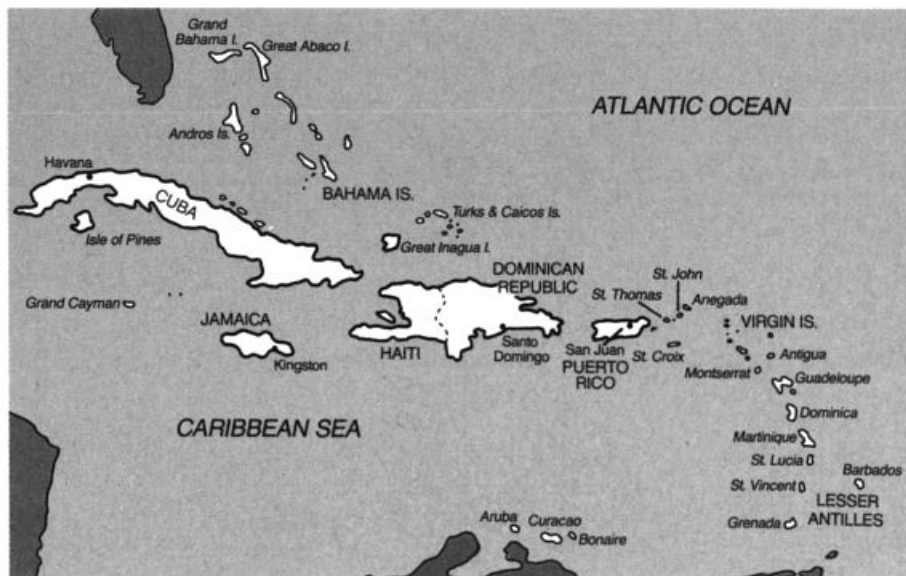


west indies region



ROBERT L. NORTON

This season only two reports were filed by contributors from Bermuda and the Bahamas, the latter providing important information on the status of nesting seabirds in the Exumas. Weather reports on cyclonic activity from the Region indicated no major disturbances owing to El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) influences.

There is a report from observers in the eastern Caribbean that a satellite launching/tracking station is being considered for a tiny limestone rock, Sombrero Island, in the middle of Anegada Passage. This remote spot is located in some of the roughest water connecting the tropical western Atlantic and the Caribbean Sea. It is also one of the most interesting and vulnerable seabird nesting colonies east of the Virgin Islands and north of Redondo Island. Thousands of Brown Noddies, Royal, Sandwich, and perhaps Roseate terns and Brown Boobies nest there with occasional breeding by Black Noddy and Masked Booby (Norton 1987).

The site is very infrequently visited by naturalists, or curious yachters, because of the great difficulty of landing in high swells on undercut limestone cliffs. Logistics and maintenance of a high-tech project such as this in such a corrosive environment strains prudent thinking. However, what of the seabirds? Two species, Masked Boobies and

Black Noddy, have recently been found there during nesting season. This is considered good news because both species are quite vulnerable to disturbance and have small and widely disparate colonies in the Region (Halewyn and Norton 1984). The likelihood that Roseate Tern, a threatened species, nests there is very high (see *Am. Birds* 1985). Indeed, there are endemic fauna (Lazell 1979) on this rock, e.g. herpetofauna and plants. Should they be ushered along the same path to oblivion as the Dusky Seaside Sparrow for the sake of the space program? How ironic that we could accept the loss of species diversity in the name of looking back from space to evaluate how we are managing our stressed natural resources. How imperialistic it seems that we would exchange ill-conceived, material projects for sovereign natural heritage, no matter how small.

SHEARWATERS TO TERNS

Three Cory's Shearwaters were noted rafting with about 200 Audubon's Shearwaters approximately 3 mi e. of Cave Cay, Exuma, Bahamas, June 22 (TW et al.). White-tailed Tropicbirds numbered 18 at Warderick Wells, Exuma, June 23. A Brown Booby rookery was noted at Chesters, Acklins I., Bahamas, June 4 (PA), and another rookery had about 200–300 boobies at Pirates Well, Mayaguana, in the s. Bahamas June 7 (PA). Flamingos numbered 150 at Northeast Pt.,

Mayaguana, June 19 (PA). Two reports of Glossy Ibis, one from Flamingo Bay, George Town, Exuma, June 17, and another at Rolleville, Great Exuma, June 20, were widely separated and probably involved different birds (TW). A White Ibis reported in spring remained until June at Spittal Pond, Bermuda (AD). Four Ruddy Ducks noted at Grog Pond, Exuma, June 18 suggest that they are breeding (TW). A White-cheeked Pintail was noted at Great Stirrup Cay, Berry Is., June 17–11 (BE). A drake Am. Wigeon over-summered at Waterville Park, Bermuda.

