



Field Guides Tour Report

**Bahamas Endemics & Kirtland's Warbler 2016**

Apr 2, 2016 to Apr 8, 2016

Jesse Fagan

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.*



*Our difficult work environment -- this is birding in the Bahamas. Photo by guide Jesse Fagan.*

This was a very successful tour to the Bahamas. It was the first time we included Andros as part of the main tour, and it went as well as expected. We saw five Bahama endemics (the five possible on our tour route), plus a host of Caribbean regional endemics. Plus we managed to find three Kirtland's Warblers on Eleuthera! We ate our way through conch fritters and blackened grouper (how we suffered), and washed them down with cold Kalik. There was even a little down time to enjoy what most other people go to the Bahamas for: turquoise waters, pink sand beaches, and soft Caribbean breezes.

Thanks to this fun group. I really enjoyed your company, and expertise, and knowledge on birds and other general topics. I hope to see you again soon!

All the best birding in 2016.

-- Jesse (aka Motmot) from Bridgetown, Barbados

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**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

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**BIRDS**

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**LEAST GREBE** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – One in the small fresh water pond near Small Hope Bay.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*) – Several around Marsh Harbour and again on Andros.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Wintering birds on Abaco and Eleuthera.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Most (all?) of the individuals we saw were juveniles.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – A small migrant group passed over us heading north on Andros.

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

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*) – Good numbers on Andros.

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*) – Just one, an immature, in the mangroves on Andros. Good spotting, Michael.

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Not common. Just a couple on Eleuthera and Andros.  
**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*) – Mostly Andros, but one also on Eleuthera.  
**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – One adult in the mangroves on Andros.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

**WHITE IBIS** (*Eudocimus albus*) – Fairly common on Andros, even as a yard bird.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – Common on Abaco and Andros. Both are islands with pine trees.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Singles on Eleuthera and Andros.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**RED-TAILED HAWK (SOLITUDINIS)** (*Buteo jamaicensis solitudinis*) – We saw the resident subspecies on Abaco.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**CLAPPER RAIL** (*Rallus crepitans*) – Heard on Abaco, but seen incredibly well on Andros.

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*) – Just one on Nassau between flights.

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – A couple on the freshwater pond on Andros.

Aramidae (Limpkin)

**LIMPKIN** (*Aramus guarauna*) – Both were on Eleuthera.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – A pair along the road on Eleuthera.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

**AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus*) – Mark spotted our first group on Abaco near Sandy Point. We also saw them in good numbers on Eleuthera.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Good numbers on Abaco and Eleuthera.

**WILSON'S PLOVER** (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – Presumably breeding pairs near Small Hope Bay on Andros.

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Around Governor's Harbour on Eleuthera.

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – On Nassau.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – Singles each day on Andros.

**WILLET** (*Tringa semipalmata*) – Each on Eleuthera and Andros.

**WILLET (WESTERN)** (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*) – One bird we had on Eleuthera looked liked Western Willet to my eyes. It was longer billed (slightly upturned?) and looked long-legged. In winter plumage a single Willet is tough to identify as either Western or Eastern. Both subspecies are found in the Caribbean in the winter.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Small groups on Eleuthera and Andros.

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Two distant dowitchers off Sandy Point that Mark spotted were most likely this species.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Common on all the islands where most appeared to be in full breeding plumage (adults with dark hoods).

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – A second-cycle bird was seen at Tarpum Bay on Eleuthera.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus fuscus*) – An adult (or very near) in basic plumage was seen in Governor's Harbour. I have had them here before.

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – The most common tern seen on all of the islands. Most were in basic plumage.

**SANDWICH TERN** (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – A distant flock off Sandy Point were our only ones.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Seen in towns on all of the islands.

**WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Common on all of the islands.

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – The New World invasion started here, and it continues...

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina passerina*) – "Common" on all of the islands.

**KEY WEST QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon chrysia*) – We birded a side road north of Tarpum Bay that seemed to have good numbers (at least by call). We eventually called one up for decent looks albeit a bit hidden.

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Rare in the northern Bahamas. We had one at Sandy Point. Are they expanding?

**ZENAIDA DOVE** (*Zenaida aurita*) – Just one briefly as it flew across the car on our drive back to Small Hope Bay.

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – A few on Eleuthera and more common on Andros.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**MANGROVE CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus minor*) – Fantastic encounter with a pair near our parking spot for the Kirtland's Warbler. A lifer for a few of you.

**GREAT LIZARD-CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus merlini*) – One of my favorite birds. I can't imagine being an Anole lizard living with this thing in my neighborhood! Only found on a few islands in the Bahamas and Cuba.

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*) – Common on all of the islands.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

**BAHAMA WOODSTAR** (*Calliphlox evelynae*) – Linda made an incredible spot finding a male perched in the pine forest on Abaco. It is uncommon on this island. We later had a few more on Eleuthera where more common (and the emerald is absent). [E]

**CUBAN EMERALD** (*Chlorostilbon ricordii*) – Good numbers on Abaco.

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**WEST INDIAN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes superciliosus*) – Most people saw this species pre-tour, but for the rest it was a struggle. Our Hail Mary paid off however and we located one having coffee at Bliss with 15 minutes to spare.

**YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – Singles still around on Abaco. Evidence of their wintering in the Bahamas was noted on many trees, however.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER (EASTERN)** (*Picoides villosus piger*) – A pair in the pine forest on Abaco.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL (CUBAN)** (*Falco sparverius sparverioides*) – The resident subspecies are nice to look at. The males are clean white below which is striking.

