



Jamaica

28 February – 3 March 2014

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Introduction

We had planned a 2 week trip to Cuba late February 2014. While making the itinerary it turned out we had some days left and decided to spend these on an extra trip to Jamaica. A Birdwatchers guide to Cuba, Jamaica etc. mentioned that all 29 endemics should be possible to see in just a couple of days so we booked a long weekend from Cuba arriving Friday afternoon and leaving Monday afternoon. We saw all but one of the Jamaica endemics (we missed the owl) and in addition we saw quite a few near-endemics and Caribbean endemics. Combined with the many Cuban and Caribbean endemics that we saw on Cuba it was a very successful trip.

Itinerary

- 28-Feb Arrival at Kingston airport at 2:30 PM. Drive to Blue Mountains
- 1-Mar Morning Hardwar Gap, afternoon Ecclesroad
- 2-Mar Morning Ecclesroad, afternoon Green Castle Estate, drive to Kingston
- 3-Mar Hellshire Hills, back to airport (flight at 3:10PM)

A visit in early March means we saw no Greater Antillean Nighthawk, Black-Whiskered Vireo, Caribbean Martin and Grey Kingbird, all have a wider Caribbean distribution.

Two other targets we missed were Jamaican Owl and Greater Antillean Eleania (probable split, see trip report by Frank Rheindt). We saw Plain Pigeon in Cuba, so we did not search for it here (probably Portland ridge would be the best site).

The best site for Jamaican Owl is probably Marshall's Pen, but it should be common on the island and can also be seen at Green Castle Estate, Forrest Park (Rockjumper 2012), Mockingbird Hill (Rockjumper 2012, 2014), Frenchman's Grove (Andersson) and Section (Rheindt 2010). We tried at Section (evening and early morning),

Mocking Bird Hill (evening) and Frenchman's Grove (morning), sadly without result.

Greater Antillean Elaenia is possible near Hardwar Gap (seen by a Mass Audubon group the day before we were there), or otherwise Portland Gap (see Rheindt).

Practicalities

Weather

During our 3 days visit we had perfect weather (sunny with some clouds). Hardwar Gap can be very wet and rainy but we were there on a good day, although with quite a bit of wind and sunny conditions activity was low around noon.

Guiding

No guides needed in Jamaica. All sites are easily reached and birded independently.

Travelling

We hired a car at the airport at Budget (automatic transmission, 2wd). The main roads were very good. Some smaller road (e.g. at Hardwar Gap) were more challenging with narrow sections, steep curves and many potholes. A gps can be usefull to find the road to Hardwar Gap out of Kingston. We downloaded Jamaica GPS Map by Kaart Data LLC for the iphone, but although a similar app for Cuba worked very well, it kept crashing and we used our handheld GPS for navigation.

Eating & Sleeping

We did not book anything in advance.

We had hoped to stay at Hardwar Gap cafe but due to some delay at the airport we arrived there at 5.30 PM and everything was closed. We drove on to Star Light Chalet (110 USD for a room) near Section. Near Port Antonio we slept in a Guesthouse in Drapers (60 USD for a room) and our final night we spent in a motel near Spanish Town (all accommodation mentioned in Lonely Planet).

Costs

Jamaica is quite expensive, especially when compared to Cuba.

- Return ticket Santiago de Cuba to Kingston: 300 euros per person
- Car hire (Friday to Monday): 160 euros in total
- Daily expenses (sleeping, eating, gas etc): 200 euros per person for the entire trip

Literature

All places we visited are described in: *A Birdwatchers' guide to Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico & The Caymans* - Kirwan *et al* except for Green Castle Estate.

In addition we gathered information from tripreports. The following tripreports were quite usefull (all found on www.cloudbirders.com):

- Andersson, Jan 2010
- Rheindt , November 2010

- Vollmar, Apr 2013
- Rockjumper, Feb 2014

We used the field guide *Birds of the West Indies* (for both Cuba and Jamaica). Bird sounds were obtained with the cd *Birdsounds of Jamaica* and in addition some downloads from xeno-canto.org.

