CUBA BIRD SURVEY
The Zapata Peninsula, Northern Archipelago, Eastern and Western Endemic Birding Regions of Cuba
Feb 1 – 13, 2016

EXCLUSIVE ITINERARY, RICH IN NATURE AND CULTURE

The Massachusetts Audubon Society is promoting an exclusive, U.S. led and managed birding program to Cuba! The program is coordinated under U.S. government authorization by the Caribbean Conservation Trust, Inc. (CCT) which is based in Connecticut. In early 2016 CCT staff will be celebrating 20 years of providing high quality, legal birding programs in Cuba for U.S. citizens. Along with MAS leader Bob Speare, our full time staff will include renowned Cuban biologist Dr. Luis Diaz, a bilingual Cuban tour guide, and Cuban driver. In addition, 3 regionally located Cuban naturalists will accompany us in various parts of the country. They will guide you through a variety of natural areas in Cuba, the Caribbean’s largest and most ecologically diverse island nation.

In addition to birding, we will learn about the ecology and history of regions we visit. Finally, we can expect some degree of indulgence in the richness of Cuban music, dance, art, architecture, and history.

CUBA’S BIRDS
According to BirdLife International, which has designated 28 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Cuba, “Over 370 bird species have been recorded in Cuba, including 28 which are endemic to the island and 29 considered globally threatened. Due to its large land area and geographical position within the Caribbean, Cuba represents one of the most important countries for Neotropical migratory birds – both birds passing through on their way south (75 species) and those spending the winter on the island (86 species).

Our itinerary provides opportunities to see many of Cuba’s endemic species and subspecies, as listed below. This trip will also focus on the many neotropical migrant species that spend the winter in Cuba (endemic and endemic sub-species in italics): Bare-legged Owl, Bee Hummingbird, Blue-headed Quail-Dove, Cuban Blackbird, Cuban Black-Hawk, Cuban Gnatcatcher, Cuban Grassquit, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Cuban Meadowlark, Cuban Nightjar, Cuban Oriole, Cuban Palm Crow, Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Pewee, Cuban Pygmy-Owl, Cuban Solitaire, Cuban Tody, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Vireo, Fernandina’s Flier, Gray-fronted Quail-Dove, Giant Kingbird, Gundlach’s Hawk, Oriente Warbler, Red-shouldered Blackbird, Yellow-headed Warbler, Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow.

Other specialties include: Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Crow, Cuban Emerald, Cuban Parrot, Plain Pigeon, Great Lizard-Cuckoo, Tawny-shouldered Blackbird, Bahama Mockingbird, La Sagra’s Flycatcher, Loggerhead Kingbird, Olive-capped Warbler, Key West Quail-Dove, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Ruddy Quail - Dove, Zenaida Dove, Stygian Owl, Thick-billed Vireo, West-Indian Whistling Duck, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, Greater Flamingo, and a great variety of wading birds, and numerous other migratory and resident species.
**WHERE WE TRAVEL**

**Cuba’s Western Mountains** include two of the country’s most diverse and dramatic ranges: the Sierra de la Rosario, and Sierra de los Organos. We will explore an area common to both ranges in search of western range endemic species such as the *Cuban Solitaire*. A highlight of the trip, we will visit the magical, unusually beautiful karstic landscape of mogotes-- the towering, lushly vegetated, flat-top limestone monoliths that dominate the Organos Mountains. This is the only region in which we will likely see the *Cuban Solitaire*, *Cuban Grassquit*, *Giant Kingbird*, & *Olive-capped Warbler*. Other potential endemic species for western Cuba include *Cuban Oriole*, *Cuban Blackbird*, *Cuban Green Woodpecker*, *Cuban Pewee*, *Cuban Pygmy-Owl*, *Cuban Tody*, *Cuban Trogon*, *Cuban Vireo*, & *Yellow–headed Warbler*.

