

Puerto Rico

March 31, 2007 to April 6, 2007

Guided by
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It was strange for me to arrive in Puerto Rico a few days before the tour (white sand beaches and plenty of sun, this is the Caribbean, right?) only to be met by gloomy skies and rain. The locals seemed to be a little confused as well, "Si, que extraño! Siempre hay sol aqui." Yeah, whatever... The gray conditions did hold out for a few more days, but, wouldn't you know it, on game-day (no bad Puerto Rican baseball pun intended) the clouds broke, welcoming our eager participants from their land of big parkas and snow shovels (well, not for Rob and Eve!).

This well-designed short tour to the Greater Antilles island of Puerto Rico accomplishes its goal of getting the island endemics at a very relaxed and enjoyable pace. Despite efforts on the final day to see the Puerto Rican Parrot (sadly, now down to fewer than 50 wild birds), this year's Field Guides tour managed to find 17 of the 18 endemics and a very respectable list of 104 species including West Indies goodies like Key West Quail-Dove (whoeeoooo-whoeeoooo—just singing away in the scope), Antillean Crested Hummingbird (dude, you got some hair issues), Red-legged Thrush (red leg-deep in African Tulip flowers), and Antillean Euphonia (will I ever get that tinkling little song out of my head?!). We circumnavigated the island with stops in the north at Cambalache SF (where we had 9 of the island endemics within just a couple hours of birding!), the southwest (Guanica and Maricao state forests), and the lush Caribbean National Forest, where we spent our final evenings. The Puerto Rican Tody once again took top honors as the group's trip bird. Maybe it has something to do with its diminutive size, lime-green upperparts, bright red throat, and thick, hummingbird like bill? Probably not (wink-wink). Other group favorites included the cooperative Puerto Rican Screech-Owl at Casa Cabuy, the rare Elfin-woods Warbler singing in low vegetation at Maricao State Forest, and the Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo (a species that can often be difficult to see well) perched above the picnic table at Cambalache .

From both of your Field Guides coaches, George and myself, thanks for a great week of island birding, island endemics, and, thankfully, that warm island sun. Let's do it again soon. —Jesse.

List total: 104 bird taxa and 1 mammal taxa

*If marked to left of list, * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic,*

N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

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Podicipedidae

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

Phaethontidae

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon lepturus*)

Several seen flying below the cliffs at first day's lunch stop at Guajataca.

Pelecanidae

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Sulidae

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*)

A few seen at the coastal town of Fajardo including a nice adult low over the water.

Fregatidae

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*)

Ardeidae

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*)

A bird was seen at Humacao NWR on our final day of birding.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*)

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*)

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

* LEAST BITTERN (*Ixobrychus exilis*)

Vocalization was confirmed after the trip. A single bird heard doing its rarely heard [mainly wintering] kik-kik-kik-kik call at Laguna Cartegená.

Threskiornithidae

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

A good find (and first for the tour) at Laguna Cartegená and Humacao NWR.

Anatidae

WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL (*Anas bahamensis*)

Fantastic studies on several days of this sharp looking Anas.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*)

First observed on the small ponds at Charco Azul, but also seen at Humacao NWR.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Several breeding plumaged males with females at Humacao NWR.

Cathartidae

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Pandionidae

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Two migrants ifishing over Laguna Cartegená were fun to watch.

Accipitridae

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus venator*)

A single bird was calling near a nest at the Maricao SF visitor's center.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

The resident individuals observed in PR had pale tails, heavy belly bands, and dark throats.

Falconidae

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius caribaeorum*)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*)

Rallidae

SORA (*Porzana carolina*)

A great find by Raven at Laguna Cartegena as two individuals foraged along the edge of taller cattails; also seen at Humacao NWR.

YELLOW-BREASTED CRAKE (*Porzana flaviventer*)

A flyby individual at Charco Azul was seen by a few people; nice record for the island.

PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyrio martinica*)

COMMON MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*)

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Seen on our last day at Humacao NWR along with the next species (where we were able to make nice comparisons).

CARIBBEAN COOT (*Fulica caribaea*)

A number of birds seen and studied well at Humacao NWR.

