

West Indies Region

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Winter precipitation measured at Cruz Bay, St. John, United States Virgin Islands (100+ yr POR) was 44% above-average for the period: December +44%, January +101%, and February -31%. This was a huge improvement over last year, which was -27% for the same 90-day span. Dobson reports Bermudans experienced above-average rainfall, high winds and continuous gales, and cool temperatures, which translated into good birding and new records.

Local bird clubs and natural history organizations in the West Indies operate on very limited resources, and yet we depend heavily on their frontline efforts to protect birds—and habitats—which we hope to visit to enrich our own lists, photo collections, or personal education. If you are planning to visit some of these islands soon, consider contributing something to their cause. It may be old bird books, binoculars, scopes, computers—anything a deserving young person in your own circle might accept but already has, or is not yet ready to appreciate. You'll also reap the rewards from such a gift (See *Addendum*).

Reports were received from the usual participants: Bermuda and Barbados. Frequent flyers provided comprehensive records from Puerto Rico and the Bahamas, where specific study projects provide valuable baseline data for areas

where habitats are threatened or in need of management. And a report from the Cayman Islands rounds out coverage from the Western Caribbean.

Abbreviations: Ba (Bahamas); Bd (Barbados); Be (Bermuda), CI (Cayman Is.); DM (Dominica); Gr Ab (Grand Abaco); MN (Montserrat); NV (Nevis); PR (Puerto Rico), StL (St. Lucia); StT (St. Thomas, United States Virgin Is.)

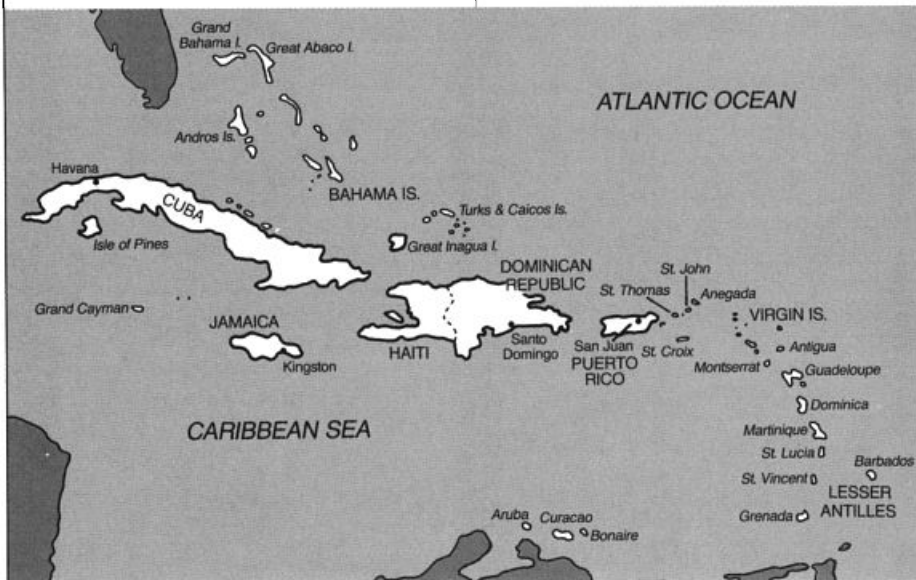
Shearwater to Alcids

A Sooty Shearwater seen Jan. 12 (EA) at Bermuda is considered a winter vagrant at this latitude. Northern Gannet(s), also seen at Bermuda, remained in the area from Dec. 3–February (DBW). An imm. Double-crested Cormorant wintered at Cayman Brac, CI from November–February (*fide* PB) for one of the few records from that location. A Least Bittern was noted at Bermuda Feb. 2 (AD). A ♀ bittern photographed Dec. 8 (MF, EM, BBI) at renowned Graeme Hall Swamp, Bd, was suggested to be a Little Bittern from Europe. But the photo is not definitive to separate it from its New World counterpart, Least Bittern, a common breeder in the Greater Antilles, less so from Guadeloupe to Dominica, Lesser Antilles, and widely found throughout South America. Little Egrets are continuing to nest at Barbados through the winter (ph., EM, MF). More details are expected elsewhere. Up to nine N. Pintails overwintered at Grand Cayman, CI November–February, as did an imm. ♂ Gadwall that provided Grand Cayman with a first record (PB). A ♀ Eurasian Wigeon seen (EA) at Somerset Long Bay reserve, Be Nov. 20 remained through the period. A ♀ Ring-necked Duck lingered from late fall through Feb-

