

Aruba, Dutch Caribbean **12-20 March 2005**

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Painful Beauty they call it– an innocuous looking semi-woody plant with palmate leaves that lightly endowed with a few benign looking hairs. Brush against this vegetation, and you'll tingle. Now, there have been times in my life when I've enjoyed a good tingle but not this pins-and-needles type of tingling. I guessed that since the sensation was much like that produced by nettles, the whole thing would fade after 15 minutes or so, and indeed, I was tingle-free in about that much time. That night, a few scattered mosquito-bite like bumps were all that remained from the nettlesome encounter. The next afternoon, though, I was scratching my calf vigorously. I dropped my pants that evening and found, to my great horror, a series of red and violaceous blotches covering my legs, some almost as big as my palm. What had been painful before now itched vigorously. Since my wife's encounter with this plant had totally dissipated, I felt very special to have this wonderful colorful reaction. I looked as if I had leprosy. These lesions disappeared, but they did so slowly, with me scratching like a flea-ridden monkey. By the time I returned to the U.S., it was all gone – nothing to impress my colleagues or terrify my patients with. Alas, I also never really understood the name of the plant. Painful Beauty. Okay, the pain part is clear. But beauty? The leaves are unremarkable to look at and the flowers are tiny, white, and unadorned. I guess beauty is in the palm of the beholder.

We were back in Aruba. Continental Airlines had transferred us without problem from Seattle to Newark and then Newark to the Friendly Island. Dollar

provided a durable Toyota Yaris, the same model we'd happily rented the year before from Budget. And we stayed at the Bucuti Beach Resort, that lovely establishment at which guests are treated as friends, not customers.

It was our third trip here, all in March. Below is a narrative of the birding. For more precise directions, see previous trip reports accessible on Surfbirds.com.

Following what had become tradition, we met our first sunrise at **Bubali**, checking out the first the small sewage treatment pond, which was full of sleepy-eyed White-cheeked Pintail and Blue-winged Teal. We then drove to the far corner of the marsh (which takes all of 3-4 minutes) and climbed up the observation platform. From the top, you can survey the entire marsh, which unfortunately is now most covered by cattails and a kind of water-lettuce type plant. The one area of open water is fairly distant. A few moorhens poked around the edges desultorily. A Pied-billed Grebe with 2 mostly full-grown young popped up and down. We could see the huge Neotropic Cormorant roosting area, which included a few Great and Cattle Egrets. Several of the cormorants appeared to be sitting on nests and one of the Great Egrets looked to be a juvenile. A new cut through the trees bordering the pond revealed a small group of fishing Snowy Egrets and Tricolored Herons. One of the Snowies, however, wasn't a Snowy – it was a Little Egret, with two long head plumes blowing about in the wind. We'd found one of these Old World herons at Tierra del Sol Golf Course 2 years ago for a first ABC (Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao) record, and quite possibly, this was the same individual.

With that fine rarity under our belts, we headed off to walk the trees that border Bubali's west side. Again, the Golden Warbler and Northern Waterthrush

numbers were stunning: 140 of the former and 35 of the latter. And as previously, the Golden Warblers went nuts over pishing, flitting over our heads, chipping loudly, chasing each other about, and often coming within 5-10 feet. Among them, as previously, was a scattering of neotropical migrants (beyond the waterthrushes). This year there seemed to be more. Actually, there seemed to be more of almost everything. They'd had a very wet December and January. Dragonflies formed swirling swarms, butterflies flopped about hither and yon, the country side was greener, and there was more wet spots. Better yet, there were no more mosquitos. Horrid for the mid-winter tourist trade, great for us. We reaped the benefits. The first "neotrop" was a Northern Parula. Interestingly, when Voous' Birds of the Netherlands Antilles was published in 1983, there were only 10 records from the ABC Islands and none from Aruba. Regular visits by myself and Jeff Wells, North American birders not afraid to pish, revealed that N. Parulas are not rare, which is particularly odd since they're vagrants in Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, and the southern Lesser Antilles.

So, why are they in Aruba?

The next neotrop vagrant was an island first for us and the 4th for Aruba: a glorious citron yellow, blue-gray, and white Prothonotary Warbler. By morning's end we'd see FIVE more. And so the morning went. Partly cloudy skies, a moderate breeze, no biting insects, and dozens of Golden Warbler, Banaquits, Northern Waterthrushes plus a few endlessly charming and often loud Caribbean Parakeets. There was also a Groove-billed Ani or two, a few Tropical Mockingbirds, plus numerous "vagrants": 4 Northern Parulas, 3 Chestnut-sided

Warblers (2 previous Aruba record), 2 Cape May Warblers (3 previous Aruba records), an Ovenbird, a Louisiana Waterthrush (2 previous Aruba records), TEN Common Yellowthroats, and an American Redstart. Almost all were extremely cooperative. We also videotaped two or three dragonflies we'd not seen on previous trips.