A record number of Black-necked Stilts (10) were found at North Pond, Bermuda, June 8. A possible over-summering Greater Yellowlegs was noted at Little Exuma June 19. An abandoned Willet's nest was noted at Grog Pond, Exuma, June 18. A survey of nesting terns in the Exumas (TW et al.) yielded some valuable information on the status of these birds in the c. Bahamas. The uncommon and widespread Gull-billed Tern was found in low numbers (10) on Great Exuma June 20, and one was at Staniel Cay June 22. A Royal Tern was noted at Warderick Wells June 24; Sandwich Terns, approximately 15 pairs, were found nesting at North Channel Rocks off Great Exuma June 19, as were about 50 pairs of Roseate Terns; and Least Terns numbered about nine at Grog Pond and Staniel Cay June 23. Bridled Terns (six) were seen in the area of Duck Cay, Pigeon Cay, and North Channel Rocks, where they possibly nest. Large colonies of Sooty Terns were noted at North Channel Rocks and Little Pigeon Cay June 18. Brown Noddies, about 50 pairs, were nesting at North Channel Rocks June 18. A high count of 200 noddies was made at Thunderball Cay, where they were nesting June 22.

OWLS TO WARBLERS

Nineteen resident landbird species were noted on the Exumas from June 18–24 (TW et al.), and all were reported to be fairly common to abundant. Only a few are mentioned here.

Three Burrowing Owls were seen at George Town Airport, Exuma, June 20, and a high count of 10 Antillean Nighthawks was noted throughout Exuma until June 23. A Cuban Emerald was noted at Great

Harbour Cay, Berry Is., June 2-7 (BE). A hummingbird sp. was seen on June 7 at Hog Bay Park, Bermuda, and possibly the same bird seen on May 9 remained near Jenningsland garden into early summer. Red-legged Thrushes were seen on Great Harbour Cay June 2-7 (BE), and Great Stirrup Cay June 7-11 in the Berry Is. Ten Black-whiskered Vireos were noted, only on the main island. Yellow Warblers were reported at Staniel Cay (two) June 23, and Warderick Wells (two), and Shroud Cay (one), all Exuma (one), June 24. A Louisiana Waterthrush seen on July 8 provided the earliest fall record for this species, and the earliest report for any warbler, for Bermuda (*fide* AD).

ADDENDA

Received too late to be included in the spring report are the following: A rare breeding event this spring at Somerset Long Bay Reserve, Bermuda, involved Pied-billed Grebe. Two Sooty Shearwaters were 5 nautical mi s. of Running Man Marina, Grand Bahamas, April 2 (DP). A Swallow-tailed Kite made a rare appearance over Warwick, Bermuda, May 8. Two Bermuda sightings of Peregrine Falcons, at South Shore dunes March 22 and Devonshire April 18, were considered unusual spring occurrences (AD). A Willet at Spittal Pond from April 25-30 furnished only the 2nd spring record for Bermuda. Eastern Kingbirds numbered 10 between Nonsuch I. and Paget Marsh, Bermuda, from April 25-30. The Brown Creeper reported (AD) during the late winter period at Jennings' I. remained until at least Mar. 23, an extraordinary record. A Yellow Warbler made a rare spring visit to Perry Pt., Bermuda, May 24.

CORRIGENDA

The unidentified swift reported from Bermuda was seen on Oct. 12, 1996 (EA) and should read at Ft. Sauer. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird sighting from Bermuda should read Heydon Trust Oct. 13 (BL), and the Lark Sparrow reported at Paget Sound should read Heydon Trust, Bermuda, Oct. 12.

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