

West Indies & Bermuda



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Amnus horribilis. Six named storms (Bonnie, Charley, Earl, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne) ripped through the Region, bringing about 65 days of tropical-storm-force and hurricane-force winds, ranging from 45 to 165 miles per hour (72–264 k.p.h.). Four hurricanes reached Category 4 or 5. It was only the fourth time in modern history that so many storms were recorded. Some areas, such as the northern Bahamas, western Cuba, and the southern Lesser Antilles, were hit repeatedly. Grenada took a direct hit from *Ivan* on 7 September; the storm devastated habitats of endangered species and damaged or destroyed almost every building on the island. Southern Jamaica (10 September) and the low-lying Cayman Islands (11–12 September) also were hit very badly by *Ivan*. Haiti's lack of vegetative cover resulted in some of the worst human and natural-resource losses in the Region: over 1900 people died from flooding and mudslides caused by Tropical Storm *Jeanne* 18–19 September; almost half a million people were left completely homeless. With any storm, damage to micro-habitats and to local bird populations can have long-lasting effects, and the loss of shelter for hundreds of thousands of people will surely have a negative impact on what little remains of bird habitat in Haiti. There is much con-

cern, too, for the endemic-rich montane habitats in the adjacent Dominican Republic, where refugees are increasingly numerous.

In August, Paul Dean remarked that the late-summer wet season in the Bahamas meant that migrants would find "spring" when they arrived in September and October. Hurricanes *Frances* (3–4 September, winds 145 m.p.h.) and *Jeanne* (24 September, 120 m.p.h.) wiped out that scenario. Instead, both resident and migrant birds found plants stripped bare from wind, sand, and salt-burn. Nectivorous birds such as hummingbirds and Bananaquits became noteworthy rarities, while frugivorous birds like parrots and pigeons behaved abnormally in their search for food. Many other resident species were probably also affected, but reporting from badly hit islands such as San Salvador, Great Abaco, and Grand Bahama stopped temporarily as people put their lives back together. On the other hand, Great Exuma had a terrible drought, and its prime birding spot, Grog Pond, nearly dried up. The flow of migrants after the storms was normal or even above average, though the effect of the storm on resources for wintering birds (such as Kirtland's Warblers) remains to be seen. The Bahamian government, recognizing that the storms se-

verely stressed the White-crowned Pigeon population, delayed opening the hunting season by nearly a month (until 29 October), in order to give the pigeons time to recover. As more information on the impact of the fall 2004 storms arrives, we will continue to include it in this column.

Although bird populations in the West Indies are resilient and typically recover over time, after even severe storms, there are limits to their resilience. The burgeoning human populations in poorer nations bode ill for the needs of dozens of imperiled bird species in the Caribbean. National economies dependent upon both ecotourism and natural resources have been badly shaken by the storms of 2004, but the future looks bleaker still: large-scale climatological models portend rising sea levels and more frequent powerful hurricanes. The confluence of hurricanes, human-related stressors, and loss of lowland habitats to the ocean may prove to be a "perfect storm" from which some species never recover to past levels—and to which some species may well be lost in the near future. In the current ornithological climate, which often favors recognition of allopatric taxa as full species, West Indian islands stand to lose more than the current field guides imply: the taxonomic relationships of dozens of

"subspecies" remain to be investigated carefully—from columbids to tyrannids to icterids. In that vein, readers should take note that subspecies *barbadensis* of Lesser Antillean Bullfinch is now elevated to status as a full species, **Barbados Bullfinch** *Loxigilla barbadensis* (see Buckley, P. A., and F. G. Buckley. 2004. Rapid speciation by a Lesser Antillean endemic, Barbados Bullfinch *Loxigilla barbadensis*. *Bulletin B. O. C.* 124: 108–123).

Abbreviations: B.A.R.C. (Bahamas A.R.C.); H.W.P.N.P. (Harrold and Wilson Ponds N.P., New Providence, Bahamas); P.T.N.R. (Petite-Terre Nature Reserve, Guadeloupe).

