

Be., including Port Royal 4 Oct (AD), Hog Bay Park 25 Oct (AD), and Spittal Pond 2 Nov (AD). A tour on North Andros produced 20 species of warblers 1–5 Nov (ABA *vide* TW), including a Wilson's Warbler 1 Nov. Another Wilson's was at San Salvador 12 Nov (PD), much farther ese. in the Bahamas, and GF found another at Grand Bahama 23 Nov for the latest report in the area. A male American Redstart and a Black-and-white Warbler 20 Sep at Fermanthe were noted again 11 Nov (JRC), along with 6–8 Cape May Warblers and singles of Prairie Warbler, Ovenbird, and Common Yellowthroat. On 7 Oct at Furcey, Haiti, JRC recorded Black-throated Blue and Yellow-throated Warblers. A Northern Waterthrush was noted 2 Sep in a small stand of mangroves at Trou Caiman, possibly an arrival that day.

A Clay-colored Sparrow was noted 8 Oct at Hog Bay Park, Be. (AD), and a Fox Sparrow was at Hog Bay Park 13 Nov (SF). The aforementioned 1–5 Nov tour found a Chipping, 4 Savannah and 4 Grasshopper Sparrows and 2 Indigo and 5 Painted Buntings (ABA). At

Bermuda 18 Sep were 300 Bobolinks feeding in pumpkin fields. Two ad. and one juv. Greater Antillean Orioles were noted at Fermanthe 20 Sep (JRC). Baltimore Orioles were noted at the extremes of the Bahamas, with one at N. Andros 1 Nov (ABA) and another at San Salvador 12 Nov (PD, EC, BH, & TW). Imagine finding 25 Baltimore Orioles, birds not ballplayers, on Bermuda in one day (18 Sep)!

#### Addenda/Corrigenda

Fall 1999 reports from GK include a Yellow-throated Vireo at Marshall's Pen, Jamaica, 8–9 Nov (GK, RPM, JP, FR); a Willow Flycatcher tape-recorded(!) at Windsor Caves 10 Nov (GK, FR); a Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Rocklands, Jamaica, 11 Nov (GK, FR). Also from GK came 2000 reports of a Chimney Swift s. of Matanzas, Cuba, 14 Apr and a Bananaquit (not native to Cuba) at Palpite, Matanzas, Cuba, 23 Jul, the 21st for the island. Five White-rumped Sandpipers were near Jaguey Grande, Matanzas, 24 Jul, and a Northern Rough-winged Swallow was near Palpite 21 Jul (earliest

autumn record). Dean found both Glossy and White Ibises on Cat Cay, Biminis, Bahamas, 30 Jul for the first records of both species for that group of islands (TW). The 28 Aug 1999 Little Egret (*N. Am. Birds* 54:109) should read "imm white-morph Reddish Egret (CS *vide* TW)."

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# Central America



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In this, the first seasonal report from Central America, coverage is weighted toward Belize. However, thanks to the work of George Angehr, Oliver Komar, and James R. Zook, who graciously agreed to serve as country coordinators for Panama, El Salvador, and

Costa Rica respectively, records from these three countries lend a regional perspective that otherwise would not have been possible. I expect future reports will achieve a balance of coverage, as more people living in or visiting these and other Central American countries learn of this new vehicle for publicizing their noteworthy field observations. Lacking this broader perspective for the moment, it is difficult to discern Regional trends, especially weather-related phenomena that can so profoundly affect both the timing and pulse of migration and other seasonal movements from season to season. Nonetheless, even with limited data at hand, it is clear that this fall season was a remarkable one. In addition to several supposed "resident" species in out-of-the-way places, several earliest arrival and latest departure dates on record, and an unexpected subspecies of warbler, the autumn migration produced one new country record, at least two second country records, and several others nearly as rare. And three intrepid souls got a rare bird's-eye-view of life in the eye of a Category 4 hurricane!

**Abbreviations:** C.C.C.–U.S.F.S. (Caribbean Conservation Corp. and U.S. Forest Service Redwood Sciences Laboratory Tortuguero Banding Station, Costa Rica); C.T.W.S. (Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize); PG (Punta Gorda, Belize). **Note:** Frank's, Nicholas, Lime, and Seal Cayes (pronounced "keys") are in the Sapodilla group in s. Belize.

