

# JAMAICA

## Island Endemics

January 7 – 14, 2017

### Day 1, January 7

You will arrive at Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston today, where a driver will meet you for your transfer to the Knutsford Court Hotel. Depending on your arrival time, you might want to spend some time at the hotel's pool, birding the grounds and nearby Emancipation Park on your own, or simply relaxing. We will enjoy a welcome dinner with our guide, Ricardo Miller, and tour leaders, Jim and Cindy Beckman.

### **Knutsford Court Hotel (D)**

### Day 2, January 8

We'll begin our day with a hearty breakfast at the hotel before leaving for Hellshire Hills, a very dry limestone forest located just west of Kingston. We'll make a quick stop along the way for a restroom break, but we should still arrive in Hellshire Hills before 8:00 AM, which will allow plenty of time for birding before the surrounding desert gets too hot.

The vegetation in Hellshire Hills is dominated by short shrubs, cacti, Red Birch (*Bursera simaruba*), and Silver Thatch (*Coccothrinax jamaicensis*). The environment is very hot and dry but 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 here. When the cacti are in bloom, Jamaican Mango hummingbirds are everywhere to be seen. If we are lucky,

we'll also find West Indian Whistling Ducks on a small pond along our route.

We'll return to Kingston for an authentic Jamaican Jerk lunch. We often spot a few common birds while eating at this outdoor dining area. After lunch, we will return to the hotel to check out and then drive a short distance to Hope Botanical Gardens, our birding site for the remainder of the afternoon. The Royal Botanical Gardens of Hope is a public park that is managed by the Nature Preservation Foundation. Its large mature trees and diversity of plants promotes an equally diverse birdlife. It is an important place to see a large diversity of migratory warblers such as Black-throated



Blue, Black-throated Green, Cape May, Prairie, Palm, American Redstarts and Black-and-white Warblers. More importantly however, it is home to a remnant population of Yellow-billed Parrots with a few Black-billed individuals seen occasionally. The National Bird, the Red-billed Streamertail, can be found feeding amongst the flowers, and the abundant trees provide good habitat for Jamaican Woodpeckers and Jamaican Euphonias. Hope Gardens provide a convenient relaxed setting for some easy birding. We will move on to Starlight Chalets at the end of the afternoon, arriving in time for dinner.

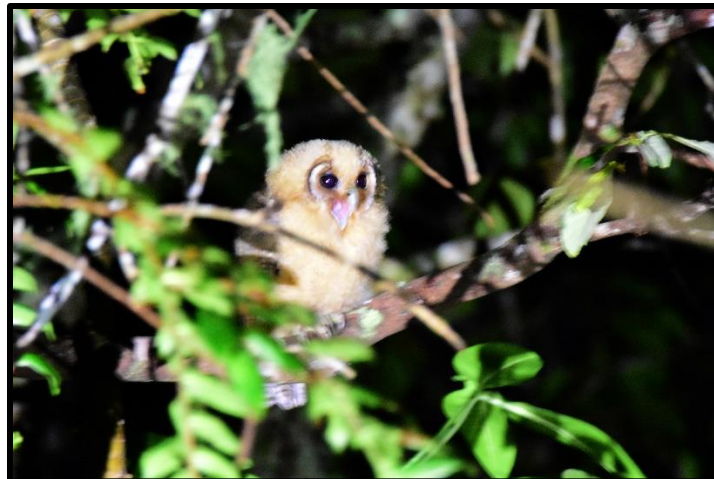
### **Starlight Chalets (BLD)**

### **Day 3, January 9**

We will spend the entire day birding parts of the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, including Hardwar Gap and Section, which are located on the western slopes of the Blue Mountains. These areas merge seamlessly into each other along a rugged mountain road. At approximately 1000m above sea level, the cool western slope of the Blue Mountains is classified as an important bird area by BirdLife International. An impressive species list of birds has been recorded in this area including hard-to-find species such as the Jamaican Blackbird, Crested Quail-Dove and the Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo. This area is less disturbed in some parts and the road twists and turns through stands of primary forest and areas of secondary growth. The stands of Blue Mahoe (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 8km of level road for birding. Throughout this section of the Blue Mountains and given enough time, we should be able to find as many as 25 of the 29 endemics. The exceptions would be the 2 parrots, the Jamaican Crow and the Black-billed Streamertail. In the evening we will search for owls and potoos in the area around our lodge and a section of Hardwar Gap.



### **Starlight Chalets (BLD)**



### **Day 4, January 10**

We will spend another full day birding Hardwar Gap, returning to our lodge for lunch and a midday break. Depending on the success of our search for owls and potoos last night and the group's preferences, we may go out after dark to look for nocturnal species again this evening.

### **Starlight Chalets (BLD)**



### Day 5, January 11

This morning we will do some pre-breakfast birding near Section, an area that can be very good for Crested Quail-Dove.



We will pack and depart Starlight Chalets shortly after breakfast, with one last opportunity to view and photograph the Red-billed Streamertails, Jamaican Orioles, Jamaican Spindalis, and Jamaican Todies at the feeders and in the gardens before we go. We will travel to the north coast and should arrive in Port Antonio around lunch time. There, we will enjoy lunch at Woody's Burgers before checking in to our lovely rooms at Goblin Hill Villas near San San. After some time to settle in and take a short rest, we'll do some birding in the immediate area.

**Goblin Hill (BLD)**

### Day 6, January 12

We'll have an early breakfast in our tour leaders' villa before an early departure for Ecclesdown Road, probably the most famous birding location in Jamaica. It is a seldom-used road that travels along the foothills of the John Crow Mountains for approximately 18km. It is entirely flat and passes through secondary closed and open forests as well as small patches



of farm lands. This area is a stronghold of the Yellow-billed and Black-billed Parrots as well as Jamaican Crow, Ring-tailed Pigeon and Black-billed Streamertail. All 29 endemics have been recorded in these forests.

**Goblin Hill (BLD)**

### Day 7, January 13

Another early breakfast at Goblin Hill before we depart for Hector's River, where we should be able to observe White-tailed Tropicbirds soaring near the shore before they fly off to hunt further out at sea. We'll then proceed to the opposite end of Ecclesdown Road and bird our way back to Goblin Hill, where we will enjoy lunch. After lunch, we'll finish packing and depart for Kingston. If time permits, we will make a couple of important stops when we reach the outskirts of the



capital city, first for some souvenir shopping and then at Devon House for some delicious ice cream (optional). We'll check in at the Knutsford Court Hotel and meet for our farewell dinner at the hotel's fine restaurant or a local restaurant.

**Knutsford Court Hotel (BLD)**

**Day 8, January 14**

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your flight home after breakfast. (Early flights might require eating breakfast at the airport)

**End of Services**

**Price Includes:**

- ~ Lodging
- ~ All meals as indicated
- ~ All land transportation within Jamaica
- ~ Airport transfers
- ~ Entrance fees
- ~ Expert local birding guide(s)

**Price does NOT Include:**

- ~ International airfare
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, souvenirs, etc.
- ~ Gratuity for Jamaican birding guide and driver (optional)