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## **The Facts about Those Cats**

A survey in Australia showed that one feral cat eats as many as 3,600 native animals or birds per year. Another study on Macquarie Island reported that each cat kills roughly 300 sea birds a year and that they have been responsible for the extinction of at least two local species. In the United States, a study in Virginia indicated that cat-killed birds in the state are calculated to number 26 million. In Wisconsin cats kill an average of 19 million songbirds and 140,000 game birds in a single year. Many studies clearly show that cats, whether feral or domestic, have a driven instinct to kill other wildlife.

“Say it ain’t so! That adorable little ball of fluff snoozing on the sofa is a killer – one of the major predators of wildlife?” “Not my cat” is the usual retort. “She gets all the food she can eat at home.”

Bermuda would be foolish to believe that statistics would show a different behaviour by cats here. The fact is that cats hunt for the sake of hunting and in the process kill wildlife no matter how much food you feed them and as long as they have access outdoors. Local conservationists are becoming increasingly concerned about cats in our fragile island environment. Our concern is focused particularly on B.F.A.B.’s (Bermuda Feline Assistance Bureau) policy of setting up feeding stations for feral cats, some of which are on Parklands or on adjacent nature reserves that are critical habitat for endangered native species. As for feeding ferals, particularly on public lands that provide habitat for native species, it is inconceivable that anyone would think we should use parkland to put an abundant, non-native species over a rare or declining native species. It just does not make sense. We know that cats in Bermuda eat a number of songbirds including the threatened bluebird. We also know that they are responsible for invasion of longtail nesting sites. In addition we know that they kill a large number of lizards and who knows how many of the endemic skinks. What we do not know is just how many species are under threat because of cats and how long it would take them to be driven to extinction.

Cats cannot be blamed for killing wildlife. It is the responsibility of cat owners to ensure their cats are safely indoors. The Humane Society of the United States, the American Humane

Association and other groups are working with the American Bird Conservancy ([www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)) on promoting the “Cats Indoors” programme. The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats (more information available upon request). Because many members of B.F.A.B. in Bermuda also support this programme it is hard to understand how they can reconcile this with the maintenance of feeding stations in outdoor areas. It is time for Bermuda to take a serious look at the problems caused by all feral and domestic animals in the environment and implement effective legislation and action before it’s too late.

## President’s Perch - Night Rescue of Warwick Pond Flamingo

I’ve always wanted to go boating on Warwick Pond – so when Audubon member David Wallace phoned to tell me the flamingo appeared to be in difficulty, I thought, here’s my chance – but it’s almost dark! Centre of operations – Ettrick Animal Hospital – and a search is on for a punt. Dr. Andrew Madeiros manages to procure a punt and headlights of passing cars light up a trio of strange men walking along Middle Road with a boat. Dr. M and I volunteer to venture out in the boat, there is no ‘small craft warning’ and David is primed to call the marine police if we don’t return soon.

Our efforts at a heroic rescue are soon met with the realization that there is only about a foot of water in the pond and we are paddling through another foot of mud. As we approach the now alarmed flamingo, it struggles towards the reeds at the edge of the pond – shallower water and more mud! Alarmed coots rush past us and a barn owl floats overhead, no doubt thinking much wiser thoughts. Exhausted (that’s both Dr.M and the flamingo) , we manage to get the



magnificent creature into the boat. It sits quietly on my lap while kite string is removed from its leg. The string is still attached to an enormous kite which has been acting as an anchor to the desperate flamingo. Now follows the mud paddle back to shore – a tricky task but easily done with the elation of mission accomplished. Fortunately no-one has a date that evening, such is the odour of the Warwick Pond mud!

*Left: Dr. Andrew Madeiros (left) and Andrew Dobson examine the kite.*

Footnote:

(The flamingo’s feet are fine, my feet are fine but the sneakers are discarded).

The flamingo was checked by Ettrick's Dr. Darren Glanville and Jennifer Gray the Head Aquarist from BAMZ. No serious injuries could be observed but the bird was taken back to the zoo to allow it to feed well and recovery in safety. The Aquarium had recently received a number of calls from the public regarding the flamingo. It had been wandering away from the pond dangerously close to traffic on Middle Road, so its capture may be for its own good. The flamingo escaped from the zoo during *Hurricane Emily* in 1987. It had been by itself since a second escapee was found dead at Spittal Pond shortly after *Hurricane Felix*. The surviving flamingo had become increasingly restless in recent months, commuting between Spittal and Warwick Ponds and making unsuccessful attempts to land and join the captive flock at the zoo.

