a travel day for most participants, although several folks came in to Miami a day or two early and made the opportunity for some birding in the local area. We all convened at the Fairfield Inn & Suites at 7:00 pm for a “meet & greet” and to answer questions for the tour. We were all anxiously awaiting tomorrow’s journey to Cuba, and went to bed with Cuban sugar-plums in our head (or something like that).

5 November 2012

Up at a fairly early time, we all made our way to the Miami Airport by 7:30 am using various shuttles or vans. We lined up at ABC Tours (affiliate of American Airlines) and started the slow process of waiting in line for our check-in. Unfortunately Christopher had brought an expired passport and so with some quick phone calls and some contingency planning, we constructed a plan to meet with him in Cuba when he got his passport mailed to him from home. Yikes, he certainly had a great deal of courage to take this on by himself! We got checked in and got in to the boarding line, and then off to Havana we went.

The flight was uneventful, until our LEADER discovered that he had left his zipped portfolio with his return flight ticket and some important entrance certification paperwork back on a Miami chair in the waiting area. Nice job, Dave!! After landing, we went through Immigration and then Customs, exchanged money, and everyone then waited for Dave to complete the obligatory “leader... let’s check his stuff” search. Once concluded, we exited and met with a Havanatur representative, and also met up with Raydalie Pérez O’Farrill (“Rye”), who was to be our Havanatur guide for the trip, and Gary Markowski (CCT, Inc.). We all exchanged our US currency for Cuban CUCs (minus the 10% currency exchange fee), had a quick lunch at the airport, and then headed to the house of Orlando Garrido, the most famous and knowledgeable ornithologist (and tennis player?) in Cuba. We all enjoyed his infectious good humor, colorful stories, and discussions on the birds of Cuba while he signed our field guides.

It was now late afternoon and we needed to check in to our hotel and prepare for our next day’s journey. We took the bus to the Hotel Occidental Miramar in Havana, got settled in, did some birding on the grounds of the hotel and then had dinner at the buffet downstairs.

6 November 2012

[Note: Election Day in the United States]

We were up fairly early, brimming with excitement and ready to see the species around the Hotel Miramar before breakfast. Several of us wandered the hotel grounds for about an hour before braving the breakfast buffet crowds with the pushy foreign

tourists. Then quickly finished final packing and down to the bus for our first day of driving and Cuban birding.

We birded along the National Highway (the main East - West highway in Cuba) to San Diego de los Baños. Along the way we learned about Cuban cigar-making techniques from Ray, and had a great (although distant) sighting of Snail Kite near Las Terrazas. Once we arrived at the Hotel Mirador in San Diego de los Baños, we made arrangements for our return there in a few days, and picked up Cesár, our local guide for the birding around the local area. We had a short opportunity to spend time looking for Cuban Grassquit in a series of fields outside of town before we continued further west toward Guanahacabibes Nation Park. This area was dubbed "Chigger Ranch" for the potentially lethal-looking grasslands that we wandered through, but no problems. We missed on seeing the grassquits, dropped Cesár off and then headed west toward Guanahacabibes National Park and Biosphere Reserve, with a short stop at La Bajada (the entrance and guard station) and then to the resort at Maria la Gorda. Check-in was fairly seamless, although some of the cabins were more functional than others, and then we convened for our evening checklist session and dinner.

7 November 2012

We met near the lobby at 6:30 for some early birding before breakfast, and got the results of the US elections from Gary. Obama had won re-election for another 4-year term, and apparently the results were not as close as many had predicted. We walked a few trails to the east of the hotel grounds, but had to call it short when we got some early morning rain to dampen our clothing but not our spirits. After breakfast at 7:30 (European standards you know), we boarded the bus at 8:30. We drove up to La Bajada, and then picked up Abel, our local guide. We entered Guanahacabibes National Park through a security gate to access the western and northern portions of the park.

Along the main road heading west, we made several stops and had good views of Cuban-Black-Hawk, our first Mangrove Vireo, and also several sightings of the smallest bird in the world, the Bee Hummingbird. After birding the road well to the west, we returned back east and visited a large wetland and marsh complex. We had heard that another group with Arturo Kirkconnell had discovered an Eastern Phoebe the day before at this site. While we were enjoying the cacophony of Cuban Crows and viewing some additional Bee Hummingbirds and Palm Warblers, sure enough, we first heard and then saw the Eastern Phoebe. Abel and Giráldo were really excited because from what we understand it represented the sixth record for the country. But for our group, it was hard to get excited about this sighting when we had Cuban Bullfinch and Western Spindalis in the trees around us!

After our lunch buffet back at Maria la Gorda, we headed back out to La Bajada for some birding at a mangrove lagoon and then some forest birding behind the entrance station. We had our first flock of Yellow-headed Warblers at this latter site, and good

views of many of the more common North American migrant warblers along the roadside along with obliging Cuban Todies.

8 November 2012

Since today was to be a rather long travel day back to the east, we only birded a little while along the roads behind La Bajada, where we also got good looks at the endemic curly-tailed lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus*) near the charcoal-production area. We did not see anything new or of particular note, but we were aware that this could be our last opportunity to see Yellow-headed Warblers and we took advantage of that. We finished up our morning birding by 10:30 am and then headed back to Maria la Gorda to finish packing, have a lunch buffet and pay our bar tab before departure.

The afternoon saw us on the road for most of the afternoon. We pulled in to the Hotel Mirador in San Diego de los Baños around 5:00 pm, hoping to see Christopher in the lobby. There he was, and our NMOS group was now all together for the remainder of the trip! We met at the outdoor restaurant El Ranchon (on the hotel grounds) and had a great meal (selection of five meat options!), completed our checklist, and managed to get to bed at a reasonable hour given that we had live music to entertain us and some of our group did some dancing.

9 November 2012

Early morning start to get us out to Cueva de los Portales shortly after sunrise. We drove some circuitous back roads to Che Guevarra's secret hid-out during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Singing Cuban Solitaires and a colorful Cuban Tody greeted us almost as soon as we stepped out of the bus. We all enjoyed the show, then quickly toured the cave complex to view Che's bed and the rough headquarters that he maintained for several months as the world held its collective breath.

Back in to the bus and then to the east up some older back roads to our next destination, Cueva de los Portales in the karst mountains with semi-deciduous and coniferous forest covering the slides. No sooner had we stopped the bus when we came across a large mixed flock of warblers, with several North American species but also approximately 20 Olive-capped Warblers, a big target for the group. The mixed-species group moved around quite quickly, and the photographers were having a hard time getting the birds to stay still even for a split second, but we all got great views before we decided to move on for the Cuban Grassquit before threatening skies delivered on their promise.

Driving past Hacienda Cortina (where Janet and Dave visited in 2006), we continued on to the "Chigger Ranch" for another crack at the grassquits. Francisco located several on the back side of field just out of our view, so we walked back to the road and up into another clearing where we hoped to see them. We finally had 8+ birds hopping around the edge of the field and perching in some bushes for all to see. Photographers got some distant and grainy images, but they were diagnostic. Quite happy with our

success, we then headed back to the Hotel Mirador for lunch and checkout, and then began our long drive back through Havana and then south to Playa Larga for the next portion of our tour.

After all afternoon driving, we arrived at the Horizontes Hoteles Playa Larga in the town of Playa Larga, which is at the northern end of the Bahia de Cochinos (Bay of Pigs) at around 6:30 pm. We checked in, quickly got settled, found out that several in the group did not have water (at all) or no hot water. Being late in the evening and having several days to prepare for birding in this area, we just moved on bravely, did our checklist and had dinner at the restaurant, and made it to bed by 10:30 pm.

10 November 2012

Today was to be a very early wake-up and breakfast to allow us to drive out to Bermejas for an early attempt at the quail-doves in the reserve just outside of the town. We arrived right on time and walked the short trail into the forest to where a crude blind had been constructed. We stood behind the blind and peered down a dirt track in the darkness, wary of movement. On my previous trip for this species we had brief looks of one individual for only a handful of seconds, giving less than satisfactory views. But today was to be our day. The quail-doves had been coming in close to the blind with rice being used as bait. We all saw movement, and then we could make out the shape of Zenaida Doves... then a lone Gray-headed Quail-Dove was showing itself well... then a Blue-headed Quail-Dove... and then we suddenly had up to FOUR Blue-headed Quail-Dove within 40 feet of us!

We all were able to admire these beautiful birds at leisure before the photographers started to use flash and the bait had been eaten. We then walked back into the forest a bit further but quickly ran in to high water and lots of mud from Hurricane Sandy which had dropped a great deal of rain the previous month. Back to the road where we birded, then into Bermejas where we found a Bee Hummingbird for Christopher, and added great views of Cuban Parrot in some palms.

Piling back on to the bus, we headed out to La Cuchilla, a palm and savannah habitat visually very similar to the Everglades just to the north of us by 100 or so miles. The best birds out there were some skulking Red-shouldered Blackbirds and some great (although distant) views of the bizarre Bare-legged Owl. On to Caleta Buena where we enjoyed an all you can eat and drink buffet along the ocean, and where some of us snorkeled and others birded the local grounds. The trail out to the back of the parking lot held a small group of Yellow-headed Warblers which we got Christopher onto, which meant that he had not missed any of the species that the rest of the group had seen earlier!

