

West Indies & Bermuda

The Region was well represented geographically, with robust reports from all Greater Antillean islands, from the Bahamas, a scattering of important observations from the Lesser Antilles, from Aruba off Venezuela, and from Bermuda, our sentinel migrant trap well off the Carolinas.

There have been some very surprising results from surveys and expeditions in the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, and in the Lesser Antilles, proving that given enough time and sustained interest, old news becomes news again. It has been said here that the last frontier of West Indian birding is the oceanic realm. That seems to be where new records are born (see Dominica), but those willing to turn an eye to historic and little-known insular occurrences (see Inagua and St. Eustatius) can be richly rewarded. To understand whether these occurrences indicate reclaimed former territory or represent unprecedented expansion, one will need to dig a little deeper in the fossil record or in the middens or caves of the region.

Lastly on the conservation (or confrontation) front, Vieques, Puerto Rico, will no longer be a military bombing range and has been turned over to the Dept. of Interior. Daphne Gemmill's benchmark surveys on Vieques will be of certain value as resident and migrant species react to quieter nuptials.

GREBES THROUGH DUCKS

Least Grebes found nesting at Bordeaux, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (hereafter U.S.V.I.) 1 May and at Concordia, St. John U.S.V.I. (FH, RF) may be recolonizing portions of the VI. after a long hiatus, but FH says declines this season, at least, were caused by heavy spring rains.

At Bermuda, a record-high 70 pairs of Bermuda Petrels raised a record 39 young (JM). An unidentified *Pterodroma* gadfly petrel noted at Elbow Beach, Bermuda 28 Apr (SR) provided enough views of dark upperwings and dark underwings contrasting with white body to suggest a possible Fea's Petrel, a rare-but-regular species off North Carolina May to September, with records from Virginia, New Jersey, and Nova Scotia. On a four-hour pelagic trip out of Barbados (MF), there were 2 Black-capped Petrels within 12 km of shore, providing first records from that island. On 21 Apr, a Bulwer's Petrel was carefully noted (AJ, JV) off Dominica, providing the 2nd record of that species from the West Indies. A three-hour pelagic trip aboard the R.V. *Stommell* out of Bermuda 4 May (AD et al.) provided sightings of a Cory's Shearwater, a Wilson's Storm-Petrel, 2 probable Leach's Storm-Petrels, and White-tailed Tropicbirds (17 km offshore). A Cory's Shearwater was also noted in Exuma Sound, Bahamas 17 & 18 May (NM).



The American White Pelican at Spittal Pond, Bermuda (first discovered 6 Nov 2002) was last seen 20 May (PW). A pair of Brown Pelicans was found nesting on Slipper Cay, Acklin Is., Bahamas in May (MR). Single Northern Gannets were seen at sea off Grand Bahama 21 Mar (LM) and about 2 km off Little Bell I., Exuma well to the s. 29 Apr (A&JG). Two Least Bitterns were at Paget Marsh Pond, Bermuda 29 Mar (AD, SR). Least Bitterns were found nesting at Vieques, Puerto Rico 28 Mar–8 Apr (ph. BMu, *fide* DG). A large number of Great Blue Herons was concentrated at Trou Caiman, Haiti 5 Apr (JRC). Little Egret, another expanding invader, is now reported from St. Maarten (Netherlands side), where one was found 24 May (AB). Bermuda's first Reddish Egret (discovered 22 Dec) was last seen 9 May at Cavello Bay (PH). Green Herons were reported in breeding plumage from Mangrove L. and Trott's Pond, Bermuda 30 Apr (EA). An astonishing report of a Striated Heron at Concordia, St. John, U.S.V.I. (ph. FH, m. ob.) represents a first documented record from the latitude of the Greater Antilles and the 2nd documented from the West Indies proper (previous record from St. Vincent).

