

west indies region



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Reports from the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Jamaica) are highlighted by rare occurrences of resident species and neotropical migrants. The northern Bahamas are represented by complete reports from Abaco and Grand Bahama. Bermuda and Barbados brace the Region as migrant trap “bookends,” illustrating the incredible potential for transatlantic invaders (i.e., Cattle Egret in the 1950s and Little Egret and Western Reef-Heron in the 1980s) and vagrants from any direction.

Gale force winds and cool temperatures may have provided avian fallout at Bermuda, and the parade of summer and fall storms across the Atlantic may have influenced the extraordinary records (e.g., ardeids) from Barbados that provided the island with five new records, three probably also new to the Region. Many observations refer to European species and races, testifying to the influence of weather and location on this birding outpost, one of the most important in the hemisphere. Hurricane *Georges*' strong westerly winds were given credit for providing an inter-island record (MF et al.) and a model explaining colonization of Barbados over the millennia. According to Mark Oberle, the hurricane left Puerto Rico's Boqueron Refuge mangroves in poor condition. He also related that the Puerto Rican Euphonia and resident Lesser Antillean Pewee are very hard to find, but the Elfín Woods Warbler was somewhat protected at Maricao State Forest.

Bracey reports that racoons were introduced to North Abaco with potentially devastating results for all ground-breeding fauna, as well as tree nesters. He also reports that fires are being set in pine forests, includ-

ing those in the national forest and park, by wild pig hunters. While controlled fire may have some benefit in pinelands, both pigs and racoons need to be eliminated since their total biomass is equivalent to lost endemic, and possibly threatened, fauna.

Abbreviations: Ab (*Abaco, Bahamas*); PR (*Puerto Rico*).

SHEARWATERS THROUGH TERMS

Manx Shearwaters migrated e. in large numbers off Warwick Long Bay, Bermuda, Feb. 14 (AD). Interestingly, by this date Audubon's Shearwaters are already laying eggs in the e. Caribbean. Two Cory's Shearwaters were also seen Feb. 14 (AD), the earliest recorded for Bermuda. The first-ever ad. N. Gannet was present Feb. 13 through the end of the month at Castle Harbour, Bermuda (DBW). Three Brown Pelicans, including a juvenile, were seen at W. End, Grand Bahama, Feb. 15–17 (BH, DL, EC), further suggesting breeding or recruitment somewhere in the n. Bahamas; pelicans formerly nested at Bimini I.; in Florida, nesting at the latitude of the Bahamas occurs in fall, late winter, and spring. Alert observers are watching for breeding among Great Blue Herons in Bermuda, whence suspected nesting behavior was observed. A juv. dark-morph W. Reef-Heron appeared at Coles, St. Philip, Barbados, Feb. 4, and a juv. **Purple Heron**—initially noted at Graeme Hall Swamp, Barbados, during fall—wintered there, providing the first record for the Region and only the 2nd for the W. Hemisphere (MF, EM et al.). Two **Gray Herons** reportedly wintered at Graeme Hall Swamp (MF, EM). Greater Flamingos (30+) have been reintroduced to S. Abaco (EB) where they appear to be established and free-flying. A flamingo was seen at Cabo Rojo, PR, Feb. 24 (DH, AC, *fide* MO), and Roseate Spoonbills were also reported at the Boqueron Refuge, PR, during early winter (MO). Among a large group of ducks at a pond near “Different of Abaco” Jan. 17, White-cheeked Pintails numbered 35 and Ring-necked Ducks 210 (SM et al.). A female Ring-necked Duck wintered at Barbados as did a male **Common (Green-winged) Teal** through February for the 2nd winter (MF).

Rarely reported, a Yellow-breasted Crake was seen at water level on the Lower Black R. Morass, Jamaica, Feb. 20 (NB), and a **Spotted Rail**, apparently extirpated as a resident, was heard calling at Caymanas Ponds west of Kingston in January (*fide* NB) for perhaps only 2nd time this decade. A Virginia Rail was seen Jan. 17 at Sandy Point, Ab (SM et al.), the first report from that island.

