

West Indies & Bermuda

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March and April at Bermuda remained cool, but a huge high-pressure area that sat over Bermuda for much of May prevented the influx of most spring migrants, just as the southwesterly and southerly winds on the western edge of the high allowed migrants to overfly much of the American East. As observed from Bermuda, the spring passages of pelagic species, shorebirds, and landbird has shown consistent downward trends in numbers and diversity, even when weather conditions are favourable for bringing migrants to the archipelago. Among the highlights for Bermuda this spring were a California Gull (first island record), a Little Egret (Bermuda's third), displaying Red-tailed Hawks, and a Northern Gannet.

Five new species were recorded for the Ba-

hamas. Unfortunately only two of the birds (Pacific Golden-Plover and Fork-tailed Flycatcher) were photographed. All reports will be submitted to the Bahamas Avian Records Committee. In support of the Bahamas Important Bird Areas Program, Lynn Gape and Lisa Sorenson visited Great Inagua in April to train local birders in surveying and monitoring techniques. They increased the skills and enthusiasm of the residents and laid out three transects for regular monitoring. They also had some noteworthy bird sightings.

Abbreviations: B.A.R.C. (Bahamas A.R.C.); H.W.P.N.P. (Harrold & Wilson Ponds N.P., New Providence, Bahamas).

PETRELS THROUGH ALCIDS

A Black-capped Petrel was seen with a flock

of Audubon's Shearwaters e. of Man-o'-War Cut, Abaco, Bahamas 14 May (BW). Three Cory's Shearwaters were observed 10 km e. of Elbow Cay, Great Abaco, Bahamas 24 May (EB), while 2 were in Exuma Sound, Bahamas 29 May (NM). Numbers of Manx Shearwaters were passing Elbow Beach, Bermuda 16 Mar (AD), but the subsequent shearwater passage was very sparse, owing to unfavorable winds. At least 4 Wilson's Storm-Petrels were flying in Exuma Sound near Ocean Rock at the n. end of the Exumas, Bahamas 24 Apr, with a single there 29 May (NM); 4 were 8 km e. of Elbow Cay, Abaco 24 May (EB).

Some 15+ Red-billed Tropicbirds were seen prospecting nest sites along the ne. coast of Barbuda 29 Feb-1 Mar (ABr). A Red-footed Booby was seen feeding with a

SA Lee and Mackin have published a paper documenting the decline of the White-tailed Tropicbird colony on Warderick Wells, Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park from 30-50 pairs in 1991 to just five pairs this spring (Lee, D. S., and W. Mackin. 2004. Demise of a White-tailed Tropicbird colony in the Exumas Land and Sea Park. *Bahamas Journal of Science* 11.2: 2-12). The paper is critical of the Bahamas National Trust for failing to protect these birds despite numerous entreaties from biologists. The park headquarters and the home of the warden are located near the nesting areas, and the warden has given his dogs run of the island. These dogs are believed to have killed or driven off the nesting birds. The warden has not honored repeated requests from researchers and conservationists to control the dogs; appeals to the Trust headquarters in Nassau have been equally ineffective (WM). Bahamian reports of the species away from Exumas included three reports from the n. end of the species' range in the Abacos: one prospecting a nest-site at Great Guana Cay 14 Mar (NS, KS), 12 near Hole-in-the-Wall 4 Apr (ABA), and one chased by a Pomarine Jaeger off Hopetown 16 May (BW). The species is regular enough in the Bahamas as not to be reported specifically by local observers or visitors, but in view of local extirpations, we welcome all reports of this and other breeding seabird species.

A decline in nesting White-tailed Tropicbirds has also been noticed on Bermuda, where many traditional nest sites have been lost to erosion (mostly due to hurricane damage) and development. In addition, there has been a sudden dearth of records from the Gulf Stream off North Carolina, which had no confirmed reports of the species in 2003 or 2004 (in contrast to the years 1994-2002) but over 20 sightings of Red-billed Tropicbirds from the pelagic trips from the state's Outer Banks.

large flock of Sooty Terns 8–13 km ese. of Hopetown, Abaco 14 May (BW). Four Northern Gannets were seen s. of Grand Bahama 1 Apr (ABA), an ad. was off Hole-in-the-Wall, Abaco 4 Apr (ABA), and a third-year bird was in Exuma Sound 29 May (NM). An imm. remained around Bermuda until 18 May (AD). American White Pelicans are very rare in the Bahamas, but reports from bone-fishermen of one in the Marls, Abaco 20–22 Mar (SRu, NR, TWr) appear to be reliable. Three Brown Pelicans

Centre 3 Apr (EG). Over 8000 Greater (Caribbean) Flamingos were feeding at the w. end of L. Rosa, Great Inagua 17 Apr (LG, LS, S.N.B.C.); an imm. appeared at Barbados 22 May (EM).

