

# West Indies



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The drought in the Bahamas and Cayman Islands this winter and spring brought extensive fires in the pinewoods of southern Great Abaco Island, in the area where Bahama Parrots nest. Although the short-term damage to understory may affect immediate nesting, fire is beneficial in the long run where there are fire-climax forests such as there are in southern Florida. The drought also affected shorebird breeding at salt ponds and ephemeral pools, as noted at Little Cayman Island, where waders and other shorebirds nest and forage.

The most exciting observations in the Bahamas this season involved a small flock of Kirtland's Warblers on Eleuthera. Two Bald Eagles photographed on Great Abaco also made headlines. Nesting for most tern and gull species had commenced by late May, as reported by Woody Bracey off Great Abaco, as well as by Paul Dean, Eric Carey, and Melanie Steinkamp on the Berry Islands in the Bahamas.

## GREBES THROUGH DUCKS

At Bermuda, Pied-billed Grebes bred at both Somerset Long Bay Nature Reserve (two broods) and Pitman's Pond (at least one brood)

On Bracey's 16 May pelagic trip 8-32 km out of Hope Town, Great Abaco, a Black-capped Petrel, one Greater and 10 Audubon's Shearwaters, and one Leach's and 3 Wilson's Storm-Petrels were seen. Among the transient pelagic species seen off Bermuda, Cory's Shearwaters' passage was lighter than usual in May. Greater Shearwaters were uncommon until late May, with most birds being well offshore (71/hour max; SR). Sooty Shearwaters, however, were seen in good numbers in mid-

May, with up to 47/hour on 23 May (SR). Manx Shearwaters are early-spring migrants off Bermuda, so very few were seen after Apr. Off the coast of Port Antonio, Jamaica, a half-day pelagic trip recorded only Audubon's Shearwater and Red-necked Phalaropes before being turned back by high seas (ESB et al.) At Port Antonio proper, Hoyer found 5 White-tailed Tropicbirds near Folly Point Lighthouse, which may represent an unrecorded colony. A few Masked Boobies have been visiting the Brown Booby colony on Cayman Brac since 1984; one was seen again this spring on 15 Mar (BH, NN). A pair of Red-footed Boobies (one dark morph, one light) nested on Catto Cay, San Salvador, Bahamas 26-30 Apr (WH). Previously only white-morph birds have been reported from this location.

A single Double-crested Cormorant was in a flock of 60 Neotropical Cormorants at Cable Beach, New Providence, Bahamas 6-7 May (BH). A superb Little Egret in breeding plumage at Pitman's Pond from 26 Apr—3 May (EA) was the 2nd ever for Bermuda (first in 1985). At least 4 Green Herons (WF) on 26 May at Trott's Pond may well have been attempting to breed. Roseate Spoonbills are rarely seen residents on Andros, Bahamas, but 4 were seen there 15-17 May (PD, EC, JW, JH). A blue-morph Snow Goose (RB) at Port Royal Golf Course, Bermuda 12 May was the first-ever spring record of this form. Another blue Snow Goose was noted at Treasure Cay, Great Abaco, Bahamas from 25 Mar—15 May (WB, BH). Fifty Ruddy Ducks was a high count at Blue Pond, Great Exuma, Bahamas (LG, B&JM, MS)

**SA** Jeremy Madeiros, the Conservation Warden on Bermuda who has stepped into David Wingate's shoes, reports good news for the Bermuda Petrel (Cahow). "Since intensive management of the Cahow began, its population has increased from 18 pairs producing 8 fledgling chicks in 1962 to 65 breeding pairs with a record 36 chicks in 2002. (The previous record was 32 in 2001.) Despite the continuing increase in the population, it remains critically endangered and still nests on only four tiny rocky islets totaling less than two acres in area. Continuing threats include: coastal erosion by hurricanes; overwashing of nesting islands; sea level rise; and the physical constraints of the present breeding areas." Madeiros has continued to pursue Wingate's dream of a nesting colony on the now-restored and rat-free Nonsuch I. and is gathering information to attempt translocation of newly fledged chicks to that site in the future. With help from Porzana Ltd. of the U.K., a banding program for the species has begun, with 30 fledglings and 10 adults now sporting custom-made bands, the first of their species to wear them. Individual Cahows can now be distinguished at the breeding areas, which will aid in the study of their breeding biology. Finally, growth rates have been studied: "Some 20 fledglings have been weighed regularly to determine growth rates. This has already shown that there is great variation in the rate at which individual chicks develop. Fifty-two days after hatching, the chicks range from 211 to 508 g in weight." The success of the conservation program appears to have borne fruit in other Regions as well: Bermuda Petrels are now seen annually off North Carolina, and this spring, two birds were seen together 27 May, the first record of multiple birds away from breeding areas.

