



Tampa Audubon Society

"To conserve and restore our ecosystems, focusing on birds, wildlife, and their habitats, through education, advocacy, and community involvement."

Cuba's Western Mountains, Zapata Peninsula, and Havana

Cuba Bird Survey January 14 – 20/21, 2017

The **TAMPA AUDUBON SOCIETY (TAS)** in collaboration with **Caribbean Conservation Trust (CCT)** is promoting an exclusive, U.S. led and managed birding program to Cuba! The program is coordinated under U.S. government authorization by Connecticut based CCT. In early 2016 CCT staff began their **20th year** of managing bird conservation and natural history programs in Cuba. Along with TAS President and past Field Trips Chair **Mary Keith**, our team will include acclaimed Cuban scientist, **Dr. Luis Diaz** (curator, National Museum of Natural History in Havana), a bilingual Cuban tour leader and local naturalists in 3 different birding areas. They will guide you through some of the best birding habitat in Cuba, the Caribbean's largest and most ecologically diverse island nation.

CCT designed this itinerary to take you to Cuba's finest bird habitats, most beautiful national parks, diverse biosphere reserves, and unique natural areas. We will interact with local scientists and naturalists who work in research and conservation. In addition to birding, we will learn about the ecology and history of regions we visit. Finally, and especially given the ongoing changes in U.S. – Cuban relations, we can expect some degree of inquiry into fascinating aspects of Cuban culture, history, and daily living during our visit.

Cuba's Birds

According to BirdLife International, which has designated 28 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Cuba, "Over 370 bird species have been recorded in Cuba, including 27 which are endemic to the island and 29 considered globally threatened. Due to its large land area and geographical position within the Caribbean, Cuba represents one of the most important countries for Neotropical migratory birds – both birds passing through on their way south (75 species) and those spending the winter on the island (86 species)."

Our itinerary provides opportunities to see many of Cuba's endemic species and subspecies, as listed below. This trip will also focus on the many neotropical migrant species that migrate south to Cuba in the fall, and are abundant in Cuba during the winter months (endemic species and endemic subspecies in italics):

Bare-legged Owl, Cuban Oriole, Bee Hummingbird, Blue-headed Quail-Dove, Gray-fronted Quail-Dove, Cuban Black Hawk, Cuban Blackbird, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Grassquit, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Parrot, Cuban Pewee, Cuban Pygmy-Owl, Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Tody, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Vireo, Fernandina's Flicker, Giant Kingbird, Gundlach's Hawk, Eastern Meadowlark, Cuban Nightjar, Red-shouldered Blackbird, Tawny-shouldered Blackbird, Yellow-headed Warbler, Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow, Cuban Crow, Cuban Emerald, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Smooth-billed Ani, & Western Spindalis.



Cuban Oriole

Smooth-billed Ani

Cuban Tody

Red-legged Thrush

Western Spindalis

Cuban Sparrow

Other species of interest include:

Great Lizard-Cuckoo, La Sagra's Flycatcher, Loggerhead Kingbird, Olive-capped Warbler, Key West Quail-Dove, Ruddy Quail-Dove, Zenaida Dove, Stygian Owl, American Flamingo, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, and a great variety of wading birds, and numerous other migratory and resident species.

WHERE WE TRAVEL

Our **Cuba Bird Survey** begins in the forests surrounding **Las Terrazas Community**, established in 1968 as a re-forestation and community integrated development project. In Cuba's post-revolutionary history, the community has blossomed as a model of sustainability, and is currently a prime destination for ecologically based tourism.

