

Central America



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June and July are more than just the "nesting season." They are the months of the latest spring migrants and the earliest fall migrants, overwintering shorebirds, and the occasional stray that defies any pattern of occurrence. Nevertheless, it is the time of year when the fewest birders are afield in this Region (and others). And this summer, fewer birders were afield than in either of the previous two summers since the inauguration of seasonal reports for Central America in this journal. Nevertheless, despite the paucity of reports, Summer 2003 provided the first breeding record of Roseate Spoonbill in El Salvador and what could be the first indications of an invasion of Tricolored Munias into Central America from introduced populations in the West Indies. Early fall arrival dates were established for at least two species, and several species were reported from the edges of their ranges in Panama where they are rare. To these "summer" events can be added a belated spring report of a Cory's Shearwater—the latest addition to the impressive list of birds from Costa Rica.

SHEARWATERS THROUGH SANDPIPERS

A Cory's Shearwater, suffering a neck injury and unable to fly, was brought to AT (ph.) and GD at the Caribbean Conservation Corporation in Tortuguero, Limón on 8 Mar. Despite efforts to revive it, the bird died overnight. This, the first record for Costa Rica, was received too late for inclusion in the spring issue. Following a record 684 American White Pelicans seen in El Salvador on 3 May at Cerrón Grande, Chalatenango, a group of 26 was reported overnighting on a sandbar at Barra de Santiago, Ahuachapán on the late dates of 6–7 Jun (JRS). In Panama, a Least Bittern was observed 30 Jul at Changuinola, Bocas del Toro (D, D, & CM). There are few previous records from this province. Unfortunately, the Agami Heron breeding colony discovered near Punta Gorda, Belize two summers ago and reported again last summer failed to materialize this summer. A pair of Green Ibis (relatively rare and local in Panama) was at Isla Popa, Bocas del Toro 31 Jul (D, D, & CM). In El Salvador, a small Roseate Spoonbill breeding colony of at least six pairs was discovered this summer at Estero El Tamarindo, La Unión (AM). Nest-building began in early Jun, and three nests had been completed by 5 Jul; however, the outcome of the nesting attempt is unknown. This

represents the first documented nesting record for El Salvador and perhaps for the entire Pacific slope of n. Central America.

An imm. Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, only the 3rd or 4th reported in El Salvador, was observed at close range feeding on the side of the road near the Cerrón Grande Res. between Cinquera and Suchitoto, Cabañas 27 Jul (NH). Following a record number of Rufous-necked Wood-Rails observed on Caye Caulker this spring, one that remained until 14 Jun (J&DB) may have provided the first Jun record for Belize. An American Oystercatcher at Barra de Santiago, Ahuachapán 7–8 Jun (AM) was at a locality in El Salvador where it does not breed. The first southbound migrants of several shorebird species were recorded in Jul on Caye Caulker by J&DB: Semipalmated Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, and Sanderling on the 4th, Whimbrel on the 5th, Willet on the 11th, and Marbled Godwit on the 24th. The godwit is only an occasional winter visitor in Belize, and 24 Jul is the earliest date recorded for this species here. A Long-billed Curlew, rare anywhere in Central America, was at Barra de Santiago 8 Jun (AM). A flock of 40 Short-billed Dowitchers at Barra de Santiago 8 Jun (AM) was unexpected at this time of the year.

A dark gray gull at Aqua Mar Shrimp Farm 25 Jul (LJ) was intriguing, but most likely a melanistic subad. Laughing Gull, as it was identical in size and shape to the other Laughing Gulls with which it was closely associating.

DOVES THROUGH MUNIAS

Rare in Panama, a pair of Gray-fronted Doves was seen at Isla Bastimentos, Bocas del Toro, and a pair of Olive-throated Parakeets was on nearby Isla Popa 31 Jul (D, D, & CM). The latter species is spreading and becoming more common in nw. Panama, where there had been few reports prior to the 1990s. Green-breasted Mangos continue to be reported in Bocas del Toro: on 31 Jul, a female was observed tending a nest on Isla Colón, and another was seen on Isla Popa (both D, D, & CM).



