



A Tropical Birding SET DEPARTURE tour

ENCHANTED ISLAND ENDEMICS: Puerto Rico

12th-17th February 2022



Puerto Rican Tody enjoys a fresh meal

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INTRODUCTION:

For most participants, this trip marked the first visit to Puerto Rico, where the enchanted island offered opportunities for lifers in the form of island and regional endemics. Each participant got quality looks at all **18 endemic species** including four endangered species: the **Puerto Rican Parrot, Puerto Rican Nightjar, Elfin-woods Warbler** and **Yellow-shouldered Blackbird**. We added a dozen additional Caribbean endemics to our total including **West Indian Whistling Duck, Antillean Mango, Antillean Crested Hummingbird, and Red-legged Thrush**.



The endangered, **Yellow-shouldered Blackbird** was seen in La Parguera

Other highlights included **Antillean Mangos** and **Puerto Rican Emeralds** visiting an aloe plant in great lighting at Guánica State Forest, **Puerto Rican Screech Owls** accompanying us for breakfast in Cambalache State Forest, and an endemic frenzy in Maricao State Forest consisting of **Elfin-woods Warblers, Puerto Rican Vireos, Puerto Rican Tanagers**.



Greater Antillean Grackles, a Caribbean endemic greeted us at the airport and kept us company throughout the tour.

TOUR SUMMARY:

Day 1:

Our first day began at mid-day in the capital, San Juan. Before hitting the road, we found a couple Caribbean endemic **Green-throated Caribs**. After the hour drive from the capital, we arrived at Cambalache State Forest, where we were immediately greeted by Puerto Rican endemics including **Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoos**, **Adelaide Warblers**, and **Puerto Rican Orioles**. We spent the afternoon birding in the forest before switching focus to our nocturnal target: the **Puerto Rican Owl**. While we were able to catch glimpses and heard multiple owls, we headed back to our hotel in Mantai with a plan to find better views of the owl the following morning.



Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoo was one of the first endemic species seen

Day 2:

Our second day in Puerto Rico started early, but we weren't the first ones up. On our way to the van, we ran into a precocious endemic: a male Puerto Rican Spindalis. This exciting start to the day was only a harbinger of things to come.

We arrived at Rio Abajo State Forest and quickly started hearing **Puerto Rican Owls**. As the night turned to dawn, we focused on a few owls allowing for everyone in the group to get a good look at this nocturnal endemic. Following a quick packed breakfast, we turned our attention to the rarest bird on the trip: the **Puerto Rican Parrot**. After an hour of near misses, our patience was rewarded as two parrots flew into a tree above our heads. We were able to watch Puerto Rico's only native parrot before another endangered species – the **(Puerto Rican) Broad-winged Hawk** - scared the parrots off. Trading one endangered endemic for another was quite the experience!



Puerto Rican Spindalis was up early to greet us on our second day

The rest of our time in Rio Abajo State Forest brought the joys of other Caribbean endemics including **Loggerhead Kingbirds**, **Scaly-naped Pigeons**, and **Red-legged Thrushes**.



Red-legged Thrush and Scaly-naped Pigeon as seen in Rio Abajo State Forest



We left Rio Abajo State Forest feeling accomplished. We stopped in La Parguera where we saw a dozen endangered **Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds**.



Yellow-shouldered blackbirds were out in large numbers in La Parguera.

While checking in to our resort in Guanica, we were welcomed by a particularly friendly **Pearly-eyed Thrasher**. After a quick siesta, we were back on the road to find our final nocturnal Puerto Rican endemic.



Pearly-eyed Thrasher welcomed us to our resort in Guanica

We took a quick drive from the resort up to Guánica State Forest to find the endangered **Puerto Rican Nightjar**. While searching, we were entertained by the acrobatics of local bats. After listening and searching up and down the road, our efforts were rewarded when we found a vocal nightjar that we located by the glow of its eye. Each participant was able to get a look at this rare, expertly camouflaged species. We headed back to the resort for some great seafood and sleep.

Day 3:

Our third day on the enchanted island started with a visit to the montane forests of Maricao State Forest. Our journey took us through the famous Puerto Rican limestone forests. Upon arriving, we were greeted with a pair of **Puerto Rican Tanagers**, a monotypic family only found on Puerto Rico. The pair of tanagers were interrupted with the call of another endemic, a **Puerto Rican Vireo** in the adjacent tree. We had to work a little harder to see the endangered **Elfin-wood Warbler**, which we found after a short search. Our time in Maricao State Forest also included **Puerto Rican Bullfinches**, **Black-faced Grassquits**, and **White-crowned Pigeons**.

Our next stop was Laguna Cartagena to look for **West Indian Whistling Ducks**, **White-cheeked Pintails**, and **Least Grebes**.

