



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Bahamas: Birds & Butterflies 2013**

Mar 12, 2013 to Mar 17, 2013  
Jesse Fagan

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*Birding in the Bahamas: it's tough work, but somebody's gotta do it! (Photo by guide Jesse Fagan)*

One of my favorite tours combining warm weather, pink sand beaches, plenty of delicious seafood (conch this, conch that), and, of course, a very unique set of birds. We did exceptionally well this year, seeing four Bahamian endemics, one a recent split (Bahama Warbler), and count 'em, EIGHT Kirtland's Warblers. We had some highlights including those Kirtland's, but I don't think we will soon forget the Great Lizard-Cuckoos hunting in the tall coppice, parrots that we could nearly reach out and touch, and that small plane ride to Eleuthera!

It was a very enjoyable group, as well. Thanks for a lovely time on the islands. I hope to see you all again real soon.

--Jesse aka Motmot (from Lima, Peru)

---

**KEYS FOR THIS LIST**

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

---

**BIRDS**

*Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Three were on the large lake south of Governor's Harbor.

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – One around the boats at Marsh Harbour and several on the large lake south of Governor's Harbour (Eleuthera).

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – One in flight south of Governor's Harbour on Eleuthera.

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – One along the edge of the large lake south of Governor's Harbour on Eleuthera.

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*) – One on Abaco Island was our only one of the trip.

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*) – One on Eleuthera Island was also our only one of the trip.

*Cathartidae (New World Vultures)*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – Fairly common on Abaco Island. Not seen on Eleuthera.

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Just a single bird on Abaco Island.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** (*Elanoides forficatus*) – A very good bird for the Bahamas. We saw one soaring south of Marsh Harbour on Abaco Island. Eastern populations appear to cross the Gulf of Mexico via Cuba and then Florida, but an individual over the Bahamas is a bit off course.

**RED-TAILED HAWK (SOLITUDINIS)** (*Buteo jamaicensis solitudinis*) – Fairly common on Abaco Island where resident.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*) – One was along the edge of a small freshwater pond south of Governor's Harbour.

Aramidae (Limpkin)

**LIMPKIN** (*Aramus guarauna*) – One on Abaco Island and another heard on Eleuthera.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Singles around Governor's Harbour on Eleuthera.

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – On Abaco and Eleuthera islands.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Seen in good numbers on both islands.

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – Four were with some turnstones near Sandy Point on Abaco Island.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Common on both islands. Most had already molted into an adult breeding plumage.

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – Several on Eleuthera Island.

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Seen on both islands. More memorable sitting at the end of the long pier at Cherokee Sound.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Both islands.

**WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Fairly common near the hotel on Abaco Island, but also seen again on Eleuthera.

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Common on both islands. The Bahamas are where this species was introduced into the New World and has now expanded to cover most of the U.S.

**ZENAIDA DOVE** (*Zenaida aurita*) – Rare in the northern Bahamas. We had one nicely in the pine forest on Abaco, and yet another on Eleuthera.

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – One on Eleuthera.

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina passerina*) – Fairly common on both islands.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**MANGROVE CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus minor*) – One seen very well on Eleuthera.

**GREAT LIZARD-CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus merlini*) – Such a great species. The largest of the lizard-cuckoos, a group of birds found only in the Greater Antilles. We saw them well in the tall coppice near our hotel on Eleuthera Island.

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*) – Common on both islands.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

**BAHAMA WOODSTAR** (*Calliphlox evelynae*) – Just glimpsed on Abaco where they were surprisingly absent, however, we caught up with several nice males on Eleuthera. [E]

**CUBAN EMERALD** (*Chlorostilbon ricordii*) – Fairly common in the pine forest of Abaco, but also around the hotel grounds.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – Singles on both islands.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**WEST INDIAN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes superciliosus*) – One on Abaco Island.

**YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – One on Eleuthera was a nice surprise.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER (EASTERN)** (*Picoides villosus piger*) – This subspecies was seen well in the pine forests of Abaco where it is resident.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**AMERICAN KESTREL (CUBAN)** (*Falco sparverius sparveroides*) – This paler Caribbean subspecies was seen quite a lot on Abaco Island.

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – Singles on both islands including one perched on a powerline at Bahama Palm Shores. This is a common wintering falcon in the Greater Antilles.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – One on Abaco Island over Bahama Palm Shores was a nice surprise.

Psittacidae (Parrots)

**CUBAN PARROT (BAHAMAS)** (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*) – Our first was in the pine forest south of Marsh Harbour, but we had them even better at the Gumbo Limbo trees at Bahama Palm Shores.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

**CUBAN PEWEE** (*Contopus caribaeus*) – Fairly common in the pine forests south of Marsh Harbour. At times it was hard to appreciate the crescent eye, as this species was formerly known as Crescent-eyed Pewee.

**LA SAGRA'S FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus sagrae*) – Seen on both islands where fairly common.

**LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (LOGGERHEAD)** (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus bahamensis*) – This subspecies has been considered for splitting from other Caribbean populations. It was seen a few times on Abaco. They are paler overall on the upperparts along with having rufous tinged edging to

uppertail coverts (absent in other populations).

Vireonidae (Vireos)

**THICK-BILLED VIREO (THICK-BILLED)** (*Vireo crassirostris crassirostris*) – Common on both islands.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**BAHAMA SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta cyaneoviridis*) – I think the cooler temps and rain caused this endemic to be a bit scarce this trip. We did find them on two different days on Abaco, but not numerous as in years past. [E]

Poliophtidae (Gnatcatchers)

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – A few on Abaco Island.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**RED-LEGGED THRUSH (WESTERN)** (*Turdus plumbeus plumbeus*) – This the nominate form was seen well on Abaco Island; especially likes to be around gardens and ornamentals.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**GRAY CATBIRD** (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – A few on Eleuthera Island.

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Common on both islands.

**BAHAMA MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus gundlachi*) – This species prefers denser forest and is less common than the previous species. Seen on both islands, however, but not many.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – One on Eleuthera in the mangrove swamp at Levy's Preserve.

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – Singles on both islands.

**BAHAMA YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis rostrata*) – Fairly common in the thick grassy understory of the pine forest and coppice on Abaco Island. [E]

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – A couple of wintering birds also seen on Abaco Island.

**AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Both islands.

**KIRTLAND'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) – A target bird for us (and the trip). We saw 8 different individuals at several spots south of Governor's Harbour on Eleuthera Island. Awesome to find this bird on its wintering grounds, something that was virtually unheard of 15 years ago.

**CAPE MAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga tigrina*) – A couple of nice males on both islands.

**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – A few here and there on both islands.

**BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – One on Eleuthera Island.

**PALM WARBLER** (*Setophaga palmarum*) – Common on both islands. Most of what we saw appeared to be the "western" Palm Warblers which are the subspecies, palmarum. They are paler below (less yellow) than the eastern population, hypochrysea.

**OLIVE-CAPED WARBLER** (*Setophaga pityophila*) – This species is only found on Cuba and a few pine forests in the Bahamas. We saw our first near the airport on Abaco Island.

**PINE WARBLER** (*Setophaga pinus achrustera*)

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE)** (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – Common as a wintering bird on both islands.

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (YELLOW-LORED)** (*Setophaga dominica dominica*) – One was at the mulberry tree at our hotel on Eleuthera Island. This gave us a great comparison with the endemic birds we had seen on Abaco. Very different!

**BAHAMA WARBLER** (*Setophaga flavescens*) – A recent split from Yellow-throated Warbler, but the differences are striking and the recent changes justified. They look and sound different, along with being isolated on just a few islands. [E]

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – Common as a wintering warbler on both islands.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

**BANANAQUIT (BAHAMAS)** (*Coereba flaveola bahamensis*) – This subspecies would be a likely candidate for a split. It is the most distinctive of the Bananaquit populations. It looks and sounds really different.

**BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris bicolor*) – Common on both islands.

**GREATER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH** (*Loxigilla violacea*) – Seen well on both islands.

**WESTERN SPINDALIS (NORTHERN BAHAMAS)** (*Spindalis zena townsendi*) – A sharp looking species that is thankfully quite common on both islands. This is a Caribbean "tanager."

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Fairly common on Abaco Island where resident.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Yep, on both islands.

---

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

---

Totals for the tour: 70 bird taxa and 0 mammal taxa