

# Birds of the Greater Antilles

Puerto Rico is situated at the eastern end of the Greater Antilles and is now technically affiliated to the United States. The island is small in size and holds seventeen endemic species, one of the highest numbers in the Caribbean region. A good internal road system combined with a variety of habitats make birding on the island a joy. We have two bases: Guayanilla in the south-west and Fajado on the north-east coast.

**Day 1:** Fly to San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico, where we overnight.

**Day 2:** Common birds in parks and gardens of San Juan include Caribbean Martin, Greater Antillean Grackle, Zenaida and White-winged Doves and Red-legged Thrushes. We visit Cambalache State Forest, one of the few mature lowland forest patches left on the island. A variety of habitat from vine tangles to mature trees attracts a wealth of species with the forest edge often holding the introduced Monk Parakeet, Common Ground Dove, Black-whiskered Vireo and the endearing Puerto Rican Tody. We walk along the forest trails seeking out Key West Quail-Dove, Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoo, Puerto Rican Spindalis, Puerto Rican Vireo, Adelaide's Warbler and the secretive Puerto Rican Bullfinch. Not far from Cambalache is an area of grasslands where we should see wintering Barn Swallows, Osprey and introduced estrilded finches. At a coastal location White-tailed Tropicbirds and Magnificent Frigatebirds should be observed gliding along the cliff face. En route to Guayanilla a visit to the Abajo Forest may reveal the presence of the rare Puerto Rican Parrot and other endemics including Puerto Rican Woodpecker. Transfer to Guayanilla area for three nights.

**Day 3:** We start the day by visiting Maricao State Forest, a protected area of elfin forest, small trees and flowering plants. Any patches of mistletoe are worth checking for Antillean Euphonia whilst the flowers lure Green Mangos, Puerto Rico Tanager and Puerto Rican Spindalis. Our main target species at Maricao is Elfin Woods Warbler which was only discovered in 1971 and totals around 600 birds. Higher up the

## Dates

Friday March 23rd -Thursday  
March 29th 2018  
Leader: Mark Finn  
Group Size: 8  
Birds 100-120

mountain, a check of flowering plants may reveal Puerto Rican Emerald and Puerto Rican Kingbird. Maricao is also known for Puerto Rican Oriole, one of the scarce island endemics. After lunch, we check the coast road for Caribbean Elaenias, Puerto Rican Peewee and Adelaide's Warbler. Patches of mud and mangrove habitat often have wildfowl and waders which may include Least and Stilt Sandpipers, Snowy, Grey and Semipalmated Plovers and, perhaps, rarer species in Eastern Willet and Short-billed Dowitcher.

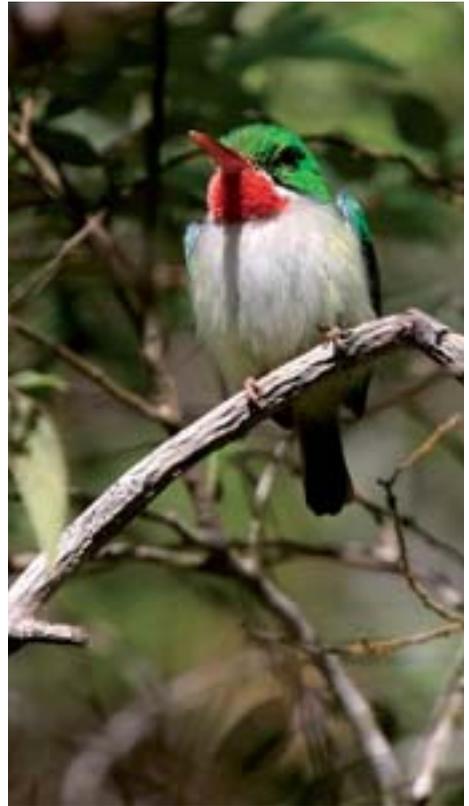
**Day 4:** Today we concentrate on the dry south-western corner of the island. Our first stop is at La Parguera where flowering trees attract the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird. Laguna Cartegena is an important freshwater wetland. Water levels vary from year to year and we can expect a wide range of herons, Glossy Ibis, Masked Duck, Common and American Purple Gallinules, and a chance of the rare West Indian Whistling-Duck. The mangrove forests near Boqueron are worth stopping at for wintering warblers – Prairie, American Redstart, Magnolia, Northern Parula, and Northern Waterthrush. A visit to the south-western tip reveals a habitat of salt pans, mangroves, and beaches. Careful scanning should reveal the presence of Semipalmated and Stilt Sandpipers. We return to Guayanilla for dinner followed by a

nocturnal visit for the rare Puerto Rican Nightjar.

**Day 5:** This morning we can revisit our favourite areas of the south-west before heading to Fajado. Lajas has extensive rice fields and meadows of long grasses attracting the highly localised Grasshopper Sparrow. We will be on the lookout for wintering Merlin and other species we may have missed earlier in the tour. Small ponds often have wintering Sora Rail and the highly localised Masked Duck. Susua National Forest is a park with a creek along the main trail. Puerto Rican Vireos and Puerto Rican Flycatchers can be numerous in the hanging vines. On our route to Fajado we make a short diversion to Comerio for the scarce Plain Pigeon. Two nights in Fajado.

**Day 6:** Today we drive towards the north-east coast. En route we can check an area around Fajardo which holds the endemic Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Green-throated Carib, Greater Antillean Hummingbird, Grey Kingbird and Pearly-eyed Thrashers. The coast has many old piers and jetties which attract Brown Pelican, Brown Booby, Sandwich and Royal Terns and ever-present Magnificent Frigatebirds. Next on the agenda is Humacao, a wetland area of mangroves and lagoons. The trees attract White-crowned Pigeon, Puerto Rican Flycatcher and wintering Northern Waterthrush, American Redstart and Northern Parula. In areas of open water we should locate Blue-winged Teal and other wildfowl. This area also affords us the opportunity to compare American and Caribbean Coots at close range. Any weedy fields are worth checking for Black-faced and Yellow-faced Grassquits and Smooth-billed Ani. Our journey takes us towards the coast and a series of lagoons attractive to Least Grebe, White-cheeked Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck and American Wigeon. Shorebirds may include Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs and Black-necked Stilts. After dinner we have an option to visit a forest for Puerto Rican Screech Owl.

**Day 7:** Fly back to the UK with arrival on the following morning.



**Puerto Rican Tody** Photo: Neil Norvock

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,995  
 Single room: £200  
 Deposit: £200  
 \*Air Fare: £810

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** visa to enter Puerto Rico, drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature and any relevant fuel surcharges.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*