

West Indies & Bermuda

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Winter weather varied throughout this large Region, but frequent, strong north winds appeared to be a common factor. In Bermuda, cool temperatures and high winds in January and early February brought many birds. The temperature hit 48.5° F on 24 January, the lowest in about 50 years. In the Bahamas, temperatures were seasonably cool, and the winter dry season did not provide any relief from last summer's drought. Puerto Rico, on the other hand, experienced above-normal rainfall. Gemmill's ongoing studies on Vieques and Sykes's survey of the U.S. Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba provided many noteworthy observations. Reports of the impact of last fall's hurricanes are still being received. The endangered Grenada Dove and Cuban Parrot (Cayman Islands races) survived, but their toeholds on existence became even more precarious.

William Hayes has proposed that the endemic Grand Bahama race (*insularis*) of Brown-headed Nuthatch be assigned species status and called Bahama Nuthatch *S. insularis*. (See W. Hayes et al. 2004. Grand Bahama's Brown-headed Nuthatch: a distinct and endangered species. *Bahamas Journal of Science* 12: 21–28.) Hayes et al. estimate that fewer than 1800 nuthatches exist on Grand Bahama, and this estimate was made before last autumn's hurricanes. If accepted by the A.O.U., the Bahama Nuthatch will be the

fourth extant endemic species in the Bahamas and a critically endangered species.

Abbreviations: BAMZ (Bermuda Aquarium Museum & Zoo), B.V.I. (British Virgin Islands), D.R. (Dominican Republic), G.B. (U.S. Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba), H.W.P.N.P. (Harrold & Wilson Ponds N.P., New Providence, Bahamas), P.R. (Puerto Rico), T.C.I. (Turks and Caicos Islands).

GREBES THROUGH HAWKS

A pair of Pied-billed Grebes with 4 juvs. at Somerset Long Bay Nature Reserve 29 Jan (DW) provided the earliest hatching date in Bermuda. Another pair was on the pond at the Hydroponic Farm, Vieques, P.R. 9 Feb (DG, BM). Two Horned Grebes were in Castle Harbour, Bermuda 6 Feb (IF, PW). Among the many seabirds observed during a cruise in the Lesser Antilles, Wells saw 2 Cory's Shearwaters 17 Jan. A single Audubon's Shearwater was seen over the Tongue of the Ocean, Bahamas 9 Jan (EC, Pba). On 25 Feb, Hayes visited Catto Cay, Graham's Harbour, San Salvador, Bahamas and counted 150 Brown Booby nests, 3 Red-footed Booby nests, and 75 Magnificent Frigatebird nests. Brown Boobies and frigatebirds were also probably nesting on nearby White Cay. He estimated 100+ frigatebird nests on the two cays, more than double what he has seen in past years. An imm. Northern Gannet flew

along the reef line at St. George's, Bermuda 15 Feb (IF, PW). Three American White Pelicans that flew past Spittal Pond 2 Jan (HD, DS) provided Bermuda's second record. A juv. Double-crested Cormorant was noted 15 Jan at Tortuguero Lagoon, P.R. (JS et al.). A Great Cormorant was in the Great Sound, Bermuda 5 Feb–28 Feb+ (IF, PW).

An American Bittern was at West End, Grand Bahama 25 Feb (RP), and a Least Bittern in mangroves at Small Hope Bay, Andros, Bahamas 8 Feb was unusual there (TW). A Great White Heron, rare in the Bahamas, was seen at Staniard Creek, Andros 11 Jan–4 Feb (MB, JSt, m.ob.). A Little Egret at Punta Soldado, Culebra 2 Jan (JC) was an outstanding find for the Greater Antilles and first for that island. A Black-crowned Night-Heron was noted 24 & 28 Jan at G.B. (PS). A Roseate Spoonbill was seen 20 Feb near Cable Beach, New Providence (KB), but there may have been more, as 4 were found in that area in early Mar (CW, PD, m. ob.). A single Roseate Spoonbill was at G.B. 3 Feb (PS). JRC found about 145 Greater Flamingos 24 Dec at Trou Caiman, Haiti.

