



Field Guides Tour Report

Lesser Antilles 2013

Mar 30, 2013 to Apr 14, 2013
Jesse Fagan

I hadn't run this tour for three years so I was a little bit curious about how things had changed on "the islands." I am always nervous about the connecting flights, lost baggage (LIAT don't let us down!), and general logistics on this logistically complicated tour. However, we seem to have it down to a science after years of practice, and LIAT has gotten better! It was a great tour in 2013.

We saw all of the Lesser Antilles' endemics very well including great looks at the tough ones: Grenada Dove (my closest and best encounter ever; and at the last minute!), Imperial Parrot (chasing a pair through the Syndicate forest and eventually having them right over our heads!), St. Lucia Black-Finch (at our feet; and it does have pink feet!), and White-breasted Thrasher (twelve, count 'em twelve! on the island of Martinique). It was an adventure and I want to thank this most excellent group for doing it with me.

I can't wait to see you all again.

--Jesse aka Mot (from Lima, Peru)



More a bird of the Greater Antilles, the White-crowned Pigeon reaches the northern Lesser Antilles islands of Antigua and Barbuda, where it is quite common. (Photo by tour participant Greg Griffith)

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)

WEST INDIAN WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna arborea*) – A number along Antigua Village Ponds.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – Good numbers on Barbados and Antigua.

WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL (*Anas bahamensis*) – This striking duck was seen well on Antigua where pretty common.

MASKED DUCK (*Nomonyx dominicus*) – Our local guide, Eddie, took us to a small pond on Barbados where this species was present. We saw a number of female-plumaged individuals, but no males.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – By the thousands on Antigua.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – On St. Lucia and Martinique.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon aethereus*) – Our first were distant on Guadeloupe (Chateau Point), and again from the airplane as we landed in Montserrat, but our best views were on Barbados.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – The frigatebird colony at Codrington Bay on Barbados was pretty cool. One of the largest Magnificent Frigatebird colonies in the world (largest in the Caribbean), a RAMSAR site, this site is home to more than 5000 pairs of breeding frigatebirds.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*) – Especially easy from the pier on Dominica, or the hotel on St. Vincent, but seen well on several different islands.

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula sula*) – One was seen briefly by a couple of us on St. Vincent.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Numerous on the islands north of St. Vincent.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

LEAST BITTERN (*Ixobrychus exilis*) – A pair seen at Coot Pond on Martinique. This species is uncommon and local in the Lesser Antilles.

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Many of the long-legged waders, including this species, were seen on Antigua.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Barbados and Antigua.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – A couple on Barbados and again on Antigua. This species is now a regular breeder on both of these islands.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Both Little and Snowy egrets are on Barbados and Antigua where you need to look carefully to tell them apart.

They appear to hybridize on Antigua as well.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Fairly common throughout LA.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – Just one on Antigua.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Found on every island, seen every day of the tour.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – Fairly common throughout the Lesser Antilles' islands.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Singles on St. Lucia.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – Also seen on St. Lucia, but again on Antigua.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

COMMON BLACK-HAWK (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) – The only island where this species is found is St. Vincent. We saw them well on both days.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (CARIBBEAN) (*Buteo platypterus insulicola*) – This subspecies is found on Antigua where we saw one individual soaring over us during our walk around Antigua Village Pond.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (CARIBBEAN) (*Buteo platypterus rivierei*) – This subspecies is found from St. Lucia to Dominica where fairly common.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (CARIBBEAN) (*Buteo platypterus antillarum*) – Common on the southern islands of LA, but not found on Barbados.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – Singles on Barbados and again on Martinique at Coot Pond.

COMMON GALLINULE (AMERICAN) (*Gallinula galeata ceccheris*) – Fairly common throughout the Lesser Antilles.

CARIBBEAN COOT (*Fulica caribaea*) – One on Martinique at the appropriately named "Coot Pond." This species has a large white foreshield that is noticeable from a distance.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A couple on Barbados, but larger numbers on Antigua.

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – Rare migrant on Barbados where we had two individuals.

