

west indies region

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El Niño and La Niña, unlike Yin and Yang, are essential forces that describe atmospheric and earthly disharmony. With the waning of a very strong 1997–1998 El Niño in late spring, La Niña followed, quickly expressing a robust cooling trend in the eastern Pacific. As a result, the Atlantic hurricane season launched in June was expected to be slightly above-average in named storms and impacts (Gray 1998). Cyclonic action across the inter-tropical convergence zone bears down on the Lesser Antilles at about 10° to 15°N latitude. Many of the early depressions didn't acquire namesake status, but nonetheless influenced pelagic systems and fauna. The first named storm, Alex, troubled only shipping lanes from July 27 through the end of the month. For a review of environmental effects on nesting seabirds of the Antilles, see Morris and Chardine (*Auk*, Vol. 112, April 1995) and papers cited therein. A possible early fallout from disharmony in the southern Atlantic was a bird not recorded in the northern Caribbean for more than 30 years (Bond 1956).

A report from the northeastern Caribbean (Lasley and Johnson) highlighted the apparent ease of encounter and remarkable concentration of Puerto Rican endemics found in the southwest corner of the island. With the exception of Puerto Rican Parrot, all of the endemics were found in a matter of days. This attests to the will for protecting a diverse avifauna on an island with major resource demands.

In the Bahamas at Great Abaco and surrounding cays, Bracey reports native land birds, including West Indian Woodpecker, Bahama Swallow, Yellow, Olive-capped, and Pine warblers, and Bahamas Yellowthroats, are doing well. An expedition on the *HMBS Port Nelson* made possible surveys of remote Bahama islands, Cay Santo Domingo, Cay Verde, and Cay Lobos off Cuba and Big Green Cay in the Tongue of the Ocean by White, Dean, and Carey. Big Green Cay, situated at the edge of deep water and surrounded by larger islands with more heterogeneous bird fauna, is a laboratory of species turnover and island biogeographic forces at work.

Abbreviations: BA (Bahamas); PR (Puerto Rico).

TUBENOSES THROUGH TERMS

A report of a **Black-browed Albatross** on Christmas Day 1997 off Conception I., BA (RE), seemed a bit too odd to be taken seriously, although the location is not far from deep water, until an astounding 2nd report June 9 (SB-C) of an albatross off Exuma, BA, was circulated (CW, TW). It was apparently the same species and possibly the same bird for only the 2nd, or 3rd, time in 3 decades! The first report of Black-browed Albatross in the W. Indies came from Martinique in 1956. Yellow-nosed Albatross is the other possible vagrant in the tropical w. North Atlantic, but their records (three) around Florida, for example, from May to July suggest a distribution and occurrence more frequent than Black-browed (one) in September (Stevenson and Anderson 1996). Audubon's Shearwaters were seen in large numbers (200–250) June 23 as the *HMBS Port Nelson* sailed through Blossom Channel into Tongue of the Ocean, BA (TW et al.), a deep water intrusion into the Great Bahama Bank. Lesser numbers of shearwaters and Sooty Terns were seen as the vessel sailed SE toward Big Green Cay June 23. At Saba, Netherlands Antilles, Lasley reports that there are more than 750 Red-billed Tropicbirds nesting. At White Cay, San Salvador, BA, William K. Hayes found 2 pairs of Red-footed Booby nesting and a pair of Masked Booby displaying, and about 700 Brown Boobies, mostly juveniles, all June 12. Brown Boobies, all immature, were seen at Cay Santo Domingo June 22 (TW et al.). White reported that the cay is subject to overwash and is not likely to be an annual seabird nesting site. At Cay Verde June 22, White counted 150–200 nests of Brown Booby, with many unoccupied scrapes accounting for the fledged boobies circling overhead. A Neotropic Cormorant was noted at New Providence, BA, June 16 (AB, TW). Magnificent Frigatebird chicks numbered 75 at the elevated s. end of Cay Verde.

A Great Blue Heron at New Providence June 16 (AB, TW) was very early as a migrant or a local breeder. A Reddish Egret and a Green Heron were seen at Big Green Cay June 23. Two White Ibis were noted at Harrold Pond, New Providence (AB, TW), June 16. It would be useful to survey wader nesting colonies on New Providence to see



if this species is breeding. A pair of White-cheeked Pintails was seen at New Providence June 16 (AB, TW).

