

Cuba, January 3rd – 17th 2010

Participants

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General

This trip report contains the bird observations made during a holiday trip to Cuba in January 2010. The main purpose of the trip was two-fold, to observe as many interesting birds as possible and to enjoy an interesting country with its lovely nature scenery and culture.



Cuba is a very nice, interesting and safe place to visit with an atmosphere of its own. In many ways it feels like the clocks were stopped when the revolution took place in 1959 and that many things since then have not changed. This is to a great extent caused by the US embargo which has hindered both export and import of many products as well as of technology and thereby reduced the economical development of the country. Due to this much still looks like in the fifties; the old cars, the architecture etc, but nowadays generally in a rundown condition. Also striking is the almost complete lack of commercial advertising. You see no ads for McDonalds, Coca Cola or similar but these are instead replaced by political propaganda praising the revolution and its heroes. For getting the most out of a visit here, besides birding, we recommend to read in advance about Cuba and its recent history.

We found almost all people to be very friendly and helpful and we never felt unsafe. People speak English to some extent but some Spanish will help you through the trip.

From a birding point of view it is necessary to visit several different habitats. We chose to make a selection and visited the following areas: Havana, Soroa including a visit to La Güira, the Zapata peninsula and Cayo Coco. For logistical and timing reasons we skipped Guanahacabibes and the Najasa area. A trip like ours will render many of the Cuban endemics and specialties but some will be missed, e.g. Cuban Palm Crow. Of the 24 endemic species found in Cuba (following Clement), we recorded 18. A few more could have been seen also on our route, but again, this was not a full-stop birding trip.

Travel

We flew with Cimber Sterling from Copenhagen to London and then with Virgin Atlantic from London to Havana. Our tickets were bought through Nätresebyrå in Malmö and cost 7700 SEK/adult person (app. 770 Euro) including taxes and airport fees except departure fee (CUC 25) in Havana which must be paid in CUC at the airport after check-in.

Visa is needed and should be handled at a Cuban consulate or equivalent. The cost is around 25 Euro per person.

Money

In Cuba foreigners are expected to use the Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC) which has a completely different value than the national Cuban Peso. We exchanged money (to CUC) in a number of places, getting the best rates in banks and exchange offices (1.29 CUC/Euro), and slightly lower rates in hotels and at the airport in Havana (1.26 CUC/Euro). It should be noted that US Dollars are no longer officially accepted for payment and that an additional tax of 10 % is added when exchanging US Dollars, thereby making Euros or other currencies a better option to bring.

Credit cards are only accepted in larger tourist hotels, car rental agencies etc, but hardly at all in local restaurants or Casas particulares. Cash is king in Cuba so be sure to bring enough along!



Car rental, roads and traffic

In contrary to what often is stated in other trip reports we found car rental to be a difficulty. Since we were 4 adults and 2 children with quite extensive luggage we wanted to rent a minivan/van. There are a number of companies, all local, that are recommended, either in other trip reports or by people in Cuba, e.g. Cubacars www.cubacars.com, Havanautos www.havanautos.com and Rex www.rexcarrental.com. They all seem reliable but at the former two you will when booking on their websites receive an instant auto reply that the car is available and that you are expected to pay in advance on an attached link. We deferred to do so and found it extremely hard to find a solution where we could get a reliable confirmed booking before paying. In the end we managed to establish phone and email contact with Rex and succeeded to hire two class D cars (VW Passat). Rex could also provide a child seat for a minor extra cost. We recommend organizing car hire well in advance and if possible to hire standard cars and also try to establish direct contact with the company. Car hire in Cuba is also very expensive. We paid in total 10,700 SEK (app. 1,070 Euros) per car for 11 days (6th to

16th January) and another 440 SEK (app. 45 Euros) for the child seat for the same period. The cars received were rather new and generally in good condition and we drove totally 2,100 km each.

Traffic is limited especially when you travel on the autopista. In towns, certainly in Havana, traffic is more intense although very moderate compared to international standards. People also behave friendly in the traffic and the pace is low. Do however count on meeting bicycles, tractors, horse and carriage and other things also on the autopista. The roads are generally ok with moderately distributed pot holes but the smaller roads are of variable standard.



Some information about taxi in Havana can be useful. We tried several times to get a ride with the old taxi cars from the fifties but it seems as they do not pick up foreigners. They are more used as small buses, travelling on more or less fixed routes, and people jump on and off. A lot of cars without a taxi sign tried to give us a ride but we kept to the official ones. Taxi fares varied a lot from about 2.90 CUC up to 10 CUC for travel within Havana for approximately the same distance but interestingly enough it was cheapest when the car used its taximeter.

Accommodation

We had pre-booked all hotels and Casas Particulares, a sort of Cuban bed & breakfast in private homes, in advance. Also this was somewhat tricky since internet information and booking is limited. A phone call might help if you can find a phone number and can manage at least some very basic Spanish. We had very good help from www.tripadvisor.com to choose places to stay. All bookings except one (in Morón) worked out fine but in that case another Casa Particulares was easily found. There are plenty of Casas to find throughout Cuba and these are also more interesting to stay at than ordinary hotels, furthermore the food is much better here. Booking in advance of course lowers your flexibility but we did not experience that as a problem.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Accommodation</i>	<i>Price and comments</i>
Sat 2	Hotel Pembridge Palace 55, Price's Square, W2 4PX London Phone: +44 207 229 6262 www.pembridgehotel.co.uk	Normal two star standard, paid by the airline due to a schedule change.
Sun 3 to Tue 5	At Casa Mer, Dr. Wilfredo Monzon 28 street No. 206 (between 19 and 21 streets) El Vedado, Havana Phone: +53 7833 4412 Booked through another Casa, "La Casa de Ana", Phone +53 7833 5128, E-mail analinacuba@gmail.com Web: www.anahavana.com	Very nice house built in the 40-ies in art deco inspired style. The landlady was very nice and helpful and we can strongly recommend staying here. The rooms were of average standard. 30 CUC/room