**SA** This spring, at least 8 Kirtland's Warblers were observed in broad-leaf coppice s. of Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera, Bahamas. Many of these warblers were photographed, and 6 were banded. This exceeds the total number of documented Kirtland's Warbler sightings in the entire Bahamas over the past 50 years. Paul Dean, leading a Bahamas National Trust Ornithology Group outing, discovered 3 on 9 Mar 2002. Teams of birders visited the site every weekend through 5 May and saw varying numbers of Kirtland's. Joe Wunderle, member of a Kirtland's Warbler research and training project, color-banded 6 of the Kirtland's Warblers. Three heard and one seen 28 Apr (PD, LL) were the last ones reported from the site. None was found there on or after 4 May (PD, BH, LL).



One of the eight Kirtland's Warblers observed on Eleuthera this winter, 18 March 2002. Photograph by Aileen Bainton.

**KITE THROUGH TERNS**

A **Mississippi Kite** over Nonsuch I. 20 May (DBW; vt. EA) was the first record for Bermuda and the farthest recorded from continental landmasses; it apparently crossed to Cooper's I. and was possibly seen later in the day over the Hamilton Harbour Is (SR, DW). Two **Bald Eagles** photographed over Marsh Harbour, Great Abaco 13 Mar were the first confirmed record for the Bahamas (RP). A Red-tailed Hawk (DW) was over Morgan's Pt.

27 Apr (presumed to be the bird seen in Dec). A Northern Bobwhite was heard at Santa Clara, Villa Clara, Cuba 1 Mar (JM, GM, J C). Between 45 and 50 Piping Plovers were huddled on the lee shore at Kamalame Cay, Andros 2 Mar, seeking protection from strong winds and high waves (EC). A Black-necked Stilt (AD) flew over Harrington Sound, Bermuda on 20 Apr, then stayed at North Pond into May. Several sightings of Red Knot were made at Bermuda this spring 21 May+. A Ruff (WE, SR)

was at North Pond, Bermuda from 18-24 Apr. This was a very good spring for skua sightings off Bermuda. The four records here refer either to Great Skua or to South Polar Skua, the latter being presumably much more likely: single birds were offshore on 5 May (GL), over Nonsuch I. 16 May (WF), off Devonshire Bay 18 May (SR), and at Elbow Beach 19 May (SR, AD). There was also a good passage of the three jaeger species (SR) off the s. shore of Bermuda. A Ring-billed Gull ne. of Port Royal 28 Apr and a second-summer Herring Gull at Parrottee 22 Apr were rare for Jamaica (ESB et al.). A second-summer Laughing Gull was seen throughout the period at Bermuda (AD). A survey of breeding seabirds in most of the s. two-thirds of the Berry Islands, Bahamas 21-24 May (PD, EC, MSt) provided important new data summarized in Table 1. (The number given is a gross estimate of the number of nests; "x" means the species was present on the island.)

Species	Laughing Gull	Gull-billed Tern	Royal Tern	Roseate Tern	Least Tern	Bridled Tern	Sooty Tern	Brown Noddy
<b>Location</b>								
Mamma Rhoda Rock			X	X		25	100	150
S. Stirrup Cay	X				X			
Bushes Cay			X			1	X	
Rum Cay						200	1000+	
Chub Cay					2			
Cat Cay	X	X						
N. Fish Cay	250					X		
Sandy Cay	25					X		
Rock off Little Whale Cay				75				
Frozen Cay	X		X		X	300	700	400
Alder Cay				200		50	100	50
S. Market Fish Cay	25			X	X	X	X	X
White Cay	40			X		20		
N. Market Fish Cay	20+						X	
High Cay						5		17
Abner Cay				X	X	X		
Guana Cay		X						
Cabbage Cay						X	X	

**PIGEONS THROUGH ORIOLES**

An estimated 500 Ring-tailed Pigeons were seen flying eastward all morning in small flocks over Ecclesdown, Drivers River Valley, Jamaica 11 Apr (RLS, RH). This is the highest day count of the species reported in this Regional report and one of the highest known to Sutton. The remains of a Northern Saw-whet Owl (JM) were found in Jenningsland, Bermuda on 24 Apr. On 28 Mar, JV videotaped a Ruby-throated Hummingbird at Freeport, Grand Bahama, where it is a rare winter visitor. In a moment of ecological balance reminiscent of David Lack's studies of niche loading on Caribbean islands, 2 each of Cuban

Emerald and Bahama Woodstar were found on tiny Cave Cay located between Grand Bahama and Great Abaco 28 Apr (EM-G, RJ, KNT). On 1 Mar, 3 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were noted at Santa Clara, Cuba (JM, GM, JC). A Gray Kingbird was present at Tudor Farm, Bermuda 11-13 May (WF, SR), while a Red-eyed Vireo was on Nonsuch I. 11-12 May (JM).