Visited Sites

A complete list of GPS points of sites and specific birds is available here <http://goo.gl/3ZwDvj>, and can also be requested in e.g. .kml (for Google Earth), .gpx (for GPS devices and GPS software) format.

Hardwar Gap – Blue Mountains

We parked our car at the entrance to Hollywell and birded the road in both directions. Most of the targets we found in the direction of Kingston. We taped regularly for Greater Antillean Eleania but not a sign. Around noon it became quite windy, we decided that our chances for Elaenia in this conditions were very low and it would be best to leave the site. Somehow we had bad luck with the flycatchers anyway; we saw only a couple of rufous-tailed Flycatchers and Jamaican Becard. No Jamaican elaenia, Pewee or Sad Flycatcher. Yellow-shouldered Grassquit and Jamaican Blackbird found quite easily, one Crested Quail dove flushed from the roadside vegetation (not heard once).

Ecclesdownroad

We drove down on the first day to make sure we could find it the next morning, we were glad we did, the turnoff from the coastal road (18° 7'18.74"N, 76°19'38.45"W) was not obvious (to us at least). After the first turnoff, turn left at 18° 6'56.13"N, 76°19'57.25"W and you are on the road. The first bit is quite disturbed with plantations, but soon there are patches of forest between the plantations, the highest part of the road has most intact forest (around here: 18° 4'23.12"N, 76°20'49.34"W). We saw quite a few Quaildoves on the road while driving slowly, with Ruddy giving the best views. On our morning visit (wondering what we had been doing wrong flycatcher-wise) we had the Pewee, Elaenia and Sad Flycatcher within 10 minutes of each other, being our only sighting of those three.

Green Castle Estate

We included Green Castle Estate because it's a sure thing for Jamaican Mango. Jamaican Mango can be quite a difficult bird on the western part of the island as we deduced from tripreports. Caribbean Coot and West Indian Whistling Duck are regularly seen on the reservoir on the estate as well.

With the barrier closed we walked up from Gate 1, arranged access (10 USD per person) and received a map. If you overnight there the Potoo is common, and Jamaican Owl is sometimes seen (e.g. Rockjumper 2012). It is a nice property and especially in a longer visit a nice place to stay (<http://www.gcjamaica.com/>).

Hellshire Hills

When preparing for the trip we found two sites at Hellshire Hills which looked very similar, one of the places as described in the birdwatcher's guide (17°56'1.87"N, 76°52'34.71"W). And a site a bit further site with and adjacent beach (17°52'31.06"N, 76°54'32.40"W). Since we had some time we drove down to the Southern site and had Bahama Mockingbird and Stolid Flycatcher within 20 minutes. It became hot very fast around here, so we went to the beach and had a swim.

ANNOTATED SPECIES LIST

Subspecies

We have tried to accurately indicate the proper subspecies for all our observations, usually based on geographic locations *based on the IOC World Bird List version 4.1*.

+ = several

++ = common

+++ = very common

Endemic: Endemic to Jamaica

Near Endemic: Endemic to Jamaica and surrounding island(group)s

Caribbean Endemic: Endemic to Caribbean region

GPS points

A complete list of GPS points of sites and specific birds is available here <http://goo.gl/3ZwDvj>, and can also be requested in e.g. **.kml** (for Google Earth), **.gpx** (for GPS devices and GPS software) format.