At 3:30 pm we headed into Playa Girón for a one hour visit to the Museum established to interpret and celebrate the sacrifices made by the Cuban troops during the Bay of Pigs invasion. I think that we all could appreciate getting “the other side of the story”

and each of us no doubt wondered just where in the middle the truth did lie (pun intended). Then out to Soplillar to try for Fernandina's Flicker just before sunset, but we were unsuccessful searching the extensive marsh there. Back to the hotel by 6:00 pm, checklist at 7:00 pm and dinner at 8:00 pm. Some of us went owling out to the back of some of our rooms and we had a Stygian Owl fly over us but could not for the life of us get on to it while perched. Pretty tired by now, we retired shortly after that.

11 November 2012

Up early again for breakfast in the dark, and then we were off to La Turba just to the north of Playa Larga and within the national park. We made a long drive out through marshes on a grassy track and finally stopped and got out of the bus and started walking further down the road. The target was Zapata Sparrow and Zapata Wren. We played tapes for the wren in several likely locations, and after getting a response, suddenly had two come in quite close for great views by everyone. We then hustled further down the track before it got too warm for the Zapata Sparrows. We called in a cooperative pair which flew around and through our group for up to 0.5 hour. Great looks to be had by all participants and a thousand photos must have been shot of the birds before we headed back towards the bus.

Several of the group had heard a rail calling up the road, and realizing that it was a Spotted Rail, we played tape in the hopes that it would respond and come in for views. Well, it did respond, and it did come in... but would not for the life of us show us even a glimpse of itself. Although we did not see the bird, this was probably one of the rarest detections for the trip, and I relished hearing it calling from so close.

We drove back toward Playa Larga and stopped for some birding at Finca Carmelo (near the entrance arch) with the target being Fernandina's Flicker, but we were unsuccessful. We did find a male Summer Tanager, Smooth-billed Ani, and many Palm Warblers. To La Boca de Guamá (Crocodile Farm) for a short period to have an ice cream, watch a Cuban Oriole from close range, and to admire the many classic cars in the parking lot. Back to the hotel for lunch of soup, salad and chicken with a nice mango dessert with shredded cheese.

At 3:00 pm we grabbed our gear for a late afternoon foray out into Las Salinas on the western side of Bahía de Cocina (Bay of Pigs). A light wind kept the mosquitos at bay, and we soon saw our first American Flamingos amongst the mangroves along the diked road. We birded from several raised observation platforms and also along the road where we enjoyed many hundred flamingos, Prairie Warblers, Blue-winged Teal, a belligerent blue crab in the road, and the whistling calls of what we thought could have been whistling-ducks (?) (spp?) coming from the mangroves.

After watching a wonderful sunset over the Zapata Marsh, we got in the bus and slowly drove back to Playa Larga looking for Cuban Nightjar on the road but only caught brief views of one or two flushing away from the bus. We also tried for Stygian Owl but also

missed on this species, and arrived back to the Hotel Horizontes by 7:30 pm. We did the checklist, had dinner from 8:00 – 9:00 pm, conducted another scout around the grounds for Stygian Owls (which flew over us on several occasions), and then made it to bed by 10:30 pm or so.

12 November 2012

Today was to be a long driving day with some limited birding along the way. We packed up our gear, had breakfast by 7:00 am, and were checked out and on the bus by 8:00 am. Out of Playa Larga and to Finca Carmelo for another try at Fernandina's Flicker, but we were unsuccessful here. We departed at 9:00 am for the drive to long drive to Camagüey.

Birding from the bus today proved slightly entertaining, as teams were employed to count birds along the way (several groups and different sides of the bus looking for vultures, kestrels and waterfowl and Green-tailed Towhees). We had lunch at a nice restaurant along the highway which allowed us to stretch our legs, have a meal and even do a bit of birding and shopping before getting back on to the bus. Another three hours, and one rest stop, got us into Ray's hometown, beautiful Camagüey. This would be our furthest east stop in the country, and would be our base for birding for several days.

We unpacked the bus, and walked the 100 meters to the El Gran Hotel and got checked in. We all had adventures with the door key and air conditioning systems, but managed to get things sorted out before meeting up with the group at 7:00 pm for the checklist followed by dinner on the upper floor of the hotel with a great view of the city.

13 November 2012

After fighting the French tourists for coffee and enjoying the fresh buffet breakfast, we departed at 7:00 am for La Belén which was near Najasa. Along the way we stopped to view (and listen) to several Cuban Palm-Crows and also have some distant views of some perched Plain Pigeons in the distance. The roads were in bad shape after Hurricane Sandy and we made slow time getting to La Belén, but make it we did.

While at La Belén, we walked some of the trails and roads near the ranch headquarters. We quickly found one of our most desired target species, the Giant Kingbird. A pair entertained us for quite some time, and the photographers were happy with their captures. We tried again for Fernandina's Flicker and also Cuban Parakeet, but we were unsuccessful in this quest. We did have some great views of Scaly-naped Pigeon in the scopes while there, and also enjoyed the many other species that the working ranch harbored.

We all enjoyed a nice buffet lunch by the pool and helped Michael celebrate his birthday (he went swimming) and then walked down the road for about 0.5 hr before getting

back on the bus and heading north back to Camagüey and then going beyond into Sierra de Cubitas. Overcast and with some rain sprinkles, we were successful in getting some great looks at another of our target species, the Oriente Warbler. We missed finding a Cuban Gnatcatcher (very rare here) and with the rain and the dark threatening, we headed back to Camagüey, arriving by 6:15 pm. Dinner at 7:00 am and then the evening checklist at 8:00 pm while Michael enjoyed his birthday cigar, we all enjoyed the beautiful views of the city.

14 November 2012

Today was to be our long travel day back to the west. We all met at the opening of the buffet breakfast to battle the French (we won) and then grabbed our bags and loaded on to the bus by 8:00 am. As we drove to the west through leaden skies and occasional heavy rain, we did some incidental birding. Ray and Dave decided that an open air barbeque lunch probably would not work today, so we made an alternate plan and ate a delicious buffet lunch in Santa Clara on the way.

Back onto the bus by 3:00 pm for the remainder of the drive back to near Playa Larga. Our destination was the Hotel Don Pedro in Australia, which is just to the north of Playa Larga along the main highway. We checked in to our cute cabinas, and then blasted south to Soplillar to see if we could find Fernandina's Flicker before dinner. We missed the Flicker and then made an attempt at Cuban Nightjar near Batey Buena Ventura (again), but we did not get any birds to come in for us. Back to Hotel Don Pedro for a fantastic meal of shrimp, rice and salad, completed the daily checklist, and then to bed by 10:00 pm.

15 November 2012

Up early for final re-packing and a nice breakfast under the outdoor veranda. We headed south to Soplillar one final time to see if we could coax out a Fernandina's Flicker and to see what else might be around. Several members of the group clearly heard the flicker giving its calls from a distant palm tree, and although we searched the trunks of every palm in sight with binoculars and scopes, we just did not find one exposed for the group. The marshy area there holds great promise for a great variety of birds, but because it was so flooded, we found gaining access to other areas besides the road to be problematic.

Back to the Hotel Don Pedro in Australia to pick up our packed luggage and to check out, and then we were on the road back to Havana where we arrived at about 12:30 pm for lunch in Old Havana and to meet up with Gary. After lunch, we toured the Natural History Museum with Girálido and saw some great displays while dodging several school groups. We took another walk around the central square and looked at the many booksellers and other booths, took some cultural photos of the city, cars and people, and then checked in to the historical Hotel Telegraphico at 4:30 pm. We had some time for packing and re-packing and to take showers before meeting up for our final checklist and dinner. We met on the 5th floor terrace of Ambos Mundos (restaurant) several

blocks away where we all enjoyed a great seafood combination dinner. The lobster was spectacular! We waited on the roof and watched over toward El Castillo for the 9:00 pm commemorative cannon blast which traditionally marked the end of the working day. After the anticipated blast, Gary gave us all final words of advice to make our transition back through US Immigration as seamless as possible. It was a final night for five of our participants, while the remainder of the group was prepared for a cultural tour of Old Havana and also some birding to boot.

16 November 2012

We had coffee and breakfast downstairs in the Hotel Telegraphico from 7:00 – 8:00 am while waiting for Ray to arrive. Narca, Alan, Jim, Christopher and Steve departed for the airport, and then we jumped on our bus to head out to the Jardin Botanica Nacional for a tour of the gardens and to do some final birding on the grounds. We walked around the grounds for several hours and enjoyed the plant exhibits, found a large flock of Red-legged Thrush and also a Bicknell's/Gray-cheeked Thrush which was quite unusual due to the late date, and also Eastern Meadowlarks, Yellow-throated Vireos and other North American breeders.

We went back to Old Havana for lunch at a wonderful old restaurant with a “print shop” theme. Ray led us around Old Havana and gave us a great interpretive tour of the city during the afternoon. Several in the group made friends and received kisses from the lovely women in the street, and happily paid them \$10 USD for the privilege of receiving some crimson “war paint” on the cheek!

After wandering Old Havana for the afternoon, we headed back to the hotel for re-packing, showers and a final discussion on re-entry to the US tomorrow. We parted ways for dinner, with several folks going to a high-end restaurant about a block away while others just wandered and found what looked good.

