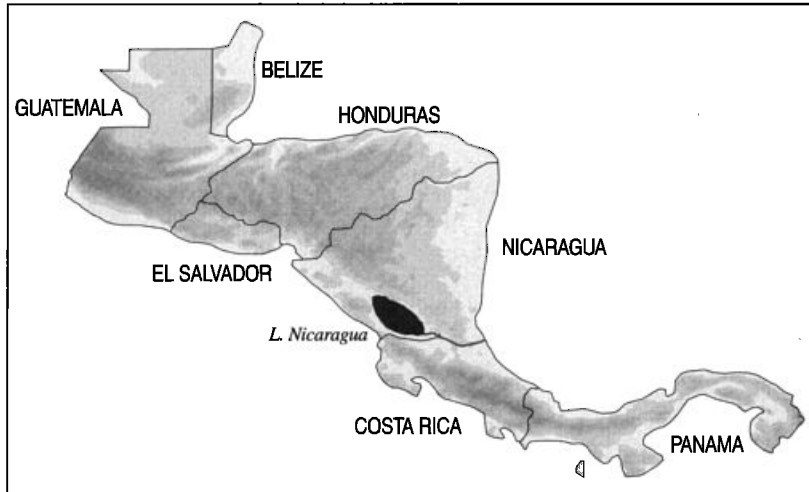


# Central America



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It was not that long ago that the resident avifaunas in many parts of Central America were still poorly known. Although the days of discovering new species north of South America may be over, one need not travel far from the beaten path anywhere in Central America to discover common resident species in “new” places. This is especially true of mountain tops. Granted, some of these species are recent colonists from other regions or countries, but not all of them are. Oliver Komar must have sensed this thrill of discovery during expeditions in May to two readily accessible mountain peaks in El Salvador. A visit to San Miguel Volcano in late May produced no fewer than five resident species previously unrecorded in the Department of San Miguel and another that had not been recorded in the past 110 years! And on a visit the previous week to Cerro El Pital, he found one resident previously unrecorded in the Department of Chalatenango to be abundant, two others that had not been recorded in 60 years, and yet another that had not been previously recorded breeding in the department. In contrast to previously overlooked species on isolated mountaintops, second-growth and

open country species continue to spread into new areas following deforestation. The latest such colonist is the Lesser Goldfinch, recently recorded for the first time in Belize.

**Abbreviations:** Aguacaliente (Aguacaliente LuHa N.P., Toledo District, Belize); La Selva (La Selva Biological Station, Costa Rica); Monteverde (Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, Costa Rica; S.F. (shrimp farm).

## PELICANS THROUGH RAILS

An American White Pelican at Ycosos Lagoon, Belize 18 Apr (MMu) was one of the few records for Toledo Dist., and 13 on 5 May at Puerto Parada, Bahía de Jiquilisco (OK) represented the first May record for El Salvador. The absence of Brown Pelicans 5–6 May at the mouth of Río Lempa and at Bahía de Jiquilisco confirms that the species does not nest in se. El Salvador. A first-year Reddish Egret at Irish Cr., New R., Belize 8 & 14 May (MH) was at an unexpected inland location. A roost with 225 ad. White Ibis at Puerto Barillas, Dept. Usulután 5 May (OK) was an unusually large concentration for May in El Salvador. Quite surprising were 2 **Greater Flamingos** seen circling over the large lagoon at Aguacaliente during an aerial waterfowl survey of the area 28 Mar (OF). There are very few believable records of this species in Belize, and these birds were a good 150 km sw. of the previous southernmost record. Fulvous Whistling-Ducks continue to be seen in Panama at Las Macanas Marsh, with 4 there 7 Apr (DM). Nearly as rare

was a male Cinnamon Teal seen on several occasions in Feb and Mar at Costa de Pajaros, La Ensenada Lodge, Costa Rica (v. ob.).

An impressive hawk migration at El Imposible N.P., El Salvador 27 Apr (RP) comprised 1000 Turkey Vultures, 70 Swainson's Hawks, 50 *Buteo* sp., and 25 *Falco* sp. A Swallow-tailed Kite in El Salvador 6 Apr (RP) was an unexpected spring migrant. Throughout most of its range, the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail is typically found in mangrove forests, but in some areas it has also been found in heavily forested upland areas away from the coast. Such is the case in El Salvador, where it has been recorded in six heavily forested inland localities between 500–1100 m elevation; thus, one heard in a mangrove swamp before dawn at Puerto Barillas, Bahía Jiquilisco 6 May (OK) was unexpected.

