

# West Indies & Bermuda

## Robert L. Norton

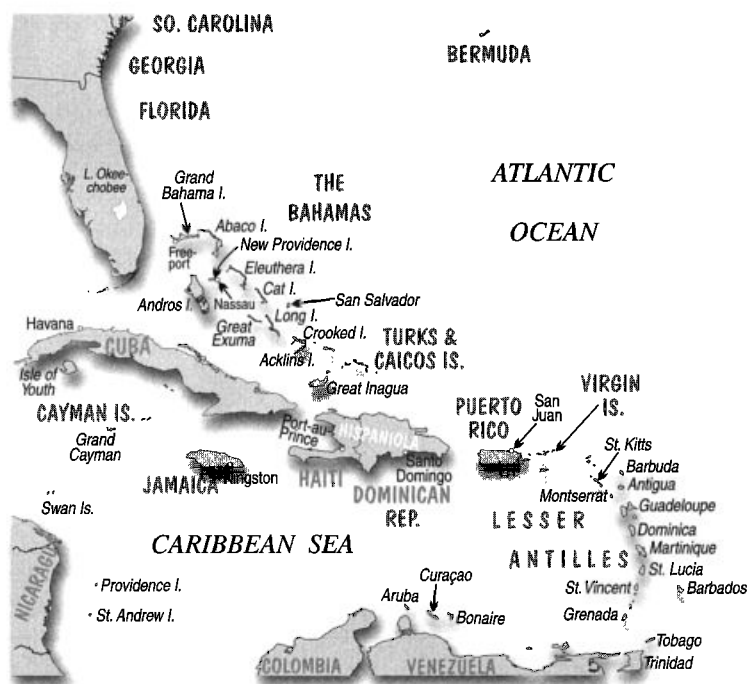
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## PETRELS THROUGH TERNS

Three Audubon's Shearwaters off Peterson Cay, Grand Bahama 7 Feb (NM) were unusual for midwinter. A cruise aboard the *Sea Cloud* through the e. Caribbean from St. Vincent n. to Antigua 3–10 Jan (V.E.N.T.) recorded four sulid species with Brown, Red-footed, and Masked Boobies all seen near Roca Redonda, along with an ad. Northern Gannet close to the boat 9 Jan. A Northern Gannet at Ferry Reach, Bermuda 8 Jan (PH) was the first of 3 imms. to appear there in Jan.

On Cuba, a team from Rouge River Bird Observatory led by Julie Craves, with resident experts William Suarez (Museum of Natural History, Havana) and Orlando Garrido, the museum's Curator Emeritus, surveyed birds primarily in the Zapata N.P. area to Soplillar

region and Cayo Coco 7–19 Feb. Among many other interesting reports, noted below, they found an American White Pelican 1 Feb at Las Salinas, which furnished the 9th Cuban record (JC). A Double-crested Cormorant at Arecibo, Puerto Rico 14 Dec (JAC) was unusual there. A Least Bittern was found at Embalse Ejercito Rebelde, Havana 30 Jan (JC et al.). In the Bahamas, American Bitterns were at Wilson's Pond, New Providence 14 Dec (PD, LL) and Bahama Star Groves, Abaco 27 Feb (EB, MS). Bermuda's 3rd Little Egret was discovered at Spittal Pond 5 Feb (IF). A rare Glossy Ibis was on Bermuda at the airport 15 Dec–29 Feb+ (DH). A group of about 100 Glossy Ibis was seen at Trou Caiman, Haiti 31 Jan (JRC), where receding water levels provided good feeding habitat. A White Ibis at

Caño Tiburones, n. Puerto Rico in Jan was unusual there (*vide* RR). Seven Wood Storks were found at Las Salinas, Cuba 1 Feb, about the same number seen the previous year, while Greater Flamingos numbered 470 there 4 Feb, apparently down from the previous year's count, although the tide was down during this survey (JC et al.). Flying over Andros, Bahamas, JS located an airborne flock of about 400 Greater Flamingos 30 Dec; the flock consisted of about 30 to 40 per cent juvs. A rare Greater Flamingo at Savannah Sound, Eleuthera 31 Dec (TT) was also noteworthy.

