

### **Bahamas Bird Report Winter (Dec-Feb) 2005-2006**

Taxonomists continue to review West Indian birds for possible splits. The latest proposal (Garrido, Wiley, and Kirkconnell 2005) splits Greater Antillean Oriole (*Icterus dominicensis*) into four species: Bahamas Oriole (*I. northropi*), Cuban Oriole (*I. melanopsis*), Hispaniolan Oriole (*I. dominicensis*), and Puerto Rican Oriole (*I. portoricensis*). This proposal and the suggested names are tentative until they are approved by A.O.U. Check-List Committee. The "Bahamas Oriole" is now found only on Andros, it was extirpated from Abaco within the past 50 years. There are estimated to be fewer than 1,000 "Bahamas Orioles" in existence.

Eighteen dead birds (14 flamingos, 3 Roseate Spoonbills, and a cormorant) were found on Great Inagua 26 and 27 Feb. There was speculation that the birds died from avian flu, and articles in the international press led to cancellation of some tourist reservations in the Bahamas. The birds were determined to have died from other causes. This incident reflects the high level of concern over avian flu and the care one must exercise when mentioning dead birds. (fide EC, various newspaper and internet articles).

The Nassau, Grand Bahama, and Abaco Christmas Bird Counts from December 2005 (106th Annual Count) are available at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc).

A list of papers of interest follows the seasonal report. This list includes two papers about Puerto Rican Parrots that may have application to conservation efforts for the Bahama Parrot.

### **Winter 2005-2006 Seasonal Report**

The CBC on Grand Bahama 16 Dec found 7 Canada Geese on island golf courses.

A Snow Goose was at the old Fruit Farm, Abaco 3 Dec (EB, TW), and two spent Feb at the Emerald Bay G.C., Great Exuma (J&BM).

Six Wood Ducks were seen at Ruby G.C, Grand Bahama 16 Dec (BH, CBC) and three were still there 24 Jan (EG).

There were 20 Green-winged Teal at Crossing Rocks, Abaco 10 Jan (EB).

Twenty Northern Shovelers and 42 American Wigeon were at Grog Pond, Great Exuma in Feb (J&BM).

On Feb 18-19 BP saw eight small shearwaters including three probable Manx Shearwaters flying north along the western edge of the Little Bahama Bank.

A White-tailed Tropicbird between New Providence and Andros 9 Jan was early (JS); they arrived in numbers (13) at Little Harbour, Abaco 20 Feb (AB).

White Pelicans are rare in the Bahamas, so two in the Marls west of Treasure Cay, Abaco 4 Feb (EB) and one between Hog Cay and Leaf Cay at the south end of the Exumas 24 Feb (DL) are noteworthy.

The Anhinga at Lakeview Ponds, Paradise Island remained throughout the winter (m. ob.).

An American Bittern was at Rock Sound airport, Eleuthera at dusk 28 Feb (RB, DC, EJ).

A Black Vulture seen over Chippingham, Nassau 17 Jan (CW, E&PA, F&SZ) was the first for New Providence and fourth for the Bahamas.

On 4 Dec an Osprey fishing unusually far out at sea over Southwest Bank caught a fish and carried it back towards New Providence, 7 mi. away (PM).

Single Northern Harriers were seen at the fruit farm, Abaco 13 Dec and 4 Jan (EB, TW) and South Westridge Estates, New Providence 19 Feb (PD).

The desiccated remains of a Sharp-shinned Hawk were found at Montagu Foreshore, Nassau 25 Feb (sp. SBu).

A Virginia Rail, possibly the first for Andros, was seen at Davis Creek near Small Hope Bay Lodge in the week of 9 Jan (JS, AF, SB).

Seven American Oystercatchers on North Andros the week of 9 Jan were a good count (JS, AF, SB).

A flock of 10-15 Snowy Plovers was observed over Buena Vista Cay, Ragged Islands 31 Jan (R&WO).

The Bahamas is proving to be a major wintering ground for the endangered Piping Plover. During the International Piping Plover Census 21 Jan – 6 Feb Bahamian birders found over 275 Piping Plovers. This table does not include all the Piping Plovers found in the Bahamas during the census. When one considers the locations that are not included in the table below, e.g. Cat Island, San Salvador, Berry Islands, Bimini, and Joulter's Cays, it is probable that the number of wintering plovers is over 500.

Location	Date	Number of Piping Plovers	Observers
Green Turtle Cay, Abaco	2 Feb	9	EB
South Beach, New Providence	21 Jan	16	PMo, CW
Barbary Beach, GB	2 Feb	2	EG, SM, BR
Discovery Bay Beach, GB	2 Feb	20	EG, SM, BR
Williamstown Beach, GB	2 Feb	12	EG, SM, BR
Pelican Pt. to the Refinery, GB	3 Feb	24	SM, MA, K&MK
Near High Rock, GB	3 Feb	12	SM, MA, K&MK
Andros Town, N. Andros	27 Jan	11	PD, LH, LL
N. Cargill Creek, N. Andros	27 Jan	43	PD, LH, LL
Blanket Sound, N. Andros	28 Jan	6	PD, LH, LL
Stanniard Creek, N. Andros	29 Jan	68	PD, LH, LL
Mars Bay, S. Andros	3 Feb	38	PD, KHL, LL
Hog Cay, Ragged Islands	29 Jan	10	R&WO
Winding Bay, Eleuthera	6 Feb	1	JW
Moriah Harbour Cay, Exumas	? Feb	6	J&BM

Over 100 Lesser Yellowlegs with a few Greater mixed in were at Diamond Crystal Salt Ponds, Long Island 31 Jan (DL).