### Shearwaters Through Waterfowl

Two separate **Audubon's Shearwaters**, a dying bird found on the beach at Caye Caulker in late Jul (ph. EM) and a carcass found on a beach near Hopkins 2 Aug (ph. MM), represent the first and second records for Belize; details will be published elsewhere. A small nesting colony of Brown Pelicans with approximately 7 nestlings was discovered on E. Snake Caye in mid-Sep (JY, LJ). As this species normally nests in Belize only in spring, this colony was a full six months out of sync.

A Least Bittern at Tortuguero, Costa Rica, 25 Sep (WW) was at an unexpected Caribbean coastal locality. This species nests at Lago Caño Negro and Palo Verde and is seldom reported elsewhere. Two Black-crowned Night-Herons on Caye Caulker 21–22 Oct (J&DB) are the first for that locality and represent one of the few records for the Belize cayes. There were several reports of Glossy Ibis in Panama in Jun–Aug, including the first ever for well-studied Barro Colorado I. 24 Jul (GR). The 25 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks that appeared on Caye Caulker in the eye of Hurricane *Keith* (J&DB) were the first reported for any Belize caye.

Representing only the 3rd record for Panama were 33 **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** at Las Macanas Marsh 14 Jul (vt. DM, K&RK, CR).

### Raptors

Three Swallow-tailed Kites 15 Jul (JPD) and 2 on 9 Aug (OK) at Municipio de Perquin were the first fall migrants ever reported in El Salvador, while 3 on 14 Sep in P.G. (LJ) were the latest yet for Belize. Only last fall the **Mississippi Kite** was confirmed as occurring in Belize (two earlier reports were likely correct but lacked details). This year, a sub-adult 16 Sep and 8 juv. 3 Oct, both in P.G. (LJ), strongly suggest this species is a scarce but regular fall migrant. A Cooper's Hawk 22 Oct in P.G. (LJ) was the only one reported this fall in Belize; however, two sightings in the lowlands of Costa Rica and another at Fila Las Cruces just 10 km from the Panama border (all JRZ) was an impressive number for one fall season. A Swainson's Hawk at Campo Tres, Costa Rica, 28 Nov (JRZ) was either a late migrant or a wintering bird.

### Sandpipers Through Kingfishers

An Upland Sandpiper on Frank's Caye 8 Oct (LJ) may represent only the 2nd fall record for Belize. Least Sandpipers at the Aguadulce salt ponds 14 Jul (DM, K&RK, CR) were the earliest ever reported in Panama; 4 Wilson's Phalaropes there 15 Aug (GA) were an added treat. One of the best birds of the season was surely the well-studied ad. **Gray-hooded Gull** in basic plumage that turned up at Costa del

Este, Panama City, 2 Aug (DM, RK, CR), only the 3rd for Panama and one of the few ever n. of South America. Also present were a Ring-billed Gull, a Franklin's Gull, and a probable imm. Gray Gull. A juv. Sooty Tern at sea off E. Snake Caye 15 Oct (LJ) was about 2 months later than expected. What is perhaps the only remaining breeding colony in Belize persists (barely!) on nearby M. Snake Caye, but all birds are usually gone by mid-Aug. Brown Noddies are rare on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, so 2 moribund individuals at Tortuguero 22 Sep and 15 Oct, respectively, were a surprise.

A Ruddy Quail-Dove on Lime Caye 1 Nov (vt. LJ) represents only the 2nd offshore record for Belize. Previously only a winter visitor in El Salvador, a pair of Red-throated (Green) Parakeets at Municipio de Perquin 10 Aug (OK) was a surprise and represents the first rainy season record. Increasingly scarce in Costa Rica, 12 Great Green Macaws at Caño Harold, Tortuguero, 25 Sep (WW) are worth noting. Indicative of their continuing northward expansion in Costa Rica, 6 Blue-headed Parrots were seen at Isla Grande near Puerto Viejo 16 Oct (JRZ). A juv. Black-billed Cuckoo on Lime Caye 29 Sep (LJ) was the only one reported in Belize this fall. An ad. Smooth-billed Ani was well studied on Caye Caulker 3 Oct–8 Nov (J&DB) following Hurricane *Keith*. Chuck-will's-widows, once thought to be rare in Belize, are proving to be regular fall migrants on the small cayes, where they are much more conspicuous than on the