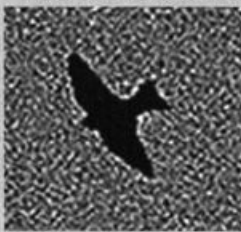
Five wintering Canada Geese was a record high for Bermuda, with 4 at Spittal Pond and one at Jubilee Road 11 Dec–29 Feb+ (AD). In the Bahamas, single Canada Geese were reported at Reef G.C., Grand Bahama 16–20

**SA** A month-long series of Rapid Biological Inventories (R.B.I.) in Feb co-sponsored by the Field Museum (Chicago), Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and several Cuban organizations (including BioEco and the University of Santiago de Cuba) covered e. Cuba this winter, primarily the La Bayamesa area in the Sierra Maestra range of w. Granma and s. Santiago de Cuba provinces and the La Melba–Baracoa sectors of Parque Alejandro de Humboldt in Holguin and Guantanamo provinces (AF, Tim Barksdale, Greg Budney, Freddy Rodriguez, Ken Rosenberg, Doug Stotz). During these surveys the teams made several important discoveries, among them the documentation of dozens of **Black-capped Petrels** seen from the shore near the town of Uvero (s. coast of Granma province) 9 Feb (25 birds) and 24 Feb (46 birds). Most birds were noted beyond 100 m from shore, generally moving closer to shore just after local sunset. After dark, a number of the birds moved into a small inlet and were seen and heard flying inland up a small valley.

Breeding has been suspected in this rather isolated area (connected by road to Santiago only in 1962) since the late 1970s, when four specimens were taken "on the coastal mountain La Bruja between Uvero and Ocuja in Sierra Maestra by Dr. Nicasio Viña Bayes" on 29 Jan 1977 (Bond, J. 1978. Twenty-second Supplement to the *Check-List of Birds of the West Indies*. Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia). O. H. Garrido and A. Kirkconnell (2000. *Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York) list this site as "Las Brujas" (The Witches), also famous in the region as the subject of a legend speaking of the eerie and tortured sounds of "the spirit from La Bruja." The R.B.I. team, accompanied by Dr. Viña, felt confident, after discussions with local people, that the petrels' calls were indeed the source of this legend; however, as in other Spanish-speaking American cultures, the "witch/bird" might refer to almost any nocturnal bird. A widespread Caribbean name for Black-capped Petrel, "Diablotin" (Devil), is echoed in many old vernacular names for other gadfly petrels. While the precise location of nesting grounds and the total numbers of birds in the area remain unknown, it seems likely that a small population nests in the high peaks of the Sierra Maestra range.

**SA** A Cuban Martin—a “displaying” male at Punta Jagüey, Cabo Rojo N.W.R. in extreme sw. Puerto Rico—was photographed and voice-recorded by Brinkley and Armistead and observed simultaneously by John Puschock and Tom Rodriguez 22 Jan. (This date is close to the earliest spring arrival date, 27 Jan, of the species on Cuba but about a month before most return there; the wintering range of the species is unknown.) The bird circled the small peninsula many times, affording remarkably good views of the typically obscure pale plumage (thus the specific name *cryptoleuca*) of the ventral area. The bird’s repeated vocalizations were “unlike anything heard from Purple Martin,” “close to the rollicking song of Caribbean Martin,” and “almost mockingbird-like in quality.” The dark-bodied male was pursued in flight by four white-bellied female-type martins, all of which could well have been Cuban Martins but which were not carefully studied, as the observers concentrated on photographing and recording the adult male. The latter birds were noted to be very similar in plumage to female Caribbean Martin. Though the observers have no previous field experience with Cuban Martin, they are familiar with Southern, Peruvian, Purple, Caribbean, Sinaloa, Gray-breasted, and Brown-chested Martins.

Away from Cuba, only one other record of Cuban Martin has been confirmed, that of an immature male collected at



Key West, Florida 9 May 1895 (Banks, R. C. 2000. The Cuban Martin in Florida. *Florida Field Naturalist* 28: 50–52). Puerto Rican birders, however, report that several dark-bellied male martins, all unidentified, have been seen over the years on Puerto Rico, and that one apparently nested on the n. coast. Further details on this record will be published in this journal.