A Canada Goose was on Great Exuma, where very rare, 21 Apr–13 May (BM). The Gadwall at Lyford Cay, New Providence was last seen 29 Mar (AB, JD); one at Somerset Long Bay N.R., Bermuda was last seen 7 Apr (DBW). A flock of 18 American Wigeons flew onto Grand Bahama from the s. 1 Apr

Hamilton Harbour Is., Bermuda 9 May (PW). A pair of Red-tailed Hawks has been seen displaying regularly over Morgan's Pt., Bermuda since mid-Mar (AD et al.). A Purple Gallinule was at Paget Marsh, Bermuda 19 Mar (DBW). Purple Gallinules in the Bahamas were reported from H.W.P.N.P. 18 Mar (BHa), Cable Beach 28 May (CW), both on New Providence, and on Great Abaco at Leisure Lee, 4 Apr (ph. JHB), Marsh Harbour 6 Apr (ABA), Hopetown 10 May (RP), and Treasure Cay 20 May (EB). Four Soras were at Pelletan Pond, Guadeloupe 2 Mar (AL).

The Bahamas' first Pacific Golden-Plover visited Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 6 Mar–1 Apr (SD, m. ob., ph.). Experts have studied the photographs and confirm the identification. The only previous West Indies records come from Barbados. A Snowy Plover with 4 chicks at Diamond Crystal Salt Ponds, Long I., Bahamas 21 Apr was a very good find (O.G.). An American Avocet was at Grog Pond, Great Exuma 21 Apr (BM). A migrant Killdeer was at Outerlea Farm, Bermuda 8 May (JO, DBW). Two Black-necked Stilts arrived at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 7 May–31 May+ (EA), later increasing to a maximum of 9. A well-described American Avocet reported from



A species rarely seen during spring migration in the French West Indies, this Blackpoll Warbler was photographed 9 May 2004 at the Petit-Terre Nature Preserve, Guadeloupe. It remained through 14 May. Photograph by Anthony Levesque.

were unusual at Highborne Cay, Exumas 6 May (m. ob., *vide* CW).

An American Bittern was at Paget Marsh, Bermuda 11 Mar (DBW). A flock of 42 Great Blue Herons was seen heading northward out over the open ocean from West End, Grand Bahama 31 Mar (ABA). Smaller flocks of Great Egrets and Green Herons were seen migrating over water s. of Grand Bahama 1 Apr (ABA). Bermuda's 3rd Little Egret remained throughout the season (AD); another was found at Gaschet Res., Guadeloupe 14 Mar (AL). White Ibis are uncommon in the s. Bahamas, but one was seen on Great Inagua 1 Apr (HN). Two Roseate Spoonbills were reported from Mores I., w. of Abaco 21 Mar (OM)—well away from the nearest breeding grounds. An estimated 100 were found along South Dike Rd., Great Inagua 21 Apr (LG, LS, S.N.B.C.). Single Black Vultures were seen twice over Grand Bahama: at West End 30 Mar (ABA) and at Rand Nature

(ABA). A Mallard that spent the winter on the Treasure Cay Golf Course, Abaco departed in mid-Apr, which suggests that it was a genuine vagrant (EB). A Northern Shoveler was at Grog Pond, Great Exuma 18 Apr (BM). A female Northern Pintail was still at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 8 May (AD). The Bufflehead over-wintering at St. Martin was not observed after 11 Mar (ABr).

Six Ospreys—2 of these of the resident race, the remaining 4 being mainland migrants—were seen flying over H.W.P.N.P. 18 Mar (BHa, EB), an unusually high local count. There were seven reports of Swallow-tailed Kite from the Bahamas this spring: one foraging over a wildfire on Abaco 5 Mar (RP); one near Little Harbour, Abaco 3 Apr (ABA); one at West End, Grand Bahama 7 Apr (EG); one at Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 10 Apr (DC); and at least 3 at Ship Channel Cay, Exumas in mid-Apr (AW, SP). A Sharp-shinned Hawk was a surprise over the

North Pond 11 May (GB) provided the first spring record for Bermuda.

A possible Spotted Redshank was reported at Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera, Bahamas 10 Apr (SD, IM); unfortunately the observers were unable to secure a photograph. A detailed report by experienced birders was received of a Common Sandpiper in St. George's Harbour, Grenada 21 Apr (RK, EM, TM, m.ob.); again, no photographs were taken. An Upland Sandpiper at East End Dairy, Bermuda 25 Apr (DBW) was unusual. A Whimbrel on Rose I., New Providence 11 Apr (NM) provided one of the few spring records from the Bahamas. On 17 Apr, an EPIC biologist at Gallis Bay, St. Martin found a single Eurasian Whimbrel. A Marbled Godwit was reported at Spirit-tree Pond, Little Exuma 15 Apr (PD RS); this potential Bahamian first left before it could be photographed.

