



Field Guides Tour Report

Bahamas: Abaco, Eleuthera, Andros and the Kirtland's Warbler 2015

Apr 4, 2014 to Apr 9, 2015

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



Bahama Woodstar (Photo by participant Doug Hanna)

This was another enjoyable island-hopping adventure with a fun group, excellent birding, and delicious food. It all started on the island of Abaco with a visit to Abaco Island National Park and our first Cuban Parrots perched in the pine trees and a Bahama Yellowthroat skulking in the understory. Bahama Palm Shores was also very good for parrots and West Indian Woodpecker, but lunch at Pete's Pub and "sittin' on the dock of the bay" in Cherokee Sound were also memorable. On to Eleuthera via our trusty Caravan, and within an hour we were looking at a pair of Kirtland's Warblers and our first Great Lizard-Cuckoo -- not too bad. But, again, lunch at Tippy's looking at quite possibly the prettiest beach in the world may have stolen the show, though we really enjoyed watching the sunset at The Cove!

This was also the first year we offered a visit to Andros in search of the Bahama Oriole, a recent split from Greater Antillean Oriole. That turned out to be no problem, and we found its nest in the process. Turns out our group thought the Great Lizard-Cuckoo was the coolest thing since sliced bread, and I agree. It took home top honors, but it was in good company with Bahama Woodstar (female on the nest or maybe the male on Eleuthera?), and those parrots.

Thanks again to everyone who participated: Cort & Carolyn, Charlie & Jeanne, Doug and Doris. I hope to see you all again real soon! Until then...good birding and safe travels.

--Jesse Fagan 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

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – We found six wintering birds on Andros.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*) – Introduced on several of the islands. We saw a covey of 15 or so birds on Andros.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – One on Oyster Lake, Eleuthera Island.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – A small family group on Oyster Lake.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – We saw several on Abaco Island.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Small groups were seen on Eleuthera Island.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Small numbers on Abaco Island.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – One on Eleuthera, but several more on Andros.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Several immatures (calico) and at least one adult on Oyster Lake, Eleuthera.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – One on Eleuthera (flying across Oyster Lake), and a singles on Andros each day.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Small numbers on Abaco and Eleuthera.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – Several on Abaco and again on Andros.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – A pair of immatures on Abaco Island.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*) – Several were seen in the marsh near our lodge on Andros Island.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – On Abaco and Andros Island. We discussed what they historically would have fed on in the Bahamas. The only native land mammal (not including several species of bats) was the Bahamian Hutia, which went extinct in most of the Bahamas in the 17th century.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Singles on Eleuthera Island.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

RED-TAILED HAWK (SOLITUDINIS) (*Buteo jamaicensis solitudinis*) – The resident Abaco population was seen a few times.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus crepitans*) – Nice views on Andros Island.

Aramidae (Limkin)

LIMPKIN (*Aramus guarauna*) – On all three islands this trip.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – One on Andros.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – This was a good find for us on Eleuthera.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Fairly numerous on Eleuthera where one day we counted at least 20 birds, most molting into breeding plumage showing a little bit of a black belly.

WILSON'S PLOVER (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – A write-in were three birds seen on Andros.

SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Just a pair on Eleuthera.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – A couple of birds on Abaco Island.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WILLET (*Tringa semipalmata*) – We weren't able to clearly identify the Willets we saw on Eleuthera as either Eastern or Western (most seemed to still be in non-breeding plumage). I believe, however, birds on Eleuthera may have been Eastern where I have seen them breeding in years past. This is looking more and more like a good split.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Fairly common on Eleuthera and again on Andros.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – A distant pair on Oyster Lake, Eleuthera.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Common on all the islands, most of them appeared to be adults with dark heads.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Seen on all three islands.

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – A good number mixed with Royal Terns on Eleuthera.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Yep. On all the islands.

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Seen on all the islands, but most common on Eleuthera it seems.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Very common on all the islands.

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – Also quite common on all three islands.

ZENAIDA DOVE (*Zenaida aurita*) – We lucked out finding two birds in the path at Leon Levy Preserve, Eleuthera. Easily missed on this tour as they

are rare to uncommon in the Bahamas.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Just two on Eleuthera.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GREAT LIZARD-CUCKOO (*Coccyzus merlini*) – Your favorite of the trip! I have to agree, this is indeed a fun bird to watch. Eleuthera and Andros islands.

SMOOTH-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga ani*) – Fairly common on all the islands.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

BAHAMA WOODSTAR (*Calliphlox evelynae*) – Seen in good numbers this year on Abaco where we found a female on a nest. We didn't see our first male, however, until Eleuthera. Another female was seen on Andros. We discussed at length the potential split on Inagua as "Inaguan Lyretail." It will be interesting to see what becomes of this! [E]

CUBAN EMERALD (*Chlorostilbon ricordii*) – Seen in good numbers on Abaco where quite common. Again on Andros.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Two wintering birds were on Eleuthera.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

WEST INDIAN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes superciliosus*) – Can be a tough one to pin down. We had good luck with it this year on Abaco.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (EASTERN) (*Picoides villosus piger*) – Fairly common in the pine forest of Abaco and Andros where resident.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (CUBAN) (*Falco sparverius sparveroides*) – This is somehow grouped with the Cuban complex, but opposite in coloration. The Bahamian birds are very pale, striking white below, while the Cuban subspecies is quite dark overall.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – One was seen well perched in a pine near the Andros airport. A few others were seen in flight over Marsh Harbour, Abaco.