On 1 May, WB, BB, and HN located 1000+ Greater Flamingos on inland pools of Great Inagua. Henry Nixon reports that Greater Flamingos failed to nest at Great Inagua for the 3rd consecutive year because of low water conditions. However, there are unconfirmed reports of a large colony at Acklins Is., Bahamas (*fide* LG).

Robert L. Norton

8960 NE Waldo Road
Gainesville, Florida 32609
(corvus0486@aol.com)

Anthony White

6540 Walhonding Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20816
(spindalis@aol.com)

Andrew Dobson

Warwick Academy
117 Middle Road
Warwick PG 01, Bermuda
(info@audubon.bm)

Twelve West Indian Whistling-Ducks were noted for two weeks in Mar at Bambarra, Middle Caicos (BNM), 3 were noted at Stafford Cr., Andros 13 Mar (DS), and singles were seen in s. Eleuthera, Bahamas 28 & 31 May (DC, DVP). A pair of Fulvous Whistling-Ducks was noted 6 Apr at Río Cauto rice fields, Cuba (BM et al.). An ad. female Eurasian Wigeon 16–28 Mar at Emerald Golf Course, Grand Bahama (WB, EG, DM, ph. BHa) provides the first record for the Bahamas and extends the Regional departure date. A drake Northern Shoveler arrived at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 2 Apr (AD, PS). The winter-

SA There have been some notable inter-island range expansions or recolonizations in recent years, but none seems more astounding than one by a parochial (or single-island) endemic subspecies. One of the most extraordinary findings in the Region comes from Great Inagua, Bahamas. Several photographs of a nesting pair of **Double-striped Thick-knees** were taken while FRM and GH were conducting surveys of Bahama Parrots in the interior forests of Great Inagua 14 May 2003. Although there are fossil and subfossil records from the Bahamas and Grand Turk, where paleo-climates produced different habitats than today, modern distribution was limited until now to Hispaniola.

ing Common Mergansers were last seen in the Great Sound, Bermuda 21 Mar (DW). A fine male Ruddy Duck was an unseasonal arrival at Parsons Road Pond, Bermuda 20 May (DW). Seven Ruddy Ducks were seen at Humacao Nature Reserve, Puerto Rico 12 Apr (TM). Ruddy Duck is expanding its range in the Lesser Antilles, with breeding pairs found at St. Maarten (AB et al., ph.). Still other Ruddy Ducks were noted in early May at L. Antoine, Grenada (AB). Masked Ducks numbered 40 at Treasure Beach, St. Elizabeth, Jamaica 6 Apr (ph. RH et al.), the largest concentration on the island in some years.

