

Moloka'i (HJ), an island not yet colonized by this species.

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# West Indies Region

## ROBERT L. NORTON

The ornithological news this period must be viewed through weather-watchers eyes. The rainfall deficit January to May 1995, as measured in the Virgin Islands archipelago (*i.e.* Cruz Bay, St. John, United States Virgin Islands since 1878) was an incredible 61 percent below average. The spring period experienced a "hellacious" drought, with 75 percent below-average precipitation (March, -48 percent; April, -98 percent; and May, -74 percent). Water rationing went into effect in both San Juan, Puerto Rico, according to Williams, and Vieques, Puerto Rico, where Gemmill reported a dearth of herons and egrets, as well as neotropical migrants. Pierce *et al.* found fewer Masked Boobies nesting than expected this spring in the Virgin Islands, reported P. William Smith, perhaps as a result of fewer fish. And Williams reported that warmer water temperatures in Puerto Rico probably affected coral bleaching in the Caribbean, albeit to a lesser degree than in the recent past.

It's difficult to imagine how the Region's landbirds can manage to sustain their populations when resources are nonexistent. Social behavior of otherwise gregarious species

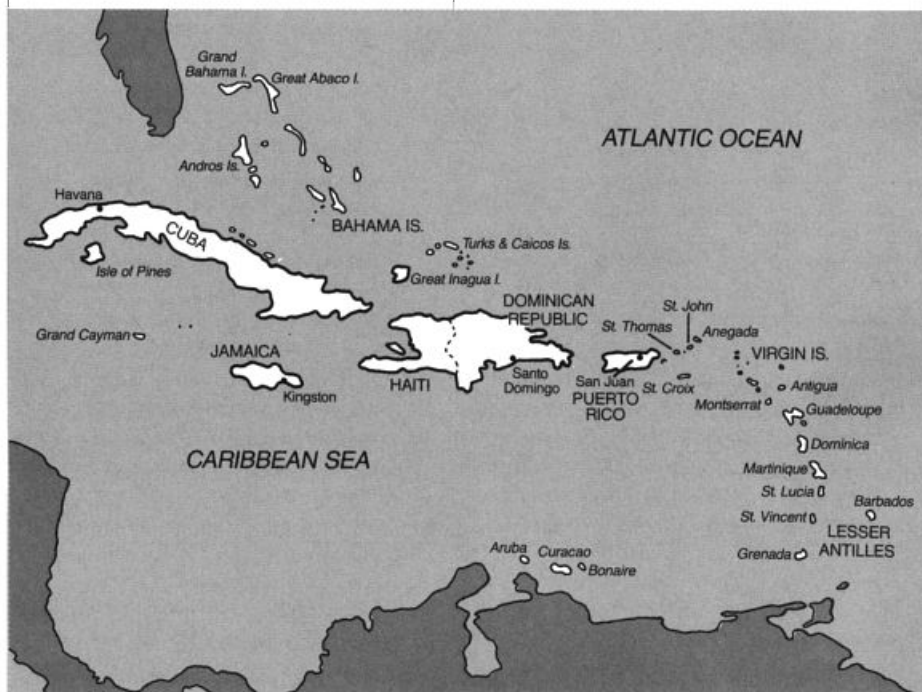
may breakdown (Morton 1982; Norton 1993; Tramer and Tramer 1979). Long droughts force wetland species to emigrate to islands where ponds and sloughs still afford nesting and feeding opportunities. Landbird vagrancy has been detected (Norton and Hobbs 1987) when the Region suffers periodic droughts. Without fresh water outwellings, plankton blooms cannot augment fish populations in neritic check waters supporting breeding seabirds.

Abbreviations: BE (*Bermuda*), CI (*Cayman Is.*); DM (*Dominica*); MN (*Monserrat*); NV (*Nevis*); PR (*Puerto Rico*), StL (*St. Lucia*); StT (*St. Thomas, United States Virgin Is.*)

## Shearwaters to Terns

A Cory's Shearwater was seen off Coopers I., BE March 21 (SD) during migration. A White-tailed Tropicbird noted April 28 was Gemmill's first at Vieques, PR in 11 years of spring and winter surveys. Several Masked Ducks, males and females, were seen at a small pond at Grand Anse, StL May 30 (PW&SAS, MW), which may represent the southern-most breeding station in the Lesser Antilles.

A Peregrine Falcon seen at Hamilton, BE Mar. 15 (LM) provided only the 2nd spring record for the island. A Merlin was seen at Montpelier Plantation Inn, NV Mar. 29 and Apr. 2 (JF) for one of few reports from that island. A Whimbrel noted at Vieques, PR Apr. 27 (DG, EL) was among lingering shorebirds, which also included a Stilt and Least sandpipers, Semipalmated Plover, and Ruddy Turnstones.



Roseate Terns, which nest in late May on the e. Puerto Rican Platform (RLN), were noted by the Smiths at a perennial nesting site at Shark Cay, StT May 18; off Melville Hall R., DM May 28; and off Anse Chaloupe, StL May 30. Three late migrant (?) Com. Terns were noted at Nazareth Bay, StT May 21 (PW&SAS). Nichols (1943) reported Com. Terns nesting at St. Thomas a half-century ago, although they have not been proven to be nesting there since. Three Least Terns noted at Vieques, PR Apr. 26 may nest at edges of dry salt ponds and lagoons, as they often do on St. Croix and Anegada (RLN).

