

NOTES ON THE AVIFAUNA OF CAYO PAREDÓN GRANDE, CUBA

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Abstract: We document a new locality for Black-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris bicolor*) in the Sabana–Camagüey Archipelago, plus twelve new species and three noteworthy species to the avifauna of Cayo Paredón Grande, recorded in January–April 2008, October 2008, October 2009, and September 2010. Comments on species previously recorded, but not referred to in Kirkconnell and Kirwan’s (2008) avifaunal inventory, are also included. Our revision of the island’s avifauna elevates the species number up to 154, including five Cuban endemics.

Key words: bird inventory, Cayo Paredón Grande, Cuba, distributional data, new records, Sabana–Camagüey Archipelago

Resumen: UNA NUEVA LOCALIDAD PARA EL *TIARIS BICOLOR* EN EL ARCHIPIÉLAGO SABANA–CAMAGÜEY Y ADICIONES A LA AVIFAUNA DE CAYO PAREDÓN GRANDE, CUBA. En este trabajo se documenta una nueva localidad para el Tomeguín Prieto (*Tiaris bicolor*) en el Archipiélago Sabana–Camagüey, doce nuevas especies, y tres observaciones de interés para la avifauna de Cayo Paredón Grande, durante visitas realizadas en enero-abril 2008, octubre del 2008, octubre del 2009 y septiembre de 2010. También se incluyen comentarios sobre especies reportadas en dicha localidad pero no referidas en el inventario de la avifauna de Kirkconnell y Kirwan (2008). La presente revisión de la avifauna de Cayo Paredón Grande eleva el número de especies a 154, incluyendo cinco endémicos.

Palabras clave: Archipiélago Sabana–Camagüey, cayo Paredón Grande, datos distribucionales, Cuba, inventario de aves, nuevos registros

Résumé : PRÉSENCE DU SPOROPHILE CICI (*TIARIS BICOLOR*) SUR UN NOUVEAU SITE DE L’ARCHIPEL DE SABANA–CAMAGÜEY ET NOUVELLES ESPÈCES D’OISEAUX POUR CAYO PAREDÓN GRANDE, CUBA. Ce travail présente des informations sur une nouvelle localité pour le Sporophile cici (*Tiaris bicolor*) dans l’archipel de Sabana–Camagüey, ainsi que douze nouvelles espèces et trois observations remarquables pour l’avifaune de Cayo Paredón Grande, relevées de janvier à avril 2008, en octobre 2008, octobre 2009 et septembre 2010. Des commentaires sur les espèces déjà signalées dans cette zone, mais non traitées dans l’inventaire de l’avifaune de Kirkconnell et Kirwan (2008) sont également inclus. Notre révision de l’avifaune de l’île porte le nombre d’espèces à 154, dont cinq espèces endémiques à Cuba.

Mots clés : Cayo Paredón Grande, Cuba, données sur la répartition, inventaire des oiseaux, nouvelles données, Sabana–Camagüey Archipelago

Cayo Paredón Grande is located at 22°29' N and 78°07' W, off the north coast of western Cayo Romano in the Sabana–Camagüey Archipelago (SCA). It comprises an area of 8.75 km² formed by two narrow strips of emerged land: one along a north–southeast axis and the other in a north–south direction. Conservation efforts in such islets of the Sabana–Camagüey Archipelago are of great importance, especially for relict populations inhabiting this island, whose avifauna previously comprised 132 species, including 37 permanent residents, 80 Neartic–Neotropical migrants, and four Cuban endemic species (Kirkconnell and Kirwan 2008).

In this present paper we update the avifauna of Cayo Paredón Grande by adding 12 newly recorded species based on our field observations at Cayo Paredón Grande during 2008–2009, and other spe-

cies previously reported by other authors but not referred to by Kirkconnell and Kirwan (2008; see Appendix 1). In the following species accounts we comment on the status and abundance in Cuba (Garrido and Kirkconnell 2011) and previous records.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*). Common winter resident in Cuba. Recorded in the SCA at Cayo Coco (Sánchez and Rodríguez 2000), Sabinal (Barrios *et al.* 2003), and Santa María (Ruiz *et al.* 2009). On 20 October 2009, a pair was seen flying over an interior lagoon in the southern sector of the cay.

Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*). Common transient throughout Cuba (Acosta and Mugica 2006). First recorded in SCA at Cayo Coco on 20

November 1996 (Wallace *et al.* 1999) and very common during migration at Cayo Guillermo (Guy M. Kirwan pers. comm.). Our observations expand its occurrence eastward to Cayo Paredón Grande. On 19 March 2008, one was seen at Playa Los Lirios (22°28'50.2" N, 78°10'0.3" W), providing only the third record in SCA.

Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*). Common winter resident and transient in Cuba, Isla de la Juventud, and Cayo Coco. Previous records in SCA have included localities such as Guajaba (ACC / ICGC 1990b), Sabinal (Morales-Leal and Garrido 1996), and Cayo Coco (Wallace *et al.* 1999). On 21 October 2009, two individuals were seen in the southern Cayo Paredón Grande.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). Common permanent resident in Cuba, Isla de la Juventud, and some cays, as well as a very rare winter resident. Previously reported nearby at Cayo Coco (ACC / ICGC 1990a) and Cayo Romano (ACC / ICGC 1990b). A possible migrant from northern populations was heard flying over the Paredón Grande lighthouse on 18 October 2008, providing the first record for the island. The species occurs in Ciego de Avila province from the northern cays, various mainland localities, and to the south in the Jardines de la Reina archipelago, specifically on Boca Piedra de Piloto cay (Parada and Arias 2005).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*). Rare fall transient in Cuba. In SCA, earlier records of *Empidonax* were documented in Cayo Santa María and Cayo Coco for the Least Flycatcher (*E. minimus*; Llanes unpubl. data) and Acadian Flycatcher (*E. virescens*; Parada *et al.* 2006), respectively. A single individual was mist-netted and photographed in sandy coastal scrub with predominance of *Coccothrinax litoralis* along the southern perimeter fence of the lighthouse on 11 September 2010, providing the first record for an offshore island of Cuba.

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*). Common winter resident and transient in Cuba and Isla de la Juventud. Formerly recorded in Cayo Coco by ACC / ICGC (1990a) and considered as an uncommon winter resident in the northern cays of Ciego de Ávila. Our observation of one on 19 March 2008 is the first for Paredón Grande.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*). Rare winter resident and common transient in Cuba and Isla de la Juventud. Previously recorded in ASC at Cayo Coco in November 1996 (Wallace *et al.* 1999). Four individuals were observed by API flying over and perched on top of the

lighthouse's lightning rod on 11 September 2010.

Black-throated Green Warbler (*Setophaga virens*). Common winter resident and transient in Cuba, Isla de la Juventud, and some larger cays. Earlier records on Cayo Romano (Rodríguez *et al.* 2006) and Coco (ACC / ICGC 1990a). On 17 October 2008, one presumably immature female (drabest plumage pattern) was observed foraging in an *Avicennia germinans* in the southern part of the island.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). Rare winter resident and less rare as transient in Cuba, Isla de la Juventud, and some larger cays. Previously reported from Romano (ACC / ICGC 1990b). On 28 February, one female was seen foraging in coastal scrub beside the unpaved road leading to El Campismo on Paredón Grande Cay (22°27'10.0" N, 78°09'54.4" W), providing the first record for the island.