17 November 2012

Our final morning in Cuba. Most of us got up fairly early and had breakfast and coffee downstairs in the hotel. Then we all went out for a final morning of exploring Old Havana and the waterfront. We walked down El Prado to view the Malecon and to take photos. We looked for an addition to the trip list (a shorebird or a gull?) but we did not find any new species to pad the list. The Malecon and fortress was impressive, especially under the rapidly changing skies and lighting conditions. We were able to view a Marathon mixta which was a ceremonial public running down El Prado the day before the national marathon was to take place. Lots of students, children, firemen in coordinated uniforms, men pushing wheelbarrows, etc. made for a scenic and fun addition to the morning.

After final packing, we checked out of the hotel and headed to the airport where Ray got us through the throngs and confusion, and helped immensely with acquiring our tickets and exit paperwork. The official money exchange was not working, but several of us made final changes back to US dollars near the entrances to the bathrooms, while others chose to finish off their CUCs with ham and cheese sandwiches, beer, Tukolas

(colas) or rum shots. The flight back to Miami was a short 35 minutes, and many of us split up in the teeming masses (pre-Thanksgiving travel) and made our respective ways through Immigration and Customs without hassle. Trip ended officially at this time, although several of us bumped into one another at the hotel or the following day at the airport.

Overall, this was a super trip with a great group of participants. We tallied 156 species and a total of 21 endemic bird species for the trip. I would do it again in a heart-beat! Thank you all for a memorable experience full of good birds and good friends!

DJK

Annotated Avian Species List 5 – 17 November 2012

Status and **Abundance** definitions follow those described in *Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba* by Garrido and Kirkconnell (2000):

Abundant. Over 20 individuals observed per day in appropriate habitat and season.

Common. Five to 19 individuals observed per day in appropriate habitat and season.

Uncommon. One to five individuals observed in a week in the appropriate habitat and season.

Rare. One to five sightings per year expected in the appropriate habitat and season.

Very Rare. One sighting every five years expected in the appropriate habitat and season.

Vagrant. A bird that reaches Cuba by accident, or is sighted about once every 10 or 20 years.

Transient. Migratory bird species that pass through Cuba, usually pausing only briefly.

Permanent Resident. Bird species which remains in Cuba throughout the year.

Summer Resident. Migratory bird species that arrive from the south principally during March, to breed in Cuba, with most departing by September.

Winter Resident. Migratory bird species arriving from North America during the months of July through October that spend the winter in Cuba before departing in March and April of the following year.

Winter Visitor. Migratory birds arriving in Cuba in winter and staying no longer than a few days.

FGBoC = *Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba* by Garrido and Kirkconnell (2000):

* indicates Cuban Endemic species

** indicates Cuban Endemic subspecies or race

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Whistling-Duck (spp.). While at the Las Salina unit of the Zapata Swamp, we heard the distinctive whistled squealing of whistling-ducks coming from the mangrove lagoons across the pond right around sunset. Giráldo felt that they were most likely whistling-ducks, but we did not see them and we most certainly did not know which species they were. Increasingly hard to find in Cuba, the West Indian Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*) is apparently a nocturnal feeder (Alaron pers. comm.), roosting in remote mangroves, marshes and forests during the day and then flying to foraging areas at night.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*. We had three individuals in the lagoon where we also had the Eastern Phoebe within Guanahacabibes National Park on 7 November 2012. At the time, we did not think anything of the sighting, and only later found out that this species is quite rare in Cuba, with only three previous sightings mentioned in FGBoC

American Wigeon *Anas americana*. Common transient and winter resident to Cuba, we recorded three individuals from the marsh complex in Guanahacabibes NP on 7 November 2012 where we had the assortment of other waterfowl species.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*. Very rare transient and winter resident (Sept. – April), we saw one en route from San Diego de los Baños to Playa Larga on 9 November 2012.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*. Common migrant and winter resident throughout Cuba, we found them during the first half of the tour on three days, but a huge total of 2100 birds at Las Salinas within the Zapata Swamp on 11 November 2012 were notable.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. We recorded this species in small numbers on several lakes and reservoirs during the first half of the trip, with a high count of 36 birds at Las Salinas within the Zapata Swamp on 11 November 2012.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*. Common winter resident and transient to Cuba. We counted an estimated 500+/- on the roadside lake and ponds on our drive from San Diego de los Baños to Playa Larga on 9 November 2012.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*. Rare winter resident and transient in Cuba, we counted seven on roadside lakes and ponds on our drive from San Diego de los Baños to Playa Larga on 9 November 2012.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*. Rare permanent resident, winter resident and transient in Cuba. We found one on 6 November 2012 while driving from San Diego de los Baños to Guanahacabibes NP, and an additional fifteen en route from San Diego de los Baños to Playa Larga on 9 November 2012.

GALLIFORMES: Odontophoridae

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*. Common permanent resident throughout the country, but obviously introduced. Seen throughout the trip, wandering about in the yards and towns. Not counted for the official trip totals.

GALLIFORMES: Odontophoridae

Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*. Common permanent resident throughout most of the country. **FGBoC** mentions that the species might have been introduced to the country. We had what we estimated to be about 12 birds along the side of the road after we departed San Diego de los Baños on our way to Guanahacabibes NP on 6 November 2012.

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Least Grebe *Podiceps dominicus dominicus*. Although considered a fairly common permanent resident, we only saw two on 7 November 2012 while in Guanahacabibes NP and one more on 9 November 2012 en route from San Diego de los Baños to Playa Larga.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps antillarum*. Fairly common permanent resident, we recorded this species on five days, all at the beginning of the trip. A high of 39 were found on 9 November 2012 while en route from San Diego de los Baños to Playa Larga

CICONIIFORMES: Ciconiidae

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*. A rare and permanent resident on Cuba, Isla de Pinos and large cays along the north coast. We were fortunate to see three birds in flight on 11 November 2012 while at Las Salinas within the Zapata Swamp as sunset approached.

SULIFORMES: Fregatidae

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*. Common permanent resident along all coasts of Cuba, we saw a total of five birds on five days total, with a high count of three individuals on 7 November while at Guanahacabibes NP.

SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae

Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus mexicanus*. Common permanent resident to Cuba, we recorded them on six days with the majority of sightings coming at the beginning of the tour. A high count of six was recorded at Las Salinas within the Zapata Swamp area on 11 November 2012.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*. Uncommon resident in Cuba, we encountered this species on four days of the tour while birding at Guanahacabibes NP, en route from San Diego de los Baños to Playa Larga, while at La Turba, and finally on our rainy return from Camagüey through Santa Clara to our hotel at Australia. Our high count was of two individuals at the latter three locations.

SULIFORNES: Anhingidae

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga leucogaster*. A common permanent resident in Cuba, we recorded them on four days, with a high count of four while birding the wetland complex near Maria la Gorda within Guanahacabibes NP on 7 November 2012.

PELECANIFORMES: Pelecanidae

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*. Uncommon to rare transient in Cuba, we were fortunate to come across three birds soaring while birding the wetland complex near Maria la Gorda within Guanahacabibes NP on 7 November 2012. Details have been submitted to the regional compiler for North American Birds for this unusual sighting.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis*. Although considered a common permanent and winter resident, we only saw three birds while at Salinas on 11 November 2012, and additional singles on 15 and 17 November 2012 while in Havana.

PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias occidentalis*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. Seen on nearly every day while on the trip, with a high count of 12 individuals on 11 November 2012 while at Salinas.

Great Egret *Ardea alba egretta*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. Several to many seen on nearly every day while on the trip, with a high count of thirty-seven birds on 12 November 2012, most of which were seen from the bus en route from El Carmelo to Camagüey.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. Recorded on eleven days of the trip, with a high count on sixteen individuals on 6 November 2012 while en route from Havana to San Diego de los Baños.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. Several seen on nearly every day on the trip, with a high count of fifteen birds on 11 November 2012 while birding in the late afternoon at Las Salinas.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor ruficollis*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. We recorded this species on three days with a high count of seven individuals on 11 November 2012 while at Las Salinas.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens rufescens*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. We recorded this species on only one day when we found seven individuals at Las Salinas on 11 November 2012. Had we spent more time in appropriate coastal and mangrove habitats, we probably would have seen many more of this charismatic species.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis ibis*. Abundant permanent and winter resident in Cuba. Scores seen daily throughout the trip, with a high count of 890 individuals on 12 November 2012 while en route from El Carmelo to Camagüey. A special thanks to the counters that day! The real reason for their dedicated counting will not be known – adding to the scientific database or staying awake on the long drive... (?)

Green Heron *Butorides virescens maculata*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. Recorded on nearly all days of the trip (missed it on our arrival day into Cuba), we counted a high of 20 while we were at Las Salinas on 11 November 2012.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax hoactli*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. We found this species on several different days, with a high of two individuals on 11 November 2012 while we were hustling out to see the Zapata Sparrows at La Turba.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*. Common permanent and winter resident (also a transient in Cuba, Isla de Pinos, and certain isolated cays). We recorded this species on four days during the tour, with a high count of four individuals on 7 November 2012 at Guanahacabibes National Park.