ruary at Grand Cayman, CI (PB) for one of the few recent records there. A Common Goldeneye, the first since 1990, was reported from Spittal Pond, Be Jan. 5 (PS). A ♀ Red-breasted Merganser remained at Grand Cayman, CI from December–February for the first record from these islands (PB). A Peregrine Falcon reported from Nonesuch I., Be Dec. 8 was considered to be overwintering, a first for that location (AD). Another Peregrine was noted harassing Rock Doves in Old San Juan, PR Dec. 7 (MO). A Piping Plover was seen at Baselands, Be Dec. 26 (AD). An American Avocet seen at N. Pond, Be (AD) throughout the winter represented the first overwintering record there. Gulls reported this winter from Bermuda included Laughing Gull Dec. 12, Com. Black-headed Gull Dec. 18, Bonaparte's Gull Dec. 3, and Black-legged Kittiwake Jan. 27. Two Atlantic Puffins were found dead at Bermuda Feb. 25 & 29 (DWA) for only the 3rd and 4th specimens in the last 25 years (*fide* AD). Perhaps they arrived in the area with the kittiwakes, but could not find proper food.

Pigeons to Blackbirds

Up to 18 endemic Puerto Rican Plain Pigeons were seen at Lago de Cidra, PR Dec. 9 (GB, MO *et al.*), where this very threatened species has enjoyed some protection and management by P.R.D.N.R. for the last 25 years, despite habitat reduction. The island's population is estimated to be about 700 in the wild (*fide* P.R.D.N.R./U.P.R.). Thirty-nine endemic Bahama (Cuban) Parrots were counted Dec. 1–6 on Great Abaco, Ba (GB, MO *et al.*). A trip to El Yunque Dec. 9 produced no Puerto Rican Parrots near the oft, or purported, old restaurant roost, which P.R.D.N.R. biologists say has been abandoned for the last 3 years. This may be a fallout from recent hurricane damage. Total wild population estimates as of spring 1995 stand at around 46 (MO, GB, *fide* AV)! However, five Puerto Rican Screech-Owls, a fairly common endemic, was heard at El Yunque, PR Dec. 9 (MO *et al.*). Four N. Saw-whet Owls were seen on Bermuda Dec. 16 (AD *et al.*), which reflected a very large movement on the e. seaboard of North America. A Short-eared Owl reported from Grand Cayman in February suggests to Bradley that a population increase in Cuba may be responsible for visitors to outlying areas, as seen in the case of wanderers to the Virgin Islands (St. Thomas, possibly St. John, and Guana Island) and from breeders in Puerto Rico (RLN). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird first reported on Dec. 3 remained through Bermuda's CBC period to Febru-



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ary for the island's first record in the winter season (JM, AD).

On Jan. 30 an Ash-throated Flycatcher (BL), also recorded at Outer Lea Farm, Be, provided only the 2nd record of this w. species for this remote Atlantic island. Bermuda's 5th Red-breasted Nuthatch record in 20 years (*fide* AD) was of a bird that apparently wintered Nov. 24–February at Jenningsland (JM). A Marsh Wren was discovered (EA, m.ob.) and photographed (*fide* AD) at Pembroke Marsh, Be, Jan. 24 for the first record there. A Gray-checked (Bicknell's) Thrush seen Dec. 31–February at Port Royal, Be (SD), represented the first winter record there. A Northern Mockingbird was also reported Jan. 30 from Bermuda (WF) for the first record there since 1988. Four N. Shrikes were reported from Lover's Lake, Be Jan. 1 (AD). A Solitary Vireo Dec. 31 (DBW) and a Yellow-throated Vireo Feb. 14 (DWa) provided only the 2nd winter records each for Bermuda. A winter survey of warblers by Wallace produced a remarkable 26 species and 1469 individuals. Among them was a Swainson's Warbler that apparently overwintered at Port Royal, Be (*fide* AD), and two Kentucky Warblers reported from Castle Harbour, Be, Dec. 11, one of which apparently overwintered at an Ord Rd. woodland through Feb. 23 (AD). The first Vesper Sparrow at Bermuda since 1985 was reported from Ferry Pt. Park (EA). A **Common Grackle** at Outer Lea Farm Jan. 12 furnished the 5th record from Bermuda. The same bird or perhaps another was seen at Daniel's Head Farm Jan. 26 (AD).