Cuba's Western Mountains include two of the country's most diverse and dramatic ranges: the Sierra de la Rosario, and Sierra de los Organos. We will explore an area common to both ranges in search of western range endemic species such as the *Cuban Solitaire*. A highlight of the trip, we will visit the magical, unusually beautiful karstic landscape of mogotes-- the towering, lushly vegetated, flat-top limestone monoliths that dominate the Organos Mountains. This is the only region in which we will likely see the *Cuban Solitaire*, *Cuban Grassquit*, *Giant Kingbird*, & *Olive-capped Warbler*. Other potential endemic species for western Cuba include *Cuban Oriole*, *Cuban Green Woodpecker*, *Cuban Pewee*, *Cuban Pygmy-Owl*, *Cuban Tody*, *Cuban Trogon*, *Cuban Vireo*, & *Yellow-headed Warbler* (2 nights).



We will also explore the diverse wetland region of the **Zapata Peninsula**, Cuba's richest and most important birding destination located in the historic **Bay of Pigs**. This peninsula is a Ramsar Convention (international conservation treaty) designated site, and is among the most important wetlands in the West Indies. Here, the best local guides will lead us through protected areas in Cienaga de Zapata National Park and other natural sites off the beaten track. The Zapata Peninsula covers more than 2800 square miles and features easily accessible, everglades-like ecology and habitat. Framed by the pristine Caribbean coastal environment of the Bay of Pigs, the peninsula features vast open swamp land, low coastal forests, sparkling white sand beaches, healthy and accessible coral reefs, and refreshing natural limestone pools called cenotes. *Bee Hummingbird*, *Cuban Black Hawk*, *Zapata Wren*, *Zapata Sparrow*, *Fernandina's Flicker*, *Bare-legged Owl*, *Tawny-shouldered* and *Blue-headed and Grey-fronted Quail Doves*, *Red-shouldered Blackbird* are among the many birds we will hope to find (3 nights).



Our program concludes in **HAVANA**, among the most authentic colonial cities in the Americas. As a special treat we will visit the home and private ornithological collection of **Orlando Garrido**, Cuba's most prolific living naturalist and senior author of the *Field Guide To the Birds of Cuba*. Upon our return to Havana at the end of the birding program, you will have the option to spend an additional day and night in Havana, one of Latin America's best preserved and most compelling colonial cities. **Our full day extension** in the city **will include** a guided ½ day orientation to Havana by private coach, featuring a spin in **1950's American cars**, and a **walking tour of Habana Vieja** (Old Havana) and the 4 original plazas, declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987. Old Havana is like a living museum, and is currently undergoing rapid, energetic change.

THE CONSERVATION PROJECT

The U.S. Department of Treasury has provided a license for conducting bird conservation work in Cuba to the **Caribbean Conservation Trust, Inc. (CCT)**, a U.S. based organization committed to the conservation of endemic and migratory birds and their habitats in the greater Caribbean region. The primary objective of CCT is to enhance the ability of North American and Caribbean ornithologists, naturalists, resource managers, conservation organizations, institutions, and local citizens to conduct research and initiate programs to help conserve the birds of the Caribbean and their habitats. CCT is dedicated to bird and habitat conservation through education and relationship building and, is in compliance with U.S. Treasury licensure for travel to Cuba.

For a glimpse of our program in action, go to: <http://video.pbs.org/program/counting-birds/> for a link to the film **COUNTING ON BIRDS**, a 2013 Public Broadcasting System (www.pbs.org) production which describes the history of the Christmas Bird Count and features a segment on our program in Cuba as an example how birders can contribute to 'citizen science' based bird conservation efforts.

Program Leadership

Our program is designed and managed in the United States and is professionally staffed and field tested **over 20 years in Cuba**. We are dedicated to providing participants with informative nature oriented experiences with the help of our highly skilled local leaders.

Our Cuban Naturalists

We work with a very competent team of biologists, museum curators and naturalists in Cuba. Our full time Cuban biologist and primary Cuban birding guide will be with us throughout the program in the field and will assist in finding and identifying birds, as well as providing a broad overview of Cuban natural history. He may share specific information relative to the flora, fauna, geology and other natural features of the environments we visit.

Cuban Pygmy Owl



Additionally, we will work with regional naturalists from the national parks and biosphere reserves that we visit around the country.

