

Bermuda Audubon Society Newsletter Winter 05 Vol.16 No.3

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The Audubon Year - 2005

Andrew Dobson, President

The last few months have been so busy - as you can read about below - that I have had little time to write a newsletter - and I apologise for that. The Society goes from strength to strength, thanks to a committed executive and healthy membership.

The year started with the launch of our special 50th anniversary magazine as well as commemorative tree plantings in a specially created 'Audubon Grove' in the grounds of Government House. Members of the executive were featured in a TV programme on local birds produced by Panatel Ltd for the 'Learn-a-lots' series. The Society also acquired a new nature reserve - Pearl Island, thanks to the generosity of the Butterfield family. The Buy Back Bermuda Campaign has been a fantastic success thanks to the community-wide support we have received, including many Audubon members. The National Trust-Audubon management committee is now initiating the restoration work at the Long Bay Somerset site in anticipation of an official opening in late spring. The executive is particularly grateful to the volunteers who have helped with work on our nature reserves, prepared longtail igloos, made bluebird nest boxes - or helped to sell them on our stall at the Farmers' Market. A recent development is the work being done on our Freer Cox reserve in Devonshire Marsh. David Wingate provides the background to this work in this newsletter. Fieldtrips have been well supported and another very successful Paget Island Bird camp was held in October. The Cahow watch at Cooper's Point was particularly memorable (see the article by George Peterich). I know that all of us eagerly await the development of that area as a national park and nature reserve. The

Audubon-Bermuda Zoological Society natural history camp for school students based on Nonsuch Island was another great success – not possible without a dedicated staff and enthusiastic group of students.

Birdwise, it has been a memorable year. A new species of bird was confirmed for Bermuda – the Grey Heron – and you can read about that story in the newsletter. The recent colonization by Green Herons has been dramatic, and Jeremy Madeiros provides an update. However, the birding event of the year was the passage of Hurricane Wilma in late October. Few people in Bermuda can have failed to see one of the many Magnificent Frigatebirds that arrived. Record numbers of many other seabird species arrived and you can read a summary of the Wilma ‘fall-out’ and the rest of a very active season of bird sightings.

This year also sees the culmination of a very exciting project for the Society – a documentary film about Nonsuch Island, featuring not only the Cahow, but also some human stars, including David Wingate, Jeremy Madeiros and Jennifer Gray. This is a professionally produced film that has already made it to the TV screen (see the following article). So we already have something to look forward to in 2006!

Bermuda’s Treasure Island – Documentary Film

Andrew Dobson



The Bermuda Audubon Society joined forces with Castletown Productions (New York & County Limerick, Ireland) in 2003 to make a film documentary on Nonsuch Island and the story of the Cahow (Bermuda Petrel). The producer, Deirdre Brennan, was instrumental in attracting the internationally acclaimed wildlife film-maker, Éamon de Buítléar to be the director. His son Cian is the main cameraman on the documentary. Cian’s underwater photography was

instrumental in the movie ‘Saving the Life of Private Ryan’ winning an Oscar for cinematography. Such is the reputation of Éamon de Buítléar, that the Irish television company RTE not only agreed to back the documentary, but also wished to create an Irish version, featuring the European Storm-Petrel as well as the Cahow. The result was *Sceillig and Bermuda – A Last Refuge*. Filmed on location in Bermuda and the remote Sceillig Islands off the west coast of Ireland, the documentary parallels the work of two men who have spent their lives as naturalists – one man, David Wingate has spent over forty years in the resurrection of the world’s rarest seabird, the Bermuda Petrel, thought to be extinct for three hundred years: the other man, Oscar Merne has worked to ensure the resurgence of seabirds off Ireland’s west Kerry. This documentary was broadcast

on Christmas Day at 8:35 pm on RTE 2 - a fantastic coup - not only for the Audubon Society, but for Bermuda. It promoted Bermuda in a very good light, not only the successful conservation story - but marvellous footage of other aspects of Bermuda's natural history and scenery. With a prime-time slot on Christmas Day, the audience will have been huge. In fact the programme was promoted as a 'Christmas Special' in Ireland".