## PLOVERS THROUGH SKIMMERS

The American Golden-Plover is a little known spring transient in Belize, with only one or two localities where it is seen regularly. Up to two dozen birds at Payne's Creek N.P. 22 Apr–23 May (MMu, LJ, RE) were in an area where the species was not previously known and represented the first records for Toledo Dist. A Wattled Jacana at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge in mid-Apr (DG, RG) represented one of the few records for Costa Rica. Eighteen Spotted Sandpipers at the mouth of Río Lempa 6 May (OK) was a large concentration for this relatively late date. Twenty-five Stilt Sandpipers at El Agallito Beach, Herrera Prov., 7 Apr (DM) was thought to be an atypically large number for Panama; however, a similar number at Sorensen S.E., Toledo Dist. 21–22 Apr (LJ, MMu, RE) was probably typical for Belize, especially with the substantial increase in shorebird habitat resulting from the proliferation of shrimp farms in the country in recent years. An alternate-plumaged Long-billed Dowitcher, also at Sorensen S.F. 21–22 Apr (LJ, MMu, RE), was the latest verified spring date for Belize but probably not atypical for this largely overlooked species. A female Wilson's Phalarope in alternate plumage at Las Macanas Marsh 7 Apr (DM) was noteworthy, as this species is a very uncommon migrant in most of the Region, especially in spring.

A *skua* sp. flying just offshore near Mawamba Lodge, Tortuguero, Costa Rica was independently identified by DW and RR on 14 & 15 Apr, respectively. Both felt that the bird was a South Polar Skua, although the reasons for their assertion are not yet clear. Unidentified skuas are reported periodically in the West Indies and w. Caribbean, but the only species positively identified in the Region thus

far is Great Skua (a specimen record from Belize; a banding return from Îles des Saintes, Guadeloupe, could refer to Brown or to South Polar Skua). South Polar Skua may be equally, or even more, likely, but in the absence of specimens, photographs, or conclusive field notes and sketches, the relative status of these two species remains speculative.

A flock of 200 Franklin's Gulls near the mouth of Río Lempa 6 May (OK) was a late date for such a large concentration. An ad. Ring-billed Gull at Puerto Caldera 4 Apr (WF) was noteworthy, as were an ad. and a juv. Ring-billed Gull and 4+ Elegant Terns at Panama Viejo 1 May (RK, DM, RQ). The first May record of the rarely reported Caspian Tern in El Salvador was obtained when OK observed 5 in Bahía de Jiquilisco on 5 May. A basic-plumaged Forster's Tern at Panama Viejo 1 May (RK, DM, RQ) was quite unexpected. A small breeding colony of Least Terns, first discovered in 1994, persists at Isla San Sebastian, El Salvador, with 12 ads., 20 first-year birds, and at least three nests found there 5 May (OK). At Dangriga, a Black Skimmer seen 1 Mar (PB) was the only one reported from Belize thus far this year.

### PARAKEETS THROUGH TAPACULOS

The Brown-throated Parakeet is a relatively new arrival in Costa Rica from Panama, so a flock discovered in mid-Mar at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge by a BirdQuest tour group was noteworthy. A Rufous Sabrewing at San Miguel Volcano, El Salvador 24 May (OK) was the first record from that locality since 1891. Belize's 3rd record of **Long-billed Starthroat** was of 2 seen together 24 May 11 km s. of La Democracia (OF, MT, RC, EM); all records have been taken within the last two years.

**SA** The Green-breasted Mango and Cinnamon Hummingbird are the only two resident hummingbird species on the Belize cayes. However, few cayes have both species. Until recently, the only one on Caye Caulker was Cinnamon, but that may be changing. Mangos were first noted on the cayes when a pair was found nesting last Apr (J&DB). One year later, they were already being seen at least as often as Cinnamon (J&DB). This rapid shift may, in part, be due to the devastation of Hurricane *Keith* last fall. The mango is a larger hummingbird and may have been better equipped to survive the nearly three-day onslaught of hurricane-force winds.

The Black-headed Trogon is proving to be a somewhat regular winter visitor on Caye Caulker, 10 km s. of Ambergris Caye where they are resident. The latest was of one observed 29 Mar (PB). Two Acorn Woodpeckers in Belize City 1 Apr (PB, MC, AB, LA) were at an unexpected locality well away from their pine-oak habitat; however, 7 on the San Miguel Volcano 23–24 May (OK) were the first ever recorded in Dept. San Miguel. The first **Silvery-fronted Tapaculo** nest ever recorded was located just 200 m from the parking lot in Monteverde in early Apr (WZ, BY, ph.). A complete account of this discovery will be published elsewhere.