Black-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris bicolor*). Rare permanent resident in Cuba. Known from a few islands of the SCA including Cayo Tío Pepe (1959), Cayo Punta de Piedras (Bond 1963), Cayo Coco in October 1973 (Garrido 1976), and Guillermo in November 1996 (Wallace *et al.* 1999). The latter authors also included Gibara as another locality (J. W. Wiley pers. comm.). In addition, the second author observed one individual caged in Santiago de Cuba (near the Cuban Ornithological Society building) in 1996, captured in the suburbs of the city according to locals. We now report a new locality for the species in the SCA at 22°26'22.7" N, 78°07'28.4" W) and the first in nearly 12 yr. We recorded two observations at the southeastern tip of the island, known as Punta El Barril. On 24 January and 16 March 2008, two adults (one male and one female) were seen separately between sandy coastal scrub with a few scattered Cuban silver palms (*Coccothrinax litoralis*) and a narrow fringe of exotic Australian pines (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) planted on the sand dunes.

Our sightings of the species in Cayo Paredón Grande support Garrido's (1973) statements about the strong relationship between the avifauna of the Bahamas and SCA, based on the occurrence of species such as Bahama Mockingbird (*Mimus gundlachi*), Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*), Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), Thick-billed Vireo (*Vireo crassirostris*), Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*), and more recently a Bahama Woodstar (*Calliphlox evelynae*) recorded on Paredón Grande on 19 April 2001 (Kirkconnell and Kirwan 2008).

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). Vagrant in Cuba with four previous records at Guantánamo

(Ramsden 1912) and in Havana province (Garrido and Kirkconnell 2011). During 21–22 October 2009, one was observed foraging on grass surrounding the Paredón Grande lighthouse, providing the first record for the SCA.

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*). Common winter resident and transient in Cuba. In the SCA, previously recorded at Cayo Coco (Regalado 1981), Santa María (ACC / ICGC 1990c), and Guillermo (Wallace *et al.* 1999). On 21 and 31 October 2009, one individual was observed flying among the henequén (*Agave fuorcroydes* and *A. desmettiana*) planted in the environs of the Paredón Grande lighthouse.

Other noteworthy findings comprised two Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*) seen at Playa del Norte (22°28'56.1" N, 78°09'34.0" W) and two American Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*) at playa Los Lirios on 16 and 19 March 2008, respectively. On March 25, another was seen along the Cayo Coco causeway. In addition, we observed two immature individuals of Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*) at El Campismo on 17 March and 19 April 2008 (latest winter and first breeding dates recorded in SCA, respectively). Considering these last two records along with four individuals observed and mist-netted in coastal scrubs of Cayo Coco during 2005–2006 (Wiancko 2008), it is possible that a breeding population may occur in the northern cays of Ciego de Ávila and Camagüey provinces.

DISCUSSION

Our observations elevate the number of recorded species to 154, including five Cuban endemics. Recording such a varied avifauna is the combined outcome of extensive field surveys conducted over the last 20 yr, the geographical location, and the ecosystems of the islet, which support important numbers of resident and transient Neotropical species during southbound migration. This island, along with neighbouring cays, also stands out markedly for the aforementioned “Bahamian component” of its avifauna. Among the rarities, the most noteworthy are the only permanently resident population of Thick-billed Vireo and the only sighting of Bahama Woodstar in Cuba. The coastal scrubs of these northern cays and its associated avifauna have been undergoing considerable pressure from landscape transformation due to development of the recreational industry in Cayo Coco during the past 16 years. Conservation of these rare components of the Cuban avifauna must be a high priority in future development expected to occur in this island.

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Appendix 1. Bird species previously reported by various authors in Cayo Paredón Grande, but not referred to by Kirwan and Kirkconnell (2008).

Species	Source
Greater Flamingo (<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>)	Socarrás <i>et al.</i> (1995)
Black-crowned Night-Heron (<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>)	ACC / ICGC (1990a)
Semipalmated Sandpiper (<i>Calidris pusilla</i>)	API (personal observation)
Snowy Plover (<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>)	Blanco <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Black Tern (<i>Chlidonias niger</i>)	Socarrás <i>et al.</i> (1995)
White-winged Dove (<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>)	ACC/ICGC (1990a), API (pers. observ.)
Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	Parada <i>et al.</i> (2006)
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>)	Parada <i>et al.</i> (2006)
Cuban Vireo (<i>Vireo gundlachi</i>)	Parada <i>et al.</i> (2006)