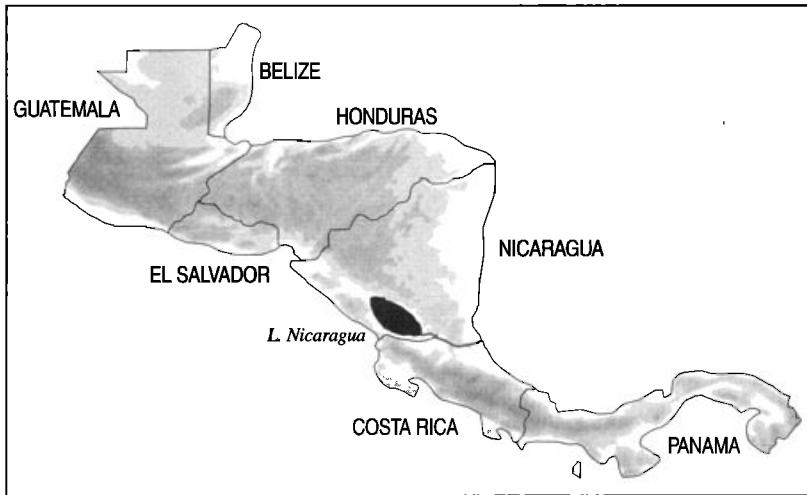


Central America



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The timing of migration, reflected in the first and last records of migrant species each season, has been poorly documented in most of Central America in the past. Now, a few dedicated birders are keeping close track of the arrival and departure of these migrants. Jim and Dorothy Beveridge, residents of Caye Caulker, Belize, are to be commended for keeping accurate daily notes on the birds they see on their morning walks, which follow essentially the same route every day. In two years, they have seldom missed a morning afield, and now have an impressive record of landbird migration at this key migrant stopover locality.

While birding in Panama, Costa Rica, and Belize has become a popular pastime for both tourists and residents, the silence from Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala is downright deafening. And El Salvador would be a complete void without the dedicated work of Oliver Komar. Many birders visit Guatemala every year. Surely, some of them subscribe to this journal. Surely, they see at least a few birds worthy of mention in this column. Guatemala is the gateway to Central America with one of the richest avifaunas in the Region. Honduras and Nicaragua form the link between northern and southern Central America, but unfortunately receive few birders each year and have even fewer (if any?) resident field ornithologists. This is an appeal. Is anyone out there?

Abbreviations: C.C.C.-U.S.F.S. (Caribbean Conservation Corporation's and U.S. Forest Service Redwood Sciences Laboratory's Tortuguero Banding Station); Crooked Tree (Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize); M.P.R. (Mountain Pine Ridge, Belize); Monteverde (Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, Costa Rica); S.F. (shrimp farm).

FRIGATEBIRDS THROUGH FALCONS

The American White Pelican is now a regular winter visitor in n. C.A., but a report of 115 at Laguna El Jocotal, Dept. San Miguel 28 Nov (NH) was an unusually large concentration for El Salvador. An ad. male Magnificent Frigatebird at Mile 6, Mollejon Road, Cayo Dist., Belize 14 Aug (JG) was well inland near the Guatemala border. Two Reddish Egrets at the shrimp ponds in Chomes, Costa Rica 12 Nov (RH et al.) were noteworthy. A pair of **Cinnamon Teal** at Laguna El Jocotal, Dept. San Miguel 28 Nov (NH) was only the 2nd El Salvador record. A Ring-necked Duck in juv. plumage was at Punta Gorda 28 Nov (LJ). This species is rare in Belize away from Crooked Tree. Imm. and/or female Snail Kites has been reported in El Salvador since 1996, but the presence of an ad. pair at Laguna El Jocotal, Dept. San Miguel 28 Nov (NH) suggests that the species may be establishing itself as a breeding resident.