PELECANIFORMES: Threskiornithidae

White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*. Common permanent and winter resident in Cuba. We recorded this species on five days, with eighteen birds seen at Soplillar between Australia and Playa Larga on 15 November 2012.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*. Uncommon, but local, permanent and winter resident in Cuba. Recorded on two days, with seventy-three individuals en route from El Carmelo to Camagüey on 12 November 2012.

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja*. Considered to be a common permanent and winter resident in Cuba, we recorded only a single individual at Las Salinas on 11 November 2012.

PHOENICOPTERIFORMES: Phoenicopteridae

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopus ruber ruber*. Common permanent resident along the Cuban coast, but apparently also slowly declining in numbers. We recorded 250 individuals at Las Salinas Wildlife Refuge on 11 November 2012.

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Cathartidae

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura aura*. Abundant permanent resident in Cuba, and also a rare winter resident (implying that some birds arrive from North America and over-winter). Recorded on every day of the trip, with a high count of 1076 individuals en route from El Carmelo to Camagüey on 12 November 2012.

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Pandionidae

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus carolinensis/ridgwayii*. Common permanent and winter resident. We recorded individuals on seven days of the trip, with a high of three individuals on 11 November 2012 at Las Salinas to the west of Playa Larga.

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*. Considered to be a common permanent resident to swamps, lagoons and flooded fields within Cuba. Francisco, our bus driver, spotted one bird that had flown in and perched on a power wire en route from Havana to San Diego de los Baños on 6 November 2012. I think that we were all pretty impressed with his visual abilities on this sighting, and once encouraged, he certainly tried to show his skills on several other occasions! All in good fun though.

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus striatus*. Considered to be a rare permanent resident within Cuba, and the resident race is in fact listed as Endangered. Local populations are augmented in the winter with some birds from North America, but even in the winter it is considered to be a very rare winter resident. We recorded one bird while wandering around the “chigger ranch” just outside of San Diego de los Baños on 6 November 2012.

Gundlach's Hawk** *Accipiter gundlachii gundlachii/wileyi*. Distributed throughout the country, but considered to be rare and local. In the ***Threatened Birds of the Americas: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book (hereafter the **Red Book**) it mentions that this species is not considered specialized in its habitat requirements, but that since it feeds exclusively on birds and has been documented to take poultry, persecution may contribute to its decline. Loss of large tracts of forested habitat and the pet trade may also contribute to its decline. There are two subspecies in the country, with *A. g. gundlachii* found in western and central Cuba, and *A. g. wileyi* in eastern Cuba. We found one or two of this species on four different days, often soaring high in the sky amongst Turkey Vultures.

We counted two on 14 November 2012, with one each at Soplillar and en route from Camagüey through Santa Clara to our hotel in Australia.

Note: Juan Cristóbal Gundlach (1810 – 1896), born Johannes Christoph Gundlach, was a Cuban naturalist and taxonomist. He wrote the first major work on the birds of Cuba, *Ornitología Cubana*, and his name is recorded in the scientific names of over sixty species. Some of the names associated with birds includes Gundlach's Hawk *Accipiter gundlachii*, Cuban Black-hawk *Buteogallus gundlachii*, Antillean Nighthawk *Chordeiles gundlachii*, the Grand Cayman Island race of the Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus gundlachi*, Cuban Vireo *Vireo gundlachii*, Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachii*, the Lower Florida Keys, Cuba, Isle of Pines and Bahamas race of the Yellow (Golden) Warbler *Setophaga petechia gundlachi*, and the Greater Antillean Grackle *Quiscalus niger gundlachii* from central and eastern Cuba and the inner cays of Jardines de la Reina.

***Cuban Black-Hawk *Buteogallus gundlachii*.** Common permanent resident in Cuba. This species has been recently split from Common Black-Hawk. We found this species on four different days (daily while at Guanahacabibes NP) with a high count of four birds there on 7 November 2012.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis solitudinis*. Common and widely distributed permanent resident in Cuba. We recorded a total of 20 individuals spread over nine days of the trip, pretty much evenly distributed throughout the western and central portions of the country. The leaders certainly did get excited about these sightings, and so it might mean that this species could be less regular than what we had been led to believe (?).

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. We recorded five individuals on two days total at three different locations, with three being seen on 11 November 2012 while at Las Salinas as they coursed over the mangroves and lagoons.

GRUIFORMES: Rallidae

Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris*. Common permanent resident along the coastlines of Cuba and Isla de Pinos, we found one while at Las Salinas on 11 November 2012.

Sora *Porzana carolina*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. One was vocalizing from the flooded marshland at La Turba on 11 November 2012. This was our only detection for the trip.

Spotted Rail *Pardirallus maculatus*. While arguably one of the “best” birds of the trip (particularly if we could have actually seen it), one was vocalizing from the flooded marshland at La Turba on 11 November 2012. Fortunately, several heard the vocalizations and realizing how rare that species is, called us all over to try to coax it out.

It responded by approaching closer to us (just across the drainage ditch), but for the life of us would not show despite our best efforts.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata cerceris*. Common permanent resident on Cuba. A total of nine were recorded on five different days. A high count of three were seen while at Las Salinas near Playa Larga on 11 November 2012.

American Coot *Fulica americana americana*. Abundant permanent and winter resident throughout Cuba. Seen on almost every day of the trip, we recorded a high of 298 birds were seen at Las Salinas near Playa Larga on 11 November 2012.

GRUIFORMES: Aramidae

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*. Common permanent resident in Cuba at freshwater marshes and swamps. We recorded fifteen individuals on four different days, with a high of four individuals at Soplillar on 14 November 2012. If we only could have traded one of the Limpkin for a Fernandina's Flicker while there....

CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus ternominatus*. Common permanent resident and transient throughout the country. We recorded this species on nine days, with a high count of seven individuals en route from San Diego de los Baños to Guanahacabibes NP on 6 November 2012.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Recurvirostridae

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*. Abundant permanent resident and transient throughout the country. We found individuals on five different days, with a high of thirty-two individuals counted en route from San Diego de los Baños to Guanahacabibes NP on 6 November 2012.

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana*. Vagrant to Cuba (little known to us at the time!), with only five records listed by the time the **FGBoC** was published in 2000. We found one individual at a flooded site about ½ mile to the east of the large wetlands complex at Guanahacabibes NP. As far as I know, we did not obtain any photographic documentation for this record (unfortunately).

CHARADRIIFORMES: Jacanidae

Northern Jacana *Jacana spinosa violacea*. Common permanent resident at marshes and lagoons, we recorded this species on six different days. We had a high count of five individuals on two occasions: 13 November 2012 while en route from Camagüey to Najasa to Belén; 14 November 2012 at Soplillar.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. We recorded birds on three days, with a combined high of 5 individuals on 11 November 2012 while at La Turba in the morning and at Las Salinas in the late afternoon.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. Recorded on three days, with a high of six individuals on 6 November 2012 while en route from San Diego de los Baños to Maria la Gorda within Guanahacabibes NP..

Spotted Sandpiper *Tringa macularia*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. We had a total of ten individuals on six days of the trip. There were no notable concentrations of birds throughout the trip.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*. Common winter resident throughout Cuba, Isla de Pinos and Cayo Coco. We recorded a total of three individuals on 6 & 7 November 2012 while birding the flooded wetlands within Guanahacabibes NP to the far West of the country.

Peep spp. Two were seen on 6 November 2012 while at the wetland complex within Guanahacabibes NP.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla atricilla*. This subspecies is found in the West Indies south to northern Venezuela and northern Brazil. It is a permanent resident and the most common gull along the Cuban coastline. We recorded them on 6 days with a high count of 135+ birds while in Havana on 17 November 2012.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*. Considered to be an uncommon winter resident on all of the coasts of Cuba. Recorded on only one day for the trip, we had two individuals at Las Salinas on 11 November 2012.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus maximus*. Common permanent, winter visitant and transient throughout Cuba. Recorded on 7 days with a high count of seven individuals on the last day while in Havana.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis acufavidus*. Common summer resident and transient in Cuba and a local winter resident in the northern cayes and along the coastline. We recorded this species on two days, with a single bird seen on 15 November 2012 while at the harbor in Havana, and an additional six were seen on the last day as we toured the Malecón and the harbor in Havana proper.

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* (introduced). Common permanent resident throughout Cuba and Isla de Pinos. Seen on nearly every day of the trip except in the more remote areas of Guanahacabibes NP and in the vicinity of Playa Larga. We counted a high of 245 individuals on 12 November 2012 while in the Camagüey area.

Scaly-naped Pigeon *Patagioenas squamosa*. Only found on the Greater and Lesser Antilles, and considered to be uncommon and very local in eastern Cuba and rather rare in western Cuba and Isla de Pinos. We had a total of four individuals for the trip, with poor views of two birds (mainly fly-by) while in the area known as Cabañas de los Pinos (east of Ché Guevarra's hideout) on 9 November 2012. We got much better views of two birds using spotting scopes while at La Belén on 13 November 2012.

White-crowned Pigeon *Patagioenas leucocephala*. Common permanent resident and transient throughout Cuba. Seen or heard on 8 days while in the field and from the bus, with a high of 10+ being detected on 6 November 2012 while in Guanahacabibes NP.