This incident highlights the need for the general public to be more responsible when flying kites. Birds become victims of discarded kite strings every year because people are too lazy to retrieve kites or cut the string from kites that are tangled in trees. Kites that come down in ponds are a particular hazard because the string can snare herons, egrets and wildfowl. The kite attached to the flamingo would have taken years to decompose.

Andrew Dobson

# Bluebird Report 2000

Stuart Smith

This year, with the erection of bluebird boxes on the St. Georges Golf Club, I am proud to announce that every golf course on the Island has a monitored blue bird trail. The following table is a list of the major bluebird trails and an estimated number of fledged chicks for the years 1999 and 2000.

Trail:	# of boxes:	Est. Fledglings:	
		1999	2000
Arboretum	7	12	26
Belmont	10	12	6
Castle Harbour	25	23	21
Government House	20	12	7
Haydon Trust	16	7	10
Mid Ocean Club	54	57	82
Ocean View	9	7	11
Port Royal	44	-	56
Riddells Bay	30	-	17
Southside	27	20+	-
St.Georges Club	12	-	-
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>236</b>

Can one imagine the days when bluebirds were the birds nesting under the eaves of ones house and were seen in flocks of up to fifty. With the continual erosion of the bluebird's habitat, the bluebird's survival in Bermuda is dependent on man providing safe nesting sites. The aggressive and highly adaptable house sparrow is the biggest threat, after man, to the existence of the bluebird, ferociously competing for food and nesting sites. The bluebirds nesting season has been reduced to mainly one brood in the months of June and July as the sparrow ruthlessly dominates the nesting sites from February to May.



*Left: Standard Bluebird box (with hatchlings). A. Dobson*

I am currently experimenting with various different types of boxes that deter the sparrow from nesting. The white plexiglas roof box has had great results this season, with the Arboretum's four plexiglas roof boxes successfully fledging sixteen bluebird chicks and Palm Grove's trail only successful fledglings came from two plexiglas roof boxes. Next season I will be producing and testing the Gilbertson PVC nesting box with two different entrances, and a fiberglass cone rooftop. In 2001, the Audubon Society will be concentrating on the registration and monitoring of all private boxes in Bermuda so as to raise awareness and to gain a better statistical understanding of the total bluebird fledglings. The Audubon Society, Bermuda's Bluebirds

and I would like to thank David O'Neill, Stephen Morgan, the green keepers at Castle Harbour, James Gibbons, James Keyes, Roy Matcham, Bennie Moreira, Kevin Winter, Heather DeSilva, Liz Paul, and Roger Pocklington and friends, without whom this programme would not be

successful. A special thanks to Ray Latter for cutting lumber to help produce over 75 bluebird boxes.

Last year I appealed to the members of the Audubon Society for help in constructing blue bird boxes or monitoring a bluebird trail and sadly did not receive one response. Unless we are prepared to make a common effort to help this species, we may no longer be certain that they will survive for future generations. Please give me a call on 734-9856 if you are willing to help.

## **Bird Report October to November 2000**

**Andrew Dobson**

October was one of the wettest on record with 8.72 inches of rain. One casualty of the weather was the cancellation of the annual bird watching camp, not once, but twice! Nevertheless – an impressive 137 species were recorded on the October World Bird Count. Wet weather continued into November with another 3 inches of rain in the first two weeks. So what did all this wet weather bring us?

Cahow to Herons:

The most alarming report of the month concerned the finding of **Cahow** remains on the Baselands on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. (DBW) almost certainly the result of a **Peregrine Falcon** kill. A probable **Northern Gannet** flew along North Shore on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. (SD). Many **Great Blue Herons** arrived on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. including 15 at Spittal Pond and 6 on Nonsuch (DBW)

Wildfowl:

Perhaps the highlight of the season was the arrival of four **Brant Geese** at St. George's Dairy on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. (LG). All immatures of the *B.b.horta* race, only two remained after 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. There have only been three previous records of Brant Geese since the first was recorded in the mid-1960's. Jubilee Road attracted a **Canada Goose** on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. (AD) which was relocated on Port Royal GC in the company of an adult **Snow Goose**. The latter goose first arrived at Somerset Long Bay on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. (DW). An immature Snow Goose was recorded in St. George's Harbour later in the month (PW). There were 13 **Green-winged Teal** in Devonshire Marsh and a further 32 on Spittal Pond on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. (DBW) but most had departed the following day. A drake **Eurasian Wigeon** (JM) was on Nonsuch Island freshwater pond on 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. More than a dozen duck species had been recorded by the end of November. **American Coot** numbers grew steadily during November, with over 120 on Spittal Pond and 40 in Devonshire Marsh.