A Swallow-tailed Kite at Caye Caulker 10 Sep (J&DB) represented one of only a few records for the Belize cayes. Three subad. Mississippi Kites were seen with migrating Hook-billed Kites over Punta Gorda 21 Oct (LJ, LZ). Five Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen

SA For the second year in a row and the third year out of four, the fall season was marked by a powerful hurricane that struck Belize in the month of October. In 1998 it was *Mitch*; last year it was *Keith*; this year it was *Iris*. Considered by old-timers to be the most destructive hurricane ever to hit Belize—more powerful than *Hattie* in 1961—*Iris* was a compact storm that, at one point, had three eyes. With sustained winds of 145 mph and gusts up to 185 mph, it struck southern Belize on the evening of 8 October with the force of a tornado swarm and left a 48-km-wide path of devastation across the country from the cayes to the Guatemalan border. A wide swath of primary rainforest was literally blown away in less than an hour. On 9 October, the sun rose on a desolate landscape littered with the trunks of thousands of trees, some lying neatly in rows, others not too far away lying in disarray like a giant pile of pick-up sticks. All of the foliage and smaller limbs from the ground to the canopy was gone. Reports soon came in of motmots, toucans, Squirrel Cuckoos, and other forest birds sitting on tree stumps beside the highway. People reported hundreds of dead birds in their villages, and seeing normally elusive Crested Guans and Great Curassows feeding among domestic flocks of turkeys, chickens, and ducks. Among the eerily out-of-place birds witnessed by Jones when he returned to Belize nine days after the hurricane were impressively large numbers of Keel-billed Toucans moving through the outskirts of Punta Gorda, a bedraggled Collared Araçari missing half its feathers perched on a powerline in the village of Mafredi, Yellow-headed Parrots in Punta Gorda well south of their normal pineland haunts, and a lone White-bellied Emerald, a forest dwelling hummingbird, on a weed stalk in the middle of an expansive ricefield far from the nearest forest remnant.

in s. Toledo Dist. between 18 and 24 Oct (LJ et al.); but 7 Cooper's Hawks seen during the same period (20 Oct-3 Nov) were unexpected, as this species is normally less frequent than Sharp-shinned in Belize. A **Swainson's Hawk** in first-basic plumage was closely studied in flight and perched at close range near Big Falls, Toledo Dist., Belize 30 Nov (LJ, WRM, LZ, RC). Despite numerous unsubstantiated reports of this species in Belize in the past (Jones 2002), this represents the first documented record for the country. A juv. Zone-

SA Costa Rica now has a migratory raptor monitoring station at Kéköldi in the BriBri indigenous reservation near Cahuita at the base of the Talamanca Mts. along the s. Caribbean coast. The project is being run jointly by the Hawk Mt. Sanctuary, the Kéköldi Wak Ka Loneke Indigenous Association, and Anai. In its first year, the station joined the elite sites of Elait in Israel and Vera Cruz in Mexico as the only ones to count more than a million raptors in a season. This fall, 2,979,102 individuals of 15 species were recorded as follows: **Turkey Vulture 1,367,200; Broad-winged Hawk 1,018,666; Swainson's Hawk 374,188; Mississippi Kite 207,915; Peregrine Falcon 2062; Osprey 2051; Swallow-tailed Kite 595; Merlin 43; Plumbeous Kite 22; Zone-tailed Kite 20; Sharp-shinned Hawk 18; Cooper's Hawk 16; Northern Harrier 10; American Kestrel 4; Red-tailed Hawk 2; unidentified migratory raptors 6290** (source: *La Nación*, 9 Dec. 2001).