The first Cuban Martin for Puerto Rico was voice-recorded and photographed at Punta Jagüey, very near the Cabo Rojo lighthouse, in southwestern Puerto Rico 22 January 2004. Photograph by Edward S. Brinkley.

Dec (EG, BH, m. ob.) and South Ocean G.C., New Providence 27 Dec (JB); 2 Snow Geese were with the Canada at Reef G.C., and another 2 were at Ford’s Landing, Long Island 3 Dec (FM). In Bermuda, 10 Snow Geese wintered between Outerlea Farm and Mid-Ocean G. C. Some 30–40 American Black Ducks arrived following a storm on 15 Jan at Bermuda (AD). A female Eurasian Wigeon was at Warwick Pond, Bermuda 1 Feb (EA), and up to 2 males were at Laguna Cartagena N.W.R., Puerto Rico in Jan (*vide* RR). Gadwalls are rare in the Bahamas, but a drake was at Lyford Cay 26 Feb+ (AW, CW, ABA, ph). A single American Wigeon was noted at Fresh Pond, St. Martin on 5 Feb (AB). The C.B.C. on 17 Dec found 3 Northern Shovelers at Emerald G.C., Grand Bahama. A male Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal stayed on Warwick Pond, Bermuda 25 Jan–29 Feb+ (SR). A flock of 15 Lesser Scaup was seen at Embalse Ejercito Rebelde, Havana 30 Jan (JC et al.). A Bufflehead was noted at Lowlands Pond, St. Martin 22 Jan (AB) for perhaps the first record from the Lesser Antilles. A White-winged Scoter seen at Fairylands Creek, Bermuda 22 Jan (DBW) was picked up dead 24 Jan, while another was at Somerset Long Bay, Bermuda 25 Jan–29 Feb+ (AD, SR); these represent only the 3rd and 4th records for Bermuda. Fourteen wintering Hooded Mergansers was a Bermuda seasonal record (AD), while a female Common Merganser at Watford Bridge, Bermuda 25 Jan (PJH) was very rare there.

Two Crested Caracaras were seen along the highway between Havana and Zapata 31 Jan (JC). A Gundlach’s Hawk, the rarest *Accipiter* in the Region, was noted near the Parque Alejandro de Humboldt 12–21 Feb (AF et al.). We again received stunning documentation of a female Marsh Harrier (again of the nominate subspecies, sometimes split as Western Marsh Harrier) in the Region—this time from

Laguna Cartagena N.W.R., Puerto Rico 20–30 Jan (ph. RR, m. ob.), where a Northern Harrier also wintered. This constitutes the 2nd Regional and New World record (see N.A.B. 57: 564–565). A Northern Harrier at Grog Pond, Great Exuma, Bahamas 17 Jan (BM) was unusual there. A Purple Gallinule was on Paget Marsh Pond, Bermuda 6 Jan–Feb+ (AD); the species is almost annual on Bermuda. A nest of Yellow-breasted Crane was a superb find at the Humacao refuge, s. Puerto Rico in Jan (*vide* RR). The Bahamas’ first Sandhill Crane remained on a farm on North Andros during the first two weeks of Dec (ph. RS).

A Piping Plover was seen throughout the winter to at least 26 Feb at Petite-Terre Nature Reserve, Guadeloupe (AL). Piping Plovers in the Bahamas included 8 at Barbary Beach, Grand Bahama 17 Dec (AW, C.B.C.), 5 near Winding Bay, Eleuthera 4 Jan (DC), 2 at Forfar Research Station, Andros 21–24 Feb (EBS), and 10–15 at Green Turtle Cay throughout Feb (EB). During Feb, Bracey also found up to 100 Dunlin, 10–15 Red Knots, 40–50 Sanderlings, and 25 Western Sandpipers at Green Turtle Cay. A Solitary, a White-rumped, and a Pectoral Sandpiper lingered at Jubilee Road, Bermuda, before departing in early Dec (AD). Up to 129 Stilt Sandpipers frequented mangrove mudflats s. of Guanica, Puerto Rico 21–25 Jan (ESB, GLA). An injured Red Phalarope found on Point Finger Road, Bermuda 31 Jan (JG) provided a rare winter specimen record when it died several days later.