Seven West Indian Whistling-Ducks on Laguna Kiani were the first reported from Vieques in 23 years (AM, JR, ML). An imm. Snow Goose appeared on Warwick Academy sports field 18 Dec (JH), while a Canada Goose was at Southampton Princess Pond, also Bermuda 23 Jan (AD). Single Common



The Bahamas' (and West Indies') first Mute Swan was this first-winter bird at Baker's Bay, Great Guana Cay, Abaco Island 28 (here) and 29 January 2005. Photograph by Bill Herrington.

(Eurasian Green-winged) Teal males wintered at Southampton Princess Pond 23 Jan+ (AD, PH) and Parsons Road Pond 1 Dec+ (EA, TWe). On 9 Feb, a pair of Northern Shovelers were on Laguna Navio, Vieques, where uncommon (DG, BM). Continuing dry weather concentrated the ducks at Great Exuma, Bahamas in golf course ponds, where there were 50 Blue-winged Teal, 90 White-cheeked Pintails, and 30 Northern Shovelers 9 Jan (J&BM). Six wintering Common Goldeneyes made a Bermuda record count, with 3 at Spittal Pond 26 Jan–mid-Feb (DW) and 3 more, including an ad. male, at Mangrove L. 1–mid-Feb (DW). At Trou Caiman, Haiti, Crouse counted 50+ Ruddy Ducks 31 Dec. Twenty-three Ruddy Ducks were at Little Bay Pond and 35 at Fresh Pond, St. Martin 14 Jan (AB et al.). Two Masked Ducks were near Humacao, P.R. in mid-Jan (JNv, *vide* ESB).

A leucistic Turkey Vulture was present on Big Wood Cay, Andros, Bahamas late Nov–early Jan (ph. DB). Wintering birds of prey in Bermuda included Osprey, 2 long-staying Red-tailed Hawks, and 2 Northern Harriers. There were sightings of Gundlach's Hawk 22–28 Jan at G.B. (PS et al.), providing unusual reports from e. Cuba of this rare hawk. On 7 Feb, PB spotted a Gundlach's Hawk at Cayo Coco, Cuba near the airport. The sighting of a Broad-winged Hawk of the threatened Puerto Rican race on Mt. Pirata 7 Feb (OD) provided only the 2nd record for Vieques; the first was at Mt. Pirata 16 Oct 2004 (DG). Two Rough-legged Hawks at the Bermuda Airport 26 Jan–28 Feb+ (DH, PHol) and 1–mid-Feb (DH) were exceptional, as there are only two previous records for this species in Bermuda. Seven Crested Caracaras were

found at G.B., where they are permanent residents, 31 Jan–3 Feb (PS, PSc, KK).

RAILS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

It appeared to be a good season for Yellow-breasted Crakes in P.R. A record 5 were noted at Garrochales and Main Canal, s. Caño Tiburones, Arecibo 18 Dec (JRi et al.; JC et al.), and 3–4 (one ph.) were on a golf course near Humacao, P.R. 27 Jan (ph. ESB, vt. JMc, m.ob.). An American Coot at the Hydroponic Farm Pond, Vieques 9 Feb was a first for that island (DG, BM). Piping Plover reports in the Bahamas included 2 at Island Seas Resort, Grand Bahama 4 Jan (P&SL); 8 in mid-Jan on Green Turtle Cay, Abaco (EB); and 3 on only one day (27 Feb) at Winding Bay,

Eleuthera, where 5 wintered last year (DC, DVP). Piping Plovers apparently concentrated at Staniard Creek, Andros, Bahamas, where Baltz saw “two dozen if there was one” in Jan, and Steensma reported over 100 in early Feb. An American Avocet at Ocean View G.C. 21–26 Jan (RL) was the first winter arrival for this species in Bermuda, and one reported in Nov at H.W.P.N.P. wintered (PD, NM, m.ob.).

