

PASSERINES

The release program for captive Puaiohi (*Endangered*) in the Alaka'i area of Kaua'i reported last season continues to be a landmark success. Eight of the 14 birds released last winter are confirmed to be already breeding in the wild, including captive-captive and captive-wild pairs. Of 6 confirmed nests thus far, one has hatched two chicks, one is incubating, 2 should receive eggs soon, and only 2 are failed or abandoned (BW). In contrast to the difficult problem with the 'Alala, this is a really notable achievement by The Peregrine Fund and

SA The captive rearing and release program for 'Alala (Hawaiian Crow, very critically *Endangered*) had been going well for several years, until last year when environmental threats began to take their toll on the young released birds (see last 2 season reports). Of 27 captive-reared young birds released beginning in 1993, 14 are known dead (7 killed by 'Io, four died from toxoplasmosis acquired probably from feral cats, two died from bacterial and fungal infections, and one of unknown cause), six more are missing and presumed dead, four were returned to captivity as protection from predators and disease and to preserve genetic diversity, and three survive in the wild (one released 1998, two in 1997; DB). Other than one or two instances of trying to form a pair, none of these young released birds had attempted to breed.

Of the 12 original wild birds (none in recent captivity) known in 1993, eight were confirmed dead over succeeding years, and one more is missing this year and presumed dead. Two of the remaining three have been a long time pair, last producing a malformed egg in 1997 and still starting nest-building in spring. All three of these wild old-timers are considered senescent seniors and no longer productive (DB).

This story is a grim one. The captive hatching, rearing, and release techniques developed by The Peregrine Fund have proven successful. But the still greater challenge is how to "educate" these young birds to protect themselves from environmental perils (directly or indirectly human-caused), without wild-living birds from which to learn. It is a daunting task.

the Biological Resources Division of U.S.G.S., with a somewhat easier species.

One egg was taken from the nest of a wild Maui Parrotbill (critically *Endangered*) in the Hanawi area of Maui 19 Mar and brought to the Maui Bird Conservation Center. It hatched 2 days later. The chick joins the only other Maui Parrotbill hatched in captivity, a female.

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west indies region



ROBERT L. NORTON

A wide range of sight reports covering the breadth of the Region provided an interesting retrospective following last fall's series of hurricanes, especially *Georges*, which swept through most of the Greater Antilles. A report from Cuba again provides a glimpse of that island's endemics and accessibility. An interesting report from Haiti included descriptions of habitat that warrant some form of protection. Indeed, an abundance of waterfowl following the floods of *Georges* are hunted and sold along roadsides in Haiti, and nesting Audubon's Shearwaters are consumed by Cuban boat-people on Cay Sal, and perhaps other uninhabited landings in the Bahamas.

Rainfall at Haiti following *Georges* was

at least beneficial to resident and migrant waterfowl (and hunters) at L. Bois Nef, Pierre Payen, and Savanne Desolee, near Gonaives, where Crouse estimated that levels may have been three feet above normal in an otherwise denuded and overworked landscape. On the other side of the *Georges* coin, Oberle reported that many Puerto Rican species, especially quail-doves and parrots, were nesting late because of low food after the hurricane. By late April migrants stalled by sweeping fronts in the central and northern Bahamas (*vide* Bracey) included 15 species of wood-warblers and black-billed forms of Roseate Tern.

Abbreviations: Ba (*Bahamas*); Bd (*Barbados*); Be (*Bermuda*); Cu (*Cuba*); GC (*Grand Cayman*); Gr (*Grenada*); Ha (*Haiti*); PR (*Puerto Rico*); StL (*St. Lucia*); StV (*St. Vincent*).

SHEARWATERS THROUGH TERNS

A large passage of Greater Shearwaters was noted from South Shore, Be, during May (AD). A Cory's Shearwater was among 30 Audubon's between Little and Great Inagua, Ba, 9 May (BH). Dozens of Audubon's Shearwater carcasses were found at campfires around Cay Sal, Ba, where presumably birds were attracted by fire and eaten by Cuban or perhaps Haitian boaters.

