

CARIBBEAN MARTINS (*PROGNE DOMINICENSIS*) OVERWINTER AT A ROOST IN BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

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Abstract.—Caribbean Martin (*Progne dominicensis*) is a regular summer breeding resident and passage migrant in both spring and fall on Barbados. Our observations over almost 10 years before the winter of 2000–2001 show that this species becomes uncommon in October, may be rarely seen in November (every other year on average), and has been recorded three times in December and twice in January. In this note, we report the presence of a small roost of this species on the island throughout the winter of 2000–2001, which is the first known occurrence of overwintering on any West Indian island.

Resumen.—LA GOLONDRINA DE IGLESIAS (*PROGNE DOMINICENSIS*) INVERNANDO EN BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS. La Golondrina de Iglesias (*Progne dominicensis*) es un residente nidificante en el verano y un migrador de paso durante la primavera y el otoño en Barbados. Nuestras observaciones durante casi 10 años antes del invierno de 2000–2001 demuestran que esta especie se torna poco común en octubre, es vista raramente en noviembre (cada dos años en promedio) y ha sido registrada tres veces en diciembre y dos veces en enero. En esta nota, se relata la presencia de un pequeño grupo de esta especie en la isla durante el invierno de 2000–2001, la cual es la primera cita de invernada en cualquiera de las Indias Occidentales.

Key words: Barbados, Caribbean Martin, distribution, Lesser Antilles, *Progne dominicensis*, record, roost, winter

CARIBBEAN MARTIN (*PROGNE DOMINICENSIS*) is a regular summer breeding resident and passage migrant in both spring and fall on Barbados. Our observations over almost 10 years before the winter of 2000–2001 show that this species becomes uncommon in October, may be seen rarely in November (every other year on average) and has been recorded three times in December and twice in January. In this note, we report the presence of a small roost of this species on the island throughout the winter of 2000–2001, which is the first known occurrence of overwintering on any West Indian island.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Caribbean Martin breeds in small numbers on Barbados, principally along coastal cliffs in the southeast and north of the island and in Bridgetown. A small breeding colony has existed in the latter location for many years, at least since the late 1950s when breeding was first documented (M. B. Hutt, unpubl.). The presence in Bridgetown of a Caribbean Martin roost, however, was first detected under the eaves of a building directly adjacent to the waterfront on Wharf Road by the authors during the summer months in the early 1990s. Informal checks of the roost were made during the summer months and it was estimated that each year around 200 birds were present during this period. The roost site was not monitored during the winter months, when the birds presumably migrated.

Massiah conducted the first census of the roost in late summer of 2000 and counted 459 birds, a much higher number than prior informal estimates. On 5 November 2000, Massiah made a second census and tallied 156 individuals, an amazing total at a time of year when expectations would have been to see few, if any, birds. Subsequent censuses were conducted on 19 November, 3 and 11 December 2000, and 1 January 2001, when 59, 45, 29, and 22 individuals were counted, respectively. During January 2001, the roost was checked two or three times per week and the estimated number (as opposed to an accurate count) of Caribbean Martins present ranged between 15 and 20 individuals. During further checks of the roost on 9 and 25 February and 2 and 26 March 2001, we estimated 30, 30, 40, and 80 individuals present, respectively. All surveys except one were conducted well after sunset, when all birds would have returned to the roost.

The surveys showed conclusively that Caribbean Martins were present at the roost throughout the 2000–2001 winter period, reaching a minimum of 15 individuals estimated in January. This is the first known instance of overwintering of this species on Barbados or any West Indian island and is apparently the only known location where Caribbean Martin has wintered. This species' winter range is unknown but is thought to be in South America (American Ornithologists' Union 1998, Murphy and Hayes 2001). We have no observations of Caribbean Martins dur-

ing the 2000–2001 winter period away from the roost, which is not surprising given that the small numbers involved translates into roughly 0.12 birds per square mile or alternatively one bird for every 8 square miles. An observation of the roost around sunset showed that the Caribbean Martins approached silently from the south or southwest, generally alone but occasionally in pairs, with the first birds roosting about 10 min before sunset and the last birds about 5 min after sunset. A high proportion (estimated at two-thirds) of the overwintering birds appeared to be juveniles or females.

In summary, we document the first overwintering of Caribbean Martins on Barbados and encourage observers in other south Caribbean islands to check known roost sites, including other Martin species, for possible wintering populations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LITERATURE CITED

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Hirundo americana, Wils. Golondrina Bifurcada [Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*] and *Hirundo bicolor*, Vieill. Golondrina Verdosa [Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*] - Plate VI in Lembeye, J. (1850) *Aves de la isla de Cuba*.