

Trip Report — Lesser Antilles 2024

April 5, 2024 to April 21, 2024

Guided by Jesse Fagan



St. Lucia Black-Finch is always a difficult bird to see well. But, not this year! Photo by guide Jesse Fagan.

It had been 5 years since we last ran a Lesser Antilles tour, largely owing to the pandemic which paralyzed global travel for at least two years. Not surprising, for a logistically complicated trip like this tour (10 islands in 15 days!), we expected to have some hurdles to overcome after being gone for so long. Indeed, an entire airline went bankrupt during the pandemic, flight schedules were reduced, a few ground operators disappeared, and hotels closed. However, despite all of this, we pulled off a very successful tour with little or no serious delays or complications, and the birding was very good. Thanks to my eager and go-with-the-flow group, who made travel easy for me. I look forward to future trips with you all.

We started the tour a little out of order than my previous visits. Normally, I would work the islands south to north, starting in Barbados, then Grenada, up to St. Vincent, and so on, finishing in Barbuda or Montserrat. This year the flight schedules had us starting in Barbados, where we saw the endemic bullfinch, before flying to St. Lucia. This felt a little awkward to me, but occasionally, it is good to switch things up. St. Lucia is one of the birdiest islands in the Lesser Antilles, and has the most endemic bird species, five to be exact. Some of them are quite challenging, like the black-finch or oriole, so we had to make visits to several different locations (like Pigeon Island and the Des Cartiers Nature Trail) to catch up with them. The dry forest at Grande Anse was our most productive spot where we had nice looks at the endemic House Wren (soon to be split), St. Lucia warbler and pewee, St. Lucia Oriole (a last-minute arrival before it got too dark to see anything!), St. Lucia Black-Finch, and a very cooperative Rufous (St. Lucia) Nightjar at night. Our next island, St. Vincent, has two endemics, one of which, the Whistling Warbler, can be quite tricky. Our first afternoon of birding we visited the Vermont Nature Trail where we had nice fly-by St. Vincent Parrots and one perched bird that we were able to scope from the parking lot. We returned the next morning early and made a longer hike into the lush tropical forest. We waited patiently at the highest overlook before eventually finding a Whistling Warbler that showed well for us. A visit to the oldest botanical gardens in the New World, located in Kingstown, was also appreciated by everyone. The southernmost island in the Lesser Antilles chain is Grenada where we landed next for an attempt at the Critically Endangered Grenada Dove. Usually, I find the Grenada Dove to be one of the more difficult of the island endemics to see well. It often takes a bit of stealthy work to get a bird to show, which can be tough in the dense, spiny forest that it prefers. However, as we were pulling into the site this year, we had a bird literally walking around in the parking lot! We would improve on this view by having another individual approach within a few feet of us on the trail, then walk circles around us for a few minutes. Birding is a lot like yin-yang. Sometimes the birding gods give you a break (like with the dove), though our luck ran out a little with our visit to Dominica. Dominica has two endemic parrots and a couple of near endemic species like Blue-headed Hummingbird and Plumbeous Warbler. The hummingbird and warbler are found on just two islands. We did very well with Red-necked Parrot, but struggled with the largest Amazon parrot, the Imperial Parrot. A brief look at a high-flying bird for some of us was a bit disappointing. However, the hummingbird and warbler both showed super well. After Dominica, it was time to change languages and sides of the road, as we headed to the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.



We had a very cooperative Grenada Dove check us out on the trail this year. That NEVER happens!
Photo by guide Jesse Fagan.

Guadeloupe was a quick visit, as we were after just one endemic, the Guadeloupe Woodpecker. It is also the only woodpecker found in the Lesser Antilles. It took us two visits to one of my reliable spots, but eventually we found a quiet bird that performed well. We also made a trip out to Pointe de Chateaux in the evening which was more scenic than anything else. We enjoyed the sunset and flying tropicbirds. Moving on, we had one of my best visits ever to the island of Martinique. It started with an amazing afternoon after we landed at the airport, and before checking in at the hotel. We dashed up to Caravelle National Park in the northeast corner of the island. My hope was to get a couple of good birds before returning the next day. However, we did better than that! We had smashing looks at Martinique Oriole and White-breasted Thrasher, our targets, plus a bunch more stuff (a tarantula wasp with its prey) and celebrated with pizza and beers at a local restaurant near the park. The next evening, we scored big with close views of the rare White-tailed Nightjar, a curious disjunct population and a potential future split.

