

# **THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

**MAY 5-13, 2007**

**LEADERS: KATE WALLACE AND DAVID ASCANIO**

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## ITINERARY & TOUR REPORT

**Saturday, May 5, 2007.** The 2007 Dominican Republic tour began, as always, at the Embajador Hotel. VENT leader David Ascanio and local guide Kate Wallace met the group in the lobby this afternoon and immediately adjourned to the parking lot to view the spectacular Hispaniolan Parakeet show. Our first Palm Chats, Bananquits and Hispaniolan Woodpeckers were all seen, but the several hundred parakeets arriving to roost for the night made the show.

**Sunday, May 6.** The National Botanical garden is an outstanding destination for familiarizing oneself with the common birds of the island. The RARE Palm Chat, the national bird, is not at all elusive and everyone soon learned the flight patterns and calls, and also recognizes their huge communal nests. The constant calling of the Black-whiskered Vireo and the swooping Antillean Palm Swifts were joined by Greater Antillean Grackles, Vervain Hummingbirds, Antillean Mango hummingbirds and Hispaniolan Lizard-Cuckoos. The trail along the stream produced glimpses of Common Moorhens, Least Grebes, a Spotted Sandpiper and a Limpkin. The real thrill of the morning, however, was the discovery of a West Indian Whistling-Duck pair with two ducklings. This regional endemic is listed as threatened by Birdlife International and we were very privileged to have seen it. After returning to the hotel for brunch, we boarded our bus for the trip to Sabana de la Mar, entry point to Los Haitises National Park. The Hotel Paraiso (Paradise) Caño Hondo is a very special place, built of local stone and surrounded by waterfalls and pools. As it was raining hard by the time we arrived, we were glad to take advantage of the large porch over a portion of the outdoor dining room. From there we had a fine view of the gardens, and fortunately a view of a Hispaniolan Oriole, which we soon realized was coming and going to a nest in a palm tree. After dinner we met Juan Cespedes, the national park guard who was to be our guide. He is ever on the lookout for roosting places for the Ashy-faced Owl. Much to our delight, he had located one just a mile or so down the road. The rain stopped and the bird was easily seen perched in a low tree. It stayed while everyone had a good scope view.

**Monday, May 7.** In the morning, we had a coffee and cake breakfast, made our sandwiches and were off in the park launch (boat) by 7:15 am. Moving down a river through the mangroves, we saw egrets, a night-heron and heard grackles. As we entered the Bay of San Lorenzo we began to see pelicans and frigatebirds. The landscape of Los Haitises is composed of karst limestone hills with small valleys in between. Where the hills enter the bay they become islands, covered with palms and white flowering trees, and are roosting places for birds. There were Snowy, Cattle and Great egrets, night-herons and White-crowned Pigeons. The islands are cut away by the action of the waves and there are caves. Here we saw Cave Swallows and Caribbean Martins coming and going. Further along we saw the remains of a dock, and each pier served as a perch for Royal Terns and Brown Pelicans. We continued down the bay to the Island of the Birds. Each tree and bush held a frigatebird, or a pelican, or a Brown Booby, with others constantly trying to claim a space. We then entered another short river which leads to a dock, where we landed and walked into a cave. The attraction of the Taino petroglyphs was completely upstaged by a pair of Broad-billed Todies. They were perched on a

branch in an opening in the cave roof, which was nice, but then one flew down and landed on the interpretive sign, just as bold as could be!! Then it flew back up, only to descend again to the railing right beside us! Todies are not very shy, but this was really extraordinary. We visited a second cave and then returned to the hotel for lunch. We were concerned about the possibility of another afternoon shower, so it was decided to start the walk to the Ridgway's Hawk site at 2:00 p.m. We knew it would be muddy (check out Tom's photos) and hot and rather too steep for some. The hawk was not on a nest, but did respond to Juan's call and was seen well perched in a cecropia tree. An extra for the afternoon was an Antillean Piculet peeking out of a nest hole.

