



Fernandina's Flicker

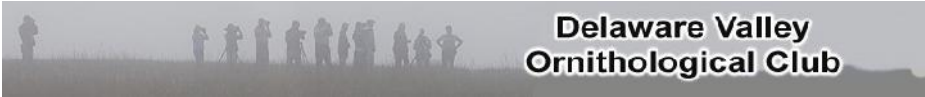
Cuban Trogon

Cuban Tody

Western Spindalis

Cuban Pygmy Owl

Bee Hummingbird



**Delaware Valley
Ornithological Club**

CUBA BIRD SURVEY
*The Zapata Peninsula, Northern Archipelago,
 Eastern and Western Endemic Birding Regions of Cuba*
March 22 - April 2, 2012*

12 Day Program (*with optional 1 night extension in Havana)

EXCLUSIVE ITINERARY, RICH IN NATURE AND CULTURE

The Delaware Valley Ornithological Club (DVOC) is endorsing an exclusive, U.S. led and managed birding program to Cuba! The program is coordinated under U.S. government authorization by the Caribbean Conservation Trust, Inc. (CCT) which is based in Connecticut. CCT staff have a **16 year history of managing bird conservation programs in Cuba**. Along with DVOC field Trip Chair **Win Shafer**, our full time staff will include renowned Cuban ornithologist **Dr. William Suarez** (Curator, National Museum of Natural History, Havana), a bilingual Cuban tour guide, and Cuban driver. In addition, 3 regionally located Cuban naturalists will accompany us in various parts of the country. They will guide you through a variety of natural areas in Cuba, the Caribbean's largest and most ecologically diverse island nation.

Our program begins and ends in Havana, one of the most authentic colonial cities in the Americas. The following our first day in Havana, we will depart for the countryside to visit national parks and reserves, returning later in the week to enjoy a final evening in Havana. A very popular **post-trip extension option** for 1 additional day and night in Havana is available as well.

CCT designed this itinerary to take you to Cuba's 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, we can expect some degree of indulgence in the richness of Cuban music, dance, art, architecture, and history.

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 28 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 they begin their nesting season. For this reason, we often enjoy easier, more prolonged looks at endemic and resident species than we might have at other times of the year.

Where we travel

Cuba's Western Mountains include two of the country's most diverse and dramatic ranges: the Sierra de la Rosario, and the 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. Other

potential endemic species (*italics*) and specialties for western Cuba include *Cuban Solitaire*, *Cuban Oriole*, *Cuban Blackbird*, *Cuban Grassquit*, *Cuban Green Woodpecker*, *Cuban Martin*, *Cuban Pewee*, *Cuban Pygmy-Owl*, *Cuban Tody*, *Cuban Trogon*, *Cuban Vireo*, *Gundlach's Hawk*, and *Yellow-headed Warbler*.

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. 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*, *Zapata Wren*, *Zapata Sparrow*, *Cuban Nightjar*, *Fernandina's Flicker*, *Bare-legged Owl*, *Tawny-shouldered* and *Red-shouldered Blackbirds*, *Cuban Parakeet* are among the many birds we will hope to find.

Camaguey Province is our easternmost destination. The city of Camaguey provides the base for our efforts to track down Cuba's eastern endemic species (*Cuban Palm Crow*, *Giant Kingbird*, and *Cuban Meadowlark* among them). Colonial Camaguey's prosperity nearly proved to be its undoing, as it was a favorite of pirate raiding parties in the late 18th century. Consequently, the city was moved inland from the coast, and its design was characterized by a maze of narrow, cobbled streets to confuse persistent raiders. In addition to its proximity to excellent birding destinations, Camaguey offers a unique and authentic Cuban experience often overlooked by the tourist crowd.

Northern Archipelago featuring **Cayo Coco** and surrounding keys, where we will experience excellent birding on Cuba's sunny Atlantic coast. *Oriente Warbler*, *Cuban Gnatcatcher*, *Gundlach's Hawk*, *Zapata Sparrow (local race)*, Bahama Mockingbird and Thick-billed Vireo are specialties here, as are numerous shorebirds and wading birds.

Other resident species of interest may include:

Cuban Crow, Cuban Emerald, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Parrot, Plain Pigeon, Great Lizard-Cuckoo, La Sagra's Flycatcher, Loggerhead Kingbird, Olive-capped Warbler, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Ruddy Quail Dove, Zenaida Dove, Stygian Owl, Greater Flamingo, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, and a great variety of wading birds, and various other resident species.