PETRELS THROUGH TERNS

The first Bermuda Petrel of the season returned 14 Oct (JM), after which about 16 were seen from a seawatch at Cooper's Pt. 3 Nov (AD, PH). A Cory's Shearwater was near "the wall" off Cape Eleuthera, Bahamas 16 Nov (BP). A Wilson's Storm-Petrel was seen 13 Oct off P.T.N.R., Guadeloupe (ALv). In 14 hours of Nov seawatching from P.T.N.R., Guadeloupe, Levesque counted a total of 3 Manx, 2 Audubon's, a Greater, and 42 Cory's Shearwaters, a **Long-tailed Jaeger**, and 2 Pomarine Jaegers. A subad. Masked Booby found on Queen's Hwy., Grand Bahama 9 Sep was rehabilitated and released 10 Oct at Peterson Cay N.P., where it remained for three days (ph. EG). A subad. dark-morph Red-footed Booby was photographed perched on the AUTECH buoy 8 km e. of Andros 30 Jul (TA).

An American Bittern was heard at H.W.P.N.P. 11 Oct (PD, TW). Single Gray Herons were found 27 Oct at Fosters Swamp and 14 Nov at Hope Parrish, both Barbados (EM); this Eurasian species has been reported breeding at Graeme Hall Swamp, not far away. The long-staying Little Egret on Bermuda was present throughout the period (AD). An ad. **Reddish Egret** was seen 1 Nov at Jobos Bay, Salinas, Puerto Rico (JS). On 16 Sep, a flock of 15 White Ibis, including several juvs. and subads., was noted at Caño Tiburones, Puerto Rico (SC), the most reliable spot on the island for this irregular species; breeding in the area is possible, as juvs. were also present here in 2003 and early 2004 (with a single also reported 3 Jun 2004 at Jobos Bay [BM]), and their numbers have increased there since 2002. One of the highest-ever counts of Greater Flamingos (315) was

made at Trou Caiman, Haiti 28 Aug–2 Oct (JRC).

West Indian Whistling-Ducks were much in evidence in early Aug in the Turks & Caicos Is. On 2 Aug, a half-dozen or so flew over Kew Settlement, North Caicos after dark (NMa). In the same week, a pair was photographed at Frenchman's Creek, Providenciales (MJ), and 5 were photographed at East Bay Cay, North Caicos. A Canada Goose seen over St. David's, Bermuda 4 Oct (GA) settled at Outerlea Dairy. An imm. **Brant** was seen at night s. of Cape Eleuthera 15 Nov: the bird actually swam up to Purdy, who was snorkeling at the time (p.a. by B.A.R.C.). The only other report for the Bahamas is of one shot at Twin Lakes, Andros at least 35 years ago (DL). A male Eurasian Wigeon joined American Wigeons at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 25 Oct (EA). More than 50 Blue-winged Teal were counted 2 Oct at Jobos Bay, Salinas, Puerto Rico (JS), with numbers increasing during the week to 300, and 4 Northern Shovelers were noted at the same site 10 Oct (JS, SC et al.). Northern Shoveler numbers at H.W.P.N.P. peaked at 6 on 1 Nov (NM). Over 80 White-cheeked Pintails at a small, unnamed pond on Little Exuma

son, two pairs raised 2 fledglings each, and four pairs each raised one (I.S.S.G.). Four Ospreys (of the migratory North American race) circled over West End, Grand Bahama 13 Oct (TW). Two Northern Harriers were in North Andros 3–6 Oct (EBS), and one was in s. Eleuthera 27 Oct (DC). Bermuda's 2 resident Red-tailed Hawks were present until at least 21 Nov, when seen near Paradise Lakes (NB). Northern Harrier and American Kestrel were recorded at Southside, Bermuda 20 Aug (EA). Merlins staged a strong migration in early Oct: 2 at North Andros 3–6 Oct (EBS), 2 at Adelaide and one at Lyford Cay, New Providence 9 Oct (PD TW), 3 on Grand Bahama 13–14 Oct (TW), and one on Rose Island 23 Oct (NM). Raptors in Oct at Bermuda included 4–5 Peregrine Falcons. Two Northern Bobwhite visited Villa Capulet, Montague Foreshore, New Providence 6–8 Sep and fed among the debris of an uprooted Royal Poinciana (SB). A Virginia Rail was taken into captivity at Bermuda Zoo 8 Nov (JG) and later released.