Plain Pigeon *Patagioenas inornata inornata*. Considered an endangered permanent resident found on Cuba primarily in 6-7 isolated populations. According to the **Red Book**, "...hunting and habitat loss have combined to reduce this once abundant and widespread pigeon of Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico to the situation where it is threatened everywhere and gravely at risk in Cuba (highest known population is ca. 100 pairs)." While there are some birds in the Zapata Peninsula we did not detect any there. We did record a total of c. 8 birds on two different days. We first found two birds at the wetlands near Maria la Gorda within Guanahacabibes NP on 7 November 2012. Then on 13 November 2012, we found four on the road to La Belén near Najasa, and an additional two while we were at La Belén. This is a species which prefers coastal semi-deciduous woodlands, low forested hills, and grassy palm groves, the latter of which we found to be common in the Najasa region.

Zenaida Dove *Zenaida aurita zenaida*. Common permanent resident in Cuba and it is found throughout the country in several different habitats. We recorded a total of 29 birds over six days, with a high of 9 birds on 10 November 2012 while at Bermejas.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*. Abundant permanent resident throughout Cuba. Populations from North America overwinter commonly as well. Mourning Doves were our daily companions throughout the trip. We recorded them on every day except 7 November 2012 while in heavily forested habitats at Guanahacabibes NP. Found in most of the habitats that we visited, we recorded a high of 113 while en route from Guanahacabibes NP to San Diego de los Baños on 8 November 2012.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica asiatica*. Common permanent resident in central and eastern Cuba, but uncommon in the western portions of the country. We recorded

a total of one individual for the entire trip (!), with that individual being seen within Guanahacabibes NP on 7 November 2012.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (introduced). Uncommon to fairly common permanent resident of larger urban areas. This species was introduced in the Bahamas in 1974 when ca. 100 birds were released (escaped?) from a pet dealer. Its population and distribution has exploded exponentially in a classic example of a species filling (or exploiting) a niche not previously filled (a niche is not present until a species comes along to “discover” and fill it...). The species subsequently invaded Florida, Cuba and much of the Lesser Antilles. Reported from Cuba in 1988, it was confirmed in 1990 and has become established in La Habana, Guanahacabibes Peninsula, and on Cayo Coco. We found this species in nearly every urban environment for the trip, and counted a high of 9 birds in and around San Diego de los Baños on 6 November 2012.

Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerina insularis*. Common permanent resident throughout Cuba, we recorded birds on every day of the tour. Our high count of 24 birds on 10 November 2012 while birding at Bermejas and La Cuchilla.

Grey-fronted Quail-Dove *Geotrygon caniceps caniceps*. Rare and local permanent resident on Cuba, although considered to be “common” in the Zapata Peninsula (Garrido and Kirkconnell 2000). We targeted this species while in the forested habitats at Bermejas, and we were not disappointed. While standing behind our crude observation blind, one came right out on to the dirt tract in front of us and gave us quite the show for ½ hour on 10 November 2012.

***Blue-headed Quail-Dove** *Starnoenas cyanocephala*. This Cuban endemic is considered rare and vulnerable, primarily in the central and eastern portions of the country. According to the **Red Book**, “... once common and widespread on its native Cuba, this ground-haunting pigeon has become extremely rare almost everywhere through the combined effects of hunting and the destruction of it (chiefly lowland) forest habitat.” Considered to be uncommon and found only on the Guanahacabibes Peninsula, at La Güira and in the Zapata Peninsula (Garrido and Kirkconnell 2000). Prefers thick forested habitats with little understory. We were fortunate to have prolonged views of four individuals while in the “quail-dove blind” at Bermejas on 10 November 2012. The electric blue on the head was spectacular even in the dim light that we had there, and those memories certainly will remain with us for quite some time.

CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae

****Great Lizard-Cuckoo** *Saurothera merlini merlini*. Common permanent resident on Cuba and surrounding cays, being found in most of the forested and scrub habitats throughout the island. We recorded this species every day in appropriate habitat (not in downtown Havana!), and we all had ample opportunities to study the species up fairly

close. A high of four individuals were seen on 10 November 2012 while at Bermejas, Caleta Buena and Soplillar.

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani*. Abundant permanent resident within Cuba and in the Caribbean, frequenting the edges of roads, fields and the scrubland habitats throughout the country. We recorded this species every day in appropriate habitats (thus not in Havana). A high of 73 individuals were seen on 13 November 2012 en route from Camagüey to La Belén and while we were at La Belén.

STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae

***Bare-legged Owl (Cuban Screech-Owl)** *Gymnoglaux lawrencii*. This was one of the “most-wanted” species for many of the participants. This endemic species is considered to be common in undisturbed forested habitats throughout the country, but it can be difficult to locate. The taxonomy of this species is still somewhat undecided, with Garrido and Kirkconnell (2000) calling this species *Otus lawrencii*, while others have this as *Megascops lawrencii*. The A.O.U. (2006) and Howard and Moore (2003) both have adopted *Gymnoglaux lawrencii*. Whatever the taxonomy, we can all agree that we had some distant but clear looks at a single individual that was roosting in a rotten palm trunk at La Cuchilla on 10 November 2012. Our local guide went out into the swamp and knocked on the snag to gain its attention, and after several rounds of knocking and shaking the roost site, the bird finally gave all a clear view. Something about those soul-less black eyes staring back at us seemed almost alien....

***Cuban Pygmy-Owl** *Glaucidium siju*. Common permanent resident throughout Cuba, preferring forested habitats from sea level to mountains. We recorded this species on 8 days, with good views primarily in the Playa Larga region and the Zapata Peninsula. We had a high count of three birds on 8 November 2012 while birding at Guanahacabibes NP before our long drive back to San Diego de los Baños.

****Stygian Owl** *Asio stygius siguapa*. Uncommon, local and vulnerable permanent resident in semi-deciduous and pine forests throughout most of Cuba. We recorded a total of three individuals for the trip, but none of the sightings were particularly memorable or lengthy. We had several consecutive fly-bys while birding at night at our hotel in Playa Larga on the night of 11 November 2012.

CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Caprimulgidae

****Antillean Nighthawk** *Chordeiles gundlachii gundlachii*. Common summer resident and transient throughout Cuba, Islas de Pinos and on most cays. Two were seen by several observers on the late afternoon and evening of 5 November 2012 right after we checked in to the hotel. This was an unusual sighting since it is believed that most (all?) birds depart during the winter months and these must have been late in departing.

***Greater Antillean Nightjar** *Antrostomus cubanensis cubanensis*. Common permanent resident throughout Cuba. We only caught glimpses of these birds as we flushed them from the road on the way in to Playa Larga on 9 November 2012, and again on 14 November 2012 near Batey Buena Ventura.

APODIFORMES: Apodidae

****Antillean Palm-Swift** *Tachornis phoenicobia iradii*. Common permanent resident throughout Cuba. We recorded this species on 11 days total, evenly spread throughout the trip. A high count of 50+ was made on 6 November 2012 while at the hotel in Havana and en route through San Diego de los Baños through to Guanahacabibes NP.

APODIFORMES: Trochilidae

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*. One was found on the Hotel Miramar ground on the morning of 5 November 2012, representing the only sighting for the trip.

***Bee Hummingbird** *Mellisuga helenae*. The world's smallest bird, this was also one of the most sought-after birds of the trip. It is considered to be rare and vulnerable in isolated populations in Cuba. We struck gold while in Guanahacabibes NP, with an estimated eight birds there on 7 November 2012. We also found one while at Bermejas on 10 November 2012. We had discussed why we were only seeing females, but then after our return to the States, Bruce, Janet, Richard, and Michael started to do some digging for information on the non-breeding plumage of the males. Lo and behold, when looking at the photos and reviewing the literature, it became apparent that we were also seeing males which had lost their gorgets, and to our untrained eyes appeared to be females or juvenile birds.

Cuban Emerald *Chlorostilbon ricordii*. Common permanent resident in forests, coastal scrub and near human habitations where ornamental plantings provide food. We recorded this species on every day of the trip, with a high of 15 seen on 5 November 2012 while at the Hotel Miramar in Havana. Our low count was of two individuals and this occurred on four occasions, primarily on the longer travel days.

TROGONIFORMES: Trogonidae

***Cuban Trogon** *Priotelus temnurus temnurus*. Common permanent resident to forests throughout Cuba, this is the Cuban national bird and it is truly spectacular. We recorded this species on almost every day of the trip while in appropriate habitat. On 8 November 2012 while at Guanahacabibes NP and around Maria la Gorda, we recorded a high count of four individuals.

CORACIIFORMES: Todidae

***Cuban Tody** *Todus multicolor*. Common permanent resident in semi-deciduous forests and coastal scrublands throughout the country. We recorded this species on most days of the trip while in suitable habitat, with a high of six seen on 8 November 2012 while at Guanahacabibes NP and around Maria la Gorda and La Bajada

CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae

Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon*. Common winter resident and transient within the country, with some remaining year-round as non-breeders. We recorded them on eight days in the field, with at high of five on 11 November 2012 while at Las Salinas.

PICIFORMES: Picidae

****West Indian Woodpecker** *Melanerpes superciliaris superciliaris*. Common permanent resident throughout Cuba, nesting primarily in dead or dying palm trees. We found this species to be common in nearly all of the habitats that we birded, with birds being detected on all days except one (the long driving day from Camagüey to Australia). We recorded a high of ten individuals on 13 November 2012 when birding near Najasa, at La Belén, and at Sierra de Cubitas.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*. Fairly common winter resident and transient within Cuba, we recorded seven individuals on a total of five days. A high of two were seen while birding at Cueva de los Portales on 9 November 2012, and another two were at La Belén on 13 November 2012.