Wed 6 to Fri 8	Hotel Villa Soroa Carretera Soroa, km 8, Candelaria, Pinar del Rio Phone: +506 643 3273 Fax +506 643 3296	OK hotel where we stayed in cabins of relative good standard. There were continuous problems with the hot water. Good place to stay because of its vicinity to the Mirador Trail and the orchid garden. Pre-booked and prepaid in Sweden, app. 140 Euro per room for three nights including breakfast.
Sat 9 to Tue 12	At Mr. Enrique Rivas in Caletón Booked through El Chino Phone: +53 45 98 7373, Mobile: +53 1 5253 9004	Very good place to stay. Very nice and friendly people, close to the beach and serving excellent food. El Chino lives next door. 55 CUC/room incl breakfast and dinner.
Wed 13	Casa Particular Sra Marel Vázquez Rodríguez Serafin Sánchez No 77, e Marti y Castillo Morón, Ciego de Avila Phone: +53 33 503186 E-mail: marelv@enet.cu	Very nice place, nice people and good food. 25 CUC/room. Recommended!
Thu 14 to Fri 16	Hotel BlueBay Jardines del Rey, Cayo Coco, Ciego de Avila Phone: +53 33 3 23 50 E-Mail: alojamiento@bluebay.co.cu www.bluebayresorts.com/en/hotel/bluebay-cayo-coco.html	An all-inclusive hotel. Spacious rooms and good standard. Food was moderately ok. 175 euro/room for two nights
Sat 16	At Casa Mer, Dr. Wilfredo Monzon 28 street No. 206 (between 19 and 21 streets) El Vedado, Havana Phone: +53 7833 4412 Booked through another Casa, "La Casa de Ana", Phone +53 7833 5128, E-mail analinacuba@gmail.com Web: www.anahavana.com	See above
Sun 17	Night in the aircraft	
Mon 18	@ home	

Literature, trip reports and websites

For the birds of Cuba there are two books that are useful. **Orlando Garrido & Arturo Kirkconnell "Birds of Cuba"** which is the main reference work with good information in the text but with pictures of moderate quality. Furthermore, it is useful to bring **David Sibley's "The North American Bird Guide"** for wintering North American birds such as wood warblers etc.

There are numerous travel guides covering Cuba but we mainly used **"Första klass reseguide, Cuba"** in Swedish, **"Eyewitness travel guide Cuba"** in English. It covered all the information we needed for this trip regarding general information, culture, food etc. We also, as mentioned above, recommend reading something about Cuba's recent history for a better understanding of the country

A good selection of birding trip reports is found at www.travellingbirder.com/tripreports/default.php

Birding guides

Cuba is a country that you generally can bird on your own, with the exception of the Zapata peninsula where a local guide is necessary. There are several options but we chose to contact the most well-known guide, Mr. Orestes Martínez Garcia, also known as “El Chino de Zapata”, who was booked for three half day excursions. El Chino of course has a detailed knowledge of the birds of the Zapata as well as several stakeouts of important species but he also can arrange accommodation and provide guiding in other parts of the country. We paid 60 CUC per half day (dawn – lunch). Unfortunately the unusually cold and windy weather gave us quite some problems to find all our target species although El Chino was working hard to find them for us.

El Chino can be contacted via e-mail chino.zapata@gmail.com, phone +53 4598 7373 or mobile +53 1 5253 9004.

Localities

Most localities are rather well described in various travel reports and we generally found them without any problems. The maps in the reports of Mark Sutton (2000) and van de Voude (2001) were still accurate and very helpful. A few updates though:

La Güira: The road leading up to Cabañas los Pinos was in very bad condition and just about driveable with an ordinary car. A 4x4 might be necessary here in the near future unless the road will be improved. From the entrance through the stone arch “Hacienda Cortina” it was 7.0 kms to the turn-off left, just before the cabañas.

Cayo Coco: The road leading to Flamingo beach, which is a well known area for Zapata Sparrow, had been broadened and the grassy shoulders of the road had been filled out with sand and gravel all the way to the forest edge. When we visited the site, a lot of trucks were also passing to and from a construction site further up the road, making birding less pleasant. We instead found Zapata Sparrow at Cueva de Jabali, along the road in the open area 50 meters before the sign Cueva de Jabali.



Cayo Coco specialties: Bahama Mockingbird, Zapata Sparrow and Cuban Gnatcatcher

Cayo Guillermo: We found Bahama Mockingbird in the lower scrub on the right hand side (north) of the road when coming from the hotel area, 3 km after the end of the road pavement, just after a track leading north past an old abandoned house, i.e. not far from the western tip of the island.

Itinerary

Saturday 2nd January

Our travel started when we gathered at Kastrup airport, Copenhagen, Denmark. The group consisted of Hans-Åke and Karin Gustavsson and Maria, Thomas, Kajsa (4 years) and Alice (1 year) Lindblad. We travelled with Cimber Sterling to London where we, due to a flight time change, had to stop over night before taking the Virgin Atlantic flight to Havana.