After such spectacular birding, believe it or not, we took a break and popped into the butterfly farm, which you walk right past as your birding the tree-line. The butterflies are well-worth some time to look at, but we were gift hunting. When the tame butterflies pass on to become multi-colored angels, their corporeal forms are turned into luminous unique jewelry. A few minutes later we left lighter of wallet but much enriched.

Our next birding stop was the **Moomba Beach**, just at the north end of the High Rise Hotels. Last year, the rocks around the small marina here were good for roosting terns and hosted a Franklin's Gull. We checked it several times this trip, and besides a few Laughing Gulls, Brown Pelicans, and Ruddy Turnstones, there was nought. We continued up-coast to the **Malmok** area. One of the wrecked ships has drifted close to shore and is not much used for a roost any more. The "German Wreck", barely visible, lies where the highway splits – one part headed towards Tierra del Sol Golf Course (henceforth, TDSGC) and another towards California Lighthouse. An adult Brown Booby was roosting on a small pyramid of rusting metal protruding from the azure sea. As we watched, another booby flew in. We'd already identified it, when it developed a furious itch, causing it to scratch vigorously exposing bright orange feet: an immature Red-footed Booby. We then looked at the saltpans across the street. Not much (though at sunset the previous night, it had been packed with

yellowlegs).

We continued our way up the leeward coast to **California Lighthouse** (we have no idea how a lighthouse at the northern tip of Aruba was named “California”). Usually, low-lying fingers of limestone sticking into the sea here provide great roosts for terns, but beyond the usual scattering of Royals, we saw just 4 Cayenne/Sandwich Terns (1 Cayenne, 2 Sandwich, 1 with mixed features), and we saw those on only that day.

We ended day one at that magical place, the **Tierra del Sol Golf Course**. Over our last two visits, this spot provided the ABC’s first Little Egret and Red-breasted Blackbird, nesting Southern Lapwing, Aruba’s first and second records of Green-winged Teal and third record of Northern Pintail. As in 2004, our descent to the pond was greeted by a pair of agitated Southern Lapwings; not as hysterical as last year, but clearly agitated. We suspect that, since we were two weeks later last year, there were no young out but just a nest. Another plover also vigorously performed distraction displays– a Killdeer – a rare breeder on the ABCs. The Killdeer chick, tiny as a cottonball, was pretty easy to find. Surveying the small pond, we saw hundreds of yellowlegs (probably many of the same birds that had been at the nearby Malmok flats the previous night), a few Stilt Sandpipers, many Black-necked Stilts and Blue-winged Teal. Many species showed evidence of breeding: at least a couple Caribbean Coot chicks, many Common Moorhen chicks/nearly full grown immatures, several broods of Pied-billed Grebes ranging from full-size to half-size, and a couple broods of WC Pintail, including a group of 10 fluffballs. Though there were some egrets about, the Snowy Egret rookery on the pond’s far side was unoccupied. Hundreds of Neotropical Cormorants stood about on giant elephant-gray boulders, wings

outstretched, uttering a continuous stream of piggy grunts. On the back edge, hanging with the teal and pintail, was a Lesser Scaup and 2 Ring-necked Ducks, the latter a first for Aruba. As I was filming them, my camera flashed a red warning: EJECT TAPE. Well, the tape wouldn't eject. I was standing merely 100 yards from where my Panasonic had died two years ago. Another videocam D.O.A. at TDSGC, clearly the Bermuda Triangle for these instruments. At least my Panasonic had the politeness to die on the last day, not the first. And as had happened that first time, a mega appeared immediately after the camera died: A Limpkin, Aruba's 2nd. Of course, it gave great views. Our final rarity was American Coot, two adults this year. It is not clear how rare these are on the ABCs as Voous chose to essentially lump American with Caribbean Coot. He may, in the end, be taxonomically correct, but even as a subspecies, they're worth tracking.

Day 2's sunrise found us at **Spanish Lagoon**. This cut of brackish water extends a km or two into the island from the sea's edge and is surrounded by lush mangroves. From the air, it forms a green finger sticking out from the surrounding country side, even in wet winter such as this. The density of Golden Warblers here is not as great as Bubali, though Northern Waterthrushes are equally numerous at both sites. Pishing here, thus, does not produce the same instantaneous gratification. Nonetheless, our first pish produced 2 Cape May Warblers!!! One would have allowed tremendous videotaping, if, well...