1. West Indian Whistling-Duck - *Dendrocygna arborea* – Caribbean Endemic – Vulnerable
02/3: 2, Green Castle Estate;
2. American wigeon – *Anas americana*
02/3: 20+, Green Castle Estate;
3. Blue-winged Teal - *Anas discors*
02/3: +, Green Castle Estate;
4. Ring-necked duck – *Aythya collaris*
02/3: 10+, Green Castle Estate;
5. Red-breasted Merganser – *Mergus serrator*
02/3: +, Green Castle Estate;
6. Ruddy Duck - *Oxyura jamaicensis jamaicensis*
02/3: 5+, Green Castle Estate;
7. Pied-billed Grebe - *Podilymbus podiceps antillarum*
02/3: ++, Green Castle Estate;
8. Brown Booby - *Sula leucogaster leucogaster*
28/2: 1, Kingston Harbour;
9. Great Blue Heron - *Ardea herodias occidentalis*
02/3: +, Green Castle Estate;
10. Great Egret - *Ardea alba egretta*
03/3: +, en route;
11. Snowy Egret - *Egretta thula thula*
03/3: +, en route;
12. Little Blue Heron - *Egretta caerulea*
02/3: +, Green Castle Estate;
13. Western Cattle Egret - *Bubulcus ibis*
Common in lowlands
14. Green Heron - *Butorides virescens maculata*

- 02/3: +, Green Castle Estate;
15. Glossy ibis - *Plegadis falcinellus*
02/3: 15, en route;
16. American White Ibis - *Eudocimus albus*
03/3: 1, en route;
17. Brown Pelican - *Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis*
28/2: +, Kingston Harbour
02/3: +, en route;
03/3: ++, Hellshire hills;
18. Magnificent Frigatebird - *Fregata magnificens*
28/2: +, Kingston Harbour;
02/3: +, en route;
03/3: 1, Hellshire hills;
19. Turkey Vulture - *Cathartes aura aura*
03/3: +++, Hellshire hills;
20. Western Osprey - *Pandion haliaetus ridgwayi*
03/3: 1, Hellshire hills;
21. Red-tailed Hawk - *Buteo jamaicensis*
01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;
02/3: +, en route;
03/3: +, en route;
22. Purple Gallinule - *Porphyrio martinicus*
02/3: 1, Green Castle Estate;
23. Common Gallinule - *Gallinula galeata cerceris*
02/3: ++, Green Castle Estate;
24. American Coot - *Fulica americana*
02/3: ++, Green Castle Estate;
25. Caribbean Coot - *Fulica caribaea* - **Caribbean Endemic** - **Near-threatened**
02/3: ++, Green Castle Estate;
26. Black-necked Stilt - *Himantopus mexicanus mexicanus*
02/3: 4, Green Castle Estate;
27. Wilson's Plover - *Charadrius wilsonia wilsonia*
03/3: 3, Hellshire hills;
28. Killdeer - *Charadrius vociferus ternominatus*
02/3: 1, Green Castle Estate;
29. Northern Jacana - *Jacana spinosa violacea*
02/3: ++, Green Castle Estate;
30. Spotted Sandpiper - *Actitis macularius*
02/3: ++, Green Castle Estate;
31. Laughing Gull - *Leucophaeus atricilla*
03/3: 50+, en route;
32. Caspian Tern - *Hydroprogne caspia*
03/3: +, en route;
33. Royal Tern - *Thalasseus maximus maximus*
03/3: 20+, en route;

34. White-crowned Pigeon - *Patagioenas leucocephala* - Caribbean Endemic - Near-threatened
 01/3: 2+, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: ++, Green Castle Estate;
35. Ring-tailed Pigeon - *Patagioenas caribaea* - Endemic – Vulnerable
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
 ++, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: ++, Ecclesdown road;
36. White-winged Dove - *Zenaida asiatica asiatica*
 02/3: + Green Castle Estate;
37. Zenaida Dove - *Zenaida aurita zenaida* - Caribbean Endemic
 02/3: 2, Ecclesdown road;
 ++, Green Castle Estate;
38. Mourning Dove - *Zenaida macroura macroura*
 03/3: ++, en route;
39. Common Ground-Dove - *Columbina passerina jamaicensis*
 28/2: +, en route;
 03/3: ++, en route;
40. Caribbean Dove - *Leptotila jamaicensis jamaicensis* - Near Endemic
 02/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;

Only occurs in Jamaica, Cayman and a couple of islands along mainland. We had only one sighting near the beginning of Ecclesdown road. They probably occur in low numbers everywhere (e.g. Mockingbird Hill, Green Castle Estate, Hellshire hills but)

41. Crested Quail-Dove - *Geotrygon versicolor* - Endemic - Near-threatened
 01/3: 1, Hardwar Gap – flushed on from the roadside;
 1, Ecclesdown road – flushed from the road;
 02/3: 2, Ecclesdown road – flushed from the road;;

All brief sightings of birds flying off the road. We tried hard for longer views on the deck but failed. We never heard one.

