

## GUANA SCIENCE NEWS #2

David and Charlotte Hill, Wenhua, and I spent all of 7 & 8 June on Guana, concentrating on birds - especially those nesting - or supposed to be. There is good news and bad.

New Island Record - The White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) was spotted by David and shown to the rest of us on both days, in pairs and groups of up to six. Despite its scientific name, it is native to the Greater Antilles, Mexico, and the southwestern U.S. It has been expanding its range on its own accord, and reached the USVI by 1988. Clive Petrovic says they have been on Tortola "about 10 years." About the size of the common brown Zenaida Dove, they have a broad flashing white bar across the wing, boldly visible in flight and perched. They will compete with Zenaidas, and possibly Scaly-naped Pigeons, in open areas like White Bay flat, but should pose no problems for the forest-dwelling White-crowned Pigeons. They are very conspicuous, and if they had been present in October we would have noticed.

All in all, rather good news. But we did not even see, let alone find a nest of, a White-crown. The canopy in suitable habitats was denser than I have ever seen it, and the fact that we didn't see them does not mean they were not there: we couldn't see any birds up there. Liao reports seeing them in February when things were very dry, and they came to the plantation for water. They are reportedly nesting in the Beef Island mangroves, but this habitat is threatened now by apparently illegal development.

Antillean Mango Hummingbird.- The adult male of this very rare species is hard to tell from the common Green-throated Carib, but juveniles and females are drab, pale-breasted, and have light outer tail feathers. That is exactly what David and I saw, and watched at close range, for several minutes. There are subtle distinctions between an adult female and a juvenile; David is checking those out and will report soon. If an adult female, she would almost certainly have been nesting at this time of year. The sexes take turns incubating, so not seeing the male is explicable. Ours was by the RO plant, but this is a forest species, so she may have been foraging far from her nest. We have occasional records of this species over the years, so seeing this one encourages us to believe a breeding population persists.

Mangrove Yellow Warbler. This is the resident form of this widespread species. Jonnie Fiske knew it well in the 1950s, but feared it had been extirpated by mangrove clearance. We never saw one until a couple of years ago when Fred and Peggy mist-netted one (it's a report cover for that year: check the website). Well, we had a lovely male singing away and acting very territorial by the salt pond this trip, which we take as good evidence of a nesting pair: good news! Val took us around the island to spot seabirds. There are lots - dozens - of pelicans nesting from Pelican Ghut around to Palm Point, and a pair of White-tailed Tropicbirds were checking out Long Mans Point, apparently for a nest site (the tropicbirds nesting last summer there were Red-tails). However, we saw not a sign of nesting boobies there.

The worst news is the lack of Roseate Tern nests at either Monkey Point or Bigelow Beach, where this world-threatened species has regularly nested in the past. The reason was obvious: people. Boats were anchored off both beaches, and footprints told of human activity on land. We recommend labeling at least Bigelow Beach as off-limits on the sailing charts from March through July, and putting up a sign there asking people to stay off. A flock of a half dozen Roseate Terns were perched on the rocks at Monkey Point, looking displaced.

Our results will be written up in a more formal and comparative manner for submission to a journal soon. It was a highly productive trip, despite some bad news. Please let me know who else to put on the recipient list for these emails, and please forward this to them in the meantime. This comes to you from the high Himalayas, Yunnan Province, China: the land of small steps and big breaths.

All The best,

Skip & Wenhua

Oklahoma State University  
Wes Watkins  
Agricultural Research and Extension Center  
Box 128 Lane, OK 74555