

JAMAICA

You wouldn't know from our week's birding on Jamaica that they had just experienced one of the driest winters on record. On our first day there were still water use restrictions for Kingston, and reservoirs everywhere were very low. The spigot turned on with our arrival – not only with the rain, but also bird breeding activity. Everywhere we looked birds were building nests—an Orangequit disappeared into a dead cecropia leaf with a filament, a Rufous-tailed Flycatcher gathered mouthfuls of shredded bark, White-eyed Thrushes vanished with globs of mud—and birds were singing everywhere. We were bombarded with endemics at every stop and already by the afternoon of day one, we had had at least cursory looks at 22. In the following days we would gradually accrue perfect looks at every endemic species, most of the subspecies, and still have time to marvel at the many endemic plants, butterflies, snails, and even a dragonfly and damselfly never photographed in the wild before.

Jamaican Mangos were the first endemic bird to greet the group already before we loaded our luggage to head to our first birding destination. Before we plunged into the lush eastern end of the island, we looked around our hotel for migrants, where Cape May Warbler, American Redstart and Northern Parula were highlights. We also saw several of the resident form of Yellow Warbler, Bananaquits, a Common Ground-Dove on a nest, and incredibly loud and territorial Vervain Hummingbirds. At Hector's River we spotted the White-tailed Tropicbirds from the highway even before we had a chance to slow down, and their chattering voices given in display flights close to the cliffs were audible from the vehicle.

The parts of two days spent birding on the Ecclesdown Road were fantastic. Jamaican Tody was one bird everyone thought they had seen to their hearts desire, securing it as the trip favorite, but even better views were to come. We lucked out with a foraging pair of Jamaican Blackbirds and a responsive and close Blue Mountain Vireo that would be the only one we saw this trip. The afternoon resulted in a group of close, loud Jamaican Crows babbling their odd call and flocks of Black-billed Parrots, while the morning was better for close and colorful Jamaican Spindalis, a handsome Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, and a perfect male Black-billed Streamertail.

Even our hotel grounds were birdy—Jamaican Mangos and Streamertails were using the feeders, a Bananaquit was nesting in a potted plant supporting one of the feeders, and groups of Jamaican Spindalises cavorted in the treetops. Our second attempt for the Jamaican Owl, after hearing two incessantly begging young the first night, was a fantastic success when the adult flew in and landed in a tree below eye level.

We had a warm welcome at Green Castle Estate by Bob and Adrienne, where a Northern Potoo on its day roost was staked out, while a pair each of American and Caribbean Coot and a handsome male Red-billed Streamertail performed nicely. Lunch by Miss Rose and crew was delicious and well worth waiting for. The butterflies and dragonflies here were also particularly numerous.

On into the high elevations above Kingston, after a brief stop for our first Antillean Palm Swifts, we had time to make just one stop to see what was about. Before long, we were looking at a Crested Quail-Dove in perfect view, which later began singing from a visible perch, where we could either watch it in the scope or turn the other way and watch a curious Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo. Our hotel here was very birdy, especially in the morning when a Sad Flycatcher and a Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo came in to glean moths that had been attracted by the night lights. The hummingbird feeders were particularly busy with Red-billed Streamertails, a mixed flock of several migrant wood-warblers worked around the yard, and a very rare Lincoln's Sparrow foraged on the ground with a Yellow-faced Grassquit. Birding in the high elevation cloud forests was worth it just for listening to the haunting song of the Rufous-throated Solitaires, which we also saw quite well. A Greater Antillean Elaenia was a treat, seen on very few tours, and we had uncommonly good views of a Yellow-shouldered Grassquit.

JAMAICA: Bird List...2

After a successful stop at Portland Cottage for the Bahama Mockingbird and Stolid Flycatcher, we dodged a rainstorm on our way to Marshall's Pen. Our stay here was wonderful. Here we caught up on a few species that we hadn't seen or had seen only briefly and moved them into the "cracking view" category, such as Jamaican Elaenia, Jamaican Becard, Caribbean Dove, and White-eyed Thrush. One never tired of seeing the Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoos, Jamaican Todies, Jamaican Woodpeckers, and Loggerhead Kingbirds, most of which were available at any time.