A Wilson's Storm-Petrel was noted off Treasure Cay, Abaco, Ba, 10 May (EB). The ad. N. Gannet reported last season from Bermuda was found dead at Cooper's I. 6 Mar (DBW) for the first ad. specimen record. A Brown Pelican was seen periodically 21 Mar–14 Apr at Harrington Sound, Be (AD, PW, DBW) for one of the few spring reports from that island. A Magnificent Frigatebird was noted 28–30 Mar at S. Shore, Be (AD, LM).

A pair of Least Bitterns 30 Apr (EB) at Abaco were likely breeding. On 2 Mar a migrant Am. Bittern was noted at High Point, Be. The first breeding record for Great Blue Heron on Bermuda was in May on the Hamilton Harbour Is. (DBW); suspected breeders at Canno Tiburones, PR, were seen during an Ornithol. Society of Puerto Rico trip there 20 Mar (*fide* MO). On 12 Mar at Savanne Desolee L., Gonaives, Ha, JRC et al. observed Great Blue Herons (five), Great Egret (40+), Snowy Egret (three), Little Blue Heron (one), and 100s of Cattle Egret. On 3 Mar Beaton and Massiah relocated the **Purple Heron** at Graeme Hall swamp, Bd, that made news last fall as the first North American record; it was last seen 28 Apr (MF). That same morning they located the **Gray Heron**, last seen 16 May before the swamp dried (MF), as well as Little Egrets at Chancery Lane and a Western Reef-Heron at Coles Rd. swamp, all from 5–8 a.m.

A Com. Teal 20 Apr at Marsh Lane, Be, was a good find and one of the few reports during April (AD). Northern Shovelers numbered 25 at Savanne Desolee Gonaives, Ha, 12 Mar (JRC et al.), along with numerous Blue-winged Teal and a single Am. Wigeon. Up to three Swallow-tailed Kites visited Bermuda from 20 Apr–8 May, providing the first May records (AD, JM). A singleton was seen 30 Apr at Treasure Cay, Abaco, Ba (EB). Among a group of raptors circling over a brush fire at Boca Jaruco, e. of Havana, Cu, 17 Apr were three **Mississippi Kites** apparently feeding on insects flushed by the flames (PB, AK et al.); this sighting represents a first report for Cuba (Garrido and Kirkconnel 1993) and the West Indies. A N. Harrier lingered 1 Mar–5 May among the Castle Harbour Is., Be, extending the seasonal occurrence record into May (AD). An unexpected fly-by Gundlach's Hawk at Los Sabalos, Cu, 12 Apr was a treat after searching other sites (PB, AK). A resident Cuban population of Crested Caracara persists near La Ceiba, where Burke, Bludau et al. recorded the first for this column 11 Apr. A Peregrine Falcon

SA Martin Frost reports Snowy Egrets and **Little Egrets** nesting separately *and* forming mixed pairs. First noted 14 Mar at the renowned Graeme Hall swamp, itself deserving international recognition for special protective status, Little Egrets were incubating clutches through May. Snowy Egrets began nest building 21 Mar. A male Little and female Snowy were seen copulating 3 Apr with subsequent female copulation(s) with a male Snowy providing, as Frost contends, the strongest evidence yet for hybridization between these 2 species of the Little Egret/Snowy Egret/Western Reef-Heron superspecies complex.

cruised Bermuda 1 Mar–15 Apr (AD). At Treasure Cay, Abaco, Ba, 2–8 Apr, Cuban Am. Kestrels were noted (WB, *fide* EB). A remarkable sighting of **Spotted Rail** 13 Apr at Zapata Swamp, Cu, provided a first sighting for local ornithologists (*fide* CB). A tape elicited 3 responses from a **Zapata Rail** at the same location (CB), a bird rarely heard or seen.