As we worked coastward, pishing pulled in 2 Prothonotaries, 4 N Parulas, 4 Black-and-white Warblers, and 7 American Redstarts as well as a Black-whiskered Vireo and Aruba's first Red-eyed Vireo. It is actually quite amazing

that Aruba has no prior records of this, as Red-eyeded from the US/Canada are common winterers in Venezuela. Voous (1983) lists only 6 from Bonaire and Curacao. We also saw plenty of Blue-tailed Emeralds and Ruby-topaz Hummingbirds, though not the swarms of last year– probably less concentrated with so much water about. The emerald displays a glorious range of luminescent greens and blues with hints of gold here and there. The Ruby-topaz is an odd hummingbird, wearing a helmet-like crest and colored in a wide variety of golds, magenta, and reds. Northern Scrub-Flycatchers were common, a pair of Yellow Orioles (the local race actually being more yellow-orange) offered great views. The background to this all was provided by the maniacal singing of dozens of Bare-eyed Pigeons.

After walking the mangroves' edge, we went back, almost all the way to the carpark, to where a cut leads into the mangroves. This is currently marked by red-and-white flagging tape. Carefully navigated, one can cross all the way to the south side of the ravine in which the cut lies. We paused and pished and up popped an Ovenbird. I switched to a pygmy-owl whistle and a large bird flew into the tree above us uttering an odd croak. As I binoculated on this creature, I was stunned to see an ani larger than a Great-tailed Grackle with a piercing yellow-white eye. Indeed, there were two such creatures. The bill was odd, as well, even for an ani. It was partly grooved and had a weird bump, giving a “roman-nose” appearance. These were Greater Anis from South America, a lifebird, and a first for the ABC Islands.

Much gladdened, we stumbled into the swamp. This is a fairy land inhabited by oddly shaped turquoise spiders, salmon-pink crabs, and small black-and-yellow dragonflies. The birding was slow, though. Lots of Bananaquits, a

few Golden Warblers and waterthrushes, and one American Redstart.

From Spanish Lagoon, we went to **Savaneta**, where there are more mangroves but fewer warblers. There is an old small set of salt ponds reached by following the road as close to the water as one can. The first pond has no vegetation around it and is separated from the rest (which is now mostly mangroves) by a small footpath. We walked across this footpath, seeing a few egrets, BN Stilts, yellowlegs, etc along the way, and then turned right. We followed the mangrove swamp edge until you finally reach an impenetrable wall of vegetation. It's about a five minute walk, but last year led to a Black-and-white Warbler, so it seemed worthy of revisiting. A nice lengthy pish pulled in two more Cape Mays, a Prothonotary, a Black-and-white, and another N Parula.

The rest of the day was a bust, figuratively and literally, despite ongoing glories of sun and warmth. **Seroe Colorado** and the **Colorado Light** were devoid of terns or any kind of interesting bird life. On the way back, along a curve, a pickup truck packed to the gills with passengers, cut the corner off their turn. To avoid a head on collision (which was missed by about 12 inches) I slammed on my breaks, causing the tourist behind me to gently rear-end me. Since it was his fault and his car sustained all the damage (initially it appeared that way; we shortly thereafter noted a small buckle on the side bumper from the rear impact and showed it to the Dollar agent at the airport who shrugged his shoulders and kindly told us to forget about it), he decided to blow it off and drove off. Normally driving around Aruba is a boring experience, but it was Aruba Day, a major local holiday, and apparently cruising – just driving around the island – is a popular past time, so the normally benign traffic wasn't that day (nor on flag day, 5 days later).

Sunrise 3: **Tierra del Sol**. Another rosy morning, with scattered clouds skittering across overhead. The RN Ducks were still there. A Common Yellowthroat popped up when pished at. No sign of Mr Limpkin. The lapwings again objected to our presence. Fewer shorebirds were present, but we found them at the **saltpan at Malmok**, visible from the road as you head west from TDSGC to the sea. We walked the north and east edges. There were hundreds of yellowlegs, a few Stilt Sands, 125 BB Plovers, a goodly number of Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones, about 30 Least Sands, a couple small groups of Semi Plovers, a Semi Sand. No sign of the Collared Plover I'd encountered there the night of our arrival. We did find 2 Short-billed Dowitchers, the first dows I've been able to ID on Aruba (and the more expected). During my prolonged study of these (basic-plumaged dows aren't high up on the easy list), I'd occasionally glance at the remainder of the flock. To my surprise, after we'd been there about an hour, I found a Gull-billed Tern in with the Black-bellied Plovers. A first for us on Aruba and apparently a first Aruban spring record.