Tricolored Munias (Mannikins) were reported for the first time in Honduras and Belize in July and early August 2003 (here photographed on Caye Caulker, Belize on 4 August 2003). This species—a native of southern Asia and considered a pest in the rice fields of the West Indies and northern South America, where it has been widely introduced—may be staging an "unassisted" invasion of Central America. Photograph by Jim Beveridge.

Two Acorn Woodpeckers were at 120 m near Flores, Petén 22 Jun (ph. MM). This species normally occurs above 500 m in Guatemala. Stub-tailed Spadebill is infrequently reported in Panama, where it is restricted to Bocas del Toro, so one on 31 Jul on Isla Bastimentos (D, D, & CM) was noteworthy. Four Long-tailed Manakins at

Cinquera, *Cabañas* 27 Jul (NH) were at a new locality in El Salvador. The Purple Martin is easily the first of the fall migrants to appear in Belize, but one in Belize City 15 Jun (TR) was about a week earlier than expected.

In Belize, Black Catbird was presumed to have been extirpated from Lighthouse Reef, but one each observed 16 Jul (PB) on Long Caye and Northern Caye, two cayes on the reef that birders seldom visit, provided evidence that a few still persist. A Yellow-throated Warbler on Caye Caulker 6 Jul (J&DB) established the earliest fall record for that species in Belize by two days. Seeding bamboo along the Inter-American Hwy, roughly between Km 60–78 at Cerro de la Muerte, attracted many Peg-billed Finches and a few Slaty Finches from late Jul+ (m.

ob.). A previously unknown Chestnut-headed Oropendola colony, only the 3rd reported from El Salvador, was found this summer in the Sierra de Metapán, *Santa Ana* (LC). The colony contained eight nests, and the young hatched the week of 10 Jun.

Tricolored Munia (*Lonchura malacca*), a resident of Asia, has been introduced widely in the West Indies in recent years and may now be spreading on its own beyond the islands of introduction. A flock of more than 50 birds appeared on the grounds of the Hotel Agua Azul, Lago Yojoa, *Cortés*, Honduras 15–18 Jul (ph. M&PK), and a flock of 13–14 birds showed up on Caye Caulker, Belize 4–5 Aug (J&DB, ph.). The species had not been reported from either country previously.

Could these birds represent the beginning of an invasion of Central America from introduced populations in the Caribbean, much like the earlier invasion of Eurasian Collared-Doves in the s. United States from the Bahamas?

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West Indies & Bermuda

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Geologic forces that shape the landscape and the future of avifauna on islands are again at work on Montserrat, where the Soufrière Hills lava dome collapsed on 12 July, sending out a cloud of ash over the northern half of the island. From one to 15 cm of ash covered active breeding areas of Montserrat's birdlife, including the endemic oriole in the Centre Hills; widespread defoliation and complete

reproductive failure followed. More details are expected elsewhere.

Despite some setbacks in the Bahamas for its endemic subspecies of parrot, there is good parrot news elsewhere. During three days in June, four Lesser Antillean parrot species were observed in rather high numbers, indicating continued recovery and success of localized conservation education programs.

GREBES THROUGH TERNS

A Least Grebe found at Concordia, St. John, U.S. Virgin Is. (FH) was still present on 10 Jun. At Guadeloupe, a seawatch from Petite Terre Nature Reserve on produced 68 Cory's, 33 Greater, and 16 Audubon's Shearwaters 7 Jun, and 111 Cory's, 97 Greater, and 19 Audubon's Shearwaters the next day (AL). During a seawatch 11 Jun from Petite Terre there were 261 Greater, 59 Cory's, and 2

SA The endangered Bahama Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*) lives only on Abaco in the n. islands and Great Inagua at the s. end of the Bahamas. Parrots on Abaco nest in holes (usually limestone sinks) in the ground, making them vulnerable to feral cats and other introduced predators. Raccoons were recently introduced onto Abaco, where they have been multiplying and expanding their range. Raccoons now pose a serious threat to the parrots and other ground-nesting birds. Plans to eradicate the raccoons were complicated by the fact that the IUCN considered the raccoons on New Providence I., Bahamas to be a distinct endemic species (*Procyon maynardi*) and listed them as "Endangered." It is not known where the Abaco raccoons originated, but the possibility that they came from New Providence had to be considered.