Dr. Luis Diaz is Curator of Herpetology at Cuba's National Museum of Natural History in Havana. Luis has authored Cuba's most comprehensive book on reptiles, and has several ornithological publications to his credit. He is an excellent general naturalist and is a very talented birder and illustrator. Luis is fluent in English, and has a warm, engaging personality. Luis has been involved with research projects throughout the West Indies, and has traveled on a scientific visa to the U.S. on several occasions. Luis will be with us throughout the program in the field, and will provide an overview of Cuban natural history as well as specific information relative to birds and other fauna, flora, geology and other natural features of the environments we visit. Luis will be with us throughout the program in the field.

Mary Keith has been birding all her life. Mary recently retired from University of Florida as a dietitian Extension Agent, a job which supported her passion for birding. Mary has birded on 5 continents, lived on 3, and worked on 4! Mary currently leads birding trips for Tampa Audubon, is fluent in Spanish, and will be making her 2nd trip to Cuba with CCT.

A Bilingual Cuban Guide will be at our service throughout the program. Along with a professional driver, he or she will be with the group each day to tell us about Cuban history, culture, arts and lifestyle. He/she will also deal with logistics, meals, translation, and other nuts-and-bolts aspects of the travel experience.

Accommodations

Accommodations feature hotels in Havana and 4 additional provinces. Our Cuban accommodations are staffed by friendly hosts and in the countryside represent the best Cuba has to offer in the regions we visit. These may include refurbished vintage hotels, modern resort hotels, and simple beach-front bungalows. All accommodations are safe, clean, air conditioned tourist facilities. It should be noted that standards in Cuba differ from those in the U.S. and other developed countries.

Additional Details

Following program registration, we will provide all participants with a bird list as well as details with regard to travel to Cuba, including all of the basics you need to know about travel documents, customs, facts about Cuba, currency, health and safety, food, flights, and what to bring. U.S. Government authorization documents and bird checklist will be provided following receipt of your final balance.

Physical Demands and Expectations

This program offers opportunities for several days of ambitious birding, early departure times on birding days, and occasional evening sessions. Birding days may provide leisure time after lunch and before our afternoon birding sessions. Physical exertion will be light to moderate most days, with the longest walks approximately 3 miles. Terrain is mostly flat and dry, with some hills present in western Cuba. Participants should be in reasonably good physical condition and prepared for strong sun, with temperatures in the mid 70s – 90s. Mosquitoes can be bothersome in Cayo Coco and the Zapata Region. Although unlikely, rain may occur as well, so bring adequate rain gear. Those with medical concerns should check with their physician before taking part in the program. Your health and well-being are very important to us!



Fernandina's Flicker



Cuban Trogon

Registration, Trip Costs, Terms, and Conditions

Land costs for the **7 day** program are **\$ 3,350.00** per person for shared accommodations, with an additional **\$ 450.00** for Single supplements. **Current TAS members will receive a \$ 100.00 per person discount for registering before October 10th!** Reservation forms are accepted on a first come, first served basis, and must be accompanied by a **\$ 700.00 deposit** payable to **Caribbean Conservation Trust**. Enrollment is limited to 14 travelers. **CCT Cuba** programs have sold out quickly this season. Fewer participants may result in a reasonable small group supplement. With a total of 12 participants, add \$ 175.00 per person for a small group supplement. The one day/night **HAVANA EXTENSION** is an additional **\$ 295.00** per person sharing, or **\$ 355.00** per single traveler.

What is included:

CCT Cuba Bird Survey Programs include the following: all accommodations, all meals in Cuba beginning with dinner on day 1, ending with breakfast on the last day of the program, guide services, most tips (guides, drivers, naturalists and restaurant and bell staff), airport/hotel transfers, ground transportation, bottled water, some drinks, admission fees (itinerary only), U.S. Department of Treasury authorization documents, and program management services which include the provision of all pre- and post-program materials, a full-time Cuban bilingual guide,

bilingual Cuban naturalists, and a fulltime driver. Program fees help support Caribbean Conservation Trust's bird conservation efforts in Cuba.