WILSON'S PLOVER (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – Several at the Antigua Village Ponds.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – On Barbados and Antigua.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – A couple were seen on Barbados, our only ones for the trip.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Numerous on Antigua.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – Seen on a number of different islands.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – Seen on Barbados and again on St. Lucia.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Common on Barbados (where they migrant through in the tens of thousands) and again on Antigua.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Slightly less common than the previous species.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Seen on at least three islands.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Just a single bird on Dominica.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – One on Barbados.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Very common on Barbados, but also at Antigua Village Pond.

STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*) – One on Barbados in near breeding plumage.

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – One on Barbados.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Common throughout the Lesser Antilles. Most were showing black hoods.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Seen on several islands starting in St. Vincent.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Seen on all the islands. [I]

SCALY-NAPED PIGEON (*Patagioenas squamosa*) – One of the more common Caribbean endemics. Seen on all the islands.

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – Common around the hotel in Antigua.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Seen on most islands. [I]

ZENAIDA DOVE (*Zenaida aurita*) – Also a very common dove in the Lesser Antilles.

EARED DOVE (*Zenaida auriculata rubripes*) – Seen on Grenada and St. Lucia only.

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – Seen on most islands.

GRENADA DOVE (*Leptotila wellsi*) – One of the most difficult of the LA endemics to see. I was very saddened to see the habitat continue to be fragmented, plus lack of concern for noise pollution and many mongooses. However, we did have an amazing encounter with one finally, my closest

encounter yet! [E]

BRIDLED QUAIL-DOVE (*Geotrygon mystacea*) – Seen very well on St. Lucia, but again on Guadeloupe and Montserrat.

RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE (RUDDY) (*Geotrygon montana montana*) – Seen on St. Vincent in flight mainly. Heard again on St. Lucia.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

MANGROVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus minor*) – Seen or heard on most of the islands. Common.

SMOOTH-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga ani*) – Not real common, but seen on a couple of different islands.

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (LESSER ANTILLES) (*Tyto alba insularis*) – Decent looks in flight on St. Vincent. We looked for it again on Dominica, but no luck.

This is a potential split.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

RUFOUS NIGHTJAR (ST. LUCIA) (*Antrostomus rufus otiosus*) – Amazing looks at this nightjar on St. Lucia, the only island in the Caribbean where it is found. Very closely related to Chuck-wills-widow.

Apodidae (Swifts)

LESSER ANTILLEAN SWIFT (*Chaetura martinica*) – Fairly common from St. Vincent to the north.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

PURPLE-THROATED CARIB (*Eulampis jugularis*) – Seen on every island between St. Vincent and Montserrat.

GREEN-THROATED CARIB (*Eulampis holosericeus*) – Seen on most islands in the Lesser Antilles.

BLUE-HEADED HUMMINGBIRD (*Cyanophaea bicolor*) – This hummingbird is found on just a couple of islands in LA. We saw it well on Martinique and again on Dominica.

ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD (LESSER ANTILLES) (*Orthorhynchus cristatus exilis*) – We really like the haircut on this guy. This subspecies was found from St. Lucia north to Antigua.

ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD (ST. VINCENT) (*Orthorhynchus cristatus ornatus*)

ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD (BARBADOS) (*Orthorhynchus cristatus cristatus*)

ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD (GRENDINES AND GRENADA) (*Orthorhynchus cristatus emigrans*)

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Singles on several islands. An uncommon wintering species.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

GAUDELLOUPE WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes herminieri*) – The only woodpecker species in LA. Seen well on Basse-Terre. [E]

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (EASTERN CARIBBEAN) (*Falco sparverius caribaeorum*) – One on St. Lucia and singles again on Montserrat.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – Seen a few times on the trip.

Psittacidae (Parrots)

RED-NECKED PARROT (*Amazona arausiaca*) – A common endemic on Dominica, at least in the humid highlands. [E]

ST. LUCIA PARROT (*Amazona versicolor*) – Always difficult to see requiring a good hike into the highlands, but we saw it well including an individual in the scope that perched just in front of us overlooking the steep valley below. Awesome. [E]

ST. VINCENT PARROT (*Amazona guildingii*) – The Vincie is my favorite of the LA parrots. Seen fairly well after the downpour from the overlook in the Vermont hills. [E]

IMPERIAL PARROT (*Amazona imperialis*) – A great experience chasing two birds through the forest. We eventually caught up with them as they called loudly above us. The rarest of the LA parrots. [E]

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

CARIBBEAN ELAENIA (*Elaenia martinica*) – Very common. Heard or seen on every island.