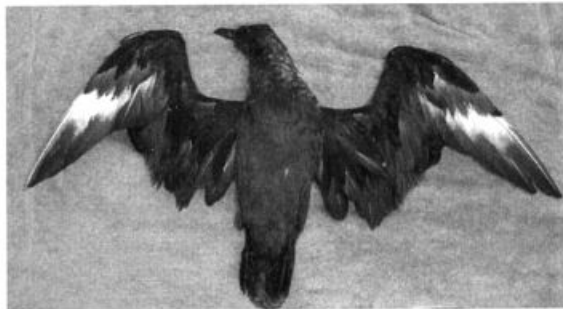
KITES THROUGH TERNS

On 15 Apr, an ad. and a juv. **Hook-billed Kite** were noted (AJ, JV) at Grenada. Swallow-tailed Kites were noted from several locations in the Region: one was at the n. end of Grenada in early May (AB); a pair was seen at Great Pond, Treasure Cay, Jamaica 17 May (CA); and 4 were in the Bahamas, with 2 at Emerald Golf Course, Grand Bahama 28 Mar (EG, DM), one on Great Exuma 27 Apr (BS), and one at Marsh Harbour, Abaco 7 May, the last remaining for about a week (RPt, *vide* RP). On Bermuda, the first of several Swallow-tailed Kites were seen over the Smiths Hills, Bermuda 4 Mar, and sightings continued over the following three weeks. In total, there were likely 4 individuals, with 2 circling together over Port Royal Golf Course 11 Mar with the Red-tailed Hawk present since Nov 2001 (IF, PW, AD). A Snail Kite was seen 6 Apr at the Río Cauto rice fields near Hoguín, Cuba (BM et al.). The Region's first Western Marsh Harrier reported in fall 2002 remained at Guadeloupe until at least 14 Apr (AL). A Northern Harrier was seen at San Andros, Bahamas 9 Mar (DS), and a wintering Northern Harrier was still at Bermuda's airport 22 Apr (AD). A prize raptor of any trip to Cuba is **Gundlach's Hawk**, which was seen at Guardalavaca 30 Mar and 5 Apr (BM et al.). A late Merlin was noted at Barbuda 27 Apr (AJ, G&EM). A Peregrine Falcon was noted 12 May perched at the tern colony on Goulding Cay off New Providence, Bahamas (ABa, TW, JD). Single Crested Caracaras were noted 3 Apr near Playa Santa Lucia and at Guardalavaca, Cuba 11 Apr (BM et al.).

The wintering Virginia Rail was last seen at Parsons Road Pond, Bermuda 2 Mar (AD). A Purple Gallinule was noted at Cable Beach

Pond, New Providence, Bahamas 17 Apr (CW), and one Purple Gallinule was at Somerset Long Bay Reserve, Bermuda 2 May (PH). From St. Maarten, a Purple Gallinule was noted at Fresh Pond 22 Mar (AB). About a dozen Piping Plovers were present throughout Mar and Apr (WB) at the s. end of Green Turtle Cay, Bahamas, suggesting a strong affinity of this Endangered species for the n. Bahamas during late winter and pre-migration. A Black-necked Stilt arrived at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 21 Mar and stayed into early Apr, while another arrived 16 May at North Pond (DW). Three pairs nested at Crossing Rock, Abaco, Bahamas (RP).

A Solitary Sandpiper was watched being pursued by a Merlin at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 26 Apr (AD, SR, PH). Single Upland Sandpipers were noted at Treasure Cay, Abaco 11 Apr (WB) and at Rock Sound, Eleuthera, both Bahamas 13 Apr (DC). Red Knots (4) and Dunlin (50+) were found at Green Turtle Cay, Abaco, Bahamas 5 Mar (BB, WB). Seven Sanderlings were at Elbow Beach, Bermuda 31 Mar (AD). Fourteen species of shorebirds were recorded during a two-week bird tour of Cuba (BM et al.)



A dead skua, presumed to be South Polar Skua, was found in Tucker's Town Bay, Bermuda 27 (here 28) April 2003. Because of the recent confirmation of southern-hemisphere skuas in the eastern North Atlantic, DNA samples are being analyzed to resolve the identification. Photograph by Andrew Dobson.

and appeared to peak 6 Apr, when 30 Stilt Sandpipers were counted at Rosa Blanca Res. near Calixto. A female Ruff turned up at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 2 May (EA), and a Reeve was noted at Congo Road swamp, Barbados 26 Apr (MF).

A dead skua found in Tucker's Town Bay, Bermuda 27 Apr is almost certainly a South Polar Skua (ph. JC). Its identity will be verified by DNA analysis and reported here if found to be otherwise. On 22 Apr 16 Parasitic Jaegers were recorded from Elbow Beach, Bermuda (AD, SR), and 5 Pomarines were seen there 28 Apr (SR, PH). All three jaeger species were seen off Cooper's Pt., Bermuda 28 Apr (PW). Three Pomarine Jaegers were noted e. of Abaco 17 Mar (WB), and another 3 were seen on a fishing trip (WB, BB) 30 Apr 17 km w. of Matthew

Town, Great Inagua. The pelagic trip 4 May out of Bermuda produced one Parasitic, one Long-tailed, and 3 Pomarine Jaegers (AD et al.).

