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## HERMIT THRUSH AND BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER, NEW FOR CUBA, AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT BIRD RECORDS FROM CAYO COCO AND VICINITY, CIEGO DE ÁVILA PROVINCE, CUBA, 1995-1997

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**Abstract.**—We present accounts of the occurrence of 44 bird species on Cayo Coco, Archipiélago de Sabana-Camagüey (ASC) and vicinity, Cuba during 1995-1997. Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) is new for Cuba and Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*) is new for Cuba and the West Indies. In addition, we present records and reports for 14 species new to the ASC and 27 other records and reports that augment information available on threatened and endangered species, rare migrants and residents, and the seasonal status of regularly occurring migrants and residents. Even modest amounts of field work in Cuba can produce much new information on the status and distribution of its birds. The threats to birds in the ASC posed by the construction of causeways linking the cays to the mainland are discussed.

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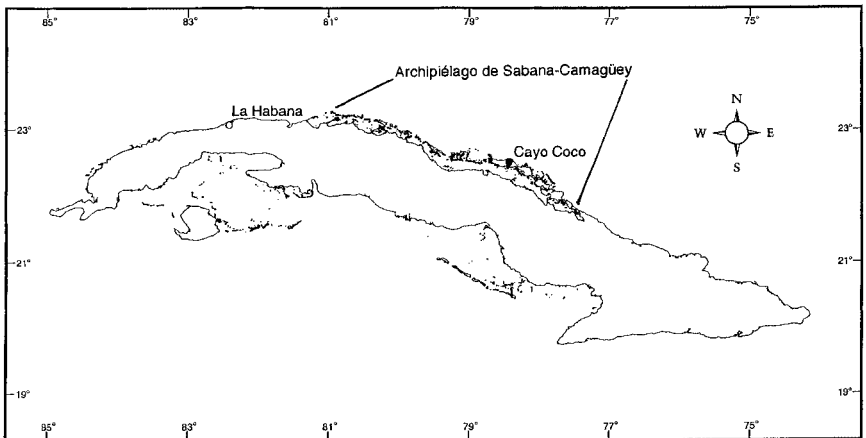
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Several summaries of the avifauna of Cuba have been produced over the years, ranging from the pioneering works of Lembeye (1850) and Gundlach (1876, 1893) to more contemporary works such as the *Catálogo de las Aves de Cuba* (Garrido and García Montaña 1975). The latter is currently undergoing a much needed revision (Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.) and a field guide to Cuba's birds is in production (Garrido and Kirkconnell, in press). Nonetheless, a surprising amount has yet to be learned about the status and distribution of many of Cuba's birds, both resident and migrant. A variety of factors account for this, including Cuba's large size (1250 km long; 114,524 km<sup>2</sup>), long history of social unrest, and recent political and social isolation. Furthermore, few Cubans pursue birdwatching as a recreational pastime. Today, although there are several resident ornithologists working in Cuba, the number is proportionately low compared with more developed countries, and constraints on travel and research funding have limited the extent of their studies. Large areas of the country are still relatively unstudied and even modest amounts of field time can produce much valuable information. Here we present noteworthy records, including two species new for Cuba, collected during the period June 1995-March 1997 on Cayo Coco and vicinity, Cuba.

Cayo Coco is in the Archipiélago de Sabana-Camagüey (ASC) (Fig. 1), a chain of islands along the north coast of Cuba stretching 465 km from the beach resort area of Varadero, Provincia de Matanzas, 110 km E of La Habana, east to Nuevitas, Provincia de Camagüey.



**Figure 1.** The island of Cuba showing the location of the Archipiélago de Sabana-Camagüey and Cayo Coco in relation to the capital city La Habana.

Cayo Coco (380 km ESE La Habana, 370 km<sup>2</sup>) is the second largest island in the ASC, surpassed only by Cayo Romano immediately to the southeast. Cayo Coco is a designated faunal reserve and lies 15 km offshore, separated from the mainland by the Bahía de Perros. It is connected to the mainland by a causeway completed in 1989 to initiate tourism development on Cayo Coco and its neighbors to the northwest, Cayo Guillermo (13.2 km<sup>2</sup>), and to the east, Cayo Paredón Grande (6 km<sup>2</sup>). The islands are flat and covered by mixed evergreen and semideciduous forest ranging from low coastal scrub over much of Cayos Guillermo and Paredón Grande and the northern coast of Cayo Coco to moist forest in the western interior of Cayo Coco. The scrub, though largely undisturbed in the past, now faces severe pressure with beach hotel construction well underway. Much of the forest in eastern and central Cayo Coco is coppice woodland and has been thinned intensively in the past for charcoal production, resulting in many multi-stem trunks, but the moist forests of the western interior have been undisturbed for at least 40 years and resemble primary forest. The latter two forest types are now threatened by road construction and wood collection to supply cooking fuel for construction workers. The avifauna of Cayo Coco and vicinity has been described by Garrido (1973, 1976) and Kirkconnell (in press), and supplemented by various shorter visits (e.g., Garrido 1978, Regalado 1981, Wallace et al. 1996).