**Tuesday, May 8.** This day was spent crossing from one end of the island to the other. A long drive from Sabana de la Mar to Santo Domingo, where we stopped for lunch, and then another several hours to reach Barahona. The Hotel Costa Larimar has a small beachfront and one member of our group managed to see some egrets, a shorebird, and a Yellow Warbler.

**Wed. May 9.** 5:00 a.m. departure and raining. On the drive towards Duverge we heard and then stopped to see Antillean Nighthawks. As soon as we got out of the bus we noticed Burrowing owls. One was perched on the electric wire, one on a fence post, and another at a burrow entrance. We arrived at Rabo de Gato by 7:30. While I was setting up breakfast, the group was viewing Hispaniolan Lizard-Cuckoos and Broad-billed Todies. One of the local guides had told me about a Northern Potoo he had located down the trail, and we set off with the intention of looking for it, as well as the usual species which can be seen here. Unfortunately the rain became heavier and heavier, and after we were completely soaked we decided to head back to camp. However, we were comfortable (sort of) in the enramada and were joined by Lance Woolaver, the young Canadian who is doing research on the hawk as well as the Bay-breasted Cuckoo. The rain provided a good opportunity to hear about his work. The Limpkin, which is almost always close by, showed up. Many folks were rather happy to have such a close look. I fired up the stove and made a soup...not very good, but something hot. We went back to the hotel early in the afternoon.

**Thursday. May 10.** 5:00 a.m. departure for Santa Helena Road. It was cloudy, but not raining! We tried for Least Poorwill and heard a response, in its usual ventriloquist way, closer and then farther away, up the road and down the road. Just as it began to get light it flew over, so most people at least caught the general impression of size and shape. We then drove on to the breakfast stop at the San Rafael overlook (7:30 a.m. and clearer). As we were ascending the Alcoa Road, I was about to say "look out for..." when we saw an iguana on the road. It was too quick for photos and moved off the road. We reached the water hole by 9:30 a.m., and spent some time listening for White-winged Crossbills. Antillean Palm Swifts and Caribbean Martins were swooping over. We heard Hispaniolan Parrots and also Hispaniolan Trogons, which were discovered perched close-by in a pine tree. Pine Warblers and Greater Antillean Bullfinches were seen. One of the best sightings was a Least Poorwill sleeping in a pine tree. It began to rain again, so we headed up to the picnic pavilion at the entrance of the park road to Hoyo de Pelempito. As we were setting up lunch, we heard a very surprising bird. Northern Bobwhites were

calling nearby. This is a bird which was introduced for hunting, and there are small groups in the Sierra, but they have not appeared for a tour before. We tried for Hispaniolan Palm Crows, but with no luck. After lunch we moved down the hill, trying to get out of the rain. At one stop near a dead tree we found feathers of an Olive-Throated Parakeet, but the bird, which Kate had seen on an earlier visit, was not there. We heard Antillean Piculets calling. They continued calling but did not come into view. Descending to Cabo Rojo, we spent some time in the small wetland there. We did see herons and egrets, two Blue-winged Teal, Black-bellied Plovers and Wilson's Plover, and the resident endemic subspecies of Yellow Warbler. Returning to Barahona, it was quite late and we did not stop at Oviedo.