Recurvirostridae

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

Charadriidae

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Scolopacidae

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*)

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*)

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularia*)

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*)

STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*)

Laridae

LAUGHING GULL (*Larus atricilla*)

Sternidae

SANDWICH TERN (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

We had nice studies, along with Royal Terns, of several individuals sitting on posts at Fajardo.

ROYAL TERN (*Sterna maxima*)

A few individuals including first-cycle birds studied well at Fajardo.

Columbidae

I ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*)

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON (*Patagioenas leucocephala*)

A pair that flew over our vans and perched on the power lines between our drive from Maracao SF to Caribbean NF.

SCALY-NAPED PIGEON (*Patagioenas squamosa*)

I EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

A single individual was seen along the dirt road to Laguna Cartegena.

ZENAIDA DOVE (*Zenaida aurita*)

A common West Indies dove, seen many times on our trip.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*)

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina portoricensis*)

KEY WEST QUAIL-DOVE (*Geotrygon chrysia*)

Wow, great studies of a bird calling and perched mid-level at Cambalache NWR. First time on the tour seen at this location.

Psittacidae

- I** MONK PARAKEET (*Myiopsitta monachus*)
A few individuals observed in flight and perched around Charco Azul.

Cuculidae

MANGROVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus minor*)

- E** PUERTO RICAN LIZARD-CUCKOO (*Saurothera vieilloti*)
Great looks at this PR endemic at Cambalache, but also heard at a few other locations.

SMOOTH-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga ani*)

Strigidae

- E** PUERTO RICAN SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops nudipes*)
Heard in several locations, but we had amazing looks at responsive birds just behind our hotel in El Yunque; the wing drooping and bare legs were quite distinctive for this Megascops.

Caprimulgidae

- E*** PUERTO RICAN NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus noctitherus*)
Heard a few times at Guanica SF, but alas we never could coax an individual into our spotlights. It may be that the most vocal time period for this species is in late December

Trochilidae

ANTILLEAN MANGO (*Anthracothorax dominicus aurulentus*)
Seen well at Cambalache.

- E** GREEN MANGO (*Anthracothorax viridis*)
Found at higher elevations than the Antillean, we caught up with this species in Maricao and El Yunque.

GREEN-THROATED CARIB (*Eulampis holosericeus*)

ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD (PR-ST LUC (*Orthorhyncus cristatus exilis*)
Multiple races are found in the Caribbean, the males of the exilis race on PR show purplish tips to the crest feathers. A female on a nest near our lunch stop in Fajardo was fun to watch. Nice spot, Dick!

- E** PUERTO RICAN EMERALD (*Chlorostilbon maugaeus*)
First observed in the parking lot at Guanica SF, but seen a few more times after that in Maricao.

Alcedinidae

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Ceryle alcyon*)

Todidae

- E** PUERTO RICAN TODY (*Todus mexicanus*)
Truly a living Christmas ornament! Such a unique creature, voted the top bird of the trip, not surprisingly; the tody family is now endemic to the Greater Antilles, but fossilized remains of todies have been found in Wyoming and France!

Picidae

- E** PUERTO RICAN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes portoricensis*)
A beautiful dark woodpecker, seen well on a number of days.

Tyrannidae

CARIBBEAN ELAENIA (*Elaenia martinica*)

This species can be difficult to locate in PR, but we saw one well at Guanica SF and heard a few others at Laguna Cartegená.

- E** PUERTO RICAN PEWEE (*Contopus portoricensis*)
A bird near the Elfin Woods site in Maricao bounced around a few times, perching seldom in the open, and in general gave us fits. Most of the group managed to see it well, however.

- E** PUERTO RICAN FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus antillarum*)
A distinctly plumaged Myiarchus, showing little or no rufous edging in wings and tail, also it is darkly marked above on the head.

GRAY KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus dominicensis*)

The most common tyrannid in PR, seen and heard often.

LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus taylori*)

Found in taller, moister forest like at Maricao and El Yunque, where we had a pair just off the hotel balcony.

Hirundinidae

CARIBBEAN MARTIN (*Progne dominicensis*)

Birds were just returning to their breeding grounds. We saw a few using palm cavities at Humacao NWR as well as other migrants around PR.

CAVE SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon fulva puertoricensis*)

Common throughout PR flying around bridges and overpasses.