Sunday 3rd January

Sunday morning started normal but cold weather in London created traffic problems. Well at Gatwick we found ourselves in the midst of enormous queues, both due to traffic problems and delays but also due to increased security controls. However, the flight was also delayed so we made it safe in time. An eventless but long flight (almost 10 hours) took us to Havana arriving just after sunset. After the immigration control our luggage came quickly and we could leave the terminal. We exchanged money to get Cuban Convertibles (CUC) before leaving the airport. We recommend exchanging only a small sum at the airport since you get a (slightly) better rate in Havana. Taxi to our pre-booked Casa Particulares in the Vedado part of Havana cost 40 CUC. We were well received and installed ourselves in the two rooms.

Monday 4th January

Monday started with breakfast at the Casa. A **Cuban Emerald** was feeding in the garden which was a nice start. We walked to the nearby famous cemetery, Necrópolis de Colón, and spent some time there. **Palm Warblers** were numerous and we had our first encounter with **Red-legged Thrush**. The cemetery is well worth a visit, both for the superb graveyard art and for the birds.

We then took a taxi to the Capitolio and spent the afternoon walking around in the city centre. There are fantastic buildings and the street life is entertaining. Of course the cars from the fifties are present and very well worth mentioning. Most are in bad shape but some are really nice!

In parks and around we saw a **Yellow-throated Warbler**, several **Cuban Blackbirds** and over to the old castle north of the main city a few **Antillean Palm-swifts** were circling.

We had dinner at a small local restaurant/Paladar which was an interesting experience but the food was moderately good.

Tuesday 5th January

We had breakfast at the casa after some early birding in the neighbourhood which revealed nothing special. After this, the day was spent touring in central Havana. We started with trying to visit Real Fábrica de Tabacos Partagás cigar factory but unfortunately it was closed for visits for the time being. Some good birds were seen, e.g. **Antillean Palm-swift**, **Cuban Blackbird** and **American Herring Gull**. We also saw a **Peregrine Falcon** hunting around the Capitolio. Among tourist attractions we followed the guide books but a visit to the hand-craft market in the harbour proved to be really worth a visit. We had lunch at La Muralla in the old plaza, Plaza Vieja, which was a very pleasant surprise. They brewed their own beer which was very good, all three labels, and the food was also nice.

In the evening we had dinner at Restaurant La Roca which we can recommend. Two of us had Langosta Mariposa which was excellent.

Wednesday 6th January

The day started with focusing on getting the rental cars. It was not really difficult, just very bureaucratic and slow. For example, we had to sign a full separate contract for the child seat. It is necessary to bring both driving license and passport when you hire a car even for the extra driver, if not present.

Back at the casa we packed ourselves and our luggage in the cars and drove off towards Soroa about 80 km west of Havana. Driving was easy although road signs were rare. People are very helpful with giving directions and well out on the autopista traffic was sparse. It took about 1,5 hours to get to Soroa. We checked in and repacked for some birding.

We went to the Orchid garden situated just 200 m south of hotel Villa Soroa. It is a small but very well nursed garden. The orchids were beautiful and we also saw several new birds, e.g. **West Indian Woodpecker**, **White-crowned Pigeon**, **Black-throated Blue Warbler** and **Red-legged Honeycreeper**. In the evening we had dinner at Villa Soroa. Avoid the wines since they seem to have been stored at too hot temperature and had gone foul.



Cuban Tody, Cuban Emerald, orchid from the orchid garden in Soroa

Thursday 7th January

We had an early morning start and headed for the Mirador Trail. Quite an easy walk and the birds are relatively easy seen. We saw **Cuban Trogon**, **Great Lizard-cuckoo**, **Cuban Solitaire**, **Cuban Tody** and **Yellow-headed Warbler**. There were not an overwhelming amount of birds but the variation was good.

After breakfast we went to Pinar del Rio and paid a visit to a tobacco plantation. We gave a man with a broken down car a lift on the day before and as pay-back he now took us to his workplace in the plantation. He gave us an interesting guided tour where he explained the tobacco plantation and the manufacturing of cigars.



We had lunch in Pinar del Rio where our two families split up. The Lindblad family went back to Villa Soroa for a very cold swim in the pool while the Gustavsson part visited a small liqueur manufacturer. On the way back two **Least Grebes** were seen in a road-side pool as well as some **Brown Pelicans** and **Snail Kites**.

Friday 8th January

After breakfast we headed for La Güira national park. Main attraction here is the **Olive-capped Warbler**. The road in the park proved to be a challenge as it was badly damaged and required a careful study of where we could drive over potholes. However, it all went fine and we found ourselves at the disused Cabañas los Pinos where several **Olive-capped Warblers** were singing among the pine trees. They were a bit difficult to find but we managed to see them well after some work.

After lunch at a Paladar in San Diego, which proved to have excellent food, we split up again: the Lindblads went back for a rest by the pool while the Gustavssons visited the Parque La Güira before returning, stopping for a female **Hooded Merganser** in some roadside pools close to Soroa.



Louisiana Waterthrush

Saturday 9th January

The last morning at Soroa and we headed for another walk up the Mirador Trail. We saw more or less the same birds as earlier but a singing **Blue-headed Quail-dove** was new as well as **Ovenbird**. Meanwhile Maria, Karin and the children visited the waterfall nearby which was nice although the steps were slippery and challenging due to some rain. After breakfast and packing we went for the long drive to the Zapata peninsula. It was raining heavily most part of the journey and the only stop was at a lake close to Havana just south of the road giving us an inland **Royal Tern** and a flock of about 200 **Ring-necked Ducks**.