Belize, at the base of the Yucatán Pen., is a far cry from Costa Rica. That most migrating raptors avoid the Yucatán Pen. is evident in the totals obtained for the four most common Costa Rica species by LJ et al. at a coastal location just outside Punta Gorda in s. Belize between 15 Jul and 15 Nov: migrant Turkey Vulture 0; Broad-winged Hawk 13; Swainson's Hawk 0; Mississippi Kite 3. On the other hand, LJ recorded **1030 Hook-billed Kites** at this site, all between 19 Oct and 15 Nov. This species is proving to be, by more than an order of magnitude, the most common migrant raptor along the s. Belize coast. Without exception, all were moving sw. along the coast. Consider that counts were for only 2-2.5 hours every other day, with virtually no raptors seen in the first hour (the counts are designed to include all diurnal migrants and began shortly after sunrise). Based on these limited observations, LJ estimated that at least 5000 Hook-billed Kites passed over this coastal site in fall 2001.

tailed Hawk was at Punta Gorda 5 Nov (LJ, WRM). An ad. Ornate Hawk-Eagle was at Cerro Azul near Panama City 12 Nov (KK, RK, LS). An ad. Yellow-headed Caracara at Chilamate, 5 km w. of Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí, 25 Nov (RA, FM et al.) represents one of very few records for the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica. It may have reached Chilamate from Cañas on the Pacific slope, where it has been established for a number of years. An

American Kestrel at Caye Caulker 18 Sep (J&DB) represents the earliest fall record for Belize, and an Aplomado Falcon at Punta Gorda 18 Oct (LJ, WRM, LZ) was well s. of its normal pine savanna range in Belize.

NEW WORLD QUAIL THROUGH TERNS

A group of 8 Black-eared Wood-Quail and 2 female Tawny-faced Quail, two rarely seen species in Panama, were at Cerro Azul near Panama City 28 Oct (BA). The Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, generally thought to be resident wherever it occurs, may be seasonal on Caye Caulker. Several individuals frequent J&DB's yard daily between Sep and Apr; however, they have never seen or heard it on the island in the intervening months. The first ones of the season arrived in their yard this year on 17 Sep. A road-killed juv. picked up by LJ at the mouth of Joe Taylor Creek, Punta Gorda on 15 Nov established the southernmost record for this species in Belize. A Sora at Caye Caulker 17 Sep (J&DB) established the earliest fall record for Belize.

The 3rd documented record of **Southern Lapwing** in Costa Rica came 15 Nov when LMC recorded 6 about 10 km e. of Siquirres on the Rio Pacuare. A juv. American Golden-Plover at Chomes 20 Oct (JRZ) was unexpected, as this species is seldom seen anywhere in C.A. in fall. A **Snowy Plover** at Caye Caulker 25 Aug (EM) represented only the 2nd documented record for Belize. More than the normal number of Long-billed Curlews was recorded this fall. In Belize, a flock of 10 was at Caye Caulker 29 Aug (J&DB), after which, one bird stayed until 4 Nov; in Costa Rica, one was present 15 Sep-20 Oct at Chomes (RD, EA); in Panama, one was at Panama Viejo, Panama City 28 Sep (KK, PAS), and another was at Costa del Este, also in Panama City 25 Nov (DM, KW, SH). A Marbled Godwit at Caye Caulker 18 Sep-31 Oct (J&DB, LJ) was the only one recorded in Belize this fall. A juv. Long-billed Dowitcher at Aqua Mar S.F. 29 Aug (LJ, LZ) was the earliest yet recorded in Belize. A group of at least 100 Common Snipe in a ricefield near Big Falls, Toledo Dist. 8 Nov (LJ) was an unusually large number for Belize, with a more typical dozen or so still present at the end of the period. A Wilson's Phalarope at the Parismina R. mouth 19 Sep (DVB) was apparently the first one documented from the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica.