***Cuban Green Woodpecker** *Xiphidiopicus percussus percussus*. Common endemic species to Cuba, being found in dry forests, pines, and semi-deciduous woodlands throughout the country. We recorded this species nearly daily from 7 – 16 November 2012, with a high count of four while at Cueva de los Portales and Cabañas de los Pinos on 9 November 2012.

****Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus chrysocaulosus*. Although considered to be a common permanent resident in Cuba, primarily frequenting forests and pine woodlands, we recorded only a total of four birds on only three days. The subspecies found here is endemic, but some birds from North America might augment the wintering population.

***Fernandina's Flicker** *Colaptes fernandinae*. Rare and vulnerable Cuban endemic which prefers forest edges in open areas, especially associated with palms. According to the **Red Book**, "...for reasons unclear, though probably related habitat loss, this once common and widespread ground-feeding woodpecker, endemic to Cuba, has become very rare and localized, with only one relatively strong population (in the Zapata Swamp) and total numbers estimated at only 300 pairs." While a major target for our trip, we

unfortunately did not see this species, but we did hear distant calling on at least one occasion. On 15 November 2012, on the final morning re-visiting Soplillar on the Zapata Peninsula, we heard one call on two or three occasions, but our taped calls were unsuccessful in pulling in the bird(s) for viewing. Perhaps this pair has been taped out?

FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae

Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway auduboni*. Considered to be rare and fairly local on Cuba, we recorded a total of 19 on five days. Most were seen in the central and eastern portions of the country from Bermejas east to Camagüey between 12 and 15 November 2012. This subspecies is the same that is found in Florida and in the American Southwest from Arizona and Texas south to western Panama.

****American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius sparverius* / *F. s. sparverioides*. Common permanent resident and uncommon winter visitor to Cuba. The Cuban race *F. s. sparverioides* has two color morphs, with one having a rufous chest and belly and the other with a white chest and belly. The North American race *F. s. sparverius* was also recorded on several occasions, which allowed for nice comparisons. We recorded a total of 156 individuals for the trip (thanks to the counters). A high of 31 were seen on two different days: 8 November 2012 on the drive from Guanahacabibes to San Diego de los Baños; on 12 November 2012 primarily on the drive from Playa Larga, El Carmelo through to Camagüey.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*. Uncommon winter resident and transient in Cuba. Single individuals were seen on six days total, with two days having multiple sightings. All of the birds that we saw were thought to be *F. c. columbarius*, the common and widespread subspecies in North America.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. Uncommon winter resident and transient (possibly breeds?). Two subspecies have been recorded in the country, *Falco peregrinus tundrius* and *F.p.anatum*. We had a total of five individuals on three different days at the beginning and towards the middle portions of the trip, with the high count of three birds at Las Salinas on 11 November 2012.

PSITTACIFORMES: Psittacidae

****Cuban Parrot** *Amazona leucocephala leucocephala*. Considered to be rare and vulnerable within Cuba, this species is now restricted to several isolated populations with apparently little or no genetic emigration or immigration. This species is not considered to be threatened in the **Red Book**, but it probably faces threats similar to those for the Cuban Parakeet. For the latter species, the Red Book mentions that “... *the Cuban Parakeet has become a rare bird throughout Cuba owing to excessive trapping and the loss of its semi-deciduous woodland and palm savanna habitat, such that it now appears to survive in only a few more remote regions of the country, notably the*

Península de Zapata and the Cuchillas del Toa.” We saw this species on five of six consecutive days toward the middle and end of the tour from 10 – 15 November 2012 while based in the Playa Larga region. We recorded a high count of 30 individuals on 12 November 2012 while at Playa Larga, particularly around the grounds of the Hotel Horizontes. The species is not considered to be an endemic because small numbers are also to be found on the Bahamas and on the Greater and Lesser Cayman islands.

PASSERIFORMES: Tyrannidae

****Cuban Pewee** *Contopus caribaeus caribaeus* (widespread form) and *C. c. morenoi* (southern Cuba primarily within the Zapata Swamp area and off-shore cays). Common permanent resident throughout the country, we recorded this species every day except 14 November 2012 when we were driving from Camagüey through Santa Clara to our hotel in Australia primarily through the rain. We tallied a high of four individuals on 8 November 2012 while at Guanahacabibes NP.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*. While certainly not as exciting as the other Cuban endemic species, this could arguably be considered one of the most unusual (rare) sightings of the trip. On 7 November 2012 we were able to re-find the single individual that was discovered by Arturo Kirkconnell (who was leading another birding group) the previous day at the large marsh complex to the west of Maria la Gorda within Guanahacabibes National Park/Biosphere Reserve. We were told that this would represent the sixth record for Cuba. Details and photos were submitted to the North American Birds regional compiler for the record.

La Sagra's Flycatcher *Myiarchus sagrae sagrae*. Common permanent resident to forests from the lowlands to high elevations throughout the country. We recorded this species nearly daily in appropriate habitat, with a high of four individuals detected on 9 November 2012 while at Cueva de los Portales and Cabañas de los Pinos.

****Loggerhead Kingbird** *Tyrannus caudifasciatus caudifasciatus*. Common permanent resident to forests, mangroves and swamps throughout Cuba. We recorded this handsome bird daily in most habitats, with a high of nine detected on 13 November 2012 while at La Belén. At one time this species was included on the AOU Checklist as having occurred within the United States (Florida), but was removed from the checklist due to questions of correct identification several years ago. Ironically, it has recently been confirmed in Florida, and thus has now been included in the most recent version of the ABA Checklist (but also see information below).

***Giant Kingbird** *Tyrannus cubensis*. Very rare and endangered permanent resident within Cuba, frequenting dry savannah with scattered *Ceiba* trees and tall forests near rivers and riparian areas. It is found on Cuba and the Isle of Pines, but was also formerly distributed on Great Inagua and on the Caicos islands. The **Red Book** states that this species is “... a naturally low-density flycatcher, this bird has become much rarer still

throughout its native Cuba (there are old records from the southern Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands) for reasons unknown, although the most likely culprit is deforestation.” Absolutely one of the most desired species for the entire trip, we were not disappointed. We had crippling scope / binocular / viewfinder views of the species while at La Belén Preserve near Najasa to the south of Camagüey on 13 November 2012. Many photos were obtained, and we actually walked away from this species.

Note: After Jon Dunn participated in a previous trip to Cuba (Western Field Ornithologists in 2006), he became interested in reviewing the documentation of the Florida reports of Loggerhead Kingbird (see above). After he observed Giant Kingbird in person in Cuba, he re-circulated the Florida Loggerhead Kingbird records through the American Ornithologists Union Checklist Committee again because he felt that one or more could have actually been Giant Kingbird. Loggerhead Kingbird has not shown an inclination for dispersal while there have been six records of Giant Kingbirds from Cuba dispersing to the Bahamas to the north (J. Dunn pers. comm.). After that review, Loggerhead Kingbird was dropped from the ABA Checklist (see above note), only to be recently added again. To date there are no verified records of Giant Kingbird from the continental United States... yet.

PASSERIFORMES: Vireonidae

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus griseus*. Fairly common winter resident to thickets and dense shrubbery throughout the country from September through April. We detected this species on four occasions (all single individuals) while at Guanahacabibes NP, the “chigger ranch” near San Diego de los Baños, Bermejas, and Soplillar.

***Cuban Vireo** *Vireo gundlachi*. Common permanent resident to forests and thickets, primarily in the lower elevations throughout the country. We recorded this species on 7 days from 7 – 14 November 2012, with a high of six individuals on 8 November 2012 while at Guanahacabibes NP. Several nice photos were obtained by the photographers.

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*. Although considered to be a rare winter resident to semideciduous forests in Cuba, we recorded this species on eight separate days. We found a high of two at La Belén on 13 November 2012. Also some nice views were obtained on the last day while at Jardín Botánico Nacional in Havana.

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae

****Palm Crow** *Corvus palmarum minutus*. Uncommon and vulnerable permanent resident to forests, palm, and pine plantations near towns, primarily near Najasa in central Camagüey Province. This is a near endemic to Cuba, with another population found only on the island of Hispaniola (possibly a distinct species, the “Hispaniolan” Palm Crow). We recorded this species on 13 November 2012 near Najasa on the road from Camagüey to La Belén. We were able to view this species at leisure and hear the

nasal “craaah” call which is distinctive when compared to the following species. This species is often seen on the ground, quite unlike the following species.

Cuban Crow *Corvus nasicus*. This is another Cuban near-endemic, with birds only being found on Cuba and also Grand Caicos Island in the Bahamas. Common resident in isolated patches of habitat throughout Cuba, being especially common in the Zapata Peninsula region and also in the Sierra Najasa in Camagüey Province. We recorded this species on all but four days while in the field, with a high of ca. 150 birds recorded on 7 November 2012 at the wetlands near Maria la Gorda in Guanahacabibes National Park. This species has a particularly interesting series of high-pitched, gurgling and discordant call notes which are quite different than the preceding species. We all had a great show provided by the “murder of crows” at the marsh, with a chorus of vocalizations entertaining us for about an hour.

