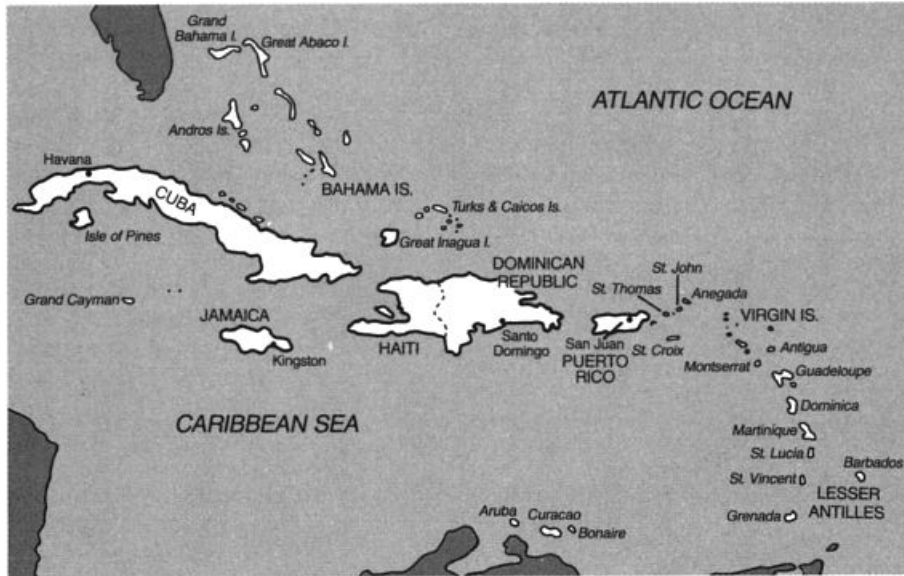


west indies region



ROBERT L. NORTON

The Bahamas archipelago were well canvassed this season. Tony White and a small cadre of dedicated Bahamian birders provided records of birds from Abaco and the Berry Islands in the northwest Bahamas to about as far southeast as one can get, Mayaguana and Great Inagua. They gave us a particularly interesting report where few birders go or report to the rest of us. Between the “book-ends” of the Bahamas, Bruce Hallett, Paul Dean, and Aileen Bainton reported from Grand Bahama, Andros, and New Providence. White, along with the Audubon Naturalist Society, visited Turks and Caicos Islands. Although geographically connected to the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos are politically connected to Great Britain. Daphne Gemmill reported again from Vieques, Puerto Rico, after a short hiatus. Fred Sibley reported on banded birds and observations from Guana and Anegada islands in the British Virgin Islands, supporting sight records of rarely seen warblers east of Puerto Rico. And Andrew Dobson continues to report from Bermuda on the always fascinating fallouts there.

Weather was unusual, to say the least. For example, at Bermuda August rainfall was 140% above average, while September was 80% above normal. October was relatively quiet with no major fronts producing

rain or bird fallout, according to Dobson. November cold fronts sweeping through the northern Bahamas eventually provided some 20 warbler species days and a few sparrow treats. Many of the reports from Bermuda represent the earliest sightings on record for some species. Are birds breeding sooner and leaving sooner? Or were weather patterns a little more favorable this fall for early overshooting and fallout in distant locales? And, finally, Gemmill reports that local residents in Vieques reported woodpeckers to be common, and Antillean Crested Hummingbirds have also appeared to rebound since the ravages of hurricane *Hugo* in 1989.

Abbreviations: BA (*Bahamas*); BE (*Bermuda*); BVI (*British Virgin Islands*); MB salt pans (*Morton Bahamas Ltd. salt pans, Great Inagua, Bahamas*); PR (*Puerto Rico*).

SHEARWATER THROUGH TERMS

A moribund Audubon's Shearwater was found at Elbow Beach, BE, Sept. 26. Dobson reports that this is a significant observation, because it is the first record since the species last bred at Bermuda in the 1980s. Brown Booby was nesting at Mayaguana, BA, Oct. 24–29. A single Neotropic Cormorant was noted at Marsh Harbor, Abaco, BA, Oct. 6 for the 2nd record there, and 125 were seen at MB salt pans Oct. 30 at Great Inagua, BA. An Am.

Bittern was noted at Grand Bahama for one of the few reports from the Bahamas (BH), and a Least Bittern was noted at New Providence, BA, Oct. 25. A ad. White Ibis was seen at Chub Bay, Berry Is, BA, Nov. 22–23, and a Glossy Ibis was seen at Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Oct. 10. Two Roseate Spoonbills were noted at MB salt pans Oct. 31 (TW et al.).