YELLOW-BELLIED ELAENIA (*Elaenia flavogaster*) – Found on Grenada and St. Vincent where fairly common by its loud, screaming voice.

LESSER ANTILLEAN PEWEE (*Contopus latirostris*) – We had our only one on Basse Terre at the car park for the Chuts de Carbet. That was a cloudy and misty morning! With a recent taxonomic changes, the St. Lucia Pewee (once considered a separate species) is lumped back with Lesser Antillean Pewee. We did see St. Lucia Pewee very well at Grande Anse.

GRENADA FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus nugator*) – This Myiarchus was seen well in the thorn forest on Grenada, but also again on St. Vincent; the only two islands it is found on.

LESSER ANTILLEAN FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus oberi*) – St. Lucia and again on Dominica.

GRAY KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – Every day; every island.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO (*Vireo altiloquus*) – Also quite common on all the islands, except absent from Barbados. Both Gray Kingbirds and the vireo are resident (non-migratory) in LA, but probably supplemented with wintering birds from the north from Oct to March.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

CARIBBEAN MARTIN (*Progne dominicensis*) – Seen on most islands.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – A few on the north islands.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (CARIBBEAN) (*Troglodytes aedon rufescens*) – The House Wrens are quite interesting on the islands; all deserve more research

attention as they represent potentially 4 new species. This subspecies was seen on Dominica.

HOUSE WREN (CARIBBEAN) (*Troglodytes aedon mesoleucus*) – This is the St. Lucia "House" Wren.

HOUSE WREN (CARIBBEAN) (*Troglodytes aedon musicus*) – The St. Vincent "House" Wren.

HOUSE WREN (CARIBBEAN) (*Troglodytes aedon grenadensis*) – The Grenada "House" Wren.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

RUFIOUS-THROATED SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes genibarbis*) – This beautiful species with an ethereal song was seen very well on Dominica and St. Lucia.

COCOA THRUSH (LESSER ANTILLEAN) (*Turdus fumigatus personus*) – Several seen on St. Vincent feeding on Melastone berries from the wet lookout.

SPECTACLED THRUSH (*Turdus nudigenis*) – Fairly common from Grenada to Martinique.

RED-LEGGED THRUSH (EASTERN) (*Turdus plumbeus albiventris*) – Though now thought to have been introduced to Dominica from Puerto Rico via travelling Carib Indians, this species is still nice to look out.

FOREST THRUSH (*Turdus lherminieri*) – Decent looks on Guadeloupe where we had several feeding on the road in the early morning. We had better, but brief looks on Montserrat.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus gilvus*) – On several islands.

WHITE-BREASTED THRASHER (*Ramphocinclus brachyurus*) – Twelve (!) was a record for me. Seen very nicely on the island of Martinique. We missed it on St. Lucia.

SCALY-BREASTED THRASHER (*Allenia fusca*) – This LA endemic was seen starting on St. Lucia and found north to Montserrat.

PEARLY-EYED THRASHER (*Margarops fuscatus*) – Common on most of the islands; also found in the Greater Antilles.

BROWN TREMBLER (*Cinlocerthia ruficauda*) – This genus is endemic to the Lesser Antilles. They really do tremble! Our first was on St. Vincent and seen again well on Montserrat. The distribution of this species is broken up through the islands.

GRAY TREMBLER (*Cinlocerthia gutturalis*) – Seen well on St. Lucia.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

WHISTLING WARBLER (*Catharopeza bishopi*) – One of our favorites. It responded so well; my best and closest views ever! [E]

PLUMBEOUS WARBLER (*Setophaga plumbea*) – Another LA endemic first seen on Guadeloupe and again on Dominica.

YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN) (*Setophaga petechia bartholemica*) – Seen on Antigua.

YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN) (*Setophaga petechia melanopectera*) – Seen on Guadeloupe and Dominica.

YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN) (*Setophaga petechia ruficapilla*) – This is the real different looking one we saw on Martinique with the solid rufous head (like Mangrove Warbler from the mainland, but all of these are "Golden" Yellow Warblers). The Yellow Warbler complex is a bit confusing, but doesn't seem to represent many species despite differences in chestnut on the head.

YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN) (*Setophaga petechia petechia*) – On Barbados (the nominate race!).

