

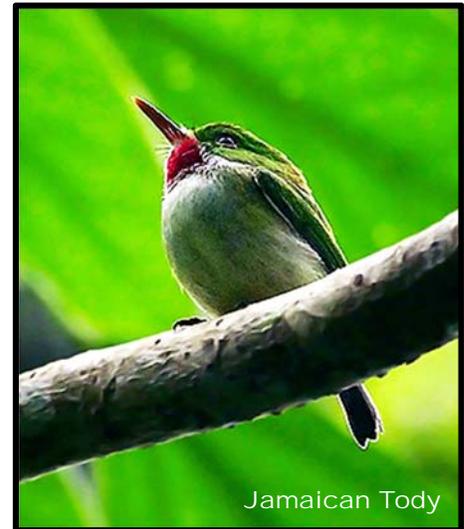


CARIBBEAN ENDEMIC OF **JAMAICA**

February 8–15, 2016

We dove head-first into the Caribbean in November 2014, with a whirlwind 5-island scouting trip to Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. As part of our strong commitment to bird conservation, we immediately began building a relationship with BirdsCaribbean, the leading conservation group in the region. I was then invited to Jamaica in July 2015 as one of the keynote speakers for BirdsCaribbean's 20th International Meeting. At the meeting, I shared ideas for developing nature- and conservation-based tourism in the region, and representatives from more than 30 different islands responded with enthusiasm. It's now time to walk our talk, with a 2016 tour to Jamaica!

We are excited to continue our partnership with BirdsCaribbean, and a portion of the proceeds from this tour will support their much-needed conservation efforts in Jamaica. We want to show Jamaicans that healthy bird habitats bring birders to their island, and we are proud to contribute to these efforts. Join us in Jamaica—for the unique tropical nature experience and the genuine island hospitality—and you too will be proud to have gone beyond the birding.



*Your host and lead guide,
Steve Shunk*

WHY VISIT JAMAICA?

Jamaica stands out in the Caribbean, in more ways than one, featuring the highest number of endemic bird species in the region and an incredible overall diversity of flora and fauna. In addition to the island's 31 endemic birds, Jamaica boasts the following mindboggling statistics: 48 endemic reptiles and amphibians; more than 500 endemic land snails; and over 3,000 flowering plants, at least 830 of which are endemic, ranking Jamaica 5th among the world's islands for endemic plant diversity.

Compared to many tropical regions, birding in Jamaica is relatively easy, and many of the endemic species are fairly common. Both the Red-billed and Black-billed Streamertails will visit hummingbird feeders at our lodges, along with the handsome Jamaican Mango. The Jamaican Woodpecker, Sad Flycatcher, and White-chinned Thrush will also be on our lodge grounds. Two full days in the Blue Mountains will give us excellent chances for finding Arrowhead Warbler, Yellow-shouldered Grassquit, Crested Quail-Dove, and Blue Mountain Vireo. The lowland forests on the Portland coast will provide easy access to Jamaican Lizard-Cuckoo, Jamaican Owl, Greater Antillean Bullfinch, and Orangequit.

And just to make you feel at home, our winter visit will also feature an exciting array of North America's breeding songbirds. The warbler list alone includes Palm, Prairie, Cape May, Worm-eating, Yellow-throated, and more. Black-throated Blue Warblers may be hopping around on the railing at the Goblin Hill veranda!

Beyond the phenomenal nature experience, we will also enjoy the delightful Jamaican hospitality, staying at very comfortable local lodges and tasting the best of Jamaica's fresh tropical cuisine. This is not your ordinary Caribbean vacation! Skim through the itinerary below, and dust off your passport, because Jamaica is calling you.

TOUR SUMMARY

Our tour begins and ends in Kingston, well away from the primary tourism center in Montego Bay. Our US and local guides will meet you at the Kingston airport before a short drive to our Port Royal hotel for the first night. We will enjoy a casual evening on the harbor, with a little waterbird action and an orientation dinner at our hotel. Early the next morning, we will head to Hellshire Hills.

Located just west of Kingston, the habitat at Hellshire is a dry limestone forest. The vegetation is dominated by short shrubs, cacti, Red Birch (*Bursera simaruba*), and Silver Thatch (*Coccothrinax jamaicensis*). The environment is quite arid, but it is deceptively rich in birdlife. This is one of only two locations on the island where the Bahama Mockingbird can be found. Also common here are the Stolid Flycatcher, Caribbean Dove, and Mangrove Cuckoo. Endemics such as the Jamaican Vireo and Yellow-shouldered Grassquit can also be seen. When the cacti are in bloom, Jamaican Mango hummingbirds are everywhere.