The remainder of the day was spent poking around some of the larger hotels and briefly popping into some of the better spots at Bubali. Just north of the **Marriott**, there are a few wet spots with some scraggly mangroves and a big mesquite (or what looks like mesquite) or two. A pish here drew in a Common Yellowthroat (these buggers are supposed to be rare) and another Cape May. A pish along the service road on the **Radisson's** n. side yielded another Cape May Warbler! Finally, a walk into the small grove of mesquite and weeds along **Bubali's** sewage treatment plant's east side produced another yellowthroat, a few Shiny Cowbirds and grassquits, and... Aruba's first Indigo

Bunting.

March 15th: My last full day of birding. Susan Bieman, our hotel owner, had been generous beyond belief and arranged, via the Bureau of Tourism, for me to go out with a biologist in the fisheries department: Francisco Franken. The goal was to get to those tern islands near Seroe Colorado. I had my misgivings given how little we'd seen from land. Last year the area was bustling with birds, mostly just beyond reach of confident ID (well, except the dead Black Noddy).

Francisco, a kind and handsome man of bronzed complexion and sporting short salt-and-pepper hair and beard, was a great companion. As he launched the small boat, I looked up and saw a bird headed at us. My first instinct was "big gull," but that was quickly and obviously wrong. It was a frigatebird, but a small one. It had a white head, complete dark chest band, and a white shield-shaped patch on the belly extending a bit into the axillars. Perfect for Lesser Frigatebird, which would be a tremendous rarity, except in that plumage (juvenile) it should have a buffy or tawny head... still looking into the ID of that bird.

Indeed, the boat trip out, though pleasant enough with the warm sun and unbelievably colored water, was a bust bird wise. We saw 6 Brown Boobies roosting on buoys and nada more. I felt as if I'd wasted Francisco's time, but he seemed okay with it all. On the way back, I inquired about other areas with water and was told there were many. Many of the ravines, particularly on the island's south and central portions, had small dams that accumulated water behind them in wet years such as this. He showed me a couple near **Paradera**, and one had an adult Least Grebe plus two full-grown young and two Solitary

Sandpipers. Interestingly, the mesquite surrounding these ponds, often lush, were quite poor for passerines.

I then went back to **Spanish Lagoon**. That area always seems to warrant multiple checks, probably because you can never cover it thoroughly like you can Bubali. The revisit paid off in the form of a female Black-throated Blue Warbler, a Common Yellowthroat, a “new” Ovenbird, and 2 “new” Northern Parulas. I then drove about 1/4 to _ mile back towards Santa Cruz, and birded a verdant desert-like wash heading into the island’s interior. The first large mesquite held a handful of Golden Warblers and a Blackpoll Warbler, normal enough during fall in Aruba, but rare during winter/spring. Northern Scrub-Flycatchers and Brown-crested Flycatchers really love this habitat and were easy to find as was the always stunning Troupial.

March 18th: Our last birding opportunity. The medical education conference I was attending gave us the a.m. off, so we headed back to **Spanish Lagoon**, where (GASP!) we ran into another birder, John Schreiber (forgive me, John, if I’ve misspelled your name) from Pennsylvania. Most of the birds had already grown accustomed to our pishing enticements, but not all. Our first pish brought in a Cape May and a brightly colored Philadelphia Vireo, which of course, got within 10 feet of us and would have been great for video.....Anyway, a 2nd Aruba record and 3rd for the ABC Islands, well worth celebrating, even without hard documentation. The walk was kind of slow bird-wise, though we did find 2 more Cape Mays not previously seen, and likely seen-already N Parulas, Black-and-white, and redstart. After walking the mangroves, we decided to follow the same ravine into the interior. To our great surprise, there was quite a few pools

and ponds, and the area was very birdy, giving us especially good views of Yellow Orioles, plus tons of Troupials, N Scrub Flies, BF Grassquits and the like. Two years ago I had a Rufous-collared Sparrow up here. None this year, but did pull in a male Hooded Warbler!

LODGING

Outside of nature lodges such as Chan Chich, the Bucuti Beach Resort is our favorite hotel/resort/lodge. The staff is unbelievably nice and helpful. The rooms are exceptionally comfortable and clean. You're on the beach in case you are, unlike me, capable of just stretching out and relaxing. An incredible array of iguanas perform territorial displays for your entertainment in the afternoons. This year, a very pale small Peregrine spent most of the day and night up on the Tara Suites (about as close to a cliff edge as you'll find in Aruba and shielded from the sun much of the day). That Peregrine must have been a great hunter, for it was almost always up there hangin' out or sleeping.

