

Jamaica – An Island of Endemics

Naturetrek Tour Report

4 - 12 February 2019



Loggerhead Kingbird



Jamaican Tody



Jamaican Owl

Report and images compiled by Neil McMahon



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Summary

With over a hundred species recorded and seeing all 28 endemic birds, this birding trip to Jamaica proved particularly successful. Staying on the north coast at the Green Castle Estate, this proved to be the ideal venue in itself for providing many of the endemic birds plus a rich haul of North American wood warblers. Utilising the local knowledge and excellent birding skills of local guides, the group enjoyed multiple sightings of many of the Jamaican specialities which of course included Jamaican Owl, the endemic cuckoos and both Red-billed and Black-billed Streamertails. Other highlights included White-tailed Tropicbird, Northern Potoo and the second smallest bird in the world - the Vervain Hummingbird. And with warm, sunny conditions for much of the trip, comfortable surroundings, tasty food and exposure to the vibrancy and friendliness of the people of Jamaica, what wasn't there to like!

Day 1

Monday 4th February

The majority of the group and the tour leader descended on Gatwick's South Terminal during the morning and at about 1pm we flew in our British Airways Boeing 777 direct to Kingston, Jamaica. The plane was full, with no spare capacity but in general it was a comfortable ten hour flight.

Jamaica is five hours behind UK time so we touched down at about 6pm Jamaican time although our body clocks assured us it was 11pm at night! The baggage collection seemed to take an age but eventually we had all our bags and met Raymond our mini coach driver. Our road trip in the relative comfort of our little coach took about two hours forty minutes as we gently drove up the trail to our accommodation at Green Castle Estate. Two Barn Owls were perched up along the track and were the first birds seen in Jamaica. Richard and his team welcomed us in and could tell we were a little travel weary! Nevertheless a hot meal was waiting for us and the majority dined before retiring for the night.

The Green Castle Estate is a 116 acre area of forest and farm in the hills on the north coast of the third biggest island in the Caribbean, and our accommodation was bang in the middle of it. There are numerous trails snaking their way around the forest which are excellent for birding.

Day 2

Tuesday 5th February

We started as we meant to go on, mustering at 5.30am for a fruit and cake pre-breakfast and hot drinks before Dwayne the local guide gently led us away from the buildings to investigate a couple of short trails and straightaway we were into birds with a Zenaida Dove perhaps being the first diurnal bird we identified. Whizzing hummingbirds manifested themselves into our first Vervain Hummingbirds, Jamaican Mangos and Red-billed Streamertails. The local version of Bananaquit threw a few people who were more used to the plumage of birds associated with central and South America.

Lots of birds then appeared in the broken forest with Jamaican Euphonia, White-chinned Thrush and Northern Parula joining the throng with good numbers of American Redstarts and a glimpsed Black-throated Blue Warbler. We quickly saw Black-faced Grassquit but it took most of the morning before we all enjoyed good

views of the related but endemic Yellow-shouldered Grassquit! The highlights for many were the gorgeous Jamaican Tody and showy Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo, but other good birds included Loggerhead Kingbird, Sad Flycatcher and Olive-throated Parakeet.

We popped back for a more substantial breakfast at 8.30am, enjoyed a briefing session from Richard and the estate house manager and then went for a late morning walk again with Dwayne. This time the walk was longer and took in one of the longer trails called Cuckoo Trail. The feeding antics of Black and White Warbler were enjoyed, we saw our first Rufous-tailed Flycatcher and saw plenty of Jamaican Orioles. A good number of Jamaican Vireos were singing but were initially hard to see and the humming sound of the overflying male streamertails was an impressive sound. Jamaican Woodpeckers were common and not shy.

We arrived back at our accommodation just before 1pm and during the lunchtime period birds on view from the verandah included many flying Turkey Vultures, a couple of perched American Kestrels, good views of Jamaican Mangos as they came to the feeders and a couple of Smooth-billed Anis. By this time we were seeing a good number of lizards mostly of the anole type, large black beetles attracted to flowers on the nearby shrubs and the first of many large and bright butterflies. A simple home-made burger and fries was our lunchtime tucker and at 3pm we again wandered out with Dwayne to enjoy a two hour saunter along Potoo Trail. By this time Ian had joined us after finally arriving via different flight connections and experiencing a cancelled flight due to mechanical issues affecting his flight from Miami.

