

# Dominican Republic

**2–11 March 2019**

## **Participants**

Douglas and Margaret Bell  
Stephen Bishop  
Rachel Carr  
Robert Carr  
Keith Fisher  
Alan Nairn

**Local guide** Danilo Mejia

**Leaders** Vaughan and  
Svetlana Ashby



**Ridgway's Hawk**

This is a summary of the main events of the tour: a full checklist with numbers of the scarcer species is on the website. We enjoyed good weather throughout and the arrangements were as good as could be expected – which was also true for Vaughan's jokes!

**Day 1** We arrived at Gatwick in time for our morning flight to Madrid, and then our onward flight to Santo Domingo. The flights were with Air Europa, which has the worst airline food I have ever eaten! On arrival we collected the van and made the short transfer to the Hampton by Hilton hotel – our only taste of luxury!

**Day 2** After an early breakfast we went to the Botanic Gardens where we met our local guide, Danilo. We then had a very productive walk around the gardens where we had good views of Palmchat (endemic family no. 1) and Antillean Palm-swifts. Hispaniolan Woodpeckers were everywhere and we also caught up with Vervain Hummingbird, Hispaniolan Lizard-cuckoo and Black-crowned Palm-tanager (endemic family no.2). After an early lunch (which turned out to be a late breakfast!) we drove to Puerto Escondido via Lago Enriquillo where Danilo's local gen paid off and we found a flock of Hispaniolan Palm Crows as well as Broad-billed Tody and Stolid Flycatcher. As we approached our lodgings (with unusual plumbing arrangements!), we managed to see the other endemic crow, White-necked Crow.

**Day 3** After 03.30 coffee we got in the 4-wheel drives for the very long and bumpy drive uphill, arriving just before dawn. Most people managed to see Bicknell's Thrush and we all eventually got decent views of La Selle Thrush. Other endemics steadily showed in the next few hours: White-winged Warbler, Golden Swallow, Hispaniolan Trogon, Hispaniolan Spindalis, Hispaniolan Pewee, Green-tailed Warbler, Hispaniolan Parrot, Narrow-billed

Tody, Greater Antillean Bullfinch and Greater Antillean Elaenia. We were fortunate to find a Bay-breasted Cuckoo, a species often missed by tours. We were even more pleased to pin down the final endemic family in the form of a Western Chat-tanager – the Latin name of this family translates aptly as “loves to hide”. We then moved even higher and eventually tracked down Antillean Siskin and Hispaniolan Crossbill. As we drove down we made a number of stops and were rewarded with excellent views of a pair of Antillean Euphonias and Margaret called our attention to an Antillean Piculet. Other stops produced Loggerhead Kingbird and Northern Potoo, both of which were the endemic sub-species, which Vaughan assured us would soon be split!

**Day 4** We walked the Lodge grounds in the morning where we came across Scaly-naped Pigeons, Zenaida Dove and Ruddy Quail-dove, but the best bird was found by Keith: a White-fronted Quail-dove. After some searching Stephen found a Flat-billed Vireo. After lunch we walked the grounds in the opposite direction seeing a few new species, with the highlight being the Hispaniolan Oriole. Warblers included Black-throated Blue all day, with Palm Warbler and Common Yellowthroat in the afternoon.

**Day 5** In the morning we walked the grounds again with similar birds to yesterday, except for White-crowned Pigeon found by Rachel, and some managed to see Key West Quail-dove. After lunch we drove back to Lago Enriquillo where we found a selection of water birds including White-cheeked Pintail and American Flamingo. The Palm Crows were still present. We then headed to Barahona.

**Day 6** The next day we drove to Cabo Rojo and Bahia de las Aguilas where we saw a variety of waders including Stilt Sandpiper. At the point we saw Brown Booby, Brown Pelican and distant White-tailed Tropicbird. Back at the lagoons a lucky few saw a Spotted Rail but it could not be relocated.

**Day 7** Another early start (04.30) and another bumpy uphill drive (1 hour only) to Cachote where everybody got some sort of view of Eastern Chat-tanager. We then went back downhill to the hotel and the long drive to Cano Hondo – as promised, very quirky, with very possibly the longest wait for an evening meal, ever!

**Day 8** A local warden took us to see the nest of a pair of Ridgway’s Hawk and we all had good views of both birds. As we walked the area we saw the usual suspects and added Limpkin to the trip list. In the afternoon Vaughan found an out-of-range Pearly-eyed Thrasher – the only write-in of the trip. Eventually, everyone saw the bird. In the evening the local warden took us out and we managed to entice an Ashy-faced Owl to perch, spot-lit, in a tree.

**Day 9** After a quiet morning we headed back to the airport, but a flat battery meant that we did not risk stopping en-route. Our overnight flight was nearly on time and the food predictably dire.

**Day 10** Arrival in Madrid and thence to Gatwick where we said our goodbyes at the end of a very successful trip. We saw 29 of the 31 possible endemics and heard both the other two.

**Robert Carr**