

# West Indies



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The summer season in the West Indies is the seam between late spring and early fall. Before the 60 days of this season, most resident landbirds have already begun nesting, even before the departure of Neotropical migrants. It is usually too hot and often dry for most species to breed after late spring. Although landbird nesting may be recorded through Jun, it is usually supported by late spring rains that fuel fruit, flower, and insect production into the summer months. Resident landbirds may have two breeding attempts, but their peaks are not usually in June and July. By July, songbirds have shifted from constant to only regular singing; and a few (Northern Mockingbird, Thick-billed Vireo, Bananaquit, and Black-faced Grassquit) in the Bahamas reduce vocalizations to infrequent song (Brudenell-Bruce 1975). In the Lesser Antilles, resident landbirds may breed into early July when conditions are favorable (Keith 1997).

Resident shorebirds (several plovers, Black-necked Stilts, and Willets) may nest through this period, but most waders (herons and

egrets) and seabirds began laying by mid-February (shearwaters) to late May and early June (terns), leaving July as a mop-up month when second attempts or late learners may be underway before the early fall fronts and tropical storms arrive. For migrant seabirds, particularly young of the year, this is not a good time to be unprepared. This also the season when transient birders also have left the islands, making data on birdlife more difficult to obtain.

## SHEARWATERS THROUGH TERNS

During a 23 Jun pelagic trip out of Bermuda, 22 Greater, one Manx, and 4 Cory's Shearwaters were counted (DBW); the Manx represented the latest seasonal record for this species here.

A Wilson's Storm-Petrel was noted at Guadeloupe 4 Jun (MF), one of the few reports during this season for the Region. There was also an unidentified shearwater noted during a seawatch here. An ad. Brown Pelican in definitive alternate plumage noted at No Name Cay

off Abaco, Bahamas on 24 Jun may be a local breeder (EB, BB). B.N.T. members found 50 Neotropical Cormorants at Great Inagua, where they breed, on 30 Jun–1 Jul. A Limpkin and a Least Bittern were noted at Paradise Is., New Providence, Bahamas 12 Jun (CW).

At Trou Caiman, a shallow lake ne. of Port-au-Prince, Haïti, JRC counted upwards of 200 Greater Flamingos 2 Jun. This number swelled to nearly 400 on 28 Jul. At Great Inagua, the B.N.T. counted about 700 Greater Flamingos 30 Jun. A record of Ring-necked Duck at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 8 Jun was very unusual (AD), as any anatid in summer other than resident Mallard is a rarity there. A Purple Gallinule was found at New Providence, Bahamas (CW) 12 Jun, one of the few summer records for this location.

A lingering Black-bellied Plover was heard at Trou Caiman, Haïti on 2 Jun (JRC), where nesting Killdeer and a pair of Snowy Plover were also found. Eleven Black-bellied Plovers were noted at the mudflats at Gonaives, Haïti 23 Jun (JRC, IP, KK). Among the 20+ Wilson's Plovers at Gonaives, Haïti 23 Jun was a downy chick (JRC, IP, KK). Among the nonbreeding contingent of Nearctic charadriids at Gonaives, Haïti were 14 Semipalmated Plovers and 6 Ruddy Turnstones (JRC, IP, KK). A Greater Yellowlegs noted at Trou Caiman (JRC) 2 Jun was joined by 30 Lesser Yellowlegs 28 Jul, indicating an early fall arrival. Twelve Willets were noted at Gonaives 23 Jun and were no doubt local breeders. On 30 Jun–1 Jul, 3 Spotted Sandpipers, 5 Ruddy Turnstones, a Short-billed Dowitcher, 2 early Least Sandpipers, and a very early Common Snipe were noted by B.N.T. members at Great Inagua (LG, HN et al). There were one Stilt and 2 Pectoral Sandpipers at Trou Caiman on 28 Jul, providing early records for these species from w. Hispaniola. Twenty Least Sandpipers there were within three days of their early date (Wetmore and Swales 1931). A moribund Least Sandpiper found at Saba, Netherlands Antilles 26 Jul (MW-M, GL) provided only the 2nd record for that location and is consistent with other arrival dates from Haïti to the Bahamas.

A Solitary Sandpiper seen on 5 Jul at North

**SA** The vulnerability of seabird colonies was unfortunately demonstrated this summer at the Audubon's Shearwater colony on Allen's Cay, Exumas, Bahamas. In Jun, researchers studying the endangered Allen's Cay Rock Iguana (*Cyclura cyclura inornata*) found over 100 desiccated carcasses of ad. shearwaters with their breasts eaten out and heads missing (JI). There was no indication of human predation (unlike the shearwater kill on Cay Sal Bank in 1999; *N. A. B.* 53: 333). Several carcasses have been saved and will be examined to determine the cause of death. Possible causes include the resident Ospreys, a wintering Peregrine, the iguanas, and death from pollution or red tide, with scavenging by iguanas and land crabs. Discussions about this incident also brought to light at least one case of an iguana killing and eating a shearwater chick (BD & SY).