The autopista disappeared when we entered Havana and it was somewhat difficult to find the other autopista leading east, Autopista Central. But, by asking some people we soon were back on track. In the afternoon we arrived in Playa Larga and Caletón where we installed ourselves at Enriques Casa Particulares booked for us by El Chino. A short evening trip gave us our first **Cuban Pygmy-Owl**. We had dinner at the Casa, superb langostas!



Stygian Owl, Cuban Pygmy-Owl, American kestrel

Sunday 10th January

In Zapata we had pre-booked El Chino for guiding us around. This first day we headed out into the Zapata swamp to the area of La Turba. The weather was unusually cold and windy due to a low pressure pushing down cold air from the north. This made it difficult to find birds in general throughout our stay in Zapata. We saw **Red-shouldered Blackbird** and **Cuban Crow**, heard **Sora** and **Zapata Wren** but did not manage to see the latter one. We also tried for Zapata sparrow without luck. A swiftly passing **Ruddy Quail-dove** was at least some consolation.

Meanwhile the rest of the crew had toured the Bay of Pigs and also found out that the water temperature was much, much warmer than the air.

In the afternoon we visited Cueva de los Peces, a 70 m deep lagoon with nice coral reef fishes easily attracted with bread. We snorkelled in the warm sea and saw some nice fish as well as a number of **Cave Swallows** before heading back to the casa. A short stop at some mangroves gave **Cuban Black-hawk**. We had dinner at the Casa.

Monday 11th January

We started the morning birding at 6 am searching for Greater Antillean nightjar, but no luck. In general there was more bird activity than the day before but still very quiet. We walked a long tour around in the woods along different paths. El Chino found a **Stygian Owl** which was a remarkable effort; it was hardly to be seen until we had approached rather close. We also had nice views of **Grey-headed Quail-dove**. Long searches for Fernandina's Flicker were however unsuccessful.

We joined with the rest of the families; they had spent time on the beach while we were birding. We went to Playa Girón for lunch, a visit to the Museum of revolution and then to Cueva de los Peces for some more snorkelling as well as a few **Cuban Parrots**. An evening search for the nightjar was again without result. Dinner at the Casa.



Cuban Black-hawk, Olive-capped Warbler, Tawny-shouldered Blackbirds

Tuesday 12th January

We started with early morning birding and went for a site with two lagoons southwest of Palpite. These lagoons were also used for fishing and since we met several fishermen some expected birds were not present. We saw a couple of **Cuban Pygmy-Owls**, **Cuban Trogons** and heard a singing **Grey-headed Quail-dove** but the prize bird of the day was **Cuban Parakeet**, a flock of eight. El Chino had not seen any for the last three months so he was excited as well. We also had a brief view of a **Key West Quail-dove** but just as we found it a fisherman came cycling (!) along the path from the other direction and flushed the bird, very unfortunate. A normally reliable stake-out for Bee Hummingbird did not pay off either and our mood was a bit low.

We joined with the rest of the families for lunch in Playa Larga and a visit to the beach afterwards. We made a second attempt at the Bee Hummingbird stake-out in the late afternoon but none to be seen. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in the same tree was at least some compensation.

Some very unfortunate news reached us this evening. There had been an earthquake just outside Port-au-Prince in Haiti with a tsunami warning for Cuba following. We did however not understand the width of the earthquake until we got back home and our thoughts went to the people of Haiti.

Wednesday 13th January

Very early start (6 am) for **Cuban Screech-owl**, heard, and the nightjar, not heard. Hard work paid off with some Pygmy-Owls but nothing more. Even harder work finally paid off on the woodpecker account when two **Fernandina's Flickers** posed for us and we could enjoy excellent views. After that we spent one last hour at the Bee Hummingbird stake-out but again without luck.



Fernandina's Flicker, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cuban Green Woodpecker

We went back to the Casa, packed up and left at 11 am for Cayo Coco. Our first stop was in Santa Clara for a quick visit to the Che Guevara museum. From there we went directly to Morón for our

pre-booked Casa Particulares. Unfortunately the booking had failed and we had to find another place. We soon did and the new place could be recommended, great hospitality and good food. The minibar was more like a maxibar and well equipped. It seems as most (all?) casas cost 25-30 CUC per room and night.

Thursday 14th January

We had a nice breakfast at the casa before leaving Morón for Cayo Coco. On the way out we passed the famous metal cock sculpture of Morón which of course was documented on photos.

The causeway to Cayo Coco is a toll road, costing 2 CUC per car, and of course a mandatory passport and car documents control. No Cubans except those who work there are allowed to visit Cayo Coco which of course feels very strange.

We found our all-inclusive hotel after some slight problems. No signs along the main road and we had to ask for directions a number of times. Hans-Åke and Thomas took the chance of a quick check for Bahama Mockingbird but unfortunately it did not pay off. Some lazy time at the hotel in the afternoon with sun and bathing was popular for all especially the children.

Some late afternoon birding and checking out the areas for next morning resulted in **Oriente Warbler**. We had dinner at the hotel, buffet of mediocre quality, and following that the standard evening entertainment which actually was above expectations.

Friday 15th January

The morning tour went to Cueva de Jabali. We spent two hours there and had some really nice birds, **Key West Quail-dove, Cape May Warbler, Oriente Warbler, Painted Bunting** and 3 **Zapata Sparrows**.



Cuban Vireo, Oriente Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Magnolia Warbler

We parked at the parking lot and walked back along the road. The area around the cave is good, the area back towards the open area with lower vegetation is good but the Zapata Sparrows seem to prefer the area with low vegetation along the road, just before the sign with Cueva de Jabali.