BARBUDA WARBLER (*Setophaga subita*) – Fairly common in the dry scrub on Barbados. Our last LA endemic! [E]

ST. LUCIA WARBLER (*Setophaga delicata*) – Found in a variety of habitats on St. Lucia. [E]

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

LESSER ANTILLEAN TANAGER (*Tangara cucullata*) – We caught up with several on St. Vincent; missed on Grenada.

BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN) (*Coereba flaveola bartholemica*) – Despite the variability in plumage and song, all of the Bananaquits are considered on species. Most of these island groups look the same, but vary in throat color and some are all black! This subspecies was found from Dominica north to Barbados.

BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN) (*Coereba flaveola martinicana*) – St. Lucia to Martinique.

BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN) (*Coereba flaveola barbadensis*) – On Barbados.

BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN) (*Coereba flaveola atrata*) – St. Vincent.

BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN) (*Coereba flaveola aterrima*) – Grenada, where we also had the all dark morph a.k.a. the Rotten Bananaquits

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

LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla noctis ridgwayi*) – This subspecies was seen on Antigua. It is one of the more distinctive looking of the subspecies being nearly all sooty black on the face. In general, the trend is for males to show red throats and supraloral regions in the south with a reduction in red as one moves further north in the islands.

LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla noctis dominicana*) – Dominica and Guadeloupe.

LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla noctis noctis*) – Martinique.

LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla noctis sclateri*) – St. Lucia.

LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla noctis crissalis*) – St. Vincent.

LESSER ANTILLEAN BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla noctis grenadensis*) – Grenada.

BARBADOS BULLFINCH (*Loxigilla barbadensis*) – The only endemic on Barbados. Males and females are nearly identical and difficult to separate in the field. Why would they evolve to have the same plumage? What is the selection? This group, the *Loxigilla* bullfinches, are the closest relative to the Darwin finches where plumage is also irrelevant in selection. Most important? Bill sizes! [E]

ST. LUCIA BLACK FINCH (*Melanospiza richardsoni*) – A wonderful male was seen very close at Grand Anse, a new location for me. I was happy we didn't have to return to the first spot! [E]

LESSER ANTILLEAN SALTATOR (*Saltator albicollis*) – Fairly common on several islands; our first on St. Lucia.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

CARIB GRACKLE (*Quiscalus lugubris guadeloupensis*) – The grackle subspecies really differ in the appearance of the females which range from dark

to sooty gray. Also, the male song can be quite different between the islands. This subspecies was seen from Martinique north to Antigua.

CARIB GRACKLE (*Quiscalus lugubris inflexirostris*) – St. Lucia.

CARIB GRACKLE (*Quiscalus lugubris contrusus*) – St. Vincent.

CARIB GRACKLE (*Quiscalus lugubris luminosus*) – Grenada.

CARIB GRACKLE (*Quiscalus lugubris fortirostris*) – Barbados.

SHINY COWBIRD (*Molothrus bonariensis*) – Seen on at least three different islands.

ST. LUCIA ORIOLE (*Icterus laudabilis*) – A nice looking oriole seen well on the Des Cartiers Nature Trail. [E]

MONTSEERRAT ORIOLE (*Icterus oberi*) – One of my favorites (and the groups!). Thanks to Blacker and Scriber for taking us right to a nest with a pair of adults. Very cool. [E]

MARTINIQUE ORIOLE (*Icterus bonana*) – Perhaps my favorite of all the endemics. We caught up with this one in the moist highlands. It is also found in the dry scrub near the coast (but we missed it there; it is not so common in this habitat). [E]

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

ANTILLEAN EUPHONIA (*Euphonia musica*) [*]

MAMMALS

BRAZILIAN FREE-TAILED BAT (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) – On Grenada.

GREEN MONKEY (*Cercopithecus sabaues*) – Seen by a few on Barbados. An introduced primate native to West Africa and originally brought to the West Indies in the 17th-century aboard slave ships.

ANTILLEAN AGOUTI (*Dasyprocta antillensis*) – One on Dominica.

HUMPBACK WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – One breached behind the boat on our ferry ride back from Barbados.

SMALL ASIAN MONGOOSE (*Herpestes javanicus*) – Lots on Grenada (sadly for the dove), but also again on St. Vincent and St. Lucia. [I]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 135 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa