



Field Guides Tour Report

**Bahamas: Abaco, Eleuthera, and the Kirtland's Warbler 2014**

Mar 11, 2014 to Mar 16, 2014

Jesse Fagan

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

This short tour was again very successful. We saw all the potential Bahamian endemics well, plus another fifteen or so regional (i.e. Caribbean) endemics, as well as the very special Kirtland's Warbler (four individuals this year!). Group highlights included the endemic Bahama Woodstar, a bird we struggled to see on Abaco but found to be very obliging on Eleuthera; the colorful Cuban (Rose-throated) Parrots which were happily feeding on the fruiting gumbo limbo trees; and finding new wintering territories for the Kirtland's Warbler (a hit!). But the Great Lizard-Cuckoo cackling away in the tall coppice was the big winner -- he is just too awesome!

Thanks to being a fun group, and I hope to see you all again on another memorable adventure! Bird On.

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**

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

**WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon lepturus*) –

There was one seen on the chartered flight from Abaco to Eleuthera. Really, just a white speck over the water below us! They hadn't yet returned to Little Harbour on Abaco.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*) –

A few around Marsh Harbour.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Good numbers on Abaco. Just a couple on Eleuthera.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Just one juvenile on Abaco.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – Singles on Abaco.

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – Singles on Abaco and Eleuthera.

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*) – We saw one on Abaco.

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*) – There was one adult at a small freshwater pond near where we saw the Kirtland's.

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – A flock of 20 or so birds were seen on the island of Eleuthera. Surprising, that this species is not all that common on our tour.

**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*) – Heard on Abaco, but seen on Eleuthera.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

**WHITE IBIS** (*Eudocimus albus*) – A good bird for the islands; this species was seen on Abaco.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)



*The fantastic Great Lizard-Cuckoo easily captured bird-of-the-tour honors! (Photo by guide Jesse Fagan)*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – Good numbers on Abaco. We discussed the evolution of this species on the islands. How long has it been here? Is it a recent colonist? They probably do okay with lots of people around, but with only small native mammals to the Bahamas, what would they have survived on historically?

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – One was seen on Eleuthera.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**RED-TAILED HAWK (SOLITUDINIS)** (*Buteo jamaicensis solitudinis*) – The resident subspecies was seen on Abaco in flight or sitting on top of telephone poles. Not found on Eleuthera. Must survive on the few small native mammals (rats and mice).

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – One in the freshwater pond near the Kirtland's spot on Eleuthera.

*Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)*

**AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus*) – At least 20 seen at Sandy Point on Abaco.

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A group of 15 or so near Sandy Point.

**SEMPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Ten individuals were along the beach north of Governor's Harbour.

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Fairly common on both islands.

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – A large group of 75 birds was seen at Sandy Point, Abaco Island.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Common on both islands.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus marinus*) – A surprise (and first for the tour) was a first cycle bird at Governor's Harbour.

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Common on Eleuthera. Less so on Abaco.

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Both islands in cities and town.

**WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Seen on Abaco (where uncommon), but more common on Eleuthera.

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – This is where the US invasion started. Not surprising they are common on both islands.

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina passerina*) – This small columbid is common on both islands in the semi-arid scrub and pine forest.

*Cuculidae (Cuckoos)*

**MANGROVE CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus minor*) – One was seen well in the coppice near Surfer's Manor (Eleuthera).

**GREAT LIZARD-CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus merlini*) – Good looks at a bird in the coppice on Eleuthera Island. Seen or heard a few other times south of Governor's Harbour. This species is only found in eastern Cuba and a few islands in the Bahamas.

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

*Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)*

**BARN OWL** (*Tyto alba*) – One participant saw a flyover while walking back to the hotel after dinner. Abaco Island.

*Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)*

**BAHAMA WOODSTAR** (*Calliphlox evelynae*) – Not seen on Abaco (where a bit tough), we caught up with several individuals at ornamental flowers near the hotel on Eleuthera. Also, seen visiting the feeders at Levy Preserve. [E]

**CUBAN EMERALD** (*Chlorostilbon ricordii*) – Fairly common on Abaco. Seen in a variety of habitats.

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**WEST INDIAN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes supercilialis*) – Good to catch up with this species near our hotel on Abaco Island.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER (EASTERN)** (*Picoides villosus piger*) – Seen well in the pine forest on Abaco Island.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL (CUBAN)** (*Falco sparverius sparveroides*) – This striking subspecies (males are clean white below) was seen well on Abaco Island.