The rest of the morning and early afternoon was spent with our families and mainly on the beach.

In the afternoon we went to Cayo Paredon Grande for the specialties there. It took less than an hour to drive but that was when we kept a very good pace. When we left Cayo Coco for the next island, Cayo Romano, we had to pass a bridge which definitely had seen its best days. It was not difficult to pass, just a bit scary. We went all the way out to the lighthouse and took the dirt track to the right. After some 400 – 500 m we had both a family of 6 **Cuban Gnatcatchers** as well as 3 **Thick-billed Vireos**. They were both relatively easy to find. On the way back we checked for waders. New species were a **Wilson's Plover** and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper**.

Saturday 16th January

We split up in the morning and the female part of the group started the long trip back to Havana while Thomas and Hans-Åke went to Cayo Guillermo for some final birding. After a short while with play-back a very curious **Bahama Mockingbird** came extremely close and gave excellent views. We also saw two **Cuban Black-hawks**.

After a quick breakfast at the hotel we also headed for Havana. We made a few short stops for waders and found a flock of 50 **Stilt Sandpipers** along the causeway to the mainland. At the same place we also heard a **King Rail**.

The group reconnected some 200 kms before Havana. The full trip length from Havana to Cayo Coco was about 525 km, a long drive. In Havana we stayed at the same Casa as before. For dinner we went to Restaurant Mares on Calle 23 and had langostas for 18 CUC/person, excellent food and nice live music.

Sunday 17th January

The last morning we went for pure tourism in old Havana and some last minute shopping in the Havana craft and souvenir market down Desamparado. We also went back to La Muralla in Plaza Vieja for a nice lunch before final packing. We went to the airport in very good time just in case. The airport service was however swift and after checking in and paying airport tax we spent some hours in the departure hall. The flight back was eventless.



Red-legged Thrush, La Sagra's Flycatcher, Cuban Trogon

Monday 18th January

We arrived at Gatwick in the morning and since our flight home was not due until early evening we spent the whole day in the airport. We arrived in Copenhagen at 9 pm, tired but satisfied with a very nice trip, very good birds and with a new view on a very special country.

List of species

1. **Least Grebe** *Tachybaptus dominicus*
2 in roadside ponds along the autopista near Los Palacios 7.1.
2. **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps*
12 in a lake along the autopista just west of Havana 9.1.
3. **Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis*
Rather common along the coast, fewer inland. Totally 56 birds recorded.
4. **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus*
Totally 25 during three days in Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
5. **Neotropic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*
6 La Turba 10.1, 2 Soplillar 13.1.
6. **Anhinga** *Anhinga anhinga*
1 La Turba 10.1, 1 along the autopista between Jagüey Grande and Ciego de Ávila 13.1.
7. **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens*
4 Havana 4.1, a few Zapata 9-12.1 and rather common Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
8. **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias*
Totally 33 birds recorded 6-16.1.
9. **Great Egret** *Ardea alba*
Common. Totally 155 birds recorded 6-16.1.
10. **Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula*
Common. Totally 89 birds recorded 4-16.1.
11. **Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea*
Rather common. Totally 45 birds recorded 7-16.1. Highest count: 15 La Boca 10.1.
12. **Tricolored Heron** *Egretta tricolor*
Rather common. Totally 44 birds recorded 7-16.1. Highest count: 15 Cayo Guillermo 14.1.
13. **Reddish Egret** *Egretta rufescens*
1 Cayo Coco 14.1, 7 Cayo Paredon Grande 15.1, 3 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
14. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*
Common. Recorded daily 6-17.1.
15. **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens*
1 Havana 4.1, 2 west of Pinar del Rio 7.1, 3 Parque La Güira 8.1, 2 La Turba 10.1, 2 Palpite 12.1, 2 Cayo Coco 14.1, 1 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
16. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*
2 La Turba 10.1, 3 Palpite 12.1, 2 Soplillar 13.1.
17. **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea*
2 south of Playa Larga 11.1.

18. **White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus*
4 La Turba 10.1, 15 Cayo Guillermo 14.1, c.25 Cayo Paredon Grande 15.1, c.30 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
19. **Roseate Spoonbill** *Ajaia ajaja*
3 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
20. **Wood Stork** *Mycteria americana*
1 south of Playa Larga 10.1, 1 Palpite 12.1, 1 Playa Larga 13.1.
21. **Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura*
Abundant. Recorded daily in large numbers.
22. **Caribbean Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*
10 Cayo Coco-Cayo Guillermo 14.1, 22 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
23. **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*
20 Cayo Coco 14.1
24. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors*
1 Playa Larga 10.1, 8 Cayo Guillermo 14.1, 10 Cayo Coco 14.1, c.20 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
25. **Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*
15 Cayo Coco 14.1, 5 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
26. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana*
15 Cayo Coco 14.1.
27. **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*
A dense flock of c.200 in a lake along the autopista just west of Havana 9.1.
28. **Hooded Merganser** *Lophodytes cucullatus*
1 female in roadside ponds along the autopista near Soroa 8.1.
29. **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*
1 male seen from the causeway from the main land to Cayo Coco 14.1.
30. **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*
1 Zapata 9.1, 1 Soplillar 11.1, 1 south of Playa Larga 11.1, 3 Palpite 12.1, 4 Cayo Coco 14.1, 5 Cayo Paredon Grande 15.1, 1 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
31. **Snail Kite** *Rostrhamus sociabilis*
c.10 at roadside ponds along the autopista between Soroa and Pinar de Rio 7.1 and 8.1, 1 La Turba 10.1.
32. **Northern Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*
1 along the autopista between Jagüey Grande and Santa Clara 14.1.
33. **Cuban Black Hawk** *Buteogallus gundlachi*
1 south of Playa Larga 11.1, 2 Cayo Guillermo 16.1. Often considered as a separate species and split from Common Black Hawk, e.g. by Clements.
34. **Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis*
2 Soroa 7.1, 1 La Boca 9.1, 2 Soplillar 11.1, 2 Palpite 12.1.
35. **Crested Caracara** *Caracara cheriway*
3 Palpite 12.1, 1 Soplillar 13.1, 3 Cayo Coco 14.1, 3 Cayo Coco 15.1, 1 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
36. **American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius*
Common. Totally 88 birds recorded 4-16.1