After an early lunch, we will explore the Royal Botanical Gardens of Hope, a public park managed by the Nature Preservation Foundation. Its large mature trees and diversity of plants promote an equally diverse birdlife. It is an important place to see migratory warblers such as Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Cape May, Prairie, Palm, American Redstart and Black-and-white Warbler. More importantly however, it is home to a remnant population of Yellow-billed Parrots, with a few Black-billed individuals seen occasionally. Jamaica's National Bird, the Red-billed Streamertail, can be found feeding among the flowers, and the abundant trees are good habitat for Jamaican Woodpecker and Jamaican Euphonia. The Hope Gardens provide a convenient relaxed setting for some easy birding. With many Jamaican endemics already under our belts, we will take an afternoon drive into the spectacular Blue Mountains, arriving at the Starlight Chalet—our lodge for the next 3 nights—just in time for dinner.

For the next two full days, we will immerse ourselves in Jamaica's famous Blue Mountains. Known around the world for its exquisite coffee, the region just gained international stature as part of the brand new Blue and John Crow Mountains UNSECO World Heritage Site. Adding to the area's geographical resume, we will explore Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, listed by BirdLife International as a global Important Bird Area.



Red-billed
Streamertail

Our specific Blue Mountain birding sites will include Hardwar Gap, Section, Silver Hill Gap, and Cascade. Throughout the Blue Mountains, we will bird along rugged mountain roads at approximately 1000m elevation. An impressive list of birds has been recorded in this area, including hard-to-find species such as the Jamaican Blackbird and Crested Quail-Dove. This area is relatively undisturbed, and the roads twist and turn through primary forest and secondary growth. Stands of Blue Mahoe (Jamaica's National Tree) attract numerous Red-billed Streamertails and Orangequits. In other areas, the road is lined with small cottages, with beautiful gardens that attract many bird species. Section and Hardwar Gap combined can provide over 8 km of lightly traveled, level road, where we could find as many as 25 of Jamaica's endemic birds.

The Blue Mountains should also produce Ring-tailed Pigeon, Blue Mountain Vireo, Arrow-headed Warbler and Jamaican Spindalis. The charismatic Jamaican Tody will be seen throughout the region. Other endemics recorded here include the Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo, Jamaican Becard, and the much sought-after Rufous-throated Solitaire.

After our final breakfast at Starlight Chalet, we will head down the northern slope of the Blue Mountains to Port Antonio. After lunch at the famous Woody's Burgers (they offer a great veggie burger for herbivores!), we will settle into our base for the next three nights—Goblin Hill Villas. To give you an optional break in the heat of the day, the afternoon schedule remains open. You may choose to rest in your villa, bird the grounds and entry road to Goblin Hill, or take a dip in San San Bay (or the swimming pool). We will enjoy dinner in Port Antonio, followed by a brief jaunt to search for owls and potoos.

The next morning will bring an early departure, as we first head coastward in search of tropicbirds. Most of the day will be spent in one of Jamaica's most famous birding sites—Ecclesdown Road. Ecclesdown is a seldom-used road that travels along the foothills of the John Crow Mountains for approximately 18 km. It is entirely flat and passes through secondary closed and open forests as well as small patches of farmlands. This area is a stronghold for the Yellow-billed and Black-billed Parrots as well as Jamaican Crow, Ring-tailed Pigeon and Black-billed Streamertail. Every one of Jamaica's endemic birds has been recorded in these forests! Following our Ecclesdown jaunt, we will head to the local jerk-joint for lunch and a casual afternoon of birding around Goblin Hill.

Our last full day again offers several options. You may opt for more birding along Ecclesdown Road, or you may want to swim in the famous Blue Lagoon, just a 15-minute walk from Goblin Hill. Regardless of how you spend your final day, you will always be accompanied by one of our guides. We will end the trip with dinner in Port Antonio, returning to Kingston after breakfast the following morning.

BASIC DAILY ITINERARY

Monday, February 8: Arrive at Kingston International Airport by 3 pm; dinner and night in Port Royal.

Tuesday, February 9: Birding around Kingston, drive to Blue Mountains; dinner and night at Starlight Chalet.

Wednesday, February 10: Birding the Blue Mountains; dinner and night at Starlight Chalet.

Thursday, February 11: Birding the Blue Mountains; dinner and night at Starlight Chalet.

Friday, February 12: Birding our way to Port Antonio; casual afternoon at Goblin Hill; dinner in Port Antonio, night at Goblin Hill.