Greater Flamingos (212) were seen daily at Mayaguana from Oct. 24–29 (AB) moving between Besty Bay and Blackwood Pt. No recent nesting has been confirmed there. On North Caicos, 220 flamingos were counted Nov. 9–11 (TW et al.). At Great Inagua, however, 500+ Greater Flamingos were seen at the salt pans and L. Windsor Oct. 31, where Henry Nixon, senior warden and long time flamingo conservationist, and brother Jimmy Nixon of the Bahamas National Trust, said that this was the 3rd consecutive year that more than 10,000 young birds fledged there. Two decades ago 30,000–40,000 birds represented over half the world's population (Buden 1987)!

The 2nd **Greater White-fronted Goose** for Bermuda appeared Sept. 20 and stayed until Oct. 11. Always good are reports of West Indian Whistling-Ducks. Two were noted on Andros Oct. 30 (BH). A Wood Duck, very infrequently reported from the Bahamas, was seen at New Providence Oct. 25 (BH), for perhaps the earliest record there. White-cheeked Pintails numbered 15 at New Providence Oct. 25 (BH), and 30 were seen n. of the MB salt pans Oct. 30. A Black Scoter appeared at Spittal Pond, BE, for only the 6th record there.

A Northern Harrier was seen at New Providence Oct. 31 (BH, TW) for one of the few reports from the c. Bahamas. A single Peregrine was reported from Nonsuch Island, BE, Sept. 4, the earliest date by 9 days. Peregrine Falcons may be in danger of being delisted if reports from the Bahamas are the sole criterion. On Oct. 5, four were seen from Hole-in-the-Wall to Bahama Palm Shores, Abaco (TW); one was reported from Grand Bahama Nov. 4 (TW); and one was seen Nov. 11 at North Caicos. That's six in about 40 days.

One Am. Golden-Plover was noted at the airfield at Vieques, PR, Aug. 29 for one of the few reports from that island. Singleton Piping Plovers were seen at Green Tur-

the Cay, Abaco, Oct. 9, and at Northwest Pt., Providenciales, Caicos Is., Nov. 11 (TW et al.) A single Snowy Plover was found at Pirate's Well, Mayaguana, Oct. 24. A juv. Dunlin was seen at Diamond Farm, New Providence, Nov. 1 (PD), and was subsequently photographed (BH). A Solitary Sandpiper was noted at Guana, BVI, Oct. 10 (FS) for one of the few reports from the smaller islands there.

A Great Black-backed Gull was seen at Grand Bahama Nov. 5 (BH) for one of the few reports from the Bahamas. A Ring-billed Gull Oct. 26 at Mayaguana (AB) may represent only the 2nd record there. A Herring Gull also at Mayaguana Oct. 28 provided probably the first report from that island (Buden 1987). Each was in first fall plumage. As time passes and consistent reporting emerges from the Bahamas, we will probably see reports of the same gull species reported from Florida.

A rare fall report of Com. Tern was noted at L. Cunningham, New Providence, Oct. 25 (BH). It was carefully studied when sitting and flying, with field marks (carpal bar and darkish primaries) noted. Another five were seen some distance away at Mayaguana for 3 days beginning Oct. 27 (TW et al.), and one was at Mangrove Cay, N. Caicos (TW). A Forster's Tern was seen at Grand Bahama Nov. 5 (BH et al.), and two were seen at L. Windsor, Great Inagua, Oct. 30 (TW et al.). A Black Skimmer was noted off Sandy Pt., Abaco, Sept. 1 (CM) for one of few records in the n. Bahamas.

DOVES THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

The always elusive Key West Quail-Doves were evident Oct. 6 at Elbow Cay, Abaco (TW, AB) and at N. Caicos Nov. 9–12 (TW et al.). Two Cuban Parrots were seen near the airfield at Great Inagua Oct. 30 (TW). Six Yellow-billed Cuckoos were seen Oct. 19 at Anegada, BVI (FS), suggesting a temporary migration bottleneck there. Smooth-billed Anis were found to be common near settlements at Mayaguana, where Buden (1987) had not recorded them.

Short-eared Owls may be making a range expansion e. of Puerto Rico into its satellite islands, and e. to the Virgin Islands in the last decade or so. A single bird was noted at Vieques, PR, Aug. 30. St. Thomas also has a record from last decade. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was noted Oct. 12 and provided one of three records at Bermuda this season. Dobson reports that of the 30 records since 1852, at least 67% (20) have occurred since 1974. A single female Ruby-throated Hummingbird found

at Grand Bahama Nov. 5 (BH) furnished one of few recent records from the n. Bahamas.