We will also explore the diverse wetland region of the **Zapata Peninsula**, Cuba’s richest and most important birding destination located in the historic **Bay of Pigs**. This peninsula is a Ramsar Convention (international conservation treaty) designated site, and is among the most important wetlands in the West Indies. Here, the best local guides will lead us through protected areas in Cienaga de Zapata National Park and other natural sites off the beaten track. The Zapata Peninsula covers more than 2800 square miles and features easily accessible, everglades-like ecology and habitat. Framed by the pristine Caribbean coastal environment of the Bay of Pigs, the peninsula features vast open swamp land, low coastal forests, sparkling white sand beaches, healthy and accessible coral reefs, and refreshing natural limestone pools called cenotes. *Bee Hummingbird*, *Cuban Black Hawk*, *Zapata Wren*, *Zapata Sparrow*, *Fernandina’s Flicker*, *Bare-legged Owl*, *Tawny-shouldered* and *Red-shouldered Blackbird* are among the many birds we will hope to find (3 nights).

**Camaguey Province** is near the geographic center of Cuba, but is our first destination within range of Cuba’s eastern endemic birds such as *Cuban Gnatcatcher* and *Oriente Warbler*. It is our only opportunity to see *Cuban Palm Crow*, a future endemic. Here we will stay in Camaguey City (2 nights) at an historic renaissance hotel in the city’s pedestrian center. Our full day in the region features a trip to Najasa and La Belen Reserve, with a late afternoon return to Camaguey for an interesting look at this unique, historic Cuban city (2 nights).

**Cayo Coco and Cuba’s Atlantic Archipelago**

*Cayo Coco* and surrounding keys provides excellent birding opportunities on Cuba’s Atlantic coast. These previously uninhabited and relatively unexplored offshore islands were connected to the mainland by an 18+ mile causeway completed in 1989. Cuba’s academy of sciences (CITMA) maintains a research facility here. **These barrier islands and keys provide unique opportunities for:** *Cuban Gnatcatcher*, *Oriente Warbler*, Thick-billed Vireo, Bahama Mockingbird, West Indian Whistling Duck, as well as numerous shorebirds and aquatic birds. This region also provides additional opportunities to see rare endemics such as *Zapata Sparrow* & *Gundlach’s Hawk*. Accommodations are in a modern beachfront resort (2 nights).

**THE CONSERVATION PROJECT**

The U.S. Department of Treasury has provided a license for conducting bird conservation work in Cuba to the **Caribbean Conservation Trust, Inc.** (CCT), a U.S. based organization committed to the conservation of endemic and migratory birds and their habitats in the greater Caribbean region. The primary objective of CCT is to enhance the ability of North American and Caribbean ornithologists, naturalists, conservation organizations, institutions, and local citizens to conduct research and initiate programs to help conserve the birds of the Caribbean and their habitats. CCT is dedicated to bird and habitat conservation through education and relationship building and, as a result of our work and research findings, are in compliance with U.S. Treasury licensure for travel to Cuba.
The Cuba Bird Survey Program Your participation in this program will involve a simple bird and habitat survey. Each evening, the group will review and record a checklist of birds seen on that particular birding day. Data is compiled by the group, and submitted by the trip leader to CCT staff. Recorded trip totals are part of CCT’s ongoing data bank of information on both migratory and resident species recorded in Cuba over several years. Significant findings are noted and submitted to the journal *North American Birds*. Our Cuban colleagues keep trip totals and notable information to support their ongoing research as well.

Program Leadership
Our program is designed and managed in the United States and is professionally staffed and field tested over 16 years in Cuba. We are dedicated to providing participants with informative nature oriented opportunities, good, wholesome food and comfortable accommodations, and highly skilled local leaders.

Your Mass Audubon guide will be Bob Speare, Director of Wildwood and the Monadnock Conservation Center in Rindge, New Hampshire, has led Cuba in 2013 and 2014 as well as numerous other trips for Mass Audubon, including Belize, Baja California, Cuba, Big Bend in Texas, the Mojave Desert, and Death Valley. He has led many trips throughout the East, from Cape May to Newfoundland. Beyond birds and other aspects of flora and fauna, Bob likes to focus on wetland and desert ecology, butterflies, reptiles, and amphibians. He also enjoys sharing his passion for photography on tours and presents workshops on digital photography across Massachusetts.

Cuban Specialists
Our primary Cuban naturalist will be with us throughout the program in the field and will assist in providing an overview of Cuban natural history as well as specific information relative to the flora, fauna, geology and other natural features of the environments we visit. Additionally, we will work with regional naturalists from the national parks and biosphere reserves that we visit around the country.