We follow the procedure of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Check-list Committee by referring to species' occurrences documented by specimens or photographs as "records" and by referring to species' occurrences that lack tangible evidence (e.g., sightings or banded birds) as "reports" (AOU 1998).

Many of our records and reports come from two winter field seasons, November-February 1995-96 and 1996-97 when we conducted intensive mist net and point count surveys in 12 sites on Cayo Coco, four in each of coastal scrub, coppice woodland, and well-conserved forest. Other records and reports are the result of several field trips to the neighboring cays and mainland. Here we limit our accounts to rare and vulnerable species and to species for which we have data to update their status at the national and ASC levels. Details on species at the cay level are available from the first author on request.

Locations are on Cayo Coco, unless otherwise specified. The "Causeway" is the causeway connecting Cayo Coco to the mainland. North American, West Indian, and Cuban status and distribution are from AOU (1998), Bond (1956 and supplements; 1985), Garrido and García Montaña (1975), Garrido and Kirkconnell (in prep.), and Raffaele et al. (1998) unless otherwise indicated.

## SPECIES ACCOUNTS

- AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER (*Puffinus lherminieri*): 1 found dead, 27 February 1996 (specimen no. 609, Museo Nacional de Historia Natural, La Habana); origin unknown, may have died outside Cuban waters. Widely distributed in West Indies, but most common in eastern Greater Antilles and Lesser Antilles. This brings the total of Cuban specimens with documentation to four (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). Breeding has not been documented, although there is an anecdotal report from a fisherman of a "penguin-like" bird observed emerging from a rock crevice that contained one white egg in Cayos Los Felipes, ASC.
- WEST INDIAN WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna arborea*): Common 10 November 1995-February 1996, mostly on interior freshwater lagoons; high count 19 (including 9 flightless young), 20 November 1995; also 1 being eaten by a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), 12 November 1995. Flightless young 20 November 1995 to mid-February 1996. In winter 1996-97, first observed 12 December; high count 12, 17 December 1996; reported at many sites near mangroves throughout Cayo Coco, January-February 1997; less common in 1996-97 and arriving later. This species is resident in the Greater Antilles, Bahamas, and northern Lesser Antilles. In Cuba, it is a locally common permanent resident with a wide distribution, including Cayos Coco and Romano, but is vulnerable to human predation. Typically it breeds April-December, but there are reports for breeding as late as January (see citations in Collar et al. 1992). Our observations indicate that it is common on Cayo Coco and that breeding occurs throughout the winter. Its late appearance in winter 1996-97, and in lower numbers than 1995-96, suggests that populations may fluctuate from year-to-year. The species has declined throughout its range, including in Cuba, because of hunting, egg collecting, wetland drainage, and exposure to pesticides used widely in rice plantations (Collar et al. 1992). Despite legislation against hunting in Cuba, poaching continues, making breeding populations in protected areas such as Cayo Coco important to the species' conservation.
- HOODED MERGANSER (*Lophodytes cucullatus*): 2 females on brackish lagoon, 29 November-early December 1996. A rare winter visitor to the West Indies with reports from Cuba, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and Martinique. In Cuba, there is one report from Cienfuegos and seven specimens collected from La Habana east to Holguin Province (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). First report for the ASC.
- RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*): Five sightings along Causeway during 10 December 1995-14 January 1996; high count approx. 1000, apparently all females, 7 January 1996; three sightings (max. 4) 12 December 1996-17 January 1997, also mostly females. Winters along the United States coast and is common in Florida during winter (Stevenson and Anderson 1994), but only casual in the West Indies. In Cuba, it is considered a very rare winter resident and transient with five reports from Pinar del Río in the west to the Bahía de Perros. A recent report suggests that they are fairly regular in April in Maspotón, Pinar del Río (Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.; D. Rodríguez and B. Sánchez unpubl. data). The three specimens with locality information in Cuban collections are from eastern Cuba, including one from Gibara, Holguin Province and two from Guantánamo Province (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). Our sightings suggest that, at least occasionally, it is a locally very common, but sporadic, winter resident. Large numbers during the winter of 1995-96, with apparently increasing numbers in early January, may have been the result of the severe winter in the United States, particularly along the north and central Atlantic coasts. Changes in water circulation and food distribution in the Bahía de Perros following the construction of the Causeway also may play a role in concentrating this species. Bond (1959) noted that nearly all West Indian specimens that he examined were females or immatures.

- SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** (*Accipiter striatus*): 1 immature male banded, 27 December 1995 and re-sighted 28 December 1995; 1 immature female banded, 22 November 1996; 1 female observed, 24 December 1996; 1 adult male banded, 25 December 1996. All were of the North American subspecies *velox*, considered a rare winter resident in the Bahamas and Greater Antilles. In Cuba, it is considered a rare transient and, possibly, a rare winter resident with eight previous reports. Six during 19 October-2 December and another in April may have been transients. However, one banded on Cayo Coco 8 February 1993 (Wallace et al. 1996) was certainly a wintering bird, as probably were the late December individuals reported here. These reports suggest that *velox* is a rare winter resident in Cuba.
- GUNDLACH'S HAWK** (*Accipiter gundlachi*): 2 (1 definite adult), Loma de Cunagua, 16 January 1996; four sightings on Cayo Coco, 18 November 1996-13 February 1997, including one adult male giving a territorial call. Gundlach's Hawk is a rare and locally distributed species endemic to Cuba. Five areas of population concentration are known and the species is threatened (Collar et al. 1992). Loma de Cunagua is an isolated mountain (338 m) surrounded by sugar cane fields and open marsh lands, just inland from the southern shores of the Bahía de Perros. Recently it was designated a faunal reserve by the Ministerio de Agricultura. The adult observed was performing a nuptial display flight with flight behavior not unlike that of a Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*). Facing into wind, the bird flapped with slow, buoyant beats bringing the wing tips nearly together over the back. This report is the first from Loma de Cunagua which may be a new breeding locality. Our series of sightings from Cayo Coco suggests that Gundlach's Hawk also is established and breeding there. Previously single birds were reported from Cayo Coco by Garrido (1976) and Regalado (1981). However, in over 600 h of observation during 1987-89, Kirkconnell (in press) failed to find any, but suggested that previous reports may have been strays from Loma de Cunagua, the closest site he felt might support a population.
- MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*): Common on Cayo Coco during winter in open areas and in forests along roads and trails; not rare in winter as previously reported (Kirkconnell, in press). Among the seven captured during the winters of 1995-96 and 1996-97, one was especially noteworthy: an adult male, 20 December 1995; originally banded 29 September 1992, Cape May, New Jersey.
- WILSON'S PLOVER** (*Charadrius wilsonia*): 1, Cayo Paredón Grande, 18 January 1996; 1, 3 February 1996; 1, 8 November 1996; 5, 5 January 1997. Found throughout the West Indies. In Cuba, it is a common summer resident 19 February-14 November (Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.), declining in winter (Raffaele et al. 1998). The source for the latter statement is unclear as our reports are apparently the first from mid-winter for Cuba. Our reports suggest that it is a very rare and local winter resident.
- PIPING PLOVER** (*Charadrius melodus*): Five sightings of 3-9 birds, Cayos Coco and Paredón Grande, 30 December 1995-18 January 1996. By February 1996 numbers had increased at all sites; high count 23 on Cayo Paredón Grande on 23 February 1996 (P. Blanco unpubl. data); 5, 8 February 1997; a flock that built from 4, 8 November 1996 to a high of 37, 23 February 1997; 1, 3 March 1997. None of the birds observed carried bands. Winters mostly from South Carolina south to Florida and west to eastern Texas and rarely in the Bahamas and Greater Antilles. In Cuba, based on 22 known reports 1965-1995, it is a rare winter visitor and uncommon transient (Blanco et al. 1993, Blanco Rodríguez 1995, Blanco Rodríguez and Pérez M. 1997). Previous reports from Cayos Coco and Paredón Grande seem to pertain only to transients. Our reports are the first wintering for the species in the ASC and the flock of 37 is the largest concentration reported for Cuba. Cayos Coco and Paredón Grande are evidently important wintering and staging areas for Piping Plover and increased disturbance on beaches caused by intensive tourism development is a significant threat.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*): 1 photographed, 7 June 1995.

Patchily distributed in the West Indies, breeding in the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, islets off Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and on some of the Grenadines. It is very rare in Cuba with only one specimen with locality details and eight sightings, most along the north coast, and all during the nonbreeding season (Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.; Wallace unpubl. data; J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). This is the first breeding season record. Although it is described as a "spotty breeder" in Cuba by Raffaele et al. (1998), breeding has not yet been documented for Cuba.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*): 5, islet between Cayos Coco and Romano, 20 November 1996; 3 persisted to at least 5 January 1997; 3, Cayo Guillermo, 3 March 1997.

Transient and rare winter resident in the West Indies. In Cuba, it is considered a rare transient. Of three specimen records, two are undated, including one from Cayo Coco, and one is a fall transient from August (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). There are six additional reports: three in April, probably spring migrants; one in March possibly a wintering bird; and two reports from Cayo Coco September-October were likely fall migrants. Our sightings are the first evidence of wintering in Cuba.