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, as a result of our work is in compliance with U.S. Treasury licensure for travel to Cuba. Our current license is valid through November 30, 2012.



Cuban Parrot

Red-legged Thrush

Cuban Grassquit

Cuban Parakeet

Cuban Gnatcatcher

The Cuba Bird Survey Program

Your participation in this program will involve a simple bird and habitat survey. Each evening, the group will review and record a checklist of birds seen on that particular birding day. Data is compiled by the group, and submitted by the trip leader to CCT staff. Recorded trip totals are part of CCT's ongoing data bank of information on both migratory and resident species recorded in Cuba over several years. Significant findings are noted and submitted to North American Birds Journal. Our Cuban colleagues keep trip totals and notable information to support their ongoing research as well.

Program Leadership

Our program is designed and managed in the United States and is professionally staffed and field tested over 15 years in Cuba. We are dedicated to providing participants with informative nature oriented opportunities, good, wholesome food and comfortable accommodations, and highly skilled local leaders. Cultural and educational elements provide for an authentic and unforgettable “Cuban experience.”

Win Shafer is the DVOC Field Trip Chair and a life member and Fellow of the DVOC. He has birded most of the Eastern US as well as Texas and Arizona over the past 10 years. In 2009 he and his son hiked and birded the entire Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. Win has also birded in Costa Rica and has led DVOC birding trips in Canada and Pennsylvania. Win is a science teacher at the Episcopal Academy in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, and the Director of Camp Susquehannock, a traditional overnight summer camp in northeastern Pennsylvania.

Dr. William Suarez

In addition to his training as a medical doctor, William is an expert on fossil birds, and currently curator of paleontology at the National Museum of Natural History (Cuba), where he has worked since 1996. William has published numerous scientific papers related to extinct species of birds, evidence of which has been found in Quaternary Period (beginning roughly 1.8 million years ago) cave and asphalt deposits of western Cuba. His research has contributed important information that was previously unknown with regards to both extinct birds (some representing new species for Cuba), as well as current species of birds found in Cuba. William is currently working on his second book, A Field Guide To The Endemic Birds of Cuba.

A gifted field ornithologist, William has worked on numerous occasions with Orlando Garrido and currently works closely with Arturo Kirkconnell in field research scenarios throughout Cuba. William received grants from The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C, in 2001, 2002, 2007, and 2010, and from the Museum of Natural History in New York in 2009, and from the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada in 2007 and 2008. William is fluent in English, and his enthusiasm and natural ability with people, as well as his highly skilled and specialized ornithological perspective is greatly appreciated.

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 in two additional provinces. Our Cuban hotels are staffed by friendly, helpful hosts and represent the best Cuba has to offer in the regions we visit, and may include refurbished vintage hotels, modest 3 star facilities, and simple beach-front bungalows. All hotels are safe, clean, air conditioned tourist facilities.

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.

Physical Demands and Expectations

This program offers opportunities for a few days of ambitious birding, with early departure times on birding days, and occasional evening sessions. Birding days provide for leisure time after lunch and before our afternoon birding sessions. Physical exertion will be light to moderate on most days, with the longest walks approximately 3 miles. Terrain is mostly flat and dry, with some hills present in western Cuba. All participants should be in reasonably good physical condition.

Be prepared for strong sun, with temperatures in the mid 70 – 80s. Mosquitoes can be bothersome in the Cayo Coco archipelago and Zapata peninsula. 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!

Trip Costs, Terms, and Conditions

Land costs for the 12 day itinerary are **\$4,150.00** per person all inclusive, for shared accommodations. Single supplements are \$400.00 per person. Cost for the Havana extension is \$225.00 per person sharing, or \$275.00 per single accommodation. The optional extension for 1 day and nights is available following the end of the program.



ABA/CCT Cuba Bird Survey Programs include the following:

all accommodations, meals, 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), licensing fees, and program management services, which include the provision of all pre- and post-program materials, on-site U.S. leader, a full-time Cuban bilingual guide, bilingual Cuban naturalists, and a full-time driver.

Not Included:

Travel to and from Havana, Cuba, items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, beverages, bar and housekeeping tips, etc., airport departure taxes, passport fees, or other fees not listed in the program.