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in cloud forest at 2380 m elevation 18 May (OK) was the latest spring record and highest elevation yet recorded for El Salvador. The Vermilion Flycatcher is essentially nonmigratory in the tropics, but a few are occasionally recorded well away from breeding areas. A female that wintered at Gallon Jug, Belize (B&CM) was such a bird. Gallon Jug is an isolated patch of farmland surrounded on all sides by extensive rainforest, and there are few previous records from this heavily birded locale. Until this year, Dusky-capped Flycatcher was thought to be a non-breeding visitor to Caye Caulker; but a pair observed building a nest in a dead coconut palm on 30 Apr (J&DB) confirms that it at least occasionally nests. Another first in the nest department was the discovery this spring of the nest of **Snowy Cotinga** in Costa Rica. The pair was nesting in a tree in a clearing along the entrance road into La Selva. The nest, which contained one egg but later failed, was photographed by a local photographer; the pictures have yet to be critically examined.

On the heels of two White-eyed Vireo reports from Costa Rica last fall comes yet another: one heard singing and seen at Cahuita 11 Apr (PO, RD). The Mangrove Vireo is now rare on the Pacific coast of C.A., so one each at Bahía de Jiquilisco and at the mouth of Río Lempa 5 & 6 May, respectively (OK), were encouraging. Fifteen singing male Brown-capped Vireos between 2150 and 2370 m on the e. slopes of Cerro El Pital, El Salvador 17 May (OK) were the first ever recorded in Dept. Chalatenango, suggesting more that this area is seldom visited by birders than an actual recent colonization.

A Tree Swallow at Las Macanas Marsh 7 Apr (DM) was noteworthy, as this species is not often seen in Panama. A nesting pair of Black-capped Swallows along the e. flank of Cerro El Pital 19 May, and 20+ Rufous-collared Robins

nesting at and above 1650 m in nw Chalatenango 13 May (both OK), established the first nesting records for those two species in the Dept. since 1941. It is likely that these are continuously resident populations in a seldom-explored part of the country rather than isolated instances of breeding. A late Swainson's Thrush was seen 23 May on San Miguel Volcano (OK). Quite surprising was a Black Catbird 100 km s. of the species's known range at Monkey River Town, Toledo Dist., in early Apr (MMu). Ten singing Blue-and-white Mockingbirds on San Miguel Volcano 23–24 May (OK) established the first record of this species for Dept. San Miguel. More than the usual number of reports of Cedar Waxwing was received, all but one from the month of May. The largest number reported was 60 on Cerro El Pital 13 May (OK); the latest was 25 on 19 May, also on Cerro El Pital. One on Caye Caulker 6 May (J&DB) represents one of the few records from the Belize cayes. Always rare as far s. as Costa Rica, 35 at Costa de Pajaros in mid-Mar (MQ), and 3 at Zona Protectora El Chayote 6 May (JRZ) were noteworthy.

### WARBLERS THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

The latest spring dates for Chestnut-sided and Magnolia Warbler this year came from Caye Caulker, with the former last seen 27 May and the latter last seen 23 May (both J&DB). A Cape May Warbler foraging at a flowering tree with Tennessee Warblers in the San Luis Valley below Monteverde 29 Mar (EA) was quite unusual; one in Belize City 1 Apr (PB, MC, AB) was unusual away from the cayes. A **Townsend's Warbler** near Boquete, Chiriquí Prov., 10 Apr (PM) was only the 6th record for Panama. All previous records have been from the w. highlands. Hermit Warblers were reported from three sites in Costa Rica this spring. Unusual were a male and female Prairie Warbler coming to a backyard hedge in Hacienda Los Reyes, La Guácima de Alajuela, Costa Rica from Jan through mid-Apr (WO). Received late was a report of an imm. male Palm Warbler closely studied by RuP and RG in the courtyard of the Eco-Lodge, L. Cote, Costa Rica 6 Feb. A Blackburnian Warbler on Caye Caulker 15 Mar (J&DB) was early, but a Worm-eating Warbler at Monkey R. Town 22 Apr (MMu, RE) and 3 Wilson's Warblers on San Miguel Volcano 24 May (OK) were later than expected. A male American Redstart at Puerto Barillas, El Salvador 5 & 6 May (OK) was considered late for the Pacific slope; however, birds in early May are not unusual on the Caribbean slope, where the species is more common. A Yellow-breasted Chat was reported in lower Braulio Carrillo 3 May (JC, *vide* JRZ)

**SA** Arguably, the event of the spring in Belize was the appearance of **Lesser Goldfinches** in n. Orange Walk District. Other than a female tentatively identified as this by LJ on 1 Sep 1998 at August Pine Ridge, these represent the first records for Belize. JU and DH first reported a group of 3 (ad. male, imm. male, and female) at the Tower Hill Toll Bridge, New R. 22 Apr. Then WM (*vide* OF) reported seeing as many as 4 in Trinidad Village as far back as Feb, with at least 3 present through May. August Pine Ridge, Trinidad, and the Tower Hill Bridge are all within 18 km of each other.