A West Indian Red-bellied Woodpecker noted daily at Marsh Harbour, Abaco, from Aug. 31–Sept. 1 (CM) was good news, since this species seems to be going through some distribution or abundance fluctuations. A special effort to survey this Regional endemic is warranted. An E. Wood-pewee was seen Oct. 8 at Coopers Town dump for one of the few records from the n. Bahamas. Bermuda's 6th record of Olive-sided Flycatcher was recorded Sept. 21, the first since 1985. A House Wren at Grand Bahama Nov. 4 was not only unusual, but earlier than previous records (Brudenell-Bruce 1975). One Bank and 20 Cliff swallows were seen at Vieques from Aug. 29–Sept. 1 (DG). Two N. Rough-winged Swallows, another rare passage migrant in the Bahamas, were seen Oct. 10 at Sugarlands Farm, Abaco.

Cuban Crows (30) were noted at N. Caicos Nov. 9–11 (TW). They are persecuted in the Caicos because they are perceived as a threat to subsistence agriculture (Norton 1989). Mowery reports first hearing the distinctive nasal call, then seeing a **Fish Crow** at Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Aug. 31. This is a remarkable sighting because it strongly suggests that the first record for the West Indies at West End, Grand Bahama, from February 13–15, 1997 (m.ob.) has survived, and may be the same bird now found in Abaco, only 140 mi due east as the crow flies.

Red-eyed Vireos have been an annual occurrence at Guana, BVI, whence Sibley has netted/banded them in each of the last 3 Octobers. A single Nashville Warbler seen Oct. 24 at New Providence was one 16 warbler species seen that day (BH), and Nashville and Orange-crowned warblers Oct. 28 were part of a 19 warbler day at Andros, BA (BH). Two Golden-winged Warblers were found at Guana Oct. 14 (FS, banded) & 18 (FS, unbanded). A Black-throated Blue Warbler seen Aug. 25 at Ferry Pt. Park, BE, provided the earliest record by 3 days. A Chestnut-sided Warbler, rarely seen in the Virgin Islands, was noted at a sugar feeder at Guana Oct. 18 (FS). A Bay-breasted Warbler was found at the South Ocean golf course, New Providence Oct. 26 (BH), one of the few times reported from the Bahamas.

Fourteen Bahama Yellowthroats were counted on a survey (TW, AB) from Treasure Cay to Sandy Pt., Abaco, Oct. 4. An important discovery was three Bahama Yel-

lowthroats found Nov. 23 at Chub Cay, Berry Is., BA, where they were formerly considered hypothetical. A Summer Tanager was seen at Chub Cay Nov. 23. A Dickcissel was found in a flock of Bobolinks at New Providence Oct. 23 (PD) for one of the few records there.

A Chipping Sparrow, rarely found in the Bahamas, was noted at Grand Bahama Nov. 4 (TW). This was big season for Clay-colored Sparrows in the Bahamas. One was seen at North Andros Oct. 29 (JD); one in fields at Dover Sound, Grand Bahama, (BH); and one at Northwest Pt., Mayaguana, Oct. 25 (TW) for the first record there. A Grasshopper Sparrow at Pirate's Well, Mayaguana, Oct. 24 (TW, AB) provided a new record there (Buden 1987). A **White-throated Sparrow** was seen at West End Resort, Grand Bahama, Nov. 5 (BH) for a first record from the Bahamas.

A rare occurrence of Lapland Longspur at St. George's dairy, BE, Nov. 13 was the first since 1993. A Shiny Cowbird was found on Andros Oct. 28–29 in the company of Red-winged Blackbirds. Black-cowled Orioles seem to be hanging on nicely at Andros, where Hallett and Dunn found up to 12 on Oct. 28. A Com. Redpoll on Nov. 25 at St. David's, BE, was the first since November 1991.

ADDENDUM

Received too late to be included in the summer report are sightings from Bermuda. A White Ibis summered at Spittal Pond for the first time. A Gull-billed Tern at Non-such I. July 22 represented only the 2nd fall (late summer) report of the 12 ever recorded there. A very early Louisiana Waterthrush, 9 days ahead of a previous first fall date, appeared July 8, surpassing all other fall dates for any warbler species on Bermuda.

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