

BAHAMAS/TCI BIRD REPORT FALL 2009

The information in the Bahamas/TCI Seasonal Bird Reports is included in the West Indies Regional Reports in North American Birds (NAB), published quarterly by the American Birding Association (www.aba.org).

Back issues of NAB are now available on-line free at SORA, Searchable Ornithological Research Archive, (<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/>). The West Indies reports and other articles of interest to Bahamian birders can be easily read or downloaded.

Thank you for sending in your observations. The Bahama Islands are one of the jewels of the western hemisphere, and a healthy and diverse birdlife is a facet of this bright jewel. Increasing public knowledge and interest in these birds is the best way to protect them.

Happy New Year and good birding in 2010. Tony White

RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND WEB POSTINGS

There were three papers published recently that discussed the taxonomy of birds found in the Bahamas. Orlando Garrido, James Wiley and George Reynard have a paper in the Wilson Journal of Ornithology entitled "Taxonomy of the Loggerhead Kingbird (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus*) complex (Aves: Tyrannidae)". They propose leaving the Bahamian, Cuban, Cayman, and Jamaican populations as subspecies of *T. caudifasciatus* and splitting out the Puerto Rican (*T. taylori*) and Hispaniolan (*T. gabbii*) populations.

In a paper in the Journal of Caribbean Ornithology M. Bryant J. Reynolds and William Hayes propose that three populations of the Cuban Parrot in the Bahamas be made separate subspecies. They propose the names *A. l. bahamensis* for the now extinct Acklins population, *A. l. abacoensis* for the Abaco population, and *A. L. inaguaensis* for the Inagua population. They base their proposals on morphology and plumage variation. At the January 2010 Abaco Science Alliance, Caroline Stahala presented evidence from DNA analysis supporting this proposed split. In another paper in the Journal of Caribbean Ornithology Melissa Price and William Hayes propose splitting Greater Antillean Oriole (*Icterus dominicensis*) into four species: *I. northropi* from the Bahamas, *I. melanopsis* from Cuba, *I. dominicensis* from Hispaniola, and *I. portoricensis* from Puerto Rico. Raising the Bahamian race to a full species will increase its priority in international conservation.

The 2010 edition of the Bahamas Handbook has an excellent article on Kirtland's Warbler. It gives Paul Dean full credit for discovering the wintering population on southern Eleuthera. Recent sightings of Kirtland's Warblers at unexpected locations in the Bahamas have been documented by photos posted on the web. Leno Davis's photos of two Kirtland's at Hawksbill Cay, Exumas last winter are posted on the Nature Conservancy website <http://www.nature.org/wherewework/caribbean/bahamas/>, and Becky Marvil's photo of a Kirtland's Warbler near Treasure Cay, Abaco is posted on abaconews.com. Marvil was bicycling when she found the warbler and had to ride home, get her camera, and then relocate the warbler in order to document it.

FALL SEASON REPORT

The fall of 2009 (Aug - Nov) was a relatively quiet season. There was no hurricane, and migration did not hold a great many unusual birds. A desiccated corpse on Paradise Island and two rarities on Grand Bahama in October were highlights in this calm and normal fall.

Stahala monitored forty-eight Cuban (Bahama) Parrot nests on Abaco this summer and only two were predated by feral cats, illustrating the efficiency of the predator control program. She also surveyed White-tailed Tropicbird nests on nearby Tilloo Cay where there was no predator control program. Four of seven nests had been predated by feral cats (CS).

Ducks through Kingfisher

Two Blue-winged Teal arriving at Adelaide, New Providence 8 Aug were 10-15 days earlier than usual (PM). Purdy had a high count of 13 Pied-billed Grebes at Reef G.C. Grand Bahama 25 Oct. The desiccated corpse of a **Manx Shearwater** found on Paradise I. 12 Oct provided the second confirmed record for the Bahamas (PD, ph. TH). There were 40+ Brown Boobies (all but two were adults) roosting on West Cay off Conception I. 7 Aug, and even more (mostly imm.) were noted flying around Mira Por Vos 10 Aug (BP). A gathering of herons including at least 10 Great Blue Herons, 50 Great Egrets, 30 Tricolored Herons, 5 Snowy Egrets, 5 Green Herons, 5 Little Blue Herons, and 5 Reddish Egrets was observed 29 Oct in the Marls of Abaco from an overlook near Treasure Cay (EB, BM). An American Bittern was n. of Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera 16 Nov (DE). The Roseate Spoonbill at Freeport Harbour, Grand Bahama was last seen on 4 Aug (BP).

Single American Golden-Plovers were seen at the Treasure Cay Dump 3, 10-11 Sep (EB, TH). On 29 Nov Purdy found four Snowy Plovers and 10 Piping Plovers at Discovery Beach, Grand Bahama. Other reports of Piping Plovers this fall included one at Discovery Beach 2 Aug (BP), 4-6 at Green Turtle Cay 12 Sep (EB, TH), 4-6 at South Andros 8 Sep (TH, PD, LH), and 5 at South Beach, New Providence 18 Nov (PD, TH, WP). White-rumped Sandpipers were found on Grand Bahama 30 Aug and 20 Sep (BP), Green Turtle Cay 12 Sep (EB, TH), and New Providence 31 Aug (PD, TH). Over 20 Pectoral Sandpipers at Lyford Cay G.C., New Providence 20 Sep was a good count (TH). The only Upland Sandpiper reported was one seen at the Gladstone Rd. Agricultural Center (hereafter G.R.A.C.), New Providence 6 Sep (PD, TH).