We then stopped at Boquerón Wildlife Refuge to look for the Caribbean endemic, the **Lesser Antillean Pewee**. We were also treated to other neat views of a **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** and a **Puerto Rican Woodpecker**.



Lesser Antillean Pewee put on quite a display in Boquerón Wildlife Refuge



Yellow-crowned Night Heron perched in a tree in Boquerón Wildlife Refuge



Puerto Rican Woodpecker showing nicely at Boquerón Wildlife Refuge

Day 4:

Our last day in the south started with a trip back to Guánica State Forest where we were treated to displays of **Puerto Rican Todies** and **Adelaide Warblers**. We finished our time at Guánica State Forest watching **Puerto Rican Emeralds** and **Antillean Mangos** visiting an Aloe plant.



Puerto Rican Emerald visiting an aloe plant in Guánica State Forest



Antillean Mango jockeying with a bee in Guánica State Forest

After watching the hummingbirds, we headed back to Laguna Cartagena to round out our wetlands species, adding **Sora**, **Smooth-billed Ani**, and **Purple Gallinule** to our trip's list.



West Indian Whistling Duck as seen in Laguna Cartagena

Saying goodbye to the south, we headed east to Fajardo, stopping near Jobos Bay to find shorebirds including **Stilt Sandpipers**, **Willetts**, and **Whimbrels**. We also got good looks at **Caribbean Elaenias** along the way.



Stilt Sandpipers as seen near Jobos Bay



Caribbean Elaenia as seen near Jobos Bay

Day 5:

Our final full day in Puerto Rico focused on finding a few of the last species on our list. We started off the day with an **Antillean-crested Hummingbird** in Fajardo. We then headed to El Yunque National Forest, the only tropical rainforest in the United States. We added **Black-whiskered Vireo** to our list total and got good looks at more **Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoos** and **Puerto Rican Orioles**.



*While birds were the focus of this trip, we identified over a dozen reptiles including this **Puerto Rican Anole***

This trip was a huge success. We saw all 18 Puerto Rican endemics and 12 additional Caribbean endemics, on a short, fun-filled trip. Each species offered quality views for each participant. We recorded just shy of 100 species over the five days and visited over a dozen different habitats. This was our first trip to Puerto Rico since the pandemic, and we'll certainly be back!

CHECKLISTS:**BIRDS**

The taxonomy of the bird list follows: **Clements, James F., White, Anthony W., and Fitzpatrick, John W.** *The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World*. Cornell, 2007.

This list is up to date with the major changes published by Cornell up until August 2019.

Abbreviations:

NE: Near Endemic

PRE: Puerto Rican Endemic

WIE: West Indian Endemic

CE: Caribbean Endemic

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

West Indian Whistling-Duck (WIE) *Dendrocygna arborea*: Seen at Laguna Cartagena

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors*: Seen at Laguna Cartagena

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*: Seen at Laguna Cartagena

White-cheeked Pintail *Anas bahamensis*: Seen at Laguna Cartagena

American Wigeon *Mareca americana*: Seen at Laguna Cartagena

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*: Seen at Laguna Cartagena

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*: One individual was seen at Laguna Cartagena

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*: A few were seen at Laguna Cartagena.

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus*: A few were seen at Laguna Cartagena.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*: Recorded regularly.

Scaly-naped Pigeon (NE) *Patagioenas squamosa*: Recorded regularly.

White-crowned Pigeon *Patagioenas leucocephala*: Seen in Maricao

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: Recorded regularly.

African Collared-Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea*: Recorded regularly.

Common Ground Dove *Columbina passerina*: Recorded regularly.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*: Recorded regularly.

Zenaida Dove (NE) *Zenaida aurita*: Recorded regularly.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*: Recorded regularly.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani*: Recorded at Laguna Cartagena.

Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor*: Recorded at Cambalache on PR.

Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo (PRE) *Coccyzus vieilloti*: Noted at El Yunque and Cambalache.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

Puerto Rican Nightjar (PRE) *Antrostomus noctitherus*: Seen in Guánica State Forest.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

Antillean Mango *Anthracothorax dominicus*: Seen in Guánica State Forest.

Green Mango (PRE) *Anthracothorax viridis*: Seen in Maricao State Forest

Green-throated Carib (WIE) *Eulampis holosericeus* - Seen in San Juan and Fajardo.

