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BIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM A VISIT TO ANGUILLA, LESSER ANTILLES, 28 DECEMBER 1995 TO 4 JANUARY 1996

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Abstract.—I summarize observations of birds made on Anguilla from 28 December 1995 to 4 January 1996. I observed a total of 44 species and present these in the context of their significance to the island's avifauna and to the Lesser Antilles in general. Several species I observed are rare or accidental for the region, and short descriptions are provided for these species.

I MADE OBSERVATIONS ON THE BIRDS of Anguilla, northwestern—most of the Leeward Island Group in the Lesser Antilles, from 28 December 1995 to 4 January 1996. Anguilla is a small elongate island about 19 km long by 6.5 km wide. Its surface is comprised almost entirely of aeolian limestone, with occasional pockets of red soil which locals use for agriculture (Peters 1927). Vegetation on the inland areas of the island is dominated by *Acacia*, *Croton*, and *Fourcroya*, along with several cacti, including *Opuntia*, *Cereus*, and *Melocactus*. The northeastern end of the island, and salt ponds along the southern shore are surrounded by mangroves (*Avicennia germinans*), and beach situations are dominated by seagrass (*Coccoloba uvifera*).

I observed birds primarily at several salt- and fresh-water ponds around the island, as follows:

28 December 1995.—Late afternoon ferry crossing from St. Martin to Blowing Point Harbor, Anguilla, and bus ride to Island Harbor.

29 December.—Island Harbor and Shoal Bay beach.

30 December.—Long Salt Pond and nearby scrub habitats, 09:00–11:00 hr; Junk's Hole Beach, 14:00–15:30 hr.

31 December.—Mangrove scrub around West End Salt Pond and other salt ponds on the western end of the island, including Gulf Pond, Cove Pond, and Mead's Bay Pond; 08:45–12:00 hr.

1 January 1996.—Junk's Hole beach to Grey Pond, on foot; 14:00–17:00 hr.

2 January.—Salt pond east of ferry dock at Blowing Point (hereafter Blowing Point Pond), 11:25–11:40 hr.

3 January.—Boat trip from Island Harbor to Scrub Island (off the northeastern corner of Anguilla), 09:00–13:30 hr; drive around island: Little Bay, 16:00–16:30 hr; Shoal Bay, 15:00–15:20 hr, Road Salt Pond, 15:30–15:45 hr; and East End Pond (the only fresh pond I visited), 17:20–17:30 hr.

4 January.—Blowing Point Pond and surrounding scrub, 10:00–11:00 hr.

SUMMARY OF SIGHTINGS

I observed a total of 44 species on Anguilla. Below, all observations are listed for most species. For the most common species, only a summary of their abundance and preferred habitat is presented. Location names correspond to those listed in the topographical map of Anguilla (Department of Overseas Surveys 1997), with the exceptions of East End Pond (which is the freshwater pond on the west side of East End Village) and Blowing Point Pond (which is just east of the Blowing Point docks). I also include a few comparative observations from St. Martin.

Abbreviations.—BPP = Blowing Point Pond, EEP = East End Pond, GP = Gulf Pond, LSP = Long Salt Pond, MBP = Mead's Bay Pond, RSP = Road Salt Pond, photo = photographed (duplicate photographs are available to interested persons). Dates of observations are enclosed in brackets; e.g., [1/3] = 3 January.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*).—One sighting: one adult GP [12/31].

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*).—Common in small numbers (1–5) in marine habitats around island, especially on the northern side. High count was of 25 resting on the west end of Scrub Island (off northeastern Anguilla) [1/3] (photo).

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*).—Common in small numbers (1–10) in marine habitats around the island.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*).—Common in small numbers in marine habitats around island. High count of 25 over western end of island [12/31] (photo).