The Bermuda version of the documentary 'Bermuda's Treasure Island' does not include any footage from Ireland. It focuses on Nonsuch Island in particular and includes some extraordinary footage of our endemic Cahow. The documentary promises to be something very special and I know that audiences will enjoy the film. The production would not have been possible without the generous support of: Alvin Brock, Argus Insurance, Bacardi International, Bank of Bermuda Foundation, the Bermuda Government, Butterfield Bank, Butterfield & Vallis, Capital G, Chevron International, English Speaking Union, General Atlantic Group, Gosling's Ltd, James Hannam, Montpelier Re Foundation, Orbis Investment Management Ltd, Platinum Underwriters Ltd, Starr International Charitable Trust and the XL Foundation. Special DVD copies of the documentary are going to be presented to all of Bermuda's schools.

Following a gala presentation to sponsors and those involved in the making of the documentary, there will be four screenings for society members and the general public. They will be at the BUEI on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th February at 6.30 and 8.00 pm on both nights. All tickets are \$10, available from The Body Shop (Hamilton) and BAMZ front desk (Flatts) from Sat 7th Jan.

Grey Heron - New to Bermuda

Andrew Dobson



On 7th October 2005, David Wallace found a dead heron at Kindley Field, St. Georges. Although small, he assumed it to be a Great Blue Heron, a common fall migrant. As it appeared to have recently died and was in good condition, he delivered it to BAMZ. Lisa Greene, the museum collections officer, also remarked on the small size of the bird and asked David Wingate to have a look at the specimen. He confirmed the bird as a Grey Heron - the first for Bermuda,

and now a specimen in the collection at BAMZ.

As to the origin of this bird, there are a number of possibilities. Firstly, the heron's discovery followed about two weeks of easterly airflow. On 10th Oct, a Garganey (only the second for Bermuda) and then two Eurasian Wigeon also arrived, indicating a movement of birds from the Western Palearctic. The heron may have been ship-assisted for part of its journey. Secondly, there was a much debated Grey/Great Blue Heron present at Spittal Pond in May 2004. Could this have been the same bird? Perhaps that record needs further examination? Thirdly, Grey Heron has not been recorded in North America, but a number of vagrants have crossed the Atlantic, reaching Barbados. However, any bird in the southern Caribbean is unlikely to be flying north in October (unless it had arrived in the spring and remained undetected).

The new record of Grey Heron would not have happened without the bird having been collected by David Wallace and the alert eye of Lisa Greene. David Wingate has been prepared the heron as a specimen for the museum collection (see photo)

'Buy Back Bermuda' Campaign

In 2004, the Bermuda Audubon Society and the Bermuda National Trust came together in an effort to save open space. The initial goal was to purchase nearly 3-acres of land at Long Bay in Sandys. Both organisations committed \$150,000 each towards the 'Buy Back Bermuda' appeal. By the fall of 2005, the societies were thrilled to announce that the campaign to acquire the property has been a complete success. The target of \$1.7m was reached thanks to a generous donation of \$300,000 from the Ministry of the Environment in August 2005. If you would like to make a donation to the Buy Back Bermuda campaign to save open space, you may still do so. The Buy Back Bermuda committee is currently searching for the next piece of open space to save.

The 2005 Breeding Season of the Green Heron

Jeremy Madeiros



The Green Heron *Butorides virescens* is one of the smaller and more colourful of the heron species and was considered to be a likely candidate for natural colonization because of its increasing tendency to stay in small numbers throughout the year on Bermuda.