RED KNOT (*Calidris canutus*): 26, inlet between Cayos Guillermo and Coco, 15 January 1996; 49 (assumed to include the 26 of 15 January), lagoon 0.5 km west of inlet, 15 January 1996; 7, 28 January 1996; 15, Cayo Guillermo, 3 March 1997. Knots winter mostly along the southern Atlantic coast of Argentina and in Chilean Tierra del Fuego (Morrison and Myers 1987, Morrison and Ross 1989). Despite the presence of a significant wintering population in Florida (approximately 10,000 birds, Harrington et al. 1988), knots are generally considered only transients in the West Indies. In Cuba, knots are rare transients and very rare winter residents. One winter record (photographed) and four winter reports exist of up to four individuals, all since 1986 and all from La Salina, Ciénaga de Zapata. Our sightings are the first for the ASC. These are the largest numbers reported in Cuba in winter, and, to our knowledge, are the largest wintering concentrations reported for the West Indies.

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*): Four sightings, most from the Causeway, 14 November 1995-6 February 1996; high count approx. 200 in mixed flock of 370 *Calidris*, 6 February 1996; min. 20, Causeway, 20 November 1996; 1, Causeway, 20 January 1997; 800, Causeway, 4 March 1997. Few sightings in 1996-97 reflect reduced search effort. An uncommon transient and winter resident throughout the West Indies. In Cuba, it is considered a rare transient, but is not known to winter. However, we suspect this species is regular in winter in Cuba, but is under-reported because of difficulty distinguishing it from Semipalmated Sandpiper (*C. pusilla*) in winter plumage. The status of Western Sandpiper in Cuba is in need of re-evaluation much in the way it required re-evaluation for North America (Phillips 1975). The birds we observed were with Semipalmated and Least sandpipers (*C. minutilla*). In winter we feel comfortable only with field identification of extreme individuals, which usually are females. All individuals had distinctly long, decurved bills and contrasted with the short and straight-billed Semipalmated Sandpipers. We also noted, under ideal viewing conditions, that the bills of some Western Sandpipers were finer near the tips, unlike the stockier bills of Semipalmated Sandpipers. Our January and February sightings are the first winter reports for Cuba.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*): 4 photographed, Causeway, 20 January 1997. Bond (1962, 1964) was reluctant to accept reports of Dunlin for the West Indies unless supported by specimens of which only two have been obtained from Barbados (Bond 1972). Sightings exist from many other islands, mostly in the Bahamas and Greater Antilles, but in Cuba it has been sighted previously only five times (photographed once), all since 1989 at Ciénaga de Zapata. Given its status in Florida and along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, where it is fairly common in winter (DeSante and Pyle 1986, Stevenson and Anderson 1994), it probably occurs regularly in Cuba and the northern Caribbean. First record for the ASC.

- STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*): 8, Causeway, 20 November 1996. A common transient in Cuba with sightings from various localities on the Cuban mainland and from Cayos Matías and Rosario along the southern coast. First report for the ASC.
- POMARINE JAEGER (*Stercorarius pomarinus*): 1 barred-phase juvenile in feeding flock of Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), and Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*), Causeway, 17 January 1997. Apparently rare in the West Indies with reports at sea in the Caribbean and among the Bahamas, although its regularity and occasional abundance in Florida and in the southern Caribbean (Stevenson and Anderson 1994, Olsen and Larsson 1997) suggest that it is under-reported. It is extremely rare in Cuba with two, possibly three, records (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.) and five previous reports. First report for the ASC.
- GULL-BILLED TERN (*Sterna nilotica*): 1, 13 January 1996; 1, Causeway, 2 March 1997. Whereas this species breeds in the Bahamas and Virgin Islands, it is a transient or rare winter resident elsewhere in the West Indies. The main wintering grounds of North American breeders are along the Caribbean coast of Central America (Bond 1956). In Cuba, it is a rare winter resident and transient with three records (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.) and seven previous reports scattered across Cuba. First reports for the ASC.
- SANDWICH TERN (*Sterna sandvicensis*): 1, 8 January 1996; flocks up to 50, Causeway, 14-17 January 1996; 9, Causeway, 17 January 1997. Although widespread in the West Indies, in Cuba it is considered a locally common spring and summer resident with reports mostly from the northern and southern cays. The only previous winter report for the species is of a single bird off La Habana (Wallace unpubl. data), but the concentrations observed along the Causeway confirm that this species winters in Cuba. Given that these are the only winter reports, the statement that Sandwich Tern is a common year-round resident throughout Cuba (Raffaele et al. 1998) is apparently without foundation.
- BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*): 1, 20 November 1996. Common during winter on the Cuban mainland and also reported from Cayo Juan García in far western Cuba. First report for the ASC and the earliest winter report for Cuba.
- EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*): Three sightings of single birds, 9-30 November 1996. Spread to Florida, probably from escapes in the Bahamas in 1974 (Smith 1987) and established in the Cayman Islands and various of the Lesser Antilles (Barré et al. 1996, Raffaele et al. 1998). It was first confirmed in Cuba in 1990 (Garrido and Kirkconnell 1990), although a sighting by a forest guard in Cayo Coco in 1988 may have been this species. Populations are known from La Habana and vicinity and the tip of the Guanahacabibes Peninsula. Our reports are the first confirmed for the ASC. In the absence of sightings between La Habana and Cayo Coco, it is possible that birds in these two areas may be the result of different colonizing events from the United States or the Bahamas or that it has been overlooked in the intervening area.
- BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*): 1, 8-15 December 1995; 1 (probably same individual), same location and perch, 30 November 1996. Known from the Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola, and, formerly, several of the Lesser Antilles. In Cuba, six breeding populations are localized in western and eastern Cuba and on Isla de Pinos. This is the second report from Cayo Coco, but, thus far, subspecific identification is unknown. They most likely pertain to *A. c. floridana*, the breeding subspecies of the Bahamas and Florida for which two specimens exist from the ASC, including one from Cayo Guillermo (Garrido 1973, Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.). The species is not known to breed on Cayo Coco as stated by AOU (1998), nor is the species known to be a year-round resident in several cays of the ASC as stated by Raffaele et al. (1998).
- SHORT-EARED OWL (*Asio flammeus*): 1 found dead, 5 June 1995 (specimen at Centro de Investigaciones de Ecosistemas Costeros, Cayo Coco). Formerly considered rare in