An American Golden-Plover was reported from Caño Tiburones 13–14 Sep (SC), while 2 were nearby at Las Palmas, Barceloneta, Puerto Rico 13 Sep (SC, JS). A Piping Plover, a declining visitor to Bermuda, was seen 6 Aug on Nonsuch I. (PW). Pippings in the Bahamas included 2 on Little Whale Cay, Berry Islands 7 Aug (PD), 6 at Sandbank Cays, Abaco 27 Aug (EB HP), and 20 at Somerset Beach, Andros 6 Oct (EBS). Single American Avocets were at Somerset Beach, North Andros 5 Oct (ph. EBS) and at H.W.P.N.P. 1–9 Nov (ph. NM). The shorebird passage on Bermuda was not as dramatic as in some years, although a big fallout of shorebirds 8 Aug provided impressive numbers for some species (record highs in boldface): 40 Semipalmated Plovers at the airport (PW), 142 Lesser Yellowlegs, 100 Solitary Sandpipers, 4 Willets, 300+ Semipalmated Sandpipers, 300+

Least Sandpipers, and 133 Pectoral Sandpipers, 94 of those at one airport rain pool. Paul Watson estimated at least 1000 shorebirds at the airport, where "you couldn't see the grass for the birds." Other notable shorebird sightings on Bermuda included: single Baird's Sandpipers 12–13 (DBW) & 23–26 Sep (AD), a Curlew Sandpiper at Spittal Pond 17 Oct (AD), and a Ruff at Riddell's Bay G.C. 16 Aug (EA).

In the Caribbean, many Eurasian shorebirds were located, with several "firsts" for localities. A Eurasian Whimbrel was again



Masked Boobies are rare in the Bahamas, and this subadult was found ashore on the Queens Highway, Grand Bahama. It was rehabilitated for a month and then released at Peterson Cay N.P. off the southern shore of Grand Bahama. It remained in the area for three days (here 9 October 2004), then flew off. Photograph by Erika Gates.

30 Oct and 6 Nov was a good count (J&BM). Two hundred Ring-necked Ducks on Great Inagua 23 Nov (HN) was unexpectedly high, while a flock of 12 on Parsons Road Pond, Bermuda 1 Nov (DW) was more expected. Single Lesser Scaup were at Princess G.C. Pond and Warwick Pond, Bermuda 22 Aug (EA). A summering Hooded Merganser remained into the fall at Bermuda.

Seven pairs of Ospreys on w. Great Inagua were nesting around 10 Sep. Despite the fact that this was the peak of the hurricane sea-

recorded at P.T.N.R., Guadeloupe (ALv) 11 Nov–2 Dec, while yet another was found at St. Martin 21–22 Nov (ADu, ALv). A Curlew Sandpiper at Los Machos beach, Ceiba 5 Sep (JaM) was an outstanding find and one of few records for Puerto Rico. A Buff-breasted Sandpiper seen 13 Sep at P.T.N.R. was possibly the same individual as the one at Aéroport Pôle Caraïbes, Guadeloupe 22 Sep (ALv). Ruffs were widely reported: an imm. male represented the 4th record for Guade-

Two more Wilson's Phalaropes were noted at Boquerón Wildlife Refuge 2 Oct (SC et al.), with one at Pointe des Châteaux, Guadeloupe 15–21 Sep (ALv).

A Black-headed Gull at various sites around Bermuda 29 Oct–17 Nov was first observed in Castle Harbour (DBW). Six Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted on Coco Cay (Little Stirrup Cay), Berry Is. 16 Oct (J&PH), while a first-summer bird continued at Guadeloupe from late summer



Hudsonian Godwit is rare anywhere in the Lesser Antilles, though its migration in fall presumably takes many individuals east of the islands. This bird was photographed 3 November 2004 at Pointe des Châteaux, Guadeloupe, one of few records for the country. Photograph by Anthony Levesque.