Black-throated Blue Warbler
(on lamp shade at Goblin Hill)

Saturday, February 13: Birding at Hector’s River and Ecclesdown Rd.; dinner and night at Goblin Hill.

Sunday, February 14: Birding at Ecclesdown Rd (or other activities); dinner and night at Goblin Hill.

Monday, February 15: Breakfast at Goblin Hill; drive to Kingston for 2 pm or later departures.

YOUR GUIDES

Your lead guide, **Steve Shunk**, has operated [Paradise Birding](#) for over 18 years, and he has been teaching adults about birds and nature since 1992. Steve is a seasoned tour guide, with over 150 trips under his belt, mostly in the western and southern US, but also in Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, and Sicily. Steve is a patient, experienced educator with an infectious enthusiasm for all things in nature, and he strongly incorporates ecology and conservation messages in all the regions where we travel. Steve has visited Jamaica twice in the last year, scouting all our travel routes and birding locations. He was also a keynote speaker at the BirdsCaribbean 20th International Meeting in Jamaica in July 2015.



We are excited to introduce you to our newest guide, a native of the Dominican Republic (DR), **Iván Mota**. Since 2009, Iván has served as the lead guide for many birding tour operators in the DR, including his own company, [La Cúa Birding and Wildlife Tours](#). In 2011, he worked for the Project Puffin seabird restoration program in Maine, and he continues to collaborate with the Vermont Center for Eco-Studies, with ongoing conservation projects in the DR. In his work for the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in the DR, Iván also led several conservation projects for endemic species of the island. We met Iván during our scouting trip to the Caribbean, and we recognized immediately that he would meet our very high standards as a Paradise Birding guide. Iván recently immigrated to the USA with his family, and we look forward to his leadership on several of our future tours to the Caribbean (including CUBA in November 2016!).



Our local Jamaican guide is **Ricardo Miller**, owner and operator of [Arrowhead Birding Tours](#). We met Ricardo on our scouting trip to Jamaica in 2014, and we were at once impressed by his skill and professionalism. Ricardo’s interest in birds started with a Master’s project in 2002, when he studied pigeons as game birds in Jamaica. He also volunteered as a bird bander and quickly learned all the local birds and their calls. Before long, he started taking guests around the island to show them the birds and their habitats. To date, Ricardo has seen over 200 bird species in Jamaica, and he has expanded his repertoire to include arthropods, plants, general natural history and the rich Jamaican culture. More importantly, Ricardo is witty and fun, and he fluently speaks the local Jamaican patois at the drop off a hat!



ACCOMMODATIONS

After our first night in the very comfortable and very convenient Grand Port Royal Hotel, we will spend three nights each in two of our very favorite lodging sites. Both the Starlight Chalet and Goblin Hill Villas exemplify the unpretentious Jamaican hospitality that keeps bringing us back to the island. Truly authentic Jamaican cuisine (as opposed to American tourist food) is served at both locations, and each spot offers outstanding service. We want you to sleep well; we want excellent food and on-site birding; and we want you to feel comfortable relaxing in your room or exploring the grounds on your own. These two spots meet our high standards of comfort and culture to a T.

STARLIGHT CHALET—Nestled in the cloud forest at nearly 3,000 ft. above the Caribbean Sea, the Starlight Chalet peers out across a lush canyon of tropical flora in Jamaica’s Blue Mountains. The lodge blends colonial West Indian furnishings with Caribbean island décor for a unique and colorful experience. Sitting on the balcony, you will watch Jamaican Orioles and Red-billed Streamertails at the hummingbird feeders while White-chinned Thrush and Yellow-faced Grassquit hop around the grounds below. Meals are cooked on our schedule, without the hassle of a menu, though most dietary restrictions are happily accommodated.

GOBLIN HILL VILLAS—Well-manicured tropical gardens bordering lush jungle vegetation; postcard views of Alligator Head and San San Bay; spacious suites, with full tropical breeze, ceiling fans, and air conditioning; and home-cooked-to-order Jamaican specialty dishes. These things are yours for the last 3 nights of our trip. Black-billed Streamertails and Jamaican Mangoes battle for the hummingbird feeders at Goblin Hill, while Loggerhead Kingbird calls from the palm trees. Snorkeling is just a 15-minute walk down the hill, and as many as 20 of Jamaica’s endemic birds can be found on or adjacent to the property. Our location on the quiet side of the island will make us feel like we have the whole island to ourselves.



A note on lodging: The posted tour fee offers lodging at single and double occupancy. If you request a roommate but we are unable to pair you with one of the same gender, you will be required to pay the single tour fee. If you wish to have a private room, we should be able to arrange this for you at most locations. If you have physical limitations and prefer to stay on the ground floor or to avoid stairs, please note this on your registration materials. We will do our best to accommodate special requests.