Puerto Rican Emerald (PRE) *Chlorostilbon maugaeus*: Seen a few times, best views were in Guánica State Forest.
Antillean Crested Hummingbird (WIE) *Orthorhyncus cristatus*: Seen in Fajardo.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

Sora *Porzana carolina*: Recorded at Laguna Cartegena.
Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata*: Recorded at Laguna Cartegena.
American Coot *Fulica americana*: Recorded at Laguna Cartegena.
Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*: Recorded at Laguna Cartegena.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*: Recorded near Jobos Bay.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferous*: A few sightings.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: Recorded near Jobos Bay.
Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*: Recorded near Jobos Bay.
Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: Recorded near Jobos Bay.
Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*: Recorded near Jobos Bay.
Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*: Recorded near Jobos Bay.
Willet *Tringa semipalmata*: Recorded near Jobos Bay.
Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*: Recorded near Jobos Bay.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*: A number of sightings.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*: Seen near Guanica

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*: Recorded regularly in coastal locations.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

Great Blue Heron *Ardea Herodias*: Seen a couple times.
Great Egret *Ardea alba egretta*: Recorded regularly
Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*: Seen near Laguna Cartegena.
Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*: Seen near Guanica.
Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*: Seen near Guanica.
Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis ibis*: Recorded on most days of the tour.
Green Heron *Butorides virescens*: Seen at Boquerón Wildlife Refuge
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*: Seen at Boquerón Wildlife Refuge

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: Seen at Laguna Cartagena.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*: Seen driving near Guanica
Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*: Recorded regularly.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus carolinensis*: Recorded Regularly.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* – Seen in Rio Abajo State Forest

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*: Recorded regularly.

Strigidae (Owls)

Puerto Rican Screech-Owl (PRE) *Megascops nudipes nudipes*: Seen in Rio Abajo State Forest.

Todidae (Todies)

Puerto Rican Tody (PRE) *Todus mexicanus*: Recorded regularly.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

Belted Kingfisher *Megasceryle alcyon*: Seen near Jobos Bay.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*: Seen in Maricao.

Puerto Rican Woodpecker (PRE) *Melanerpes portoricensis*: Recorded regularly.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*: Recorded regularly.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*: Seen while driving on fourth day.

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)

White-winged Parakeet *Brotogeris versicolurus*: Flyover near Cambalache.

Puerto Rican Parrot *Amazona vittate*: Seen in Rio Abajo State Forest.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

Caribbean Elaenia (NE) *Elaenia martinica riisii*: Good views at Cabo Rojo.

Lesser Antillean Pewee (PRE) *Contopus latirostris*: Seen at Boquerón Wildlife Refuge.

Puerto Rican Flycatcher (PRE) *Myiarchus antillarum*: Recorded on 3 days, including at Cambalache.

Gray Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis*: Recorded regularly.

Loggerhead (Puerto Rican) Kingbird (PRE) *Tyrannus caudifasciatus taylori*: recorded a couple of times.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

Puerto Rican Vireo (PRE) *Vireo latimerid*: Seen in Cambalache.

Black-whiskered Vireo *Vireo altiloquus*: Regularly in El Yunque National Forest.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

Caribbean Martin (NE) *Progne dominicensis*: Seen by a couple of people near Guanica.

(Caribbean) Cave Swallow (NE) *Petrochelidon fulva*: A few were seen while driving to Guanica.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

Pearly-eyed Thrasher (NE) *Margarops fuscatus*: Recorded regularly.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*: Recorded regularly.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

(Eastern) Red-legged Thrush (WIE) *Turdus plumbeus ardosiaceus*: Recorded regularly.

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*: Seen near Boquerón Wildlife Refuge

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Recorded regularly.

Nesospingidae (Puerto Rican Tanager)

Puerto Rican Tanager (PRE) *Nesospingus speculariferus*: Seen in Maricao (PR).

Spindalidae (Spindalises)

Puerto Rican Spindalis (PRE) *Spindalis portoricensis*: Recorded regularly.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

Puerto Rican Oriole (PRE) *Icterus portoricensis*: Seen in Cambalache and El Yunque.

Venezuelan Troupial *Icterus icterus*: A few of these introduced birds were seen near Cabo Rojo.

Yellow-shouldered Blackbird (PRE) *Agelaius xanthomus*: Excellent views were had near Cabo Rojo.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*: Excellent views were had near Cabo Rojo.

Greater Antillean Grackle (WIE) *Quiscalus niger*: An abundant and common bird throughout the tour.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*: Recorded near Boquerón Wildlife Refuge.

Elfin-woods Warbler (PRE) *Setophaga angelae*: Seen at Maricao (PR).

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*: Seen at Maricao.

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*: Seen near Cabo Rojo.

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens*: Seen near Guanica.

Adelaide's Warbler (PRE) *Setophaga adelaidae*: Noted on 4 days.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*: Seen in Cambalache.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola portoricensis*: Recorded regularly.

Puerto Rican Bullfinch (PRE) *Melopyrrha portoricensis*: Recorded regularly.

Black-faced Grassquit *Melanospiza bicolor*: Recorded regularly.