

NEW BIRD RECORDS FROM ANGUILLA AND ST. MARTIN

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Abstract: Field work on St. Martin during 2004 and 2005 produced four new bird record for the island: Eurasian Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*), Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*), Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*), and Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*). Additional field work on Anguilla during 2003 and 2004 produced three new species of migratory bird for the island: Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*), Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*), and Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*).

Key words: Anguilla, Lesser Antilles, Nearctic-Neotropical migrants, new bird records, Palearctic migrant, St. Martin

Resumen: NUEVOS REGISTROS DE AVES PARA ANGUILLA Y SAN MARTÍN. Durante el invierno de 2004 y 2005, cuatro nuevas especies fueron observadas en la isla de San Martín: *Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*, *Cypseloides niger*, *Wilsonia canadensis*, e *Icterus galbula*. Durante los trabajos de campo en Anguilla en el 2003 y el 2004, se registraron tres nuevas especies migratorias: *Hydroprogne caspia*, *Dendroica magnolia*, y *Dendroica virens*.

Palabras clave: Anguilla, Antillas Menores, migrantes neárticas-neotropicales, migrante paleártico, nuevos registros de aves, San Martín

Résumé : NOUVELLES ESPÈCES D'OISEAUX POUR ANGUILLE ET SAINT-MARTIN. Des prospections de terrain faites à Saint-Martin en 2004 et 2005 ont donné 4 nouvelles observations d'espèces pour l'île : le Courlis corlieu européen (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*), le Martinet sombre (*Cypseloides niger*), la Paruline du Canada (*Wilsonia canadensis*), et l'Oriole de Baltimore (*Icterus galbula*). D'autres prospections à Anguilla en 2003 et 2004 ont fourni 3 espèces migratrices nouvelles pour cette île : la Sterne caspienne (*Hydroprogne caspia*), la Paruline à tête cendrée (*Dendroica magnolia*) et la Paruline à gorge noire (*Dendroica virens*).

Mots-clés : Anguilla, migrants néarctique-néotropicals, migrant paléarctiques, nouvelles observations d'oiseaux, Petites Antilles, Saint-Martin

RECENT FIELD RESEARCH in the northern Lesser Antilles has documented the presence of many Nearctic-Neotropical migrants previously unrecorded in the region (e.g., Brown and Collier 2003, 2004). The increasing frequency of researchers and birders in the region has led to increased awareness of migratory birds overwintering in the Lesser Antilles. Recent bird monitoring efforts on St. Martin and Anguilla have not only documented the status of well known migrants in the region, but the status of little or unknown species as well. Here we report four new species of birds for St. Martin and three new species for Anguilla.

METHODS

We used two methods to record the presence of birds on each island: area searches and mist-netting. All seven species documented herein were observed during area searches, which were done along pre-existing trails within each habitat. Counts took place during stable weather, not during rainy or exceptionally windy conditions. A single observer completed all surveys to reduce observer bias. During data collection, birds flying over the site

were recorded separately from individuals detected in vegetation, as these birds may not have been associated with the habitat surrounding the station. Each area search plot was covered in 30 min during a census; however, we allowed for extra time to complete an area if the bird density was high. In general, observers cover the entire plot in the time allotted. Observers were free to stop the area search to investigate songs, calls, or breeding activity.

OBSERVATIONS

ST. MARTIN

“Eurasian” Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*).—During an area search at Galis Bay on 17 April 2004, we observed this bird foraging along shoreline mudflats. The bird subsequently was observed at this wetland until 28 January 2005. It was identified as the Eurasian subspecies of Whimbrel based on the distinct inverted V-pattern of white feathers on its rump and back.

Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*).—On 19 April 2004, we observed a large flock of Caribbean Martins (*Progne dominicensis*) along with a single

Black Swift, at Mullet Bay. The bird was observed for approximately 20 minutes before we continued the area search. It was identified by its large size, all black underparts, slightly forked tail, and direct flight pattern.

Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*).—An individual was located on the lower slopes of Pic Paradis within secondary dry forest on 10 April 2004. Most likely a northbound migrant, it was seen in a loosely mixed flock of Nearctic-Neotropical migrants including Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos vermivorus*), Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*), American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*), Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), Northern Parula (*Parula americana*), Magnolia Warbler (*D. magnolia*), and Hooded Warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*). The bird was identified as a male based on the presence of bold black streaking on the chest.

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*).—This bird was located within the secondary dry forest on the lower northern slopes of Pic Paradis on 3 January 2004. The bird was identified as a male by its mostly black head and bright orange underparts. We observed this solitary bird for approximately 5 min.

ANGUILLA

Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*).—Two birds of this species were observed roosting among 15 Least Terns (*Sterna albifrons*) in dry Dog Island Pond on 7 May 2004. The island is home to tens of thousands of breeding seabirds including Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*), Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*), Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*), and Sooty Tern (*O. fuscata*). We subsequently searched the immediate area for evidence of nesting, but did not find any. The birds were identified by their large, reddish-orange bills. When approached to search for evidence of nesting, the birds both called a raspy *aaaarrrrgggggr*. They birds were not observed on future weekly visits to this area.

Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*).—A single bird of this species was observed in the Katouche Valley on 5 February 2003. The bird was seen in a loosely mixed flock of Northern Parulas, American Redstarts, Prairie Warblers (*D. discolor*), Yellow-rumped Warblers (*D. coronata*), and Hooded Warblers. The bird was identified based on its distinct black necklace, black chest streaks, and the unique white mid-tail band.

Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*).—An individual was observed on 17

January 2004 in the dry forest habitat of the Katouche Valley. The bird was perched atop a mango tree (*Mangifera indica*) and readily approached us when we made a “pishing” noise. The bird had dull olive auriculars, a bright yellow-green back, streaks down the flanks, and a yellow across the vent. Its sharp *steek* call was heard many times during the observation. It did not associate with any other birds and was not relocated during subsequent area searches.

DISCUSSION

These seven birds are the first records for their species on Anguilla and St. Martin. However, many of these species are expected to occur occasionally on these islands but are easily overlooked. In the case of the “Eurasian” Whimbrel, there are only subtle differences in plumage from the regularly recorded and closely related North American subspecies (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*), most notably the presence or absence of the white plumage on the tail and back. A “Eurasian” Whimbrel was also observed in Guadeloupe during November 2003 (Norton *et al.* 2004).

Black Swift, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Baltimore Oriole are recorded regularly in the Virgin Islands, the nearest islands to the west of both Anguilla and St. Martin, and have been recorded in many of the southern Lesser Antilles (Bond 1987; Raffaele 1989; Raffaele *et al.* 1998). However, the Canada Warbler is truly far from its normal wintering grounds in Central America, and should continue to be considered a rare vagrant in the Lesser Antilles.

Additional surveys in the region will continue to increase our understanding of the status of Nearctic-Neotropical migrants to the Lesser Antilles. Standardized efforts throughout the region will not only help us better understand which species are present but also document their abundance, habitat preferences, and long-term population trends. Such data can be used to inform land management and conservation priorities within the region.

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