Displaying Green Herons were observed in the summer of 2000 and were again present in the summer of 2001. In 2002, breeding was proven in the Mangrove Lake/Trott's Pond area by David Wingate. A 2003 a breeding survey by David Wingate revealed a

total of 20 adult Green Herons and 10 active or vacant nests around the edges of these

ponds. In 2004 a survey of both ponds by Jeremy Madeiros and Mark Outerbridge produced a total of 6 Green Heron nests on Trott's Pond and a further 4 nests on Mangrove Lake. (*Photo of 2004 Green Heron nest – Andrew Dobson*)

For 2005, several surveys of Mangrove Lake and Trott's pond were carried out to try to determine the extent of the Green Heron breeding season and also estimate the total number of young produced by the breeding population and whether that population was increasing. No more than one survey a month was scheduled so as not to cause undue disturbance to the nesting Herons, as some species are known to be sensitive to disturbance during the nesting season. The help of Mark Outerbridge was again enlisted.

Results of 2005 Survey

The survey revealed that this new Heron population is increasing in size with considerably more nests recorded at both Mangrove Lake and Trott's Pond than in the 2004 survey. A total of 18 nests were recorded, including 11 at Trott's Pond and 7 at Mangrove Lake, compared to a total of 10 nests in 2004 (6 at Trott's Pond and 4 at Mangrove Lake). In addition, the Herons appeared to be using more of the available habitat around the edges of these ponds. On all previous years, nests were only seen on the western sides of both ponds, whereas in 2005 nests were starting to appear around all four sides of the ponds. At least 13 of the nests showed active breeding activities with chicks and/or egg clutches recorded during different survey trips.

The total number of adult Green Herons associated with these nesting colonies is difficult to determine. There was constant activity with foraging adults flying back and forth across the ponds while on feeding trips to support the hungry chicks. The greatest number recorded at one time during June 22 was in excess of 27 adults (10 at Trott's Pond and 17 at Mangrove Lake).

The real measure of breeding success is the number of young which survive to fledging, and it was obvious that these populations are producing a good number of fledged chicks. A total of at least 27 chicks were confirmed from 13 of the nests, 17 chicks from 7 of the nests at Trott's Pond and 10 chicks from 6 of the nests at Mangrove Lake.

Footnote: Tropical Storm 'Harvey' passed only 30 miles south of Bermuda during the 4th and 5th August, dropping over 4" of rain and battering the island with east-southeast and northeast winds up to 44 knots (52mph) for an extended period. This unusually early Tropical Storm brought the breeding season to an abrupt end. All but two of the nests at Mangrove Lake were completely destroyed or partially washed away. At Trott's Pond, at least 3 nests were destroyed and 1 damaged. It appeared that late egg clutches in at least 3 of the nests on Mangrove Lake were destroyed or abandoned, while chicks at all active nests on Trott's Pond appeared to have already successfully fledged.

SCSCB Guadeloupe Conference 2005

Andrew Dobson

The 15th regional meeting of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) was held in Guadeloupe from 1-6 August. Having recently become President of the SCSCB, it was an honour for me to preside over the conference proceedings as well as to represent Bermuda. Some 100 delegates from more than 20 countries attended. The conference was jointly organised by a Local Organising Committee in Guadeloupe and the SCSCB Executive. The plenary lecture, on 'Biodiversity and Eco-tourism in the Caribbean', was presented by Edouard Benito Espinal. The second featured speaker was Nils Navarro Pacheco, who spoke on 'Art's Capacity to Inspire and Raise Funds for Nature Conservation'. Nils is an internationally acclaimed Cuban bird artist and very generously donated one of his bird paintings raise funds for the society.

More than fifty speakers presented papers during the conference, on topics ranging from threatened and migratory birds to the effects of hurricanes on bird populations and bird education programmes. Delegates also had the opportunity to attend specialist working groups, focussing on individual species such as the West Indian Whistling-Duck, or more general issues such as invasive species or bird monitoring techniques. In addition, there were thirty poster presentations on a wide variety of bird studies in the region.

Mid-week fieldtrips were arranged for the delegates to the Reserve Naturelle de Petite Terre (for seabirds and coastal scenery) and to the Grand Etang area of the National Park (for rainforest birds, especially the endemic Guadeloupe Woodpecker).

