

# Caribbean BIRDWATCH

Expert advice to help you appreciate our region's beautiful birds

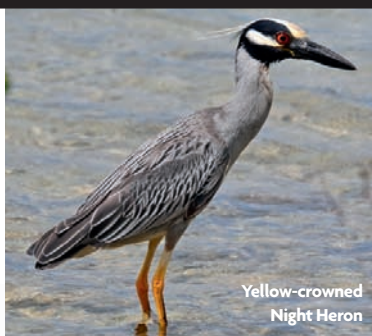


LISA SORENSON

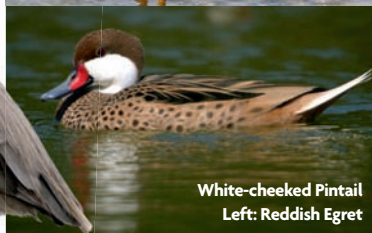
## PROJECT WATCH

The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) is starting a new region-wide waterbird and wetland monitoring programme called the Caribbean Waterbird Census (CWC). The aim of this programme is to learn more about the distribution, status, and abundance of waterbirds in the Caribbean to improve our conservation planning and management of these birds and their habitats. The first region-wide count will be in January-February 2011.

\* [www.scsb.org](http://www.scsb.org) for more information



Yellow-crowned Night Heron



White-cheeked Pintail  
Left: Reddish Egret

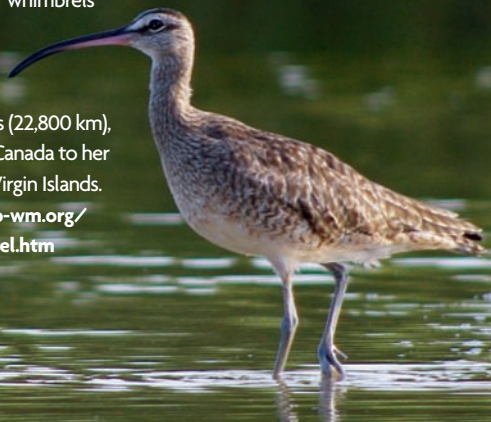
TONY HEBURN

WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL: ERNESTO ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ

## BIRD OF THE ISSUE: WHIMBREL

**How to spot it:** Overall, this large shorebird is plain grey-brown, but the long down-curved bill and strong black head stripes are distinctive. Look for these waders in shallow wetlands and mudflats. **Where to find them:** Each fall thousands of whimbrels fly from their breeding grounds in the Arctic to their winter homes in the Caribbean and coast of South America. These long-distance migrants may fly non-stop over the ocean to countries such as Guyana. Others stop at wetlands in the Dominican Republic, Virgin Islands, Trinidad and other islands where they spend the winter, or "refuel" before continuing south. **What do they eat?** Whimbrels use their long curved bills to probe deep into the soft mud for fiddler crabs, their primary winter food. They also eat fish, aquatic worms and insects. In their northern breeding grounds they add berries and even flowers to their diets. **Global Status:** This species is declining in numbers, mostly due to destruction of its coastal habitats. **Where do they migrate to?** In recent years scientists have been learning about the migration of whimbrels by fitting them with small satellite transmitters. In 2009-2010, a bird named "Hope" was tracked and discovered to have a round-trip migration of 14,170 miles (22,800 km), from her breeding grounds in northwest Canada to her winter home at Great Pond, St Croix, US Virgin Islands.

\* See tracking maps at: <http://www.ccb-wm.org/programs/migration/whimbrel/whimbrel.htm>



LISA YNEMA

## HOW TO... COUNT WATERBIRDS

Do you know of a pond or wetland nearby with waterbirds on it? If yes, why not participate in the first region-wide survey of Caribbean waterbirds, the Caribbean Waterbird Census (CWC). Here are some tips on how to conduct your count.

\* First, visit your pond and decide on the best vantage point ("count station") to conduct your count. Choose an area that is unobstructed and gives you a good view of birds on the pond. If possible, draw your count area on a map of the site; Google Earth is a great resource for aerial photos.

\* Birds are most active and visible in the morning so do your count between sunrise and about 10 or 11 am. Aim to conduct your count during a three-week period from January 14th to February 3rd, 2011, when many others in the region will also be doing surveys.

\* Arrive at your site quietly and have your binoculars, field guide, notebook and pencil ready. Stand at your count station, record your start time, and count the number of each species that you see on the pond. Spend a minimum of six minutes doing your count. If you need more time to identify and count all the birds, that's fine, just be sure to record the amount of time you spend counting birds. Try to keep your count time to a maximum of 20 minutes.

\* Finally, visit eBird Caribbean (<http://ebird.org/content/caribbean>), an online site where you can enter your bird count data for any country in the Caribbean. This database is an invaluable tool for birders, scientists, natural resource managers and conservationists.

MANY THANKS TO LISA SORENSON, LISA YNEMA, AND MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE CONSERVATION AND STUDY OF CARIBBEAN BIRDS; WWW.SCSB.ORG