Single Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs wintered in Bermuda (AD). Two Solitary Sandpipers at a roadside pond near Small Hope Bay, Andros, Bahamas 13–14 Jan (MB) and a lone Willet at Small Hope and Calabash Bays, Andros 7 Jan–4 Feb (MB, PBa, TW) were unusual in midwinter. The Eurasian Whimbrel found on St. Martin in Nov remained at least through 14 Jan (AB). A Red Knot was at Spanish Point, Bermuda 18 Dec (BL, JT). Fifteen Red Knots at Piñones, Carolina, P.R. 31 Dec (JS) were a good find. Two Sanderlings wintered on Anegada, B.V.I. (DIA, *vide* AMc). A Dunlin was noted at Cayo Guillermo, Cuba (EN, *vide* PB) 7–8 Feb. A Ruff was at Palmas Altas, Barceloneta, P.R. 18 Dec (SC); this species, annual in the Region, may soon no longer warrant boldface type. A Red Phalarope was found dead at Bermuda Airport 18 Feb (DH, *BAMZ).

On his return cruise to Barbados 21 Jan, JW saw 6 Pomarine, 2 Parasitic, and 2 Long-tailed Jaegers. At least 3 Black-headed Gulls were seen at various locations on Bermuda 26 Dec–24 Feb (PW). A Franklin's Gull in definitive basic plumage was found 7 Feb during strong northwesterly winds at Cayo Coco, Cuba (PB). In Bermuda, Iceland Gulls were present 27 Jan–28 Feb+ (m. ob.), with a high count of 7 on 20 Feb (AD, PH, TWe). Three Glaucous Gulls were also recorded

SA Hurricane *Ivan* devastated Grenada last Sep, but the critically endangered **Grenada Dove** survived. Rusk conducted a census in Nov–Dec and found 33–60 males. If there are as many females as males, then the total population is just 66–120 doves. The males were not singing on territory as they normally do at this time of year, so there is a degree of uncertainty in her estimates. This year's estimate was below the 2003–2004 count of 91 males or 182 doves (BR). JW visited Mt. Hartman, Grenada 17 Jan and heard 2 doves there.

Ivan also devastated Grand Cayman; there was huge environmental damage to forests and wetlands that almost certainly will not recover in time to avoid being cleared and sold for development. Much of the black mangrove forest—50% of the Cuban (Grand Cayman) Parrot's (race *caymanensis*) breeding habitat—has been felled, with less than 1% of the nesting trees (now dead) standing. The Cayman National Trust and Department of the Environment are installing nests in urban/semi-urban areas where parrots are regular or have lost known nest trees. They are also organizing a count of Grand Cayman Parrots in coordination with new satellite mapping.

Another endemic race of the Cuban Parrot, *hesterna*, resides on Cayman Brac. This parrot's habitat escaped the hurricanes, but as a consequence of the storm, land on the bluff at Cayman Brac is now at a premium, and several subdivisions are planned as well as a computer back-up facility and offices. The Trust is attempting to raise a half-million dollars to buy forested land that separates the two parts of the parrot preserve. J. W. Wiley et al (2004). Status and conservation of the family Psittacidae in the West Indies. *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology* 17: 94–154) feel the chances of this race's survival are slim even if the land is purchased. (PBr).

About 15 of the *bahamensis* Cuban Parrots that arrived on Man-o'-War Cay, Abaco, Bahamas after the hurricanes remained there through Feb. Four moved to nearby Cistern Cay (NA). On the main island of Abaco, they wandered as far northward as Treasure Cay, well beyond their normal range (IL).