MEALS AND REFRESHMENTS

Your tour fee includes all foods and non-alcoholic beverages from dinner on Monday, February 8, through breakfast on Monday, March 15. We will also keep a variety of locally inspired snacks in the vehicle(s), as well as water and other beverages. We will eat most breakfasts at our lodging sites, but some will be “on the go” and others will be at restaurants in the field. Lunches will be a combination of Jamaican-style picnics and casual restaurant meals. Restaurant meals will all be fairly traditional Jamaican fare, and we will seek out the freshest, most unique local foods we can find. One of our main goals during any tour is to keep you pleasantly fueled and hydrated so you can make the most of your birding days.

On your registration forms, please alert us to any dietary concerns, and we will do our best to ensure that everyone enjoys our travel snacks and restaurant choices equally. However, it may be difficult to accommodate the most restrictive of diets. If you maintain such a diet, remember that appropriate foods may not be available at restaurants or even in local grocery stores. To prepare for these situations, you may wish to bring a limited amount of the foods that will meet your needs.

PACKING FOR THE TRIP

Jamaica lies south of the Tropic of Cancer in a region we call the Neotropics, and we will be in the middle of the Caribbean Sea. This translates into a tropical maritime climate, with warm, humid weather most of the year. February's average daily highs and lows lie between 82 and 74 deg F, and it is the driest month of the year, with an average of 1.8 in. of rain for the month, and about 1/3 of the days getting rain. We will spend some days in dry parts of the island, some days in the cloud forest, and some days in humid windward parts of the island. Your clothing should reflect these conditions.

We recommend that you pack lightweight, breathable field clothing that is easy to clean and that dries quickly. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants are ideal for insect and sun protection. Shorts, skirts, or dresses may be appropriate for evening at dinner, but be prepared for biting insects, especially when we eat outside. More on insects below.

For breezy days at the coast, the rare downpour, or the cool cloud forest, you may want a lightweight, water-resistant shell jacket and maybe even a light sweater. For footwear, we recommend trail walking shoes or lightweight hiking boots. Athletic shoes or sandals are very comfortable for evenings and other casual times, but always be aware of possible biting insects. You would probably appreciate a wide-brimmed hat, and some of you may wish to bring a swimsuit. If you are considering some new clothing for the trip, Patagonia and REI are both excellent resources; ask for someone who has traveled to the Caribbean, and ask plenty of questions.

Nature Hazards: Regarding insects, we will likely encounter small numbers of mosquitoes, mostly at lower elevations. Chemical repellants are effective against mosquitoes, but we also find that bug resistant clothing helps us keep our attention focused on the birds. We will bring chemical repellants, but please be prepared with your own.

Additional hazards may include biting spiders or other arthropods. There are no poisonous reptiles or amphibians in Jamaica, and most of them are freakishly afraid of predators, quickly disappearing into the brush upon approach. If we are ever faced with the very rare likelihood of an encounter with hazardous wildlife, we will warn you in advance.

Other hazards include rough terrain, thorny tropical plants, automobile traffic (when we are birding from rural roads), and the most hazardous threat of them all, the sun. Make sure you bring sunscreen—preferably waterproof and SPF 25 or above—and the proper protective clothing.

If you choose to swim in the sea or swimming pool, please note that you engage in all water activities at your own risk.

Other travel items we recommend: A light daypack or fanny pack; a headlamp or small flashlight; a camera; and your best binoculars. We may not have laundry service at our lodging sites, so you should be prepared to hand wash your clothing if necessary.



Hibiscus blossom, Goblin Hill

Also note that we will often be birding in dense tropical jungle, when a spotting scope would only be a hindrance. That said, you are welcome to bring any scope or camera you are willing to carry.

A note on currency: The unit of currency in Jamaica is the Jamaican Dollar. As of this writing, the exchange rate is \$1 US = 117 JMD, or 1 JMD = ~\$0.009 US. Unless you are paying for food and lodging, the US dollar goes very far in Jamaica. For the most part, you should not need any Jamaican currency. However, every few days we will be near a bank or other facility with an ATM machine. If you plan to use an ATM, make sure you alert your home bank that you will be in Jamaica, or you may be denied access to your cash. Typical tourist facilities will usually take major credit cards; Goblin Hill, for example has a gift shop with local crafts, and they will take a US credit card. If you plan to drink alcohol during the trip, please be prepared to pay for your drinks after each meal with JMD.