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)

CUBAN PARROT (BAHAMAS) (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*) – I was happy to find so many perched flocks in the Abaco Island NP. Later we had even better views at Bahama Palm Shores feeding on gumbo limbo fruit.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

CUBAN PEWEE (*Contopus caribaeus*) – Pretty good numbers in the pine forest of Abaco and seen again on Andros.

LA SAGRA'S FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus sagrae*) – Fairly common on Abaco and Andros.

GRAY KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – Finally the migrants arrived! We had a couple of flocks (4 to 5 birds each) on Andros.

LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (LOGGERHEAD) (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus bahamensis*) – Seen on Abaco several times. This is a resident subspecies that has rufous edged uppertail coverts and a slightly paler head. There has been talk of splits within this group.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

THICK-BILLED VIREO (THICK-BILLED) (*Vireo crassirostris crassirostris*) – Lots throughout the islands; one of the more common species heard.

BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO (*Vireo altiloquus*) – We finally found an early migrant on Abaco, but it stayed only briefly.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BAHAMA SWALLOW (*Tachycineta cyaneoviridis*) – Lots on Abaco and again on Andros. [E]

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Just one on Abaco Island.

Poliophtidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Fairly common on all the islands where it breeds. Many males were in full song.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

RED-LEGGED THRUSH (WESTERN) (*Turdus plumbeus plumbeus*) – This sharp looking thrush was seen on all the islands. The species is a Greater Antilles endemic (there is an introduced population on Dominica), where it looks quite different between the islands.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Another common species that winters in the Bahamas.

BAHAMA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus gundlachii*) – Usually confined to taller pine forest or mature coppice. We found individuals on all the islands. This one has a very interesting distribution in the Caribbean.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – All the islands. Very common.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Several individuals were seen at Cherokee Sound, Abaco, and again in Marsh Harbour (for the first time! uh oh...).

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – A couple on Eleuthera.

WORM-EATING WARBLER (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – A good one to find. One was seen in the mulberry tree on Marsh Harbour, and yet another in the coppice on Andros.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Heard in the mangroves of Abaco, but seen on Eleuthera and Andros.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – A pair on Abaco and again on Andros.

BAHAMA YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis rostrata*) – This endemic was oddly quiet this year, but we eventually caught up with several in the pine forest of Abaco Island NP. It was seen again on Andros. [E]

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – This species winters in the Bahamas. Seen on Abaco and a female on Eleuthera.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Fairly common wintering warbler in the Bahamas.

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) – We struggled at first to find our first, but boy, we ended up seeing 4 individuals in total! (at our secret spots on Eleuthera..shhhhh). ;-) A great bird that seems to be doing better and better each year, but still very rare to find outside of its well-known breeding grounds.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*)

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – Seen on all the islands.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – Seen a few times on Andros; however, in general seems to be hard to find in the Bahamas.

YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN) (*Setophaga petechia gundlachi*) – Lots were singing around the lodge on Andros.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – Males and a few others were seen on Eleuthera.

PALM WARBLER (*Setophaga palmarum*) – The ones we saw were of the western subspecies (*palmarum*) being much paler below than their eastern counterparts.

OLIVE-CAPPED WARBLER (*Setophaga pityophila*) – Good numbers in the pine forest on Abaco Island. Only found in the Bahamas and Cuba.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus achrustera*) – On Abaco and Andros (where there are pines).

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE) (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – Several were seen on Abaco and a couple were heard on Eleuthera.

BAHAMA WARBLER (*Setophaga flavescens*) – This endemic was found in the pine forest of Abaco Island NP, where fairly common. [E]

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*) – One was seen on Andros.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

BANANAQUIT (BAHAMAS) (*Coereba flaveola bahamensis*) – Common on all three islands.

BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT (*Tiaris bicolor*) – Seen on all three islands, but most common on Abaco.

GREATER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla violacea*) – Very nice views at Bahama Palms Shore on Abaco, but seen on all the islands.

WESTERN SPINDALIS (NORTHERN BAHAMAS) (*Spindalis zena townsendi*) – This is the black-backed or "dark-backed" Bahama subspecies, quite distinctive looking, and a possible split in the future. Uncommon to fairly common on all the islands.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – A bright male was seen on Abaco and again two more on Andros.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Seen on Abaco and Andros.

BAHAMA ORIOLE (*Icterus northropi*) – The main reason to visit Andros was for this recent split (off of Greater Antillian Oriole). We did very well finding 7 or so individuals, plus a male visiting a nest!

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*) – Several males were seen on Andros.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Abaco and Andros.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 89 bird taxa and 0 mammal taxa