A Pomarine Jaeger flew past Dockyard, Hamilton, Bermuda 28 Dec (PJH). A Parasitic Jaeger was seen 5 Feb in the Gulf Stream between Port Everglades, Florida and Grand Bahama (RN). Of the smaller gulls to arrive at Bermuda, a first-winter Black-headed Gull was at Rockaway 28 Jan (IF, PW), a flock of 15 Bonaparte’s Gulls was over Spittal Pond in Jan

(JM, SR), and a single Black-legged Kittiwake was at Watford Bridge 9 Dec (PJH). A first-winter Bonaparte’s Gull was at Emerald G.C., Grand Bahama 15–19 Dec (BH, m. ob.). Ten Ring-billed Gulls were seen at Embalse Ejercito Rebelde, Havana 30 Jan, and one was noted at Las Salinas 1 Feb (JC et al.).

It was a big year for gulls in the Region, with numbers of Herring, Lesser Black-backed, and Great Black-backed Gulls wintering as far s. as St. Kitts. In the Bahamas, 3 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at Arawak Cay, New Providence 14 Dec (SB, LG, C.B.C.), 3 were at West End, Grand Bahama 16 Dec (BH, T&JG, AW), and 5 were at Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 11 Feb (AW). Single Great Black-backed Gulls were seen on Grand Bahama 16 Dec (BH, T&JG, AW) and 6 Feb (RN, SN), with one on Dog I., Anguilla 25 Jan and 4 at St. Martin throughout Feb (both AB). A Great Black-backed Gull was observed at Great Pond, St. Martin 26 Feb (AB). Herring Gulls numbered up to 10 at various sites around Cayo Coco, Cuba 19–24 Feb. At St. Kitts, a second-winter Herring Gull was seen along with a Lesser Black-backed Gull on 21 Feb (AB). A single Herring Gull was noted at Embalse Ejercito Rebelde, Havana 30 Jan. During a Cuban field ornithology course conducted at Cayo Coco in Feb, Peter Burke recorded a Great Black-backed Gull 27 Feb at Cayo Guillermo, near Cayo Coco, as well as a Lesser Black-backed Gull on the bridge from Cayo Romero to Cayo Coco that day. A Glaucous Gull was noted along North Shore, Bermuda 15 Jan (JM). A third-year Iceland Gull was seen with Ring-billed Gulls at near Port Lucaya, Grand Bahama 8 Feb (RN, SN, p.a.), representing the first record from the Bahamas and apparently the Caribbean (there are several records from Bermuda). Details will be published elsewhere. A Royal Tern was seen in St. George’s, Bermuda in Dec (PW). A single Gull-billed Tern was noted at Las Salinas, Cuba 1 Feb (JC).

### QUAIL-DOVES THROUGH PIPITS

The Cuban endemic Gray-headed Quail-Dove (now split by most authorities from Hispaniolan Quail-Dove) was noted at both La Bayamesa in the Sierra Maestra and in Parque Alejandro de Humboldt (AF et al.), while a single Key West Quail-Dove and 3 Gray-headed Quail-Doves were noted at Bermejas, Cuba 2 Feb (JC). Eurasian Collared-Doves apparently are out-competing Mourning Doves at Abaco, Bahamas (EB); Mourning Doves were formerly more common at disturbed areas such as the dump, and at fruit and chicken farms, but their numbers are now eclipsed by collared-doves at such sites. East of La Parguera, Puerto Rico, collared-doves appear to have hybridized with “Ringed Turtle-Doves” in several sites, as observed in Jan (ESB, GLA). Six Zenaida Doves at Shannon G.C., Grand Bahama 26 Dec was a good count (EG).