DIRECT FLIGHTS TO HAVANA FROM MIAMI

Flights can only be arranged by officially authorized Travel Service Providers (known as TSPs), travel agencies in the United States that are screened and licensed by the same government agency that issues CCT's license. CCT has partnered with **Marazul Charters**, a TSP with offices in New Jersey and Miami. Marazul Charters is the largest and most experienced TSP in the country, with more than 30 years experience providing licensed U.S. citizens and organizations with travel services to Cuba. Marazul provides these direct flights to thousands of passengers each month, most of them Cuban Americans visiting family in Cuba. We are told by Marazul that flight itineraries that are issued in mid December will be consistent with the flight itineraries that exist through March and April, meaning there are not likely to be significant changes in departure times and days. The caveat is that some daily schedules have been known to change slightly, which it is why it may be risky to book a same day returns from Miami to Philadelphia before the flights are officially confirmed.

The bottom line is that we cannot say (at the time of publication of this document) with absolute certainty when the Miami – Havana departure for our delegation will be. We will pursue flights that depart Miami on Day 1 in the morning, which means you will need to arrive in Miami on the previous evening. On the return from Havana to Miami, we target departures that get you to Miami in the morning, presumably in time to make a same day flight to your final destination in the US where that is convenient.

Costs and Payment

The cost for the round-trip ticket will vary in most cases between \$350.00 - \$425.00 per person. In addition, there is a \$50.00 per person charge for the Cuban Visa, also referred to as the Cuban Tourist card. Other costs are for Cuban health insurance at \$ 3 US per day in Cuba, which is mandatory for all foreigners traveling directly from Miami.

Travel Insurance

Any U.S. citizen traveling internationally these days should consider insurance protection. Reasonably priced coverage is available to provide protection against financial loss due to trip cancellation or delay, as well as lost baggage. In addition, your U.S.-based health plan is prohibited by the U.S. embargo from directly doing business with any Cuban health facilities (e.g. hospitals and clinics). While traveling in Cuba, you are not directly covered by your U.S. health plan. You will have to pay out of pocket with cash for your any medical treatment administered in Cuba.

Although uncommon, cancellations due to illness, accidents, work related schedule changes, and other un-planned or un-welcome events have happened. Unforeseen travel related events which you have little or no control over can also effect travel plans. All of these factors make trip cancellation insurance a very important consideration. For information about Travelex insurance, go to: <http://www.travelex-insurance.com/index.asp?location=07-0067> or call 1 800-228-9792. Be sure to use the agency location code 07-0067 to access coverage explicit to this program.

Payment

Regarding payment for the land portion of the tour, a **\$1,000.00** deposit is due as soon as possible to reserve space on these programs. This can be a check or money order payable to:

Caribbean Conservation Trust, Inc.
192 Willard Street
New Haven, CT 06515

The full balance payment is due 75 days prior to the departure date. Details of individual invoices will be provided. We will provide balance payment information following receipt of your deposit and registration fees.

Cancellation and refund policy * :

Cancellation and refund policy *

All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the CCT office. Should it become necessary for you to cancel, all payments will be refunded after a deduction of our cancellation fee outlined below:

More than 90 days prior to the tour..... \$400.00 per person (land only)
less than 90 days prior to the tour.....NO REFUND IS GRANTED.

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.***

DVOC, Caribbean Conservation Trust, Inc., Marazul Charters, and its agents and constituents reserve the right to make changes to the itineraries. Land/Air arrangements may be subject to price increases beyond our control.



Photo credits: G. Markowski, J.Eppner, E. Reyes, G. Jett, A. Rome, C. Campbell





Blue-headed Quail Dove



Cuban Black Hawk



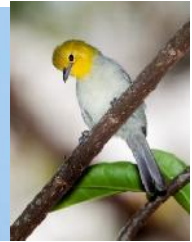
Cuban Green Woodpecker



Zapata Wren



Giant Kingbird



Yellow-headed Warbler



CUBA BIRD SURVEY - ITINERARY
*The Zapata Peninsula, Northern Archipelago,
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Day 1 **Thursday, March 22**

Arrive Havana from Miami. Brief introduction with accommodations at the famous Hotel Nacional, overlooking the Florida Straits in Havana. Afternoon visit to 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. Dinner/accommodation at Hotel Nacional.

Day 2 **Friday, March 23**

Breakfast, check out, and drive (1.5 hours) west to San Diego de los Baños in the Sierra del la Rosario Mountains. Birding on slightly hilly, easy trails. The endemic Cuban Grassquit, Cuban Tody, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Green Woodpecker and Yellow-headed Warbler are likely to be seen here. Lunch followed by check in at our hotel, and afternoon birding in La Guira National Park (45 minutes drive). Our birding destination is Cueva de Portales, a classic 'through cave' carved by the San Diego River, which currently meanders through. Within the cave, Che Guevara established a headquarters during the missile crisis of 1962. The endemic Cuban Solitaire, with its enchanting, flute-like melody, as well as the endemic Giant Kingbird are likely. Red-legged Honeycreepers, and Olive-capped Warblers are possible nearby. Accommodation and dinner at Hotel Mirador.