The afternoon session was altogether much quieter, the sky was cloudy and it was dull and humid along the trails. Encountering many species first seen in the morning we also saw a White-collared Swift, a brief view of Yellow-faced Grassquit and Greater Antillean Bullfinch and a particularly good view of Jamaican Vireo. A couple of canopy-hugging streaky ‘dendroicas’ went unidentified but we saw our first Caribbean Dove.

Dwayne escorted us back with plenty of time for most to freshen up before the evening meal, immediately after which Richard and a visiting birder Rob took us to where a Northern Potoo was perched and occasionally flying up and around. Initially it was high up on a telegraph pole but then flew down and permitted a close approach on a broken tree trunk, a super birding finale to the day!

Following check lists it was time to retire as the following day’s activities were to start early and would involve us being away from Green Castle Estate for about twelve hours...

Day 3

Wednesday 6th February

With our departure planned for 5am, we were provided with a 4.45am pre-breakfast snack again and had an opportunity to gulp down some coffee or tea. We then trundled down the track from the estate and headed initially east and out of St Mary province into Portland. Some heavy showers had hit the bottom of the mountains but as we steadily climbed the rain dissipated and dawn broke cloudy and a little grey but still warm. Small birds mostly looked all dark initially but the light gradually improved and we began to identify typical forest birds such as Bananaquit, Orangequit and Black faced Grassquit. However it wasn’t long before Trevor our coach driver alerted us to a bird on a branch which he thought we might be interested in – and we were as it proved to be our first Crested Quail-Dove, perhaps one of the more difficult of the endemics to find. Strange

noises from the canopy alerted Dwayne to the presence of a Chestnut bellied Cuckoo and it wasn't long before we were looking at our second new endemic bird of the day.

Large numbers of Red-billed Streamertails caused the air to throb around us as they whizzed past at incredible speed. Next was Arrow-marked Warbler, another endemic of the higher mountains and we watched a couple of them feeding in open view alongside the roadside. Our first Ring-tailed Pigeons were perched up high on a tree and looked large and pale. In better light later we realised that actually they were a combination of beautiful colours with a strong pink underside, subtle greys, a very pale undertail and reddish legs.

We walked further up the road watching a mixture of birds and saw a number of White-chinned Thrushes. A fruiting shrub attracted plenty of these thrushes but also a couple of White-eyed Thrushes and a super Rufous-throated Solitaire appeared in the bush too. Dwayne picked up on a Blue Mountain Vireo at about the same time as we were salivating over a couple of gorgeous Jamaican Spindalis - which way to turn! Thankfully both birds hung around and were seen well by everyone, but a Greater Antillean Bullfinch melted away into the darkness of the foliage.

We wandered back down the road to Trevor and his waiting mini-coach, the clouds swirling around the canopy. We drove a little further up and decamped and took a short walk which immediately provided excellent views of Jamaican Pewee and Loggerhead Kingbird. A Turkey Vulture showed well in a tree below us and views were obtained of Black-throated Blue and Prairie Warblers as well as the more usual American Redstarts. By this time we were at about 3,000 feet up and very much in the Blue Mountain coffee zone. Plants could be seen growing by the roadside and on terraces, sometimes blended with light or secondary growth forest or small areas of banana. The bushes are grown to be relatively low for ease of manual picking, and the plants at higher elevation take longer to mature and their beans are slower growing which apparently improves the taste and aroma.

We ate our packed breakfasts, which included a warm and rather sweet Jamaican style oatmeal porridge and flaked coffee, at the roadside. Shortly afterwards Dwayne recognised a call a little way off and then expertly spotted a very unobtrusive Jamaican Elaenia pretty high up towards the canopy. Wow, another endemic located! We walked a little further along the same forested road and following a call resembling something between a grackle and an oriole we finally found a Jamaican Blackbird, a bird which is generally scarce and not always easy to find. As we watched this rare icterid, it pecked away and then peeled back some bark, presumably in an effort to locate invertebrates. Rather than hiding away the same individual flew out from obscurity and showed well in the open. As with most birds with essentially black plumage, a little light was enough to reveal iridescent colours in the body and wing feathers, but with the head looking blacker. Slim proportions and a slim bill and its behaviour suggested a close relationship with the Jamaican Oriole.

At about this time the weather closed in again with low cloud enveloping the trees around us, but not before a Merlin was seen racing along above the tree-tops. We then experienced rain and after taking shelter and waiting for an interlude in the wet stuff we took a walk down a steeply sloping road and straight away found an active male Jamaican Becard. Further down the track Dwayne pointed out the massive if a little dishevelled nest that this species constructs. We enjoyed views of perched Ring-tailed Pigeons in good light and Rob located a fine Prairie Warbler for us to enjoy.

