

West Indies Region

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Rainfall in the Region was erratic, but notably dry. To what effect an extended 1993–1994 El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) contributed to Caribbean ornithology may depend on its extent in the localized climatology. Precipitation measured at Cruz Bay, St. John, United States Virgin Islands since 1879 gives us a clear trend of monthly averages over the past century for this group of islands at the elbow of the Antilles. It indicates that March is very dry, April gets wetter, and May represents the spring rainy season. In fact, the opposite occurred this year. March was 71% above the 100-year POR, April 55% above, and May 88% below average. The 90-day period, however, was 13% below average.

The late spring dry period—no rain for 5 weeks, according to observers—could have shut down development of flowers and fruits for nectivores and frugivores, as well as the insects that depend on them. A lack of freshwater outflows and algal blooms might also reduce food chain activity in shallow bays and reefs. Similar conditions prevailed in the Virgin Islands during the 1982–1983 ENSO event.

Reports were received from the Bahamas (northern islands covered in March and a southern island in April), Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles, and a coastal island of South America. From Aruba, Netherlands Antilles, came disturbing news that the island government now permits jet-skis to operate in the immediate vicinity of three internationally important seabird colonies. Send your faxes to the Tourism Bureau. One also wonders about the wisdom and environmental impacts of war games on fragile ecosystems, endangered species, and habitats of the Bahamas National Trust on Great Inagua.

Abbreviations: Ab (*Abaco*); GB (*Grand Bahama*); Ba (*Bahamas*); DR (*Dominican Republic*); NP (*New Providence, Bahamas*); PR (*Puerto Rico*); St. J. (*St. Johns*); VI (*Virgin Islands*); Be (*Bermuda*); Bd (*Barbados*); DR (*Dominican Republic*)

Grebes to Terns

Least Grebes were noted (TW) at New Providence, Ba Mar. 18–21. A Masked Booby seen at sea (VI *et al.*) March 10 near Bequia, The Grenadines, is from one of only 3 breeding sites known in the Lesser Antilles (Halewyn

and Norton, 1984). Neotropic Cormorants have expanded their range in the n. Bahamas to NP (TW *et al.*), where 85 birds were noted and some photographed (BH) at or near a Paradise I. golf course pond (TW *et al.*) March 18–20. More details are expected elsewhere. Least Bitterns, male and female, were noted (TW *et al.*) at the same NP golf course pond March 18. Another pair was reported from the cattails at Humacao Res., PR April 28 (AC *et al.*). A single Greater Flamingo was noted near the s. end of North Cr. Pond (KS) April 29 at Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos.

Nine West Indian Whistling-Ducks were noted at Humacao Res., PR April 28, but 20 were seen the next day (AC *et al.*). This is encouraging news for this Endangered species. An imm. Snow Goose was seen (AB, JD, SU, TW) and photographed (BH) at Sugarland Farms, Great Abaco, Ba March 15 for one of the very few records from these islands. A Green-winged Teal was noted (TW *et al.*) March 18 & 20 at a pond near the Sheraton Hotel, for one of the very few records from NP.

White-cheeked Pintails (30–50) appeared to be resident (TW *et al.*) at Paradise I. off NP, where the species was purported to be a passage migrant 20 years ago (Brudenell-Bruce 1975). Smaller numbers were noted (TW *et al.*) at Casuarina Pt., Great Abaco, Ba. Twelve White-cheekeds were noted April 26 at Town Salina, Grand Turk (KS). A breeding ♀ Ruddy Duck with young was noted at Paradise I., Ba March 13 (TW *et al.*). An extraordinary number of Masked Ducks (11 females) were seen April 25 (AC *et al.*) at a small upland, freshwater pond near Desbarra, St. Lucia, on what is normally the dry n.e. side of the island. Single Peregrines were seen at Anguilla March 4 (VI *et al.*), St.

Eustatus March 5 (VI), and Great Abaco, Ba March 15 (TW *et al.*).

Two Snowy Plovers were noted at Town Salina, Grand Turk April 29; and six Stilt Sandpipers were noted April 26–29 (KS) near a hotel pond on Grand Turk. Willets seen during the week of April 26–29 there (KS) may represent breeding birds.