Note: How did the term “murder of crows” come about anyway? This more poetic term for a flock of crows can be traced back at least to the 15th century, when it was recorded as *a murther of crowes*. There are several theories as to how this particular term came about, but all of them have to do with the supposed behavior of crows. For instance, crows are scavengers and therefore often seen feeding on rotting bodies of various sorts. Survivors of wars have described how the battlefields were covered in black as crows (and ravens) came down to eat the dead. Another theory hearkens back to old folklore which told of groups of crows essentially holding court over members of their flock that had committed offenses. If they decide against the “defendant” crow, then the rest of the flock swoops down on it and kills it. There are legends outside of the Germanic culture that relate to crows being judges over people as well, and how their appearance is an omen of death. Maybe we were being judged while viewing the Eastern Phoebe that day....

PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*. Abundant winter resident throughout Cuba, particularly in the lowlands and in the wetlands and swamps of the Zapata Peninsula. Recorded on 5 days total, we had a high count of ca. eight individuals on 15 November 2012 while at Soplillar.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*. Common transient within Cuba, rare winter resident with dates recorded between 13 August and 12 April. We recorded them on seven days throughout the trip, with a high of three found on 11 November 2012 while at La Boca de Guamá and Las Salinas.

Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*. Rare transient in Cuba and Isla de los Pinos (30 August – 11 November and 21 March – 2 June). We recorded one en route from San Diego de los Baños to Playa Larga on 9 November 2012.

****Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva cavicola*. Common summer resident in Cuba, with dates extending from 29 January through 21 October. We recorded 21 individuals at 4 locations on the trip, which is quite late within the safe window of migration.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. Common transient in Cuba, Isla de los Pinos and the larger cays from 1 August – 20 November and again from 3 February – 26 June. We recorded this species on two days of the tour, with one en route from Guanahacabibes NP to San Diego de los Baños on 8 November 2012, and four individuals on 11 November 2012 Las Salinas.

Swallow sp. On at least 7 days we recorded species of unknown identity. Any guesses are welcome.

PASSERIFORMES: Troglodytidae

***Zapata Wren** *Ferminia cerverai*. Endangered permanent resident with a very localized population present in the Zapata Peninsula near the Rio Hatiguanico and the small village of Santo Tomás. The **Red Book** mentions “... *this elusive bird is known only from within a 20 km radius of Santo Tomás in the Zapata Swamp, Cuba, where it appears to have suffered particularly from dry-season burning of its savanna-like habitat and perhaps from introduced predators.*” We recorded two individuals in the morning of 11 November 2012 while birding at La Turba after hearing them calling and responding to tape from a distance. Suddenly one popped up right in front of us and sang several full songs, allowing everyone clear views from ca. 20’ away. A very handsome bird indeed, and one which was high on many participants “must see list”! Jerry Oldenettel squeezed off some quick shots which are very nice to see (access his Flickr site to see all of his images).

PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*. Vagrant, with one record for the country at the time of the writing of **FGBoC**. We recorded this species at three locations: on 8 November 2012 we found two individuals at Guanahacabibes National Park (Maria la Gorda & La Bajada); on 14 November 2012 we recorded one while birding at the hotel in Australia while checking in; on 15 November 2012 we found probably the same individual at the hotel before departing for Soplillar and then on to Havana. Maybe not the most exciting bird for us, but this was quite a series of significant sightings!

PASSERIFORMES: Polioptilidae

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea*. Common winter resident throughout the country in most habitats, with records from 10 August until 1 May. We recorded them nearly every day and in most habitats that we visited, particularly in the middle and eastern portions of the tour. We counted a high total of 13 individuals while at La Belén on 13 November 2012.

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

***Cuban Solitaire** *Myadestes elisabeth elisabeth*. Considered to be a relatively common endemic, it is confined to the far eastern and far western mountains within Cuba. We had lengthy views and heard the beautiful songs of up to eight individuals while touring the limestone karst formations and caves of at Cueva de los Portales and also at Cabañas de los Pinos in the hills above Che's secret cave hideaway on 9 November 2012. As with most *Myadestes* spp., their fairly drab plumage is more than made up for by their ethereal songs. Who was this "Elisabeth" anyway?

Gray-cheeked Thrush / Bicknell's Thrush *Catharus minimus* / *Catharus bicknelli*. One of the more unusual sightings for the tour due to the late date, we found one individual within the large group of Red-legged Thrushes at Jardín Botánica Nacional in Havana on 16 November 2012. Within Cuba, fall dates for GCTH extend from 14 Sept – 28 Nov and 19 Mar – 13 May. There are only two records for BITH, both in October and one from these same botanical gardens! Most or all Bicknell's Thrushes winter in Hispaniola to the east, while at this time of the year nearly all Gray-cheeked Thrushes should be in the Amazon Basin in South America.

Red-legged Thrush *Turdus plumbeus schistaceus* (in eastern Cuba with gray bellies) and *Turdus plumbeus rubripes* (central and western Cuba and Isle of Pines with reddish-brown bellies). Common permanent resident to pine woods and semideciduous woodlands throughout Cuba. We recorded them on all days, with a high of eleven individuals on 9 November 2012 while at Cueva de los Portales; an additional 40+ were seen at the Jardín Botánica Nacional in Havana on 16 November 2012 for those staying on the extra day.

PASSERIFORMES: Mimidae

Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*. Common winter resident and transient within Cuba, we found them in most habitats throughout the trip (10 days total), with a high of six birds recorded on 10 November 2012 while at Bermejas.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos orpheus*. Common permanent resident throughout Cuba, being found in almost all habitats. This was one of the species which we recorded on every day of the trip. Hard to miss, we had a high of eighteen individuals located on 6 November 2012 while birding Havana and then en route through San Diego de los Baños to Guanahacabibes NP.

PASSERIFORMES: Parulidae

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*. Common transient and fairly common winter resident throughout the country, we located a total of seven individuals on five different days.

Our high count was of two while birding at Bermejas on 10 November 2012 and an additional two were at El Carmelo on 11 November 2012.

Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorum*. While considered to be a common winter resident and transient within Cuba, we were only able to locate one individual for the tour, a fairly obliging individual while viewing Oriente Warblers at Sierra de Cubitas in the light rain on 13 November 2012.

Louisiana Waterthrush *Parkesia motacilla*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba, we recorded a total of four individuals on four days. Singletons were at La Bajada, La Turba, and at the lunch stop between El Carmelo and Camagüey on two different days.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba, we recorded this species nearly every day. We counted twenty-three total, with a high of five at Soplillar on 15 November 2012.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*. Common winter resident and transient within Cuba, we recorded individuals on nearly every day while in the field. The high of four birds while birding the Jardín Botánico Nacional in Havana on 16 November 2012.

Tennessee Warbler *Oreothlypis peregrina*. Uncommon transient within Cuba, we recorded three individuals on 6, 7, and 10 November 2013 while at Guanahacabibes (La Bajada and then María la Gorda) and at Bermejas.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas trichas*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba, we recorded individuals on ten of twelve days, with a high of thirty individuals on 11 November 2012 at La Turba.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*. Locally known as “Candelita,” it is considered a common winter resident and transient within Cuba. We recorded these nearly every day (when outside of Havana that is). A high of 22 individuals were recorded at Las Salinas on 11 November 2012. We found the highest numbers in the middle portion of the tour, primarily based out of Playa Larga.

Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. We recorded individuals on six days of the trip, usually in ones or twos per day. Our high count was on 13 November 2012 at La Belén when we found four in total.

Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*. Common winter resident and transient within Cuba. This was another of the species which we recorded on every day of the trip. A high of nine individuals were located on 10 November 2012 while birding in and around Bermejas.

Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia*. Common winter resident and transient within Cuba. We recorded up to three individuals on three consecutive days 7 – 9 November 2012 while at Guanahacabibes (Maria la Gorda & La Bajada) and at Cueva de los Portales.

Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*. Rare transient throughout Cuba, Isla de Pino and some of the larger cays. We found singles at Guanahacabibes (Maria la Gorda & La Bajada) on 7 and 8 November 2012.

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia gundlachi* (resident subspecies). Common permanent resident along the coast of Cuba, and also a common North American transient. Residents live in coastal vegetation, especially mangroves, while transients are most often found in forests and gardens. We had a total of 3 individuals of the resident subspecies *S. p. gundlachi* on 11 November 2012 while in the mangrove swamps at Las Salinas. We did not record any of the over-wintering subspecies from North America! There are at least three other subspecies which breed in North America and either pass through or winter on Cuba: *Setophaga petechia amnicola*; *S. petechia aestiva*; *S. petechia morcomi*.

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. We recorded low numbers nearly daily except on 13 November 2012 when we located a high count of 14 en route from Camagüey to Belén, at La Belén, and then at Sierra de Cubitas in the late afternoon.

Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum palmarum* and *S.p.hypochrysea*. The “Western” Palm Warbler *S. p. palmarum* is an abundant winter resident and transient throughout Cuba, and we certainly verified its status here on the tour. We recorded individuals on all days, and counted a high of 47 on 11 November 2012 while birding at La Turba, El Carmelo, La Boca de Guamá, Salinas, and at the Hotel Horizontes in Playa Larga. On 14 November 2012 several folks were able to see a “Yellow” Palm Warbler *S. p. hypochrysea* while we were en route from Camagüey thru Santa Clara to our hotel in Australia.