loupe 10–13 Sep. (ALv), while one at Caño Tiburones 10 Sep–19 Oct (SC) and a female on 12 Oct at Humacao Wildlife Reserve (JaM) were outstanding for Puerto Rico. American migrant shorebirds were also widely reported. A *hudsonicus* Whimbrel was noted near L. Killarney, New Providence 8 Aug (PD, TW). Single Hudsonian Godwits were at Caño Tiburones 18 Sep (SC) and at Aéroport Pôle Caraïbes 22 Sep (ALv). On 28 Sep, a Marbled Godwit was found at Boquerón Wildlife Reserve, sw. Puerto Rico (Caborro-jeños Pro Salud y Ambiente, *vide* SC). At Jobos Bay, Salinas, Puerto Rico, a Red Knot and 2 Wilson's Phalaropes 11 Sep (JS), 4 White-rumped Sandpipers 2 Oct (JS, CR), 2 Solitary Sandpipers 9 Oct (JS, SC, m.ob.), and 3 Long-billed Dowitchers 27 Oct (JS) were all noteworthy to varying degrees; the dowitchers provided a 3rd area record. Two Upland Sandpipers were seen 13 Sep at nearby Las Palmas (SC, JS). A small group of White-rumpeds was at Coco Beach, Río Grande, Puerto Rico 12 Sep (JaM), only the 3rd record for that site. A Baird's Sandpiper at Los Machos beach, Ceiba, Puerto Rico 8 Sep (ph. JS) remained through 12 Sep (JR, AP).

through at least 20 Aug, the first recorded there in more than two decades. Four Great Black-backed Gulls were on Bimini 4 Nov, 3 were in Bimini harbor and one was on Rockwell Beach (BP), and another was at Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 25 Nov (ph. DC). On 8 Aug, Dean and White counted 50+ pairs of Laughing Gulls, two pairs of Gull-billed Terns, and 10 pairs of Least Terns near L. Killarney, New Providence. Over 300 pairs of Roseate Terns nested on a rock off Little Whale Cay, Berry Is. this summer, with 20 still there 6 Aug (PD). A Gull-billed Tern was with 4 Caspians at Trou Caiman, Haiti 2 Oct (JRC). A Caspian at Jobos Bay 9 Oct was a good find there (JS, SC et al.). Bracey found 60+ Roseate Terns (all still with all-black bills) 23 Aug at Treasure Cay. A Black Tern was seen off Cambridge Beaches, Bermuda 29 Sep (PW), while Barbados' 3rd Whiskered Tern was carefully studied at Packers 21 Nov (EM, MF)—the previous records there were of a first-winter bird in 1847 and an ad. in Apr 1994.

PIGEONS THROUGH FINCHES

Over 500 White-crowned Pigeons were

counted in 15 minutes flying eastward from New Providence on 8 Aug (NM); 4 of this arboreal species were seen feeding at ground level on sea-grapes from blown-over trees at the Garden of the Groves parking lot, Grand Bahama 14 Oct (TW). Five White-winged Doves, uncommon on Grand Bahama, were at Gates's feeder in Freeport 29 Nov. A flock of 25+ Bahama Parrots flew from mainland Abaco to Man-o'-War Cay 5 Oct, 10 days after *Jeanne*. They were still present and being fed by residents at the end of the season (NA, PM); although resident very nearby on Great Abaco, these parrots have never been known to make the over-water flight to the associated cays. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was seen at The Retreat, Nassau 5 Oct (CW), and one was banded 27 Oct near Tarpum Bay (JW, SW, IM, DC). A Black-billed Cuckoo 17 Oct at Desirade I., Guadeloupe (ALv) was an outstanding find, one of few for the country. Burrowing Owls were seen regularly at the old airstrip on Harbour I., Eleuthera, and may be nesting there (WN). A flock of 6 Common Nighthawks was over Belmont Hills G.C., Bermuda 17 Oct (AD), and a pair of Antillean Nighthawks nested on cleared land fronting L. Killarney, New Providence (PD, TW). A well-described male Cuban Emerald was reported from the Retreat, Nassau 4 & 7 Aug (CW, VB, LS) and reportedly stayed until Hurricane Frances 4 Sep; this is the most detailed report to date of this species for New Providence. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was a lucky find at Stokes Point Nature Reserve, Bermuda 27 Sep–15 Oct (AD), while another was well seen in Jenningsland 11 Nov (per JM).

