

the C.B.C. behind El Cuyo 4 Jan (BM, JM, MT, RM), and an ad. male Northern Harrier was sighted flying over a savannah area on the Chunchucmil road e. of Celestún on the C.B.C. 7 Dec (BM, AD, MT). One Great Black-Hawk was at X'cambo 23 Jan (DB); another was watched by members of the Club Toh as it devoured a snake while perched on a snag on the road leading to H.S.A.X. 8 Feb (BM, AE, EG). A Zone-tailed Hawk was sighted 12 km e. of Celestún 7 Dec (BM, AD, MT) and another between Progreso and Uaymitún 23 Jan (DB). A Collared Forest-Falcon was heard and seen briefly on the road to H.S.A.X. 8 Feb (BM, AE, EG, RM).

An ad. Ruddy Crake with one juv. was observed in a mangrove area e. of Celestún 7 Dec. Three Soras were at ponds behind the coast of El Cuyo during the C.B.C. 4 Jan (BM, JM, MT, RM). Other sightings later that day included a flock of 36 Willets and three flocks of Sanderlings totaling 360 in the coastal lagoon 10 km w. of El Cuyo (BM, JM, MT, RM). A total of 16 Marbled Godwits were in the lagoon behind Chixchulub 7 Dec (AE, BM, RM, BS), while a flock of 150 Least Sandpipers was in the coastal lagoon 10 km w. of El Cuyo 4 Jan (BM, JM, MT, RM). About 100 Stilt Sandpipers and 100 Short-billed Dowitchers were seen 23 Jan between Progreso and the X'cambo turn-off (DB). A single Franklin's Gull was reported at Río Lagartos 2 Dec (SNGH, IN), while 4 Gull-billed Terns were seen between Progreso and the X'cambo turn-off 23 Jan (DB). Among the small flock of Caspian Terns at Uaymitún on 7 Dec was a juv. still begging (AE, BM, RM, BS). A total of 15 of these wintering Caspians were on a sandbar 2 km s. of Celestún 14 Dec (BM, AD, MT), while 8 Forster's Terns were reported at Ría Lagartos 2 Dec (SNGH, IN).

A single Zenaida Dove, a species becoming increasingly difficult to find on the Yucatan coast, was seen 8 km w. of El Cuyo 4 Jan (BM, JM, MT, RM). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a regular but never abundant winter resident in the subregion, was reported 22 Jan at Chichén Itza and another at X'cambo the next day (DB). A first for the archeological zone of Muyil at Chunyaxché, Q. Roo, was a single Chestnut-colored Woodpecker 26 Jan (IC). A Bright-rumped Attila, apparently feeding at an ant swarm, was seen in a low tangle under a canopy of deciduous forest along road leading into H.S.A.X. 8 Feb (BM, EG), while a single Wood Thrush was observed in same area that same morning (BM, EG, RM). Five Savannah Sparrows were in the low brush 10 km w. of Telchac Puerto 7 Dec (AE, BM, RM, BS).

Contributors: David Bacab, Ismael Caamal, Alex Dzib, Edwin Gongora, Steve N.G. Howell, Jorge Montejo, Rodrigo Migoya, Ismael Navarro, Beth Scott, Melgar Tabasco. 🐾

Central America



The winter season was an impressive one, especially for El Salvador. Oliver Komar reports: "This winter was one of the most active periods in the history of El Salvador ornithology. Four long-term mist-netting (bird monitoring) stations were established, with monthly visits at Montecristo, El Imposible, and Los Volcanes National Parks, and at a coffee plantation in Izalco. Separately, a team conducted inventory work in pine-oak forests at Montecristo National Park and La Montaña forest. In addition, 22 biologists collaborated to conduct the first park-wide one-day bird count at El Imposible National Park. Finally, local biologists continued with regular waterbird censuses at several freshwater lakes." Now, if we could only have this kind of coverage in the other six countries...

Most Panama records in this season's report are from just two Victor Emanuel Nature Tours led by Marshall Iloff. Imagine how much more useful information could be assembled for this column if other tour operators would start sending in their Central American trip reports!

The string of "country firsts" remains unbroken, with El Salvador's first and second Black-throated Blue Warblers and first and second Audubon's Warblers.