A Bilingual Cuban Guide will be at our service throughout the program. Along with a professional driver, he or she will be with the group each day to tell us about Cuban history, culture, arts and lifestyle. He/she will also deal with logistics, meals, translation, and other nuts-and-bolts aspects of the travel experience.

Accommodations
Accommodations feature hotels in Havana and in four additional provinces. Our Cuban hotels are staffed by friendly, helpful hosts and represent the best Cuba has to offer in the regions we visit, and may include vintage 4 star hotels, modest 3 star facilities, and simple beach-front bungalows. All hotels are safe, clean, air conditioned tourist facilities.

Additional Details
Following program registration, we will provide all participants with a bird list as well as details with regard to travel to Cuba, including all of the basics you need to know about travel documents, customs, facts about Cuba, currency, health and safety, food, flights, and what to bring. A bird checklist will be provided following receipt of your final balance payment. U.S. Government authorization documents and air tickets between Miami and Havana are provided after flights are confirmed and paid for (approximately 30 days prior to departure).
Physical Demands and Expectations
This program offers opportunities for several days of birding, with early departure times on birding days, and occasional evening sessions. Birding days provide for leisure time after lunch and before our afternoon birding sessions. Physical exertion will be light to moderate on most days, with the longest walks approximately 3 miles. Terrain is mostly flat and dry, with some hills present in western Cuba. All participants should be in reasonably good physical condition. Be prepared for strong sun, with temperatures in the mid 70s – 80s. Mosquitoes can be bothersome in Cayo Coco and the Zapata Region. Although unlikely, rain may occur as well, so bring adequate rain gear. Those with medical concerns must check with their physician before taking part in the program and provide us with the physicians name and phone number.

Trip Costs, Terms, and Conditions
Land costs for the 13 day itinerary are $4,990 per person all inclusive, for shared accommodations. Single supplements are $600.00 per person. A $1000.00 deposit is required as soon as possible to hold space. Prices are based on 12 travelers, with a minimum of 10 travelers required. Fewer than 12 fully paid travelers may result in a small group surcharge.

Maximum number of participants is 14, and the trip is filled on a first come, first served basis. All deposits, reservation forms must be in by November 15, 2015. All applicants must complete a paragraph describing their birding experience and knowledge, provide copies of passport, and complete a series of forms required by license. Please submit this by e mail to Karen O’Neill.

What is included?
CCT Cuba Bird Survey Programs include the following: all accommodations, meals as described in the itinerary, guide services, most tips (guides, drivers, naturalists and restaurant and bell staff), airport/hotel transfers, ground transportation, bottled water, some drinks, admission fees (itinerary only), U.S. Department of Treasury authorization documents, and program management services which include the provision of all pre- and post-program materials, a full-time Cuban bilingual guide, bilingual Cuban naturalists, and a full-time driver. Program fees include a donation to help support our conservation efforts in Cuba.

Not Included:
Travel to Havana, Cuba; Cuban Visa ($75) and Cuban health insurance (required as of May, 2010 (approximately $3 per day); items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, beverages, bar and housekeeping tips, etc., airport departure taxes, passport fees, or other fees not listed in the program.

Flights
We help facilitate arrangement of flights directly to Cuba from Miami through our partner travel agency. Departure times for flights will be provided as much in advance as possible. Flights from Miami to Havana will likely require an overnight in Miami prior to departure for Cuba.

Travel Insurance Protection
Any U.S. citizen traveling internationally these days should consider insurance protection. Reasonably priced coverage is available to provide protection against financial loss due to trip cancellation or delay, as well as lost baggage. Although uncommon, cancellations due to illness, accidents, work related schedule changes, and other un-planned or unwelcome events have happened. Unforeseen travel related events which you have little or no control over can also effect travel plans. All of these factors make trip cancellation insurance a very important consideration. For information about Travel Insured International, call 1 800-243-3174 or go to:

When online you can compare and select policies, and get a quick quote. Be sure to use the agency location code 48774 to access coverage explicit to this program.
REGISTRATION: $1,000.00 deposit per person is due as soon as possible to reserve space on this program. Tour List will be closed on DECEMBER 5, 2015.

Deposit payments can be by check, money order only payable to: Caribbean Conservation Trust
Mail to Travel office at Massachusetts Audubon Society
208 South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773

Deposit checks should not be dated. The full balance payment is due 90 days prior to the departure date, or by November 1, 201. Balance payments must be made by check or money order only. Mass Audubon will provide individual invoices and balance payment information following receipt of your deposit and registration.