We did very well in the Cockpit County, getting good views of perched Yellow-billed Parrot and Ring-billed Pigeon. We heard Plain Pigeon very well, now quite a rare bird on the island, and an unobtrusive little damselfly turned out to be a little-known and never before photographed endemic that breeds in bromeliads. The trip to the southwestern lowlands was also a success, with Yellow-breasted Crake (worth standing in the light rain) and a lovely post rain shower visit to the marshes of the Black River Upper Morass where a few West Indian Whistling-Ducks, Purple Gallinule, and an amazing Least Bittern entertained us. A Northern Harrier flew over the marsh providing one of very few island records (perhaps just the second). One of the most memorable sightings here was a Barn Owl (the regional subspecies with very white wings) flying right at us over the marsh while it was still light. The face seen through binoculars or scope was unforgettable.

A final morning's walk at Marshall's Pen was followed by a few hours of down time due to an unexpected rain event. We nonetheless managed to see or hear 18 endemic species and an additional 12 species during this time, and saw one of only a few records of Gray Catbird for the Island. The scenic drive to Montego Bay was interrupted only by the chance to have Streamertails, Mangos and grassquits feed from our hands at Rockland's Bird Sanctuary as well as the requisite roadside stop to check the sewage ponds, where a single West Indian Whistling-Duck joined the rafts of Least Grebes, Ruddy Ducks and Blue-winged Teal. Those who had a later flight the next day enjoyed some light birding near the airport where our final and 138th species (the most this tour has ever seen in 11 years) appeared in the form of three migrant Bobolinks, soon to continue north over Cuba and on to the mainland.

Bird List:

Column A = number of tours out of nine on which this species has been recorded

Column B = number of days this species was seen on the 2010 tour

Column C = maximum daily count for this species on the 2010 tour

H = heard only, N = nesting evidence observed, x = seen in 2010

Notes: (E) = Jamaican endemic species, (ES) = Jamaican endemic subspecies, (I) = introduced

A		B	C	
1	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck			<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>
9	West Indian Whistling-Duck	2	12	<i>Dendrocygna arborea</i>
9	Blue-winged Teal	3	40	<i>Anas discors</i>
1	Ring-necked Duck			<i>Aythya collaris</i>
5	Masked Duck			<i>Nomonyx dominicus</i>
7	Ruddy Duck	1	250	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>
9	Least Grebe	3	35	<i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i>
9	Pied-billed Grebe	3	6	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>
9	White-tailed Tropicbird	1	8	<i>Phaethon lepturus</i>
1	Brown Booby			<i>Sula leucogaster</i>
9	Brown Pelican	5	30	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>
1	cormorant species			<i>Phalacrocorax</i> sp.
9	Magnificent Frigatebird	7	133	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>

JAMAICA: Bird List...3

1	American Bittern				Botaurus lentiginosus
5	Least Bittern	2	3		Ixobrychus exilis
8	Great Blue Heron	4	7		Ardea herodias
9	Great Egret	6	75		Ardea alba
9	Snowy Egret	7	35		Egretta thula
9	Little Blue Heron	4	5		Egretta caerulea
9	Tricolored Heron	2	5		Egretta tricolor
6	Reddish Egret				Egretta rufescens
9	Cattle Egret	9	500		Bubulcus ibis
9	Green Heron	3	3		Butorides virescens
8	Black-crowned Night-Heron	2	6		Nycticorax nycticorax
9	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	4	4		Nyctanassa violacea
1	White Ibis				Eudocimus albus
9	Glossy Ibis	3	8		Plegadis falcinellus
9	Turkey Vulture	7	50		Cathartes aura
7	Osprey	2	2		Pandion haliaetus
1	Northern Harrier	1	1		Circus cyaneus
9	Red-tailed Hawk	6	6		Buteo jamaicensis
6	American Kestrel (dark morph)				Falco sparverius sparverioides
9	American Kestrel (light morph)	7	12		Falco sparverius sparverioides
3	American Kestrel (intermediate)				Falco sparverius sparverioides
3	Merlin	2	2		Falco columbarius
3	Peregrine Falcon	1	1		Falco peregrinus
7	Clapper Rail				Rallus longirostris
1	Sora				Porzana carolina
2	Yellow-breasted Crake	1	1		Porzana flaviventer
8	Purple Gallinule	2	2		Porphyrio martinica
9	Common Moorhen	4	180	N	Gallinula chloropus
9	American Coot	2	6		Fulica americana
8	Caribbean Coot	1	2		Fulica caribaea
5	Limpkin	1	2	H	Aramus guarauna
9	Black-bellied Plover	2	5		Pluvialis squatarola
7	Wilson's Plover	1	8		Charadrius wilsonia
9	Semipalmated Plover	4	30		Charadrius semipalmatus
9	Killdeer	4	4		Charadrius vociferus
9	Black-necked Stilt	5	20		Himantopus mexicanus
9	Northern Jacana	3	6	N	Jacana spinosa
9	Spotted Sandpiper	6	15		Actitis macularius
2	Solitary Sandpiper	1	1		Tringa solitaria
7	Greater Yellowlegs	2	3		Tringa melanoleuca
7	Willet	1	2		Tringa semipalmata
9	Lesser Yellowlegs	3	12		Tringa flavipes
4	Whimbrel				Numenius phaeopus
8	Ruddy Turnstone	2	15		Arenaria interpres
1	Red Knot				Calidris canutus
2	Sanderling				Calidris alba
9	Semipalmated Sandpiper	2	4		Calidris pusilla
3	Western Sandpiper				Calidris mauri
9	Least Sandpiper	4	125		Calidris minutilla
1	White-rumped Sandpiper				Calidris fuscicollis
1	Baird's Sandpiper				Calidris bairdii
2	Stilt Sandpiper				Calidris himantopus
6	Short-billed Dowitcher				Limnodromus griseus
9	Laughing Gull	6	75		Larus atricilla
5	Least Tern	1	10		Sternula antillarum