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*).—One sighting: one

- immature EEP 1/3, seen earlier in week by island resident. Another at Phillipsburg, St. Martin [1/2].
- GREAT EGRET (*Ardea albus*).—Two sightings: two at BPP [1/2] and one there [1/4].
- SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*).—Two sightings: five at BPP [1/2] and seven there [1/4] (photo).
- LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*).—One sighting: one calico immature at BPP [1/4] (photo).
- TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*).—One sighting: an immature at BPP [1/4] (photo). I was unable to find earlier records of Tricolored Heron for Anguilla.
- CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*).—Fairly common throughout Anguilla, especially as fly-overs or feeding along grassy roadsides, or at the Wall Blake Airport. High count 10 at Wall Blake Airport [1/3].
- WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL (*Anas bahamensis*).—Four sightings: 13 at MBP [12/31] (photo), eight at Grey Pond [1/1] (photo), three at RSP, and four at EEP [1/3]. Call, heard several times at Grey Pond, was like that of Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), but higher pitched. Most other observers (e.g., Peters 1927; Anguilla National Trust, in press) have noted the pintail in Anguilla, although Keith and Loftin (1992) considered this species accidental on the Leeward Islands. Wauer (1988) reported the pintail nesting in the island.
- BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*).—One sighting: two female-plumaged birds seen resting at the far edge of East End Pond with four White-cheeked Pintail. The bill was dark and broader and more spatulate than in Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*), but not so spatulate as that of a Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*). The pale face was lightly streaked with a dark cap and a dark eyeline. Two pale loreal spots were evident. General coloration was gray with dark spotting on the flanks, and dark on the back with paler edging, not the brighter tones expected on a Cinnamon Teal. I feel confident that Cinnamon Teal was eliminated by virtue of size, color, and bill shape, but the two species can be difficult to separate without ideal views. Keith and Loftin (1992) considered this species as accidental in the Leeward Island Group. Blue-winged Teal have been reported for Badcox Pond, Caul's Pond, and East End Pond (Anguilla National Trust, in press).
- AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*).—Three sightings: one female at LSP [12/30], and single females on telephone wires near Bud Cox Pond and just west of Lower South Hill [12/31]. The first sighting was of a brightly colored individual, probably of the race *caribaeorum*, though the others were not seen as well. Another was photographed some months earlier by Peter Schnabel at his Captain's Ridge residence just west of Island Harbor.
- MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*).—One sighting: one male lit briefly on a branch at GP [12/31]; probably of the race *columbarius*, by virtue of the medium blue-gray back (photo). Peters (1927) reported the only other record for Anguilla.
- COMMON MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*).—One sighting: five adults and 25 immatures feeding in vegetation around EEP [1/3].
- BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*).—Three sightings: 35 at LSP [12/30], 1 at RSP [1/3], and 7 at BPP [1/4].
- SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*).—One sighting: 45 at LSP [12/30].
- KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*).—Four records: one heard at night over Island Harbor [12/30], three heard at eastern end of Grey Pond [1/1], one at RSP [1/3], and 15 at EEP [1/3].
- AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*).—One sighting: one on limestone beach of Long Pond Bay, at east end of LSP, [12/30]. I observed it through binoculars for 2 min at 40 m. About the size of a Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*), the thick, long, red bill, yellow eye, white breast and belly, black hood, dark brown mantle, and white patch visible in the folded wing made for an easy identification. It did not fly or call. Ashcroft (1965) found three oystercatchers on Anguilla, whereas Wauer (1988) reported one along the Rocky Hills Bay. The Anguilla National Trust (in press) notes rare reports from West Cove Bay Pond. Keith and Loftin (1992) considered the oystercatcher an accidental in the Leeward Islands.
- BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*).—Three sightings: four at GP [12/31] (photo), 40 at BPP [1/2], and 65 there [1/4] (photo).
- GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringamelanoleuca*).—Six sightings: two at LSP [12/30], five at GP [12/31], three at BPP [1/2], five at RSP [1/3], two at EEP [1/3], and 10 at BPP [1/4]. Peters (1927) also recorded this species in Anguilla.
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*).—Eight sightings: 10 at LSP [12/20], three at small pond at Junk's Hole Beach [12/30], 45 at GP [12/31], one heard at Grey Pond [1/1], 25 at BPP [1/2], 25 at RSP [1/3], 15 at EEP [1/3], and 100 at BPP [1/4].
- WILLET (*Cataprophorus semipalmatus*).—Two sightings of what was probably the same individual: one at BPP [1/2] and [1/4] (photo). I believe this individual to be of the eastern race *semipalmatus*, because of the wing pattern and bill length.
- SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularia*).—Four sightings: three at LSP [12/30], one at BPP [1/2 and 1/4], and one at EEP [1/3].
- WHIMBREL.—Two sightings: one at BPP [1/2]; joined by a second there [1/4] (photo).
- RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*).—Seven sightings: 20 at LSP [12/30], 15 at GP [12/31] (photo), five at MBP [12/31], five on beach at Island Harbor [1/3], 10 at RSP [1/3], 20 at BPP [1/2 and 1/4].
- SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*).—Two sightings: 10 at LSP [12/30] and two at RSP [1/3].
- SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*).—Three sightings: three at LSP [12/30], 20 at RSP [1/3], and one at BPP [1/