**SA** Without question the event that had the most profound effect on birds in the Region was Hurricane *Keith*. Upgraded from a tropical storm to a hurricane 30 September, *Keith* quickly became a Category 4 hurricane, with sustained winds of 135 mph. Unprecedented for a hurricane, it literally parked itself over Ambergris Caye and Caye Caulker for nearly three full days. Because the tropical storm-to-hurricane happened so quickly and unexpectedly, more than a thousand people were trapped on these, the two most heavily populated cayes in Belize. On 2 October the eye drifted over Caye Caulker for a full six hours (noon to dusk), during which three dedicated birders were witness to a spectacle rarely seen in the avian world. To quote from Jim Beveridge:

*We [J&DB] followed the shoreline around the southern point to the west side of the cay. The seas were still raging and mounds of sea grass were piled two to four feet thick as far away as a hundred yards from the shore. It was not immediately apparent, but soon we began to notice the birds. At first it was the larger species, including Great and Snowy Egrets, White Ibis, Little Blue Herons, and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. They were feeding among the sea grass and flotsam. Then a flock of approximately 15 ducks flew toward us. These I identified as Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, which I suspect, Keith brought in from Shipstern. A second flock of ducks appeared,*

*and both groups combined to form a larger flock of perhaps 25 birds, which then flew north. Soon, large numbers of swallows and Purple Martins began to gather, each flying singly as if feeding. More and more arrived until literally thousands were flying erratically in never ending circles, seemingly aware that there was no place to go. As dusk approached we were still in the eye of the storm, and the martins and swallows, now near total exhaustion, began to roost on the shattered trees and in all the available perches on the few empty houses around us. Now, it was easy to identify the majority as Cliff Swallows. As the swallows settled down, another group of birds took off. These were nighthawks. Nighthawks are found on the cayes, but seldom are they noticed. This evening, however, I counted 16 in flight at the same time!*

And 120 mi. to the south in Punta Gorda things were quite different. There was hardly a breath of wind and little rain. LJ, who had been tracking diurnal migration past P.G. since early September, noticed a precipitous drop in diurnal migrants during and immediately following the hurricane. Notably affected were Eastern Kingbirds and swallows, with numbers of each dropping off dramatically during and immediately after the hurricane.

**SA** From 25 Oct to 1 Nov 1999, LJ observed several flocks of Hook-billed Kites (max. flock size 37) migrating south along the coast of s. Belize. While this phenomenon is not without precedent (it is an annual occurrence in coastal Veracruz), it was unexpected in Belize, where the Hook-billed Kite is thought to be non-migratory. Demonstrating that the 1999 phenomenon was no fluke, LJ again observed **Hook-billed Kites** migrating south past P.G. 21 Oct 2000. What began as a kettle of 10 birds soon grew to a remarkable **96** as this and other groups coalesced into one large flock that gradually moved s. down the coast until they were out of sight. Almost every conceivable color morph and age class of this highly polymorphic species was represented. Where are these birds coming from? Where are they going? In no part of its range is this species considered to be seasonal. Perhaps some (or most?), but not all, individuals migrate seasonally *entirely within* the confines of the species' geographic range in response to a fluctuating seasonal food source, in this case land snails.

heavily vegetated mainland. Eight were on the Sapodillas 16 Sep, 2 were on tiny Seal Caye 29 Sep, and 1 was on Frank's Caye 15 Oct (all LJ). An Oilbird in Soberania N.P. 19 Jul (AC) was only 11th for Panama. Although a regular fall migrant along the mainland coast, Chimney Swifts are not often seen on the cayes, so 30+ seen swirling in the eye of Hurricane *Keith* 2 Oct (EM) were unexpected, as were 15 flying high over Seal Caye 20 Oct (LJ).