Black-necked Stilts numbered 20 at New Providence June 16 (AB, TW). Shorebirds seen at Big Green Cay June 23 (TW et al.) included Black-necked Stilt and over-summering Black-bellied Plovers. On St. John, US Virgin Islands, Lasley and Johnson found two Least Sandpipers in mid-July, a very unusual time of year for this species; and a Short-billed Dowitcher was noted on St. Thomas July 11. Three summering Ruddy Turnstones were noted at Cay Verde June 22 (TW et al.).

Nesting larids at Cay Verde June 22 included 35 pairs of Laughing Gulls. Laughing Gulls were also noted at Big Green Cay June 23, as was a Royal Tern. Also June 23 at Cay Lobos, Sandwich Tern nests numbered 95, Roseate Tern nests numbered 20, and Least Tern nests numbered 29. Least Terns were also noted at Big Green Cay June 23. The Roseate Tern colony at Salt Cay off New Providence may be "abandoned after depredations by rats last year," according to White. Bracey reports that Roseate Terns have good success breeding on rocks in Abaco Sound, and Least Terns fare as well on beaches of uninhabited cays. A visit to Cay Verde June 22 included 50 Bridled Tern nests, 30 Sooty Tern nests, and 300–350 Brown Noddy nests. Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies were in attendance at Cay Lobos, but not found nesting. Bridled Terns were found nesting (8–10 pairs with chicks) on Don't Rock, Abaco, in late July (WB). A 3-hour sailboat trip around St. Thomas July 10 afforded Lasley and Johnson looks at Brown Boobies (100), Magnificent Frigatebirds (30), breeding Sandwich, Royal and Bridled terns, and Brown Noddies.

PIGEONS THROUGH COWBIRDS

Two Puerto Rican Plain Pigeons, an endangered endemic, were noted at Cidra, PR, July 9 (GL, CJ). White-crowned Pigeons were abundant at Big Green Cay June 23 where Dean counted 1200 returning to the cay at sundown. Still more were coming when it was too dark to count (*vide* TW). White-winged Doves numbered 13 at Cay Lobos June 23, but nesting was unconfirmed. From Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Lasley and Johnson managed to get good looks at Key West Quail-Dove at Bosque de Susua July 8, Ruddy Quail-Dove at Paguera July 9, and Bridled Quail-Dove at Cinnamon Bay, St. John, July 11. An unexpected treat and course in cuckoo vocalizations presented itself to Lasley and Johnson at Guanica Forest where Yellow-billed, Mangrove, and Puerto Rican Lizard cuckoos called the morning of July 8.

A flock of about 25 Black Swifts were noted flying around a sinkhole (GL, CJ) July 8 at Cueva Clara, Parque Nacional de Cavernas, Lares, PR. The previously reported Fish Crow remained at W. End, Grand Bahama, where it was seen July 21 (RO). Among the landbirds noted at Saba (GL) along the Mt. Scenery trail were Lesser Antillean specialties: Brown Trembler, Scaly-breasted Thrasher, and Purple-throated Carib July 5. Landbirds at Big Green Cay June 23 include a Mangrove Cuckoo, Antillean Nighthawk, Bahama Mockingbird, Thick-billed Vireo, Bananaquit, and Black-faced Grassquit. On July 8 along the entrance drive to Guanica Forest, Lasley and Johnson heard Puerto Rican Nightjar calling in the pre-dawn hour. At Paguera, PR, they found six-eight Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds, an endangered endemic, gathering nesting material on the grounds of the Parador Villa Paguera July 7. A Shiny Cowbird found at the Treasure Cay dump, Abaco, July 24 (WB) is not good news for indigenous species such as the Black-cowled Oriole, if indeed it is still present as a breeder there.

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1998 INDEX

Field Notes, Volume 52

The main part of this index covers those bird records that were considered significant enough to be mentioned in bold-face type in the Regional Reports: outstanding rarities, first nesting records, extreme out-of-season occurrences, and so on. Each entry after the species name in the index begins with the state or province (two-letter postal codes in the U.S., two- or three-letter standard abbreviations in Canada). This is followed by the number of the issue (1: with Fall 1997 reports; 2: with Winter 1997-1998 reports; 3: with Spring 1998 reports; 4: the current issue, with Summer 1998 reports. Finally, the entry gives the page number for the boldfaced mention of the species.

Following the main index is a listing of the Special Attention ("SA") essays in the Regional Reports, which includes entries for additional boldfaced birds as well as details of unusual avian phenomena or items of particular interest.

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