At Savanne Desolee L., Gonaives, Ha, JRC et al. observed a large concentration of waterfowl 12 Mar apparently crowded into a dwindling freshwater marsh caused by an ongoing drought. They counted 700+ Black-necked Stilt among the many hundreds of other waders, including 100+ Killdeer, 100 Greater Yellowlegs, and 1000+ Lesser Yellowlegs. A Collared Plover at Packers, Christ Church, Bd, 23 May was the first inland report (MF, EM) for this irregular visitor from the S. Caribbean. Three Piping Plovers and a single Red Knot were found 15 Apr (EB) at Green Turtle Cay, Abaco, Ba. A **Little Stint** photographed 16 May at Packers, Christ Church, represented only the 2nd record for Barbados (MF, MG, EM). A carefully noted **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Midland Acres, near Meagre Bay Pond, 22–23 May (KI), for a rare report for the Region and the first for Grand Cayman. An astonishing three Ruffs and two Reeves were noted by Gawn at several locations throughout Barbados 28 Mar; another, or one of these birds in alternate plumage, was noted 23–30 May at Congo Rd. (MF, EM).

Two Pomarine Jaegers were noted 24 Mar from Castle Harbour, Be (AD). Cuba's 2nd **Franklin's Gull** was recorded 14 Apr near Playa Giron (AK, *fide* CB). Two Bonaparte's Gull at Hamilton Harbour, Be,

11 Apr were considered late (AD). A rare sighting of Gull-billed Tern 8 Mar at Warwick Pond, Be, was a good find (JM); four were noted 25 Apr along the causeway to Cayo Guillermo, Cu (AJ, AK). A Com. Tern 20 Mar at Hamilton Harbour was considered very early (AD). Roseate Terns, both migrant and resident forms, were seen throughout the Bahamas; Bracey counted about 50+ migrants, distinguished by the nearly all black bill, 22 May. A **White-winged Tern** at McKinney Pond, Cat I., Ba, carefully observed by C. Wardle and five other observers of the BNT represented only the 4th record from the West Indies, the others being from Barbados (Oct 1888), Great Inagua (June 1980), and St. Croix (1987).

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A Eur. Collared-Dove was noted at Bermaja, Cu, 16 Apr (PB et al.). One of the prime attractions for birders visiting Cuba is the quail-dove group. Six endemic Blue-headed were seen near El Cenote 11 Apr, an endemic Gray-headed was near Playa Larga 12 and 14 Apr, Key West was noted 12, 15, & 16 Apr, and Ruddy was noted 13 & 16 Apr. Cuban (Rose-throated) Parrots numbered 25 (a good showing for this species) at Abaco, Ba, 12 Mar (EB), upwards of 15 around Playa Hiron and Larga, Cu, 11–15 Apr (PB et al.), eight at Great Inagua, Ba, 9 May (BH), and five from Grand Cayman, three on Cayman Brac (KI).

At Syndicate, Dominica, two Imperial Parrots were noted with more than a dozen Red-necked Parrots flying back and forth across the Morne Diablotin R. 20 Apr (AB-G, MG). St. Lucia Parrots greeted Beaton and Oberle at the Edmund Forest Trailhead 1 Mar. Two Greater Antillean Nightjars were seen 12 Apr near Bermaja, Cu; it may prove to be an endemic species (*C. cubanensis*) based on call variation and isolation from Hispaniolan populations (*C. ekmani*). Four Black Swifts were noted (KI) at N. End Estate, GC, 21 May, one of the few reports from the w. Caribbean; one at Worthing, Christ Church, Ba, 25 Mar (MF) was the earliest spring record there.

At Kenscoff and Fermathe, Ha, 27 Mar at elevations above 2000–4000 ft., five swallows described as having green-blue backs may have been **Golden Swallows** (JRC). Further surveys are warranted, as this W. Indian endemic has not been reported from Jamaica for years and now may be reliably seen only on Haiti. At Ravine La Chaloupe, StL, 2 Mar, Beaton and Oberle found White-breasted Thrasher, the St. Lucian

SA As if not enough to suffer the trauma of hurricane *Georges*, habitat of the critically endangered Puerto Rican Parrots, the subject of intensive recovery efforts involving national, local, and other organizations, was colonized by Africanized bees. United States Fish & Wildlife Service and Department of Natural Resources staff worked hard to remove the invaders from 3 active nests (*vide* MO). There were fewer than 43 parrots remaining when *Georges* made landfall, the same as in 1989, when hurricane *Hugo* reduced the population by half. Once numbering in the tens or even hundreds of thousands, the wild population reached an all-time low of 13 in 1975. Heavy logging in newly opened forest areas following an 1899 hurricane reduced the parrot to a remnant population on the e. end of the island.

