

Here is the Bahamas Bird Report for Spring 2009. It seems strange but we are almost halfway through the short summer season - June-July. Please keep track of the first date you see southbound migrants. Changing migration patterns are among the first responses by birds to global warming, and it should become apparent in the Bahamas if we keep track of the arrival and departure dates of different species. Good birding,  
Tony White

#### General:

The results of the 2006 International Piping Plover Census were published this quarter (<http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/426>), and the Bahamas ranked third in the number of wintering Piping Plovers. Texas had 2090, Florida had 454, and the Bahamas had 417. Given the number of islands and beaches in the Bahamas that were not surveyed, it is likely that there are as many or more plovers wintering in the Bahamas than in Florida. The Bahamas is an important location in the recovery of this threatened species.

'AN INVENTORY OF BREEDING SEABIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN' (ISBN 978-0-8130-3329-7) edited by Patricia Bradley and Robert Norton is now available. The hard-cover book, with a Foreword by John Croxall, has 30 chapters contributed by 46 authors. It describes status and threats to seabirds breeding in 25 island nations, with 51 maps, 44 B&W photographs, a GIS Analysis by William Mackin, and an extensive bibliography. Go to <http://www.upf.com/book.asp?id=BRADL001> to see more about the book or to order it. The price is \$75.00. Shipping costs are \$6.00 for the first book and \$1.00 for each additional copy if ordering in the U.S.; \$10.00 for the first book and \$5.00 for each additional copy if books are to be shipped outside of the United States.

Brian Sullivan, a well known American birder and bird photographer, published articles on birding in the Bahamas in the September/October 2008 issue of *Wildbird* and the spring 2009 issue of *Living Bird*. Both articles were well illustrated with Brian's photos and concentrate on birding in Abaco. You can download a digital version of the *Wildbird* issue for a small fee by going to the *Wildbird* website. The two articles should lure more birders to our shores.

#### Spring 2009

It has been a dry winter and spring in the Bahamas with Nassau getting only 3 1/3 inches of rainfall through mid-May. In general it was a poor migration with few unusual passerines being reported. Highlights for the spring season included the continued presence of the West Indies' first Iceland Gull, and second documented records of Mute Swan and Wilson's and Red Phalaropes. Namitz reported on a cruise from Florida to St. Martin and back providing a rare sampling of seabirds east of the Bahamas and Turks & Caicos Is.

#### Sightings

A first-spring Mute Swan, the second for the West Indies and Bahamas, was photographed at Reef G.C., Grand Bahama 28-29 May by MA. The first swan was a first-winter bird photographed at Baker's Bay, Great Guana Cay, Abaco 27, 28 Jan 2005. Both swans are of unknown provenance.

The American Flamingo flock at Gordon's Beach, Long I. numbered 28 on 21 Apr (TW, D&MB).

An Audubon's Shearwater was found ashore on South Bimini 24 Apr. Well meaning people "tried to help him along the way." As soon as it took flight, it was attacked by Laughing Gulls, forced into the water and killed (GM).

A juv. Brown Booby was at Danger Cay, Exumas 18 May (BP). RN saw 3 Brown Boobies east of southern Eleuthera 23 Mar and 10 or more Masked Boobies east of Turks and Caicos 24 Mar. Six Northern Gannets were flying north, 10 miles east of Munjack Cay, Abaco 9 Apr (EB, FB, HA).

A Double-crested Cormorant flying around the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (hereafter AUTEK), Andros 6 Apr was unusual (DM).

White-tailed Tropicbirds were reported nesting at Powell's Cay, Abaco 5 May (EB, BB) and Rose Island off New Providence (4 nests) the same day (O&PS).

Two dark morph Reddish Egrets at the eastern end of New Providence 16 Mar (O&PS) and one at Yamacraw Beach, New Providence 25 Apr (TH) were unusual.

Piping Plovers reported from the Bahamas this spring included 1 on Cambridge Cay, Exumas 1 Mar (LD), 10 on Green Turtle Cay 9 Mar (EB), and 1 at Lighthouse Beach, Eleuthera 23 Mar (RN).

Five American Oystercatchers were photographed on Goat Rocks between Little and Great Stirrup Islands, Berry Islands 29 Mar suggesting that the species breeds in that area (Fide BP).

A flock of thirteen Eastern Willets was seen at Yamacraw Beach, New Providence 25 Apr (TH). They were either migrants enroute nesting grounds farther north or newly arrived summer residents which will breed in the Bahamas. Two Whimbrels were seen on rocks off McLean's Town, Grand Bahama 2 April (JH, BP). A Wilson's Phalarope (2nd documented record for the Bahamas) was photographed at the Emerald G.C., Grand Bahama 18 Apr (BP, IL, ph. EG), and two Red Phalaropes (also a possible second record) were seen east of San Salvador 28 Mar (RN).

The Iceland Gull found in Nassau in Feb was last seen at Fort Montague 28 Mar (CW). The movements of Laughing Gulls in the Bahamas are poorly known. They began to gather at Lake Cunningham, New Providence about 15 Mar (PD, TW). The annual influx to Fresh Creek, Andros began 28 Mar (DM), and they first appeared on Long Island the second week of Apr (D&MB). While on Long Island 20-23 Apr TW noted Laughing Gulls perching on the telephone and power lines. Inquiries revealed that this behavior has

also been observed on Little and Great Exuma (LD), but was unknown in other Bahama Islands. The sighting of a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Southwest Ridge, New Providence 25 May (PD, TH) possibly set a new late date for this species.