JAMAICA: Bird List...4

3	Gull-billed Tern				<i>Geochelidon nilotica</i>
1	Caspian Tern				<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
9	Royal Tern	6	35		<i>Thalasseus maxima</i>
8	Sandwich Tern	4	6		<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
9	Rock Pigeon (I)	5	42		<i>Columba livia</i>
9	White-crowned Pigeon	7	20		<i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>
3	Plain Pigeon (ES)	1	2	H	<i>Patagioenas inornata exigua</i>
9	Ring-tailed Pigeon (E)	4	75		<i>Patagioenas caribaea</i>
9	White-winged Dove	9	50		<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>
9	Zenaida Dove	8	14		<i>Zenaida aurita</i>
7	Mourning Dove	1	2		<i>Zenaida macroura</i>
9	Common Ground-Dove (ES)	8	60	N	<i>Columbina passerina jamaicensis</i>
9	Caribbean Dove (ES)	6	6		<i>Leptotila jamaicensis jamaicensis</i>
9	Crested Quail-Dove (E)	4	4		<i>Geotrygon versicolor</i>
9	Ruddy Quail-Dove	5	6		<i>Geotrygon montana</i>
9	Olive-throated Parakeet (ES)	6	14		<i>Aratinga nana nana</i>
8	Green-rumped Parrotlet (I)	1	2		<i>Forpus passerinus</i>
9	Yellow-billed Parrot (E)	2	15		<i>Amazona collaria</i>
9	Black-billed Parrot (E)	2	30		<i>Amazona agilis</i>
8	Mangrove Cuckoo	2	2	H	<i>Coccyzus minor</i>
9	Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo (E)	6	6		<i>Coccyzus pluvialis</i>
9	Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo (E)	5	5		<i>Coccyzus vetula</i>
9	Smooth-billed Ani	7	35		<i>Crotophaga ani</i>
5	Barn Owl	1	5		<i>Tyto alba</i>
9	Jamaican Owl (E)	6	6		<i>Pseudoscops grammicus</i>
5	Antillean Nighthawk	4	4		<i>Chordeiles gundlachii</i>
9	Northern Potoo (ES)	4	4		<i>Nyctibius j. jamaicensis</i>
6	Black Swift	2	8		<i>Cypseloides n. niger</i>
9	White-collared Swift	6	175		<i>Streptoprocne zonaris pallidifrons</i>
9	Antillean Palm-Swift	3	50		<i>Tachornis p. phoenicobia</i>
9	Jamaican Mango (E)	6	6		<i>Anthracothorax mango</i>
9	Red-billed Streamertail (E)	5	25		<i>Trochilus p. polytmus</i>
9	Black-billed Streamertail (E)	3	9		<i>Trochilus polytmus scitulus</i>
9	Vervain Hummingbird (ES)	7	7		<i>Mellisuga m. minima</i>
9	Jamaican Tody (E)	7	10		<i>Todus todus</i>
8	Belted Kingfisher	1	1		<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>
9	Jamaican Woodpecker (E)	7	8		<i>Melanerpes radiolatus</i>
9	Jamaican Elaenia (E)	5	5		<i>Myiopagis cotta</i>
4	Greater Antillean Elaenia (ES)	1	1		<i>Elaenia f. fallax</i>
9	Jamaican Pewee (E)	4	4		<i>Contopus pallidus</i>
9	Sad Flycatcher (E)	6	6		<i>Myiarchus barbirostris</i>
9	Rufous-tailed Flycatcher (E)	7	7	N	<i>Myiarchus validus</i>
9	Stolid Flycatcher (ES)	2	4		<i>Myiarchus s. stolidus</i>
9	Gray Kingbird	7	20		<i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i>
9	Loggerhead Kingbird (ES)	7	10		<i>Tyrannus caudifasciatus jamaicensis</i>
9	Jamaican Becard (E)	5	5	N	<i>Pachyramphus niger</i>
9	Jamaican Vireo (E)	7	10		<i>Vireo modestus</i>
9	Blue Mountain Vireo (E)	3	3		<i>Vireo osburni</i>
9	Black-whiskered Vireo	7	15		<i>Vireo a. altiloquus</i>
9	Jamaican Crow (E)	4	21		<i>Corvus jamaicensis</i>
4	Caribbean Martin				<i>Progne dominicensis</i>
1	Tree Swallow	1	1		<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>
4	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	1	1		<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>
9	Cave Swallow (ES)	5	30	N	<i>Petrochelidon fulva poeciloma</i>
9	Barn Swallow	8	500		<i>Hirundo rustica</i>