Cuba, this species has undergone a recent, dramatic population increase, apparently in response to increased land clearing for sugar, citrus, and rice, and has been reported from nearly all provinces. A specimen from Key West, Florida has been attributed to this population explosion (Garrido 1995). This record is the first for the ASC and is also likely attributable to increases on the mainland. The species is not known to breed on Cayo Coco as stated by AOU (1998).

**GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*):** 1, 10 November 1995. A rare visitor to Cuba, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico 14 October-20 April. In Cuba, it is a very rare transient and possible winter resident, with at least eight previous occurrences (Bond 1956, 1960; Suárez Duque 1996; Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.; J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). First report for the ASC.

**THICK-BILLED VIREO (*Vireo crassirostris*):** 1 banded and photographed, 26 November 1995; 2 banded (one was photographed), 14 and 15 December 1996, one resighted and heard singing, 8 February 1997; 1 singing, 22 January 1997. All birds were in coastal scrub. The first records for the species in Cuba were from Cayo Paredón Grande in October 1989 (Kirkconnell and Garrido 1991) and breeding was confirmed there in spring 1997. Until the above records and reports, Paredón Grande was the only confirmed locality in Cuba and our records and reports are probably dispersers from the Paredón Grande population.

The known status of Thick-billed Vireo in Cuba has been confused by accounts in AOU (1998) and Raffaele et al. (1998). AOU (1998) indicates that it is resident on "... northern cays off the Cuban mainland, including Cayo Coco and Cayo Paredones (rare winter resident). . . ." This implies that the species is known from several of the northern cays, but, in fact, there are no confirmed records or reports for the species anywhere in Cuba other than Cayos Coco and Paredón Grande. Our records and reports are the basis for the AOU's inclusion of Cayo Coco as part of the species' range. Cayo Paredones should read Cayo Paredón Grande. As noted above, the species is now known to breed on Cayo Paredón Grande. All occurrences to date on Cayo Coco have been during winter, but its status during other times of year is unknown. The account in Raffaele et al. (1998) does not mention the species' known occurrence on Cayo Paredón Grande which is documented by nine specimens in the collection of the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba (Kirkconnell and Garrido 1991; J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). Instead it states that the species "... is an uncommon migrant in north-central Cuba during October where it occurs locally near Rancho Velez and on several nearby cays." This would be the only known migratory population of Thick-billed Vireo. The basis for this statement is the account in Kirkconnell and Garrido (1991) of two groups of vireos that were observed in October 1979, one group of eight "in the environs of the river Sierra Morena" [approximately 15 km W of Rancho Velez] and another group three days later on Cayo Cinco Leguas [approximately 50 km NW of Rancho Velez]. The birds had "brown" eyes and the Sierra Morena birds were in the company of migrant warblers. At the time, they were thought to be White-eyed Vireos (*Vireo griseus*) which is a common migrant and winter resident in Cuba. Twelve years later, the authors speculate that these birds could have been Thick-billed Vireos. This constitutes neither substantive evidence for a migratory population of the species in northern Cuba nor evidence for its occurrence anywhere other than on Cayos Coco and Paredón Grande.

**PHILADELPHIA VIREO (*Vireo philadelphicus*):** 2 banded and photographed, 18 February 1996. Considered a vagrant in the West Indies and a rare, but regular, fall transient in Cuba. Not known to winter in the West Indies, although Bond (1985) reports 1-27 February as dates of occurrence. This species is known to leave its wintering grounds relatively late in spring migration, usually not until mid- to late April (Wetmore et al. 1984). The earliest reports for the southern United States are from Florida in late March, but typically it does not appear in Florida and Texas until mid- to late April (Oberholser and Kincaid 1974, Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Stevenson and



Anderson 1994). Therefore, it seems plausible that our records and those of Bond pertain to winter residents.