As we climbed back up the track the rain returned and we boarded our mini coach and drove to a basic roadside ‘coffee shop’ which provided us with a complimentary mug of Blue Mountain coffee and demonstrated the process of manipulating the beans once picked. There were packages of beans and ground coffee for purchase and they insisted on packing the grounds only after they had been freshly ground in front of us. The aroma of rich, roasted coffee and wood smoke filled the air, providing a blend of its own.

A short walk nearby in the dry provided excellent views of another Rufous-throated Solitaire, an American Kestrel of the Cuban race which winters in the uplands and a couple of Turkey Vultures attracted to the carcass of a dead dog in the undergrowth.

Back on the bus and the weather deteriorated again so we decided to come down out of the mountains and take a slow drive back to the Green Castle Estate via a couple of brief coastal stop-offs. We saw small flocks of Smooth-billed Anis perching in trees, a Belted Kingfisher, Common Ground Dove, Northern Mockingbirds, a Red-tailed Hawk and a few other bits and bobs as we took a slow drive down the mountain. In the vicinity of Annotto Bay, we made a couple of stops, the first providing views of a few flying Royal Terns and Antillean Palm-Swifts. At the second we enjoyed views of more Royal Terns, perched this time on wooden posts, plus a single Sandwich Tern and a small gathering of Ruddy Turnstones and Sanderling. At sea level it was sunny and warm and hadn’t rained at all and we drove the short distance back to our accommodation. There was time to relax and chill out prior to our very enjoyable evening meal.

Day 4

Thursday 7th February

Our plan today was to spend the day on Green Castle Estate with Dwayne and after our usual pre-breakfast arrangement we took a wander along one of the nearer trails. The weather was windy and grey with low cloud but we remained mostly dry. The birds were initially hard to see but White-crowned Pigeons whizzed overhead, a few Turkey Vultures rode the airstreams and a couple of Red-tailed Hawks glided in the stiff northerly wind. Jamaican Woodpecker, Olive-throated Parakeet and Yellow-shouldered Grassquit came next and of course a few American Redstarts and Northern Parulas came out of the woodwork. A singing Jamaican Elaenia refused to show itself so we dawdled along and found birds such as the so cute Jamaican Tody and connected with the constantly calling Jamaican Vireo and both Sad and Rufous-tailed Flycatcher. A fruiting fig tree is always a magnet for birds and as we settled to view numerous birds began to show themselves, starting with two Jamaican Elaenias and continuing on with Jamaican Oriole, Jamaican Spindalis, a cracking young male Summer Tanager which added plenty of spangled yellows and oranges and ending with Loggerhead Kingbird and many previously-seen species.

Dwayne steered us back to our lodgings for 8.30am where we sampled scrambled egg and a very nice bean, vegetable and sausage ‘stew’ as well as fresh fruit and bread/toast and jam/marmalade. The coffee machines and toasters struggled to cope with the size of our party but we had plenty of time to enjoy breakfast. Red-billed Streamertails and Jamaican Mangos came to the sugar water feeders right next to the open air dining room and other birds viewable included the obligatory Bananaquits and the resident pair of Zenaida Doves. A pair of American Kestrels enjoyed three main perching areas around our accommodation, one of which was a tree right outside the dining room.

The idea was to then take a longer walk around the estate and we headed out with grey clouds above us. Unfortunately the rain started and it carried on raining until 2pm so we made a hasty retreat and did what we could from the protection of the veranda and buildings. Before our retreat we heard Ovenbird and Greater Antillean Bullfinch calling, but both species evaded visual detection. White-crowned Pigeons continued to fly fast overhead as did a few White-winged Doves. Rather bedraggled hummingbirds came to feed from the feeders but the poor light ensured that photography of these little gems remained a difficult challenge. With no let-up in the weather we enjoyed a cheese sandwich and chicken pasta lunch and wished the rain clouds away and just after 3pm we stepped out and took a walk down towards the reservoir. Vervain Hummingbird and Yellow-shouldered Grassquit showed nicely and then we encountered two very lively and vocal Stolid Flycatchers. Subtleties in the plumage from other similar-sized flycatchers were overshadowed by their shape and jizz and habit of perching along substantial branches and giving the appearances of large Yellow Wagtails. Their loud whistling was quite unlike anything else encountered on the estate, occasionally giving way to little purrs and clipped upturned inflections. A near endemic, this bird occurs on only one other island in addition to Jamaica.