- 4]. Those on 30 December were identified by call and bill shape, whereas those thereafter were identified only by bill shape (though on 3 January Western Sandpipers [*Calidris mauri*] were available for direct comparison).
- WESTERN SANDPIPER.—Two sightings: 10 at LSP [12/30] and 20 at RSP [1/3]. Identified by both bill shape and call (in direct comparison with Semipalmated Sandpipers on both dates).
- LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minuta*).—Two sightings: five at LSP [12/30] and 15 at RSP [1/3].
- STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*).—Six sightings: 25 at LSP [12/30], one with three Lesser Yellowlegs at a small pond near Junk's Hole Beach [12/30], 20 at GP [12/31] (photo), 20 at RSP [1/3], 50 at BPP [1/2], and 100 there [1/4]. I was unable to find earlier records of Stilt Sandpiper for Anguilla.
- COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*).—One sighting: One bird flushed, calling as it flew, from sand dunes on the ocean side of Grey Pond. Only one other record exists for Anguilla (Anguilla National Trust, in press).
- ROYAL TERN (*Sterna maxima*).—Common in small numbers (1–8) in marine habitats around the island. Despite much searching, no other tern species were seen.
- ROCK DOVE (*Columba livia*).—Although common on St. Martin, I made only two Anguilla sightings: two at Island Harbor [1/3], with possibly one of the same individuals there the next day. This introduced dove has only recently been reported (Anguilla National Trust, in press).
- ZENAIDA DOVE (*Zenaida aurita*).—Common throughout the island in all habitats (photo).
- COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*).—Common in scrubby habitats around island, especially dune areas with seagrape. Ten seen at Junk's Hole [1/1] (photo) were a typical count for this habitat.
- MANGROVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus minor*).—Two records: one seen in mangrove scrub at west end of island [12/31] and a window-killed bird found just east of Island Harbor [12/30].
- BELTED KINGFISHER (*Ceryle alcyon*).—Two sightings: one at LSP [12/30] and one at Cove Pond, near Cap Jaluca [12/31]. Sex was not determined on either bird.
- CARIBBEAN ELAENIA (*Elaenia martinica*).—Fairly common in tall scrub habitats of island. More often heard than seen, once I learned their vocalizations (photo).
- GRAY KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus dominicensis*).—One sighting: group of five, possibly a family group, seen and heard while perched in treetops just east of The Valley, on the edge of an open cattle pasture [1/3].
- BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*).—One sighting: six perched on telephone wire over grassy field between Lower South Hill and West End Village [12/31].
- PEARLY-EYED THRASHER (*Margarops fuscatus*).—Common throughout the island in all habitats. One very tame individual foraged for table scraps in an open-air restaurant at Shoal Bay Beach (photo).

- YELLOW WARBLER (*Dendroica petechia*).—One sighting: Adult male sang and then appeared with a female or immature among mangroves at BPP [1/4]. Male was quite brightly colored and likely of the race *bartholemica*.
- BANANAQUIT (*Coereba flaveola*).—Abundant in all scrubby habitats of island (photo).

DISCUSSION

There are few published accounts dealing with the birds of Anguilla and, consequently, it was difficult for me to ascertain the significance of my sightings. Although Keith and Loftin (1992) provide a comprehensive summary of the birds of the Leeward Islands north of the Guadeloupe Passage, they do not account for differences in distribution among islands. Their list might be seen as a good general guide, but I turned elsewhere to determine the importance of my sightings to Anguilla. Probably the first records of Anguilla's birdlife were made by Winch, who collected a total of 23 species from April–July 1890 (Cory 1891a) and May 1891 (Cory 1891b). Later, Peters (1927) reported on collections and observations of 44 species made from 1–22 February 1922.

