

Jamaica: Birding & Nature

February 13-24, 2008

Daily Itinerary

Wednesday, Feb. 13 ~ Arrival in Kingston / Blue Mountains / Forres Park Lodge

Our journey begins in Kingston, where we will provide group airport transfers for those arriving by 3:00 PM. Anyone arriving after 3:00 PM will need to arrange for private transfer at additional expense. Have your binoculars and cameras handy as we drive immediately up into the Blue Mountains, to a quaint eco-lodge in the rural, coffee growing area of Mavis Bank. At an elevation of 2,500 feet, the lodge's Swiss chalet style fits with the cooler climate. The



lodge is part of a working shade-grown coffee plantation, and its grounds and trails are replete with birds. On the grounds, we may discover Jamaican Tody, Red-billed Streamertail, the tiny Vervain Hummingbird, the remarkably beautiful Stripe-headed Tanager, White-chinned Thrush, Jamaican Oriole, and other species. After settling in and birding a bit on the grounds, we gather for a welcome dinner and orientation. Afterwards, enjoy the evening air from the balcony of your room. If we are lucky, as we were one year, the Jamaican Owl will be roosting nearby! *Accommodations at Forres Park Lodge (D)*

Thursday, Feb. 14 ~ Blue Mountains / Abbey Green / Forres Park Lodge

Today, weather permitting; we are off for a four-wheel drive adventure to one of Jamaica's treasured birding locations, Abbey Green, which is situated at 5,000 ft. under the summit of the Blue Mountains. Abbey Green has been a working coffee plantation for 200 years; here native trees are entwined with the coffee, creating excellent habitat for some of Jamaica's specialties – Crested Quail Dove, Rufous-tailed Flycatcher, Rufous-throated Solitaire and Chestnut-billed Cuckoo. The area is lush; with mist often hanging over the forest bromeliads flourish, and among these we look for one of the more elusive endemics, the Jamaican Blackbird, often located by its lovely song. Our ride coming and going passes through beautiful mountain scenery; we enjoy a picnic lunch on site then continue down to the Orchid Patch, an excellent birding location at a lower elevation. After a full day, enjoy a relaxing dinner on the patio back at our lodge. *Accommodations at Forres Park Lodge. (B,L,D)*

Friday, Feb. 15 ~ Blue Mountains / Hardwar Gap / Kingston

Today we drive up in elevation to spend time birding at another location in the Blue Mountains. We pass through farmlands, then forests with tree ferns, Caribbean Pine, bromeliads, and a wide variety of orchids – of Jamaica's 820 endemic flowering plant species, 66 are orchids! You can enjoy the views overlooking the mountain range and landscaped gardens with a range of lilies and roses, as well as Old Man's Beard lichen trailing from the trees.

Once at Hardware Gap, a lush forested area, we listen for the flute-like call of the often-elusive Rufous-throated Solitaire. With an annual rainfall of more than 100 inches, the forest hosts an array of fascinating ferns; some of the Giant Tree Ferns reach a height of 30 feet! Amid this lush vegetation we enjoy a walk and look for Arrow-headed Warbler, White-eyed Thrush, Jamaican Becard, Blue Mountain Vireo, Sad Flycatcher, and the endangered Ring-tailed Pigeon. Impressive native trees include huge Mahogany, Cedar, Blue Mahoe, and Broadleaf. We can also look for mixed flocks of tanagers and warblers and listen for the noisy Jamaican Woodcreeper. Jamaican Tody occurs here, and we hope to find this bright green jewel perched like a tiny jacamar waiting to prey on insects. Enjoy lunch at the Gap Café, with hummingbirds flying in close to feeders and lovely views overlooking Kingston and its deep water harbor. Afterwards, we may enjoy birding at Clifton Mount, a working coffee farm, or depending on the group's energies, drive down from the mountains to our delightful accommodations at the University of Jamaica. Visitor's

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Lodge is run by students of hotel management and hospitality. Enjoy dinner at a great local restaurant specializing in Caribbean cuisine. *Accommodations at Mona Visitor's Lodge & Conference Center, Kingston. (B,L,D)*
visitorslodge.uwimona.edu.jm/jamaica.htm