There are not many amusements for youngsters, so if you're bringing the entire family, this isn't the place. But if it's you alone, or you and your spouse....FABULOUS.

DINING

The vast array of quality dining choices is one of Aruba's biggest lures in my mind (and elsewhere). For a quick light tasty dinner, try Café Tua (pizza and pasta, but in a great atmosphere and very yummy) or Amici's (sandwiches and salads with a great assortment of ice cream for desert). For a blowout dinner, try the French/Belgian Le Dome, which is exquisite. We had a scrumptious froie

gras (sorry about the spelling) served with pine nuts and berries, a light refreshing scallop soup, and stunningly tasty duck with a citrus sauce.

Gasparito's is well worth sampling. It's mid-priced and specializes in traditional Aruban fare. The service is great. I had goat stew which, you might be surprised to know, did not taste like chicken... it tasted like lamb and was surprisingly tender. Must be farm raised. I know those goats wandering around the island's scrub would be tough as jerky. Marina Pirata also rated highly in our estimation. Though a bit far away (about a 20 minute drive, not far from Spanish Lagoon). It specializes in local seafood. The lobster tail and shrimp were sweet and we had barracuda- a meaty tasting fish not too different from swordfish in flavor and texture. Also, the ambience is fabulous. The drive there ends on about 100 meters of dirt road. There's an archway over a wooden boardwalk into the mangroves that says Marina Pirata. We saw it during the day and figured it led into some local seedy tavern. You walk through the mangroves and appear into a bustling beautiful restaurant literally over the water. The view at sunset is breathtaking.

For breakfast, Dushi Bagel on the way into (or out of) Bucuti Beach opens at 6am Mon-Sat (sunrise is 6:45-7 in mid March) and serves wonderful breakfasts from bacon, egg, and cheese bagels (and these are real bagels, not the bready stuff that passes for a bagel in Seattle) to the more traditional lox and cream cheese. If you want an earlier escape, or on Sundays, you can always stock up the night before at Dunkin' Donuts.

Species Notes

Pied-billed Grebe: Up to 50 total between TDSGC and Bubali, with one brood at Bubali and

multiple at TDSGC. Only one brood small enough to be clearly flightless.

Least Grebe: The small family group near Paradera. Nested there?

Neotropic Cormorant: max of 515 at Bubali plus 215 at TDSGC on 14 March, including 15 or so birds appearing to be sitting on nests at Bubali.

Brown Booby: An adult seen several times on German Wreck near Malmok. Six near Seroe Colorado on large buoys seen from boat only.

Red-footed Booby : Immature at German Wreck on 12 March.

Little Egret: Adult at Bubali on 12 March. Second Aruba record (or repeat of first, which was at TDSGC in Mar 2003).

Snowy Egret: Small numbers at Bubali, TDSGC, and the flooded salt pans between Eagle Beach and Malmok.

Little Blue Heron: One imm at Bubali only.

Reddish Egret: None this year. Seen only in 2003 at TDSGC.

Green Heron: all Greens. Could not find a Striated, though we looked hard. Widespread.

Night-Herons: Black-crowns especially common, particularly at Bubali, where we had 50+ on 12 March. Also, though supposedly not rare, had our first Yellow-crowned at Spanish Lagoon on 13 March.

White-cheeked Pintail: Numbers up from last year, with 75-100 at TDSGC each day, plus a

couple broods there. 20-30 present most days at Bubali, usually visible at sewage plant. When there elsewhere in the marsh, they are pretty much invisible.

Ring-necked Duck: First Aruban record: 2 at TDSGC, 12-16 March. Only 3 Venezuela records.

Lesser Scaup: Rare but semi-regular on ABCs. One at TDSGC 12-16 March.

Peregrine: Pretty much the only one we saw was the one daily at our hotel. Clearly a Tundra Peregrine, which would be the expected race.

Crested Caracara: A couple at TDSGC and Spanish Lagoon only.

Crested Bobwhite: Last year, we heard these cuties singing at TDSGC and Spanish Lagoon. No sign this year. My guess is that we were a little early and they become more obvious when hormones are active a little later in the spring.

Caribbean Coot and Common Moorhen: plenty at TDSGC and a few at Bubali. None elsewhere. A couple “broods” of coot at TDSGC (mostly one to two youngsters) plus many immature moorhen, mostly full grown, but still hanging around parents, and a few small chicks— all at TDSGC plus one ad with two full-size young at Bubali.

American Coot: Only three previous Aruba records, one of which furnished by us last year. This year we had two adults without bulbous white frontal shields and with small chestnut knobs about the white shield. Found on 12 March, with one still present 14 March and none thereafter.