Recent work (Helgen, K.M., and D. E. Wilson. 2003. Taxonomic status and conservation relevance of the raccoons (*Procyon* spp.) of the West Indies. *Journal of Zoology, London* 259: 69–76) indicates that the New Providence raccoons were morphologically indistinguishable from raccoons in the se. United States and should therefore be treated as members of the common North American species (*P. lotor*). There were similar findings for raccoons on Guadeloupe and an extinct population from Barbados. If accepted, this finding will remove a major obstacle to plans for controlling raccoons on Abaco in order to protect the parrots (*vide* S. Buckner).

Sooty Shearwaters, plus 77 unidentified shearwaters noted (AL), presumably as a result of strong easterly winds in the area. The prize, however, was a carefully studied **Bulwer's Petrel**, representing the 2nd record for the year and the 3rd from the Region. Eight Wilson's Storm-Petrels were noted 8 Jun from Petite Terre (AL), with 6 off Petite Terre 11 Jun (AL). A Greater Shearwater seen off Highborne Cay, Exumas 10 Jul (BP) provided the latest date for this winter and spring visitor and the first record documented photographically for the Bahamas.

Eighteen White-tailed Tropicbirds were over Tilloo Cay, Abaco 14 Jun (EBS), and 7 were at Whale Cay, Abaco 22 Jun (EB, TW). Tropicbirds probably bred on both cays in Jul (JC). PD saw 20 Neotropic Cormorants at Diamond Farms, New Providence 11 Aug. JK and MS found nesting Double-crested Cormorants on Man-O'-War Bush (11 nests) and Big Mangrove I. (18 nests) in The Marls, Abaco 26 Jun. They also found a colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds (40 nests) on Man-O'-War Bush, probably the northernmost colony of this species in the world.

Two Reddish Egrets were at Green Turtle



Bermuda's first White-winged Dove appeared in St. David's 21 June 2003, where regional editor Dobson was happy to have a camera at the ready to document the island's 370th species. Photograph by Andrew Dobson.

Cay, Bahamas, n. of the species' usual range, 21 Jun (EB, TW). Green Heron—first proved breeding on Bermuda in 2002—was surveyed this year on 27 and 29 Jul, for a total of 20 ads. and 10 nests found (DW). Three Black-crowned Night-Herons were noted on 6 Jun at Sugar Bay, St. Thomas (FH), and another 3 ad. Black-crowns were noted at Caneel Bay pond, St. John, U.S. Virgin Is. 10 Jun, representing perhaps the 2nd report there (FH). Fifteen Black-crowned Night-Herons seen 13 Jul at Diamond Farms, New Providence (PD) was an unusually high number; one at Graeme Hall Swamp, Barbados 29 Jun (MF, EM) was more usual. A melanistic Yellow-crowned Night-Heron with a

black head was seen flying from Green Turtle Cay to Whale Cay 20 Jun (EB, TW). Three imm. Roseate Spoonbills were unexpected for JRC at Trou Caiman, Haiti 5 Jul. At L. Saumatre, Haiti, e. of Trou Caiman, JRC counted 80–100 Greater Flamingos 14 Jun.

A Fulvous Whistling-Duck was noted among 32 White-cheeked Pintails at Trou Caiman, Haiti 5 Jul (JRC, PJE)—one of the few reports from Hispaniola. The first Blue-winged Teal of the fall was one at Maillis Ponds, Adelaide, New Providence, Bahamas 17 Aug (PM, *vide* CW). At Gaschet Reservoir, Guadeloupe, AL noted 5 Ruddy Ducks and an injured Lesser Scaup 1 Jun.

A Peregrine Falcon seen at Layou R., Dominica 14–16 Jun (NH) provided a rare summer-season report from the Region; continued reports of a large falcon there warrant investigation. A Swallow-tailed Kite at Lucaya N.P., Grand Bahama 17 Aug (EG) was a somewhat early migrant.