An ad. Laughing Gull was seen at the Royal Naval Dockyard and at St. Georges Harbour, Bermuda 22 Apr (AD, PH, SR). A Great Black-backed Gull was recorded from Saltpond, St. Maarten for the 2nd record there (AB). A Caspian Tern was noted at Rosa Blanc Res. near Calixto, Cuba 3 Apr among the group of Royals (BM et al.). A large group of about 50 Caspian Terns was found 5 Apr at Trou Caiman, Haiti, where 35 lingered until 19 Apr (JRC). A Royal Tern was at Royal Naval Dockyard, Bermuda 13 Apr (PH). The first Common Terns returned to Castle Harbour, Bermuda 31 Mar (DBW), and a Forster's Tern was in the same location 12 May for at least a week (DBW). The 4 May pelagic trip out of Bermuda yielded one Arctic Tern. On 7 May, WB recovered an injured tern that ultimately died and was identified as an Arctic Tern, providing the first documented report from the Bahamas. One of the more remarkable findings this season in the Bahamas was a breeding-plumaged **Whiskered Tern** seen well at Great Inagua 1-2 May (WB, ph. BB). This provides only the 5th New World record, the 3rd from the West Indies, and the first from the Bahamas. A colony of 410 pairs of Sandwich (94%) and Cayenne Terns (with varying amounts of yellow bill color) was found at the Dog Is., off St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. 28 May, providing apparent evidence of intergradation (FH).

PIGEONS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

A Jamaican Plain Pigeon (*C. i. exigua*) was noted at Burnt Hill, Trelawny, Jamaica 7 Apr (RH et al.) for the first local report of this Endangered subspecies, which is more typically seen in the n. Cockpit Country or coming to roost around the lighthouse at Portland Cottage. A pair of Crested Quail-Doves was found at a nest 10 Apr at Ecclesdown, Jamaica (RH et al.). Following apparent expansion to the e. and the recent 10-year increase in White-winged Dove numbers in the Virgin Islands (up to 24 on 18 May at eight sites), their numbers seem to have stabilized or declined at St. Thomas (FH), at least during early May. Farther to the se., the first record of White-winged Dove for St. Eustatius was recorded 8 Mar at Oranjested (AB). At Great Inagua, more than 300 Bahama Parrots were noted flying in smaller groups of 10 to 20 to a roost near Salt Pond Hill 9 Mar (HN, LG, S.N.B.G.). Both Red-necked and Imperial Parrots were seen near Mt. Diablotin, Dominica 22-23 Apr (AJ, JV).

Mangrove Cuckoos are rare on Grand Bahama, so one heard 16 Mar at Garden of the Groves was noteworthy (BHa, WB, HP). A single Mangrove Cuckoo was found 30 Mar at Playa Guardalavaca (BM et al.) during two weeks in Cuba. On Great Inagua, WB, BB, and HN counted 22 Burrowing Owls 30 Apr. Antillean Nighthawk numbers, 40+ in recent years, seem to peak along coastal sites of w. Haiti during the 3rd week in Apr, according to JRC and IP. At

SA At Aruba (normally just outside our reporting area), ASM reports several first island records 23–30 Mar 2003, including Little Egret 25–30 Mar, 5 Green-winged Teal 25–30 Mar, a Swallow-tailed Kite 25–30 Mar, a Tennessee Warbler 25 Mar, and a male Red-breasted Blackbird 28 Mar, as well as 2nd or 3rd island records for Northern Pintail, Southern Lapwing, Northern Parula, Cape May Warbler, and Hooded Warbler. Details to be published later in this journal.