Saturday, Feb. 16 ~ Kingston / Hope Gardens / Institute of Jamaica / Devon House / Port Antonio

Enjoy optional early morning birding at Hope Botanical Gardens, the largest botanical gardens in the West Indies. Established in 1881, Hope Gardens lies adjacent to the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies; it offers quiet respite and by far the best birding close to the bustle of Kingston. Conservation groups Birdlife International and Wildlife Jamaica have been carefully watching encroaching development, as several of Jamaica's endemic birds occur here -- including the Yellow-billed Parrot and Olive-throated Parakeet, the tiny Vervain Hummingbird, and White-chinned Thrush, locally known as "Hopping Dick." We may also find lingering North American wintering warblers such as Northern Parula, American Redstart, Cape May, and Black-and-White.

Today we show you a bit of the dynamic city of Kingston, and its excellent natural and cultural museum, the Institute of Jamaica and the Bob Marley Museum. Enjoy lunch at a favorite restaurant, and visit Devon House, a well-preserved mansion that is one of Jamaica's most prized historic sites.

After lunch, we travel around the east coast of Jamaica, heading towards Hotel Mockingbird Hill overlooking the scenic north coast near Port Antonio. This relaxed, 10-room hotel recently won the Caribbean Hotel Association's award for the best small "green" hotel – an honor bestowed for its adherence to environmentally sound practices in all phases of its operations. We make a few stops at productive wetland locations, and arrive in time for dinner at the hotel's first-class terraced restaurant – a fantastic culinary experience acclaimed by *Gourmet* magazine! Enjoy the scent of Night Jasmine and the cool tropical breeze. *Accommodations at Mockingbird Hill Hotel (B,L,D)*
hotelmockingbirdhill.com

Sunday, Feb. 17 ~ Ecclesdown / John Crow Mountains National Park

We have an early start this morning, taking a packed breakfast along on our ride to Ecclesdown, at the foothills of the John Crow Mountains. During a morning walk along a forested road, we hope to find a number of endemic birds, including Black-billed and Yellow-billed Parrots, Jamaican Becard, Jamaican Oriole, and Jamaican Crow. We spend a full morning here, and then we head to a restaurant lunch at scenic Long Bay, which offers good Jamaican cuisine on the beach. You can relax with a view of the Caribbean, take a dip in the waves, or walk along the longest beach in this area.

We arrive back at the hotel in the afternoon, where our guide will lead us around the hotel's lushly vegetated grounds. Here as many as 40 species of birds can be found, including Ring-tailed Pigeon, the impressively beautiful Black-billed Streamertail, Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo, and Rufous-tailed Flycatcher. At day's end, enjoy another engaging evening of dinner and conversation at this beautifully situated hotel, with hosts Barbara Walker and Shireen Aga.
Accommodations at Mockingbird Hill Hotel. (B,L,D)

Monday, Feb. 18 ~ Scenic Rio Grande River Rafting / Frenchman's Cove Beach

Enjoy waking up to bird song and the scent of flowers at our remarkable hotel set high on a hill with fantastic views of Port Antonio and the Caribbean Sea. The spacious rooms feature tile floors, handcrafted bamboo furniture, and original artwork. As we eat breakfast on the patio, you can watch hummingbirds such as the Black-billed Streamertail and the Jamaican Mango. Black-throated Blue Warblers are especially bright when feeding in the Poor Man's Orchid tree alongside Banaquits.

Today is a leisurely day and its highlight is a scenic rafting adventure on the Rio Grande. Before a blight disease destroyed Jamaica's valuable banana crop, Port Antonio was the banana capital of the world and the busiest port in the Caribbean. Originally these rafts were used to transport bananas; then Port Antonio's most famous resident, the movie star Errol Flynn, made raft rides popular by challenging visitors to race them down the Rio Grande. We take a relaxing trip on these two-seater bamboo rafts, lazily floating down this quiet, scenic river to get close looks at herons, egrets, kingfishers and possibly some shorebirds. We'll pull ashore for lunch at Miss Betty's, now run by her daughter, another chance for authentic Jamaican food. We return to Mockingbird Hill for the afternoon. You can

then end the day relaxing at Frenchman's Cove, a lush cove with a lovely sand beach and a stream flowing through the gardens, or simply relax by the pool, explore the beautiful gardens, or do some birding on your own.