The conference received considerable publicity in the local media, both press and TV coverage during the conference. The SCSCB is particularly grateful for the support it received from many organisations, including US Fish & Wildlife Service, BirdLife International, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the French Government and regional authorities in Guadeloupe.

Cahows at Cooper's Point

George Peterich



On the 27th November, I joined a group of 35 keen birders at Cooper's Point in the hope of seeing a Cahow in flight. So far I had only once seen a Cahow chick that was shown to me by David Wingate on Nonsuch Island.

The plan was to sit on the coast looking south, hoping to see one over the water. Andrew Dobson and Jeremy Madeiros were our leaders. Andrew explained that this was the time that the Cahows come to Bermuda to take possession of their nesting sites. The Cahows come in only in the dark, but there might be a chance to see one just before sunset. They would now certainly be cruising around not too far offshore. We had to walk through the newly designated Cooper's Island nature reserve. Jeremy told us that here was a splendid opportunity to make a first-class nature reserve and tourist attraction, formerly used by NASA as a tracking station for the Apollo programme. It was here that spacecraft were first picked up on the radar after their launch from Cape Canaveral. With his customary enthusiasm he filled in the details as we crossed the terrain. NASA has left a number of buildings, many of them in a bad state of repair and even dangerous to enter, being damaged by Fabian. One does not need much imagination to see how much work lies ahead here. The plan is to create a museum that would both be a visitor's centre, pointing out various aspects of natural history, but also to celebrate the role that Bermuda played in the US Space Programme. The great radar tracking station has been removed, but there is now a very powerful weather radar serving the Bermuda Weather Service' particularly for early hurricane warning. It stands above the vegetation as a enormous golf ball.

Looking into the future with optimism, this might become the one and only place where there could be a public viewing spot for Cahows and as such a tourist attraction. With the rising numbers of breeding pairs over the past year this optimism is certainly justified.

There was a fierce wind from the northeast whipping up the waves. Nobody would like to be out there in 10 ft waves to watch for Cahows. However Jeremy said that these were the right conditions where the Cahows would fly in against the wind picking up air currents above the waves and in doing so appear briefly above the horizon. Everyone had brought binoculars and there were also a few telescopes on tripods. They were trained on the horizon. They were hardly set up and there was a shout: a cahow was seen, albeit briefly. And then some more! I had positioned myself on the rocks with a telescope on a monopod - a somewhat wobbly setup, but this enabled me to move back and forth so that if a bird would appear in view I could briefly follow it. I heard more shouts of sightings and then I got my chance too! *(Photo of George Peterich - Andrew Dobson)*

The bird was clear above the waves, its profile - one wing-tip high and one wing-tip low - almost at a right angle to the horizon. Only a dark silhouette - but a beautiful view. An incredible wingspan as compared to the length of the body, very pointed wings and almost completely stretched out while soaring. Unforgettable! It etched itself into my memory just like an albatross had done 30 years ago - and it looked similar too.

From then on we kept seeing them and everyone saw at least one. My best viewing was when I saw two at the same time and close in, at least through the telescope. I could see their colour, not just the dark silhouette. They appear to be lighter than the birds on the Society's Christmas cards some years ago. What is black on that picture looked greyer in

reality? There were some lovely light effects with the clouds and the setting sun in the west. As it was now getting dark more birds could be seen. Finally 6 different birds were counted at the same time from about 10 birds seen!

We had to march at some speed to be back at the parking before dark. Everybody was extremely happy: this was an unprecedented success. Apart from seeing a 'Lifer', which was the case for most of us, we had received a most instructive afternoon. Many thanks to the organizers!

Marsh Dredger at Devonshire Marsh

David Wingate



If you have driven by Devonshire Marsh on Middle Road or Vesey Street lately, you may have been shocked to see a large backhoe machine at work digging into the peat. This is all part of a trial attempt to re-open the once extensive system of mosquito control ditches using a floatable digging machine that can work in a marshy environment as opposed to the labour-

intensive hand digging method that was used in the past.

