



JAMAICA AT ITS BEST

12 - 19 MARCH 2020



The endemic **Red-billed Streamertail** (photo Alan van Norman) is one of our special targets on this trip.

Birding Ecotours invite you to explore Jamaica, an extraordinary country in the heart of the Caribbean Sea. Even though Jamaica may be famous mainly for its beautiful tropical shores, exclusive beach resorts, Rastafarian culture together with its “cries of freedom”, Blue Mountain Coffee, and early James Bond adventures, the island is also home to 28 endemic birds species, plus a good number of Caribbean specialties shared with the neighboring islands only. This is by far some of the best birding experience in the West Indies.

Our eight-day tour will give you a real chance to see all Jamaican endemics, such as the gorgeous **Red-billed Streamertail**, **Black-tailed Streamertail**, **Jamaican Tody**, **Jamaican Owl**, and **Jamaican Blackbird**, and we will also make a special effort to look for **Northern Potoo** and **White-tailed Tropicbird**.

This trip can easily be combined with our preceding **Cuba: Great Caribbean Birding and Endemics 2019** tour and with our following Complete **Dominican Republic 2019** tour for a very comprehensive birding experience in the Caribbean.

Itinerary (8 days/7 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Kingston, birding the Royal Botanical Gardens

After your arrival in Kingston you will meet your tour leader and be transferred to the Mona Visitor's Lodge.

In the afternoon we will visit the Royal Botanical Gardens, commonly called “Hope Gardens”, for our first taste of island birding, looking for species such as **Yellow-billed Amazon**, **Olive-throated Parakeet**, **Red-billed Streamertail**, **Vervain Hummingbird**, **Jamaican Mango**, **White-chinned Thrush**, **White-crowned Pigeon**, **White-winged Dove**, **Zenaida Dove**, **Common Ground Dove**, **Loggerhead Kingbird**, **Grey Kingbird**, **Antillean Palm Swift**, **Northern Mockingbird**, **Jamaican Oriole**, **Jamaican Woodpecker**, and **Greater Antillean Grackle**.

Overnight: Mona Visitors' Lodge, University of the West Indies, Kingston

Day 2. Birding the Hellshire Hills and the Royal Botanical Gardens

Today we will explore the Hellshire Hills. This is one of only two locations on the island where **Bahama Mockingbird** can be found. Also common here are **Stolid Flycatcher**, **Caribbean Dove**, **Mangrove Cuckoo**, and **Jamaican Mango**. We would also expect to see **Jamaican Vireo**, **American Yellow Warbler**, **Yellow-shouldered Grassquit**, **Black-faced Grassquit**, **White-winged Dove**, **Prairie Warbler**, **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, **American Redstart**, **Palm Warbler**, **Bananaquit**, **Smooth-billed Ani**, **Jamaican Oriole**, and **Common Ground Dove**. In the afternoon we will visit the Hope Gardens once more to look for any species we might have missed on the previous day.

Overnight: Mona Visitors' Lodge, University of the West Indies, Kingston

Days 3 – 4. Birding the Blue and John Crown Mountains National Park

During these two days we will explore different sections of the Blue and John Crown Mountains National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, including Hardwar Gap, Silver Hill Gap, and Cascade. These locations all merge seamlessly into each other along a rugged mountain road. At

approximately 1200m above sea level all these areas on the cool western slopes of the Blue Mountains within the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park are classified as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International. An impressive species list of birds has been recorded in this area, including hard-to-find species such as **Jamaican Blackbird**, **Crested Quail-Dove**, and **Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo**. Also present are **Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo**, **Blue Mountain Vireo**, **Jamaican Vireo**, **Arrowhead Warbler**, **Jamaican Elaenia**, **Greater Antillean Elaenia**, **Jamaican Tody**, **Orangequit**, **Jamaican Spindalis**, **Jamaican Pewee**, **Jamaican Woodpecker**, **Rufous-tailed Flycatcher**, **Rufous-throated Solitaire**, **Yellow-shouldered Grassquit**, **White-chinned Thrush**, **White-eyed Thrush**, **Northern Potoo**, **Jamaican Owl**, **Red-billed Streamertail**, **White-collared Swift**, **American Black Swift**, **Ring-tailed Pigeon**, **Jamaican Euphonia**, and **Jamaican Becard**. Numerous migrant warblers and other common resident species can be found in these mountains. Throughout this section of the Blue Mountains, and given enough time, we should be able find as many as 24 of the 28 Jamaican endemics.

Overnight: Starlight Chalet, Blue and John Crown Mountains National Park

Day 5. Birding the Hardwar Gap, transfer to and birding Green Castle Estate

After a final morning birding at Hardwar Gap we will transfer to the Green Castle Estate. This is a working farm along the northern coast. These coastal dry forests are ideal for **Mangrove Cuckoo** and grassquits, and are a popular area to search for **Northern Potoo** and the Caribbean subspecies of **Western Barn Owl** at night. Many common resident and endemic species can also be found. These include **Jamaican Vireo**, **Jamaican Oriole**, **White-chinned Thrush**, and **Yellow-shouldered Grassquit**. In addition to the forests there are a few ponds scattered about the property, along with a much larger reservoir. Wetland species that have been sighted here include **West Indian Whistling Duck**, **Masked Duck**, **Caribbean Coot**, and **Purple Gallinule**.

Overnight: Green Castle Estate House

Day 6. Birding Green Castle, transfer to Port Antonio, birding Goblin Hill

After a last morning around the Green Castle Estate grounds we will transfer to Port Antonio. Here we will enjoy the afternoon while birding the twelve acres of magnificent gardens at our lodgings. Two endemic hummingbirds, **Black-billed Streamertail** and **Jamaican Mango**, are usually easily found here.

Overnight: Goblin Hill Villas, Port Antonio

Day 7. Birding Ecclesdown Road and Goblin Hill

Today we will have an early departure to explore the Ecclesdown Road, well-known in birding circles as this is the most famous birding location near Port Antonio. It is a seldom-used road that travels along the foothills of the John Crow Mountains for approximately 18 kilometers. It is entirely flat and passes through secondary closed and open forests as well as small patches of farm lands. This area is a stronghold of **Yellow-billed** and **Black-billed Amazons** as well as **Jamaican Crow**, **Ring-tailed Pigeon**, **Crested Quail-Dove**, and **Black-billed Streamertail**. For the afternoon we will return to Goblin Hill.

Overnight: Goblin Hill Villas, Port Antonio

Day 8. Birding Hectors River, departure

This morning we will leave Port Antonio toward the Hectors River to admire the colony of **White-tailed Tropicbird** nesting in the cliffs along the river here. Sadly then we will have to leave wonderful Jamaica behind and continue to Kingston, where we will connect to our international flights either home or to start our Dominican Republic tour.

Please note that the detailed itinerary below cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Duration: 8 days

Limit: 5 – 8

Date: 12 – 19 March 2020

Start: Kingston

End: Kingston

Price: US\$5079 per person sharing, assuming 5 - 8 participants (Please contact us for the pricing for smaller groups.)

Single Supplement: US\$630

Price includes:

Meals and non-alcoholic drinks

Accommodation

Guiding fees

Entrance fees

All transport while on tour

Bottled water and trail snacks throughout the tour

Tips at restaurants

Price excludes:

International flights

Airport taxes

Items of a personal nature, e.g. laundry, gifts

Alcoholic drinks

Personal insurance