New Providence, Bahamas, 40 Antillean Nighthawks were counted 2 May at The Caves (ABa, BB, WB, TW). Approximately 10 Short-tailed Swifts were carefully noted (AJ, JV) in the company of Black Swifts 18 Apr at Les Cartiers, St. Lucia for an unexpected report during their breeding period n. of their home range (St. Vincent). Chimney Swifts were spotted in Apr and May, with a maximum of 3 over Somerset, Bermuda 25 Apr (PH). A Black Swift was seen 3 Apr at Rosa Blanca Res., Cuba (BM et al.). Another Black Swift had "returned to the regular site" in St. Joseph, Barbados (MF) 1 May. Although considered rare on Cuba, 2 White-collared Swifts were noted there 31 Mar (BM et al.). Single Bee Hummingbirds were noted only 19 & 20 Apr at Cuba, where AK says their numbers are still depressed, apparently owing to recent hurricanes and continued loss of habitat.

A pair of West Indian Woodpeckers was found nesting at McLean's Town, Grand Bahama 22 Mar (LM et al.). The fact that these birds have less black above the eye than birds resident at Abaco (LM) suggests that the birds are survivors of the Grand Bahama race (M. s. *blakei*). Twelve Cedar Waxwings were noted at Garden of the Groves, Grand Bahama 23 Mar (LM), and another large flock of 35 Cedar Waxwings made their way to Marshall's Pen, Manchester Parish, Jamaica in Mar (RH, ph. G&EM, BrH) and remained until at least 8 Apr.

The wintering Eastern Phoebe was still at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 25 Mar (AD). An Eastern Kingbird photographed at a birdbath in a Warwick garden, Bermuda (NC) was the earliest-ever spring record, present for the last week of Mar and into Apr; an early Purple Martin was at St. Georges Dairy 24 Feb (DW). The wintering Northern Mockingbird remained until at least 5 Apr in the Botanical Gardens, Bermuda (AD). A detailed sighting of a Red-eyed Vireo 15 Apr from St. Vincent provided one of the few reports from the Lesser Antilles (AJ, JV). Three Golden Swallows, one of the most Endangered endemics of the Region, were seen at Fermanthe, Haiti 22 Mar (JRC). Three Scaly-breasted

Thrashers were banded at Lotterrie Farm, St. Martin 5 Mar (AB, EPIC), where they have not been previously recorded (Voous 1983). Given the time of year and relative shyness, this suggests an expansion of their breeding range ne. of Saba and a former site discussed at left.

Singing warblers are never numerous in Bermuda, but a Yellow-throated Warbler in Botanical Gardens, Pine Warblers at Government House and Port Royal Golf Course, and a Common Yellowthroat at Paget Marsh were all in song 1 Mar (AD). Twenty-two warbler species, including three resident forms, were recorded during the Cuba tour (BM et al.) from 29 Mar to 11 Apr; Blackburnian and Blackpoll Warblers were among the highlights 9 Apr. On 19 Apr, TM found a Blackpoll Warbler at Guanica Dry Forest, Puerto Rico. An ad. male



This flock of Cedar Waxwings visited Marshall's Pen estate, near Mandeville, Jamaica 10 March 2003, a new location for the species. Photograph by Phil Tizzard.

Black-throated Blue Warbler seen 23 May at Petite Terre Nature Res., Guadeloupe (AL) was very late. An American Redstart found at Magens Bay, St. Thomas (Dsp), and another reported from Freeport, Grand Bahama (EG), both 31 May, were very late. A skulking Kentucky Warbler 1 Mar was hard to view in Ord Road woodlands, Bermuda (SR). Recently split from the Adelaide's Warbler group, the endemic Barbuda Warbler appears to enjoy high densities ca. 12–15 birds in 5 hectares (AJ, JV, G&EM), in dry, deciduous scrub habitat. At Fermanthe, Haiti 22 Mar, JRC found a single Green-tailed Warbler (endemic). A Summer Tanager was in the Botanical Gardens, Bermuda 23 Apr (DW). The wintering Swamp Sparrow was still present at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 3 Apr (DW). Two White-throated Sparrows were singing in the Arboretum, Bermuda in late Mar (GH). Lesser Antillean Bullfinch, long resident on St. John, has apparently made the 4-km

channel jump to Red Hook, St. Thomas, either on its own or aided by commuters (AH, Dsp, MFr, *vide* FH).