JAMAICA: Bird List...5

9	Rufous-throated Solitaire (ES)	6	8		Myadestes genibarbis solitarius
9	White-eyed Thrush (E)	7	7	N	Turdus jamaicensis
9	White-chinned Thrush (E)	8	20	N	Turdus aurantius
1	Gray Catbird	1	1		Dumetella carolinensis
9	Northern Mockingbird	8	25		Mimus polyglottos orpheus
9	Bahama Mockingbird (ES)	1	4		Mimus gundlachii hillii
9	European Starling (I)	5	8	N	Sturnus vulgaris
1	Cedar Waxwing				Bombycilla cedrorum
1	Tennessee Warbler				Vermivora peregrina
9	Northern Parula	5	5		Parula americana
9	Yellow "Golden" Warbler	4	5		Dendroica petechia eoa
3	Chestnut-sided Warbler				Dendroica pensylvanica
4	Magnolia Warbler	1	1		Dendroica magnolia
7	Cape May Warbler	6	6		Dendroica tigrina
9	Black-throated Blue Warbler	6	8		Dendroica caerulescens
1	Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warbler				Dendroica coronata
8	Black-throated Green Warbler	2	2		Dendroica virens
8	Prairie Warbler	4	4		Dendroica discolor
6	Palm Warbler				Dendroica palmarum
1	Bay-breasted Warbler				Dendroica castanea
1	Blackpoll Warbler				Dendroica striata
9	Arrowhead Warbler (E)	4	8	N	Dendroica pharetra
9	Black-and-white Warbler	6	6		Mniotilta varia
9	American Redstart	9	15		Setophaga ruticilla
6	Worm-eating Warbler	1	1		Helmitheros vermivorus
1	Swainson's Warbler				Limnithlypis swainsonii
8	Ovenbird	4	4		Seiurus aurocapillus
8	Northern Waterthrush	2	2		Seiurus noveboracensis
1	Louisiana Waterthrush				Seiurus motacilla
9	Common Yellowthroat	6	12		Geothlypis trichas
9	Bananaquit (ES)	9	40	N	Coereba f. flaveola
9	Jamaican Spindalis (E)	7	15	N	Spindalis nigricephala
9	Yellow-faced Grassquit	5	90		Tiaris o. olivacea
9	Black-faced Grassquit	4	40		Tiaris bicolor marchii
9	Yellow-shouldered Grassquit (E)	7	7	N	Loxipasser anoxanthus
9	Greater Antillean Bullfinch (ES)	6	6	N	Loxigilla violacea ruficollis
9	Orangequit (E)	7	15	N	Euneornis campestris
7	Saffron Finch (I)				Sicalis flaveola
9	Grasshopper Sparrow (ES)	1	1		Ammodramus s. savannarum
1	Lincoln's Sparrow	1	1		Melospiza lincolni
3	Rose-breasted Grosbeak				Pheucticus ludovicianus
7	Indigo Bunting	1	3		Passerina cyanea
1	Bobolink	1	3		Dolichonyx oryzivorus
9	Jamaican Blackbird (E)	3	5		Nesopsar nigerrimus
9	Greater Antillean Grackle (ES)	7	25		Quiscalus niger crassirostris
7	Shiny Cowbird	4	6		Molothrus bonariensis
9	Jamaican Oriole (ES)	7	12		Icterus l. leucopteryx
1	Baltimore Oriole				Icterus galbula
9	Jamaican Euphonia (E)	7	7	N	Euphonia jamaica
2	Nutmeg Mannikin	1	30		Lonchura punctulata