Accommodations at Mockingbird Hill Hotel (B,L,D)

Tuesday, Feb. 19 ~ Sherwood Forest / Port Antonio Harbor

Join us for an optional morning bird walk on the hotel grounds, where we often have great looks at Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo, White-collared Swift, Loggerhead Kingbird, migrant warblers and Yellow-faced Grassquit.

After a delicious breakfast, we drive to bird in a forested area of the north coast at Sherwood Forest, looking for Orangequit, Jamaican Stripe-headed Tanager, Greater Antillean Bullfinch, Hooded and other migrant warblers.

Lunch is a treat – we drive to through the town of Port Antonio to Dicky's, a unique local restaurant, built overlooking the ocean. After a great meal we enjoy a boat ride into the Port Antonio Harbor where we watch for

Royal Tern, Laughing Gull, a variety of herons and egrets, Cave Swallows, and at sea, Magnificent Frigatebirds. Enjoy some free time in the afternoon and another delicious dinner at Hotel Mockingbird Hill.

Accommodations at Mockingbird Hill Hotel (B,L,D)



Wednesday, Feb. 20 ~ Caribbean Culture – the Maroons / Greencastle Plantation / Runaway Bay

After an early breakfast, we drive west along the scenic North Coast to Charles Town, where we spend the morning with the Maroon people, learning about their culture and traditional drumming and dancing. Today's Maroons are descendents of runaway slaves that found their freedom in the transition from Spanish to British colonial powers. They made their home in rugged and remote mountain terrain to avoid returning to slavery. For years they evaded the efforts of British soldiers to contain them. Their guerilla warfare tactics were legendary; their ferocity at defending their homeland was rewarded with treaty recognition of the Maroons as a free people as early as 1739. Their knowledge of native plants useful as food and medicine is extensive. (For more on the Maroons, visit nalis.gov.tt/Communities/MaroonsofJamaica.htm)

Part of our visit is lunch along a picturesque river, we then continue west towards Ocho Rios. En route we stop at a Greencastle Plantation to tour their farm and to see birds of the agricultural region such as Green-rumped Parrotlets, Jamaican Oriole and Olive-throated Parakeets. In the afternoon we arrive at Runaway Bay, a small resort property with a nearby sand beach, swaying palms and a perfect pool – after all you are in Jamaica!

Accommodations at Runaway Bay Resort (B,L,D) superclubs.com/brand_breezes/resort_runawaybay

Thursday, Feb. 21 ~ Cranbrook Estates – Gardens and Birding / Runaway Bay

Close to our hotel, today we bird and botanize as we explore Cranbrook Flower Forest with its 25 acres of lush gardens on a 120-acre property rimmed by forest. Here exotic tropical plants mingle with native forest, and we walk a trail along a river through a lovely gorge. We have a good chance to observe several endemic birds as well as migrant warblers – it's always best to have several locations to try. Enjoy some time to relax at the resort in the afternoon, and enjoy dinner at our hotel, and a chance to look for night birds such as Common Potoo.

Accommodations at Runaway Bay (B,L,D)

Friday, Feb. 22 ~ Cockpit Country / South Coast Parrottee Bay

Today we visit one of the key conservation areas of Jamaica, the Cockpit Country. This area is underlain by limestone, and holds lush forests home to many of the endemic species. The Cockpit is considered an ecological treasure, but is currently threatened by bauxite mining. Learn more about the areas ecological importance as we look for Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo, Zenaida Dove, both Yellow-billed and Black-billed Parrots.

In the afternoon we drive to the South Coast at Parrotte Beach, stopping at scenic YS Falls en route. This is a many tiered falls surrounded by native forest, a great place to cool off with a swim or go wander with your camera! Parrotte Bay is a small fishing community close to Black River, where in the morning we embark on a river safari. The town, once a bustling seaport during sugar plantation days, has a number of Georgian-style buildings and the Parish Church dating from 1837. Enjoy cottages on the beach and dinner at our hotel.