37. **Merlin** *Falco columbarius*
1 female Cayo Coco 14.1, 1 Cayo Coco 15.1.
38. **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrines*
1 adult close to the Capitolio, Havana 4.1 and 5.1.
39. **King Rail** *Rallus elegans*
1 heard Cayo Coco 16.1.
40. **Sora** *Porzana carolina*
2 heard La Turba 10.1.
41. **Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinica*
7 La Turba 10.1.
42. **Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*
1 in a small creek close to Pinar del Rio 7.1, 3 in a lake along the autopista just west of Havana 9.1.
43. **American Coot** *Fulica americana*
2 in roadside ponds along the autopista at Los Palacios 7.1, c.70 Cayo Coco 14.1.
44. **Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna*
1 Cayo Coco 16.1.
45. **Black-bellied Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*
1 south of Playa Larga 10.1, 10-25 birds daily Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
46. **Wilson's Plover** *Charadrius wilsonia*
1 Cayo Coco 15.1.
47. **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*
Numerous at Cayo Coco where 20-75 birds recorded daily 14-16.1
48. **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferous*
1-11 birds daily in the Zapata area 10-13.1, 2 Cayo Coco 15.1, 3 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
49. **American Oystercatcher** *Haematopus palliatus*
2 Playa Larga 12.1.
50. **Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus*
c.50 at ponds along the autopista near Los Palacios 7.1, heard Palpite 13.1, up to 100 daily Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
51. **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca*
2 Cayo Guillermo 14.1, 6 Cayo Coco 15.1, 3 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
52. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*
c.10 Cayo Guillermo 14.1, 15 Cayo Coco 15.1, c.15 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
53. **Willet** *Tringa semipalmata*
5 Cayo Guillermo 14.1, 1 Cayo Coco 15.1.
54. **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*
1 at ponds along the autopista near Los Palacios 7.1, 1 south of Playa Larga 10.1, 2 south of Playa Larga 11.1.
55. **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*
1 Cayo Guillermo 14.1, 3 Cayo Coco 15.1, c.15 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
56. **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus*
A flock of c.80 Cayo Guillermo 14.1 and 16.1.

57. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla*
1 Cayo Coco 15.1, c.10 Cayo Coco, at the beginning of the causeway towards the main land 16.1.
58. **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla*
c.25 at ponds along the autopista near Los Palacios 7.1, up to 100 daily Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
59. **Stilt Sandpiper** *Calidris himantopus*
A flock of c.50 Cayo Coco, at the beginning of the causeway towards the mainland 16.1.



Stilt Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs and Short-billed Dowitcher

60. **Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodroma griseus*
c.50 Cayo Guillermo 14.1, c.50 Cayo Coco 15.1, c.50 Cayo Guillermo 16.1, c.50 Cayo Coco 16.1
61. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla*
Up to 50 daily in Havana 4-6.1 as well as in Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
62. **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis*
1 first winter along the causeway from the main land to Cayo Coco 14.1, 2 first winter Cayo Coco 14.1 and 15.1, 1 adult Malecón, Havana 16.1.
63. **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus smithsonianus*
7 first winter birds Malecón, Havana 4.1.
64. **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*
Up to 10 daily at Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
65. **Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus*
1 at a lake along the autopista just west of Havana 9.1, 20-100 birds daily Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
66. **Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis*
c.20 Havana 4.1, 1 Cayo Coco 16.1, 1 Havana 17.1.
67. **Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia*
Feral birds common and recorded daily 4-17.1.
68. **White-crowned Pigeon** *Columba leucocephala*
4 Soroa 6.1, 1 Soplillar 11.1, c.10 Palpite 12.1, 2 Soplillar-Palpite 13.1, 2 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1. Several unidentified fly-by pigeons probably also belonging to this species.
69. **Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*
Common in Havana 4-6.1 and 17.1, 2 Santa Clara 13.1, 5 Morón 14.1, 2 Cayo Coco 16.1.
70. **White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica*
1 Rio Zaza, west of Ciego de Ávila 13.1, 3 along the autopista Ciego de Ávila-Havana 16.1.