during Feb at various locations in Bermuda (IF, PW, m.ob.). On 28 Dec, a first-year Great Black-backed Gull, 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 2 Herring Gulls, and 21 Ring-billed Gulls were observed at San Juan Harbor, P.R. (JN). A first-winter Herring Gull at Green Beach 31 Jan and a second-winter one at Isabel Segunda 2 Feb provided the first and 2nd records for Vieques (ESB, SWH). Four Black-headed Gulls, 4 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and a Great Black-backed Gull on Great Salt Pond, St Martin 14 Jan were good finds that far south (AB). A count of up to 30 Lesser Black-backed Gulls this winter in Bermuda (IF, PW) was the highest yet. An ad. Sabine's Gull off Cooper's Pt. 3 Feb, Bermuda (IF, PW), provided only the 3rd record for Bermuda. An imm. Black-legged Kittiwake flew past Cooper's Pt., Bermuda 6 Feb (AD, IF, m.ob.), while an ad. stayed in-shore 7 Feb+ (IF, DW). A Caspian Tern was noted 24 Dec at Trou Caiman, Haiti (JRC). A Common Tern was at G.B. 25 Jan (PS). A Forster's Tern was at West End, Grand Bahama 16 Dec (TW, T&JG), and another wintered at Dockyard, Bermuda (AD). A Black Skimmer, rare in the Bahamas, was at Montagu Foreshore, New Providence 13–20 Jan (ph. NM, m.ob.). The number of White-winged Doves at Gates's feeder in Lucaya, Grand Bahama peaked at 10 on 2 Dec.

On 2 Jan, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was at Abaco N.P., Bahamas (EB), and one was found at Loterie, St. Martin 3 Jan (AB). A Long-eared Owl was at Hog Bay Park, Bermuda 5–11 Feb (LHy), while a Short-eared Owl was at Bermuda Airport 13 Jan (DH). A Chuck-will's-widow was photographed on North Caicos, T.C.L., where rare, 18 Feb (BBO, *fide* NMA), and 2 were calling at Coral Harbour, New Providence 21 & 25 Feb (CW). Antillean Nighthawks are rare in winter in Puerto Rico, but 6 were found 15–16 Jan at Vieques (AP, CM, AR). Sykes found 2 Black Swifts and a White-collared Swift in low, dry habitat at G.B. 28 Jan; another White-collared was at Barrio Mameyes, Utuado, P.R. 19 Dec (JN). Reports of four hummingbirds, most likely Ruby-throateds, on Bermuda this winter were extraordinary; they were seen 18 Dec at Port Royal G.C. (EA) and at Orange Valley Road (BL), 9 Jan near Astwood Park (TWe), and 31 Jan at Lighthouse Hill (PT). Bahama Woodstars were scarce on Grand Bahama after the hurricanes, but Pagliaro found 4 and a nest in a blooming bottle-brush tree at West End, Grand Bahama 18–25 Feb. West Indian Woodpeckers apparently suffered from last fall's hurricanes. Hayes found none on San Salvador, Bahamas despite searching known territories, and they have been extremely scarce on Abaco (EB, SK). Puerto Rican Woodpeckers are no longer rare on Vieques. Six were noted in less than a km on 7 Feb (DG BM), and 36 were counted



This leucistic Turkey Vulture was a ghostly presence in a cohort of normally pigmented scavengers on Big Wood Cay, Andros, Bahamas (here in December 2004). Photograph by Daniel Belasco.

on the C.B.C. 15–16 Jan. A Northern Flicker was on Port Royal G.C., Bermuda 3 Jan (AD).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Winter Eastern Phoebes in Bermuda were noted at Compston's Pond 18 Dec (DBW), Wreck Road 2 Jan (WF), and Riddell's Bay G.C. 20 Feb (TWe). On 16 Jan, Wells found 3 Grenada Flycatchers in a few hours ashore at Union I., Grenadines. A Western Kingbird and a Cedar Waxwing were at Shannon G.C., Grand Bahama 17 Dec (PD), and another Western was with 6 Cedar Waxwings at San Andros Airport, Andros 12 Jan (P&SL). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen at H.W.P.N.P. 8 & 19 Feb (TW, ph. CO). The first record of White-eyed Vireo on St. Martin was provided by one at Loterie 11 Jan (AB). Five White-eyed Vireos were at San Miguel/El Convento, Luquillo–Fajardo, P.R. 19 Dec (BH, JS). A Thick-billed Vireo, rare and threatened in Cuba, was netted at Cayo Coco 8 Feb (PB, APa, EW). Single Yellow-throated Vireos were at Morgan's Pt., Bermuda 1 Jan (AD, PW), Mt. Pirata, Vieques 15–16 Jan (C.B.C.), and Cambalache S.F., P.R. 23 Jan (ESB et al.). A Blue-headed Vireo was seen in Devonshire Marsh, Bermuda 20 Dec (JM), and one was at Samana, D.R. 3 Feb (AB). A Red-eyed Vireo was at Mt. Pirata, Vieques 16 Jan (SC, WHe). Three Horned Larks were discovered at Bermuda Airport 25–30 Jan (DH).