A Northern Flicker vocalized frequently at Port Royal G.C., Bermuda 22–29 Nov (DW). Bermuda had the lion's share of flycatcher reports: more than 12 Eastern Wood-Pewees were noted; a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher 17–21 Oct at Coral Beach Club (DW) and single Acadian Flycatchers at Ferry Pt. 16–18 Oct (AD) and Hog Bay Park 18 Oct (AD) were *Empidonax* highlights; a Great Crested Flycatcher remained at Stokes Point Nature Reserve 26 Sep–3 Oct (DBW); and both Western and Eastern Kingbirds were at Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 19 Sep (WN). An imm. Eastern Kingbird was at Waterloo Drive, Nassau 1 Oct (PD), and a Western was at Garden of the Groves, Grand Bahama 14 Oct (TW). A Yellow-throated Vireo was at Coral Beach Club, Bermuda 17 Oct (DW), while a Blue-headed was in Walsingham Jungle, Bermuda 15 Oct (JM). A Philadelphia Vireo at Tarpum Bay 14 Oct was joined by another 18 Oct (ph. DC). At Punta Borinquen, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, a Red-eyed, a Yellow-throated, and a White-eyed, shared a tree 24 Oct (SC, AL); Yellow-throateds are relatively rare there. Eight Purple Martins flew over Little Whale Cay, Berry Is. 7 Aug

(PD), and 15 were seen near Bahama Palm Shores, Abaco 27 Aug (EB HP). On Bermuda, a Northern Rough-winged Swallow was at Wreck Road 5 Oct (EA, DW) and a late Bank Swallow over Daniel's Head Farm 6 Nov (AD, DBW). A rare Red-breasted Nuthatch was at Fort Scaur, Bermuda 16–17 Oct (vt. EA); a Golden-crowned Kinglet was there 13 Oct (DW), with another at the Arboretum 16 Nov (DW). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers do not breed on New Providence, so the one at Lakeview Ponds, Paradise I. 22 Nov was a migrant (CW). An American Pipit was seen at Bermuda Airport 3 Nov (PW).

Individual Swainson's Thrushes were reported from the Botanical Gardens, Nassau 17 Oct (J&PH) and s. Eleuthera the next day (ph. DC). There was a dead Wood Thrush on the Grand Bahama Hwy. 13 Oct (TW), and one was seen near Forfar Field Station, Andros 24 Oct (CW). Thrushes have become so scarce on Bermuda that we will soon list all sightings in this report. An early American Robin was at Port Royal G.C., Bermuda 16 Oct (DW). Gray Catbirds left their normal cover to feed on open lawns and seaweed on the beach at Rose I., New Providence 23 Oct (NM); a Northern Mockingbird was a surprise at Spittal Pond, Bermuda 17 Oct (DBW). A Pearly-eyed Thrasher was banded on s. Eleuthera 5 Nov (JW, ph. DC); this species rarely strays to islands on the Great Bahama Bank.

On Puerto Rico, Blue-winged Warblers put in appearances 24–28 Oct at Punta Borinquen (SC, AL), at Jobos Bay (JS), and at Caño Tiburones (SC). Although 35 warbler species have been recorded in Bermuda this fall, numbers of individuals have been depressingly low, following a long-term trend there (EA). Single Golden-winged Warblers were at Cemetery Hill 16 Oct (AD) and at Riddell's Bay G.C. 30 Oct (DW). Uncommon warblers reported from s. Eleuthera (K.W.T.R.P.) included Tennessee Warblers at Tarpum Bay 17–19 Oct and 2 Nov; a Nashville Warbler 19 Oct; a Blackpoll Warbler 14 Oct; a Chestnut-sided Warbler 18 Oct; Swainson's Warblers 2 & 18 Nov; and a Prothonotary Warbler 14–15 Oct. The Kirtland's Warbler migration was also strong, with many banded birds returning. Other unusual warbler sightings in the Bahamas included Tennessee Warblers on Grand Bahama 12–13 Oct (TW); a Yellow Warbler, believed to be a migrant, singing near Treasure Cay, Abaco 19 Aug (EB); a Blackburnian Warbler at Reef G.C., Grand Bahama 2 Oct (EG); 2 Blackpoll Warblers at Waterloo Drive, Nassau 27 Sep (PD) and 3 on North Andros 6 Oct (EBS);