Dr. Jaime Collazo, a U.S. Geologic Survey biologist, reported recently that most wild parrots survived the storm. Preliminary surveys have located 36 of 40 birds. Food and cover may not be available now in adequate quality and quantity, leaving them vulnerable to predation. Competition and disease from exotic psittacines, and damage to the preferred tree species for nesting, may cause significant problems as forests recover, particularly in the Luquillo Mts. Before *Georges*, biologists conducting experimental releases of the closely related Hispaniolan parrot in the Dominican Republic were tracking 34 birds marked with radio transmitters. Three days after the hurricane passed through the Dominican Republic they located 26 birds. This effort, lead by Collazo, is a model for Puerto Rican parrot reintroduction following the effects of a major storm on habitat and survivability.

race of the Antillean House-Wren, and St. Lucian race of Lesser Antillean Pewee; these last two warrant study for potential specific rank.

A Black-whiskered Vireo 30 Mar (AD) at Coral beach Club, Be, was the earliest spring record and the first since 1983! An Am. Redstart at Vega Baja, PR, 8 May was considered very late (MO). A pair of St. Lucia Black Finches appeared on the trail of Edmund Forest 1 Mar (GB, MO). At Caya Romano, Cu, 25 Apr were two Zapata

Sparrows (AJ), among several landbirds easier here than on the main island.

CORRIGENDA/ADDENDA

The Antillean House-Wren reported last fall at St. Michael, Bd, as a probable waif from St. Lucia or St. Vincent was found again at Fontabelle and further details were gathered. After reviewing taped song and photographs it has been determined (MF, MG, EM) to be **Southern House-Wren** (*musculus* group), possibly from Grenada.

Received too late to be included with appropriate seasonal reports are records of Collared Plover at Chancery Lane, Christ Church, Bd 25 Jul 1998 (MG), Piping Plover at Turtle Beach, St. Kitts, 24 Oct 1998 (MG), and **Black Tern** at Inch Marrow Pt., Christ Church, Bd, 22-23 Aug 1998, described as quite likely the nominate subspecies from Europe (MG, EM). A dark-morph Barn Owl was at Grande Anse, Gr, 26 Feb (GB, MO). At Perseverance Estate, Gr, Beaton and Oberle located Grenada Dove, but had no luck seeking Hook-billed Kites at Mt. Hartman. A visit to Vermont Nature Center, StV, 28 Feb provided good looks at St. Vincent Parrot and Whistling

Warbler (GB, MO). On 31 Aug 1998, three Puerto Rican Nightjars were heard at Guanica State Forest and Antillean Nighthawks were at Ponce, PR (MG). A male Blue-winged Warbler was at La Hacienda Juanita, Maricao, PR, 2 Dec 1996 (ST).

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1999 BIRDING TOURS

NORTH BURMA EXPEDITION
2-28 November

MALAYSIA
Malaya, Borneo, Mt. Kinabalu
24 June -16 July

INDONESIA #1
Greater Sundas
Java, Borneo, Bali
7-30 July

INDONESIA #2
Sumatra
5-27 August

2000 BIRDING TOURS

THAILAND
North, Central, Peninsular
8-30 January

SOUTH INDIA/ ANDAMAN ISLANDS
6-29 January

SRI LANKA
28 January-14 February

PHILIPPINES
Luzon, Mindanao, Cebu, Palawan, Bohol, Negros
4 February-6 March

WEST BURMA
Mt. Victoria, Chin Hills
10 March-2 April

BHUTAN
West to East Traverse
7-30 April

CHINA #1
Beidaihe Migration
4-20 May

CHINA #2
Manchuria
Inner Mongolia
17 May-11 June