Continuing downhill we saw relatively common birds and heard Caribbean Dove and then arrived at the vegetated freshwater reservoir. Bigger birds here included Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Green Heron, Common Gallinule (recently split from Moorhen), examples of both American and Caribbean Coot (currently treated by some authorities as one species White-shielded Coot) and further examples of waterfowl with Ring-necked Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed and Least Grebes all adorning the mud-coloured lake.

Sharp eyes picked out bobbing Spotted Sandpipers, Smooth-billed Anis and a fresh haul of small birds which included a Worm-eating Warbler, a cracking male Yellowthroat, a Black-throated Blue Warbler and hearing what was believed to be Northern Waterthrush. We scrambled up from the reservoir and meandered uphill to our lodgings, with a mongoose sp crossing the track ahead of us.

We were back by about 5.40pm and ready for our evening meal just after 6pm, followed by the wildlife check list and review of things seen to date. With an early morning start planned for the following day most of the group retired early.

Day 5

Friday 8th February

In view of our very early start today some pre-breakfast refreshments were available from 4.30am, after which a full contingent climbed into the coach to head east along the north coast highway into the mountains. En route we found that Roger, our allocated guide for today, couldn't make it because of the previous day's rain in the mountains and so Dwayne kindly responded to an early morning phone call and quickly joined us. Birds en-route and seen from the moving coach included a Merlin, a Red-tailed Hawk and a Barn Owl.

It took a couple of hours to reach the bottom of Ecclesdown Road so we emerged from the coach to devour our eggs, porridge and snacks, with hot drinks, only to be distracted by birds flitting around including our first good views of Cape May Warbler, more views of the stunning Black-throated Blue Warbler, Jamaican Crows and our first good views of Greater Antillean Bullfinches.

After our roadside breakfast we took a gentle wander up the road for about a kilometre observing a variety of common Jamaican birds with the addition of now Black-billed Streamertails (and no Red-billed birds).

Apparently the range dividing line between the two similar species of ‘doctor bird’ is pretty much the Rio Grande River which we had passed over earlier. More Bullfinches, Orangequits (called Bluequits locally), American Redstarts and similar fare were on offer and towards the highest point of our walk we saw a couple of Ring-tailed Pigeons, a Red-tailed Hawk and finally saw at least seven flying parrots which were identified as the endemic Yellow-billed Parrot.

The usual Turkey Vultures wafted past us on the air currents working through and above the tree canopy and after some scanning and standing around with few bird sightings we had Trevor pick us up and take us back to where we started. On arrival we could hear Olive-throated Parakeets and a couple of parrots and Dwayne expertly tracked down a single parrot sitting in a tree which we were able to telescope and could confirm was a Black-billed Parrot and our 27th endemic bird recorded on the trip! White-eyed Thrush, Jamaican Spindalis and Jamaican Oriole all showed here too. With increased humidity and a slowing down of bird activity we decided that it was time to move on and go sample some Jamaican jerk chicken and pork!

Trevor drove us down to Boston Bay back on the coast and it was here that we stopped to sample the traditional meat dishes with vegetables, a type of savoury pancake and fried plantain. A few Cattle Egrets and Turkey Vultures continued to show and several hirundines remained unidentified but at least one of them was a Cave Swallow.

After our lunch it was back on the coach and we headed west connecting with the north coast highway. At the confluence of the Spanish River and the Caribbean Sea we decamped and scanned the water birds on offer from the road bridge. Herons on offer included Little Blue, Great White and Snowy Egrets, with three Yellow-crowned Night Herons arriving just before we left. A very good mixture of other birds here included Glossy Ibis, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Blue-winged Teal and Pied-billed Grebe. Perched birds included Belted Kingfisher and a head-bobbing Merlin. Common Gallinules, American Coot and Royal Tern continued the aquatic theme, with the second of two Magnificent Frigatebirds of the day passing down the coast.

After about half an hour here we continued on to Green Castle Estate spotting a few more birds on the way including a Green Heron briefly. There was plenty of time then to relax and recover from the rigours of our travels prior to our evening meal at 6pm. After our check list and discussions the Northern Potoo was again on show on a telegraph pole at the back of our compound, completely ignoring our torches and camera flashes.