Most authors (Peters 1927, Cory 1891a, Cory 1891b, Ashcroft 1965, Wauer 1988) considered the Antillean Crested Hummingbird (*Ornithorhynchus cristatus*), Green-throated Carib (*Eulampis holosericeus*), Lesser Antillean Bullfinch (*Loxigilla noctis*), and Black-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris bicolor*) common to abundant, but I failed to find these four species. Although my efforts were concentrated on waterbirds, I still expected to encounter these species given the abundance with which they were found by earlier workers. I made a special effort to find hummingbirds, and carefully examined every likely flower patch. Possibly some or all of these native landbirds were adversely affected by Hurricane Luis, which struck the island on 4 September 1995.

Peters (1927) visited Anguilla at about the same time of the year (February) as my December–January observations. Whereas I found no North American migrant landbirds, it is notable that Peters found several species of wintering wood-warblers, including American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*), Northern Waterthrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*), Ovenbird (*S. aurocapillus*), Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*), and Northern Parula (*Parula americana*). Peters' list did not include Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Cattle Egret (a recent colonizer), Blue-winged Teal, American Oystercatcher, Sanderling, Western Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Rock Dove (another recent colonizer?), Mangrove Cuckoo, and Barn Swallow, which I observed, nor such species as Brown Booby, Royal Tern, Snowy Egret, and Stilt Sandpiper, which I found to be common. Also, there are differences in species abundance between Peters' and my observations. Whereas I found Pearly-eyed Thrashers and Zenaida Doves common throughout Anguilla, Peters (1927) listed them as "uncommon" and "less common than the ubiquitous Ground Dove," respectively. He found Gray Kingbird to be common, but I

observed only one small group. These differences may have been due to surveying in different terrestrial habitats. Unfortunately, Peters gave little description of where he visited on the island, although he mentioned visiting Caul's Pond, where he found most shorebirds. I did not visit Caul's Pond.

I would like to note that Long Salt Pond appears to have been little birded, and my observations there evidence that it is an excellent location and not to be ignored by visiting birders in the future.

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INDIRECT EVIDENCE ON PARASITISM OF THE LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH BY THE SHINY COWBIRD

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THE LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla noctis*) has only been documented once as a host for the Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*), a widespread brood parasite in the Caribbean (Wiley 1988, Post et al. 1990, Lowther and Post, in press). A clutch of three eggs of the host and one egg of the Shiny Cowbird was collected in Christ Church parish, Barbados, on 23 August 1937 (Friedmann 1943). Sixty years later, this note again provides evidence from Barbados that the Lesser Antillean Bullfinch is occasionally parasitized by the Shiny Cowbird.

I watched a pair of Lesser Antillean Bullfinches feed one fledgling Shiny Cowbird many times each day from 27 September to 4 October 1997 at Harrison's Point, St. Lucy parish (13°19'N lat., 59°39'W long.), at the northwestern tip of Barbados. The vegetative cover is highly disturbed coastal scrub, thickets, and woodlots, which have succeeded abandoned sugar cane plantations.

Most of the food that was brought to the young cowbird was regurgitated, and difficult to identify, but bullfinches caught in mist-nets were feeding predominantly on the seeds

and pulp of dogwood (*Capparis flexuosa*). I determined that the bullfinch pair fed the fledgling this food at least twice. The cowbird also fed on its own on seed heads of guinea (*Panicum maximum*) and sour (*Digitaria insularis*) grasses.

The bullfinches also fed one of its own fledglings from 27 September to about 10 October. The fledgling cowbird appeared to become independent after 4 October, as I saw it daily through 22 October, during which time it rarely associated with the bullfinches. Although I have no direct evidence that a cowbird laid its egg in the bullfinch nest, these observations strongly suggest that the Lesser Antillean Bullfinch served as a host for the Shiny Cowbird. The Lesser Antillean Bullfinch is an acceptor of foreign eggs (Friedmann 1943, Post et al. 1990). The bullfinch may not be ultimately suitable as a host, however, because it feeds its young fruit. Despite this inappropriate diet, the pair of Lesser Antillean Bullfinches apparently raised one Shiny Cowbird.

Most Lesser Antillean Bullfinches at Harrison's Point are heavily molting during late summer and early autumn, based on captures of numerous birds in mist-nets (McNair, unpubl.).