



## **Trip Report: Turks and Caicos Islands (28<sup>th</sup> June 2015)**

During a long-weekend vacation on Providenciales (“Provo”) in the Turks and Caicos Islands, I was invited to join Eric, from the Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs, during one of his periodic early-morning bird monitoring trips at Provo Golf Club.

Eric is also a keen photographer and, while he put his new D7200/Tamron 150-600 mm super-zoom lens combination to the test, he was kind enough to lend me an older model camera with an 18-200 mm zoom lens. This proved to be a very handy set-up given the excellent close views that we enjoyed of several species that were very confiding. Our ability to secure close-up views was no doubt aided by the birds having become accustomed to golfers and their golf carts passing them by on a regular basis. The bird photos in this report were taken on this borrowed equipment.



*Green Heron (immature) [Provo Golf Club]*

Highlights during our 6am to 9am visit included many fishing Green Herons (including a juvenile catching large tadpoles), several pairs of American Kestrels (including one individual that appeared to have lost its left eye), adult and juvenile Black-necked Stilts stalking the fairways, several Least Terns taking small fish from ponds right next to us, and a group of adult and juvenile American Flamingos that flew in and proceeded to feed and preen in front of us. A lizard with a curly tail turned out to be, naturally, a Curly-tailed Lizard. No lifers were seen, but it was a very enjoyable way to spend the early-morning in like-minded company!

During the remainder of the weekend our travels around Provo to diving and snorkelling sites provided opportunities to see a couple of lifer bird species – a Bahama Woodstar feeding at the inflorescence on the tall spike of an agave-type plant, and several Antillean Nighthawks feeding at dusk on the grounds of the Seven Stars resort on Grace Bay. The beaches and water around Provo were spectacular and we also enjoyed diving and snorkelling in both the Princess Alexandra Land and Sea National Park and the Northwest Point Marine National Park. Although live coral cover was inferior to other parts of the Caribbean that we’ve visited, there were good soft corals and we noted relative abundance of parrotfish, saw several groupers, large Caribbean Reef Sharks and a Hawksbill sea turtle. Tim and Nik of Sail Beluga (<http://www.sailbeluga.com>) were great company and excellent snorkelling guides. Finally, congratulations are due to Turks & Caicos Reef Fund for their recent installation of the fixed mooring buoys that we used in the national park.



*Green Heron [Provo Golf Club]*



*American Kestrel [Provo Golf Club]*



*Black-necked Stilt [Provo Golf Club]*



*Black-necked Stilt (juvenile) [Provo Golf Club]*



*Curly-tailed lizard (Leiocephalus carinatus) [Provo Golf Club]*



*Snorkelling in Northwest Point Marine National Park [Providenciales]*



*Snorkelling in Princess Alexandra Land and Sea National Park [near Leeward Going Through, Providenciales]*



*Hawksbill Turtle in Princess Alexandra Land and Sea National Park [near Leeward Going Through, Providenciales]*

## 1. Bird Trip List<sup>1</sup>

Confirmed personal sightings only for DJS – excludes birds heard only unless otherwise indicated. Birds in the trip list are identified as per ‘The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World’, Cornell, 2007 with updates through December 2010 (online version 6.5).

### **ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae**

**White-cheeked Pintail**, *Anas bahamensis* : Several on a shallow lake on the far side of the golf course.

**Ruddy Duck**, *Oxyura jamaicensis* \* : One female on a shallow lake on the far side of the golf course.

### **PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae**

**Least Grebe**, *Tachybaptus dominicus* \* : Several adults, including one on a nest on a small golf course pond.

**Pied-billed Grebe**, *Podilymbus podiceps* : A pair on a small golf course pond.

### **PHOENICOPTERIFORMES: Phoenicopteridae**

**American Flamingo**, *Phoenicopterus ruber* \* : Eight, including two juveniles, flew in to a lake on the far side of the golf course.

### **PELECANIFORMES: Pelecanidae**

**Brown Pelican**, *Pelecanus occidentalis* : Seen flying over the golf course and from the beaches around the island.

### **PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae**

**Tricolored Heron**, *Egretta tricolor* : Several on various golf course ponds.

**Green Heron**, *Butorides virescens* \* : Many adults and juveniles on various golf course ponds.

### **GRUIFORMES: Rallidae**

**Common Moorhen (Common Gallinule)**, *Gallinula chloropus cerceris* (*Gallinula galeata*) : Many on various golf course ponds.

**American Coot**, *Fulica americana* : Several on various golf course ponds.

### **CHARADRIIFORMES: Recurvirostridae**

**Black-necked Stilt**, *Himantopus mexicanus* \* : Several adults and juveniles in various golf course ponds and on the fairways.

### **CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae**

**Killdeer**, *Charadrius vociferous* \* : Several adults and juveniles on the fairways and wilder areas of the golf course.

### **CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae**

**Laughing Gull**, *Leucophaeus atricilla* : Common around the island and on the golf course fairways.

**Least Tern**, *Sternula antillarum* \* : Several catching bait fish from lakes around the golf course.

### **COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae**

**Common Ground-Dove**, *Columbina passerina* : Several around the island and on the golf course fairways and rougher areas.

**Mourning Dove**, *Zenaida macroura* : Several around the island and on the golf course fairways and rougher areas.

### **CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae**

**Smooth-billed Ani**, *Crotophaga ani* : Flocks of up to 10 on the golf course fairways and natural areas.

### **CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Caprimulgidae**

**Antillean Nighthawk**, *Chordeiles gundlachii* : At dusk at least three were seen repeatedly flying over the Seven Stars hotel pool area and perched on the ground along the quiet service exit roadway.

### **APODIFORMES: Trochilidae**

**Bahama Woodstar**, *Calliphlox evelynae* : One feeding from an inflorescence on the tall spike of an agave-type plant at Northwest Point Marine National Park. Listed as endemic to The Bahamas, but the range of one of the two sub-species extends to the Turks and Caicos Islands.

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<sup>1</sup> First sighting ever for DJS; **E** = Turks and Caicos Islands endemic species (there are none!); \* = photo available

**FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae**

**American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius* \*** : Several pairs on the golf course (including one individual with a missing left eye) and another confiding pair above the beach at Northwest Point Marine National Park.

**PASSERIFORMES: Tyrannidae**

**Gray Kingbird, *Tyrannus dominicensis* \*** : The bird most commonly seen and heard across the island.

**PASSERIFORMES: Polioptilidae**

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, *Poliophtila caerulea*** : One seen in roadside vegetation near to Chalk Sound National Park.

**PASSERIFORMES: Mimidae**

**Northern Mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*** : Common across the island.

**PASSERIFORMES: Thraupidae**

**Bananaquit, *Coereba flaveola*** : A pair seen in scrub vegetation on the golf course and another pair above the beach at Northwest Point Marine National Park.

Total 24 confirmed species for the trip (including no Turks and Caicos Islands endemics - there are none - as per <http://avibase.bsc-eoc.org>), of which 2 were 'lifers' for DJS.

## **2. Reptile Trip List**

**Curly-tailed lizard, *Leiocephalus carinatus* \*** : One seen at Provo Golf Club

**Hawksbill Sea Turtle, *Eretmochelys imbricata* \*** : One seen whilst snorkelling in Princess Alexandra Land and Sea National Park, plus another distant and unidentified sea turtle seen whilst diving in the same national park.



*Eric (right) and Earl conducting the bird census at Provo Golf Club*



*Conch tee markers at Provo Golf Club*