A first summer Ring-billed Gull at Aqua Mar S.F. 18 and 29 Aug (LJ, LZ) was both early and in s. Belize, where it is seldom seen. The event of the season in Panama was the discovery of one subad. and 4 ad. **Kelp Gulls** at Costa del Este on the outskirts of Panama City on 25

Nov (ph., vt., DM, KW, SH). At least 3 were still present into early Dec (m. ob.). These are the first of this species recorded in the Region, though it is known from the Mexican Yucatan. A Royal Tern at Mile 31, Western Hwy 22 Aug (PB) represents the first inland record for Belize, although it has been reported from Lago Petén Itzá in Guatemala. A **White Tern** showed up in EB's yard in Sierpe de Osa (ph NC) on 28 Oct but later died. This represents the first mainland record for Costa Rica (it is abundant on Cocos I. 320 km to the sw.).

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Red-billed Pigeon at Caye Caulker 24 Aug (J&DB) was the first seen on any Belize caye. With expansion of its preferred urban habitat, the Inca Dove has been expanding its range all the way from California to Costa Rica. One in Tortuguera all fall (C.C.C.-U.S.F.S.) may have reached there via a range extension to the se, or it may have been a boat-assisted or escaped cage bird. Determining the origin of birds frequently found in the pet trade will always be problematic. At least 2 (possibly 4) Scarlet Macaws were seen around Cerro Tortuguero in mid-Nov (PG). These are likely wanderers from the Indio-Maiz Reserve in Nicaragua, as they have yet to reestablish a resident population anywhere in Caribbean Costa Rica. Two Yellow-headed Parrots on the outskirts of Punta Gorda 28 Oct and again 7 Nov (both LJ) were unexpected, as this species is normally restricted to the pinelands farther north. They may have been driven s. in search of food by Hurricane *Iris*, which passed just n. of Punta Gorda in early Oct. Fifteen Blue-fronted Parrotlets were at Cerro Azul near Panama City 8 Aug, and a Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo was there 28 Oct (both BA). Both are rarely encountered in Panama.

A tower-killed Whip-poor-will at Punta Gorda 2 Oct (LJ) represents one of the few records from Belize, all of tower-killed or mist-netted birds, and most in Oct. An Oilbird seen in a tree near Metropolitan Nature Park in Panama City was captured by park staff and brought to the park where it was seen by GA and many others. At least 2 individuals had been seen flying about buildings in the same area on previous nights. With at least 10 records from the Panama City area since 1974, there may be an undiscovered nesting cave somewhere in the area. Three Chimney Swifts at Punta Gorda 13 Nov (LJ, WRM) were late. A female White-crested Coquette at Tapanti N.P., Costa Rica 3 Nov (RH et al.) was on the Caribbean slope where few have been reported. An imm. male Ruby-throated Hummingbird near the Braulio Carrillo N P

ranger station 16 Nov (RH et al.), and a female-plumaged bird in Tortuguero town two days later (BF) were on the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica where the species is seldom found.

On 18 Oct, 10 days after Hurricane *Iris*, LJ and WRM counted 70-80 Keel-billed Toucans moving through the trees on the edge of a ball field near Punta Gorda in a two-hour period. On subsequent days progressively fewer were seen. It is expected that these birds had moved into the area in search of food following Hurricane *Iris*. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, rare in Panama, was at Cerro Azul near Panama City 26 Nov (DM, KW, SH).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH PIPITS

An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Punta Gorda 9 Nov (LJ) was late. A Vermilion Flycatcher at Caye Caulker 17 Oct (J&DB) was only the 4th ever recorded from the Belize cayes. Belize's first documented **Western Kingbird** was closely studied 30 Oct near Punta Gorda (LJ). An Eastern Kingbird at Punta Gorda 16 Aug and another there 9 Nov (both LJ) represented the earliest and latest fall records to date for Belize. A Fork-tailed Flycatcher near Guayabos on the Pacific slope of Volcán Miravalles 29 Oct (JRZ) and 2 others at Tortuguero 25 Sep and 11 Oct (C.C.C.-U.S.F.S.) are worthy of mention, as the status of this species (as migrants vs. residents) is still poorly known in much of Costa Rica.