### Doves to Sparrows

New to the Lesser Antilles is **Eurasian Collared-Dove**; the Smiths report breeding at Victoria, MN since 1990 (*vide* JD), and also about a dozen May 26 in Roseau, DM (PW&SAS), probably resident since 1987. Six *Sreptopelia* sp. reported as Ringed Turtle-Doves at Montpelier Plantation Inn, NV Mar. 29–Apr. 2 (JF) might also be Eur. Collared-Doves. A study of the effects of this exploding population on native *Columbids* should be considered.

A small, dark Barn Owl suggesting *nigrescens* was seen at the Botanical Gardens, Roseau, DM May 26 (PW&SAS).

**SA** A pair of Puerto Rican Woodpeckers were using a dead palm for nesting at Vieques, PR (DG). This may not seem like news; but remember that hurricane *Hugo* made a near-direct hit there in September 1989. While this woodpecker has not been very common at Vieques, these observations and those reported earlier (AB 45 (5): 1165, 1991; AFN 48 (3): check) suggest that even very strong storms do not cause extinction of bird species, even a small population of specialists (Arendt 1990; Haney *et al.* 1991).

A W. Kingbird was seen at the Arboretum, BE Mar. 9 (AH) for the earliest spring record there. House Wrens were seen commonly on Dominica May 25 and only at Caoli Forest Res., StL May 30 (PW&SAS). Norton and P. William Smith have each advocated study of the unique House Wren of the Lesser Antilles, which appears to have 3 allopatric forms rather than sympatric *martinicensis* with different vocalizations. The rare, pale-colored *mesoleucus* inhabits the dry scrub, Atlantic slope of St. Lucia. The common, dark-colored *rufescens* is found in moist higher elevations of Dominica. And the Grenada form is considered by some authorities to be allied to the South American *musculus* by way of Trinidad and Tobago.

A Summer Tanager seen at the Arboretum, BE Mar. 12 (PS) and a Dickcissel seen Mar. 23 at Fairylands, BE (SD) represent earliest spring records. When Monserrat was hit directly by hurricane *Hugo* in 1989, it was feared the endemic Monserrat Oriole population might be exterminated. But it has survived (Arendt 1991) and become possibly more observable in decrowned forests. A family group of this oriole was encountered May 23 at Woodlands Spring (PW&SAS, JD) and a sub-adult was seen at Bamboo Forest May 25. House Sparrows were seen May 20 (PW&SAS) and have reappeared at Charlotte Amalie, StT since 1984 (RLN). Williams also reports this sparrow to be found at Isabella, PR, well away from the urban populations of San Juan and Ponce.

### Addenda

A Horned Grebe seen Feb. 1 (DWa) at Castle Harbour, BE provided a first winter record there. An ad. Brown Pelican was seen Dec. 9 & 13 at Little Cayman I., CI (TJD). A Reddish Egret was noted at Vieques, PR Dec. 20 (DG, NG). Bermuda's 3rd record of **Tundra Swan** (an immature) was seen Nov. 27–Dec. 1 at Spittal Pond (AD, m.ob.). Twenty West Indian Whistling-Ducks were seen Dec. 9 at Grand Cayman I., CI (TJD). The 6th occurrence of **Surf Scoter** at Bermuda was noted Jan. 12 (PS).

A **Pacific Golden-Plover**, first seen at the Naval Air Station, BE Jan. 25 (SD, DBW), was carefully compared with Am. Golden-Plover and represented a first record there. Lesser Black-backed Gull(s) noted at Phillipsburg, St. Maarten provided yet another record there (Voous 1983), where many cruise ships calling no doubt contribute to the variety of vagrant gulls there. An **Iceland Gull** in 2nd-winter plumage seen Feb. 2 at Bermuda (DWa) furnished the first winter record there.

Two Cuban Parrots were noted at Little Cayman I., CI Dec. 14 (TJD), and a Yellow-throated Vireo was seen near the airstrip there Dec. 11 (TJD). A Solitary Vireo, first noted in Bermuda Dec. 18, stayed until February, providing a first winter record; a Philadelphia Vireo seen Feb. 6 (EA) was also an exceptional winter record for Bermuda.

Visitors to Grand Bahama and Great and Little Abaco in the Bahamas in fall or winter should be aware that the endemic form of the Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica flavescens*) is extremely similar to Kirtland's Warbler (*D. kirtlandii*). In fact, Paul Sykes (in lit.) considers *flavescens* to be so distinct from the 3 mainland North American races that it could (or should) be considered a separate species based on its original description.

A ♀ **Northern (Bullock's) Oriole** was carefully noted from Vieques, PR Dec 22 (DG, NG), which would represent the first record from the West Indies. House Sparrows were noted near a grocer on Vieques, PR for the first records there. This is the same story which occurred on St. John, USVI recently, suggesting that a "nesting" barge or inter-island freighter from Puerto Rico is assisting their distribution.

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