Please contact MAS Travel Director Karen O’Neill at 800-289-9504 or direct line 781-259-2166 www.massaudubon.org/travel if you have any questions.

Cancellation and refund policy *
All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the MAS travel office.
Should it become necessary for you to cancel, our cancellation fees are outlined below:
For cancellation more than 120 days prior to the tour.......................... $400.00 per person (land only)
For cancellation less than 120 days prior to the tour....................................... NO REFUND IS GRANTED
In the unlikely event that we must cancel the tour, a full refund less a $100.00 processing fee for your license application will be forwarded to you, should cancellation occur after your license has been processed. *Please be aware that the refund policies apply only to the land portion of the trip, and that airlines may have different policies that exist beyond our ability to control. Additional registration fees may apply. As with all international travel programs, we highly encourage trip cancellation and travel insurance policies.

Cuban Parrots (Rose-throated Amazon, Cuban race)
CUBA BIRD SURVEY ITINERARY

Day 1 ~ February 1, 2016, Monday
Departure from Miami for our direct flight to Havana. Check in at 4 star Occidental Miramar Hotel for accommodation. Brief orientation meeting, birding session around the hotel’s considerable green space (if time permits), followed by dinner at the hotel (included).

Day 2 ~ February 2, 2016, Tuesday
Following breakfast we will visit the home and private ornithological collection of Orlando Garrido, Cuba’s greatest living naturalist. Sr. Garrido is a retired and venerable former curator of birds at the National Museum of Natural History in Havana, and co-author of the Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba as well as dozens of scientific publications. This visit offers an excellent introduction to many of Cuba’s endemic birds as we view Sr. Garrido’s private collection of mounted birds. A walking orientation to Havana’s historic colonial plazas, with lunch in Habana Vieja (Old Havana), follows. Habana Vieja is vibrant and remarkable well preserved and reconstructed UNESCO World heritage site. Optional visit to Cuba’s National Museum of Natural History nearby. Dinner and accommodation at the Occidental Miramar hotel.

Day 3 ~ February 3, 2016, Wednesday
Breakfast followed by 8am checkout and departure west for Guanahacabibes National Park in western Cuba (5 hours from Havana). En-route we will have a morning birding excursion in search of the endemic Cuban Grassquit. Other likely species include the endemic Cuban Vireo, Cuban Trogon as well as Cuban Pewee, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Red-legged Thrush (endemic subspecies). Lunch followed by drive west to our hotel. The Guanahacabibes Peninsula is at the far western tip of Cuba, and is among the last remaining wild places in the Caribbean. This region includes a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar designated site, and is home to 44 percent of endemic species and 47 percent of all bird species in Cuba. Dinner and accommodation at Hotel Maria la Gorda.

Day 4 ~ February 4, 2016, Thursday
Early breakfast and birding nearby the hotel in restricted conservation areas. Endemics such as the, Bee Hummingbird, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Yellow-headed Warbler, and Cuban Pygmy-Owl, are probable. In addition to numerous neo-tropical migrants and West Indian and Caribbean residents, including Cuban Crow, Cuban Parrot, and Plain Pigeon. Birding areas include coastal scrub and low to moderate growth forest. Terrain is flat and dry, with forest trail and roadside birding. Dinner/accommodation at Hotel Maria la Gorda.

Day 5 ~ February 5, 2016, Friday
Breakfast and departure for Birding stop at Cueva de Portales, a cave carved by the San Diego River, which currently meanders through. The forest around the cave is habitat to the enchanting Cuban Solitaire, and the Giant Kingbird. Within the cave, Che Guevara established a headquarters during the missile crisis of 1962. Olive-capped Warbler and Cuban Grassquit are common nearby. Lunch and departure east for the Zapata Peninsula and the Bay of Pigs, with scheduled birding stops en route. This region contains the largest wetland complex in the West Indies, and is Cuba’s most prolific birding region. Here we have access to excellent local guides, as well as to protected areas and birding locations off the
Day 7 ~ February 7, 2016, Sunday
Zapata Peninsula
A morning of birding in a nature preserve adjacent to the small village of Bermejas. Here is our best opportunity to see the endemic Fernandina’s Flicker, Bare-legged Owl, Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Parrot, Cuban Emerald, and Great Lizard-Cuckoo (endemic subspecies) are also an excellent bet. The forest is home to both endemic Blue-headed and Gray-fronted Quail-Doves, as well as Key West and Ruddy Quail Doves, and if we walk quietly we may see these magnificent and shy birds. Lunch at Culeta Buena, a beautiful limestone rimmed inlet abundant with fish and excellent snorkeling opportunities. The historic Bay of Pigs museum is nearby. Afternoon birding, dinner/accommodation at Playa Larga.

