

RECENT BIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM DOMINICA, WEST INDIES

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**Abstract.**—We report observations from December 2002 to January 2004 of Greater Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*), American Wigeon (*Anas americana*), and Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*), plus some less rare pelagic species, from Dominica, Lesser Antilles.

**Key words:** *distributional records, Dominica, Lesser Antilles*

**Resumen.**—OBSERVACIONES RECIENTES DE AVES EN DOMINICA, ANTILLAS MENORES. Reportamos las observaciones de *Puffinus gravis*, *Anas americana* y *Vireo flavifrons*, además de algunas otras especies pelágicas menos raras, hechas desde diciembre del 2002 hasta enero del 2004 en Dominica, Antillas Menores.

**Palabras claves:** *Antillas Menores, Dominica, registros de distribución*

DOMINICA LIES NEAR THE MID-POINT (15°20'N, 61°22'W) of the Lesser Antillean arc, a series of islands each stemming from a volcanic center. Dominica rises abruptly to 1,447 m, with near-shore deep water (almost 1000 m within few km) on the northern, western (Caribbean), and southern sides and somewhat shallower Atlantic coast depths to the east. Its 785 km<sup>2</sup> includes dry scrub woodland along the west coast, and upland montane and lush tropical rainforests further inland that give way to elfin forest at Morne Trios Pitons and Morne Diablotin. The montane forests are home to some of the region's unique endemic fauna, including two Amazons—Red-necked (*Amazona arausiaca*) and Imperial (*A. imperialis*). The shoreline lacks extensive beaches or mangrove bays, and supports only a few small wetlands, although heavy annual rains sustain several permanent rivers. This paper records no new species of birds from Dominica, but provides details on several seen only infrequently, including seabirds recorded a few km west of the island during whale-watch trips.

OBSERVATIONS

**Greater Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*).**—On 21 June 2003, up to five were photographed at sea with Brown (*Sula leucogaster*) and Red-footed (*S. sula*) boobies feeding over schools of fish being hunted by dolphins (NJL). Several photos were submitted to the voucher section of VIREO (VIREO ref. no. V06/54/003-005; Fig. 1). Both Evans (1990 and Raffaele *et al.* (1998) consider Greater Shearwater

'very rare or a vagrant' to Dominica, yet recent data from nearby Guadeloupe (Levesque and Yésou 2005) indicate that it is most likely an annual northbound migrant in June and July, with an estimated 14,000 passing there annually. It is thus equally likely in Dominican waters, even if still essentially undetected.

**American Wigeon (*Anas americana*).**—From 7–21 December 2002, a male and a female were found feeding and resting on the Blenheim River estuary, the male remaining until 4 Feb 2003 (NJL, BJB). Both observers had previous experience with the species in life. While Raffaele *et al.* (1998) record it as 'rare,' Evans (1990), who has worked extensively on Dominica, lists it as 'unknown.' In 10 yr of active fieldwork, BJB has seen no others, so the species seems at best to be very rare on Dominica

**Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*).**—One was studied closely and digitally photographed through a 30× telescope at Savane Paille, 22 April 2003 (NJL, MH); two photos have been submitted to the voucher section of VIREO (ref. no. V06/54/001-002; Fig. 2). NJL has previously observed this species in the USA. The only other known Dominica record was one caught at 'Beausou Jour' on 30 September 1904 (Verrill 1905).

**Seabirds.**—A recent paper by Keith and Keith (2003) calls for more pelagic observations from the Caribbean. In response, we report the following observations, all from a whale watch boat and all by NJL except as noted. On 25 January 2003, a Red-footed Booby was in the bay south of Roseau and a



Fig. 1. Greater Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*) west of Dominica, 21 June 2003. Photo by Niels J. Larsen.



Fig. 2. Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) at Savane Paille, Dominica, 22 April 2003. Photo by Niels J. Larsen.

Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) was about 1 km from the beach. On 20 April 2003, a Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*) was seen from shore near Douglas Point. During the early mornings of 23-30 April 2003, seabirds seen from shore at Savane Paille included: ten Bridled Terns (*Sterna anaethetus*) on 24 April (MH); 24 tropicbirds of which only two were identified as Red-billed Tropicbirds (*Phaethon aethereus*; MH), and although White-tailed *P. lepturus* breeds on Dominica, none were seen with certainty from Savane Paille during 2 yr NJL lived there; five Brown and 14 Red-footed boobies on 24 April (MH); and two Pomarine Jaegers on 30 April 2003 (MH). On 8 June 2003, seven jaegers

(probably Pomarines; plumage characters could not be seen due to distance and poor light) were seen flying south from the harbor in Roseau in mid- to late afternoon. On 21 June 2003, during the same whale watch where the shearwaters described above were observed, one Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*), minima of 15 Brown and 10 Red-footed Boobies, and three probable Pomarine Jaegers were seen. On 13 September 2003, one adult Brown Booby, one Bridled Tern, and one Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) were observed during a whale watch. On 10 January 2004, one Brown Booby was in the bay south of Roseau. On 31 May 2003, minima of 30 Brown Noddies and 25 Roseate Terns (*S. dougallii*) were fishing at Douglas Bay; most of the Roseate Terns continued to frequent the area through June (not checked during July), but Brown Noddy numbers tapered off during the first few days of June. Except for the jaegers, all of these seabirds breed widely in the Lesser Antilles and so are likely to turn up almost anywhere, at any time.

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