On Dec. 19, Placier found a Purple Gallinule at the San Andros airport, Andros, Bahamas. An Am. Golden-Plover was among a group of Black-bellied Plovers at Bermuda's airport. Two Piping Plovers were seen daily (BP) near Fofar Field Station, Andros, Dec. 13–18, and a single was noted at Sandy Pt., Ab, Jan. 17 (SM et al.). Piping Plover was also seen frequently during the period at Grape Bay or Ariel Sands, Bermuda (AD). From a site near Las Salinas, Bahai Las Calderas, Dominican Republic, Placier (and m.ob.) observed two Dunlins Dec. 28. A first-winter **Wood Sandpiper**, noted initially at Congo Rd., St. Philip, in late November, remained until Dec. 14 at Graeme Hall Swamp (MF), another remarkable transatlantic occurrence. A Ruff and two Reeves wintered on Barbados through at least Feb. 21 (MF, EM). A freshly dead Am. Woodcock found Dec. 2 at Paget, Bermuda (AD), provided one of the rarest of shorebird occurrences for that location.

A **Little Gull**, probably of transatlantic origin, was last noted Dec. 27 (EM, MF, MG) at Barbados and may represent the first Regional record (see FN 49(2):203, 1995). An imm. Black-headed Gull was carefully noted and described (BrM) Jan. 20–21 at Cable Beach, New Providence, Bahamas, representing the first record for New Providence and 3rd for the Bahamas. A Bonaparte's Gull noted Jan. 18 at Treasure Cay, Ab (SM, SP, CB), provided one of few reports from this island. Seven Lesser Black-backed Gulls at W. End, Bermuda, Feb. 5 (PW) provided a new high count there and indicated a large presence throughout the n. part of the Region; three—including an adult, a subadult, and first-year bird—were recorded from Marsh Harbour, Ab, Jan. 21 (SM et al.) while another was located at W. End, Grand Bahama, Feb. 15 (BH et al.). Two Glaucous Gulls were confirmed Feb. 15 at Bermuda,

an unusual occurrence and number. A Great Black-backed Gull noted Dec. 13 represented only the 6th record for Barbados (MF). A Black-legged Kittiwake was present at Great Sound, Bermuda, Jan. 2-5 (EA). Royal Terns were not recorded this winter and have not wintered on Barbados since 1992 (MF). Does this mean Regionally breeding birds are declining?

PIGEONS THROUGH SPARROWS

Plain Pigeon, a Regionally endangered species, was seen in flocks at Good Hope Plantation, Trelawny, Jamaica, in January (NB). Bahamian race (Rose-throated) Cuban Parrots numbered at least 20 at Sandy Pt National Forest Jan. 17 (SM et al.). Maybank did not locate any of Cuba's psitticines during 2 weeks of searching. Two owls endemic to Cuba, Bare-legged Owl and Cuban Pygmy-Owl, were found Dec. 29 (RSS, BM) at El Salton, Sierra Maestra Mts, and Dec. 28 at Playa Guardalavaca, w. of Havana, respectively (BM). A female **Red-bellied Woodpecker** possibly from the Florida Keys (*M. carolinensis perplexus*) was found at West End, Grand Bahama, Feb. 15 (DL, ph BH), providing a first record for the Bahamas and for the West Indies. One of the more important Cuban observations was provided by two **Giant Kingbirds** near Pinare de Mayari, Sierra de Nipe, Dec. 23 (BM), the first time this species has been reported in *AB/FN/NAB*; Giant Kingbird was extirpated from its pine forest habitat in the Bahamas, formerly its only other location in the West Indies, and is now a single-island endemic worthy of threatened or endangered status.