The ditch system was established by the Pest Control Division of the Department of Health back in 1942 to maintain a permanent network of open water habitat in the normally peat-filled marshes where open water was previously only temporary during rainy spells. In the absence of permanent water these marshes had been unable to support populations of the top minnow, *Gambusia holbrookii*, which had been introduced in 1928 as a very effective biological control for mosquito larvae. The policy of the Health Department at that time was to fill in the marshes by using them as tip and fill sites for garbage disposal in the period 1940 to 1975. The ditch system began to diminish as many of the smaller marshes were filled in.

The Audubon Society became established in the 1950s, in part for the purpose of fighting Government's policy of marsh "reclamation" and by the time this policy was terminated in the mid 1970s many of the remaining marshes had been acquired as nature reserves, either by this society or the Bermuda National Trust, or otherwise zoned for the same purpose by Government. Nevertheless, the slow demise of the ditch system continued for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the extraordinary cost of maintaining it by hand labour in an age when this kind of menial work was increasingly being done with heavy machinery. Another factor was the growing problem from introduced and now aggressively invasive plant species. A third factor was the diminishing relevance of

the ditch system for mosquito control in an era of improved mosquito control technology. It was a combination of these three factors that finally led to the complete abandonment of the ditch system in 2000.

As Government Conservation Officer at that time, I was concerned by the gradual loss of habitat diversity, and decided to investigate the feasibility of resuscitating and even enhancing this ditch system. It didn't take long to discover that the kind of excavation and mowing machinery suitable for operation in boggy marshlands was readily available and already in extensive use on the world market. In 1995, I put forward a proposal to Government recommending that such machinery would be useful. It was not until last year, four years after my retirement, that my dream was finally realized. With the full backing of the Health Department and the support of the new Conservation Services Department, the Audubon Society invited these first full trials to be conducted on its Firefly and Freer Cox Memorial nature reserves, because the status of the flora and fauna on them had just been thoroughly surveyed, providing a unique opportunity to compare before and after surveys in a scientific manner. This will enable us to assess honestly whether or not the new method of ditch maintenance will be better or worse in terms of biodiversity conservation than the old manual digging method, or no maintenance at all.

We can already state categorically that it is vastly cheaper and faster, which is good news for the Health Department, which proposes to budget for it out of concern for the recent accidental reintroduction of the *Aedes aegyptii* mosquito and the perennial threat that it poses for an outbreak of dengue fever.

One spin-off benefit of this greater digging capacity is the greater quantity of excavated peat available for raising the level of the adjacent marsh edge agricultural fields, which were originally created with rubble and soil fill for celery culture and cattle grazing in the 1920s, but have become increasingly inaccessible for grass cutting in recent years due to drowning by sea level rise. By raising these fields slightly with the excavated peat they will become accessible for fodder grass cutting again, helping the dairy industry and keeping the invasive fodder crop grasses under control to the benefit of rare native sedges and rushes.

Hurricane Wilma - the bird fall-out



Andrew Dobson

Hurricane Wilma sat over the Yucatan Peninsula for a couple of days before moving rapidly across Florida. On October 25th the whole weather system moved at about 50 mph

northwards between Bermuda and the East Coast of the US. It had little effect on Bermuda – apart from some high seas and breezy weather conditions. It did, however, bring unprecedented numbers of seabirds as well as some rare landbirds. (*Photo of Franklin's Gull with Sandwich Terns – Andrew Dobson*)

- Magnificent Frigatebird is not recorded annually in Bermuda, and only single birds. So the 70 birds that arrived were phenomenal. The highest point count was 41 from Wreck Hill. Frigatebirds were reported north to Nova Scotia and one individual even reached England.

- Great Blue Heron – a record flock of 28 birds was seen at Frank's Bay.

- Laughing Gull – a record 30 birds, with the majority staying into the winter. (The previous maxima – five).

- Franklin's Gull – a record five birds. There have only been three previous single records (all in the summer).

- Caspian Tern – one bird was only the third record for Bermuda.