Mimidae

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

PEARLY-EYED THRASHER (*Margarops fuscatus*)

Margarops is an endemic genus to the Caribbean [reaching as far south as islands off northern Venezuela], it is a cavity nester that has competed with the PR Parrot for nesting sites.

Turdidae

RED-LEGGED THRUSH (*Turdus plumbeus ardosiaceus*)

The race found in PR and Hispaniola, ardosiaceus, has fine black streaks on the throat and lacks any creamy color below.

Passeridae

I HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*)

Ploceidae

I (SOUTHERN) RED BISHOP (*Euplectes orix*)

A few female-plumaged birds were seen sitting on tall grass stalks at Humacao NWR.

Estrildidae

I ORANGE-CHEEKED WAXBILL (*Estrilda melpoda*)

Native to Africa, a few sharp-looking individuals were seen along the road at Humacao NWR.

I WHITE-THROATED MUNIA (INDIAN SILVERBILL) (*Euodice malabarica*)

Native to the Middle East, several large flocks were seen near the hotel at La Parguera.

I BRONZE MANNIKIN (*Spermestes cucullatus*)

A few individuals seen on powerlines just outside the entrance to Cambalache SF.

I BLACK-HEADED (TRICOLORED) MUNIA (*Lonchura malacca*)

Another introduced species, but quite striking in plumage, we had a single bird perched in a grassy field at Humacao NWR.

Viduidae

I PIN-TAILED WHYDAH (*Vidua macroura*)

Seen well at Laguna Cartegena, where it was singing, and again at Humacao.

Vireonidae

E PUERTO RICAN VIREO (*Vireo latimeri*)

Heard often, but great views were had at Maricao and El Yunque.

BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO (*Vireo altiloquus*)

A common breeding vireo on PR.

Fringillidae

ANTILLEAN EUPHONIA (*Euphonia musica sclateri*)

Up-close and personal looks in the parking lot at Monte del Estado in the Maricao SF.

Parulidae

NORTHERN PARULA (*Parula americana*)

YELLOW WARBLER (*Dendroica petechia*)

The 'Golden' race with a chestnut cap was seen and heard at Humacao NWR.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Dendroica tigrina*)

Two individuals [female and a male] seen in Maricao SF at Monte del Estado.

E ADELAIDE'S WARBLER (*Dendroica adelaidae*)

Fantastic studies of birds at Cambalache and Guajataca [lunch stop our first day].

- E** ELFIN-WOODS WARBLER (*Dendroica angelae*)
A striking warbler found only at two locations in PR, we caught up with several singing individuals at Maricao SF.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Seiurus noveboracensis*)

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)

Coeribidae

BANANAQUIT (*Coereba flaveola portoricensis*)

Very common throughout PR. "Oh, it's just another Bananaquit!"

Thraupidae

- E** PUERTO RICAN TANAGER (*Nesospingus speculiferus*)

Great studies at Maricao SF where it is pretty common, and often calling.

- E** PUERTO RICAN SPINDALIS (*Spindalis portoricensis*)

Several singing birds at Cambalache were our first individuals, but we had a few more throughout our trip.

Emberizidae

YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT (*Tiaris olivacea brandti*)

Singing birds at Humacao NWR were cooperative, but our only ones during the trip.

BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT (*Tiaris bicolor omisus*)

- E** PUERTO RICAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla portoricensis*)

The genus Loxigilla is endemic to the West Indies, common by song at Cambalache and Guanica SF, this striking bird was also seen well at both locations.

Icteridae

- E** YELLOW-SHOULDERED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius xanthomus*)

This rare endemic blackbird was enjoyed by the entire group behind our hotel in La Parguera.

GREATER ANTILLEAN GRACKLE (*Quiscalus niger brachypterus*)

SHINY COWBIRD (*Molothrus bonariensis*)

VENEZUELAN TROUPIAL (*Icterus icterus*)

One striking individual was seen along the dirt road on our way to Laguna Cartegena, is this species introduced or did it naturally arrive from South America?

GREATER ANTILLEAN ORIOLE (*Icterus dominicensis portoricensis*)

The Puerto Rican race, portoricensis, is treated by many as a separate species endemic to PR.

MAMMALS

- I** SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE (*Herpestes auro-punctatus*)