Two American Coots and one Caribbean-

type Coot were noted at Gaschet Res., Guadeloupe 1 Jun (AL). A flock of 24 Wilson's Plovers was seen on Blue Lagoon Cay (formerly Salt Cay) off New Providence 19 Jul (PD). At Trou Caiman, Haiti, JRC found evidence of breeding Snowy Plovers (2 ads., 3 small chicks only a few days old) on 14 Jun, and on 5 Jul, PJE and JRC found approximately 30 Snowy Plovers at Trou Caiman. Barbados's first returning Spotted Sandpiper was seen at Inch Marlowe on 6 Jul (MF, EM). Other first seasonal reports of sandpipers at Diamond Farms, New Providence, Bahamas include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs 11 Aug, Spotted Sandpiper 18 Jul, Least Sandpiper 13 Jul, Stilt Sandpiper 8 Aug, and Pectoral Sandpiper 11 Aug (PD, KHL, VS). NM saw 4 Least Sandpipers on Rose I. 13 Jul, and RP saw 10 at Crossing Rocks, Abaco 24 Jul.

Roseate Terns were often reported this season. A colony with 29 nests was located near Old Kerrs, Abaco 26 Jun (JK, MS). A first-summer ("portlandica" plumage) bird and 11 ads. were at Sandy Pt., Abaco 13 Jun. The bills of the ads. were reported to be 50% red, presumably indicative of the West Indian population. No nest or breeding behavior was observed here (EBS). Three ads. and one juv. were noted at Long Pond, St. Andrew, Barbados 21 Jun, and 2 ads. were at Inch Marlowe, Barbados (EM, MF) 6 Jul.

A first-summer Common Tern was reported from Long Pond, St. Andrew, Barbados 21 Jun (MF, EM). A further decline in the number of breeding pairs of Common Terns at Bermuda was noted this year, with only 18 nests counted (DW).

Least Terns were noted nesting at seven different locations in Abaco (EB, JK, RP, EBS, MS). On 15 Jul, 35 pairs of Least Terns were nesting at South Westridge Estates, New Providence (PD, TW), and 6 ads. and 4 juvs. were seen 31 Aug at Discovery Bay, Grand Bahama (EG). Bridled Terns were nesting off Abaco on Don't Rock (12 pairs), Whale Cay (20 pairs), Two Rocks off Whale Cay (two pairs), No Name Cay (number unknown), Tilloo Cay (one pair), and Third Pelican Cay (ca. 10 pairs) (EB, JK, RP, EBS, MS, TW). Black Terns are less than annual in the Bahamas, so one seen at South Westridge Estates 8 Aug (PD, KHL, VS) was noteworthy. Five Black Skimmers, rare on Hispaniola in summer, were at Trou Caiman, Haiti 5 Jul, a first record there for JRC (ph.) & PJE.

Gorda Cay in the Bahamas—renamed "Castaway Cay" by Disney Corporation and developed as a private retreat for cruise-ship passengers—has a new breakwater that provides nesting and roosting habitat for many seabirds. Although there has not been a detailed on-the-ground nesting census, observations from boats indicate many birds

Table 1. Boat surveys of breakwater at Gorda Cay (Castaway Cay), Bahamas.

	16 Jul (RP)	17 Jul (EG et al.)
Brown Pelican	6–8	0
Laughing Gull	0	30+
Roseate Tern	30	60+
Least Tern	0	20+
Bridled/Sooty Terns	50–80	200+
Brown Noddy	18	26

are present (Table 1). Ron Pagliaro counted birds along the breakwater from a tour boat on 16 Jul, and Erika Gates, Ricky Johnson, and Denise Neely checked it by kayak and motor boat the following day.

DOVES THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

A White-winged Dove in St. David's 18–22 Jun (ph. AD) provided a first record for Bermuda. There has been a remarkable expansion of this species in Florida and the Greater Antilles over the last decade. Two Key West Quail-Doves were heard calling at Angel Pt., Abaco 15 (EBS) & 24 Jun (EB, TW). Nigel Hacking reported the Lesser Antillean parrots in good numbers this summer 12–14 Jun: 43 St. Vincent Parrots along the Vermont nature trail 12 Jun; 23 St. Lucia Parrots at Quillesse forest 13–14 Jun; and at Syndicate, Dominica, 34 Red-necked and 3 Imperial Parrots 14 Jun. Parrots in the Greater Antilles do not seem to be faring as well.