Endemic
Jamaican Woodpecker

HEALTH & SAFETY

We have yet to encounter any health hazards in Jamaica. We readily drink the tap water and eat in local restaurants, and all our lodging facilities are very clean. As mentioned above, we will also carry bottled water in our travels. However, we may not be able to prevent health hazards in all circumstances, and you should be prepared for any possible exposure. See note below.

General Note on Travel Illness: *Any time you travel internationally, you should consult with your doctor and/or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding potential disease hazards in the region you will be visiting. You should have all your standard immunizations and any others that are recommended. We will take every precaution to eat and drink safely and to travel to low-risk destinations, but we may not be able to avoid unanticipated exposure to pathogens in all circumstances. Educate yourself, be prepared, and contact your physician with any questions.*

If you are taking prescription medication(s) or regular doses of over-the-counter medicine(s), bring an ample supply to last through the tour, including enough for extra days in case of delayed travel. Remember to pack all medications in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging.

TRAVEL PLANNING

We will meet all participants at the Kingston Int'l Airport (KIN) at 3 p.m. on Monday, February 8. Please try to schedule your departure from Kingston for 2 p.m. or later on Monday, February 15. If you have any trouble meeting this schedule, please contact us and we will help you plan your itinerary. If you wish to arrive early or to extend your stay, contact us to make rendezvous or drop-off arrangements.

Travel Insurance: We strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance with your airline ticket. This insurance covers costs associated with flight delays, trip cancellation, illness, medical expenses, lost baggage, and emergency transportation. If insurance is not offered when you purchase your ticket, we recommend [Travel Insurance Services](#). You may also want to see if you are covered by any of your existing insurance programs, or by the credit cards you use to purchase your airline travel.

Customs & Immigration: A passport valid for six months beyond your return date is required for entry to Jamaica and for your return to the US, with one blank page for the entry stamp. If you are not a US citizen, check with your local consulate or embassy for information on traveling to Jamaica.

Once you disembark your arrival flight in KIN, you will go through Passport Control, where a Jamaican immigration officer may ask you some questions. They will likely ask for the name and address of where you are staying; simply give them our first site, Grand Port Royal Hotel, Port Royal Main Road, Kingston. Once you get your passport stamped, you will collect your checked baggage and proceed through customs (if you do not check any baggage, proceed directly to the customs line). The customs official may ask you some additional questions, and you may be randomly selected to have your luggage searched. If you have questions while passing through customs, look for one of the roving officers in the room. If you have any problems, tell the officials you are with a group from the US and that your leader is outside of customs. We will meet you just outside customs once you are cleared for entry. Look for Steve holding a small Paradise Birding sign!

Baggage Recommendations: We suggest that you travel with one medium or large bag and a smaller carry-on. Your carry-on should have all of your necessities, in case your checked bags get delayed. This may include a change of clothing, money, travel documents, toiletries, medicines, and any expensive equipment such as binoculars.

2016 JAMAICA TOUR FEE

Your tour fee includes the following:

- One night lodging in Port Royal; 3 nights at Starlight Chalet; 3 nights at Goblin Hill;
- All meals and non-alcoholic beverages from dinner on Monday, Feb 8, through breakfast on Monday, Feb 15;
- Transportation from Kingston International Airport (KIN);
- The services of two US guides, plus expert local guide and a local driver;
- Amenity-related and local guide gratuities.

Not included are alcoholic beverages; trip insurance (strongly recommended); other personal expenses; and US guides' gratuities, which are never expected but always appreciated based on your satisfaction with our skills and service.

Please note that our tour fees are structured to ensure that you receive the best possible customer service and an optimal travel experience. We do this by limiting our group size to a maximum of 8 participants and by including the services of 2 US guides, regardless of group size, in addition to local guides.

2016 TOUR FEE: \$4,915 single/\$4,460 double

Non-refundable deposit: \$95/person

BALANCE due 11/8: \$4,820 single/\$4,365 double



Endemic Crested Quail-Dove

REFUND POLICY: *Your deposit is non-refundable. If you cancel your reservation more than 90 days prior to the tour, you will be refunded any payments above your deposit. If you cancel between 90 and 60 days prior to the tour, you will receive a 50% refund of fees paid over the deposit. If you cancel less than 60 days prior, you forfeit your entire tour fee, unless you can fill your space with another birder. If you cancel at any time, your deposit is transferrable to any Paradise Birding tour at any time in the future. If we cancel the tour for any reason, all payments will be refunded.*

To register for this tour, submit a non-refundable \$95 deposit with the attached registration forms.
Your balance is due November 8.

We look forward to seeing you this February in Jamaica!

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