

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

April 11-20, 2008



Ridgway's Hawk
D. Ascanio

Leaders: David Ascanio and Kate Wallace
Compiled by: David Ascanio

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, inc.
2525 Wallington Drive, Suite 1003
Austin, TX 78746
www.ventbird.com

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Island biogeography has been a fascinating topic among naturalists and scientists for decades. Terms like geographic isolation, ice age, tectonic plates and elevation are indeed forces that shaped what we see today in Hispaniola avifauna: an incredible number of endemic bird species. As you may have noticed, from the beginning of the tour we were exposed to endemic birds, from the conspicuous Palmchat (endemic family!) to the diminutive todys. In fact, it seemed like there was a chance for a new endemic species every day.

During the length of this trip we learned that some of those endemic birds were incredibly common and widespread (i.e. Hispaniolan Woodpecker), while others were quite restricted to some type of habitat or elevation (i.e. LaSelle Thrush). Furthermore, some of the widespread species were locally common (i.e. Hispaniola Parakeet) while few others were scarce and very difficult to see (i.e. Bay-breasted Cuckoo). The study of the phenomena of abundance and richness of species in isolated regions is a relatively fresh topic, so the chance of finding something new or peculiar is never forbidden. Just look at the comment about the sighting of Gray Heron and you will know what I mean!

Another term to bear in mind when birding in islands is *Niche*. In areas where there is high richness (i.e. Amazonas, Orinoco or the Andes) you're likely to find small *niche* for many species as they must specialize in order to survive. But this story is not the same when referring to islands. Here you can find one species occupying several habitat types, thus having an ample *niche*. A good example were the Palmchat and Red-legged Thrush, both occurring in forested and unforested areas.



One last comment regarding the dynamic of islands. When visiting the Dominican Republic we certainly had a snapshot of the process of evolution. Here, changes occur at a faster pace and forces threatening species are more destructive than those in the continent. This may explain why so many species were facing extinction threats.



Having in mind all the above is what inspired this tour. I hope you have found the trip educational and enjoyable, and wish your list of island endemics to have expanded.

The birdlist below summarizes the species reported in the tour. We certainly hope to see you again in tropical America!

BIRDLIST

Underlined species are endemic or of a special interest.

| | | |
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| Ducks, Geese & Swans | Anatidae | |
| <u>West Indian Whistling-Duck</u> | <i>Dendrocygna arborea</i> | 19+ individuals among many ringed individuals in the Sto Domingo zoo. This species is facing threats due to the extensive hunting |
| Grebes | Podicipedidae | |
| Least Grebe | <i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i> | 3 in the vicinity of Sierra Barahona and pair in Los Haitises |
| Pelicans | Pelecanidae | |
| Brown Pelican | <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i> | 3 ind near Bahoruco plus single sights in Rabo de Gato |
| Frigatebirds | Fregatidae | |
| Magnificent Frigatebird | <i>Fregata magnificens</i> | many sights along the coast |
| Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns | Ardeidae | |
| <u>Gray Heron</u> | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> | a photo of a single ind in Cabo Rojo represents the first verifiable record for the Dominican Republic. I need to wait for species confirmation, so keep this one in hold! |
| Great Egret | <i>Ardea alba</i> | single individuals in Barahona and breeding colony in Los Haitises |
| Reddish Egret | <i>Egretta rufescens</i> | One ind in white morph. Cabo Rojo common and widespread along the caribbean coast, but always in few numbers |
| Snowy Egret | <i>Egretta thula</i> | one in Cabo Rojo |
| Tricolored Heron | <i>Egretta tricolor</i> | various individuals in the islands of Los Haitises |
| Little Blue Heron | <i>Egretta caerulea</i> | boat trip |
| Cattle Egret | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> | many sights in open areas and pastures |
| Green Heron | <i>Butorides virescens</i> | one ind nesting in the botanical garden and other sights in Los Haitises |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron | <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> | several individuals in Los Haitises national park (boat trip) |
| Yellow-crowned Night-Heron | <i>Nyctanassa violacea</i> | pair in front of the Hotel Larimar |
| Ibises | Threskiornithidae | |
| White Ibis | <i>Eudocimus albus</i> | 1 individual in Cabo Rojo |
| New World Vultures | Cathartidae | |
| Turkey Vulture (I) | <i>Cathartes aura</i> | several individuals in the NE section of the country (around Los Haitises). Uncertain date of introduction into the island |
| Hawks, Eagles & Kites | Accipitridae | |
| Osprey | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> | 1 in Hotel in Barahona |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | <i>Accipiter striatus</i> | 3 ind in Sierra Bahoruco |
| <u>Ridgway's Hawk</u> | <i>Buteo ridgwayi</i> | an adult nesting with 2 chicks |
| Red-tailed Hawk | <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i> | scattered individuals in Bahoruco and Los Haitises |
| Falcons & Caracaras | Falconidae | |