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – Singles on Abaco and Eleuthera.

*Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)*

**CUBAN PARROT (BAHAMAS)** (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*) – Large numbers at Bahama Palms Shore, but also again in the pine forest in Abaco National Park.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**CUBAN PEWEE** (*Contopus caribaeus*) – We saw this species well on Abaco and Andros where there are pine trees.

**LA SAGRA'S FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus sagrae*) – Common on all of the islands.

**EASTERN KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – A new migrant for the tour. Seen on Andros at Stanyard Creek.

**GRAY KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – None on Abaco and Eleuthera, but by the end of the tour a few were arriving to Andros.

**LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (LOGGERHEAD)** (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus bahamensis*) – Fairly common on Abaco.

*Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)*

**THICK-BILLED VIREO (THICK-BILLED)** (*Vireo crassirostris crassirostris*) – One of the most common small passerines on all of the islands.

**YELLOW-THROATED VIREO** (*Vireo flavifrons*) – One on Eleuthera.

**BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** (*Vireo altiloquus*) – One had just arrived back on Andros after a large evening storm.

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**BAHAMA SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta cyaneoviridis*) – This endemic was around in good numbers on Abaco and Andros. [E]

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – A small group near the ferry dock on Abaco, mixed with Bahama Swallows.

*Poliophtidae (Gnatcatchers)*

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Fairly common as a winter visitor and breeder in the Bahamas.

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**RED-LEGGED THRUSH (PLUMBEUS/SCHISTACEUS)** (*Turdus plumbeus plumbeus*) – Good looks on Abaco, but seen on all the islands.

*Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)*

**GRAY CATBIRD** (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Common on all of the islands.

**BAHAMA MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus gundlachi*) – More common in the pine forests of Abaco and Andros, but also seen in the taller coppice on Eleuthera.

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Very common on all of the islands.

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – A recent arrival to some of the islands. It was seen on Abaco and a couple on Andros near Stafford Creek.

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**OVENBIRD** (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Not many around, but a few on Eleuthera and Andros.

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Quite common in the mangroves at Small Hope Bay.

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – Mainly females/immatures on each island.

**BAHAMA YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis rostrata*) – A singing male was observed nicely (and close) in Abaco National Park. [E]

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – On Abaco and Andros.

**AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – One of the more common wintering birds in the Bahamas.

**KIRTLAND'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) – Success again! We found two individuals (adult males) at a traditional "secret" spot, then John heard another chip note at a new site. It turned out to be an immature. Very cool.

**CAPE MAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga tigrina*) – Fairly common on most islands.

**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – Also fairly common on each island.

**YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN)** (*Setophaga petechia gundlachi*) – It isn't clear to me which subspecies occurs in the Bahamas or if there are subspecies for each island. This subspecies is found in Cuba up to southern Florida. However, the subspecies in the Bahamas may be "flaviceps" which wasn't an option in our database. Regardless, they are part of the "Golden" Yellow Warbler complex or group, also known as the petechia group found in the Caribbean.

**PALM WARBLER** (*Setophaga palmarum*) – A few on each island. All were Western (palmarum) types.

**OLIVE-CAPPED WARBLER** (*Setophaga pityophila*) – Nice looks on Abaco.

**PINE WARBLER** (*Setophaga pinus achrustera*) – Seen well on Abaco and heard again on Andros. Always in the pine forest.

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE)** (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – One individual was seen by a few folks on Eleuthera.

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (DOMINICA/STODDARDI)** (*Setophaga dominica dominica*) – One showed up in the sea grape tree on the grounds of Surfer's Manor. It was a nice comparison to the next species.

**BAHAMA WARBLER** (*Setophaga flavescens*) – Good looks in the pine forest on Abaco. The longer bill and extensive yellow below are very distinctive. [E]

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – Several on Eleuthera and Andros.

*Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)*

**BANANAQUIT (BAHAMAS)** (*Coereba flaveola bahamensis*) – The distinctive subspecies was seen well on each island.

**BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris bicolor*) – Fairly common on each island.

**GREATER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH** (*Loxigilla violacea*) – Seen well on Abaco and Eleuthera.

**WESTERN SPINDALIS (BAHAMAS BLACK-BACKED)** (*Spindalis zena zena*) – Spindalis seen on Eleuthera were of this subspecies, as far as I can tell, with darker (near black) backs.

**WESTERN SPINDALIS (BAHAMAS GREEN-BACKED)** (*Spindalis zena townsendi*) – The subspecies seen on Abaco with greener backs.

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)*

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

**BAHAMA ORIOLE** (*Icterus northropi*) – Lovely looks at pair (?) in nesting mode in the palm grove at Small Hope Bay. We also saw an immature on the wire heading north towards Stafford Creek. [E]

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** (*Icterus galbula*) – A pair in Marsh Harbour were our only ones.

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – In small numbers on each island.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A few other things:

(Bahama) Brown Racer (*Alsophis vudii*) = Though it's found on most islands in the Bahamas, we saw this native resident snake only on Eleuthera. Several subspecies are described.

Curly-tailed Lizard (family Leiocephalidae) = Seen on Abaco. Found throughout the Caribbean with several named subspecies. The ones on Abaco appear to be "Northern" Curly-tailed Lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus*).

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**Totals for the tour: 96 bird taxa and 0 mammal taxa**