and a Wilson's Warbler at Adelaide 9 Oct (PD). On New Providence, Prothonotary Warblers were at Rose I. 22 Aug before the hurricanes (NM) and at Coral Harbour, H.W.P.N.P., and Adelaide after the storms (CW, PD, TW). Two Kentucky Warblers were at Bahama Star Groves, Abaco 30 Aug (EB, HP), with one at Waterloo Drive 9 Sep (PD). Yellow-breasted Chats are rare in the Bahamas; one banded and photographed near Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 2 Nov provided one of the few substantiated records (SW, JW, ph. DC; p.a. by B.A.R.C.).

Scarlet Tanagers were reported from North Andros 6 Oct (EBS) and Coco Cay 16 Oct (J&PH). On Puerto Rico, a male Scarlet Tanager was seen at Jobos Beach 17 Oct (SC), and female was noted at a farm in Comerio (RR) on the same date. The day after Hurricane Frances, Black-faced Grassquits flew onto Carolyn Wardle's feeder as soon as she filled it, even before she stepped away. A juv. Clay-colored Sparrow was banded near Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 28 Oct (JW, ph. DC). A Snow Bunting on Horn Rock, Bermuda 30 Oct (JM) was the only one reported. There were good numbers of Rose-breasted Gros-

Eleuthera 30 Sep (LP), 2 were at Ruby G.C., Grand Bahama 28 Nov (EG), with singles at Coco Cay 16 Oct (J&PH) and Tarpum Bay 30 Oct (DC).

EXOTICS

Three Pied Imperial-Pigeons (*Ducula bicolor*, a South Pacific species) fed in a fig tree at Montague Foreshore, New Providence during the calm between the two storms (ph. SB); according to PM, there are about 10 flying free in e. New Providence. A Salmon-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*) was first noted by residents of Palmas del Mar, s. Puerto Rico in late autumn; it was still present in Jan (J. Novogradac). Several fledglings and juvs. of Orange-winged Parrot x Red-crowned Parrot hybrids were noted 10 Oct at Jobos Bay, Salinas, Puerto Rico (JS, SC et al.). On 12 Sep, a flock of Yellow-crowned Bishops seen at Coco Beach, Río Grande provided a new locality for Puerto Rico (JaM).

Addenda: A Greater Shearwater was noted at Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico 20 Jun 2004 (BM, fide JS). A well-described dark-morph Western Reef-Heron was seen at the private island of Mustique, St. Vincent & Grenadines 24 Jun (GB), representing a first record from this island group. American Oystercatchers, very local in Puerto Rico (including Vieques and Culebra), were noted 3 Jun 2004 at Salinas, Puerto Rico, where unreported since 1989; on 14 Jun 2004, a Caspian Tern was there as well (BM).

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This image of an Indigo Bunting at Les Galets (Désirade Island), Guadeloupe furnished that country's second record 20 October 2004. Photograph by Anthony Levesque.

beaks: 3 at Garden of the Groves, Bahamas 12 Oct (TW), singles on s. Eleuthera 14, 15, & 19 Oct (DC), one at Coco Cay 16 Oct (J&PH), 10–20 at the Botanical Gardens, Nassau 17 Oct (J&PH), and 6 at Tarpum Bay 17 Oct (WN). Elsewhere, a male was at Combate, sw. Puerto Rico 1 Nov (RaR), and 3 were at P.T.N.R. 10 Nov (ALv). Eight Blue Grosbeaks on North Andros 3–6 Oct was an unusually high count there (EBS). Indigo Buntings were very common on Bermuda, with one flock containing about 150 birds at Heydon Trust 18 Oct (DW). Bermuda's 3rd Eastern Meadowlark was seen at Ferry Pt. 24 Nov (GH), the first since 1976! A Baltimore Oriole was at Waterloo Drive, Nassau 21 & 27 Sep (PD), 4 were at Spanish Wells,