Bahama Swallows returned to Abaco Feb 16 (EB). A Red-eyed Vireo was found at Paget Sound, Bermuda, on the unusual date of Dec. 31 (PW). Migrant warblers numbered 19 species for Cuba, 20 at Abaco, and 25 on Grand Bahama (table). Maybank did not find "Yellow" Palm Warblers on Cuba in January, but Mlodinow found at least two *D. palmarum hypochrysea* at the Marsh Harbour dump sites, Ab, January 18 & 21. At the Marsh Harbour pond area, Ab, Jan 18 Mlodinow recorded a Lincoln's Sparrow, one of few reports from that island. A Lapland Longspur was found at Nonsuch Island, Bermuda, Dec. 2-5 (DBW)

ADDENDA

Received too late to be included in 1998 reports are some truly remarkable records from Barbados (MF, MG, EM). A **Gray Heron**, initially seen Oct. 11 at famous Graeme

Hall Swamp, Christ Church, was then joined by two others. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks apparently staged multiple invasions in February (Graeme Hall) and March (Greenland) 1998. A **Southern Lapwing** was captured at Fosters, St. Lucy, July 28, providing the first verifiable record from the Region. A lapwing reported from Tortola, British Virgin Is., December 26, 1996 could not be definitely ascribed to the Northern or Southern race either (FN 51(2):670, 698). A Collared Plover was found at Chancery Lane July 25 (MG), the first record in 3 years. A **Wood Sandpiper** was found at Bright Hall, St. Lucy, Apr. 25. A Wilson's Phalarope was an unexpected find at Coles, St. Philip, June 24. A Parasitic Jaeger from land Mar. 5 (T&JD) was a rarity. A House Wren, presumably of the Antillean race, was heard and seen at Fontebelle, St. Michael, Sept. 22, the day following passage of hurricane *Georges*, and provided a plausible mechanism for Windward Is. species to colonize Barbados 160 km to the east. A Canada Warbler trapped at Harrison Pt., St. Lucy, Oct. 31 (MF, EM) provided the first record from Barbados and possibly the 3rd from the Lesser Antilles.

A report from New Providence and the Exumas for Mar. 2-6 (AK) was highlighted by Audubon's Shearwaters nesting at Allan Cay, Exumas, 10 Ring-billed and 10 Herring gulls, as well as a singleton of the latter species from the Nassua area. A Great Black-backed Gull furnished only the 5th record for the Bahamas and first from New Providence. A Peregrine was seen harassing an Osprey at Wardewick Wells, Exumas. Migrant warblers in the Exumas during the first week of March included Yellow-rumped (one), Prairie (five), Palm (15), Black-and-white (one), Am. Redstart (four), Worm-eating (two), Ovenbird (two), and N. Waterthrush (two).

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Winter High Counts for Resident (boldface) and Migrant Wood Warblers in the Northern Bahamas and Cuba December 1998 to February 1999

Species	Grand Bahamas*	Abaco†	Cuba‡
Blue-winged	—	1	—
Orange-crowned	1	—	—
Nashville	—	1	—
N. Parula	2	6	4
Yellow (migrant)	—	1	4
"Cuban" Yellow	—	6	—
Magnolia	1	3	4
Cape May	1	10	2
Black-throated Blue	1	2	8
Yellow-rumped ("Myrtle")	25	75	1
Black-throated Green	2	1	—
Yellow-throated (migrant)	2	8	—
"Bahama" Yellow-throated	—	6	—
Olive-capped	1	15	10
Pine	1	30	—
Prairie	3	15	10
Palm	20	250	15
"Yellow" Palm	—	2	—
Blackpoll	—	1	—
Black-and-white	3	8	3
Am. Redstart	6	8	6
Worm-eating	1	2	1
Swainson's	1	—	1
Ovenbird	12	6	1
N. Waterthrush	5	20	2
Louisiana Waterthrush	—	—	2
Com. Yellowthroat	10	20	1
Bahama Yellowthroat	2	20	—
Oriente	—	—	1
Total Species	20	25	19

*West End, Grand Bahama, and environs, February 14-20, 1999.
†Marsh Harbour, Abaco, and environs, January 16-21, 1999.
‡Guadalavaca (nw) and Santiago de Cuba (se), Cuba, December 21, 1998-January 3, 1999.

Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 138.