Day 6

Saturday 9th February

We permitted ourselves a slightly delayed start today as we were to explore more of the Green Castle Estate and had no vehicle or travelling requirements, so some pre-breakfast snacks were available to us from 6.30am and we mustered for a walk at 7am, Dwayne again heading us off. We very quickly saw all three species of hummingbird available, noted the regular American Kestrels and Red-tailed Hawk and were soon on to the very noisy but good-looking Jamaican Woodpeckers. Olive-throated Parakeets flew around as did White-crowned Pigeons with perhaps Jamaican Orioles, White-chinned Thrushes and Loggerhead Kingbirds dominating the next size down. Distant views of Jamaican Euphonia didn't improve, a Ruddy Quail-Dove flashed by at a rate of knots and canopy-feeding small birds included Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler and the more common American Redstart and Northern Parula with Sad Flycatcher, Jamaica Vireo and Yellow-shouldered Grassquit all

on show too. Our only shower of the day caught one or two of us out without waterproofs and then it was back for a cooked breakfast!

At about 9.40am we strode out again along previously unvisited trails, connecting with Common Ground Dove, Zenaida Dove and enjoying close views of Black-throated Blue, Northern Parula and Black and White Warblers. An Ovenbird called from cover and wasn't seen but Greater Antillean Bullfinch and Jamaican Vireo showed very well. We walked up to an area that used to be an old look-out and could see a historic Spanish built tower below us. The small hill we were on was apparently an ancient burial ground. Caribbean Doves could be heard calling but we didn't track one down, while non-bird interest was provided by an enormous Cane Toad in some old concrete foundation tanks !

We took a slow walk back up the hill, checking a variety of small birds working the vines and foliage and made it back with time to spare for our 1pm lunch. There was plenty of variety with the meals using good produce from the island, nothing lavish or exotic but well prepared and healthy and everyone seemed to eat well. The small bar in the dining area was able to provide a selection of wines, beers, spirits and soft drinks and hot drinks such as coffee and tea and filtered water was available all day (and night).

Hummingbird feeders provided some of the best views of Jamaican Mango and the female Red-billed Streamertails (for some reason the males didn't seem to visit them) and the anole lizards were actively seeking insects all around us, the males flagging their throat pouches at each other. Butterflies were active and moths, shield bugs and crickets were attracted to the lights at night. Also at night the immediate grounds around us became the foraging area for the giant Cane Toads.

A pair of American Kestrels spent much of their time in the garden around our accommodation as did Bananaquit, Vervain Hummingbird, Northern Mockingbird, Zenaida Dove and Sad Flycatcher. Smooth-billed Anis and American Redstarts made regular forays close to the buildings and three male streamertails were always battling it out by the entrance gate. In the evenings a Northern Potoo regularly moth-catched from a telegraph pole and a stump close to the compound.

In the afternoon we took a walk at about 3pm again with Dwayne Swaby as our guide – his local knowledge and ability to pick up on birds was excellent. He took us down to the reservoir towards the bottom of the hill. On arrival we managed to see a Louisiana Waterthrush, a bird we knew to be present as Rob, a visiting British birder, had found it a couple of days earlier. Birds on the water looked to be much the same, made up of White-shielded Coot, Common Gallinule, Ruddy Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck and both Least and Pied-billed Grebes. Birds of the margin included both Green Heron and Spotted Sandpiper. Dwayne disappeared off into the undergrowth and was gone a long time! In the meantime our party picked up on Jamaican Euphonia, Jamaican Elaenia, several pigeon/dove species and the usual warblers.

After what seemed an age Dwayne called to us from some giant bamboo stands and guided us in to admire a roosting Jamaican Owl – wow! All owls are special but the soft browns, delicate but precise streakings and prominent ear-tufts made this our last endemic to be found - a very special bird indeed. It didn't seem too concerned at our presence with a couple of yawns and a little blinking as the bamboo creaked and swayed in the keen breeze.

We hiked back to our accommodation, seeing a few bits and pieces along the way and had sufficient time to ready ourselves for the evening meal and subsequent check list and discussions.

Day 7

Sunday 10th February

An optional excursion planned for today was to take a short journey down to the coast in an effort to try to find the White-tailed Tropicbird, a few pairs of which breed on the cliffs on the north coast of Jamaica. Half our number decided to try their luck at this sometimes difficult to see sea-bird and at about 6.30am we trundled down the track in the estate's 4x4 and a taxi and then turned left on the coast road and through a small village. We decamped by a small headland and took a short walk to look over the Caribbean Sea. It wasn't long before we could see a long distance view of a flying tropicbird, which then became two, then three and the numbers went up to a total of seven individuals. They kept their distance but the closer birds provided enough plumage characteristics to identify them as White-tailed Tropicbirds as opposed to Red-billed which tends to occur more regularly to the east of the West Indies. Fast and dramatic flyers with much shallower wing-beats than a tern and exhibiting very long tail streamers, they enjoyed chasing each other around in the blowy conditions. Despite plenty of scanning we couldn't find any other sea-birds of note and walked back to the waiting vehicles. A Peregrine flew over, the only one seen all trip. We then drove slowly east and consumed our packed breakfast of eggs, hot oatmeal and fruit porridge and coffee on the sea shore.