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*): 1, 14 November 1996.

A rare transient and possibly a rare winter resident in Cuba. First report for the ASC.

CAVE SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon fulva*): Common winter resident throughout winter 1995-96 and 1996-97. Flocks of up to 30 observed along the northern coast and over interior lagoons. In Cuba, it is a very common summer resident and transient; partly migratory with low numbers overwintering. Our reports are the first winter records for the ASC and indicate that it is locally common.

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*): 1 immature banded and photographed in coppice woodland, 25 December 1995 (photographs deposited at Centro de Investigaciones de Ecosistemas Costeros and Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba). This is the first record of Hermit Thrush in Cuba. It was identified as a *Catharus* thrush by its small size, in contrast to larger *Turdus* thrushes, overall brownish plumage, speckled breast and long legs, and as a Hermit Thrush by its grayish-brown back and head with contrasting rufous uppertail coverts and tail. The eye-ring and throat were whitish and distinct speckling was restricted to the upper breast with indistinct speckling continuing down the sides. The auriculars were streaked with buff. Legs were flesh colored and the bill was blackish-brown grading to dull yellow at the base of the lower mandible. We aged it as an immature by the presence of buff-tipped, juvenal greater secondary coverts and an incompletely pneumatized skull. It had a wing chord of 94 mm and weighed 32.2 g. Hermit Thrush has been expected as one of the next new species for Cuba, given Cuba's proximity to a large portion of its winter range which extends across much of the southern United States and south to El Salvador. In the West Indies, it is a rare winter resident in the northern Bahamas. This individual was apparently on winter territory, and the possibility exists that it was driven south by severe weather from its wintering grounds in the United States. Raffaele et al.'s (1998) reference to Hermit Thrush as a vagrant to Cuba is based on our record.

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*): 1 immature observed then banded and photographed, 8-10 February 1997. A rare transient and extremely rare winter resident in Cuba with two specimens (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.) and three sightings. The only previous report for the ASC was one bird banded during spring migration on Cayo Coco (Rodríguez et al. 1994). This record is the second for the ASC and the first during winter.

BAHAMA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus gundlachi*): 1 banded, 24 January 1996; total of 6, including 2 banded, 14 November 1996-6 February 1997; 5, Cayo Guillermo, 20 November 1996. This species is found throughout most of the Bahamas, but is local in Jamaica and Cuba, where it is considered a rare resident on a few cays in the ASC, including Cayos Coco and Guillermo. Our observations during winter 1995-96 and 1996-97 and in previous years suggest that Bahama Mockingbird is fairly common on Cayo Guillermo where it is more common than Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), and that it may be increasing on Cayo Coco. AOU (1998) states that its range in Cuba extends from Cayo Tío Pepe east to Cayo Coco. Its range actually extends east to Cayo Cruz, approximately 50 km ESE of Cayo Coco, and includes Cayo Paredón Grande.

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*): 1, 21 January 1997; 1, February 1997. An occasional winter resident in Cuba. First reports for the ASC.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Vermivora celata*): 1 banded in coastal scrub, 29 November 1995. Orange-crowned Warbler winters in the southern United States and south through Mexico and Central America and is vagrant to the Bahamas 14 October-2 January. In Cuba, there are two previous occurrences: one specimen taken on the Guanahacabibes Peninsula in far western Cuba November 1989 (Kirkconnell et al. 1997); and one captured on Cayo Santa María, ASC, 21 October 1994.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Dendroica nigrescens*): 1 photographed, 17 October 1997 (photographs deposited at Centro de Investigaciones de Ecosistemas Costeros and Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba). This is the first record of a Black-throated Gray Warbler for all of the West Indies. It appeared at the Centro de Investigaciones de Ecosistemas Costeros, Cuba, during a period of unsettled, wet weather preceding Hurricane Lili's passage on 18-19 October, and took refuge in a tree in the protected courtyard of the station where it remained for approximately one hour. Although photographed with a "point-and-shoot" camera, the photographs clearly show the key identifying features. The bird was an adult female or an immature male and was medium gray above and white below with the throat and breast band dark blackish-gray. The chin appeared whitish and from it a prominent white sub-moustachial stripe extended posteriorly nearly to the nape. Also prominent was a white post-ocular stripe framing the black auricular patch. The yellow loreal spot is barely visible in the photo, but was seen well in the field. Black streaks extended down the sides and there were two distinct white wing bars. Black-throated Gray Warbler is a western species breeding from southwestern British Columbia south through much of the western and southwestern United States to north Baja California and extreme western Texas. It winters from southern California, Arizona and Texas to Oaxaca and Veracruz. However, it also has a striking history of vagrancy, particularly during fall migration, and has been recorded in half of Canada's twelve provinces and territories and all but eight of the lower 48 United States (DeSante and Pyle 1986). In Florida, it is considered a rare fall transient and rare, but nearly regular, winter visitor, with over 80 October-April records and reports (Stevenson and Anderson 1994), suggesting that the species' occurrence in the northern Caribbean is not unexpected.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Dendroica striata*): 1 immature male banded, 10 December 1996. Common transient in Cuba, noted particularly in the ASC during fall. A new late date for a fall migrant in Cuba.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*): Very common winter resident and one of the most commonly banded migrant warblers. One adult male captured, 13 February 1996; originally banded Mugg's Is., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 24 May 1994.

