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THE BREEDING OF WILSON'S (*CHARADRIUS WILSONIA*) AND COLLARED (*CHARADRIUS COLLARIS*) PLOVERS IN THE SOUTHERN LESSER ANTILLES

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IN MAY–JUNE 1998, we visited the nations of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada, in the southern Lesser Antilles. Two main islands, St. Vincent and Grenada, each about 350 sq. km, and about 75 km apart, span several smaller islands, islets, and rocks, collectively called the Grenadines. These are mostly incorporated into St. Vincent, but some are part of Grenada.

On 26 May 1998, we observed pairs of Wilson's Plovers (*Charadrius wilsonia*) of the largely South American race *cinnamominus* at both Ashton Harbour and Belmont Salt Pond, Union Island, the southernmost major island in the nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Ashton Harbour pair engaged in a distraction display suggesting that a nest or young was nearby, but we did not wish to pursue them to discover the basis for their behavior. Later that day we found another pair near Harvey Vale, on the island of Carriacou, the northernmost major island in the nation of Grenada, at a salt pond formed by a former estuary. Those, too, we did not pursue. On 27 May, at a salt pond on the bay of the Mt. Harman Estate on Grenada, we found three pairs of *C. w. cinnamominus*, also behaving as if they were nesting. Here we did locate one pair's nest, on a small mound near the edge of the then-dry pond. The nest contained three eggs similar in appearance to the one shown in Harrison (1978), but more greenish in color and perhaps longer oval in shape. One in the set measured 35.3 x 25.3 mm.

All of these Wilson's Plovers had striking features compared to North American populations, in-

cluding a rather bright rusty cap with a prominent black fore-bar on some individuals, some rusty tone to the upper back below the complete white neck collar, and a rusty tone to some individuals' breastbands. The rustiness of these birds initially led us to wonder whether these were Collared Plovers (*Charadrius collaris*), the only member of the genus widely reported from the southern Lesser Antilles (Bond 1985). The size, stout bill shape, and complete white neck collar, on the other hand, suggested *C. wilsonia*. Upon our return, we learned of the distinctiveness of *C. w. cinnamominus* (Ridgway 1919, where named the "Cinnamomeous Plover"). It is long-known to breed in the Grenadines and also has been collected on Grenada (Bond 1936, 1940; Schwartz and Klinikowski 1963; not mentioned by Bond 1985). The proven breeding in the Grenadines (on Mustique) is from specimens and notes from the collection of G. H. Thayer, now housed at the American Museum of Natural History (A. Andors, *in litt.*), and the collection of S. T. Danforth, now housed at the United States National Museum (J. Dean, *in litt.*). Specimens from Grenada are from the collection of Albert Schwartz, now housed at the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science (V. Remsen and S. Cardiff, *in litt.*).

Our investigations failed to uncover any verifiable basis for attributing the Collared Plover to the region as anything other than an occasional non-breeding visitor, as suggested by American Ornithologists' Union (1998), *contra* Bond (1985) and Raffaele *et al.* (1998). D. W. Smith secured a Col-

lared Plover specimen on Grenada in late July, 1891, now in the British Museum (R. Prÿs-Jones, *in litt.*). Thayer secured three specimens on Mustique in September 1925 (*vide* A. Andors), and a few other sightings have been published (*e.g.*, M. Hutt *in* Keith 1997), mostly without details. Most records and reports are from summer and autumn, consistent with post-breeding dispersal. At least one Collared Plover was credibly described from St. Martin in spring 1973 (A. Hoogerwerf *in* Voous 1983), but we could locate no published or other direct evidence that the Collared Plover has ever bred in the Lesser Antilles or elsewhere in the West Indies (*sensu* Bond 1936).

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