Abbreviations: C.R.N.M. (Costa Rica National Museum); K.U.N.H.M. (University of Kansas Natural History Museum); M.H.N.E.S. (Museo de Historia Natural de El Salvador); V.E.N.T. (Victor Emanuel Nature Tours).

H. Lee Jones

P.O. Box 158

Punta Gorda, Belize

U.S. address:

12188 Central Avenue, #605

Chino, California 91710

(hleejones@verizon.net)

TROPICBIRDS THROUGH DUCKS

The Red-billed Tropicbird is an uncommon visitor off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, but a juv. found freshly dead in the yard of PM well inland at 1800 m in San José de la Montaña, Heredia 6 Feb (*C.R.N.M.) was a truly extraordinary extralimital occurrence. American White Pelicans continue to turn up in C.A. with increasing frequency. Five were seen moving e. down the coast at the Kékoldi raptor migration count station at Hone Cr., Limón 3 Dec. All recent Costa Rica reports have come from the Caribbean coast, mostly from Tortuguero. A group of 38 Brown Pelicans was seen flying east-northeastward over La Democracia, Belize 10 Jan (PB), and 13 were seen flying eastward over Chan Chich Lodge, Orange Walk 13 Feb (SS). Brown Pelicans are occasionally seen flying high overhead in inland Belize, presumably commuting between the coast and Lago Petén Itzá in Guatemala. Thus far, no seasonal pattern

of inland occurrences has been discerned.

American Bitterns were reported in Costa Rica this winter for the first time in nearly a century. One was seen well 20 Jan (†ND) at a small roadside pond on the main road to Quepos about 5 km s. of the turnoff to Playa Hermosa. Two-and-a-half months earlier, on 5 Nov, HH and a British birder (name not given) saw 3 American Bitterns not far away in a roadside marsh between Parrita and Quepos. Photographs were reportedly taken by the British birder. Seldom reported in the Region, Least Bitterns were at Lago de Yojoa, Cortés, Honduras 23 Feb (RG) and at Ammo Dump Pond near Panama City 1 Feb (MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.). A well-seen Agami Heron on Pipeline Road, Soberanía N.P. 4 Feb (ph. MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.) was another trip highlight. **Twenty** Roseate Spoonbills, the largest concentration in El Salvador since 1972, were at Laguna El Jocotal 28 Dec (NH). In Guatemala, at least 2 Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were seen flying in a flock of about 15 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Monterrico, Santa Rosa 24 Dec (KE), and 12 or more Ring-necked Ducks were seen near San Juan on L. Atitlán 4 & 6 Jan (ph. TJ). Both species are rarely reported in Guatemala, although Fulvous Whistling-Ducks are often present in the hundreds at L. Güija on the Guatemala/El Salvador border.

HAWKS THROUGH GULLS

Two ad. Tiny Hawks at Achioté Road near Colón 3 Feb (MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.) were unusual. The 2nd confirmed nesting record of Short-tailed Hawk in El Salvador came 16 Dec when one was seen carrying nesting material at Montecristo N.P., Santa Ana (NH, OK). Three Swainson's Hawks at Tocumen e. of Panama City on the unexpected date of 5 Feb (MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.) were most likely overwintering. In Costa Rica, a Crested Eagle was seen and heard calling at Quebrada González ranger station, Braulio Carrillo N.P. 5 Feb (SW, LC et al.). Typical of a mated pair, 2 Orange-breasted Falcons were observed handing over prey at Tikal N.P. in Guatemala 30 Dec and 1 Jan (KE). A Peregrine Falcon at Toncontín Airport in Tegucigalpa 21 Jan (DAR) was unexpected, as this species is seldom reported on mainland Honduras. Six Crested Guans at Volcán Lakes, Chiriquí 8 Feb (MJI, AB, V.E.N.T.) were at a locality where the species has not previously been reported. The Crested Guan is rare in Chiriquí. Noteworthy was a Spotted Rail seen near Hotel Agua Azul along the shoreline of Lago de Yojoa 28 Jan (DAR, AMc). Although there are only

about six records for Honduras, all have come from Lago de Yojoa. Two Sunbitterns were seen at Río Mendoza on Pipeline Road, Soberanía N.P. 4 Feb (MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.).