Pond, Bermuda was the earliest report of this species by seven days (DW). On 31 Jul at Cooper's I., Bermuda a Red Knot was recorded, one of the few summer period reports. Another unusual report for Bermuda was a Semipalmated Sandpiper on 8 Jun at Spittal Pond (DBW). A **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** seen on 29 Jul at North Pond, Bermuda is the 4th island record and the first reported there since 1979 (EA). An **American Woodcock** seen 1 Jun at Dolly's Bay, Bermuda represents the first summer report of this species on the archipelago. A rare 14 Jun report of South Polar Skua off Cooper's Pt., Bermuda was logged by PW. The Braceys found 80 Roseate Terns, 50 Brown Noddies, and 4 Bridled Terns nesting at Whale Cay, off Abaco, Bahamas 24 Jun. At Crab Rock, Abaco, the Braceys found an additional 50 Roseate Terns 24 Jun. Among the breeding Roseates were 2 "*portlandica*"-plumaged (non-breeding) birds. At Peterson Cay, Grand Bahama, KNT reported 100–150 Bridled Terns, the first report of breeding Bridleds in the area of Grand Bahama (TW). There were 2 Caspian Terns accompanied by a Royal Tern at Trou Caiman, Haiti 2 Jun, a very unusual early summer record (JRC). Two Sandwich and 2 Least Terns were found at Gonaives, Haiti 23 Jun (JRC, IP, KK); breeding probably occurred nearby. A Sooty Tern was seen off Nonsuch I. (DBW, JM) on 16 & 27–29 Jul, for one of the few reports in Jul.

### PIGEONS THROUGH GRASSQUIT

At Finley Cay, off Eleuthera, Bahamas, the B.N.T. banded 159 squab White-crowned Pigeons in Jun, a large number of young of the year to be banded this early (*fide* TW). Over 30 Cuban (Bahamian form) Parrots were noted by the B.N.T. at Great Inagua on 30 Jun–1 July

**SA** On 2 Jun, a man was caught at Nassau Airport with 3 young Cuban Parrots (Cuban form) and 19 Yellow-faced Grassquits in his possession. The three-week-old parrots were from Cuba and on their way to the United States, having passed through U.S. Immigration, Customs, and Bahamian security. A traveler noticed the man in the bathroom transferring the grassquits, which were stored in pill vials; the smuggler was fined \$1000. The birds were confiscated and turned over to the Ardastra Conservation Center in Nassau, where they were doing well. The parrots may be returned to Cuba, but it is not known if the authorities there will receive them.

(LG, HN et al.).

Attendees at the Society for Caribbean Ornithology (S.C.O.) meeting 15–22 Jul at Topes de Collante, Cuba found both Stygian and Cuban Pygmy-Owl in close proximity to the meeting site. Also at the meeting, attendees found a Black-and-white Warbler 17 Jul (AD), the earliest date recorded by 12 days (*fide* OG). Louisiana Waterthrushes and a Black-throated Blue Warbler were also found at Topes de Collante 19 Jul; the previous early date here for the latter species is 1 Sep (AD). Dobson wondered whether the Black-throated Blue had possibly oversummered in the mountainous area. A Yellow Warbler 26 Jul at Nonsuch I., Bermuda was the first returning parulid reported during the "fall" migration. Regrettably, none of the participants of the S.C.O. meeting in Cuba saw a Cuban Grassquit during field trips. This species is a popular cage-bird in Cuba, and the pet trade has made it scarce in the wild.

### ADDENDUM

At Middle Caicos, Turks and Caicos Is, researchers for the Darwin Initiative Project found "several" Kirtland's Warblers in the dry woodlands, as reported in the May newsletter of the Turks and Caicos National Trust (tc.nat-trust@tcipay.tc).

**Contribuors (subregional editors in bold-face):** Eric Amos, Bahamas National Trust (B.N.T.), Betsy and Elwood Bracey, **J. R. Crouse, Andrew Dobson**, Bruce Dunham, **Martin Frost**, Lynn Gape, Erika Gates, Orlando Garrido, John Iverson, Kayak Nature Tours, Ken Kratzer, Greg Lashley, Jeremy Madeiros, Leila Madeiros, Henry Nixon, Isaac Pady, David Wallace, Mandy Walsh-McGehee, Carolyn Wardle, Paul Watson, **Tony White**, David B. Wingate, Sheila Young.



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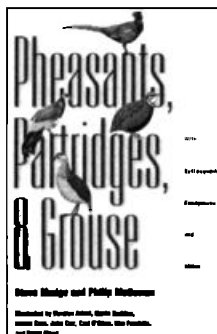
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