A surprising 3 White-eyed Vireos were banded at Tortuguero this fall: one on 8 Nov (present until 7 Dec) and 2 on 26 Nov (C.C.C.-U.S.F.S.). An early Red-eyed Vireo was at Naranjo de Alajuela, Costa Rica 24 Aug (JRZ), and a late Purple Martin was at Punta Gorda, Belize 28 Oct (LJ). A juv. Tree Swallow at Caye Caulker 29 Sep (LJ) represented the earliest record for Belize by nearly a month, and a female at Ft. Sherman near Colón, Panama 24 Nov (DM, KW, SH) was s. of its normal winter range. A Bank Swallow at Punta Gorda 13 Nov was late, as was a Cliff Swallow there 9 Nov (both LJ). The Cave Swallow, while still quite rare in Belize, must be increasing in frequency. A minimum of 8 was seen migrating s. with other swallows at Punta Gorda 4-13 Nov (LJ, WRM). All had pale rumps and were assumed to be the partially migratory *pallida* subspecies from n. Mexico and sw. U.S. A Veery near Punta Gorda 24 Nov (LJ) was the latest yet recorded in Belize. Rare in the Caribbean slope lowlands of Costa Rica was a White-throated Robin at La Selva 22 Nov (SS). The 2nd record of **European Starling** from Panama was of an ad. seen 24 Nov (DM, KW, SH) at Ft. Sherman near Colón, a few km from the Atlantic entrance to the Canal Zone. It is likely that this individual was ship-assisted. Belize's first documented

American Pipit was closely studied at Punta Gorda 5 Nov (LJ, WRM). Previously, LJ had heard one overhead near Punta Gorda on 3 Nov 1999.

WARBLERS THROUGH TANAGERS

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Parque Nacional Walter Thilo Deininger 3 Nov (TJ) was only the 3rd ever reported in El Salvador, all sight records. A Tennessee Warbler at Caye Caulker 8 Sep and a Northern Parula there 29 Aug (both J&DB) were both early; whereas a Northern Parula at Tortuguero 12 Nov (C.C.C.-U.S.F.S.) was well s. of its normal winter range. There are few records of this species from Costa Rica. A Chestnut-sided Warbler at El Palmar Viejo on the Pacific coast of Guatemala 28 Oct (TJ, JB) was in an area not shown within the range of this species (Land 1970, Howell and Webb 1995), but JB has seen it there previously. Two, possibly 3, Cape May Warblers at Chan Chich Lodge the last week of Nov (JVJ, CB et al.) were at a site well inland. This species is seldom seen in Belize away from the cayes. Two Black-throated Blue Warblers were reported from Costa Rica: one at Tortuguero 30 Oct (C.C.C.-U.S.F.S.) and another at Virgen del Socorro 19 Nov (JSc). Noteworthy were several Yellow-rumped Warblers in Costa Rica this fall, as were 2 in Panama: one each on 24 Nov (DM, KW, SH) at Ft. Sherman and Gatun Dam. This species is an irregular and generally rare winter visitor in s. C.A. An ad. male **Golden-cheeked Warbler** carefully studied at Jaguar Creek near Blue Hole N.P. 6 Nov (MMa) represented the first documented record for Belize. A Black-throated Green Warbler at Caye Caulker 7 Sep (J&DB) was early, but one at Prusia in Volcán Irazu N.P., Costa Rica 18 Aug (JS) was exceptionally early. Three Hermit Warblers were seen in Costa Rica, all from the vicinity of Monteverde. Three Yellow-throated Warblers were also reported in Costa Rica, with one on 28 Aug (JRZ) considered early. Prairie Warblers at Monteverde 14 Aug (EA) and Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí 7 Oct (JRZ) were s. of the species's normal winter range. Similarly, a Palm Warbler at Ft. Sherman near Colón 24 Nov (DM, KW, SH) was well s. of its normal winter range; one at Caye Caulker 18 Sep (J&DB) was early. A Black-and-white Warbler at 3300 m in Volcán Irazu N.P. 18 Aug (JS) was both early (for Costa Rica) and at the upper limit of its elevational range. An American Redstart at Naranjo de Alajuela 28 Aug (JRZ) was early for Costa Rica, and one at Caye Caulker 1 Aug was the earliest yet for Belize. Likewise, a Kentucky Warbler at Caye Caulker 2 Aug (J&DB) established the earliest fall record for Belize, and a male