Two Semipalmated Sandpipers at Tarpum

Bay, Eleuthera 10 Mar (SD, JW, DC) were early for the spring migration. An estimated 1000 Least Sandpipers were seen 21 Apr along South Dike Rd., Great Inagua (LG, LS, S.N.B.C.). A visiting birder reported a Baird's Sandpiper at Pelican Bay, Abaco 26 Feb (MS); the report was well documented and will be evaluated by B.A.R.C. Fifteen Sanderlings and 50 Short-billed Dowitchers were good numbers on Harbour I., Eleuthera 5 Mar (NM). A male Ruff was present 16–22 May at the oil fields swamp, Barbados (MF). On 5 Apr, significant shorebird counts on the sand flats at Green Turtle Cay, Bahamas were 63 Dunlin, 40 Sanderlings, 5 Semipalmated Sandpipers, and 8 Piping Plovers (EB, ABA). Three Wilson's Phalaropes in a blue hole near Conch Shell Pt., Great Inagua 20 Apr (LG, LS, S.N.B.C.) made an exceptional find.

In Bermuda, the paucity of shearwaters this spring was mirrored by jaegers (a few Pomarine and Long-tailed were noted from Elbow Beach 27 Apr [AD]); the reverse was true in the Bahamas, where Florida fishermen/birders reported both shearwaters and jaegers in some numbers. A dark-morph Parasitic Jaeger flew from the sea into a grove of *Casuarina* trees near the mouth of Gold Rock Cr., Grand Bahama 1 Apr (ABA), and a light-morph harassed a flock of small terns e. of Elbow Cay, Abaco 24 May (EB).

Four Black-headed Gulls were at Great Salt Pond, St. Martin 10 Mar, with a single remaining at Cul-de-sac Pond, St. Martin 10 Apr (ABr). A Bonaparte's Gull was in Castle Harbour, Bermuda 12 Apr (DBW). A late ad. Ring-billed Gull was at Flatts, Bermuda 31 May (DBW). The gull of the season was Bermuda's first California Gull, an ad., at Dockyard 1–8 May (PW). A first-winter Iceland Gull was in Hamilton Harbour, Bermuda 3–8 Mar (AD, PW, DBW). Four Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 17 Mar (BH, EB, TW). Neil Sealey reports seeing Lesser Black-backed Gulls regularly around the Nassau waterfront throughout the winter, e.g., 2 at Nassau Sailing Club and several at Potter's Cay 3 Mar, plus 3 imms. at Arawak Cay 7 Mar. From Anguilla, a pair of Caspian Terns was observed among 20 Royal and a dozen Least Terns at Dog I. 7 May (ABr). A Forster's Tern was noted during a two-day birding trip to Barbuda 29 Feb–1 Mar (ABr). The 4th report of Arctic Tern from the Bahamas was of a well-described bird off Hopetown, Abaco 14 May (BW). A dead Atlantic Puffin was discovered on the beach at Tobacco Bay 14 Mar (PW), the 5th for Bermuda but 3rd in recent times.

CUCKOOS THROUGH ORIOLES

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 17 Apr (DBW). A Short-eared

Owl was still at Bermuda Airport 18 Apr (DW). Barn Owls returned to the e. tower at the entrance to Coral Harbour, New Providence after a three-year absence (CW). There were 6 Burrowing Owls along the road to Union Cr., Great Inagua 20 Apr (LG, LS, S.N.B.C.). A very early, silent nighthawk at Great Guana Cay, Exuma 27 Mar (PM) was probably a Common based on the date. On 22 Apr, 6 Black Swifts returned near the e. coast of Barbados (EM, MF). A probable female Ruby-throated Hummingbird (Black-chinned could not be ruled out) was feeding on *Agave* blossoms at Bahama South, Grand Bahama 31 Mar (ABA). The San Salvador race of West Indian Woodpecker is very rare; a welcome report was submitted of a male on Jake Jones Rd. 11 & 13 Mar (PMT). A wintering Eastern Phoebe was still at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 21 Mar (DBW). A Great Crested Flycatcher at Old Bahama Bay Club, Grand Bahama 31 Mar was the only one reported in the Bahamas (JD). Two Western Kingbirds at Abaco Beach Resort 4 Apr (ABA) may have spent the winter there undetected. An Eastern Kingbird was seen at Parson's Road Pond, Bermuda 23 Apr (G&SH). The first Gray Kingbirds were reported from Eleuthera 5 Apr (DC) and New Providence 9 Apr (CW). The Bahamas' first Fork-tailed Flycatcher was an imm. found at the Government Agricultural Farm, New Providence 3 May (ph. PD, TW)—the time of peak occurrence in the s. United States (Lockwood, M. 1999. *Birding* 31: 126–139). Single Yellow-throated Vireos were seen in Bermuda at Botanical Gardens 13–21 Apr (AD) and A.B. Smith Reserve 14 Apr (SR). The first Black-whiskered Vireos were reported from Eleuthera 5 Apr (DC) and New Providence 9 Apr (CW), on the same dates as Gray Kingbirds. A single Cliff Swallow was observed among a small group of Barn Swallows at Mullet Bay G.C., St. Martin 11 Apr (ABr). American Pipits (14) remained at Bermuda Airport through 6 Mar (AD). Six Cedar Waxwings were at the Abaco Beach Resort 5 Apr (ABA).