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| American Kestrel | <i>Falco sparverius</i> | Sights of individuals and pairs along the roads, usually in dry areas one ind flying sighted by Bob and Lura, near Barahona |
| Merlin | <i>Falco columbarius</i> | |
| Rails, Gallinules & Coots | Rallidae | |
| Common Moorhen | <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> | common in ponds |
| Limpkin | Aramidae | |
| Limpkin | <i>Aramus guarauna</i> | heard at night singing in Los Haitises |
| Plovers & Lapwings | Charadriidae | |
| Black-bellied Plover | <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> | 1 in beach near Barahona |
| Wilson's Plover | <i>Charadrius wilsonia</i> | 1 in beach near Barahona |
| | <i>Charadrius vociferus</i> | pair near Rabo de Gato and another ind in Cabo Rojo |
| Killdeer | <i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i> | 4 ind in beach in front of Larimar hotel |
| Semipalmated Plover | Recurvirostridae | |
| Avocets & Stilts | <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i> | pair in Cabo Rojo |
| Black-necked Stilt | Scolopacidae | |
| Sandpipers & Allies | <i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i> | three in Cabo Rojo |
| Willet | <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i> | one in Cabo Rojo sights of isolated individual in most wetlands and beaches |
| Greater Yellowlegs | <i>Actitis macularius</i> | pair in Alcoa road |
| Spotted Sandpiper | <i>Tringa solitaria</i> | |
| Solitary Sandpiper | Laridae | |
| Gulls & Terns | <i>Larus atricilla</i> | various ind in Barahona. Few in Sto Domingo the commonest tern. Many in Barahona and in Los Haitises |
| Laughing Gull | <i>Thalasseus maxima</i> | distant views of 3 individuals in Barahona |
| Royal Tern | <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> | seven ind flying in Barahona |
| Sandwich Tern | <i>Sterna antillarum</i> | |
| Least Tern | Columbidae | |
| Doves & Pigeons | <i>Columba livia</i> | common in urban areas |
| Rock Pigeon (I) | <i>Patagioenas squamosa</i> | regular sights in Sierra Bahoruco, mainly |
| Scaly-naped Pigeon | <i>Patagioenas inornata</i> | one in Rabo de Gato |
| Plain Pigeon | <i>Zenaida asiatica</i> | scattered sights, usually in lowlands |
| White-winged Dove | <i>Zenaida aurita</i> | small numbers along the road to Rabo de Gato |
| Zenaida Dove | <i>Zenaida macroura</i> | common and widespread |
| Mourning Dove | <i>Columbina passerina</i> | common in dry areas and in clearings |
| Common Ground-Dove | <i>Geotrygon leucometopia</i> | astonishing views of 4 ind foraging near Rabo de Gato |
| <u>White-fronted Quail-Dove (E)</u> | <i>Geotrygon montana</i> | one flushed on Los Haitises trail |
| Ruddy Quail-Dove | Psittacidae | |
| Parrots, Macaws & Allies | <i>Aratinga chloroptera</i> | 200+ in Sto Domingo. Although common here, pretty well restricted to Sto Domingo |
| <u>Hispaniolan Parakeet</u> | <i>Aratinga nana</i> | two groups in Sierra de Bahoruco groups foraging on fruiting trees at sides of the road in Sirra Bahoruco. Few in Alcoa road. Although flight pattern does indeed fit into the <i>Amazona</i> genus, the voice sounds rather like a <i>Pionopsitta</i> |
| Olive-throated Parakeet (I) | | |
| <u>Hispaniolan Parrot</u> | <i>Amazona ventralis</i> | |

parrot!