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – A quick flyover while birding the coppice on Eleuthera. This species is a fairly common wintering raptor in the Bahamas.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – One male was seen on Abaco Island.

*Psittacidae (Parrots)*

**CUBAN PARROT (BAHAMAS)** (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*) – We lucked out this year with very close studies at Bahama Palms Shore, but seen also in the native pine forest. Only on Abaco Island where it is unique among parrots in nesting within limestone cavities.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**CUBAN PEWEE** (*Contopus caribaeus*) – Fairly common on Abaco Island.

**LA SAGRA'S FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus sagrae*) – Seen well on both islands, though slightly easier to see on Eleuthera Island.

**LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (LOGGERHEAD)** (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus bahamensis*) – This distinctive subspecies (very similar looking to Gray Kingbird) was seen well on both islands. The rusty tipped uppertail coverts are unique to this subspecies.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

**THICK-BILLED VIREO (THICK-BILLED)** (*Vireo crassirostris crassirostris*) – Very common (at least by voice) on both islands.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**BAHAMA SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta cyaneoviridis*) – Good numbers were seen on Abaco Island at least around the pine forest and a few at Sandy Point. [E]

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Singles on Abaco.

Poliophtidae (Gnatcatchers)

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – A few breeding males were starting to sing on Abaco Island.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**RED-LEGGED THRUSH (WESTERN)** (*Turdus plumbeus plumbeus*) – This striking subspecies was seen well near the hotel on Abaco Island.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**GRAY CATBIRD** (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Very common on both islands.

**BAHAMA MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus gundlachii*) – Not many, as they require better habitat than the next species, but a few seen on both islands.

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

Sturnidae (Starlings)

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – A single bird at Cherokee Sound.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – One on Eleuthera Island.

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – A few on Abaco Island.

**BAHAMA YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis rostrata*) – Good numbers in the pine forest south of Marsh Harbour. This endemic is more yellow below and around the black mask in comparison to the migrant (*G. trichas*); call is also different. [E]

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – A few seen on Abaco Island. Migrants/winter visitors are often found in gardens and in coastal marshes.

**AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Fairly common on both islands.

**KIRTLAND'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) – We had success again this year finding four different individuals in the coastal coppice south of Governor's Harbour, Eleuthera Island.

**CAPE MAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga tigrina*) – A pair were in the fig tree at the coffee shop in Marsh Harbour.

**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – Fairly common on both islands.

**YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN)** (*Setophaga petechia gundlachi*) – This subspecies was seen in the mangroves at Cherokee Sound.

**PALM WARBLER** (*Setophaga palmarum*) – Fairly common on both islands; most appeared to be of the western type (*D. p. palmarum*).

**OLIVE-CAPPED WARBLER** (*Setophaga pityophila*) – Found in the pine forests of Abaco Island. Only on Cuba and in the Bahamas.

**PINE WARBLER** (*Setophaga pinus achrustera*) – Resident subspecies was common in the Abaco pine forests.

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE)** (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – Good numbers on both islands.

**BAHAMA WARBLER** (*Setophaga flavescens*) – A distinctive looking warbler, now a species, but once considered a subspecies of Yellow-throated Warbler. We saw it well on Abaco Island in the pine forests. [E]

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – Good numbers on both islands.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

**BANANAQUIT (BAHAMAS)** (*Coereba flaveola bahamensis*) – A potential split as it is (to my eye) the most distinctive looking of the Bananaquit populations, both in song and morphology. Common on both islands.

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

**GREATER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH** (*Loxigilla violacea*) – Seen on both islands, but slightly more common on Eleuthera as it prefers the drier coppice.

**WESTERN SPINDALIS (NORTHERN BAHAMAS)** (*Spindalis zena townsendi*) – A striking looking bird (and potential split from other spindalis populations) seen well on Abaco Island.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

**PAINTED BUNTING** (*Passerina ciris ciris*) – One seen on Abaco Island.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

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

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Singles on Abaco Island.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Other critters seen:

1) Curly-tailed Lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus*) = This is the "curly-tailed" lizard (family Leiocephalidae) that was seen on Abaco Island. It is common on this island.

2) [snake on Eleuthera] = On Eleuthera there appear to be just two native species: a boa and a racer. What we saw appears to be a Bahamian Brown Racer or just Bahamian Racer (*Alsophis vudii*).

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**Totals for the tour: 73 bird taxa and 0 mammal taxa**