Accommodations at Parottee Beach (B,L,D) villasinjamaica.com/SouthCoast/parottee_beach_resort/default.shtml

Saturday, Feb. 23 ~ Black River Safari / Pedro and Parottee Ponds

This morning we leave early, as we want to be on the river when Limpkin, herons and egrets are active. The Black River is the longest river of Jamaica's Great Morass wetlands, and near the estuary we may find American Crocodile in the waters with abundant mangroves. On our seven-mile scenic boat ride within Black River National Park we encounter familiar birds such as Belted Kingfisher, Red-tailed Hawk and Osprey.

We return for brunch and some time to enjoy the beach. In the afternoon we venture out to nearby salt lagoons, where we hope to find a variety of shorebirds and waders such as Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's and Black-bellied Plover, Least Bittern and Little Blue Heron. Great Pedro Pond is freshwater, and here we look for Caribbean Coot. We should also have good comparison of Pied-billed and Least Grebe, and will be on the lookout for Peregrine Falcon above. Take time for a swim in the ocean and enjoy dinner at our hotel.

Accommodations at Parottee Beach (B,L,D)

Sunday, Feb. 24 ~ Negril Palm Reserve / Departures from Montego Bay

We make one last spectacular birding stop, at one of the largest wetlands in Jamaica, with particular aim at seeing beautiful West Indian Whistling Ducks in good number. Established in 1989, this relatively new 200-acre reserve protects a forest of endangered Swamp Cabbage Palm. Walking part of a boardwalk trail, we keep our eyes open for Osprey, Antillean Palm Swift, Smooth-billed Ani, Common Moorhen and Black-crowned Night-Heron.

After we visit Negril, we take the coastal highway into Montego Bay, and arrive at the airport in time to meet flights out after 2:00 PM.

About Your Guides:



Taber Allison is Vice President for Conservation Science and Ecological Management at Mass Audubon where he supervises science staff responsible for ecological management of our sanctuaries, bird conservation programs, and providing support of our education and advocacy programs. Taber holds a masters' degree in forest ecology from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and a Ph. D. in ecology from the University of Minnesota. Taber has served on the faculty of Ohio State University and the University of Colorado, and was a research associate at Harvard University. He has led outdoor programs throughout North America, Belize, Denmark, Russia, and New Zealand.



Greg Smith has recently retired from a 27-year career with the California State Park System. Formerly a park ecologist, Greg is now a superintendent of eight park units, focusing on education on the importance of preserving natural and cultural resources. Greg has birded on all seven continents and has led natural history and birding tours in California, Alaska, Argentina, Chile, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and Antarctica. An avid wildlife photographer, he also maintains a U.S. Master Bird Banding permit.

PRICE : \$4200 from Kingston, departing Montego Bay, This cost is based on double occupancy
Single supplement is TBD.

This cost is based on a minimum of 10 persons. If there are fewer than 8, a small group surcharge (typically \$100-\$300.00) may apply.

Price Includes:

- * All accommodations
- * All meals as specified in the itinerary
- * Group airport transfers
- * Transportation in Jamaica
- * Park and preserve entrance fees
- * Miscellaneous program costs
- * Birding guides & Mass Audubon leader
- * Basic Medical Evacuation coverage
- * Trip preparation notes, reading list, birding checklist and travel tips

Does Not Include:

- * Items of a personal nature such as beverages from the bar.
- * Portage, laundry, phone calls, or gift items.
- * Gratuity for our local drivers and guides
(which are left to your discretion)
- * International airfare

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS:

Jamaica is served by a number of major carriers and their partners, including American Airlines, Continental, Delta and United. Please arrive no later than 3:00 PM on Feb. 13th. If you need to come in the day previous, we can help with arrangements and if you are delayed or arrive later, a private transfer at additional cost. Please plan to depart after 2:00 PM on Feb. 24.