Our last three nights were spent in Antigua, from which we made day trips to Barbuda and Montserrat. This year we visited Barbuda first, arriving by fast ferry. We dodged a few rain showers during the day, but had a nice visit to Codrington Lagoon, where the largest breeding colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds in the New World can be found. We also spent time in the dry forest finding Barbuda Warbler before having a nice lunch at Two-foot Bay. Our last island of the trip was Montserrat. This is a spectacular island with its looming Soufriere Hills volcano and surrounding tropical forest. We made our first stop in the forest as we were shy of a few Lesser Antillean targets, plus the endemic Montserrat Oriole. We saw the oriole first and later added Bridled Quail-Dove and Forest Thrush. Success! After lunch we visited the Montserrat Volcano Observatory and in the late afternoon made the short flight back to Antigua. It was a memorable way to end our tour of the islands.

Some of the other critters we saw included:

- 1) Saint Lucian Anole (*Anolis luciae*) = Seen well at Forestier Reserve on St. Lucia.
- 2) Saint Vincent Bush Anole (*Anolis trinitatis*) = Photographed on the island of St. Vincent.
- 3) Martinique's Anole (*Anolis roquet*) = Seen at Savane des Petrifications (among other spots) on Martinique.
- 4) Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*) = One hanging out in a limestone cave on Barbados.
- 5) *Tityus smithii* = The scorpion found during our blacklighting evening Mt. Hartmann, Grenada.
- 6) Antilles Pink Patch (*Acanthoscurria maga*) = The paralyzed tarantula seen at Caravelle NP on Martinique.
- 7) Tarantula Hawk (*Pepsis* sp.) = Hunting the tarantula mentioned above.
- 8) Chain Moray (*Echidna catenate*) = Seen along the coastline at Savane des Petrifications, Martinique.

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/258083>

You can download a combined PDF of this page and the eBird report at this link: <https://fieldguides.com/triplists/les24TRIPLIST.pdf>

-- Jesse Fagan aka Motmot from Lima, Peru



Field Guides Birding Tours -- LESSER ANTILLES, 2024 (with Jesse Fagan)

6 – 20 Apr 2024 (15 days) Link-only



Map data ©2024 Google Imagery ©2024 NASA, TerraMetrics

- Antigua and Barbuda | Barbados | Dominica | Grenada | Guadeloupe | Saint Lucia | Martinique | Montserrat | Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Subregions

Jesse Fagan



99

34

6

Species Observed
















































Checklists

Species with Photos




























LIFERS  1  4 

Species Observed











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17	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	*			3
72	Scaly-naped Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas squamosa</i>				12
64	White-crowned Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>				2
64	Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	*			4
11	Common Ground Dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i>				6
4	Ruddy Quail-Dove	<i>Geotrygon montana</i>				4
4	Bridled Quail-Dove	<i>Geotrygon mystacea</i>				1
4	Grenada Dove	<i>Leptotila wellsi</i>				1
						2
45	Zenaida Dove	<i>Zenaida aurita</i>				9
1	Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>				1
19	Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i>				4
2	Mangrove Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus minor</i>				2
2	White-tailed Nightjar	<i>Hydropsalis cayennensis</i>				1
						1
2	Rufous Nightjar	<i>Antrostomus rufus</i>				1
83	Lesser Antillean Swift	<i>Chaetura martinica</i>				6
17	Short-tailed Swift	<i>Chaetura brachyura</i>				2
2	Rufous-breasted Hermit	<i>Glaucis hirsutus</i>				1
18	Purple-throated Carib	<i>Eulampis jugularis</i>				6
10	Green-throated Carib	<i>Eulampis holosericeus</i>				5
1	Blue-headed Hummingbird	<i>Riccordia bicolor</i>				1
33	Antillean Crested Hummingbird	<i>Orthorhyncus cristatus</i>				15

1	Clapper Rail <i>Rallus crepitans</i>	▶ 1
13	Common Gallinule <i>Gallinula galeata</i>	▶ 2
1	Black-necked Stilt <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	▶ 1
8	Semipalmated Plover <i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	▶ 2
9	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶ 3
54	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	▶ 3
75	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	▶ 1
8	Least Sandpiper <i>Calidris minutilla</i>	▶ 2
24	Semipalmated Sandpiper <i>Calidris pusilla</i>	▶ 3
69	Laughing Gull <i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	▶ 6
3	Sooty Tern <i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>	▶ 1
3	Least Tern <i>Sternula antillarum</i>	▶ 1
24	Royal Tern <i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	▶ 6
4	Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	▶ 2
532	Magnificent Frigatebird <i>Fregata magnificens</i>	▶ 8
6	Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>	▶ 2
8	Brown Pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	▶ 4
1	Yellow-crowned Night Heron <i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	▶ 1
1	Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	▶ 1
1	Little Blue Heron <i>Egretta caerulea</i>	▶ 1
3	Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	▶ 2
5	Green Heron <i>Butorides virescens</i>	▶ 4
7	Western Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	▶ 3
3	Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	▶ 3