Day 3 **Saturday, March 24**

Departure to morning birding destinations (nearby). Check out and lunch followed by departure east to the Zapata Peninsula (4 hours). Accommodation and dinner at Hotel Playa Larga on the dazzling Bay of Pigs. Birding stops along the way as opportunity permits. Possible evening trek for Stygian Owl on the hotel grounds.

Day 4 **Sunday, March 25**

Early breakfast and drive to Bermejas (45 minutes) for mixed forest birding (flat, easy walking trail system 2+ miles). Excellent chance for Bee Hummingbird, Fernandina's Flicker, Blue-Headed Quail-Dove, Cuban Parrot and the threatened Cuban Parakeet. Cuban Blackbird, Cuban Bullfinch, Loggerhead Kingbird, Bare-legged and Cuban Pygmy Owl are also likely. Lunch at Culeta Buena, a tranquil natural limestone pool (cenote). Afternoon birding in Bermejas. Dinner and accommodation at Playa Larga.

Day 5 **Monday, March 26**

Early visit to La Turba (30 minutes) in search Red-shouldered Blackbird, Zapata Wren and Zapata Sparrow, among Cuba's most limited range endemic birds. Dry, raised canal roads provide easy paths (no muck boots needed), offering wide open views of the swamp. Lunch followed by late afternoon birding option nearby Las Salinas Refuge (nearby flat, dry dirt roadway 1+ miles). Habitat is varied among low, dense forest, mangrove,

marsh, and open wetlands. Here we are likely to encounter the endemic Cuban Black Hawk as well as numerous shorebirds, including American Flamingo, Roseate Spoonbill, White Ibis, Reddish Egret, Woodstork, as well as various ducks and shorebirds. Accommodations and dinner at Playa Larga.

Day 6 **Tuesday, March 27**
Breakfast, check out, and morning birding options on the peninsula (leader discretion) for any remaining target birds. Lunch followed by departure for Camaguey (6 hours). Dinner and accommodations at the vintage Hotel Colon in town.

Day 7 **Wednesday, March 28**
Drive to Najasa (45 minutes), our easternmost destination, and best opportunity for endemics such as the Cuban Parakeet, Giant Kingbird, Cuban Palm Crow, and resident Cuban Parrot, and Plain Pigeon. Trails are mostly flat with some minor hills, 2+ miles. Return to Camaguey for lunch and free afternoon to explore this interesting city, where time seems to have stood still over the last half century.

Day 8 **Thursday, March 29**
Breakfast followed by check out and drive northwest to Cayo Coco (4 + hours) in Cuba's northern archipelago, the setting for Hemingway's *Islands in the Stream*. The 'keys' offer excellent birding, scenery, and comfortable, all-inclusive beachfront accommodation. Accommodation and meals at Sol Cayo Coco hotel.

Day 9 **Friday, March 30**
Morning birding on Cayo Paredon Grande, the northeastern-most key in the Cayo Coco archipelago, which is one of Cuba's most important migratory landfalls. Endemic Cuban Gnatcatcher and Oriente Warbler, Scaly-naped Pigeon, Thick-billed Vireo and possibly a subspecies of Zapata Sparrow are target birds for the archipelago. Lunch at the hotel followed by afternoon birding on Cayo Guillermo amidst mangrove flats, low coastal scrub, and pristine white sand shoreline (roadside, flat walking), as well as on forest trails. Dinner, accommodation in Cayo Coco.

Day 10 **Saturday, March 31**
AM birding west of the hotel for Bahama Mockingbird, Gundlach's Hawk, various shorebirds along with any second chances for missed target birds. Late check out followed by lunch drive to Santa Clara (5+ hours) for dinner and accommodation on the outskirts of Santa Clara.

Day 11 **Sunday, April 1**
Breakfast, check out, and drive to Havana (3+ hours) for lunch in the old city. Accommodation in Havana. Farewell dinner overlooking the city and sea.

Day 12 **Monday, April 2**
Breakfast followed by departure to Jose Marti Airport for flights home.

***Optional Program Extension**

Day 13 **Tuesday, April 3**
A post-trip option (April 2 - 3) is available and includes hotel accommodations (same location as Day 11 - 12), breakfast, lunch, a guided walking tour of Old Havana, staff support services, and airport transportation. Late afternoon and evening are free. Additional guides and other arrangements can be made separately.