On 14 and 24 Nov 4 and 5 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported from Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera (DE, RZ). Forty Roseate Terns at Andrews Beach Estates, New Providence 5 Aug (TH) was a good count, but paled in comparison with the 200+ seen at Crooked I. 6 Aug (BP). Common Terns are uncommon fall migrants in the Bahamas so a count of 25 at Andrews Beach Estates 13 Aug was noteworthy (TH, PD). A Forster's Tern landed on a dive boat n of Bimini 25 Nov (ph. Fide BP). A Black Skimmer was found on Indian Cay, n of West End, Grand Bahama 18 Oct (ph. GS, BP).

A White-winged Dove at Coral Harbour, New Providence 19 Nov was the first there in nearly three years (CW). Yellow-billed Cuckoos were found on Abaco 14 Aug (EB), New Providence (2) 31 Aug (PD, TH), and Grand Bahama 25 Oct (BP). Resident Antillean Nighthawks normally

leave the Bahamas in early Sep. a flight of 25 or more nighthawks over Grand Bahama 26-30 Oct and a single bird seen over Abaco 30 Oct were thought to be Common Nighthawks migrating through the Bahamas, but the birds were silent and their species could not be confirmed (BP, EB). Six Bahama Woodstars at the abandoned fruit farm on Abaco 2 Nov was a good count for that location (EB). A Belted Kingfisher at Coral Harbour, New Providence 1 Aug was early (CW).

Flycatchers through Orioles

Over six Eastern Wood-Pewees were found in the pine woods of Grand Bahama 4 Oct (LM, BP), and single birds were seen at G.R.A.C., New Providence 19 Oct (PD, TH) and on Abaco 30 Oct (EB, BM) and 2 and 6 Nov (EB, TH, BM). Six Eastern Phoebes were at Reef G.C., Grand Bahama 4 Oct (LM, BP) and single phoebes were seen on Abaco 30 Oct and 11 Nov (both EB, TH). The highlight of the season was a **Couch's/Tropical Kingbird** found at the Emerald G.C., Grand Bahama 2-3 Oct (ph. LM, BP). Photos suggest that the bird is a Tropical Kingbird, but the bird was silent and its identity could not be confirmed. This would be the first record of either species for the Bahamas. There is no record of Couch's Kingbird in the West Indies, and three records from Cuba are the only ones of Tropical Kingbird from the northern West Indies. Five and twenty plus Eastern Kingbirds were seen at Coral Harbour 12 and 14 Sep respectively, and singles were seen at Cowpen Rd., New Providence 21 Sep and S. Andros 27 Sep (all PD, TH, LL, LH). A Gray Kingbird at Tarpum Bay 14 Nov (DE) was in keeping with the later departures seen from this species in recent years. A single Purple Martin at Harrold and Wilson Ponds N.P., New Providence 1 Aug (PD, LH, LL), and two Barn Swallows on Long Cay off Crooked I. 9 Aug (BP) were early arrivals for their species.

Three Swainson's Thrushes were at St. Augustine's College 1 OCT (PD), and singles were found on South Andros 29 Sep (TH, PD, LH), Nassau 19 Oct (PD, TH), and Garden of the Groves, Grand Bahama 24 Oct (BP). Four Cedar Waxwings, an occasional winter visitor, were at the Lucayan G.C., Grand Bahama 23 Oct (BP). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was photographed at St. Augustine's College 20 Oct (PD, ph. TH), and another was at Waterloo Rd., Nassau 27 Oct (PD). A **Townsend's Warbler**, the third record for the Bahama Archipelago, was photographed at East End, Grand Bahama 4 Oct (ph. LM, BP). Previous records are from Grand Bahama 18 Apr 1984 (AE) and Grand Turk 16 Jan 1986 (GR). A Kirtland's Warbler found in coppice 24 Oct near Treasure Cay, Abaco was the first for northern Abaco in decades (BM ph.). Another was found at an undisclosed location on New Providence 19 Nov (ph. PD, LL). Madera Rd., Eleuthera was the site of Dean's discovery of Kirtland's Warbler wintering grounds in southern Eleuthera in 2002. It remains an active site as 4-5 Kirtland's Warblers were seen there 13 and 15 Nov (DE, JW). Ten Blackpoll Warblers at G.R.A.C. 9 Nov was a good count (PD, TH). Two Prothonotary Warblers were at Garden of the Groves, Grand Bahama 28 Aug (BP), two at Blue Waters, Nassau 8 Sep (BP), and one at Reef G. C. 20 Sep (BP). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Tarpum Bay 11 Nov (DE). LM and BP found six Clay-colored Sparrows at East End, Grand Bahama 4 Oct. A White-crowned Sparrow was photographed at the abandoned fruit farm 29 Oct (EB, BM). A Dickcissel was found on South Andros 27 Sep (TH, PD, LH). A begging juvenile cowbird photographed at the Egg Farm, Grand Bahama 28 Aug appears to be a Brown-headed Cowbird. If this identification proves correct, it will be the first breeding record for this species in the Bahamas. An Orchard Oriole was at the Marsh Harbour Dump in Abaco 6 Nov (EB, TH).

Observers:

Elwood Bracey, Paul Dean, Art Edwards, David Ewert, Lee Hanna, Tony Hepburn, Lionel Levine, Pericles Maillis, Larry Manfredi, Becky Marvil, William Pinder, Bruce Purdy, Gary Rosenberg, Gary Simmons, Caroline Stahala, Carolyn Wardle, Joe Wunderle, Richard ZainEldeen