Southern Lapwing is now present year-round in Costa Rica; however, no direct evidence of breeding has been obtained. In addition to those seen in the usual places, 2 wintered at a pond at Montaña de Fuego Hotel, Arenal Volcano. An ad. Wattled Jacana at Laguna San Joaquín near San Vito airport 22 Feb (JS, JZ, DM et al.) may have been the same individual reported as a juv. here at about the same time last year. The 4th winter record for Long-billed Curlew in El Salvador was established when one was seen at Punta San Juan, Bahía de Jiquilisco, Usulután 23 Feb (TJ). A Long-billed Curlew has been seen regularly at Panama Viejo since its discovery on 24 Oct 2002. The most recent sighting was on 6 Feb (ph. MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.). All reports presumably pertain to the same individual. Extraordinary were the first three winter records of Pectoral Sandpiper in Costa Rica: one was at the waste-banana dump at El Quizarrá, Guapiles 22 Dec (EC, EV, AG); another was seen a few km e. of the turnoff to La Selva 3–4 Feb (†RiG), and a 3rd was at Tarcoles 23 Feb (RiG). A light-morph ad. Parasitic Jaeger in basic plumage was seen bathing in Río Tortuguero Lagoon near Tortuguero 28 Feb (RK, FA et al.). Jaegers are seldom reported on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica, and most have been juvs., not ads. A third-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Costa del Este e. of Panama City 24 & 29 Feb (RM, KK, GA, JT). There are fewer than 10 records of this species for Panama.

PARAKEETS THROUGH ANTBIRDS

A small flock of Brown-throated Parakeets discovered s. of Playa Zancudo in the Golfo Dulce region 11 & 13 Feb (JD, ph. JH) constitutes the first record of this species in Costa Rica. The North American subspecies *Aratinga pertinax ocularis* was, until now, thought to be endemic to the Pacific slope of Panama. In El Salvador, a pair of White-fronted Parrots at El Imposible N.P., Ahuachapán 30 Dec (NH) represented the first record for the park, and at least six pairs and an active nest in the pine forest at Montecristo N.P. 11–22 Feb (NH) established the first breeding record for Santa Ana. Extraordinary in winter was a Yellow-billed Cuckoo 30 Dec at El Imposible N.P. (†NH). In Costa Rica, 2 Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoos were seen together at 800 m in Rincon de la Vieja N.P. 19 Feb

(RG, BQ et al.). This represents a new location for this very rare species and perhaps the first reported from the Pacific slope. In El Salvador, 2 Whiskered Screech-Owls found in pine-oak forest at Metapán 9 Feb (NH, *K.U.N.H.M., *M.H.N.E.S.) represented yet another first for Santa Ana. Two carefully documented Chestnut-collared Swifts over the Canopy Tower on Semaphore Hill 5 Feb (MJI, CB, JSo) were the first for the Panama Canal area. In Honduras, 10 White-throated Swifts at Celaque N.P. 3 Feb, and 3 Blue-throated Motmots there the next day (both RG), were the first of each species recorded in Lempira.

A Green-fronted Lancebill was seen at Respingo, Chiriquí 10 Feb (AB, V.E.N.T.), and a singing male Brown Violet-ear was at Macho de Monte near Guadalupe, Chiriquí 7 & 10 Feb (ph. MJI, AB, V.E.N.T.). Both of these species are rare and local in Panama. With only one previous park record, the Green Violet-ear was assumed to be a vagrant at El Imposible N.P., but 3 found there 30 Dec (OK) suggest that the species may be resident, at least in winter. A male Rufous-crested Coquette at Cerro Azul n. of Panama City 5 Feb (MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.) was in an area where it is rarely reported. A male Amazon Kingfisher at Río Acelhuate near Colima 13 Dec (TJ) was the first recorded in Cuscatlán and only the 3rd reported in El Salvador since 1975. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported more frequently in Costa Rica this winter than in most winters. A Strong-billed Woodcreeper, rare in El Salvador, was at La Montañona, Chalaténango 6 Feb (OK). A family of Wing-banded Antbirds seen about midway along the Pipeline Road 4 Feb (ph. MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.) was noteworthy, as this species is rarely seen in Panama.

