American Avocet
*Recurvirostra americana* and other vagrants in Jamaica

On 28 November 2012, at 16h30, we observed four American Avocets *Recurvirostra americana* (Fig. 1) in winter plumage at Parottee Pond, c.5 km south-east of Black River in south-west Jamaica. The observation was made with the sun behind us at a distance of c.15 m. They were in shallow, saline water with other waders including Short-billed Dowitchers *Limnodromus griseus*, Willets *Tringa semipalmata*, Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* and Black-bellied Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola*. A vagrant to Jamaica, *R. americana* was reported just once in 1984–20095. More recently, seven were at Parottee Pond on 18 April 2012 (R. Miller2). Prior to 1984, records exist for 1982, 1978, 1977 (January and June), and 1976 (October and December) (C. Levy in litt. 2013). Considered a very rare, non-breeding resident in the Bahamas, where *R. americana* has been observed primarily in July–January and April8, it has also occurred on Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in 1989 and Tobago and Barbados in 1977. In Cuba *R. americana* was formerly rare, but has recently been discovered wintering in large numbers and even breeding3.

In addition, we also observed two Wilson’s Phalaropes *Phalaropus tricolor* in the same area, one of which was spinning in circles in the water and the other was wading in the water, its yellow legs visible. Both were in winter plumage, with white neck and underparts, grey upperparts and wings, and mid-length needle-like bills. Also considered a vagrant, *P. tricolor* has been reported just twice since 2000 (C. Levy in litt. 2013). One was seen at Small Pedro Pond on 26 September 2010 by R. Miller2. Prior to 2000 there were five records, three of them in eastern Jamaica, at Yallahs Pond (1991), Kingston Harbour (1971) and in the Port Henderson area (1963) (C. Levy in litt. 2013). It is a rare migrant and non-breeding resident in Hispaniola, Barbados, Puerto Rico, the Virgin and Cayman Islands.

Earlier on the afternoon of 28 November, we observed a male Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* in breeding plumage at Great Pedro Pond, near Treasure Beach, c.18 km south-east of Black River in south-west Jamaica. It was with hundreds of Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* as well as a few Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* and Lesser Scaups *A. affinis*, and was observed at a distance of 150–200 m using binoculars and a telescope. Larger than *A. discors*, it had a white stripe on the side of its long neck and a long, pointed tail (Fig. 2). Considered a vagrant or very rare winter visitor in Jamaica4, *A. acuta* is a common, non-breeding resident in Cuba4. More recently, it was observed near Little London, Jamaica, on 10 February 2010 by R. Miller2 and at the west end of the island in February 2012 (C. Levy in litt. 2013). Previous records are from November 1995, January 1994 and January 1965 (C. Levy in litt. 2013). Subsequently, two males were seen at Great Pedro Pond on 9 February 2013 by R. Swift and G. MacDonald2 and a female in the same place on 21 February 2013 by R. Hoyer (pers. comm.). On 27 November 2012, in the early afternoon, we saw a Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus* near Elim Pools, in the Black River Upper Morass, c.18 km north-east of Black River. It was flying low over the fields and identified as a female with brown upperparts and wings, a white rump and long, barred tail. Considered a vagrant or rare passage migrant in Jamaica4, *C. cyaneus* is an uncommon winter visitor to the Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, and a rare to uncommon migrant in

**Figure 1.** American Avocets *Recurvirostra americana*, Parottee Pond, Elizabeth, Jamaica, November 2012 (Kit Larsen)

**Figure 2.** Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Great Pedro Pond, Elizabeth, Jamaica, November 2012 (Kit Larsen)
the Virgin Islands, Lesser Antilles and Caymans. Previous records of C. cyaneus include singles at Osborne Store, 25 November 2004 (R. Miller), Elim Pools, 15 April 2010 (R. Hoyer & B. Hay) and Black River Lower Morass, 22 February 2012 (A. Kneidel), with two at Elim Pools, 2 March 2012 (C. Grooms & K. Hennige) and one there, 24 March 2012 (S. Kurtzman) in addition to records in October 1997, November 1992 and January and December 1964, all in eastern Jamaica (C. Levy in litt. 2013). Subsequently, a juvenile was observed by C. & V. Turland in the same general area in February 2013 (C. Levy in litt. 2013).

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References

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