Barn Swallows arrived at Bermuda in small numbers during the period. On 9 May, BH noted a Bank Swallow at Marsh Harbour dump, Great Abaco. A single Cuban Crow was noted at Santa Clara, Cuba 1 Mar (JC, JM, GM). Four Bahama Swallows at Chub Cay, Berry Is., Bahamas 9-15 Mar (SS) were outside their breeding range. A Veery (WF, SR) was a very good find at Ferry Point, Bermuda 4 May (the latest ever spring record). Rich Hoyer and party found both Tennessee and Black-throated Green Warblers in the same *Grevillea* tree on 10 Apr near Hardwar Gap, Jamaica; Cape May Warblers were noted at Barbecue Bottom 10 Apr (3 birds) and e. of Port Antonio 12 Apr (one; RH et al.) and near Black River 22 Apr (2; ESB et al.). Several Magnolia Warblers were seen in May, making it the most common spring warbler at Bermuda. A stunning male Blackburnian Warbler was seen at Gibb's Hill Lighthouse, Bermuda 12 May, where it stayed for a few days, a very rare spring migrant (WF). A singing Prairie Warbler (WF) was found in the same area on Eleuthera as the Kirtland's from 12-23 May; the species had never previously been recorded in May here. May warbler sightings at Bermuda included American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, and Common Yellowthroat. At Ecclesdown, Drivers River Valley, Jamaica, RH noted a Worm-eating Warbler 11 Apr and another at Port Antonio 12 Apr. Three Red-legged Honeycreepers were seen at Santa Clara, Cu. on 1 Mar (GM, JM, JC). A Blue Grosbeak (WF, SR) was at Ferry Point, Bermuda on 4 May, while the only spring Bobolink (EA) was singing at Hog Bay Park on 6 May. On San Salvador, Bahamas, WH noted a pair of Bobolinks on 16 May. A pair of Shiny Cowbirds was at Santa Clara, Cuba on 1 Mar (JC et al.). The Suttons have noted a distinct increase in Shiny Cowbirds on Jamaica in the past three years; one tour group saw 2 to 4 daily at multiple locations 22-27 Apr, which was unprecedented (ESB et al.). Michael Baltz found 17 Greater Antillean Orioles (formerly Black-cowled Oriole), including 5 imms., on Andros, Bahamas 14-17 May; he also found a nest with 4 oriole nestlings and no young cowbird at Stanniard Creek, Andros, Bahamas.

## EXOTICS

Blue-fronted Parrots, still being seen in the area

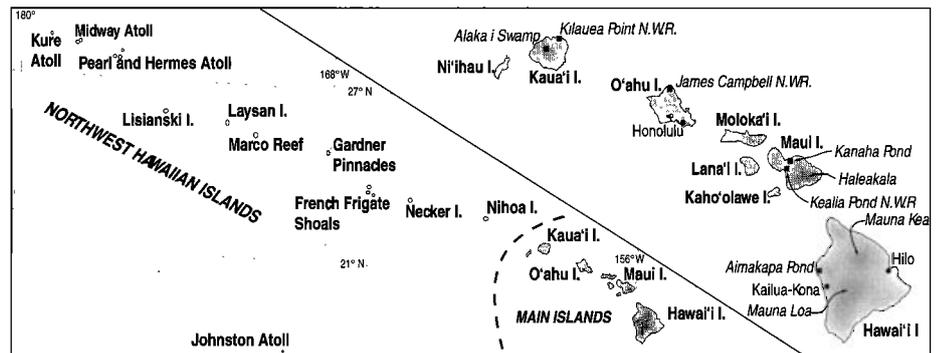
of Southampton, Bermuda, raised 2 young in a cedar tree this spring. Monk Parakeets appear to be well established on Grand Cayman, where several communal nests were located 8-11 Mar (BH, NN). Although firmly established in the continental avifauna, European Starling should be considered an invasive exotic worthy of expulsion from the West Indies. They now breed now in the Bahamas (White 1998), where BH has recorded nesting at Abaco (9 May).

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# Hawaiian Islands



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**H**heavy rains, which started last Oct, continued into late May. Rainfall for the year was near normal to above normal at most locations through May. The main exception was the Kona district of Hawai'i I., where rainfall was only about half the normal amount.

**Abbreviations:** E. (Endangered Species); H. (Hawai'i Island); Hakalau (Hakalau N.W.R., Hawai'i Island); Hanalei (Hanalei N.W.R., Kaua'i I.); Honouliuli (Honouliuli Unit of Pearl

Harbor N.W.R., O'ahu Island); K. (Kaua'i Island); Kanaha (Kanaha Pond, Maui Island); Kealia (Kealia Pond N.W.R., Maui Island); Ku (Ki'i Unit of James Campbell N.W.R., O'ahu Island); K.P. (Kilauea Pt. N.W.R., Kaua'i Island); M. (Maui Island); O. (O'ahu Island); Waiawa (Waiawa Unit of Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O'ahu Island); T. (Threatened Species).

## ALBATROSS THROUGH EGRETS

Two Short-tailed Albatrosses that appeared on Midway atoll last fall departed on schedule. The last reports were from 11 Apr for a bird on Sand I. and 12 Apr for a bird on Eastern I. (WS). One **Streaked Shearwater** was spotted from a boat near Kaua'i I. 22 Mar. A brief but convincing description was provided (†DK). Streaked Shearwaters are very rare in Hawaiian waters. As usual, reports were too sparse to tell much about arrival dates or numbers for locally breeding tubenoses. Hawaiian Petrels (E.) were seen off