Limpkin: 2nd Aruba (and 2nd ABC?) record was one stalking around edges of TDSGC 12 March. Looked like typical US Limpkin, but had back evenly brown with neat fine pale feather edges... Immature? Different race?

Southern Lapwing: A pair, apparently defending a nest site, 12-16 March, at TDSGC.

Black-bellied Plover: Good numbers roosting on Malmok Saltpans with max of 125 on 14 March.

Collared Plover: one on 11 March at Malmok salt pans.

Killdeer: pair with downy chick at TDSGC. Another pair there acting like nest present as well as pair at Malmok Saltpans doing same. Rare breeder in ABC Islands.

American Oystercatcher: Only one this year; on beach near Malmok.

Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs: Very good numbers this year with maxima of 325 Greater at Malmok Saltpans on 14 March and 275 Lessers there 16 March. The change in ratios from day to day imply that a) these birds have other feeding locations I'm unaware of, but there's not a lot of habitat or b) some migration was occurring.

Solitary Sandpiper: Apparently rare in Aruba, but common in Venezuela. Had them for third consecutive trip; this time 2 near Paradera in small pond on 15 March.

Short-billed Dowitcher: We'd seen only one Dow sp? on each previous trip. So, our first ID'd dowitchers on Aruba. At Malmok Saltpans on 14 March.

Gull-billed Tern: Apparently first spring record for Aruba- at Malmok Saltpans, 14 March.

Cayenne/Sandwich Tern: Very few. Worst trip by far for these. Why?

Bare-eyed Pigeon: Common at places with trees, such as Bubali and Spanish Lagoon. Less common, but still present at places such as Arikok, TDSGC, hotel districts.

Eared Dove: Everywhere. At outdoor restaurants, in the trees, flying overhead. Omnipresent. Seen on multiple nests plus juvs wandering around.

White-tipped Dove: Least evident dove/pigeon. Seen at Spanish Lagoon, TDSGC. Heard more often than seen.

Caribbean (Brown-throated) Parakeet: endemic race. common everywhere.

Groove-billed Ani: Evident at Bubali and TDSGC.

Greater Ani: Two at Spanish Lagoon 13 March yielded first ABC record.

Burrowing Owl: Pair nesting at Bubali, where a trench had been dug, exposing nice soft soil for burrowing. Also, three roosting low in a tree near Spanish Lagoon (as we walked towards the interior in the same ravine as the lagoon occupies).

Ruby-topaz Hummingbird: A real stunner. Some (imm males?) had a dark stripe down a pale front reminiscent of a GB Mango. This plumage is not shown in any guide I have. Mostly at Spanish Lagoon, but one or two elsewhere.

Blue-tailed Emerald: Common, widespread, and confiding.

Northern Scrub-Flycatcher: Likes areas of cactus/mesquite. Most common at the draws heading inland from Frenchmen's Pass, but still saw several at multiple other locations.

Brown-crested Flycatcher: Pairs at Spanish Lagoon and in draws inland from road through Frenchman's Pass.

Gray Kingbird: More than normal at Spanish Lagoon, with about 12 there 13 March. None

elsewhere.

Philadelphia Vireo: One at Spanish Lagoon 18 March. 2nd Aruban and 3rd ABC record.

Unrecorded in Venezuela.

Red-eyed Vireo: First Aruban record, apparently, was the one we found at Spanish Lagoon 13 March. Should be regular, especially in fall, given that migrants from US/Canada are fairly common to common in Venezuela.

Black-whiskered Vireo: two at Spanish Lagoon.

Tropical Mockingbird: common everywhere. sometimes even feeding in outside restaurants. Seen building nests.

NEOTROP MIGRANTS: the warblers and Indigo Bunting below, and vireos above, present an interesting vagrancy pattern. Many are seen in numbers that are orders-of-magnitude greater than one would expect given their rarity in Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Lesser Antilles. Why are Common Yellowthroats and Northern Parulas so much easier to find on Aruba? On the other hand, several species, including Red-eyed Vireo, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Prothonotary Warbler really should be more numerous. The first two may be under-reported secondary to ID difficulty, but certainly not Protho. This anomaly is part of what makes Aruba so incredibly fun.

Northern Parula: Considered rare by Voous. Hilty (2003) lists only three records for Venezuela. But we had 9 on Aruba last year and 6 in 2004. This year we had 11: 4 at Bubali, 6 at Spanish Lagoon, and one at Saveneta.