A **Long-billed Starthroat**, only the 2nd ever recorded in Belize, was carefully studied as it hawked insects in the middle of the Southern Highway (!) at Big Falls 29 Jul (PB). An exceptionally early Ruby-throated Hummingbird at Finca Altamira 9 Sep (CH) represents the earliest record for El Salvador, and a Belted Kingfisher on Glovers Reef 2 Jul (MM) represents the earliest record for Belize.

### Woodcreepers Through Catbirds

A Strong-billed Woodcreeper, rare in El Salvador, was seen at El Imposible N.P. 30 Sep (CH). A Yellow-bellied Elaenia at remote Seal Caye 9 Nov furnished only the 2nd record of this sedentary species on an offshore cayes in Belize. A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher 15 Aug at El Imposible N.P. (CH) was the 2nd earliest for

El Salvador, and an Acadian Flycatcher 9 Nov on Nicholas Caye (LJ) was the latest yet for Belize. A few Great Kiskadees, another species presumed to be sedentary, winter most years on Caye Caulker; however, one there 27 Jul was early (J&DB). Expect this species to be nesting on Caye Caulker within the next few years. A Piratic Flycatcher at Chilamate near La Selva, Costa Rica, 8 Oct (JRZ) was later than usual. Eastern Kingbirds migrate in great numbers every fall along the coast of Belize, with peak numbers typically occurring in late Sep and early Oct. This year, at height of their migration, Hurricane *Keith* struck. In mid- and late Sep, LJ and WRM routinely counted 1000–3500 passing P.G. in the first two hours after daylight; however, on the morning of 3 Oct, when kingbird numbers should have been at their peak, *none* were seen. The roadblock was surely *Keith*, which was just beginning to wind down 120 mi to the north. In the days following, kingbird numbers began to increase again, but never reached numbers expected for that time of year. Small groups of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers can occasionally be seen migrating with the Eastern Kingbirds, although well separated vertically, as this species migrates much closer to the ground. Although fewer than expected were seen this year, one 28 Sep in P.G. (LJ) was the earliest yet for Belize. The Rose-throated Becard is a rare winter visitor in se. Costa Rica, so a vocalizing pair at San Vito near the Panama border 28–30 Nov, and another female 2 km to the e. 30 Nov (JRZ), were of interest.

Two White-eyed Vireos at Tortuguero, one 30 Oct–4 Nov and another 10 Nov (both C.C.C.–U.S.F.S.), were the first reported in Costa Rica in about five years. A Red-eyed Vireo at Finca Altamira 9 Sep (CH) was only the 3rd record for El Salvador and the first in fall. Is this species being overlooked? Cliff Swallows reached their peak in P.G. 1 Oct, with 1,038 passing in one hour (LJ). Thus, it is not surprising that when *Keith* struck, one of the two most common species caught in the eye was Cliff Swallow. Thousands of Cliff Swallows and Purple Martins were seen swirling in the eye, near exhaustion, 2 Oct (see the S.A.). Among the Cliff Swallows were at least 3 **Cave Swallows** (EM), a rare species in Belize, with only 3–4 previous records. Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at Finca Altamira 9 Sep were the earliest on record for El Salvador. Migrant Wood Thrushes reached their peak in Belize 20 Oct, with 110 counted on the Sapodillas (LJ). Ten days later Gray Catbirds reached their peak, with 135 on the Sapodillas (LJ). A Black Catbird in Belize City in early Nov (RB) was at an unexpected location.

### Wood-warblers Through Blackbirds

A Blue-winged Warbler, rare in Costa Rica, was at Monteverde 20 Nov (JRZ). The subtly patterned Tennessee Warbler is one of the most common, yet least appreciated, warblers in Belize in fall. With one-day totals on the Sapodillas of 57 on 29 Sep and 60 on 30 Oct, it was exceeded only by the Common Yellowthroat with 110 on 18 Oct (all LJ). The best warbler of the fall had to be **Nashville Warbler**. With no more than 10 previous records for Belize, the occurrence of 3 on the Sapodillas in Oct (LJ) was unprecedented. Even more surprising was the fact that 2 of them (Nicholas Caye 8 Oct and Lime Caye 30 Oct) were apparently the western *ridgwayi* subspecies; the third (Lime Caye 15 Oct) was seen only briefly and the subspecies was not determined. Because none of the birds previously reported in Belize was identified to subspecies, it may well be that *ridgwayi*, not nominate *ruficapilla* from eastern North America as previously assumed, is the “expected” subspecies in Belize.