- Royal Tern – at least 28 birds with two staying into December. Royal Tern is not recorded every year and the previous maxima - three.

- Sandwich Tern – for a species that averages about one sighting a year, the count of up to 200 birds was extraordinary. (The previous maxima - three). Most had departed by December.

- Other uncommon terns included Roseate (2), Forster's (6), Bridled (1 or 2), and Sooty Tern (1 or 2)

- Yellow-billed Cuckoo – more than 100 scattered widely over Bermuda.

- Chimney Swift – probably in excess of 100 birds. Many were recorded in the UK.

- Winter Wren – three birds were seen. There have only been 7 previous records.



Bird Report August to December 2005

Andrew Dobson

The season's highlights included the first record of Grey Heron in Bermuda; the second records of Garganey and White-winged Dove; two Eurasian Wigeons, Black Rail, 70 Magnificent Frigatebirds, Hudsonian Godwit, Baird's Sandpiper, record gull and tern counts, Caspian Tern (Bermuda's 3rd record), record Chimney Swifts, two Northern Wheatear, three Winter Wrens (Bermuda's 6th, 7th, 8th records) and Townsend's Warbler.

Cahow to Gallinule

The first returning **Cahows** were noted 19 Oct. A **Leach's Storm-Petrel** was seen off-shore 28 Oct (PW). An immature **Masked Booby** was photographed off West Whale Bay in early Sep., and another died in captivity at BAMZ 4 Aug (JG). An immature **Northern Gannet** was seen off North Shore 9 Dec and 22 Dec (PW). A **Magnificent Frigatebird** was over castle Harbour 4 Sep (KD, AD, JM). Following the record influx of about 70 **Magnificent Frigatebirds** from Hurricane Wilma (*photo Andrew Dobson*), a single frigatebird was seen as late as 21 Dec (FH). An **American Bittern** is wintering in Devonshire Marsh (DBW). A **Least Bittern** was at Riddell's Bay GC 14 Sept (JM) and Paget Marsh 15 Nov (AD). A record 28 **Great Blue Herons** were seen at Frank's Bay 26 Oct (DW). Bermuda's first **Grey Heron** (moribund) was found at Kindley Field 7 Oct (DW). A possible adult **Grey Heron** was at Spittal Pond 11 Dec (DBW). There was a noticeable arrival of herons and egrets about 22 Oct prior to the passage of Hurricane Wilma. Thirty **Cattle Egrets** were at the Airport 24 Nov (PW). A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** flew into Flatts 20 Nov (PH). Three **Snow Geese** were on the Airport 11-13 Dec (EH, SH). Two **Eurasian Wigeon** arrived at Spittal Pond 20 Oct (DBW). A **Northern Shoveler** was on Parson's Road Pond from 29 Oct (DBW). A **Northern Pintail** was on the Princess Pond 2 Nov (DW). Another Eurasian vagrant, a **Garganey** (Bermuda's 2nd record) was identified by PW, present at Spittal Pond from at least 10 Oct. The long-staying **Red-tailed Hawk** was seen over the Hamilton Harbour Islands 17 Nov (DBW). **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and **Peregrine Falcons** were reported from both ends of the island in October. Paul Watson flushed what was almost certainly a **Black Rail** from the edge of North Pond 24 Nov. There have only been a couple of similar brief sightings of this tiny bird since recorded by Hurdis in Bermuda in 1851! Paul commented: "*Seen at a distance of about 15-20 feet as it flew from the SE corner of the pond onto one of the small islands on SE corner, very small all black bird about the size of a very dumpy sparrow, white spots on lower back seen, and large trailing feet noted in flight. The bird flew into long marsh grass on island, and it did not come out*" **Virginia Rails** were seen at Wreck Hill (WF), Heydon Trust (AD) and Spittal Pond (RL, KL) in Oct. A **Purple Gallinule** was reported from Spittal Pond 20-21 Oct (DBW).