Ring-billed Gulls were apparently common April 26–May 2 when Struthers noted several at a hotel pond, along the beach, and at Town Salina, Grand Turk. Least and, occasionally, Roseate terns (3) were noted April 28–May 1 resting on rocks by a hotel pond on Grand Turk; nesting is unconfirmed for either species in the Turks and Caicos. Gull-billed Terns (30), a species of concern in the West Indies (RLN), were also noted at the same hotel pond May 1 (KS). Cayenne Terns nested at Nicholas Bay, Aruba, in record high numbers (3550–4000 pairs) (RvH).

Van Halewyn reports that tern wardens at Aruba (12°32'N, 69°57'W) have documented an average 17 breeding pairs of Black Noddy since 1992, only a few years after they were noted in congener Brown Noddy colony at Sombrero Island (18°36'N, 63°25'W) in 1988 (Norton, 1989).

Doves to Orioles

An Eared Dove was noted at Castries, St. Lucia (AC *et al.*) April 25, representing one of the most northerly records there (ARK). The Region's Endangered parrots have had mixed success in recent years as a result of hurricanes, and despite national pride, habitat protection, and dedicated field work. Eight Red-necked and two Imperial parrots were seen at the Syndicate, Dominica March 8 (VI *et al.*).



Twelve Cuban Parrots were noted at Abaco (TW *et al.*) April 14, while 14 St. Lucia Parrots were noted April 24 at Quillese Forest, St. Lucia (AC *et al.*), where the population has rebounded to about 300 birds, close to the forest's carrying capacity (*fide* PB). The Chartiers (*et al.*) were extremely fortunate to see a single Puerto Rican Parrot April 29 at the hurricane-destroyed Caribbean National Forest restaurant near El Yunque. The population may be less than 20 (AC) and flirting with extinction.

An unusual spring record of Yellow-billed Cuckoo seen at Grand Turks April 28 (KS) summons thoughts of breeding in these islands. Two distinct populations of Lesser Antillean Pewee occur in the Region (on Puerto Rico and Lesser Antilles), and they are the subject of current research on vocalizations (GR). Both populations were seen in April (AC *et al.*); one at Ravine la Chaloup, St. Lucia Apr. 23 and at Maricao Forest, PR Apr. 27th. During a tour of the dry e. slope of St. Lucia, where several of the island's (and Region's) rare and unusual birds were found, Chartier *et al.* did not find St. Lucia's unique Antillean House Wren, perhaps last reported from Louvet in 1989 (RLN).

SA Two White-breasted Thrashers were observed (AC *et al.*) at Ravine la Chaloup, home to the world's largest population (12 pairs in 1992) of this critically threatened bird. The St. Lucia habitat from Grand Anse to Louvet is about 50 sq. km, while Martinique's Presqu'île de la Caravelle Natural Res., the only other site where the bird is found, is about 517 hectares. Martinique's population is between 15–40 pairs. Recent comparisons of all populations on St. Lucia (46 pairs in 1992, *fide* LJ) suggest a population decline of about 4.1% annually (IUCN, 1992). The dry lowland forest of e. St. Lucia, where several ravines drain toward the Atlantic, is also home to other endemics: St. Lucia Nightjar, St. Lucia Oriole, St. Lucia Black Finch, St. Lucia House-Wren, and Gray Trembler. Legal protection of habitats is in place, but enforcement and education lag behind.

Both Brown and Gray tremblers may be found on St. Lucia. The latter was noted April 23 (AC *et al.*) in the threatened riparian habitat of Ravine la Chaloup.

White *et al.* reported 21 species of warblers from the n. Bahamas Mar. 13–22, including 5 resident species. Blue-winged Warblers, seldomly reported from the Bahamas, were seen on Abaco Mar. 15, NP March 19, and Grand Bahama Mar. 22. Visitors to Dominica's Cabrits pen. were greeted by a single

Plumbeous Warbler (endemic) Mar. 8 (VI *et al.*). A rarely recorded ♀ Summer Tanager was noted (TW *et al.*) at Grand Bahama Mar. 22. The Chartiers reported difficulty in finding the endemic St. Lucia Oriole, which the late Gabriel Charles predicted would decline from its once common status.

Addendum

C. Levy of Jamaica wrote: "Three different groups [this year] sighted a Spotted Rail in the Black R. morass" of s.w. Jamaica. However, these sightings do not indicate the rail is resi-

dent in Jamaica as previously documented, she added.

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