**Friday, May 11.** This was the 2:00 a.m. departure day. We traveled in two Ford Explorers, and after the fairly easy drive to Puerto Escondido, made the climb over the rough road to the ridge above Zapotén. This is the best location on the island for finding the higher elevation cloud forest species and many of Hispaniola's special endemic birds. In the predawn minutes, we stood in the dark at a corner of the road and waited. First came the thrilling sound of the Rufous-throated Solitaire, and then the chirps of the thrush and the call of the chat-tanager. As the sky began to lighten, the black shape of the LaSelle's Thrush appeared in the road! Little by little, the red breast could be discerned, and then the white on the throat. This bird seemed so tame and approached very close. Now we had daylight and the pace picked up, a Hispaniolan Spindalis lit right above our heads, and then a Hispaniolan Emerald and a Green-tailed Ground-Warbler showed up. Unfortunately, there are now many more Haitians coming into the Sierra and at this hour at least 30 individuals walked by in the road. This more or less cancels any chance of seeing the White-fronted Quail-Dove. The next target bird was the Western Chat-Tanager. It was singing loudly in several places and some people caught glimpses of the bird. Almost all the other birds of this habitat were seen: Narrow-billed Tody, Golden Swallow, Hispaniolan Parrot, Greater Antillean Elaenia, Antillean Siskin, Scaly-naped Pigeon and White-winged Warbler (Hispaniolan Highland Tanager). One very special sighting was of a Rufous-throated Solitaire teed up on a bare spar, singing and singing. It was seen at the same spot as we walked down the trail later. We started down the hill in the late morning, and at the border post at Aguacate we walked down into Haiti, viewing the appalling devastation of deforestation and bare stone hillsides. At a point along the road, where it was really more a river of stones, we stopped to try for Bay-breasted Cuckoo. IT CAME OUT IMMEDIATELY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It was observed in full view close to the road, briefly, but seen! We celebrated with lunch right there and then moved down into the dry thorn-forest. Here we searched for the Flat-billed Vireo, with success. We then continued to the shore of Lago Enriquillo. The water level was so high that there is now a large pool of slightly fresher water just as one gets down to the lake level. The quantity of egrets and herons was wonderful, and there were also Glossy Ibises and, best of all, White-cheeked Pintails. Hispaniolan Palm Crows flew over just as we arrived. Proceeding a little further along, we saw a nice line-up of terns, including Royal, Sandwich and Least. There was a mixed flock of more than 100 Snowy Egrets and white morph Little Blue Herons.

**Saturday, May 12.** This morning we left at 5:00 a.m. and drove for about an hour up a very rough road to arrive at first light at Cachoté. As soon as we got out of the car we could hear the Eastern Chat-Tanager calling, but it was hard to see. We then located a second bird just a bit down the road and had good looks. The DNA work has been done on this bird and it is definitely Eastern, even though it occurs here in the part of the Sierra that is known as Bahoruco Oriental, and is known for having Western Chat-Tanagers. We then returned to the hotel for breakfast, packed up and drove to Santo Domingo. Some people decided to rest at the hotel. Others went to the Colonial Zone where we had lunch at Mimosa, a local comedor close to Kate's apartment. After a short shopping expedition on the Conde, we met Dr. Lynn Guitar. She is an expert on Dominican history, with a focus on the Tainos and the early colonial period. She gave a tour through the colonial zone, which ended at the National Amber Museum. We had drinks in the square by the house of Columbus and then met the other members of the group at an Italian restaurant, Pasatiempo. Best meal of the trip! Taxis back to the hotel.

**Sunday, May 13.** This morning our tour participants departed the hotel for the airport and international flights home.

## BIRDLIST

NOTE: This birdlist is arranged in accordance with the A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds, Seventh Edition. The A.O.U. is the official source on the taxonomy of birds found in North and Middle America, including adjacent islands. This list incorporates all Supplements to the Seventh Edition. Ongoing research on the birdlife of the Dominican Republic has lead several authorities to initiate changes to the taxonomy of the birds of the island. Various name changes to some of the birds are already reflected in some recent publications. Although the majority of such changes will probably become adopted by the A.O.U., this list only reflects the A.O.U.'s current position on the taxonomy the birds of the Dominican Republic.

### Location Codes

<b>JB</b>	Jardin Botanico (National Botanic Garden)
<b>LH</b>	Los Haitises National Park
<b>PE</b>	Puerto Escondido
<b>SH</b>	Santa Helena Road
<b>A</b>	Alcoa Road
<b>CR</b>	Cabo Rojo
<b>Z</b>	Zapoten
<b>LE</b>	Lago Enriquillo

\*Birds demarcated in bold are island endemics.