71. **Zenaida Dove** *Zenaida aurita*
1 Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 10.1, 3 Soplillar 11.1, 2 Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 10.1, 1 Palpite 12.1, 1 Soplillar 13.1.
72. **Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura*
Common. 5-30 birds observed daily except in the Zapata where for some reason not recorded.
73. **Common Ground-Dove** *Columbina passerina*
Common. 2-30 birds recorded daily 4-16.1.
74. **Key West Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon chrysis*
1 Palpite 12.1, 2 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1.
75. **Gray-headed Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon caniceps*
2 Soplillar 11.1, 1 heard Palpite 12.1, 1 heard Soplillar 13.1.
76. **Ruddy Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon montana*
1 La Turba 10.1, 1 Palpite 12.1.
77. **Blue-headed Quail-Dove** *Starnoenas cyanocephala*
1 heard along the Mirador Trail, Soroa 9.1.
78. **Cuban Parakeet** *Aratinga euops*
8 Palpite 12.1, heard Soplillar 13.1. A bonus species, which is getting more and more difficult to find in the Zapata.
79. **Cuban Parrot** *Amazona leucocephala*
2-3 heard Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 10.1, 3 Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 11.1, 2 south of Playa Larga 11.1, heard Palpite 12.1, 3 Soplillar 13.1.
80. **Great Lizard-Cuckoo** *Saurothera merlini*
Rather common. Totally 24 birds recorded 7-15.1.
81. **Smooth-billed Ani** *Crotophaga ani*
Common in the Zapata where 10-20 birds recorded daily 10-13.1. The only other observations were 1 Havana 4.1, 1 La Güira 8.1, 5 along the road Cayo Coco-Havana 16.1.
82. **Cuban Screech-Owl** *Otus lawrencii*
2 heard in the hotel grounds of Villa Soroa 7.1 and 8.1, 1 heard Soplillar 11.1, 3 heard Soplillar 13.1.
83. **Cuban Pygmy-Owl** *Glaucidium ciju*
Totally 19 birds recorded in the Zapata 9-13.1.
84. **Stygian Owl** *Asio stygius*
1 found on its day roost Soplillar 11.1.
85. **Antillean Palm-Swift** *Tachornis phoenicobia*
3 Havana 4.1, 2 along the autopista between Soroa and Pinar del Rio 7.1, along the autopista just west of Havana 9.1, 6 Nueva Paz-La Lanza 7.1, 1 Santa Clara-Ciego de Ávila 13.1, 1 along the road to Havana 16.1, 1 close to the Havana Airport 17.1.
86. **Cuban Emerald** *Chlorostilbon ricordii*
Common. Totally 51 birds recorded 4-16.1.
87. **Cuban Trogon** *Priotelus temnurus*
Totally 4 Soroa 7-9.1, 3 seen and 2 heard Soplillar 11.1, 1 Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 11.1, 4 Palpite 12.1, 3 Soplillar-Palpite 13.1.

88. **Cuban Tody** *Todus multicolor*
3 Mirador Trail, Soroa 7.1 and 9.1, 4 Soplillar 11.1, 3 Palpite 12.1.
89. **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon*
1 at a lake along the autopista just west of Havana 9.1, 1 La Turba 10.1, 1 south of Playa Larga 11.1, 1 Palpite 12.1, 1 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 14.1, 3 Cayo Coco 15.1.
90. **West Indian Woodpecker** *Melanerpes superciliaris*
Rather common. Totally 34 birds recorded 6-16.1.
91. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** *Sphyrapicus varius*
1 Soplillar 11.1, 1 Palpite 12.1.
92. **Cuban Green Woodpecker** *Xiphidiopicus percussus*
1 Soroa Orchid Garden 6.1, 2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 7.1 and 9.1, 1 Soplillar 11.1, 5 Palpite 12.1, 1 Soplillar 13.1, 1 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
93. **Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus*
2 heard Palpite 12.1, 1 seen and 1 heard Soplillar 13.1.
94. **Fernandina's Flicker** *Colaptes fernandinae*
2 seen and heard Soplillar 13.1.
95. **Cuban Pewee** *Contopus caribaeus*
Common. Totally 48 birds recorded 6-16.1.
96. **La Sagra's Flycatcher** *Myiarchus sagrae*
3 La Güira 8.1, 2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 8.1, 2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 9.1, 1 Cueva de los Peces 10.1, 2 Soplillar 11.1, 5 Palpite 12.1, 1 Soplillar 13.1, 1 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 14.1 and 15.1.
97. **Loggerhead Kingbird** *Tyrannus caudifasciatus*
Common, especially in the western parts. Totally 41 birds recorded 6-16.1.
98. **Thick-billed Vireo** *Vireo crassirostris*
3 Cayo Paredon Grande, app. 4-500 m along the sandy track leading southeast from the lighthouse, in an area with higher vegetation.
99. **Cuban Vireo** *Vireo gundlachii*
3 Soplillar 11.1, 1 Palpite 12.1, 1 Soplillar 13.1, 3 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 14.1, 5 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1.
100. **Cuban Crow** *Corvus nasicus*
1 La Boca 10.1, 2 Palpite 12.1, 1 Caletón 12.1, 1 Soplillar 13.1.
101. **Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor*
Numerous, maybe 200 La Turba 10.1, c.10 Soplillar 11.1, c.10 Palpite 12.1, c.10 Soplillar-Palpite 13.1, 5 along the autopista Ciego de Ávila-Havana 16.1.
102. **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*
10 central Havana 4.1.
103. **Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva*
c.30 Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 10.1, 1 Caletón 12.1.
104. **Zapata Wren** *Ferminia cerverai*
2 singing males plus 1 female heard La Turba 10.1. In spite that the one of the males was singing at close distance, just across a narrow channel, it was unfortunately not seen.
105. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** *Polioptila caerulea*
3 Soplillar 11.1, 5 Palpite 12.1.

106. **Cuban Gnatcatcher** *Polioptila lembeyei*
A family party of 6 birds Cayo Paredon Grande 15.1.
107. **Cuban Solitaire** *Myadestes elisabeth*
2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 7.1 and 8.1, 3 La Güira 8.1, 3 Mirador Trail, Soroa 9.1.
108. **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus*
1 along the stream between Hotel Villa Soroa and the beginning of the Mirador Trail 6.1.
109. **Red-legged Thrush** *Turdus plumbeus*
Common. Totally 77 birds recorded 4-15.1. Highest count: c.20 Parque La Güira 8.1.
110. **Gray Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis*
Rather common, especially in the Zapata. Totally 18 birds recorded 7-13.1.
111. **Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos*
Common. 5-50 birds recorded daily 4-17.1.
112. **Bahama Mockingbird** *Mimus gundlachi*
1 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
113. **Northern Parula** *Parula americana*
Common. Totally 31 birds recorded 6-15.1.
114. **Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica petechia*
1 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
115. **Magnolia Warbler** *Dendroica magnolia*
1 Caletón 10.1.
116. **Cape May Warbler** *Dendroica tigrina*
3 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1.
117. **Black-throated Blue Warbler** *Dendroica caerulescens*
Rather common. Totally 18 birds recorded 6-15.1, distributed as follows: 3 Soroa-La Güira, 11 Zapata and 4 Cayo Coco.
118. **Black-throated Green Warbler** *Dendroica virens*
Rather common in the Soroa-La Güira area where 11 birds recorded 6-9.1. The only other observation was 1 Palpite 12.1.
119. **Yellow-throated Warbler** *Dendroica dominica*
1 central Havana 4.1, 2 Hotel Villa Soroa 6.1, 1 Zapata 10.1, 2 Soplillar 11.1, 1 Palpite 12.1.
120. **Olive-capped Warbler** *Dendroica pityophila*
5 La Güira, close to the Cabañas los Pinos 8.1.
121. **Prairie Warbler** *Dendroica discolor*
1 Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 10.1 and 11.1, 1 south of Playa Larga 12.1, 1 Soplillar 13.1, 2 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1.
122. **Palm Warbler** *Dendroica palmarum*
Together with American Redstart the commonest wood warbler. 5-50 birds recorded daily 4-16.1.
123. **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia*
Rather common and recorded as follows: 6 Soroa-La Güira, 14 Zapata and 1 Cayo Coco.
124. **American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*
Common, especially in the Zapata. 5-50 birds recorded daily 5-16.1.

125. **Ovenbird** *Seiurus aurocapillus*
2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 9.1, totally 16 in the Zapata 10-13.1, 5 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1.
126. **Northern Waterthrush** *Seiurus noveboracensis*
Common in the Zapata where 22 birds recorded 9-13.1, 5 Cayo Coco 14-16.1.
127. **Louisiana Waterthrush** *Seiurus motacilla*
2 in the stream between Hotel Villa Soroa and the beginning of the Mirador Trail 6-9.1, 1 in the hotel garden of Hotel Villa Soroa 7.1.
128. **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas*
1 La Turba, 2 Caletón 10.1, 1 Soplillar 11.1, 5 Palpite 12.1, 1 Soplillar 13.1.
129. **Yellow-headed Warbler** *Teretistris fernandinae*
2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 7.1, 5 Mirador Trail, Soroa 9.1, 2 Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 10.1, 4 Soplillar 11.1.
130. **Oriente Warbler** *Teretistris fornsi*
3 Cayo Coco 14.1, 4 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1, 2 Cayo Paredón Grande 15.1.
131. **Red-legged Honeycreeper** *Cyanerpes cyaneus*
4 Soroa Orchid Garden 6.1, 1 La Güira 8.1.
132. **Stripe-headed Tanager** *Spindalis zena*
2 Hotel Villa Soroa 8.1, 2 La Güira 8.1, 2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 9.1, 2 Cueva de los Peces 10.1, 1 Palpite 12.1, 2 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 14.1, 8 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1, 3 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
133. **Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra*
2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 7.1, 1 Mirador Trail, Soroa 8.1, 1 Soplillar 11.1.
134. **Cuban Bullfinch** *Melopyrrha nigra*
2 Cueva de los Peces, south of Playa Larga 10.1, 5 Soplillar 11.1, 1 Cayo Coco 14.1, 6 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1, 4 Cayo Paredón Grande 15.1, 3 Cayo Guillermo 16.1.
135. **Yellow-faced Grassquit** *Tiaris olivaceus*
Common. Totally 79 birds recorded 7-15.1.
136. **Zapata Sparrow** *Torreornis inexpectata*
3 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 15.1.
137. **Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea*
1 La Turba 10.1, 1 Soplillar 11.1.



American Redstart, Indigo Bunting

138. **Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris*
2 Cueva de Jabali, Cayo Coco 16.1.
139. **Red-shouldered Blackbird** *Agelaius assimilis*
c.35 La Boca 10.1.
140. **Tawny-shouldered Blackbird** *Agelaius humeralis*
5-40 daily Caletón-Playa Larga 10-12.1, 1 Havana Airport, inside the departure Hall 17.1.
141. **Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna*
1 Candelaria 8.1, 1 along the autopista close to Santa Clara 13.1.
142. **Cuban Blackbird** *Dives atrovioacea*
Common in Havana and in the Soroa area where 10-50 birds recorded daily 4-9.1, 5 Santa Clara 13.1.
143. **Greater Antillean Grackle** *Quiscalus niger*
Common. Recorded daily 6-16.1.
144. **Black-cowled Oriole** *Icterus prothemelas*
2 Soroa Orchid Garden 6.1, 2 Mirador Trail, Soroa 7.1 and 9.1, 2 Soplillar 11.1, 2 Palpite 12.1,
3 Soplillar 13.1.
145. **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*
Common. Recorded during 12 days 4-17.1.