Not Included:

Travel to Havana, Cuba; Cuban Visa (\$75 - \$ 25) and Cuban health insurance (required by law and approximately \$3 per day); items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, additional beverages, bar and housekeeping tips, etc., airport departure taxes (\$ 30 departing Cuba), U.S. passport fees, meals or accommodations outside of Cuba, or other fees not listed in the program. Cost estimates are as of June, 2016 and are subject to change.

Flights

We plan to fly from Tampa to Havana. Flight schedules for are currently unknown at the time of publication, 10 months prior to departure. We will provide all of the information necessary to make booking these flights simple & secure. Flight costs range from \$ 425.00 - \$ 525.00 round trip.



Payment

Regarding payment for the land portion of the tour, a \$ 700.00 deposit is due as soon as possible to reserve space on these programs. This can be paid by wire transfer, check or money order payable to:

Caribbean Conservation Trust

Please mail to:

Mary Keith, TAS, PO Box 320025, Tampa, FL 33679

Please do not write **Cuba** on the check memo.



Balance Payment and cancellation and refund policy * Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure (**October 13, 2016**). You will receive a detailed receipt/invoice following receipt of your deposit and reservation form. All cancellations must be in writing and are effective upon receipt in the CCT office. Should you need to cancel, all payments will be refunded after a deduction of our cancellation fee outlined below:
More than 90 days prior to the tour..... \$ 450.00 per person
Fewer than 90 - 75 days prior to the tour FULL DEPOSIT
Fewer than 75 days prior to the tour..... NO REFUND (unless we can fill your place)

In the unlikely event that we must cancel the tour, a full refund less a \$100.00 processing fee for your license application will be forwarded to you, should cancellation occur after your license has been processed. ***Please be aware that the refund policies apply only to the land portion of the trip, and that airlines may have different policies that exist beyond our ability to control. Additional registration fees may apply. As with all international travel programs, we highly encourage trip cancellation and travel insurance policies.**

Caribbean Conservation Trust and its agents and constituents reserve the right to make changes to the itineraries. Land and air arrangements may be subject to price increases beyond our control.



Cuba Bird Survey 1996 – 2016 - 20 Years and Counting! www.cubirds.com





Cuban Grassquit



Cuban Parakeet



Cuban Blackhawk



Cuban Emerald



Blue-headed Quail Dove

TAMPA AUDUBON SOCIETY

CUBA BIRD SURVEY - ITINERARY *Western Mountains, Zapata Peninsula, and Colonial Havana*

January 14 – 20/21, 2017

Day 1 ~ January 14, 2017 (Saturday)

arrive *Havana*, transfer to *Sierra de la Rosario Biosphere Reserve*

Depart Tampa or Miami, with arrival in **Havana**. After arrival in Havana we will visit the home and private ornithological collection of **Orlando Garrido**, Cuba's greatest living naturalist. Sr. Garrido is a retired and venerable former Curator of Birds at the National Museum of Natural History in Havana, and co-author of the Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba as well as hundreds of scientific publications. This visit is always mentioned as a trip highlight. Transfer to **Hotel Moka** (2 nights), nestled in the forest and foothills of the **Sierra de la Rosario mountains** 1 hour west of Havana for accommodation and dinner. **Moka** is a tranquil and comfortable small hotel that is part of las Terrazas ecological community. Arrival time in Havana is unknown as of June, 2016.