A male Cuban Martin displaying to 8 unidentified female *Progne* was attacked by an ad. male Caribbean Martin at Punta Jagüey, Cabo Rojo N.W.R., P.R. 24 Jan (ESB et al., vt. JMc); it was almost certainly the same bird as present 22 Jan the previous year

(N.A.B. 58: 294). The Bahamas' first Purple Martin of the year was at West End, Grand Bahama 25 Feb (RP). Two Tree Swallows and a Barn Swallow were recorded 18 Dec at East End Dairy, Bermuda (PW). Three Northern Rough-winged Swallows were photographed near San Andros, Andros, Bahamas 8 Jan (EM, PBa). Cave Swallows are rare on Vieques, so 3 at Playa Grande 15–16 Jan were unusual (JC, VA, JA). Three House Wrens of the distinctive Grenada race *grenadensis* (a full species?) were found at Mt. Hartman, Grenada 17 Jan (JW). A Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush was noted 15–16 Jan on the Vieques C.B.C. at Mt Pirata, a first for Vieques. Brown found 3 Bicknell's Thrushes on the Pico Duarte Trail, D.R. 5 Feb. At least one Hermit Thrush wintered at Hog Bay Park, Bermuda (PH). Six American Robins were at Morgan's Point, Bermuda 1 Jan (AD, PW). There were more American Robins in the Bahamas than usual this winter. One was at Great Guana Cay, Abaco 20 & 27 Dec (RP), 2 at High Rock, Grand Bahama 1 Jan (DN), one near Treasure Cay, Abaco 1 Jan (EB), one at Shannon G.C., Grand Bahama 4–6 Jan (P&SL, EG), and 6 at Angel Fish Pt., Abaco 19 Feb (EB). Three Red-legged Thrushes were reported from Red/Blue Beach, Vieques (MA, HM), for only the 2nd record on that island (*fide* DG).

Up to 3 Gray Catbirds were at Cerro Nacho, Arecibo, P.R. 12 & 18 Dec (SC, JS); also on 18 Dec, one was at Barrio Islote, Arecibo (SC). A Gray Catbird at Playa Brava, Culebra 2 Jan may be the first there (JC). A Northern Mockingbird early Dec–25 Feb was banded at the Bermuda Biological Station (DBW). At