Addendum

Received too late for inclusion in the fall report were numerous records from November of which I include the most interesting (my emphasis). I am grateful to tour participants who contributed records from the Bahamas. Among some of the records from Bahamas and Barbados are late reports and photos of species not previously reported from the Lesser Antilles. Six Least Grebes were noted at Abaco, Ba, Nov. 9 (JD *et al.*). A Magnificent Frigatebird was reported from Bermuda Nov. 19 for one of the few records from that island (AD). One of the most extraordinary records comes, again, from Barbados, where Massiah and Frost observed four very shy adult **Orinoco Geese** (apparently two pairs) at Green Pond March 19–29, 1995 (ph.). They were wary as they "toured" the e. and n. coasts of the island searching for adequate resting and feeding sites. This report is the first modern record, since there seems to be a formerly misidentified specimen from Jamaica (*fide*

HR). A pair of Masked Ducks Nov. 11 were good finds for Oberle and GB among 15 Ruddy Ducks seen at Humacao, PR, where they probably breed. Another Regional breeding *anatid*, the White-cheeked Pintail, was noted at Abaco, Ba Nov. 7, where six were seen at Casaurina Pt. (JD *et al.*). Two migrant N. Shovelers, 40 Blue-winged Teal, and eight Ring-necked Ducks were also present at Casaurina Pt. A Collared Plover seen July 11 at Chancery Lane, Bd (BB, EM) seemingly repeats there every other year. On August 27 two Hudsonian Godwits briefly dropped into Barbados after torrential rains associated with tropical storm *Iris*. Twenty others were drawn to the shooting swamps at North Point, Bd (*fide* EM, MF). A Eur. Whimbrel was reported from Cole's, Bd, Oct. 28–30 (EM, MF) for the 4th island record. A Long-billed Dowitcher recorded at Barbados Nov. 8–10 provided "the first record in many years" (MF, EM). A Baird's Sandpiper provided Grand Cayman its 2nd record in October (PB). A Lesser Black-backed Gull seen Oct. 7 (BBI) & 8 (MF, EM) at Oistin's, Bd was the first for that island. A "Puerto Rican" Broad-winged Hawk seen at El Yunque, PR Nov. 11 appeared while Bell and Oberle searched for Puerto Rican Parrots that did not show at their usual roost near the old restaurant entrance. A Purple Finch seen at the Annex, Be Nov. 12 (DBW) was the 4th record there.

And, finally, here are some regional clubs and natural history organizations that would welcome your support:

Bermuda Audubon Society, Treasurer, P.O. Box HM 1328 Hamilton, HM FX, Bermuda.

Bahamas National Trust, Treas., P.O. Box N4105, Nassua, Bahamas.

Cayman Islands National Trust, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands, West Indies.

Sociedad Ornithol. Puertorriquenna, Tesorero, Colegio Univers. de Humacao, Dept. de Biología, Estacion Postal CUH, Humacao, PR 00791.

Virgin Islands Audubon Society, c/o W. Henederson, Cruz Bay St. John, USVI 00830.

Society of Caribbean Ornithol. c/o Treas., 13 East Rosemont Ave., Alexandria, VA 22301.

Montserrat National Parks Trust, Plymouth, Montserrat, W.I.

St. Lucia National Trust, Treasurer, P.O. Box 525, Castries, St. Lucia, W.I.

National Parks Trust, c/o Treasurer Friends of the National Parks Trust, Box 860, Tortola, BVI.

Gosse Bird Club, c/o 2 Starlight Ave., Kingston 6, Jamaica, W.I.

Island Conservation Effort, Windward-side Post Office, Saba, Netherlands Antilles A.E.V.A. (Assoc. Etude Vertebres Antilles), c/o 97170 Petit Bourg, Guadeloupe, French West Indies.

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