Shorebirds to Terns

At least 27 species of shorebirds have been recorded this fall. With high water levels on most ponds, the birds have been mainly found on golf courses and farm fields. A record 50 **Semipalmated Plover** on 17 Sep, including 25 in one field at Lukes Farm (AD). **Piping Plovers** were at Cooper's Island (1), Grape Bay (2) and one seen into Dec at Spanish Point. A shorebird with red legs flushed from White's Island 1 Oct gave brief views, but enough to suggested **Spotted Redshank**, a species never before recorded in Bermuda (PW). A late **Willet** was at Hungry Bay 20 Nov (GH). One **Upland Sandpiper** was recorded from Tuckers Town GC on 11 Sep (JM). A **Hudsonian Godwit** was discovered at Pitman's Pond 7 Sep-Oct (AD). A **Red Knot** was at Riddell's Bay GC 4 Dec (DW). A record 35 **White-rumped Sandpipers** were at various locations 18 Sep (AD). A **Baird's Sandpiper** was on Port Royal GC 19-20 Sept (AD). A **Dunlin** was at Daniel's Head 20 Sept (DW). Several **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** were recorded during the fall. Hurricane Wilma produced a record 30 **Laughing Gulls** at various locations 4 Nov (AD), and a record 5 **Franklin's Gulls** at Ferry Point 4 Nov (PW). A **Franklin's Gull** was

still present in Hamilton Harbour 3 Dec (AD). A **Black-headed Gull** was present 13 Nov-Dec (AD, NB) at various locations. A **Caspian Tern** (Bermuda's 3rd record) passed Elbow Beach 27 Oct (PH) and Ferry Point 31 Oct (PA). **Royal Terns** (28) and **Sandwich Terns** (200) were extraordinary record counts following Hurricane Wilma. A few birds remained into Dec. A **Roseate Tern** was at Ferry Point 29 Oct (AD) and joined by a second bird. A record six **Forster's Terns** were together in Hamilton Harbour 27 Nov (PW). A **Bridled Tern** was at Charles Island 26 Oct (JM). A **Sooty Tern** was off Ruth's Point 28 Oct (PW). Single **Bridled** and **Sooty Terns** were seen together in the Little Sound 7 Nov (TW). A **Black Tern** was in Hamilton Harbour 1 Nov (PW).



Doves to Buntings

Bermuda's second **White-winged Dove** (*photo by Andrew Dobson*) was discovered in St. George's 5 Dec (PW). Mid-October saw the arrival of several dozen **Yellow-billed Cuckoos**. **Black-billed Cuckoos** were reported from many locations including a late record at Pembroke Marsh 29 Nov (PW). Only a few **Common Nighthawks** were noted. Up to ten **Yellow-bellied**

Sapsuckers also appeared at various locations and Hurricane Wilma produced record numbers of **Chimney Swifts** (100+). Three well-watched swifts at Cooper's Island 1 Nov (PW) suggested **Vaux's Swift**, a species not previously recorded in Bermuda. It has not been a notable year for flycatchers. **Eastern Wood-Pewee** was first noted 8 Oct at Cooper's Island (AD, PW). An **Acadian Flycatcher** was on St. Georges GC 26 Oct (PW). There were few records of other empidonax species. **Eastern Phoebes** have been seen in Nov and Dec at Spittal Pond, North Pond and Jubilee Road. A **Western Kingbird** was at Kindley Field 5 Dec (PW). A **Blue-headed Vireo** was at Port Royal GC 4 Dec (AD, PA). A **Warbling Vireo** was at Fort Scaur 2 Oct (AD) and also with a **Philadelphia Vireo** at the Biological Station 18 Oct (AD). Three **Winter Wrens** were discovered at St. Georges GC 26-28 Oct (PW), Port Royal GC 28 Oct (AD) and 15 Dec (EA) and Ferry Point 4 Nov (PW). A **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** was at East End Dairy 29 Nov (AD). All the regular swallow migrants were recorded, with a large influx of **Barn Swallows** in mid-Oct, including 50 at Outerlea Farm 15 Oct (AD). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at the Biological Station 18 Oct (PW). A **Northern Wheatear** on St. Georges GC 27-28 Aug (PW) was an exceptional find, being three weeks in advance of the earliest record. Another was found on Horn Rock 24 Oct (JM). There was a better showing of thrushes than in recent years. A **Veery** was discovered on St. Georges GC 8 Oct (DBW). **Veery**, **Grey-cheeked Thrush** and **Swainson's Thrush** were all feeding on a fruiting ficus tree at the