TH found 9 Gull-billed Terns at Yamacraw Beach 25 Apr, and BP saw 10-15 Gull-billed Terns feeding on the grass verges at Freeport Airport, Grand Bahama 15 May. Least Terns were first noted on Grand Bahama 9 Apr (BP) and on New Providence 22 Apr (PD).

A light morph Parasitic Jaeger was seen between Eleuthera and the Exumas 18 May (BP), and a dark morph was diving on Bridled Terns 10+ mi. east of Eleuthera's southern tip 23 May (RN). A Pomarine Jaeger was seen east of San Salvador 28 Mar (RN), and two were 20 miles east of Tilloo Cay, Abaco 3 May (EB, PB).

Three Key West Quail-Doves on the old Coral Harbour G. C. 2 Apr were a good find (CW).

Single Yellow-billed Cuckoos were found at the Gladstone Road Agricultural Center (hereafter GRAC), New Providence 21 Apr and 25 and 30 May (PD, LH). A Mangrove Cuckoo was seen at Waterloo Rd., Nassau, an urban environment, 22 Apr (PD).

The first Antillean Nighthawk was reported from Wulf Rd., Nassau 2 May (PD). A Chuck-will's-widow calling at Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 11 Mar was unexpected (PM).

Single Ruby-throated Hummingbirds seen at AUTEK, Andros 4 Mar (DM) and Marsh Harbour, Abaco 27 Mar (EB) plus the three reported last winter were an unprecedented number for a single winter migration.

A West Indian Woodpecker was photographed at McLean's Town on the eastern end of Grand Bahama 2 May (BP). It is not known whether this is a survivor from the island's extirpated(?) indigenous population or a colonist from Abaco.

An Eastern Phoebe was at the cattle farm, Grand Bahama 7 Mar (BP), and single Eastern Wood-Pewees were at Double-blocked Pond south of Treasure Cay, Abaco 4 Apr and Spanish Cay, Abaco 16 Apr (EB, BB). Early Gray Kingbirds were reported from Abaco 16 Mar (EB), Nassau 19 Mar (PD) and Eleuthera 19 Mar (JDW).

In early April MH found 20 several pairs of Bahama Swallows nesting under the eaves of houses in Sandy Point, Abaco. Bahama Swallows may be extirpated as breeders from New Providence, but single birds seen at Coral Harbour 24, 27 Apr and 22 May (CW) raise the possibility that a pair or two remain.

A Blue-headed Vireo was banded at Rock Sound, Eleuthera 26 Mar (JT, EC, AD, SJ, JDW). A Black-whiskered Vireo at Winton, Nassau 23 Mar was early (LH); the first report from Eleuthera was 13 Apr (JDW) and from Abaco was 16 Apr (EB). A House Wren was singing at the Cooperstown dump, Abaco 4 Apr (EB). A Wood Thrush at Spanish Cay, Abaco 8 Apr was unexpected (EB).

A Magnolia and a Blackpoll Warbler were at GRAC, New Providence 17 Apr; the blackpoll was very early (PD). Two Kirtland's Warblers were photographed on Hawksbill Cay, Exumas 3 Mar (LD) raising the possibility that they had wintered on this small, scrubby island. During the 2008-2009 winter the Kirtland's Warbler Research and Training Project on Eleuthera banded 41 new Kirtland's Warblers, resighted 13 birds, and recaptured 2 birds banded previously. Three of the resighted birds were banded in Michigan. The last resights for the season were to color-banded birds on 28 Apr near Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera. The last sign of a Kirtland's Warbler was 29 Apr at Rock Sound (fide JDW). A male Hooded Warbler and several Worm-eating Warblers that wintered at Winton, Nassau were last seen 17 Apr (LH).

On 1 Mar a high count of 15 Bananaquits was at the feeders on Warderick Wells, Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park (LD). Male Painted Buntings departed Treasure Cay, Abaco 22 Mar, females a week later (M&EL). Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen at Treasure Cay, Abaco 31 Mar (M&EL) and Nassau 14 Apr (SS). EB & BB found a Lincoln's Sparrow 19 Mar at the Treasure Cay dump, Abaco. A White-crowned Sparrow, discovered at GRAC 30 Mar, was last seen 2 May. It sang frequently during its stay (ph. TH, PD, WP, KHL, LH).

A juv. Orchard Oriole was photographed at GRAC 6 Apr (TH).

Observers:

Mike Acosta, Hank Adams, Fred Bailey, Betsy Bracey, Elwood Bracey, Peter Burchfield, Dennis & Marilyn Butcher, Leno Davis, Elise Corliss, Paul Dean, Alana Demko (Ade), Erika Gates, Lee Hanna, Tony Hepburn, Jim Hully, Keva Hanna-Lawrence, Michael Harvey, Scott Johnson, Michael & Eloise Lightbourn, Irene Lui, David Miller, Grayson Miller 3rd, Predensa Moore, Russ Namitz, William Pinder, Bruce Purdy, Olga & Peter Stokes, Sheran Sweeting, Jennifer Thieme, Carolyn Wardle, Jennifer D. White, Tony White