Common Yellowthroat there 8 Sep (all J&DB) was also exceptionally early. Yellowthroats normally do not arrive until late Sep. A Hooded Warbler in the San Luis Valley on the Pacific slope below Monteverde 19 Nov (JRZ) was at the upper elevational limit for this species; it is also rare on Costa Rica's n. Pacific slope. A Hooded Warbler at El Palmar Viejo 28 Oct (TJ, JB) was a little out of range on the Pacific slope of Guatemala. Summer Tanagers at Belmopan (PB) and Caye Caulker (J&DB) 5 Sep were early fall migrants, as was a Scarlet Tanager at Caye Caulker 13 Sep (J&DB).

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

Quite unexpected was a lone juv. Grassland Yellow-Finch in Punta Gorda 3 Nov (LJ, WRM), an area where this apparently nomadic species had not been previously recorded. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** in Payne's Creek N.P. in late Sep or early Oct (MMu, RE) was only the 3rd record for Belize. The bird was closely studied; however, MMu's field notes were destroyed by Hurricane *Iris* shortly after the sighting (thus the imprecise date). Also destroyed were his house, all his possessions, and his village (Monkey River). Belize's first **Vesper Sparrow** was seen in Punta Gorda on the surprisingly early date of 26 Aug (LJ). Also noteworthy in Belize were Lark Sparrows at Blue Creek Village, Toledo Dist. (LJ, LZ), and Caye Caulker (ph., J&DB) on 2 & 3 Oct, respectively, and a Savannah Sparrow in Punta Gorda on 30 Oct (LJ). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Caye Caulker 15 Sep (J&DB) was the earliest yet recorded in Belize.

A Dickcissel in Punta Gorda 18 Aug and another 15 Nov (both LJ) were the earliest and latest yet recorded in Belize, and a Bobolink at Caye Caulker 2 Sep (J&DB) was the earliest fall occurrence for that species. The most exciting find of a spectacular fall on Caye Caulker had to be the imm. **Yellow-headed Blackbird** found 23 Sep and last seen 1 Oct (ph., J&DB, LJ). While ad. males have been seen twice before in Belize, and a female was once seen with frayed string around its foot, this was the first one considered to be of wild origin. A pair of singing Eastern Meadowlarks 2 Aug at La Palma, Dept. Chalatenango (NH) suggests local breeding in El Salvador, where the species has previously been reported only in winter. A male Orchard Oriole at San Ignacio 2 Aug (MM) established the earliest fall record for Belize. Lesser Goldfinches are still being seen in the vicinity of Trinidad, Belize (WM), where they were first recorded in Sep 1998 and appear now to be established. The Black-headed Siskin is a common resident in the M.P.R.; however, as much as 90% of its pines have been killed in the

past few years by a Pine Bark Beetle infestation. Two flocks of unidentified siskins seen briefly in flight on the outskirts of Punta Gorda on 9 & 15 Nov (LJ) may well have been Black-headed seeking new areas of suitable habitat; however, no natural pine woodlands occur near Punta Gorda. Apparently, no one is studying the effects of this devastating bark beetle disease on bird populations in the M.P.R.; thus it is not known to what extent species such as the siskin, Red Crossbill, Greater Pewee, and other pine-dependent species restricted in Belize to the M.P.R. have been affected. Five House Sparrows were in Tortuguero 1 Sep (DVdB, CR), where they have not been previously reported.