Day 2 ~ January 15, 2017

Moka – La Guira National Park

Morning birding local to **La Guira National Park** (slightly hilly, easy forest trails, 2+ miles) including Cueva de Portales (Cave of the Portals) carved by the San Diego River, which currently meanders through. This was Che Guevara's military headquarters during the missile crisis of 1962. The endemic *Cuban Solitaire*, *Cuban Oriole*, *Cuban Pygmy-Owl*, *Giant Kingbird*, Cuban Pewee, Great Lizard Cuckoo and a variety of other birds may be seen here. Lunch in San Diego de los Banos, with afternoon birding in the area before returning to Moka.

Day 3 ~ January 16, 2017

Moka – Zapata Peninsula

Breakfast and nearby search for endemic birds that include the *Cuban Bullfinch*, *Cuban Grassquit*, *Cuban Vireo*, *Fernandina's Flicker*, *Cuba Trogon*, *Cuban Tody*, and a range of other endemic and regional endemic birds such as Cuban Pewee, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and *Red-legged Thrush* (endemic subspecies). Departure followed by lunch and birding stops en route to the Zapata Peninsula. This region contains the largest wetland complex in the West Indies, and is Cuba's most prolific birding region. We will have 3 nights accommodations in the areas best casas particulares (private homestays) along the coast.

American Flamingo



Day 4 ~ January 17, 2017

Zapata Peninsula

Breakfast and departure for birding within **Zapata National Park**. Here we have access to excellent local guides, as well as to protected areas and birding locations off the beaten track. A morning of birding in a nature preserve adjacent to the small village of **Bermejas**. Here is our best opportunity to see the endemic *Bee Hummingbird* (world's smallest bird), *Fernandina's Flicker*, *Bare-legged Owl*, *Cuban Parakeet*, Cuban Parrot, *Blue-headed* and *Gray-fronted Quail-Doves*, as well as Key West and Ruddy Quail Doves. Lunch at Caleta Buena, a beautiful limestone rimmed inlet abundant with fish and excellent snorkeling opportunities. The historic Bay of Pigs museum is nearby. Afternoon birding session as well in search of *Red-shouldered Blackbird* and other endemic birds we may have missed this morning. Return to Playa Larga for dinner, accommodation.



Bee Hummingbird

Day 5 ~ January 18, 2017

An early breakfast and a morning walk along a dry roadway in the swamp at **La Turba** and good opportunity for *Zapata Wren*, *Zapata Sparrow*, *Red-shouldered Blackbird* and Tawny-shouldered Blackbird and a variety of warblers and other migrants. Parts of this area are reminiscent of the Everglades. Lunch followed by a mid-day break. Late afternoon visit to **Las Salinas Wildlife Refuge**, with numerous shorebirds, Reddish Egrets, Wood Storks, Spoonbills, Flamingos and endemic *Cuban Black-Hawk*. All walking is on dry, flat terrain (less than 2 miles total). Evening attempts to find Stygian Owl and/or the endemic Cuban Nightjar.

Zapata Peninsula



Grey-fronted Quail Dove

Day 6 ~ January 19, 2017

Breakfast, with birding options within the national park for second opportunities for any missed species. Lunch and departure for Havana, the Caribbean's most historic colonial city. Arrival in Havana by late afternoon. Check in at our accommodation on the western edge of the city, dinner included.

Zapata to Havana

Day 7 ~ January 20, 2017

Havana – Tampa OR HAVANA EXTENSION

Breakfast and departure to the airport for the flight home (*unless you choose the 1 day/night extension option*).

THE full day EXTENSION in the city **will include** a guided ½ day orientation to Havana by private coach, featuring a spin in **1950's American cars**, and a **walking tour of Habana Vieja** (Old Havana), one of the jewels of colonial America. This tour of Old Havana features a visit to the 4 original colonial squares or plazas, as well as other historic structures that comprise this fascinating UNESCO World Heritage site. Old Havana is like a living museum, and is currently undergoing rapid, energetic change. Lunch & dinner at a paladare (private Cuban restaurant) included. Accommodation in Havana (same hotel as Day 6).

Day 8 ~ January 21, 2017

Breakfast and departure to the airport for the flight home.

Havana – Tampa