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| Cuckoos | Cuculidae | |
| Mangrove Cuckoo | <i>Coccyzus minor</i> | incredible views of one in lake Enriquillo |
| <u>Bay-breasted Cuckoo</u> | <i>Coccyzus</i> | one flushed was seen by Ned, David and John. This |
| <u>Hispaniolan Lizard-</u> | <i>ruficularis</i> | is probably the hardest-to-see Hispaniola endemic! |
| <u>Cuckoo</u> | <i>Coccyzus</i> | |
| Smooth-billed Ani | <i>longirostris</i> | many individuals in forested areas and edge |
| Typical Owls | <i>Crotophaga ani</i> | common in edge of forest as well as in open areas |
| | Strigidae | |
| Burrowing Owl | <i>Athene cunicularia</i> | one at 04:00AM in the slope of Bahoruco |
| Nightjars & Allies | Caprimulgidae | mountains. Also a pair in nest in the same location |
| | <i>Chordeiles</i> | |
| Antillean Nighthawk | <i>gundlachii</i> | many flying in the early afternoon after a day of rain |
| | <i>Caprimulgus</i> | (feeding on May flies?) |
| <u>Greater Antillean</u> | <i>cubanensis</i> | |
| <u>Nightjar (Hispaniolan</u> | <i>(Caprimulgus</i> | heard in Sierra de Bahoruco. This forest-nightjar |
| <u>Nightjar)</u> | <i>ekmani</i> | perched within forest, thus difficult to see |
| Kingfishers | Alcedinidae | |
| | | one flying in front of the boat in Los Haitises |
| Belted Kingfisher | <i>Megascops alcyon</i> | national park. Seen by Bob, Lura, John and Lindsay |
| Swifts | Apodidae | |
| Black Swift | <i>Cypseloides niger</i> | pair flying low in Barahona, in a rainy morning |
| | <i>Streptoprocne</i> | |
| White-collared Swift | <i>zonaris</i> | one flying over Hotel Larimar, in a cloudy morning |
| | <i>Tachornis</i> | |
| Antillean Palm-Swift | <i>phoenicobia</i> | common and widespread in the whole country |
| Hummingbirds | Trochilidae | |
| | <i>Anthracothorax</i> | the commonest Trochilidae of the trip. Seen in all |
| <u>Antillean Mango</u> | <i>dominicus</i> | locations except in dry coastal areas |
| | <i>Chlorostilbon</i> | pair in Sierra Bahoruco and an additional one in |
| <u>Hispaniolan Emerald</u> | <i>swainsonii</i> | Caño Hondo. A hummingbird with deep forked tail. |
| | | many males calling atop palm leaves or exposed |
| | | branches. Incredible voice for being the second |
| | | smallest bird in the world! |
| <u>Vervain Hummingbird</u> | <i>Mellisuga minima</i> | |
| Trogons | Trogonidae | |
| | <i>Priotelus</i> | |
| <u>Hispaniolan Trogon</u> | <i>roseigaster</i> | pair in Sierra Bahoruco |
| Todies | Todidae | |
| <u>Broad-billed Tody</u> | <i>Todus subulatus</i> | very common in lowlands |
| | | less common and usually at higher elevations than |
| <u>Narrow-billed Tody</u> | <i>Todus angustirostris</i> | previous. We saw at least two pairs |
| Woodpeckers & Allies | Picidae | |
| | <i>Nesocittes</i> | |
| <u>Antillean Piculet</u> | <i>micromegas</i> | great views in Rabo de Gato and in Los Haitises |
| <u>Hispaniolan</u> | | |
| <u>Woodpecker</u> | <i>Melanerpes striatus</i> | common and widespread |
| Tyrant Flycatchers | Tyrannidae | |
| Greater Antillean | | |
| Elaenia | <i>Elaenia fallax</i> | pair in Sierra de Bahoruco |
| | <i>Contopus</i> | |
| <u>Hispaniolan Pewee</u> | <i>hispaniolensis</i> | pair at the border with Haiti |
| Great-crested | | one ind in Rabo de Gato and another in Hotel |
| Flycatcher | <i>Myiarchus crinitus</i> | grounds of Los Haitises |