Caravelle Pen., Martinique, where a controversial proposed development threatens one of only two White-breasted Thrasher colonies in the world, Wells found 2–4 thrashers 21 Jan. A Pearly-eyed Thrasher on Eleuthera 13 Dec was a good find (DC). Up to 4 European Starlings, uncommon on New Providence, Bahamas, were found at Diamond Farms this winter (PD, TH, FS, CW). Seven Cedar Waxwings were in s. Eleuthera 28 Jan (DC, SW), and 4 were at Camperdown, Nassau, Bahamas 25 Feb (TH, LH).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A male Golden-winged Warbler in Caribbean N.P., P.R. 27 Jan (ESB et al.), where the species is not known to winter. Single Blue-winged Warblers banded at Loterie 2 & 19 Jan provided 2nd and 3rd records for St Martin (AB). Pagliaro found a first-winter Nashville Warbler and a first-winter Orange-crowned Warbler at West End, Grand Bahama 25 Feb. A late Yellow Warbler was seen at Waterville Park, Bermuda 1 Dec (DW). This winter, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers were abundant on New Providence, where they outnumbered Palm Warblers on the C.B.C. for the first time (NM). A Townsend's Warbler at Orange Valley Road 19 Dec–16 Feb (BL) constituted Bermuda's 2nd winter record. Gemmill reported that Adelaide's Warblers are abundant on Vieques; 433 were found on the C.B.C. 15–16 Jan. A Pine Warbler at Kiani Lagoon boardwalk, Vieques 5 Feb was unusual (DG, BM). Cuba's first Kirtland's Warbler was at Cayo Coco in Nov (details will be published elsewhere) (APa, *fide* PB), and Bermuda's first Kirtland's Warbler was found during the C.B.C. 18 Dec (vt. EA, m.ob.). In the Bahamas, the Kirtland's Warbler Research & Training Project found almost 50 Kirtland's Warblers on s. Eleuthera this winter (DC). A first-year female Chestnut-sided Warbler 4 Dec at El Portal, Caribbean N.F., P.R. (JvM) was a good find. Brown banded a Chestnut-sided Warbler 6 Jan and 2 Kentucky Warblers 19 Jan at Loterie, St. Martin. A Worm-eating Warbler on 10 Feb provided the 3rd record for Vieques (DG, BM), and 2 at Loterie, St. Martin provided the 4th and 5th records there. A Swainson's Warbler was at Ocean View G.C., Bermuda 16 Jan (AD, TWe), and another was at Lyford Cay G.C., New Providence, Bahamas 15 Feb (TW, ph. CO). Eighteen Bahama Yellowthroats at West End, Grand Bahama 18–25 Feb (RP) was a good count after the hurricanes.

Single Bananaquits were netted 7 & 13 Feb at Playa Dorado, Cayo Coco, Cuba,



Gray Heron, an Old World species unknown on the North American mainland except for an Alaskan sight record and several Canadian specimens, has been recorded regularly at Barbados in recent years. This adult was photographed 15 January 2005 at Graeme Hall Swamp. Photograph by Jeff Wells.

where they are vagrants (PB, APa, EW). On 9 Jan, a Summer Tanager was at Lighthouse Marina, Andros, Bahamas (RMR). An Indigo Bunting netted 13 Jan (OD) was a first for Vieques. A Vesper Sparrow provided an unusual winter record at Bermuda Airport 15 Feb (IF, PW). A Grasshopper Sparrow was at Lover's Lane, Bermuda late Dec–early Feb (DW). Two Snow Buntings wintered on the Castle Harbour Islands, Bermuda (JM). A Dickcissel was at Talbot Estate, Bermuda 18 Dec (EA). Six Yellow-bellied Seedeaters were at Mt. Hartman, Grenada 17 Jan (JW). Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds, a critically endangered species, were seen 19 Dec at Roosevelt Roads, Ceiba, P.R. (JvM); 200+ were in usual haunts around La Parguera, P.R. 25 Jan, and fewer showed evidence of eye disease than in 2004 (ESB et al.). An Eastern Meadowlark flushed at Bermuda Airport 26 Feb (DBW) was possibly the same bird seen in Nov (GH). A Baltimore Oriole was at the Playa Grande perimeter road, Vieques 9 Feb (DG). A Common Redpoll was at Cooper's I., Bermuda 5 Feb (IF).

EXOTICS

A first-winter Mute Swan of unknown provenance was photographed at Baker's Bay, Great

Guana Cay, Abaco 27–28 Jan (LF, BHe, *fide* RP). A Hill Myna was seen near Rolle Town, Great Exuma 18 Feb (BS). A flock of 10+ Chestnut Mannakins at Kew, North Caicos, T.C.I. 6 Jan–early Feb (NMa) was the first reported from the Bahamian Archipelago. A Pin-tailed Wydah 15–16 Jan (AP, CM, AR) and Orange Bishops 10 Feb (DG, BM) were both new for Vieques.

Addenda: Reports received too late to report in the winter 2004 issue: one Bridled Quail-Dove was seen 27 Feb 2004 at Mt. Pirata, Vieques (DG, BM), where three species of *Geotrygon* sporadically coexist. A Yellow-throated Vireo 27 Feb 2004 (DG) and a Worm-eating Warbler 25 Feb 2004 (DG) provided the 2nd and first records, respectively, for Vieques.

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