### Ducks, Geese & Swans – *Anatidae*

West Indian Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*) – JB; with 2 chicks.

White-cheeked Pintail (*Anas bahamensis*) – LE

Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) – CR

**New World Quail – *Odontophoridae***

Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) – A FUN surprise at Alcoa Rd. picnic area.

**Grebes – *Podicipedidae***

Least Grebe (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – JB and PE

**Boobies – *Sulidae***

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) – Los Haitises boat trip.

**Pelicans – *Pelecanidae***

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Los Haitises boat trip; along the coast; Cabo Rojo.

**Frigatebirds – *Fregatidae***

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) – LH and CR

**Herons, Egrets & Bitterns – *Ardeidae***

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) – LH, CR, and LE

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) – LH and LE

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) – LH, CR and LE

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) – LH and LE

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) – LH, CR, and LE (where at least 100 were seen)

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Everywhere

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) – JB, LH, CR, and LE

Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – LH

**Ibises & Spoonbills – *Threskiornithidae***

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – LE

**New World Vultures – *Cathartidae***

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) – LH

**Hawks, Eagles & Kites – *Accipitridae***

Ridgway's Hawk (*Buteo ridgwayi*) – LH

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – A, Z

**Caracaras & Falcons – *Falconidae***

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) – Everywhere.

**Rails, Gallinules & Coots – *Rallidae***

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) – JB; CR; and LE

**Limpkins - *Aramidae***

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*) – JB; Kate's camp.

### **Plovers & Lapwings – Charadriidae**

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – CR and LE

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – CR

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) – A; CR; PE; and LE

### **Avocets & Stilts – Recurvirostridae**

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus melanurus*) – CR and LE

### **Sandpipers & Allies – Scolopacidae**

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) – LE

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) – A

Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) - CR

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) - CR

### **Gulls & Terns – Laridae**

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) – LE

Royal Tern (*Sterna maxima*) – LH, CR, and LE

Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) – LE

### **Pigeons & Doves – Columbidae**

Rock Dove (*Columba livia*) – Everywhere.

White-crowned Pigeon (*Patageoenas leucocephala*) – LH and A

Scaly-naped Pigeon (*Patageoenas squamosa*) – LH, A, and Z

Plain Pigeon (*Patageoenas inornata*) – Z

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) – Everywhere

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) – LH and A

Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*) – Everywhere

Ruddy Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon Montana*) – Two quick flybys

### **Parrots & Parakeets – Psittacidae**

Hispaniolan Parakeet (*Aratinga chloroptera*) – Embajador; Z

Hispaniolan Parrot (*Amazona ventralis*) – Z and A

### **Cuckoos – Cuculidae**

Hispaniolan Lizard-Cuckoo (*Saurothera longirostris*) – All over.

Bay-breasted Cuckoo (*Hyetornis rufogularis*) – YES!!!!

Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*) – Everywhere.

### **Barn Owls - Tytonidae**

Ashy-faced Owl (*Tyto glaucops*) – LH; first time ever for the tour!

### **Typical Owls – Strigidae**

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) – Morning roadside stop; LE and PE

### **Nighthars & Allies – Caprimulgidae**

Antillean Nighthawk (*Chordeiles gundlachii*) – SH  
**Least Poorwill (*Siphonorhis brewsterii*)** – SH; PERCHED INDIVIDUAL UP ALCOA RD.!!!!

**Swifts – Apodidae**

Antillean Palm-Swift (*Tachornis phoenicobia*) – Everywhere.

**Hummingbirds – Trochilidae**

Antillean Mango (*Anthacocothorax dominicus*) – Jb and elsewhere.