Biological Station in mid-October. The same tree also hosted five species of vireo, numerous warbler species, **Scarlet Tanager**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and **Baltimore Oriole!** **Hermit Thrushes** were seen in St. Georges Cemetery 21 Nov (PW) and Jenningsland 7-10 Dec (JM). An **American Robin** was at Cedar Grove 22 Oct (AD). **American Pipits** have been scarce on the Airport, but were also reported from Belmont GC 9 Oct (2) and Penhurst Park 25 Nov (PA). **Cedar Waxwings** were at the Heydon Trust 17 Oct (AD). Following worries about the lack of warbler species this fall, good numbers finally arrived in mid-October and 36 species have been recorded, including single sightings of **Cerulean Warbler** 17 Oct St. Georges GC (PW), **Townsend's Warbler** 24 Oct at Scaur Hill (AD), **Kentucky Warbler** in Jenningsland 12 Nov (JM) and **Yellow-breasted Chat** in Walsingham 2 Nov (JM). A **Mourning Warbler** 4 Sep (DBW) may have been the earliest record. **Summer** and **Scarlet Tanagers** were recorded from various locations. A late **Blue Grosbeak** was seen at Parson's Road 8 Dec (DW). Late fall saw the arrival of a number of the rarer sparrow species including: **Clay-coloured Sparrow** 18 Oct at Ferry Point (PW); **Vesper Sparrows** at Parson's Road 3 Nov (DW), Port Royal GC 4 Dec (AD, PA) and Ferry Point 9 Dec (EH, SH) and **Dickcissels** at St Georges GC 16 Oct (PW) and Cedar Grove 22 Oct (DW). A **Dark-eyed Junco** was at St. George's Cemetery 8 Oct (PW). A **Lapland Longspur** was on the Causeway 13 Nov (AD, NB). A **Snow Bunting** was seen at the Airport 12 Dec (PW). A **Common Grackle** was seen at Paget Marsh 13 Nov (KL, RL).

Observers: Peter Adhemar, Eric Amos, Ned Brinkley, Andrew and Katrina Dobson, Wendy Frith, Jennifer Gray, Gene and Susan Harvey, Felicity Holmes, Peter Holmes (PJH), Peter Hopkin (PH), Kay and Ray Latter, Jeremy and Leila Madeiros, David Wallace (DW), Paul Watson, Tim Wershler, David Wingate (DBW).

Membership Renewal

June is membership renewal month! If you do not know whether your membership is up to date, please contact the Audubon Secretary, Richard Amos: jamos@gov.bm
Membership forms and details can be found at www.audubon.bm

Future Events

Tuesday 27 December
Christmas Bird Count

Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 February
Bermuda's Treasure Island
Premiere of natural history film documentary
BUEI Auditorium. 6.30 pm and 8.00 pm
Tickets \$10.00 Available from Sat 7 Jan from
The Body Shop, Hamilton or BAMZ (Front Desk)

Saturday 11 February

Harbour and Islands Boat Tour on 'Explorer' - in search of winter birds
Depart BUEI dock at 1.00 pm. \$20 per person
Reservations info@audubon.bm or 238-3239

March

Bluebird Nest Box Workshop
Details to be confirmed

Saturday 17 June to Saturday 24 June

Nonsuch Island Natural History Camp

September

'Birds of a Feather' Art Show
Dockyard Arts Centre

Saturday 10 September

Spittal Pond Fieldtrip

Friday 6 to Sunday 8 October

Paget Island Bird Camp