We then walked along the beach area, sadly strewn in plastic and other rubbish, and checked out some pools. Heavy vegetation hid some interesting birds in addition to the Common Gallinules – two very smart Northern Jacanas showed nicely and a couple of American Purple Gallinules stalked about in the shallows too.

A raised area of sand and shale provided a wind-break for roosting waders waiting for high tide to subside and we notched up Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Black-bellied (Grey) Plover, Semi-palmated Plover and Spotted Sandpiper. The more protected area behind the sandbar offered fishing opportunities for Great Blue and Little Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets and a Pied-billed Grebe. Turkey Vultures seem to occur in all habitat zones and here a party of them rested on the windy aspect of the sandbar, occasionally taking off and wheeling around in the strong coastal breeze. A couple of short, sharp showers made us grab our waterproofs, only for them to pass through as quickly as they had arrived.

Our next stop was in some roadside bushes/mangroves which offered even more protection for birds on the coast and it was here that we enjoyed our only Yellow Warblers of the trip. They came nice and close and we were able to appreciate the differences between the males and females as they flitted around our heads. Other birds hidden away included Yellow-crowned Night Herons and a Blue-winged Teal. We then returned to the Green Castle Estate, pausing at the Spanish Tower to appreciate the handicraft of engineers hundreds of years ago. The tower is a favoured roosting site for Barn Owl but we didn't encounter any on our visit. Then of course it was lunch back at our accommodation where we caught up with the remainder of the group who had been busy out in the field and seeing plenty of wildlife of their own! This included the roosting Jamaican Owl from the previous day, improved views of Yellow-faced Grassquits and the discovery of a flock of Scaly-breasted Munias.

After lunch some of us walked back down to the reservoir and found both the Louisiana Waterthrush and Jamaican Owl still pretty much in the same places as the previous day. The collection of waterfowl seemed to be

much the same, there were two or three Green Herons fishing the margins and a Yellowthroat was acting furtively as we left. Four Yellow-faced Grassquits showed nicely later in the day and birds such as Jamaican Spindalis made it on to the day list too.

On the last night of the group trips at Green Castle it has become customary for a Jerk Chicken BBQ party to be organised and so we found ourselves being spoilt with this traditional food once again together with other tasty food and some rum punch too! After checking in online for our flights the following day we took a brief nocturnal tour with Dwayne to see what we could see on the estate at night. We quickly encountered Cane Toads and the Northern Potoo was on his post and stump again! After playing some calls, another Jamaican Owl materialised, this time sitting on the top of a tall tree and calling itself too. Fireflies danced around us as we wandered back under the starlit skies and we said our final farewell to Dwayne who had been our guide and teacher for the whole week; his local knowledge and birding skills were truly exceptional.

And after a longer day than normal it was time to cram in some sleep before our long day of travel the following day...

Day 8

Monday 11th February

A leisurely start to the morning was absolutely fine as our journey back home didn't start until the afternoon with an evening and overnight flight back to the UK for the majority of us.

It was a very warm day with strong sunshine right from the start, little in the way of cloud and certainly no rain or showers. Some pre-morning wanderings had provided the usual sightings and the remainder of the morning was at leisure with most of the group exploring the trails individually or in couples. More munias were seen again, this time with an increased flock size of about ten. The trails seemed to be busy with birds with plenty of warblers on show and even the doves were showy too, with the normally shy Caribbean and Ruddy Quail-Doves being seen well. A last walk down to the reservoir started well with a Worm-eating Warbler showing closely, views of Stolid Flycatcher and at the reservoir itself the Jamaican Owl and Louisiana Waterthrush were both located. On the walk back there were no less than three Ovenbirds on show, albeit only the last one showed well. Were these new migrants in or was it just one of those lucky mornings?

Some packing and showers before lunch all made sense and after our soup and garlic bread it was time to gather the bags and load up our mini coach for the journey to Kingston.

We said good bye to Richard and his Green Castle Estate team and took a steady journey south over the higher areas of the centre of the island with Raymond at the wheel. We had a little leg stretch at Castleton Botanical Gardens which hosted some lovely old trees and a riverside walk, the best birds seen probably being Black-throated Blue Warbler, Jamaican Crow and Ring-tailed Pigeon.

We then carried on towards Kingston, threading through the city slowly but with no significant delays and took a steady drive towards the harbour and airport. We noticed several Mourning Doves in and around Kingston but didn't see the expected House Sparrows! Birds of the harbour provided a pleasing last spectacle with Brown Pelicans, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Laughing Gulls, Royal Terns, Sandwich Terns and a Spotted Sandpiper all vying for our attention.

A few minutes later and we were at the airport where we said good-bye to Ian who was travelling the following day. With plenty of time to spare and some nice shops on offer for those with spare bag space, and no crowds, it was a gentle and quiet wait at the Norman Mandley Airport before we boarded our British Airways Boeing 777 and flew overnight back to the UK.

During our short trip to Jamaica, which was a new country for all of us, we enjoyed warm and humid weather and managed to record over a hundred species of birds between us which included all of the currently listed 28 endemics. We found the accommodation comfortable and the food very good and we enjoyed the company of our guide Dwayne, our drivers Trevor and Raymond and the lovely, friendly staff at Green Castle Estate.

Day 9

Tuesday 12th February

Arrival into the UK

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Red-billed Streamertail

Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	E=endemic; N=near endemic; I=introduced		February								
	Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1	Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>				10	1	8	✓	✓	
2	Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>				7		7	✓	✓	
3	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>				✓		✓	✓	✓	
4	Least Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i>				7		10	✓	✓	
5	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>				1	2	1	2	1	
6	White-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon lepturus catesbyi</i>							7		
7	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>					3				
8	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea bancrofti</i>				3	3	1	3	3	
9	Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>				1	1	1	2	2	
10	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>			✓		✓		✓	✓	
11	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>					1		1		
12	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>					4				
13	Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>			2		4	1	2		
14	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>					4		✓		
15	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>					1			✓	
16	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>					2				
17	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
18	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis jamaicensis</i>		H	1	2	2	2	✓	✓	
19	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinica</i>							2		
20	Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula galeata cerceris</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	
21	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	
22	Caribbean Coot	<i>Fulica caribaea</i>					✓		✓	✓	
23	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>					3				
24	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>								✓	
25	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>								2	
26	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>				1					
27	Northern Jacana	<i>Jacana spinosa</i>								2	
28	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>				✓				✓	
29	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				✓				✓	
30	Wilson's Snipe	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>									
31	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>					3	1	2	✓	✓
32	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>						1			
33	Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>									
34	Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>									✓
35	Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>				✓		✓		✓	✓
36	Cabot's/Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis aculavidus</i>				1					✓
37	Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>				✓		✓			✓
38	White-crowned Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Ring-tailed Pigeon - E	<i>Patagioenas caribaea</i>				✓		2			4
40	Common Ground Dove - E	<i>Columbina passerina jamaicensis</i>				3+		2	2	✓	
41	Crested Quail-Dove - E	<i>Geotrygon versicolor</i>				3					
42	Ruddy Quail-Dove	<i>Geotrygon montana montana</i>		2			1		1		1
43	Caribbean Dove - E	<i>Leptotila jamaicensis jamaicensis</i>		✓			H		H	H	2
44	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>									✓
45	Zenaida Dove	<i>Zenaida aurita zenaida</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
46	White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>				1+		✓	✓	✓	
47	Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i>				2+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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	Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
48	Mangrove Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus minor</i>		H						✓
49	Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo - E	<i>Coccyzus pluvialis</i>			1		1			
50	Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo - E	<i>Coccyzus vetula</i>		2	H			H		✓
51	American Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba furcata</i>	2				1			
52	Jamaican Owl - E	<i>Pseudoscops grammicus</i>						1	2	2
53	Northern Potoo - E	<i>Nyctibius jamaicensis jamaicensis</i>		1	1				1	
54	White-collared Swift	<i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i>		1						
55	Antillean Palm Swift	<i>Tachornis phoenicobia</i>			2					
56	Jamaican Mango - E	<i>Anthracothorax mango</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Red-billed Streamertail - E	<i>Trochilus polytmus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
58	Black-billed Streamertail - E	<i>Trochilus scitulus</i>					✓			
59	Vervain Hummingbird - N	<i>Mellisuga minima</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
60	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>			1		2			
61	Jamaican Tody - E	<i>Todus todus</i>		2	1	3	1		✓	✓
62	Jamaican Woodpecker - E	<i>Melanerpes radiolatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
63	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>		2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>			1		2			
65	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>							1	
66	Black-billed Parrot - E	<i>Amazona agilis</i>					1			
67	Yellow-billed Parrot - E	<i>Amazona collaria</i>					7			
68	Olive-throated Parakeet - E	<i>Eupsittula nana nana</i>		2	2	2	2	3	H	H
69	Jamaican Elaenia - E	<i>Myiopagis cotta</i>			1	2		1		
70	Jamaican Pewee - E	<i>Contopus pallidus</i>			2					
71	Loggerhead Kingbird - E	<i>Tyrannus caudifasciatus jamaicensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
72	Sad Flycatcher - E	<i>Myiarchus barbirostris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
73	Rufous-tailed Flycatcher - E	<i>Myiarchus validus</i>		2		3	✓	✓		
74	Stolid Flycatcher - N	<i>Myiarchus stolidus</i>				2		1	3	3
75	Jamaican Becard - E	<i>Pachyrhamphus niger</i>			1	1	2	H		
76	Jamaican Vireo - E	<i>Vireo modestus</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
77	Blue Mountain Vireo - E	<i>Vireo osburni</i>			1+					
78	Jamaican Crow - E	<i>Corvus jamaicensis</i>		4			4			1
79	Cave Swallow - ES	<i>Petrochelidon fulva poeciloma</i>		✓			1			✓
80	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Rufous-throated Solitaire	<i>Myadestes genibarbis</i>			2+		H			
82	White-eyed Thrush - E	<i>Turdus jamaicensis</i>			2		1			
83	White-chinned Thrush - E	<i>Turdus aurantius</i>		4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
84	Scaly-breasted Munia - I	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>							6	10
85	Jamaican Euphonia - E	<i>Euphonia jamaica</i>		✓				✓		
86	Jamaican Spindalis - E	<i>Spindalis nigricephala</i>		✓	2	1	3	✓	✓	
87	Shiny Cowbird	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>		✓				1		
88	Jamaican Oriole - N	<i>Icterus leucopteryx</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
89	Jamaican Blackbird - E	<i>Nesopsar nigerrimus</i>			1					
90	Greater Antillean Grackle - E	<i>Quiscalus niger crassirostris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
91	Ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>				H		H		3
92	Worm-eating Warbler	<i>Helmitheros vermivorum</i>				1				1
93	Louisiana Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia motacilla</i>						1	1	1
94	Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>		✓	1			✓	✓	✓
95	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>				1	1		1	
96	Arrowhead Warbler - E	<i>Setophaga pharetra</i>			4					
97	American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	Cape May Warbler	<i>Setophaga tigrina</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	