42. Ruddy Quail-Dove - *Geotrygon montana montana*
 01/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: 8+, Ecclesdown road;
43. Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo - *Coccyzus pluvialis* – Endemic
 01/3: HO, Hardwar Gap;
 1, Ecclesdown road
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
44. Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo - *Coccyzus vetula* – Endemic
 01/3: 1, Hardwar Gap;
 2, Ecclesdown road
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
45. Smooth-billed Ani - *Crotophaga ani*
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown;
 03/3: +, Hellshire;
46. Northern Potoo - *Nyctibius jamaicensis jamaicensis*
 02/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;

We had one hunting above the road at first light, disturbing a Ruddy Quail dove in the process

47. American Black Swift - *Cypseloides niger*
 01/3: 2, en route;
48. White-collared Swift - *Streptoprocne zonaris pallidifrons*
 01/3: ++, Ecclesdown road;

49. Jamaican Mango - *Anthracothonax mango* – Endemic
02/3: 4+, Green Castle Estate;

50. Vervain Hummingbird - *Mellisuga minima minima* - Near Endemic
01/3: 1, Hardwar Gap;
02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
+, Green Castle Estate;
03/3: +, Port Royal – while having lunch before our flight out;
Only occurs on Jamaica and Hispaniola

51. Black-billed Streamertail - *Trochilus scitulus* – Endemic
01/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;

52. Red-Billed Streamertail - *Trochilus polytmus* – Endemic
28/2: +, Hardwar Gap;
01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
02/3: +, Green Castle Estate;

53. Jamaican Tody - *Todus todus* – Endemic
01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;
02/3: ++, Ecclesdown road;

54. Belted Kingfisher - *Megaceryle alcyon*
03/3: 1, en route;

55. Jamaican Woodpecker - *Melanerpes radiolatus* – Endemic
01/3: 3HO, Hardwar Gap;
2, Ecclesdown road
02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
++, Green Castle Estate;

56. American Kestrel - *Falco sparverius sparverioides*
28/2: +, en route;
01/3: +, Ecclesdown road;

57. Olive-throated Parakeet - *Aratinga nana nana*
02/3: +, en route;
5, Green Castle Estate;

58. Black-billed Amazon - *Amazona agilis* - Endemic – Vulnerable
01/3: 5+, Ecclesdown road - many parrots around;
02/3: ++, Ecclesdown road;

59. Yellow-billed Amazon - *Amazona collaria* - Endemic – Vulnerable
01/3: 2+, Ecclesdown road- many parrots around;
02/3: 10+, Ecclesdown road;

60. Jamaican Elaenia - *Myiopagis cotta* – Endemic
02/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;
Sometimes considered to be conspecific with Greenish Elaenia, making the Greater Antillean Elaenia a more important target.

61. Jamaican Pewee - *Contopus pallidus* – Endemic
01/3: HO, Ecclesdown road;
02/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;

62. Sad Flycatcher - *Myiarchus barbirostris* – Endemic
02/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;
Should be more common than we experienced?