1	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  1
3	Common Black Hawk <i>Buteogallus anthracinus</i>	▶  2
26	Broad-winged Hawk <i>Buteo platypterus</i>	▶  10
1	Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	▶  1
3	Guadeloupe Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes herminieri</i>	▶  2
1	Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	▶  1
2	Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	▶  2
36	Red-necked Parrot <i>Amazona arausiaca</i>	▶  2
14	St. Lucia Parrot <i>Amazona versicolor</i>	▶  2
1	Imperial Parrot <i>Amazona imperialis</i>	▶  1
16	St. Vincent Parrot <i>Amazona guildingii</i>	▶  2
14	Yellow-bellied Elaenia <i>Elaenia flavogaster</i>	▶  6
61	Caribbean Elaenia <i>Elaenia martinica</i>	▶  16
10	Lesser Antillean Pewee <i>Contopus latirostris</i>	▶  3
9	Grenada Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus nugator</i>	▶  6
12	Lesser Antillean Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus oberi</i>	▶  5
56	Gray Kingbird <i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i>	▶  17
95	Black-whiskered Vireo <i>Vireo altiloquus</i>	▶  13
1	White-winged Swallow <i>Tachycineta albiventer</i>	▶  1
7	Caribbean Martin <i>Progne dominicensis</i>	▶  2
5	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶  1
13	House Wren <i>Troglodytes aedon</i> 	▶  1  7
8	White-breasted Thrasher <i>Ramphocinclus brachyurus</i> 	▶  1  2

25	Scaly-breasted Thrasher <i>Allenia fusca</i>	▶ 📄 8
11	Pearly-eyed Thrasher <i>Margarops fuscatus</i>	▶ 📄 2
1	Brown Trembler <i>Cinlocerthia ruficauda</i>	▶ 📄 1
7	Gray Trembler <i>Cinlocerthia gutturalis</i> 📍	▶ 📄 1 📄 2
34	Tropical Mockingbird <i>Mimus gilvus</i>	▶ 📄 11
2	Rufous-throated Solitaire <i>Myadestes genibarbis</i>	▶ 📄 1
4	Cocoa Thrush <i>Turdus fumigatus</i>	▶ 📄 3
15	Spectacled Thrush <i>Turdus nudigenis</i>	▶ 📄 6
5	Forest Thrush <i>Turdus lherminieri</i>	▶ 📄 1
7	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶ 📄 2
4	Lesser Antillean Euphonia <i>Chlorophonia flavifrons</i> ✓	▶ 📄 1
1	St. Lucia Oriole <i>Icterus laudabilis</i>	▶ 📄 1
4	Montserrat Oriole <i>Icterus oberi</i>	▶ 📄 1
3	Martinique Oriole <i>Icterus bonana</i>	▶ 📄 1
55	Shiny Cowbird <i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>	▶ 📄 2
101	Carib Grackle <i>Quiscalus lugubris</i>	▶ 📄 8
1	Northern Waterthrush <i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>	▶ 📄 1
3	Whistling Warbler <i>Catharopeza bishopi</i>	▶ 📄 2
7	Plumbeous Warbler <i>Setophaga plumbea</i>	▶ 📄 2
1	Northern Parula <i>Setophaga americana</i>	▶ 📄 1
22	Yellow Warbler <i>Setophaga petechia</i>	▶ 📄 6
2	Barbuda Warbler <i>Setophaga subita</i>	▶ 📄 1
20	St. Lucia Warbler <i>Setophaga delicata</i>	▶ 📄 4

3	Lesser Antillean Tanager <i>Stilpnia cucullata</i>	▶  2
2	Yellow-bellied Seedeater <i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>	▶  1
273	Bananaquit <i>Coereba flaveola</i>	▶  22
220	Lesser Antillean Bullfinch <i>Loxigilla noctis</i>	▶  19
20	Barbados Bullfinch <i>Loxigilla barbadensis</i>	▶  1
1	St. Lucia Black Finch <i>Melanospiza richardsoni</i>	▶  1  1
79	Black-faced Grassquit <i>Melanospiza bicolor</i>	▶  13
24	Lesser Antillean Saltator <i>Saltator albicollis</i>	▶  5
ADDITIONAL TAXA		
20	Sooty/Bridled Tern <i>Onychoprion fuscatus/anaethetus</i>	▶  1