

FIRST CONFIRMED BREEDING OF THE WEST INDIAN WHISTLING-DUCK
AT ABACO, BAHAMAS

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Abstract.—A pair of West Indian Whistling-Ducks (*Dendrocygna arborea*) with three chicks were found near Crossing Rock, Abaco, Bahamas, on 6 January 2001, providing the first confirmed breeding record for Abaco.

Key words: Abaco, Bahamas, breeding, *Dendrocygna arborea*, West Indian Whistling-Duck

Resumen.—CONFIRMADA POR PRIMERA VEZ LA CRÍA DE LA YAGUASA EN ABACO, BAHAMAS. Se observó una pareja de yaguasas (*Dendrocygna arborea*) con tres crías cerca de Crossing Rock, Abaco, Bahamas, el 6 enero del 2001, lo que constituye el primer registro de nidificación para Abaco.

Palabras claves: Abaco, Bahamas, *Dendrocygna arborea*, nidificación, Yaguasa

DURING A VISIT TO CROSSING ROCK, ABACO, Bahamas in the early morning of 6 January 2001, we saw two men wading in a brackish marsh adjacent to a road. They were looking for the carcass of a West Indian Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna arborea*) that was killed by a vehicle the previous evening while crossing the road with its mate and three chicks. Shortly afterward, one of the men retrieved the bird, which was decapitated. We learned that the other adult and chicks, stunned by the collision, had been captured and placed in a cage. We asked if we could see the other birds, and the man agreed to show them to us.

He explained that the ducks belonged to another man, who intended to eat them. Aware of the rarity of West Indian Whistling-Ducks in the Bahamas, we offered to buy them for \$40. This offer was accepted, so we transported the ducks back to the marsh, and released them.

The adult immediately fled into the marsh and began to call to its chicks. As we released the chicks, two headed quickly toward the adult, but the third was disoriented and weaker than its siblings. We were uncertain whether the third chick would survive.

The West Indian Whistling-Duck occurs widely in the Caribbean and is found in the Bahamas, the

Greater Antilles, Antigua, and Barbuda. Despite its large range, the status of the West Indian Whistling-Duck is “precarious” (Collar *et al.* 1992) and populations are declining (Raffaele *et al.* 1998) due to widespread poaching, pesticide use, and habitat destruction. In the Bahamas, West Indian Whistling-Ducks now are “rare or very rare” throughout (Collar *et al.* 1992). Our observation seems to be the first that confirms breeding at Abaco (Collar *et al.* 1992, W. Bracey pers. comm.). Copies of our photographs have been archived at The Bahama Avian Records Committee, Bahamas National Trust, Nassau.

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