63. Rufous-tailed Flycatcher - *Myiarchus validus* – Endemic
01/3: 2+, Hardwar Gap;
2, Ecclesdown road;
02/3: 5+, Ecclesdown road;

64. Stolid Flycatcher - *Myiarchus stolidus stolidus* - [Near Endemic](#)
 03/3: 1, Hellshire hills;
 Only occurs on Jamaica & Hispaniola.
65. Loggerhead Kingbird - *Tyrannus caudifasciatus jamaicensis* - [Caribbean Endemic](#)
 01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;
 +, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: 5+, Ecclesdown road;
 ++, Green Castle Estate;
66. Jamaican Becard - *Pachyramphus niger* - [Endemic](#)
 01/3: 2, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
67. Jamaican Vireo - *Vireo modestus* - [Endemic](#)
 01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
68. Blue Mountain Vireo - *Vireo osburni* - [Endemic](#) - [Near-threatened](#)
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
69. Jamaican Crow - *Corvus jamaicensis* - [Endemic](#)
 01/3: HO, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: 10+, Ecclesdown road;
70. Rufous-throated Solitaire - *Myadestes genibarbis solitarius* - [Caribbean Endemic](#)
 28/2: +HO, Hardwar Gap;
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
71. White-eyed Thrush - *Turdus jamaicensis* - [Endemic](#)
 01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
72. White-chinned Thrush - *Turdus aurantius* - [Endemic](#)
 28/2: +, Hardwar Gap;
 01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;
 +, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
73. Northern Mockingbird - *Mimus polyglottos*
 01/3: +, en route;
 02/3: +, en route;
 03/3: ++, Hellshire hills;
74. Bahama Mockingbird - *Mimus gundlachii hillii* - [Near Endemic](#)
 03/3: 5+, Hellshire hills;
 Only occurs on S Jamaica, Cays of Cuba and Bahamas.
75. Ovenbird - *Seiurus aurocapilla*
 02/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;
76. Black-and-white Warbler - *Mniotilta varia*
 01/3: 1, Hardwar Gap;
77. Common Yellowthroat - *Geothlypis trichas*
 01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
 No information wintering subspecies
78. Arrowhead Warbler - *Setophaga pharetra* - [Endemic](#)
 01/3: 10+, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;
79. American Redstart - *Setophaga ruticilla*
 01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;

- + , Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: ++, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: +, Green Castle Estate;
80. Cape May Warbler - *Setophaga tigrina*
 01/3: 1, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: 1, Ecclesdown road;
81. Northern Parula - *Setophaga americana*
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
82. Black-throated Blue Warbler - *Setophaga caerulescens*
 01/3: +, Hardwar Gap;
 +, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: 2, Ecclesdown road;
 No information on wintering subspecies.
83. Prairie Warbler - *Setophaga discolor discolor*
 03/3: 3+, Hellshire hills;
84. Bananaquit - *Coereba flaveola flaveola*
 28/2: +, Hardwar Gap;
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
 +, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: 2, Ecclesdown road;
85. Black-faced Grassquit - *Tiaris bicolor marchii*
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
 03/3: ++, Hellshire hills;
86. Orangequit - *Euneornis campestris* – **Endemic**
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
 +, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
87. Greater Antillean Bullfinch - *Loxigilla violacea* – **Caribbean Endemic**
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
 +, Ecclesdown road;
 02/3: 2, Ecclesdown road;
88. Yellow-shouldered Grassquit - *Loxipasser anoxanthus* – **Endemic**
 01/3: 3+, Hardwar Gap;
89. Jamaican Spindalis - *Spindalis nigricephala* – **Endemic**
 28/2: +, Hardwar Gap;
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: +, Ecclesdown road;
90. Jamaican Blackbird - *Nesopsar nigerrimus* - **Endemic** – **Endangered**
 01/3: 3, Hardwar Gap;
91. Greater Antillean Grackle - *Quiscalus niger* – **Caribbean Endemic**
 28/2: +, Hardwar Gap;
 02/3: +, en route;
92. Jamaican Oriole - *Icterus leucopteryx* – **Near Endemic**
 01/3: 2, Hardwar Gap;
 03/3: 1, Hellshire hills;
 Only occurs on Jamaica and San Andres
93. Jamaican Euphonia - *Euphonia jamaica* – **Endemic**
 01/3: ++, Hardwar Gap;