Olive-capped Warbler *Setophaga pityophila*. This species is only found in the pine barrens of eastern Cuba, Grand Bahama and Abaco. In Cuba, it is a common, but a very local permanent resident in the far western and the far eastern mountains. We had great views of at least twenty individuals on 9 November 2012 at Cabañas de los Pinos while at in Pinar del Río Province.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba, we recorded this species on every day on tour. We had a high of four individuals on 8 November 2012 while birding at Guanahacabibes National Park (Maria la Gorda & La Bajada).

Prairie Warbler *Setophaga discolor*. Common winter resident and transient within Cuba, we recorded one to several on 7 days of the trip. Our high total was of 12 birds at Las Salinas on 11 November 2012.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*. While considered to be an uncommon winter resident and transient in Cuba, we found it to be somewhat more common than that. We recorded a total of seventeen birds, with between one and four individuals on a total of seven days of the tour.

***Yellow-headed Warbler** *Teretistris fernandinae*. Common permanent resident but restricted to forests and thickets of central and western Cuba. This and the following species have nearly identical vocalizations, and fortunately they are allopatric in Cuba. We recorded this species on 7, 8, and 10 November 2012, with a high of twenty-two on 8 November 2012 at Guanahacabibes National Park (Maria la Gorda & La Bajada). This is a flocking species, and when seeing or hearing one, we became accustomed to seeing up to four or five individuals in the group.

***Oriente Warbler** *Teretistris fornsi fornsi*. Common but restricted to central and eastern Cuba where it does not overlap with the former species. This was one of the most desired species not so much due to its rarity, but because we really only stood a good chance of locating it at one place, in the Sierra Cubitas near Camagüey in Camagüey Province. On the afternoon of 13 November 2012, even though we were running out of daylight and dodging sporadic rain, we located a small flock of 5 individuals at Sierra de Cubitas near sunset.

PASSERIFORMES: Thraupidae

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra rubra*. Rare winter resident and transient in Cuba. We found one individual at El Carmelo on 11 November 2012 while searching the woods for a Fernandina's Flicker, and an additional three at La Belén on 13 November 2012.

****Western Spindalis** *Spindalis zena pretrei*. Common permanent resident in Cuba, this endemic subspecies was found on 6 days in the field. We recorded a high of five individuals on 7 November 2012 while in the field within Guanahacabibes National Park, particularly near the large marsh complex where the Eastern Phoebe was found and also at Maria la Gorda.

Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus*. Overall a rare permanent resident within Cuba, but locally common in several pockets of habitat in the far west and the far southeast. We recorded this species daily from 6 – 9 November 2012, always feeding on fruiting trees. The high count was of four individuals while at Guanahacabibes National Park, and we also had several more at Cueva de los Portales (where Ché Guevarra made his headquarters during the Cuban Missile Crisis) on 9 November 2012.

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

***Cuban Grassquit** *Tiaris canorus*. Common permanent resident only in the far eastern provinces, it is rapidly declining in many of the areas in the central and western portions of the country due to habitat alteration and the cage bird pet trade. Our best and only chance for finding this bird was in an overgrown field within sight of our hotel in the area which we deemed to be the “Chigger Ranch” near San Diego de los Baños on 9 November 2012. Although we missed it on 6 November 2012, we hit gold on the 9th when we observed an estimated eight individuals at the edge of a field of corn in the same area.

Yellow-faced Grassquit *Tiaris olivaceus*. Common permanent resident in Cuba. We recorded this species on 9 days while in the field, with a high of 10 individuals at La Turba on 11 November 2012.

****Cuban Bullfinch** *Melopyrrha nigra nigra*. Common permanent resident on Cuba, it is also a popular cage bird because of its attractive song. We recorded this species on three consecutive days (7 – 9 November 2012) while at Guanahacabibes National Park and Cueva de los Portales, with a high count of five individuals at the former site on 8 November 2012.

***Zapata Sparrow** *Torreornis inexpectata inexpectata*. Local, highly vulnerable and rare endemic species which is found in three highly isolated populations. The **Red Book** mentions “... three racially distinct populations of this scrub-dwelling emberizid occur in Cuba, in the Zapata Swamp, on Cayo Coco, and on a small stretch of the south-east coast, and the total numbers appear small; each population occupies a somewhat different habitat and faces a different threat.” This was undoubtedly one of the most sought-after species for the trip, and we were not disappointed. We found two very accommodating birds on 11 November 2012 down the road and trails at La Turba. We all enjoyed close views of what seemed to be a pair as they performed raised-wing display/greeting/contact behavior for us. Ample photographs were obtained as well. The population that we recorded is believed to occur only within a 5-10 km² area within the Zapata Swamp.

PASSERIFORMES: Cardinalidae

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*. A rare transient and very rare winter resident to Cuba, Isla de Pinos and to some of the larger cays. Several in the group heard one bird calling on several occasions on 10 November 2012 while at Bermejas.

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*. Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. The group saw or heard this species only in the far west while at Guanahacabibes National Park. We recorded one or two daily on 6 – 8 November 2012.

PASSERIFORMES: Icteridae

***Red-shouldered Blackbird** *Agelaius assimilis*. Rare but locally common endemic in western and central Cuba. We recorded this species on three different days, all while based out of the Zapata Swamp and Playa Larga areas. On 10 November 2012, we saw eight at La Cuchilla as they skulked in the cattails and reeds along the road. Then on 11 November 2012 we came across a large group of 98 near La Boca de Guamá, and then on 12 November 2012 while departing from Playa Larga - Hotel Horizontes and driving north we recorded an additional 25 individuals.

****Tawny-shouldered Blackbird** *Agelaius humeralis scopulus*. Common permanent resident on Cuba, being found primarily in open forests and along the edges of forests. This is a near-endemic, with the other population being found only on Haiti. We recorded this species on 6 days on the trip, with a high count of 150 individuals on 13 November 2012 while at La Belén.

****Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna hippocrepis*. Common permanent resident in Cuba, we recorded this species on nine days of the trip, with most of the sightings in the west-central and east-central portions of the country from Guanahacabibes National Park in the west to Najasa in Camagüey Province. There has been much written and discussed about this subspecies being raised to species level in the near future, so we should stay informed on that matter. According to Cuban ornithologists, it is only a matter of time for this split to occur.

***Cuban Blackbird** *Dives atroviolaceus*. Common permanent resident throughout the country, we recorded this species on every day during the trip. We recorded a high of seventy-seven individuals on 6 November 2012 while at Hotel Miramar and then en route from Havana to San Diego de los Baños, the "chigger ranch" near San Diego de los Baños and en route from there to Guanahacabibes National Park at Maria la Gorda. We had little trouble finding this species in any portion of the country that we visited.

****Greater Antillean Grackle** *Quiscalus niger gundlachii* and *Q. n. caribaeus*. There were two subspecies involved on this trip, with *Q. n. caribaeus* being found in western Cuba at the beginning of the trip, and *Q. n. gundlachii* being found in the central and eastern portions of the country toward the end of the trip. We found this species to be common to abundant throughout, being recorded on every day of the tour. We counted a high of 130+ on the drive from Playa Larga to El Carmelo to Camagüey on 12 November 2012.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*. Common permanent resident on Cuba, we recorded small numbers on six days total. Our high count was of 15 birds at La Cuchilla on 10 November 2012.

* **Cuban Oriole** *Icterus melanopsis*. Formerly known as the Greater Antillean or Black-cowled Oriole. The taxon was formerly lumped with the Bahama Oriole (*Icterus northropi*), Hispaniolan Oriole (*Icterus dominicensis*), and Puerto Rican Oriole (*Icterus portoricensis*) into a single species until all four were elevated to full species in 2010. Common permanent resident in Cuba, primarily in the lowlands throughout the country. We recorded birds on eight days of the trip, with a high count on 6 individuals at Guanahacabibes National Park (Maria la Gorda & La Bajada) on 8 November 2012.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*. Uncommon winter resident and transient throughout Cuba, Isla de Pinos and Cayo Coco. We recorded a single individual on 9 November 2012 while at Cueva de los Portales.

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus domesticus* (introduced). Common permanent resident throughout Cuba. We found this species to be common throughout the trip in all urban settings. A high of 15 were counted on 13 November in and around Camagüey.

Totals: 156 species

Endemics: 21 species

Additional Endemic Subspecies or Forms: 17

BIRDING LOCATIONS:

La Habana Province

Havana
Hotel Miramar grounds

Pinar del Rio Province

San Diego de los Baños
Cueva de los Portales
Cabañas de los Pinos
"chigger ranch"
Guanahacabibes National Park
Maria la Gorda
La Bajada

Matanzas Province

Playa Larga – Hotel Horizontes
Zapata Swamp
Bermejas

La Cuchilla
Caleta Buena
Soplillar
La Turba
Las Salinas Wildlife Refuge
Playa Girón (museum)
El Carmelo
La Boca de Guamá
Australia
Batey Buena Ventura

Camagüey Province

Camagüey
La Belén Preserve
Sierra Cubitas
Najasa (vicinity)

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Cuban Trogon *Priotelus temnurus temnurus*. Cabañas de los Pinos, Cuba. 9 November 2012