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99	Northern Parula	<i>Setophaga americana</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
100	Mangrove/Yellow Warbler - N	<i>Setophaga petechia eoa</i>							✓	
101	Black-throated Blue Warbler	<i>Setophaga caerulescens</i>		1	2	1	1	3		
102	Prairie Warbler	<i>Setophaga discolor</i>			2					
103	Summer Tanager	<i>Piranga rubra</i>				1				
104	Indigo Bunting	<i>Passerina cyanea</i>		1						
105	Bananaquit - E	<i>Coereba flaveola flaveola</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
106	Yellow-faced Grassquit	<i>Tiaris olivaceus</i>		✓					4	
107	Black-faced Grassquit	<i>Tiaris bicolor</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓		
108	Yellow-shouldered Grassquit - E	<i>Loxipasser anoxanthus</i>		✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Greater Antillean Bullfinch	<i>Loxigilla violacea ruficollis</i>		✓	1	H	✓	✓	✓	✓
110	Orangequit - E	<i>Euneornis campestris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Mammals

1	Mongoose sp.		✓				1	1	1	
2	Mouse sp.		✓					1		

Other Taxa

1	Cane Toad - I	<i>Rhinella marina</i>	1					1	✓	
2	Sally Lightfoot Crab sp.				✓					
3	Hermit Crab sp.			✓		✓		✓		
4	Graham's Anole	<i>Anolis grahami</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Jamaican Croaking Gecko/Lizard	<i>Aristelliger praesignis</i>		✓						
6	Jamaican Green Lizard	<i>Anolis garmani</i>						✓		
7	Iguana sp.								✓	

Butterflies

White Peacock, *Anartia atrophae*

Julia, *Dryas iulia*

Zebra Heliconian, *Heliconius charithonia*



American Redstart