UNDOCUMENTED RARITIES

A Black-headed Grosbeak in Monteverde near Finca Ecologica 21 Oct has been reported variously as a male and a female. Because of the confusion, and because details in support of this record have not yet surfaced, the sighting should be considered undocumented, at least for now.

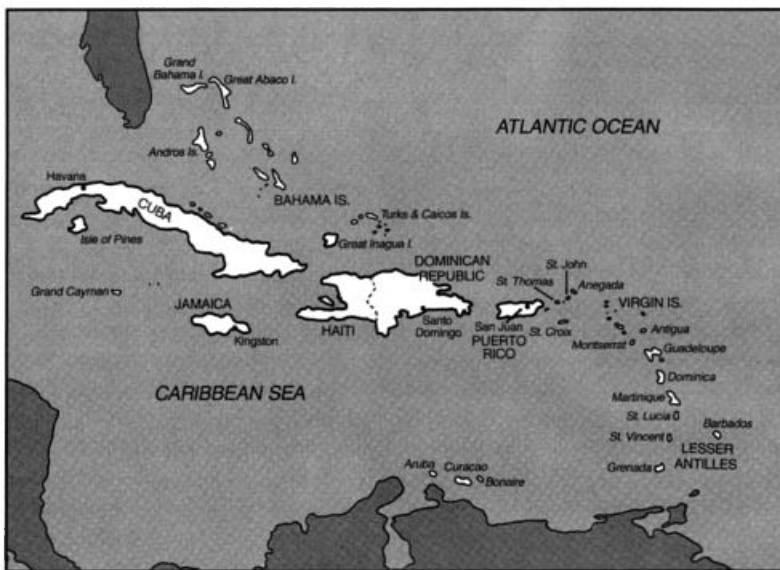
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West Indies



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For many observers, the fall migration was disappointing in terms of numbers and diversity of birds recorded. Certainly, local and continental factors were not favorable for bringing migrants to offshore areas such as Bermuda, for instance: frontal systems to bring birds from the continent were few and weak, and places such as Warwick and Spittal Pond were full of water all season, with little in the way of muddy margins.

At Bermuda, a number of late-season storms, notably Tropical Storm *Karen*—which became a hurricane as it passed 11-12 October—denuded the island of much vegetation. Salt spray “burned” much foliage, and hundreds of trees were felled by wind and rain. In early December, decaying Hurricane *Olga* brought more wind and rain. Nevertheless, there were some real highlights at Bermuda, including Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern, Red-breasted Nuthatch, two House Wrens, Lark Sparrow, and two White-winged Crossbills.

In the Bahamas, Hurricane *Michelle* passed directly over New Providence on 5 November, causing considerable damage to trees all over the

island. Paul Dean reported soon after the hurricane that birds were back in good numbers despite the damage to his usually well-vegetated back yard.

At Aruba 19-26 October and 12 November, Jan Hein van Steenis reported on resident and migrant birds. In Guadeloupe, the Nature Reserve of Petite-Terre continues to produce a phenomenal diversity of birds, especially Nearctic landbird migrants. Eddie Massiah notes that Grenada Hook-billed Kites are scarce but more widespread on Grenada than previously thought, including in rainforest up to 400 m. He also reported a new breeding species for Grenada Channel-billed Toucan, the result of a Guyanese bird dealer’s release in the early 1990s. Larry Manfredi and Dennis Buss reported on a one-day excursion to Montserrat in search of the endemic Montserrat Oriole. The news is good for the oriole (<<http://sei.org/opva.html>>), but the stoic people who remained on the island to keep the country’s spirit alive are the real story (on the volcanic impact on Montserrat: <<http://sei.org/impacts.html>> and Montserrat Volcano Observatory: <<http://www.geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/west.indies/soufriere/govt/>>).

Abbreviations: BAMZ (Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo).

STORM-PETRELS THROUGH TERNS

A Leach’s Storm-Petrel came aboard a tour boat off St. David’s, Bermuda 19 Sep (HW) and was