Cuban Parakeets are still considered relatively scarce on Zapata Peninsula, where 2 were seen at Bermejas 2 Feb (JC et al.). Cuban Parakeets numbered 73 at Parque Alejandro de Humboldt 12–21 Feb, while Cuban Parrots numbered 71 at Parque Alejandro de Humboldt and near Santiago, Cuba 12–28 Feb (AF et al.); about 50 were noted from 2–4 Feb at Palpite, Soplillar, and Bermejas (JC). The Abaco C.B.C. 5 Jan found 177 Cuban Parrots in the count circle that includes Abaco N.P. The V.E.N.T. tour recorded one Imperial and up to 150 Red-necked Parrots at the Syndicate, Dominica 8–9 Jan, a tribute to the parrot recovery work (PBr et al.); one St. Lucia and 10 St. Vincent Parrots were also seen on their respective islands 5–6 Jan (V.E.N.T.).

Three Short-eared Owls were seen at Bermuda's airport 2 Jan (PW). At Hole-in-the-Wall, Abaco, Bahamas, a Chuck-will's-widow was seen 26 Jan (EB, HP). A Greater Antillean (Cuban) Nightjar roosting in a tree at Bermejas provided nice looks 2 Feb (JC). Two Bee Hummingbirds were noted n. of Playa Larga 1 Feb (JC). The Bahamas' and Region's 2nd Red-bellied Woodpecker, a male, was at West End, Grand Bahama 16 Dec (BH, AW, T&JG)—not 15 m from where the first, a female, was found 17 Feb 1999. On 12 Feb, SD found a Hairy Woodpecker at Rock Sound, Eleuthera—the first for that island. Five Ferdinandina's Flickers were seen at Bermejas 2 Feb (JC et al.). In the Bahamas, an Eastern Wood-Pewee was at Rock Sound, Eleuthera 2 Feb (SD), and on 15 Jan, single Eastern Phoebes were seen at Stanniard Cr., Andros (MB) and Treasure Cay, Abaco (EB). **Giant Kingbird**, now a single-island endemic with the extirpation of the Bahamas population, numbered as many as 8 between La Bayamesa in the Sierra Maestra and the Parque Alejandro de Humboldt 2–21 Feb (AF et al.).

A single Yellow-throated Vireo was noted at Bermejas 2 Feb (JC), and another was seen at Parque Alejandro de Humboldt (AF). At a mist-netting site named Rak Bwa in the Macaya Biosphere Reserve, Haiti, 11 Golden Swallows, a Threatened endemic, were recorded 7–11 Feb (CR et al.), with at least one pair behaving as if it were prospecting for a nest site.

Three endemic Zapata Wrens were encountered 31 Jan along Río Hatiguanico Canal (JC). A high count of 10 Cuban Gnatcatchers was noted at Cayo Paredon Grande, Cuba 4 Feb (JC). A well-documented report of **Bicknell's Thrush** on 14 Dec at Hog Bay N.P., Sandys, Bermuda (PJH) is only the 2nd winter record there.

The first of 3 Horned Larks was at Bermuda Airport 31 Jan (EA). Ten American Robins wintered around Morgan's Pt., Bermuda (AD). Two or three Forest Thrushes were located 8 Jan on Dominica (V.E.N.T.); this is one of the hardest endemics to find in the Region. At Cayo Coco on 5 Feb, JC et al. counted 7 Gray

Catbirds; one at Arecibo, Puerto Rico on 14 Dec was one of the few records in the e. Greater Antilles (JAS). An American Pipit was at Spittal Pond, Bermuda in early Dec (DW). Bermuda's and the Region's 2nd record of **Bohemian Waxwing** was of a single bird at Port Royal G.C. 18 Jan (SR); the first record was of a flock of 5 in 2001!