TYRANT-FLYCATCHERS THROUGH THRUSHES

A previously unknown, perhaps recently established population of Ochre-bellied Flycatchers was discovered in pine-oak forest at Montecristo N.P. near the Honduras border 11 Feb, when one was captured in a mist-net (ph. JRS). Four others were collected there 11–22 Feb (NH, *K.U.N.H.M.). Two Yellow-green Tyrannulets were seen at Metro Park, Panama City 6 Feb (MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.). This Panama endemic is seldom reported. Another first for *Gracias a Dios* was a pair of Gray-collared Becards observed in Celaque N.P. 20 Jan (RG). Throughout much of its restricted range in C.A., the Lovely Cotinga is as rare as it is beautiful, so 3 in two days in Guatemala (KE) is an accomplishment.

A male was at El Ceibal, *Petén* 28 Dec, and a pair was at Yaxhá, also in *Petén*, the next day. Although a common winter visitor in ne. Central America, White-eyed Vireo is rarely seen as far s. as Costa Rica, so an imm. seen in the Selva Verde Lodge Botanical Garden 20–21 Jan (RiG, CK, JTy) was quite unexpected.

As recently as 1987, Brown-capped Vireo was still considered hypothetical in El Salvador; however, it has since proven to be fairly common in three cloud forest sites. The first photographic documentation of its occurrence came 20 Jan, when one was mist-netted in Montecristo N.P. (JRS). A Common Raven was seen at the Santa Barbara city dump 27 Jan (AMc); this species is seldom reported in Honduras, although it may be more common than the few records would indicate. Four Black-capped Swallows seen in Celaque N.P. 22 Feb (RG) represented only the 2nd Honduras record in over 40 years. Although there are now a number of sight reports of Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in El Salvador, the first photographic documentation was obtained 30 Dec (OK) in El Imposible N.P. Additionally, 3 observed 6 Feb at La Montañona (OK) were the first reported in *Chalatenango*. Three Wood Thrushes were reported at two sites in El Salvador this winter: singles banded at Los Volcanes N.P. 20 Nov and 18 Feb (ph. JRS) and one at El Imposible N.P. 30 Dec (TJ). About one bird per season is the norm. In Costa Rica, Wood Thrushes appeared to be more numerous than in most winters.

WARBLERS THROUGH MUNIAS

Two Nashville Warblers were reported in El Salvador this winter: one at Izalco, *Sonsonate* 21 Dec and another near Tacuba, *Ahuachapán* 30 Dec (both OK). Two Northern Parulas were reported in Guatemala: one at Monterrico, *Santa Rosa* 22 Dec (TJ) and another at Rocjá Pomtilá se. of Lachuá, *Alta Verapaz* 24 Feb (JC, RC). In Costa Rica, a Northern Parula was at Tapanti N.P. 14 Dec (LC), and Cape May Warblers were at Universidad Tecnológica, Cartago 14 Dec (LC), Hacienda Guachipelin, Rincon de la Vieja 18 Feb (BQ), and Savegre Mt. Lodge, Cerro de la Muerte 2 Mar (RZ, CS). All of these warblers are rare winter visitors in these countries. One species and one subspecies of warbler were recorded for the first time in El Salvador this winter. A female Black-throated Blue Warbler was at Los Volcanes N.P. 16 Jan (ph. JRS) and a male was just outside the entrance to Montecristo N.P. 11 Feb (HM). El Salvador's first Audubon's Warbler was seen

at Lago de Güija, *Santa Ana* 29 Dec (ph. NH). Less than a month later, at least 4 were at La Montañona 24 Jan (ph. TJ). Two ad. male Golden-cheeked Warblers were present at Montecristo N.P. 15 Dec (EM), establishing the first winter records for El Salvador. Another was present 14 Feb (NH, EM, MR). One of these birds was near the locality of an individual reported last Oct. In Honduras, a Golden-cheeked at the Copán Ruins Archaeological Park 4 Feb (RG) established the first record for *Copán*. A Hermit Warbler at Cerrón Grande de Apaneca, *Ahuachapán* 28 Dec (AM) was the 3rd recorded in the coastal volcanoes region of El Salvador. Four Yellow-throated Warblers were reported in El Salvador this winter, doubling the number of previous country records. One at Merliot, *La Libertad* 13 Dec (ph. TJ) was the 2nd from the coastal volcanic highlands. In the interior highlands, 2 were at Montecristo N.P. 16 Dec (OK), and another was at La Montañona 24 Jan (TJ). The species may be more common in winter in the interior mts. near the Honduras border than the few records indicate. In Costa Rica, a Yellow-throated Warbler was at Talari Mountain Lodge 29 Dec (JB).