Lesser Goldfinches may be on the move elsewhere as well. Although a common bird throughout much of El Salvador, it may have only recently colonized San Miguel Volcano. OK found it to be a common resident at the volcano when he visited the site in late May. It had not previously been reported from the area.

A Blue Seedeater seen 22 Apr at Hill Bank, Orange Walk District (JB et al.) was at a new locality in Belize. A pair of Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercers and 3 pairs of White-naped Brush-Finches on San Miguel Volcano 23–24 May (OK) established first records for Dept. San Miguel. A pair of Rusty Sparrows in heavily disturbed open scrubland near Jalacte Village on the Guatemala border 19 Apr (LJ) was a surprise, as this species is thought to occur in Belize only in pine woodlands. Jalacte is 45 km sw. of the nearest pines and of the nearest previous Belize record of the species. There are, however, at least three records from similar scrub habitat near Poptun, Guatemala, 25 km w. of Jalacte. “Thousands“ of Dickcissels flushed from a marsh near the junction of Dawson Cr. and New R. Lagoon 26 Apr (MM) may be unprecedented for Belize, where the species is locally common in spring but seldom abundant.

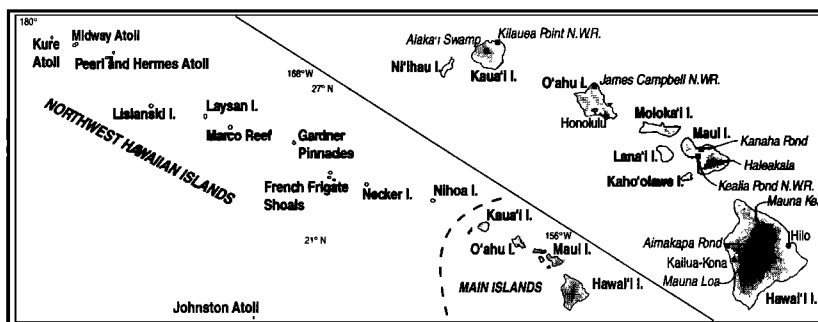
The Bobolink is one of the least common of Belize’s expected migrants, so one each on Caye Caulker 15 Apr (J&DB) and Ambergris Caye 28 Apr (MM) are worth reporting. An ad. and imm. Black-vented Oriole on San Miguel Volcano 24 May (OK) were the first ever

recorded in Dept. San Miguel. Quite unexpected was a Black-headed Siskin drinking at a water puddle in Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary 28 Feb (MH). This was the first recorded in Belize away from the Mt. Pine Ridge.

**Cited observers (country coordinators in boldface):** Eduardo Amengual, **George Angehr** (Panama), Leroy Arnold, James Baird, Philip Balderamos, Jim and Dorothy Beveridge, BirdQuest, Amalio Bustamante, Reynold Cal, John Camacho, Mick Craig, Robert Dean, Roberto Echeverria, Omar Figueroa, Wayne Fisher, David Garrigues, Richard Garrigues, Mike Haldeman, Derrick Hendy, **Lee Jones** (Belize), Rosabel Kaufmann, **Oliver Komar** (El Salvador), Wilvur Martinez, Paul Matthews, Blake Maybank, Martin Meadows, Eric Melendez, Bruce and Carolyn Miller, Darien Montañez, Mario Muschamp (MMu), Patrick O’Donnell, Winnie Orcutt, Ricardo Perez, Ruth Pestes (RuP), Morris Quesada, Rogney Quibilán, Rafa Robles, Mario Teul, Jonathan Urbina, Alex Villegas, Dennis Willie, Bruce Young, **James R. Zook** (Costa Rica), Willow Zuchowski.



# Hawaiian Islands



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There were fewer pelagic trips and sea-watches than last spring, but coverage was still pretty good. Records of birds at sea are especially valuable, as our knowledge of seabirds in Hawaiian waters remains poor. We were also happy to get reports on some of the rare native forest birds—even if the news was sometimes discouraging.

**Abbreviations:** E. (Endangered Species); H (Hawai’i I.); Hanalei (Hanalei N.W.R., Kaua’i I.); Honouliuli (Honouliuli Unit of Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O’ahu I.); K. (Kaua’i Island); Kealia (Kealia Pond N.W.R., Maui Island); Ku (Ki’i Unit of Jas. Campbell N.W.R., O’ahu I.); K.P. (Kilauea Point N.W.R., Kaua’i I.); M (Maui I.); O. (O’ahu I.); Waiawa (Waiawa Unit of Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O’ahu Island); T (Threatened Species).