A Kirtland's Warbler on Jake Jones Rd., San Salvador, Bahamas 12 Mar was the first one reported from that island since 1966 (vt., PMT). Two unusual Prairie Warblers were reported from the Bahamas: one with a red face at North Westridge, New Providence 11 Mar (CW, AH, GS), and another with "strong orange coloring on its face and throat" near Dead Man's Cay, Long Island 21 Mar (TH, EB). The most likely explanation for this unusual appearance is pollen from flowers on which the warblers had been feeding, as partial erythrisms is unreported in the species. A Palm Warbler at Marsh Lane 7 May (AD) constituted a welcome exception to the silent spring on Bermuda. A Swain-

son's Warbler at Morgan's Pt., Bermuda 4 Mar (AD, PS) had almost certainly overwintered, but Bahamian singles at Rock Sound, Eleuthera 17 Mar (b. K.W.T.R.P., JW) and at Shannon G.C., Grand Bahama 30 Mar (ABA) could have been northbound migrants. A Wilson's Warbler was in the Smiths Hills, Bermuda 4 Mar (DW), and one was near Garden of the Groves, Grand Bahama 30 Mar (ABA).

A Summer Tanager was recorded 10 Apr at Pilchard Bay, Bermuda (DBW), and a male was at Graeme Hall swamp, Barbados 28 Apr (MF, EM). In Bermuda, single male Scarlet Tanagers were seen at Tamarind Vale 28 Apr (BH) and in Warwick 6 May (WF). Along with 12 Savannah Sparrows at Kindley Field, Bermuda 19–31 Mar, a Vesper Sparrow was photographed singing (AD). The last date of Bermuda's 6 wintering Swamp Sparrows was one recorded at Spittal Pond 28 Mar (AD).

The first of a small influx of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks was noted at Compston's Pond, Bermuda 25 Apr (AD); a single migrant attended a feeder in Nassau 17 Apr (PM). A Blue Grosbeak was at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 17 Apr (DBW), and a Bobolink sang there 8 & 28 May (SR, EA). On Barbados, a female Bobolink, providing the first spring record there in 11 years, was noted at Graeme Hall swamp 28 Apr (MF, EM). An SY male Baltimore Oriole seen 9 May at Petite-Terre Nature Reserve, Guadeloupe (AL) furnished a first record for that island.

Observers: American Birding Association donor tour (ABA), Eric Amos, Aileen Bainton, Geoff Bell, John Harold Bethell (JHB), Elwood Bracey, Adam Brown (ABr), David Currie, Paul Dean, Andrew Dobson, Stephanie Dolrenry, Jon Dunn, Environmental Protection for Islands of the Caribbean (EPIC), Martin Frost, Wendy Frith, Lynn Gape, Erika Gates, Bruce Hallett (BH), Anne Hanley, Gene and Susan Harvey, Tony Hepburn, Bertie Horsfield, Richard Knapton, Kirtland's Warbler Training and Research Project (K.W.T.R.P.), O'Donel McIntosh, Neil McKinney, Anthony Levesque, Will Mackin, Eddie Massiah, Tony Menart, Peter Merritt (PMT), Ingeria Miller, Basil Minns, Predensa Moore, Henry Nixon, John O'Halloran, Ornithology Group of the Bahamas National Trust (O.G.), Ron Pagliaro, Stephan Paton, Neal Rice, Macgregor Robertson, Steve Rodwell, Steve Russell (SRu), Sammy Nixon Birding Club (S.N.B.C.), Neil Sealey, Kathleen Sealey, George Skinner, Penny Soares, Lisa Sorenson, Ron Spencer, Magnus Stangenberg, Bob Wallace, David Wallace (DW), Alan Wardle, Carolyn Wardle, Paul Watson, Tom Wheeler (TW), Tony White, David Wingate (DBW), Joe Wunderle. 🐾