Two Common Grackles 7 Mar at St. Georges, Bermuda (ph. IF, PW) were a prelude to an exceptional occurrence of a flock of at least 20 on Jubilee Road 19 Mar (AD), last reported from Pitman's Pond 12 Apr (AD). Only about 6 individuals have previously been recorded in Bermuda. A possible Common Grackle was reported from Garden of the Groves, Grand Bahama 23 Mar; this would represent the first icterid of this genus from the Bahamas (LM et al.). From Montserrat comes hopeful sign that the endemic Montserrat Oriole is holding on particularly well in the n. hills "safe zone," although the species is largely absent from the lowlands following the devastating eruption there. AJ and JV report seeing a nesting pair and that locals are studying the population. Two pairs of Jamaican Blackbirds were noted carrying nesting material 10 Apr near Ecclesdown, Portland, Jamaica (RH et al.). A Brown-headed Cowbird (IF) was at Spittal Pond Farm, Bermuda 11 Mar.

Addendum: On Guana Island, British Virgin Is., FS and SD mist-netted, banded, and released an ad. male Swainson's Thrush 9 Oct 2000, representing the first record from the Virgin Islands and 2nd documented record e. of Cuba (ph. SD). This is subsequent to a record (McNair et al. 1999) of an individual netted 19 Oct 1997 at Barbados.

Observers: Cathy Alexander, Eric Amos, Aileen Bainton (ABa), Norman Block, Betsy Bracey, Woody Bracey, Laura Brannick, Adam Brown [EPIC], Judy Clee, Neil Couper, J.-R. Crouse (JRC), David Currie, Ancillinos Davis (ADa), Jacob Disston, Andrew Dobson, Steven Durand, Rick Falkenberg, Ian Fisher, Mario Francis (MFr), Martin Frost, Lynn Gape, Erika Gates, Daphne Gemmill, Angela and Joe Gherhardt, Amanda Hall, Bruce Hallett (BHa), Brandon Hay (BrH), Brett Hayes, Floyd Hayes, Garth Herring, Peter Hopkin, Rich Hoyer [WINGS], Alvaro Jaramillo [Field Guides], Arturo Kirkconnell, Anthony LeVesque, Jeremy Madeiros, Glenn and Eileen Mahler, Brian Naqqi Manco (BNM), Larry Manfredi, Tom, Marko, Blake Maybank, Neil McKinney, Steve Mlodinow, David Moulton, Bob Mueller (BMu), Henry Nixon, Isaac Pady, Erin Lowe-Pagliaro, Ron Pagliaro, Reggie Patterson (Rpt), Hagen Peters, Tineke Prins, Frank F. Rivera-Milán, MacGregor Robertson, Steve Rodwell, Keith Rossiter, Sam Nixon Birding Group [S.N.B.G.], Fred Sibley, Baily Smith, Penny Soares, David Spencer (Dsp), David Steadman, Jay VanderGaast (JV) [Field Guides], Dominica Van Put (DVP), David Wallace (DW), Carolyn Wardle, Paul Watson, Tony White, David B. Wingate (DBW), Joe Wunderle. 🐦

SA From little St. Eustatius, just 21 km², where the recorded number of bird species is 54, comes no less exciting news than the rediscovery of Scaly-breasted Thrasher, a Regional endemic not seen there since 1927. Its range had been restricted to small patches of forested mountainside slopes of The Quill, an extinct volcano of 600 m. Whether the bird located 8 Mar (AB) is a relict of the island's original population or a vagrant from its surrounding limited range to the s. is not known. However, given that sufficient habitat on The Quill can be protected or even expanded, an extirpated member of the island's natural heritage could be repatriated.