A Chestnut-sided Warbler on Laughing Bird Caye 5 Sep (PB) was the earliest yet recorded in Belize, and single Magnolia and Black-throated Green Warblers at Finca Altamira 9 Sep (CH) established the earliest records for those two species in El Salvador. Black-throated Blue Warblers at Tortuguero 30 Oct and 11 Nov (both C.C.C.–U.S.F.S.) were the first recorded in 3–4 years in Costa Rica. One at Chan Chich, Belize, 15 Nov (MBS) was unusual at an inland location. There were three separate reports of Yellow-throated Warblers in Costa Rica this fall, quite unexpected for this rare winter visitor. Yet another earliest record for El Salvador came with the sighting of a Black-and-white Warbler 26 Jul in Las Lajas forest (CH). A Swainson's Warbler on Lime Caye 18 Sep (LJ) represents the southernmost record for this species in Belize and, perhaps, in Central America. An excellent illustration that secretive species are not necessarily rare was the spectacle of 49 Ovenbirds on the sparsely vegetated Sapodillas 29 Sep (LJ)—with 30 on one small island! A Gray-crowned Yellowthroat on Caye Caulker 3 Oct (EM), the day after the passing of *Keith*, was the first of this non-migratory species to be reported on any offshore cayes. A Wilson's Warbler at El Imposible N.P. 18 Sep (CH) established yet another earliest record for El Salvador. The Canada Warbler is an uncommon but regular fall migrant on the cayes (3 this fall), but one far inland along the Raspaculo River 24 Aug (MM) was unexpected.

A well-studied **Chipping Sparrow** on Half Moon Caye 15 Sep (PB, GC, LD) represented



only the 2nd occurrence in Belize away from its pine-woodland breeding grounds. The other record, ironically, was also from Half Moon Caye, in 1958. Although it is tempting to assume that these birds were strays from breeding populations on the mainland, the possibility that they were North American migrants far s. of their normal wintering grounds in n. Mexico and s. U.S. should not be dismissed. A **Lark Sparrow** at Payne's Creek 28 Oct (MMu) was only the 4th for Belize. A Savannah Sparrow on Frank's Caye 31 Oct (LJ) was the most recent of only a smattering of records for Belize. Likewise, a migrant Grasshopper Sparrow, also on Frank's Caye 9 Nov (vt., ph. LJ), is noteworthy as one of only a few documented records of non-resident Grasshopper Sparrows (*A. s. cracens*) in Belize. Lincoln's Sparrows, another rare species in Belize, were seen on two occasions, both on Seal Caye 20 & 30 Oct (vt., ph. LJ). Fall migrants usually do not stick around on small islands for 11 days and these birds appeared to differ slightly in plumage, so two different birds were presumably involved.

Dickcissels reached their peak in P.G. 15 Sep (LJ, WRM), with 700 counted during and just prior to a 90-minute diurnal migrant count. A rare find in both Costa Rica and mainland Belize, 10 Bobolinks near the entrance to La Selva 8 Oct (JRZ) and another in P.G. 3 Oct (LJ) were noteworthy. The 2nd report of **Crested Oropendola** in Costa Rica (the first was only eight months earlier) came 30 Nov, with 3 at Los Angeles de Jaba near San Vito (JRZ); details are being published elsewhere.

**Cited observers (country coordinators in boldface):** **George Angehr** (Panama), Philip Balderamos, Jim & Dorothy Beveridge, Rudi Burgos, Alberto Castillo, Glenn Crawford, Len Dieckman, Juan Pablo Dominguez, Bob Frey, Cullen Hanks, Karl and Rosabel Kaufmann, **Oliver Komar** (El Salvador), Ellen McRae, Martin Meadows, Darién Montañez Mario Muschamp (MMu), Wilfred Requena-Mutrie, Chris Rhodes, Ghislain Rompré, Mary Beth Stowe, William "Bud" Widdowson, Jackie Young, **James R. Zook** (Costa Rica).



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