### WARBLERS THROUGH SISKINS

A male Blue-winged Warbler was seen at Loma de Cunagua, Cuba 19 Feb, and a first-year Nashville Warbler was on Cayo Coco 14 Feb (both PB). An Orange-crowned Warbler was noted at Coral Harbour, New Providence 24 Jan (PD, ABa, LH, AW), and another was at Treasure Cay dump, Abaco, Bahamas 28 Feb (EB). A Yellow Warbler was at St. George's G.C., Bermuda 10 Jan (PW). A Chestnut-sided Warbler at Ferry Point Park, Bermuda 14 Dec (SR) provided only the 3rd wintering record. Other unusual winter records were of a Blackpoll Warbler at Lagoon Park, Bermuda 28 Dec (DW) and a Kentucky Warbler at Morgan's Pt., Bermuda 31 Dec (AD, DW). A Worm-eating Warbler was seen at Fermanthe, Haiti, at elevation 1350 m 14 Feb (JRC). Five Swainson's Warblers were netted at Rak Bwa and at Plaine Boef, Haiti 7–14 Feb (CR et al.), providing the first documentation of the species in Haiti; another 5 were recorded on various dates from 18–27 Feb on Cayo Coco, including 2 mist-netted birds (PB). A single Swainson's Warbler netted at Anguilla (AD) on 17 Jan may be the first such record e. of the Virgin Islands (RN). Another was at Owen's Town, Andros, Bahamas 9 & 12 Jan (MB). At Humacao Marsh, e. Puerto Rico, DF found a male Mourning Warbler on 24 Feb. Over 50 Bahama Yellowthroats were counted at Bahama Star Grove, Abaco, Bahamas on 24 & 27 Feb (HP, BB, EB), a remarkably high number. White-winged Warbler, a Hispaniolan endemic, was found at Rak Bwa, Haiti, where CR et al. found small groups of 3–8 birds 7–11 Feb. Three Zapata Sparrows, another Cuban endemic, were seen along Río Hatiguanico Canal, while 2 were at Cayo Coco 5 Feb (JC). A Lark Sparrow was a genuine surprise on tiny Horn Rock, Bermuda 1 Dec (JM). A Lincoln's Sparrow was noted on 24 Feb at Bahama Star Grove, Abaco (EB). Six wintering Swamp Sparrows made a winter maximum at Bermuda (AD). A Lapland Longspur was a

good find by AD at Bermuda's airport 7 Feb. Two Blue Grosbeaks at Spittal Pond Farm, Bermuda 14 Dec (AD, JG) provided a rare winter record.

Eight Tawny-shouldered Blackbirds were noted throughout the period from 12–28 Feb at Parque Alejandro de Humboldt and Santiago, Cuba (AF et al.). On 24 Feb, DF counted 403 Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds leaving their roost at dawn near La Parguera, Puerto Rico. Six of Cuba's resident Eastern Meadowlarks were noted sparingly throughout Feb (AF). A study of this insular population's genetics may prove interesting. Up to 10 Hispaniolan Crossbills were noted from 11–14 Feb in small flocks at Plaine Boef, Haiti (CR et al.). An influx of **Common Redpolls** in mid-Dec at Bermuda provided sightings from Dockyard to St. Georges, with the largest flocks being of 9 at Gibb's Hill Lighthouse 14 Dec (EA) and 30 at Shelly Hall 9 Jan (DBW). Three Pine Siskins (the first since 1986) were seen on Morgan's Pt., Bermuda 14 Dec (EA). At Fermanthe, Haiti, JRC found several Antillean Siskins 14 Feb.

**Addendum:** The Little Stint photographed at Montserrat was reported by Eddie Massiah and Bo Dalsgaard (ph.); this was the 4th Little Stint seen by Massiah in the West Indies, the other 3 being recorded from Barbados.

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**SA** Some of the **Bicknell's Thrush** habitat in Haiti is located in the Morne Cavalier, a mesic limestone forest situated on the sw. peninsula of the Macaya Biosphere Reserve, which is threatened with fragmentation from encroaching agriculture and by cutting for fuel (FS). Twelve of 14 Bicknell's Thrushes encountered in the study areas Rak Bwa and Plaine Boef from 7–14 Feb were netted and measured, thus confirmed here for the first time. CR has done similar work in the Dominican Republic portion of Hispaniola, where the highest known densities of wintering Bicknell's Thrush occur. The Macaya work, though preliminary, suggests that there may be habitat segregation by sex and even age, which could have important implications for species survivorship here. A dedicated group of Haitian conservationists and international planners has been working to protect the Biosphere Reserve and other habitats that support Neotropical migrants and the high level of endemic bird fauna of the region.