Two Willets over Long Cay, s. of Highborne Cay, Exumas, 12 Jan (MR) were unusual for mid-winter.

Two Whimbrels and a godwit (species uncertain) were w. of Deadman's Cay, Long Island 25 Jan (DL, SM).

Four Long-billed Dowitchers were found 16 Dec on Ruby G.C., Grand Bahama (ph. BH, BM, CBC), and they were last seen on 9 Jan (EG, MAS). This is the second record for the Bahamas.

High counts for shorebirds at Green Turtle Cay, Abaco this winter were 12 Red Knots and 18 Piping Plovers 30 Dec and 100+ Dunlin, 100+ Short-billed Dowitchers, 35+ Wilson's Plovers, and 50+ Semipalmated Plovers all 1 Feb (EB).

A Franklin's Gull at West End, Grand Bahama 15-16 Dec was the first for the Bahamas (ph. BH, BM, DG, LL, TW).

Christmas counters on Grand Bahama found 14 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 16 Dec, and 12 on New Providence with a Great Black-backed Gull on 18 Dec. Another Lesser Black-backed was seen at Lowe Sound, Andros 28 Jan (PD, LH, ph. LL).

Single Forster's Terns were reported 12 Dec at Treasure Cay, Abaco (EB) and 9 Jan off Caves Point, New Providence (TW).

A Caspian Tern was found at Dover Sound, Grand Bahama 16 Dec (T&GD, EG, PMo).

There was a White-winged Dove s. of San Andros in the week of 9 Jan (JS, AF, SB); another visited CW's feeder at Coral Harbour, New Providence regularly throughout the winter.

A Northern Flicker (yellow-shafted) was seen on the Ruby G.C., Grand Bahama 17 Dec and 28 Jan. If accepted, this will be the first for the Bahamas (BH, EB, PD, TW, EG, CJ, PS).

The only Eastern Wood-Pewee reported this winter was at the fruit farm, Abaco 8 Dec (EB).

An Eastern Phoebe was found 16 Dec and 21 and 24 Jan at Ruby G.C., Grand Bahama (BH, EG). One was also seen on New Providence at Bahamas Association for Social Health, Nassau 7 Jan (TW, ph. TH, OG) and 10 Jan (TH, LG, MAS).

A Western Kingbird was observed 28 Jan s of San Andros airport (PD, ph. LL, LH).

A late Gray Kingbird at Coral Harbour, New Providence was last seen 3 Dec (CW, OG).

Twenty Bahama Swallows on Mayaguana 7 Dec (AB) were probably winter wanderers; others stayed closer to home – 40 along the Great Abaco Highway 21 Jan and 4 at Fresh Creek, Andros 24 Jan (both AL).

Nashville Warblers were seen at Cable Beach, New Providence 18 Dec (BH, CBC) and Waterloo, Nassau 15 and 22 Feb (PD).

A Kirtland's Warbler was seen and photographed at an undisclosed location on New Providence 4, 5, and 11 Feb (PD, ph. LL, KHL, LH).

On the New Providence CBC introduced Cuban Grassquits outnumbered indigenous Black-faced Grassquits for the fourth consecutive year (fide NMc). A pair of Black-faced Grassquits nested at Sandypoint 25 Jan (JB) despite the species' preference for undeveloped habitat.

The Bahamas' first documented Boat-tailed Grackle was found at Port Lucaya, Grand Bahama during the CBC 16 Dec (EB, ph. MH, CBC).

In Nassau single Baltimore Orioles were at Camperdown 10 Jan (TH, LG, MAS) and at Waterloo 22 Feb (PD).

Two teams of observers noted that House Sparrows are now established at Lowe's Sound at the n. end of Andros (JS et al., PD et al.).  
Observers: Mike Acosta, Ed & Paula Andrews, Rudy Badia, Alison Ball, Elwood Bracey, Scott Brown, Jolika Buckner, Sandra Buckner (SBu), Eric Carey, David Currie, Paul Dean, Tom & Gale Duch, Ali Farhoumand, Lynn Gape, Erika Gates, Deana Glinton, Bruce Hallett, Lee Hanna, Michelle Hansen, Tony Hepburn, Carol Jones, Everton Joseph, Karl & Noreen Krupica, Keva Hanna Lawrence (KHL), Lionel Levine, Alan Lewis, David Lincoln, Sidney Maddock, Pericles Maillis, Manatee Audubon Society (MAS), Neil McKinney (NMc), Barton Milligan, Jane & Basil Minns, Predensa Moore (PMo), Bahamas National Trust Ornithology Group (OG), Rita & Will Olschewski, Bruce Purdy, MacGregor Robertson, Bernadette Russell, Joe Steensma, Peter Suffredini, Carolyn Wardle, Tony White, Fred & Sharon Zolta

**Recent Papers of Interest:**

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