A late Yellow-billed Cuckoo was calling

at Angel Pt., Abaco 15 Jun (EBS). CW heard a Chuck-will's-widow calling at Coral Harbour, New Providence as late as 11 Jul. Some 11 West Indian Woodpeckers were counted 16 Jul on a drive from Crown Haven to Sandy Pt., Abaco, nearly the entire length of the island (EG, RJ, DN). Also seen was the pair nesting at McLean's Town, Grand Bahama 20 Jul. Gates remarked that these looked smaller than the Abaco birds.

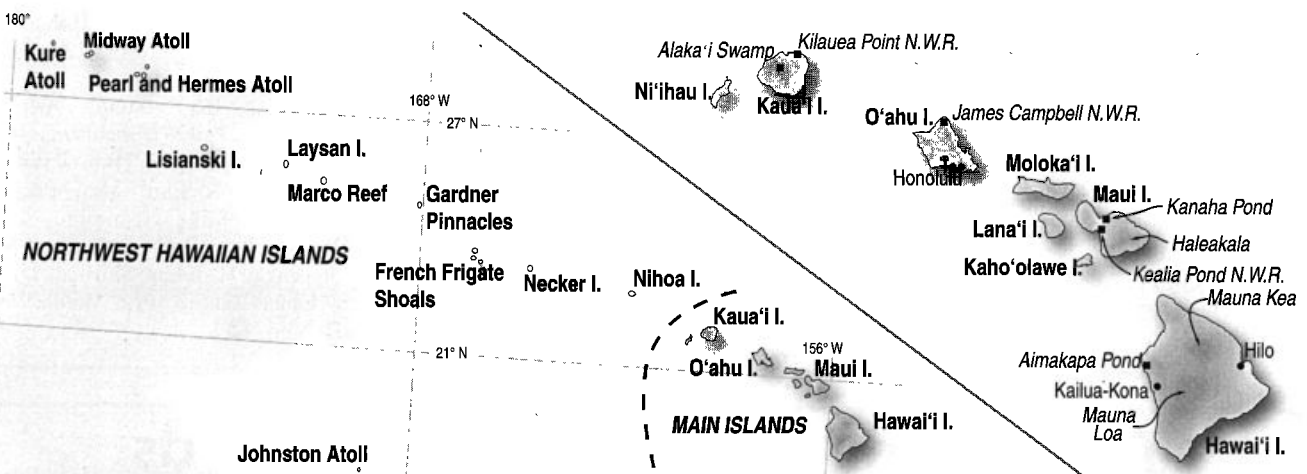
At Barbados, a White-collared Swift noted 6 Jul near St. Joseph provided the first island record (EM, MF). An Alpine Swift—first seen 21 Jun—was studied carefully in the company of 10 Black Swifts at St. Bernards Village, Barbados 22 Jun; it ultimately remained through mid-Jul (MF, EM). This report represents the 2nd record for the island and the 5th for the Region. Barn Swallows do not summer in the Bahamas, so presumably individuals seen at the Marsh Harbour dump 20 Jun (EB, TW) and Lyford Cay 18 Jul (TW) represented the extremes

of spring and fall migrations, respectively.

A migrant Yellow-throated Warbler was seen 18 Jul at Diamond Farms, New Providence (PD). A Black-and-white Warbler at Lucaya N.P., Grand Bahama 26 Jul was early (MW). Louisiana Waterthrush is an early fall migrant, but one at Diamond Farms, New Providence 13 Jul was especially early (PD). A Shiny Cowbird spent the summer at Diamond Farms, New Providence (PD, m. ob.).

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Hawaiian Islands



A good number of pelagic trips and unusual numbers and variety of overwintering shorebirds enlivened a generally quiet season. Reports of landbirds were rather sparse.

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