SWAINSON'S WARBLER (*Limnothlypis swainsoni*): A total of 134 encounters of 77 individuals during winter 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 on Cayo Coco; recorded in 10 of 13 banding sites. A few others were observed but all of the above were captured and recaptured with mistnets, emphasizing the findings of Kirkconnell et al. (1996) that Swainson's Warbler is much more common in Cuba than previously thought. Because of its cryptic coloration and behavior, surveys with mistnets (Kirkconnell et al. 1996) or playback (Graves 1996) are the only reliable methods for recording its presence and abundance.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (*Seiurus motacilla*): 1 (same bird) observed twice, 22 December 1996 and 15 February 1997; 1 banded, 30 January 1997. A common winter resident on the Cuban mainland, but not previously known to winter in the ASC. These two reports probably were the result of unusually wet conditions on Cayo Coco during winter 96-97 when more wet forest habitat was available. In typical years, mangrove forest is the only flooded forest on Cayo Coco, but this is rarely favored by Louisiana Waterthrush during winter in Cuba and is thoroughly dominated by Northern Waterthrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*).

KENTUCKY WARBLER (*Oporornis formosus*): 1 immature female banded and photographed, 20 December 1995, recaptured 22 December; 1 heard, same location, 17 February 1996; 1 immature male banded, 25 December 1995, recaptured and photographed 23 February 1996. The winter range of Kentucky Warbler extends south from Mexico to northern Colombia and Venezuela. In the West Indies, it is a rare transient in the Bahamas and Greater Antilles and a very rare winter resident.

There are also reports from Guadeloupe in the Lesser Antilles. In Cuba, it is considered a rare transient and possibly a very rare winter resident with two previous mid-winter reports. It has been reported previously on Cayo Coco during migration (Rodríguez and Sánchez 1995). Our records and reports confirm that Kentucky Warbler is a rare winter resident in Cuba.

**YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*):** 1 immature female banded and photographed in coastal scrub, 22 November 1995. Winters from Mexico south through Central America and considered a vagrant to the West Indies with reports from the Bahamas, Cuba, and Grand Cayman. In Cuba, it is considered a very rare transient with six previous reports including two specimens, 24 October 1976 and 12 February 1960 and four sight reports: 1, Cayo Paredón Grande, October 1991; 2, Cayo Coco, 5 May 1976; and 1, Ciénaga de Zapata, 26 March 1991. However, occurrences to date suggest that the species is a rare transient and very rare winter resident in Cuba.

**BANANAQUIT (*Coereba flaveola*):** 1 adult, Cayo Paredón Grande, 18 January 1996 and 10 December 1996; 1 singing adult male, Cayo Guillermo, 20 November 1996; 1 immature banded, 23 November 1996; 1 adult, 10 January 1997; 1 immature banded and photographed, 23 January 1997. All were in coastal scrub. One of the enigmas of West Indian biogeography, the Bananaquit breeds virtually throughout the Caribbean except for Cuba and the Swan Islands and is widely distributed in Central and South America. In Cuba, it is considered a very rare visitor from the Bahamas with all specimens pertaining to *C. f. bahamensis*. Our record and reports and historical reports suggest two areas of population concentration, or at least two areas in which searches have been intensive enough to find birds: the Gibara area, where at least 10 birds have been captured 1968-1980s, and the Cayos Guillermo, Coco, Paredón Grande area where a total of six birds have been recorded, including 1 banded and photographed, Cayo Coco, 7 February 1993 (Wallace et al. 1996). Additional records include 1 adult female, Cayo Tío Pepe, approximately 140 km NW of Cayo Coco, 13 March 1965 and 2, Macizo Guamuahaya (Escambray) in south-central Cuba, 1 March 1994 (Hernández Muñoz and Bowles 1997). Bond (1987) suggested that Bananaquit does not breed in Cuba because of "unfavorable ecological conditions" and further speculated that much of western Cuba is too cool in winter to support it, just as south Florida is, although breeding has been suspected several times there and there are two reports of nest building (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Stevenson and Anderson 1994). In the one area Bond thought was suitable, near Santiago de Cuba, far from any area where it has been observed, he speculated that if it could occur there it might be competitively excluded by Red-legged Honeycreeper (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) which was already present. These are unsatisfactory explanations for the apparent absence of breeding Bananaquits in Cuba, given that the honeycreeper is uncommon and local in Cuba, that Bananaquit is a habitat generalist throughout most of its range and sympatric with Red-legged Honeycreeper in many mainland areas, and that the eastern two-thirds of Cuba is as tropical as the rest of the West Indies. A breeding population probably occurs in Cuba, and one will probably be discovered; nonetheless, breeding has yet to be confirmed.

**RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPER:** 1 female, 2 December 1995; 2 females, same location, 4 December 1995; heard, same location, 3-6 December 1996; 2 (1 female, 1 possible juvenile), 23 December 1996; 2 heard, 30 January 1997; 1 adult male banded and photographed, 14 February 1997. In the West Indies, Red-legged Honeycreeper occurs on mainland Cuba where it is a rare permanent resident, but is locally common in parts of western and eastern Cuba. Our record and reports are the first for the ASC. There has been confusion about the species' status in Cuba. AOU (1983) stated that the species was "formerly widespread, but now confined to Oriente." The checklist account has been updated to state, "Records from Cuba (where possibly established) . . ." (AOU 1998). AOU (1983, 1998) and Raffaele et al. (1998) suggest that the

species may have been introduced. The Red-legged Honeycreeper is certainly well established in Cuba, and as noted above, is locally common in some areas. It has been known to occur in Cuba for nearly 150 years (Lembeye 1850). The suspicion that it may have been introduced seems to stem from Bond's (1956) comment that Red-legged Honeycreeper is frequently kept as a cage bird in Cuba and may therefore have been introduced. Keeping a species in captivity is not grounds for assuming its introduction, and many other species are kept in captivity in Cuba that occur in other countries and that are not believed to have been introduced (e.g., Cuban Parrot, *Amazona leucocephala*; Yellow-faced Grassquit, *Tiaris olivacea*). Furthermore, the peripheral occurrence of Middle and South American species in Cuba and neighboring Hispaniola is not without precedent (e.g.; Spotted Rail, *Pardirallus maculatus*; Stygian Owl, *Asio stygius*). Fossil remains of Double-striped Thick-knee (*Burhinus bistriatus*) have been discovered on Cuba (Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.). Other fossil remains from Cuba further illustrate the close biogeographic connection between Cuba and the mainland (e.g., Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*; tapaculo species, *Scytalopus* sp.) (Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.). The natural occurrence of Red-legged Honeycreeper is not only possible, but also probably the most parsimonious explanation for its occurrence in Cuba.

**BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT (*Tiaris bicolor*):** 1 male, Cayo Guillermo, 20 November 1996. Another species with an unusual West Indian distribution, Black-faced Grassquit is found virtually throughout the West Indies, except Isla de Pinos, Swan Islands, and Cayman Islands. In Cuba, a small population was discovered on Cayo Tío Pepe in 1959 when two birds were collected. In 1963 five more birds were collected and three others observed. One was also collected from nearby Cayo Punta de Piedras (Bond 1963). It also has been encountered on Cayo Coco (Garrido 1976) and Gibara (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). Our report is a new locality for the species in Cuba and the first in nearly 20 years.

**CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*):** 1, basic plumage adult, Cayo Guillermo, 20 November 1996. This species is a vagrant to the West Indies with only three previous records (total of four specimens) for Cuba (Garrido and Kirkconnell, in prep.; Suárez Duque 1996). First report for the ASC.

## DISCUSSION

Our observations illustrate well that even modest amounts of field work in Cuba can produce much new information on the status and distribution of its birds. The two species new for Cuba bring the total species recorded in Cuba to 354. Our work also resulted in 14 new records and reports for the ASC and 27 other records and reports that significantly improve information available on threatened and endangered species, the status of rare migrants and residents, and the seasonal status of many regularly occurring migrants and residents. Whereas knowledge of Cuban birds has certainly grown in recent years, clearly much remains to be learned.

The "Bahamian" components of Cuba's avifauna, Bahama Mockingbird, Thick-billed Vireo, Bananaquit, and Black-faced Grassquit, have populations largely restricted to coastal scrub habitat in the ASC. Intensive efforts to develop tourism in the ASC seriously threaten coastal scrub and this significant component of Cuba's avian biodiversity.

Two species, Gundlach's Hawk and Red-legged Honeycreeper, may be expanding into the ASC because of the links provided to the mainland by causeways. Four major causeways now connect cays in the ASC to the mainland and, as Garrido (1996) has pointed out, these causeways, and others linking cays to each other, could facilitate invasion of species not native to the cays, potentially affecting their isolated ecosystems. Many of the cays support endemic subspecies of resident birds as well as endemic species of reptiles and amphibians. The impact of non-native mainland forms on the isolated faunas of the cays is as yet unknown. In Puerto Rico, populations of Puerto Rican Vireo (*Vireo latimeri*) on offshore islands are apparently safe from parasitism by Shiny Cowbirds (*Molothrus bonariensis*) (J. Faaborg pers. comm.). Causeways could facilitate dispersal of cowbirds to the ASC where populations of species with extremely restricted ranges, such as Thick-billed Vireo, could be adversely affected.

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