Day 8 ~ February 8, 2016, Monday
Zapata Peninsula
An early breakfast and a morning walk along a dry roadway in the swamp at La Turba and good opportunity for Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow, Red-shouldered Blackbird and Tawny-shouldered Blackbird and a variety of warblers and other migrants. Part of this area is reminiscent of the Everglades. Lunch at the hotel. Afternoon birding in Las Salinas Wildlife Refuge with numerous shorebirds, Reddish Egrets, Wood Storks, Spoonbills, Flamingos and endemic Cuban Black-Hawk. All walking is on dry, flat terrain (less than 2 miles total). Stygian Owl & Cuban Nightjar are possible evening birding priorities. Dinner, accommodation at Playa Larga.

Day 9 ~ February 9, 2016, Tuesday
Zapata to Cayo Coco
Breakfast, check out, and birding options within the protected areas of the park, based on leader discretion. Late morning drive northeast to Cayo Coco (6 + hours) in Cuba’s northern archipelago, the setting for Hemingway’s Islands in the Stream. The archipelago offers excellent birding, scenery, and accommodation. All-inclusive beachfront accommodation and meals in Cayo Coco.

Day 10 ~ February 10, 2016, Wednesday
Cayo Coco
Morning birding on Cayo Paredon Grande, the northeastern-most key in the Cayo Coco archipelago, one of Cuba’s most important migratory landfalls. Endemic Cuban Gnatcatcher, Oriente Warbler, Scaly–naped Pigeon, Thick-billed Vireo and possibly a subspecies of Zapata Sparrow are likely. Lunch at the hotel followed by afternoon birding on Cayo Guillermo amidst mangrove flats, low coastal scrub, and pristine white sand shoreline (roadside, flat walking). Dinner, accommodation in Cayo Coco.

Day 11 ~ February 11, 2016, Thursday
Cayo Coco to Remedios
AM birding near Cayo Guillermo for quail doves and other forest birds; Bahama Mockingbird is another target en route. Late check out followed by lunch drive to Remedios in Villa Clara (2+ hours). Remedios is one of Cuba’s oldest and most historic small towns. Dinner and accommodation at the newly refurbished colonial Hotel Barcelona.

Day 12 ~ February 12, 2016, Friday
Remedios – Havana
Breakfast, check out, and drive to Havana (4+ hours), with birding stops along the way. Accommodation at Hotel Nacional. Farewell dinner overlooking the city and sea.

Day 13 ~ February 13, 2016, Saturday
Havana – Miami
Breakfast at the hotel followed by transfer to the airport for departure to Miami. Flight times are to be determined closer to departure.
Reservation Form for Cuba Bird Survey – Feb. 1 – 13, 2016

Passenger 1 Name as shown on passport: ________________________________

Passenger 2 Name as shown on passport: ________________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________________________

State: _______ Zip: __________________________

Phone: Home: ___________________ Work: ________________________ Cell: _____________________________

Email address: (required: ) ________________________________________________________________________

**Room Preferences:**

_____ 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.

**Personal Information:**

___ I/We are non-smokers. (If you are a smoker(s), please check here___ and note that smoking is limited to outdoors in non-group spaces)

___ Is there anything Mass Audubon should know about your health that might impact your ability to participate comfortably on this trips? Please describe: ___________________________________________________

**Attached**

_____ Yes, I have attached a clear copy of my/our passport photo page(s)

**Deposit:**

_____ Please find my enclosed check deposit of $1000 per person:

Checks must be made payable to Caribbean Conservation Trust and mailed to Karen O'Neill at address below:

Mass Audubon Tours, 208 South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773

**PLEASE do NOT date the deposit check or write CUBA in the check margin.**