A Blackpoll Warbler seen at L. Arenal 26 Dec (†SH) provided one of the very few winter records for Costa Rica, and a Prothonotary Warbler at Monterrico, *Santa Rosa* 21 Dec (TJ) provided one of the few winter records for Guatemala. In Costa Rica, a Masked Yellowthroat in a wet pasture at about 1100 m elevation along the San Isidro–Dominical Rd. near Alto de San Juan Isidro 8 Dec (NU) may have established the northernmost record for the species. A male Hooded Warbler at Hotel Perkin Lenca in Perquín 27 Dec (TJ) was the first recorded in *Morazán* since 1976. The last time Red-faced Warbler was recorded in El Salvador was in 1980, so one at Montecristo N.P. 16 Dec (OK) was unexpected, and 3 at Cerrón Grande de Apaneca 28 Dec (AM) were noteworthy. The impressive numbers of Red-faced Warblers, as well as other rare warblers, in El Salvador this winter were at least partially the result of increased observer effort.

A male Western Tanager was at the Canopy Tower 7 Feb (ph. MJI, CB, V.E.N.T.). This apparently represents the first record for cen. Panama. A female Elegant Euphonia in Montecristo N.P. 16 Dec (OK) was the first recorded there since the 1970s, and a Blue Seedeater in El Imposible N.P. 30 Dec (OK) established the 9th record for El Salvador. All records to date have been between Oct

and Feb, so it may be a winter visitor only. An ad. male Black-headed Grosbeak at Mirador de Quetzal, Km 70 of the Pan-American Hwy s. of San José 18 Jan (DC), established one of the few records for Costa Rica. Except for Belize (one record) and heavily birded Costa Rica, the species may be unrecorded s. of Mexico.

A group of 23 Melodious Blackbirds in the Garrigues' yard in the greater San José area 14 Feb (DG) is the largest concentration yet recorded in Costa Rica. Although this species is now well-established in the country, it has hitherto been recorded only in small groups. A male Bullock's Oriole, rare as far s. as Costa Rica, was at Santa Rosa N.P. in late Feb (JE). Three Red Crossbills, representing El Salvador's 4th record, were seen 16 Dec in Montecristo N.P. (ph. NH, OK), where 5 were reported last Oct. Lesser Goldfinches continue to be seen in the Orange Walk area of Belize, where the species was first reported in 1998. The population appears to be stable. Belize's 2nd record of Tricolored Munias came just five months after the first, when 3 were seen at Booth's R., *Orange Walk* 10 Jan (JU).

Undocumented: Tawny-chested Flycatcher is a little known Central American endemic restricted to the Caribbean slope of e. Nicaragua and ne. Costa Rica. One reported near the village of Las Mariás in the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve, *Gracias a Dios* 14 Feb and briefly described would represent the first record for Honduras, if substantiated.

Contributors (country coordinators in boldface): Fred Alsop, **David Anderson** (Honduras), **George Angehr** (Panama), David Arbour (DAR), Philip Balderamos, Abdiel Baulas, Carlos Bethancourt, Johan Bogaert, Javier Caal, Roberto Caal, Ernesto Carman, Leo Chaves, Dennis Coskren, Normand David, Jerry Donahue, **Knut Eismann** (Guatemala), Jesse Ellis, Robert Gallardo, Alice Gama, David Garrigues, Richard Garrigues (RiG), Steve Heini, Néstor Herrera, Humberto Hildago, Jon Hunter, Marshall J. Iloff, Tom Jenner, Lee Jones (Belize), Karl Kaufmann, Chris Knight, Rick Knight, **Oliver Komar** (El Salvador), Paco Madrigal, Andy McClelland (AMc), Daniel Martínez, Esmeralda Martínez, Hernán Miranda, Rosabel Miró, Alvaro Moises, Bob Quinn, Marvin Rivas, Julio Sánchez, Jennifer R. Smith, Steve Smith, José Soto (JSO), Carol Sykes, José Tejada, John Tyrie (JTy), Jonathan Urbina, Noel Ureña, Elaida Villanueva, Soo Whiting, Ric Zarwell, **James R. Zook** (Costa Rica). 🐦