'Golden' Yellow Warbler: Exceptionally numerous in mangroves and trees bordering Bubali and Spanish Lagoon. Also in small number around hotels and in xeric mesquite. The males all had full chestnut caps and very bright yellow underparts with heavy chestnut streaking. The well-

defined cap and intense yellow underparts were almost reminiscent of a Wilson's Warbler. The immatures were in varying states of molt and often had gray cheeks or gray on the underparts, the gray being a clear gray color that I've never seen in Northern Yellow Warblers. The females, plumage-wise, seemed indistinguishable from Northern Yellow Warblers. We had a couple birds at Bubali and Spanish Lagoon that seemed to have long primary extension and otherwise resemble Northern Yellow Warblers. Given that Northern Yellow Warblers are fairly common to common in Venezuela, it would be a surprise not to find a few on Aruba.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: Two previous Aruban records and about 10 from Venezuela. Uncommon anywhere in West Indies and accidental in Virgin Islands and Lesser Antilles.

Cape May Warbler: Three previous records, one by us in Mar 2003. Rare but not accidental in Venezuela. This year had a bumper crop, including many ad males. Had a total of 10: 2 at Bubali, 4 at Spanish Lagoon, 2 at Saveneta, and 2 near the High Rise Hotels.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: Fewer than 10 Aruban records. Female at Spanish Lagoon on 15 March only. Only two Venezuela records and quite rare in Lesser Antilles.

Blackpoll Warbler: Basic plumaged bird near Spanish Lagoon on 15 March. Though common during fall on Aruba, spring (and winter) records are few.

Black-and-white Warbler: Only 3 records listed in Voous from Aruba, but 20+ from Bonaire and Curacao. Not rare in Lesser Antilles nor Venezuela. Had one at Bubali, 4 at Spanish Lagoon, and one at Saveneta.

American Redstart: The second most numerous neotropical migrant warbler, after N. Waterthrush. Had one at Bubali and 7 at Spanish Lagoon.

Prothonotary Warbler: Only 3 prior Aruban records, and we'd not seen one here before. Also, rare in Virgin Islands and Lesser Antilles, yet fairly common winter resident in Venezuela. And

odd combo. Yet this year, we had NINE: six at Bubali, two at Spanish Lagoon, and one in Saveneta.

Ovenbird: Vagrant in Aruba according to Voous (1983) and rare in Venezuela per Hilty (2003). We've had them on Aruba during each of our three visits. This year, we had one at Bubali 12 March, one at Spanish Lagoon 13 March, and probably a different bird at Spanish Lagoon 15 March.

Northern Waterthrush: Quite common wherever water and trees occur together.

Louisiana Waterthrush: Third Aruban record was one posing nicely next to a Northern Waterthrush at Bubali 12 March. We had the 2nd record last year there on 29 March. Given status in Venezuela, I suspect this species has been overlooked.

Common Yellowthroat: This was bizarre. None in 2003, 5 at Bubali in 2004, and 13 total this year: 10 at Bubali, one in the hotel district (!), one at Spanish Lagoon, and one at TDSGC. Jeff Wells states he's had numbers at Bubali before. Only one Venezuela record and accidental in Lesser Antilles. Go figure.

Hooded Warbler: Vagrant according to Voous (1983) and only 5 records from Venezuela (Hilty 2003). Not common anywhere in West Indies and accidental in Virgin Islands and Lesser Antilles. Had a male at Spanish Lagoon 18 March. Female at Spanish Lagoon 28 March added to five previous Aruba records, one of which was a female at Spanish Lagoon on 23 March last year.

Bananaquit: Everywhere. Even in restaurants. Multiple birds building nests.

Black-faced Grassquit: Fairly common. A couple here, a couple there in a wide variety of habitats, including a cute pair taking handouts at a restaurant. More numerous than last year.

Indigo Bunting: First Aruba record, though several from Bonaire/Curacao. Found at Bubali on 14 March. Accidental in Lesser Antilles and only one record from Venezuela.

Carib Grackle: Common around hotels and in better vegetated neighborhoods. Otherwise somewhat scarce, but not rare.

Shiny Cowbird: Seen hither and yon in small groups of up to 5 or 6.

Troupial: Gorgeous. Vocal. Fairly Common. Likes more xeric habitats, though widespread.

Yellow Oriole: A few at Spanish Lagoon, especially walking up into the interior xeric scrub.

	12 Mar 05	13 Mar 05	14 Mar 05	15 Mar 05	16&18 Mar 05
Least Grebe	---	---	---	3	---
PB Grebe	50	2	15	---	10
Brown Booby	1	---	1	6	2
RF Booby	1	---	---	---	---
Brown Pelican	20	10	10	12	10
Neotrop Corm	400	415	730	---	400+
Mag Frigate	15	10	1	10	3
GB Heron	25	5	15	---	8
Great Egret	100	50	55	6	40
Little Egret	1	---	---	---	---

Snowy Egret	25	10	15	---	10
LB Heron	---	1	---	---	---
Tricolored Her	3	3	2	---	2
Cattle Egret	15	---	10	---	10
Green Heron	10	10	6	---	10
BCNH	50	---	20	---	4
YCNH	---	1	---	---	---
BW Teal	75	4	75	---	50
WC Pintail	80	30	75	---	50
Lesser Scaup	1	---	1	---	1
RN Duck	2	---	2	---	2
Osprey	3	2	1	5	4
Caracara	1	---	---	1	1
Peregrine	1	1	1	1	1
Am Kestrel	1	8	4	5	1
Sora	6	---	---	---	1
Com Moorhen	55	10	25	---	40
Carib Coot	20	10	10	---	15
Amer Coot	2	---	1	---	---

	12 Mar 05	13 Mar 05	14 Mar 05	15 Mar 05	16&18 Mar 05
Limpkin	1	---	---	---	---
S Lapwing	2	---	2	---	2
BB Plover	50	---	125	---	15
Collared Plov	1	---	---	---	---
Semi Plov	4	---	30	---	5
Killdeer	6	8	6	2	8
Am Oystercat	---	---	1	---	---
BN Stilt	60	20	100	---	75
Gr Yellowlegs	400	10	325	---	175
Le Yellowlegs	140	2	125	---	280
Solitary Sand	---	---	---	2	---
Spotted Sand	1	1	1	---	3
Whimbrel	---	4	---	---	---
Ruddy Turnst	40	4	50	---	20
Sanderling	15	---	30	---	15
Semi Sand	---	---	1	---	---
Western Sand	1	---	---	---	---
Least Sand	8	8	30	---	6
Stilt Sand	20	1	18	---	4

SB Dowitcher	---	---	2	---	---
Wilson's Snip	6	---	4	---	---
Laughing Gull	30	200	30	-8-	15
GB Tern	---	---	1	---	---
Royal Tern	15	25	2	15	8
Sand Tern	4	---	---	---	---
BE Pigeon	30	100	25	30	70
Eared Dove	100	100	75	45	50
C Ground Dov	2	10	10	30	25
WT Dove	---	4	2	---	2
Rock Pigeon	5	10	10	50	5
	12 Mar 05	13 Mar 05	14 Mar 05	15 Mar 05	16&18 Mar 05
Carib Parakee	15	10	25	6	20
Greater Ani	---	2	---	---	---
GB Ani	8	---	2	---	3
RT Topaz	---	6	1	3	4
BT Emerald	8	18	10	10	6
Belted Kingf	---	---	1	---	---
N Scrub Fly	4	4	4	7	8

BC Fly	---	1	---	2	2
Gray Kingbird	---	12	---	1	6
Philly Vireo	---	---	---	---	1
RE Vireo	---	1	---	---	---
BW Vireo	---	1	---	1	2
Barn Swallow	10	---	1	---	4
Trop Mock	18	50	40	20	50
No Parula	4	5	1	3	2
Golden Warb	140	45	30	20	25
CS Warbler	3	---	1	---	---
CM Warbler	2	4	2	---	3
BTB Warbler	---	---	---	1	---
Blackpoll War	---	---	---	1	---
BAW Warbler	---	6	---	2	1
Am Redstart	1	7	1	3	1
Prothonotary War	6	3	---	---	---
Ovenbird	1	1	1	1	---
Nor Waterthr	35	30	10	12	8

Lou Waterthr	1	---	---	---	---
Com Yellowth	10	---	5	1	1
Hooded War	---	---	---	---	1
Bananaquit	60	80	50	55	30
BF Grassquit	2	20	15	8	30
	12 Mar	13 Mar	14 Mar	15 Mar	16&18 Mar
Indigo Bunt	1	---	---	---	---
Carib Grackle	40	5	20	4	10
Troupial	6	8	12	10	10
Shiny Cowbrd	5	---	2	2	8
Yellow Oriole	---	2	---	---	6
House Spar	---	2	6	2	5
Burrow Owl	---	---	2		3
	6:45-6:45	7am-5pm	6:45a-2:30p	9a-4p	16 Mar
	Bubali	Spanish Lag	TDSGC	boat off C. CO	4:30p- 6:30p
	Malmok	Savaneta	Malmok	Span Lagoon	TDSGC
	CA Light	Seroe Colorad	Bubali (brief)	Paradera	Malmok
	TDSGC	Bubali (brief)	High Rise Hotels	Queen's Park	18 Mar