**Hispaniolan Emerald (*Chlorostilbon swainsonii*)** – A and Z

Vervain Hummingbird (*Mellisuga minima*) – JB

**Trogons - Trogonidae**

**Hispaniolan Trogon (*Priotelus roseigaster*)** - A and Z

**Todies - Todidae**

**Broad-billed Tody (*Todus subulatus*)** – SURE THING.

**Narrow-billed Tody (*Todus angustirostris*)** – A and Z

**Woodpeckers & Allies – Picidae**

**Antillean Piculet (*Nesocittes micromegas*)** – LH; In the nest hole! Heard elsewhere.

**Hispaniolan Woodpecker (*Melanerpes striatus*)** – All over!

**Tyrant Flycatchers – Tyrannidae**

Greater Antillean Elaenia (*Elaenia fallax*) – Z

**Hispaniolan Pewee (*Contopus hispaniolensis*)** – Z

Stolid Flycatcher (*Myiarchus stolidus*) – Sure thing.

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – All over.

**Vireos – Vireonidae**

**Flat-billed Vireo (*Vireo nanus*)** – Above Puerto Escondido.

Black-whiskered Vireo (*Vireo altiloquus*) – Widespread.

**Crows, Jays & Magpies – Corvidae**

**Hispaniolan Palm Crow (*Corvus palmarum*)** – LE; #6500 for Roy

**White-necked Crow (*Corvus leucognathus*)** – LH

**Swallows – Hirundinidae**

Caribbean Martin (*Progne dominicensis*) – LH; Alcoa water hole.

**Golden Swallow (*Tachycineta euchrysea*)** – A and Z

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*) – LH; very easy to see.

**Thrushes & Allies – Turdidae**

Rufous-throated Solitaire (*Myadestes genibarbis*) – Z; PERCHED AND SINGING!

Claude has a video.

Red-legged Thrush (*Turdus plumbeus*) – JB, A, Z, and PE

**LaSelle Thrush (*Turdus swalesi*)** – Z; Seen at 5:45 a.m.; later seen flying across the road.

**Mockingbirds & Thrashers – *Mimidae***

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) – All over.

**Palmchat-*Dulidae***

**Palmchat (*Dulus dominicus*)** – The national bird; All over.

**New World Warblers – *Parulidae***

Northern Parula (*Parula Americana*)

Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) – LH and Barahona

Pine Warbler (*Dendroica pinus*) - A and Z

**Green-tailed Ground-Warbler (*Microligea palustris*)** – Recent DNA work has shown this bird to be more closely related to the tanagers. Some authorities propose the name “Green-tailed Ground-Tanager.” Seen at Z.

**White-winged Warbler (*Xenoligea Montana*)** – See notes for above species; Some authors propose the name “Hispaniolan Highland Tanager.”

Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*)

**Tanagers & Allies – *Thraupidae***

**Black-crowned Palm-Tanager (*Phaenicophilus palmarum*)** – JB; A; Z; and PE

**Eastern Chat-Tanager (*Calyptophilus frugivorus*)** – Cachote; A first-ever for this tour!

**Western Chat-Tanager (*Calyptophilus tertius*)** – Z; some quick glimpses.

**Hispaniolan Spindalis (*Spindalis dominicensis*)** – Z

**Buntings, Sparrows & Allies – *Emberizidae***

Yellow-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris olivacea*)

Greater Antillean Bullfinch (*Loxigilla violacea*) - A

**Troupials & Allies - *Icteridae***

Greater Antillean Grackle (*Quiscalus niger*) – LH and CR

Greater Antillean Oriole (*Icterus dominicensis*) – From the front porch at Caño Hondo; also at PE.

**Siskins, Crossbills, & Allies – *Fringillidae***

Antillean Euphonia (*Euphonia musica*) – Heard only.

**Antillean Siskin (*Carduelis dominicensis*)** – Z

**Weavers - *Ploceidae***

Village Weaver (*Passer cucullatus*) – LH

**Old World Sparrows – *Passeridae***

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

**TOTAL = 94, with 27 Endemics**