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| <u>Stolid Flycatcher</u> | <i>Myiarchus stolidus</i> | pairs in Los Haitises, Sierra Bahoruco and Rabo de Gato |
| Gray Kingbird | <i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i> | very common and widespread. Replaces Tropical Kingbird in this country! |
| <u>Loggerhead Kingbird</u> | <i>Tyrannus caudifasciatus</i> | pair near the border with Haiti |
| Vireos & Allies | Vireonidae | |
| <u>Flat-billed Vireo</u> | <i>Vireo nanus</i> | pair in lower elevations of Sierra de Bahoruco very common voice. Seen about three times, including the bot gardens |
| Black-whiskered Vireo | <i>Vireo altiloquus</i> | |
| Crows, Jays & Magpies | Corvidae | |
| <u>Palm Crow</u> (Hispaniolan Palm Crow) | <i>Corvus palmarum</i> | few near Lake Enriquillo |
| | <i>Corvus leucognaphalus</i> | few pairs in Jaragua and Los Haitises |
| <u>White-necked Crow</u> | Hirundinidae | |
| Swallows | <i>Progne dominicensis</i> | 3 flying over main square of Sto Domingo |
| <u>Caribbean Martin</u> | <i>Tachycineta euchrysea</i> | 5 in Sierra Bahoruco and 3 in Alcoa road few hundreds nesting in the karst rock formation of Los Haitises nat park |
| <u>Golden Swallow</u> | <i>Petrochelidon fulva</i> | few individuals in Cabo Rojo although more numerous than next species |
| Cave Swallow | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | |
| Barn Swallow | <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i> | few individuals in Cabo Rojo |
| Cliff Swallow | Turdidae | |
| Thrushes & Allies | <i>Myadestes genibarbis</i> | seen more than five occasions in Sierra de Bahoruco. What a beautiful song! Amazing views of five individuals in Sierra de Bahoruco |
| <u>Rufous-throated Solitaire</u> | <i>Turdus swalesi</i> | common and widespread in forested and semi-forested areas of the country |
| <u>La Selle Thrush</u> | <i>Turdus plumbeus</i> | |
| Red-legged Thrush | Mimidae | |
| Mockingbirds & Thrashers | <i>Mimus polyglottos</i> | common and widespread |
| Northern Mockingbird | Dulidae | |
| Palmchat | <i>Dulus dominicus</i> | probably the commonest species of the island. Seen daily. The only member of its family! |
| <u>Palmchat</u> | Parulidae | |
| New World Warblers | <i>Parula americana</i> | scattered individuals in edge of forested areas |
| Northern Parula | <i>Dendroica petechia</i> | common, specially in red mangrove |
| Yellow Warbler | <i>Dendroica caerulescens</i> | couple of sights in Rabo de Gato and Los Haitises |
| Black-throated Blue Warbler | <i>Dendroica virens</i> | one ind in Los Haitises |
| Black-throated Green Warbler | <i>Dendroica discolor</i> | one at the bot gardens |
| Prairie Warbler | <i>Mniotilta varia</i> | various sights of single ind in forested areas |
| Black-and-white Warbler | <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i> | couple of sights of single ind in forested areas |
| American Redstart | <i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i> | seen twice in damp grounds of forested lowland areas |
| Ovenbird | <i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i> | one at stream of Caño Hondo |
| Louisiana Waterthrush | | |

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| Common Yellowthroat <u>Green-tailed Warbler</u> (<u>Green-tailed Ground-Tanager</u>) <u>White-winged Warbler</u> (<u>Highland Hispaniola Tanager</u>) <i>Genus incerta sedis</i> | <i>Geothlypis trichas</i> <i>Microligea palustris</i> <i>Xenoligea montana</i> | one at Cabo Rojo 6 individuals were seen in Sierra de Barahona views of 4 individuals along the road to Sierra de Barahona many sights in open and urban areas. Song recalls the one of the inland group N of the Orinoco. Keep an eye on this species as it may be split in the future! |
| Bananaquit Tanagers & Allies Black-crowned Palm-Tanager | <i>Coereba flaveola</i> Thraupidae <i>Phaenicophilus palmarum</i> <i>Calyptophilus tertius</i> <i>Spindalis dominicensis</i> | common in semi-open areas amazing views of 2 individuals singing from an exposed branch in Sierra de Barahona great views of groups foraging on insects in shrubs at edge of forest in Sierra de Bahoruco |
| <u>Western Chat-Tanager</u> <u>Hispaniolan Spindalis</u> Buntings, Sparrows & Allies | Emberizidae <i>Tiaris olivaceus</i> <i>Loxigilla violacea</i> | favours urban areas. Common in Sto Domingo a male plus two females were seen in Sierra de Bahoruco |
| Yellow-faced Grassquit <u>Greater Antillean Bullfinch</u> Troupials & Allies Greater Antillean Grackle <u>Greater Antillean Oriole</u> (<u>Hispaniolan Oriole</u>) Siskins, Crossbills & Allies | Icteridae <i>Quiscalus niger</i> <i>Icterus dominicensis</i> | small groups were seen almost daily seen alone or in pairs, mostly from Rabode Gato to Los Haitises. One singing at dawn in Hotel Larimar |
| <u>Antillean Euphonia</u> <u>Antillean Siskin</u> Old World Sparrows House Sparrow (I) Weavers & Allies Village Weaver (I) | Fringillidae <i>Euphonia musica</i> <i>Carduelis dominicensis</i> Passeridae <i>Passer domesticus</i> Ploceidae <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i> | two pairs at the border with Haiti and additional sights in Alcoa road and Rabo de Gato great views of 6 individuals in Sierra de Bahoruco common in urban areas one male carrying nesting material near Barahona |

Additional note: Should you wish to learn more about island biogeography, I strongly recommend the book *The Song of the Dodo*, by David Quammen (Touchstone book). Is a classic in this field.