TERMS & CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL

Updated 3/26/07

RESERVATIONS, APPLICATIONS, DEPOSITS: Early reservations are required to ensure your place on this trip. All reservations must be accompanied by a completed reservation form and a **\$500** deposit. Deposit can be by check or credit card (Visa or MasterCard). In the case of questionable health, we reserve the right to require a physician's certification to affirm you are capable of the activities. Final payment due by 95 days before the departure date on November 26, 2007. **Final payment must be by check.**

RATES: All tour prices are based on double occupancy. If you would like us to find you a roommate, we will do our best, but cannot guarantee a share (except on certain cruises). If we cannot find a share, you will need to pay the single supplement. All forms and fares are accurate at the time of publication June 2007, but are subject to change at any time prior to departure. It is our policy to only pass on the actual amount of any increases in airfares or land costs such as those increases due to the devaluation of the dollar. A price increase may be called for if the group falls below the minimum of 8. The maximum number of participants is approximately 12.

FLIGHTS: **You the traveler are responsible for booking and paying for your own international flights.** We work with a local travel agent, The Travel Station, in Lincoln to book our flights. You may book flights on your own or with The Travel Station. They will have the most up-to-date information on the flight arrival and departure times that we recommend for our travelers (there is a \$35 charge for all bookings). Once your deposit and reservation form have been sent to us, we will send you flight and contact information. Please be aware that most tickets are non-refundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go. **The Travel Station can be reached at 781-259-1200.**

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS: **If you need to change your booking, you must inform us immediate.** All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the Massachusetts Audubon Travel Office. Cancellations received up to 121 days prior to departure will be refunded deposits less a \$300 per person fee. For cancellations between 120 and 90 days prior to departure, all deposits will not be refunded. There are no refunds for cancellations 90 days or less from departure. We strongly urge all travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance. You will be sent information from the Massachusetts Audubon Society upon receipt of your deposit.

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Your Responsibility: Although every precaution is taken to safeguard you and your belongings, group travel trips by their nature involve a certain amount of risk. Trip participants should understand that the domestic and international trips sponsored/operated by Massachusetts Audubon Society (Mass Audubon Tours) - hereafter collectively "M.A.S." - involve known and unknown risks. M.A.S. assumes no responsibility for injuries, death, financial losses or damage to clients' property caused by or occurring during participation in any of the travel trips sponsored/operated by M.A.S. Trip participants must assume responsibility for having sufficient skill and fitness to participate in the trips and activities offered or sponsored by M.A.S. Trip participants must also certify that they have no medical, mental or physical conditions which could interfere with their abilities to participate in the activities and/or trips they are participating in and they must assume and bear the cost of all risks that may be created, directly or indirectly, by any such condition. It is the responsibility of trip participants to have in place adequate insurance to cover any injury, damage or emergency transportation costs related to their travel and/or participation in trip activities and/or to bear the costs of such injury, damage or emergency transportation costs. Because of the risks associated with the travel trips sponsored by M.A.S. we urge all trip participants to supplement their own insurance with travel or vacation or emergency response types of insurance. M.A.S. requires that all trip participants acknowledge and assume these risks by reading and signing an M.A.S. Release and Waiver and Assumption of Risk contract prior to departure.

CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL: Travelers will be provided an itinerary and trip preparation information. It is expected that travelers will read this information prior to trip departure. Travelers will be responsible for completing a reservation form, a personal information form, and a release of liability form. Travelers will be expected to abide by the terms set for in the invoice. During the tour, travelers are asked to respect and follow the directions of their guide and leader.



Reservation Form for: Jamaica: Birds and Nature ~ February 13-24, 2008

Mr./Mrs./Ms.

Passenger Name (1) – as shown as passport

Mr./Mrs./Ms.

Passenger Name (2) – as shown as passport

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone: Day

Evening

Email address

Passport number 1 (for international trips): _____

Expiration date: _____

Passport number 2 (for international trips): _____

Expiration date: _____

Accommodations:

I/We are non-smoker(s) ___ smoker(s) ___ (*smoking is limited to outdoors in non-group spaces*)

___ I request single accommodations where available and will pay the single supplement.

___ I would like to be assigned a roommate. If one is not available, I will pay the single supplement.

Deposit: Please find my enclosed **check** _____ or please **charge** _____ my credit card for the deposit:

VISA MC Card # _____ Exp. _____

Checks should be made payable to "Massachusetts Audubon Society"

Signature