Shorebirds to Gulls:

With the large amount of rainfall, flooded areas have seen the prolonged stay of many shorebird species. The flooded fields along Jubilee Road have hosted a wide range of species well into November, including: **Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper**. On 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. there were 26 **Common Snipe** at the same location – many more were probably hidden out of sight. A first-winter **Black-headed Gull** was on the Dockyard jetty 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct (AD)

Flicker to Pipits:

A **Northern Flicker** was a surprise on Vesey Street on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. (JM). An **Eastern Wood-Pewee** was at Fort Scaur on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct. (AD). An **Eastern Phoebe** was in Devonshire Marsh on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. (DBW). Also at Fort Scaur, a **Great Crested Flycatcher** on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. (SF). The flycatcher of the fall was an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** (MW), only the third ever recorded in Bermuda. First seen

on 21<sup>st</sup> Nov., it was still present in mid-Dec. Kingbirds have been scarce, but all three species turned up at Mid-Ocean GC. **Western Kingbird** 12<sup>th</sup> Oct. (AD), **Eastern Kingbird** (DBW) and **Gray Kingbird** (DBW). Both **Golden-crowned** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were present at Spittal Pond on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. (DBW). Thrush species have been very difficult to find, so a **Swainson's Thrush** in Jenningsland on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. is noteworthy (JM). Fewer of the less common migrant vireos have been reported this year. A **Yellow-throated Vireo** was present in Jenningsland from 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Oct. (JM) with another at the Bio Station on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. A flock of 20 **American Pipits** was seen at the airport on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. (AD).

Warblers to Buntings:

**Swainson's Warbler's** were reported from a number of locations including Port Royal on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. (AD), Hog Bay Park. on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct (AD) and Spittal Pond on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. (AD). Late reports of **Kentucky Warblers** suggest that they may over-winter. One was at Hog Bay on 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. (WF) with another in Smiths Parish on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. (JM). **Yellow-breasted Chats** are always scarce but one was seen at Fort Scaur on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. (WF). Of the 38 species of warblers to have been recorded in Bermuda, the only species not recorded this year was Townsend's Warbler (an extreme rarity). Fall migration also witnesses the passage of migrant sparrows, some of which will over-winter. Reports this season include the regulars like **Chipping, Savannah, Grasshopper, Lincoln's** and **White-throated** as well as the less common including **Clay-coloured Sparrow** on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. at Hog Bay Park (AD), **White-crowned** in late Oct. at Port Royal GC (MA), **Fox Sparrow** on 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. in Hog Bay Park (WF), **Swamp** at the Bio Station on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. and single **Vesper Sparrows** on 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. at Hog Bay Park (WF) and 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. on the Baselands (DBW). The first **Snow Bunting** was reported from Clearwater on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. (PW).

Also of note in the migration season was a **Question Mark** butterfly in Somerset on 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. (DW) – a very rare migrant to Bermuda.

Many thanks to those who have contributed their sightings: Marc Allaire, Eric Amos, Bobbii Cartwright. Andrew Dobson, Lisa Greene, Stephen Furbert, Peter Holmes, Bruce Lorhan, Jeremy and Leila Madeiros, Penny Soares, David Wallace (DW), Paul Watson, Martin Wernaart, David Wingate (DBW)

## New Publications

### **Birds of North America**

Kenn Kaufman

Houghton Mifflin; Published August 2000

384 pages. \$20.00

A new field guide offering a basic approach to birding but using both photographs and paintings to illustrate salient features. (But where is the Cahow?) One of the world's leading bird experts, Kenn will be remembered for his entertaining talk at the Audubon Society's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner in 1994. A.D.

### **The Sibley Guide to Birds**

David Sibley

Knopf; Published October 2000

544 pages \$35.00

With over 6,500 colour paintings of 810 species, this book has already attracted rave reviews, heralding a new dimension in bird field guides. Sibley took 12 years to produce this book. The result is a text written with clarity and concision. His well-annotated illustrations are superb, with a dozen or more for individual difficult species. I like the fact that flight illustrations show both

upper and lower wings, as well as comprehensive coverage of relevant differing ages and sexes. There are 14 illustrations of Brant Geese, most helpful following the recent arrival of this species in Bermuda. (But where is the Cahow?) A.D.

### **Threatened Birds of the World**

BirdLife International.

Lynx Ediciones; To be published January 2001

852 pages (Hardback) \$90.00

This massive tome deals with the 1,200 species threatened with global extinction – about one-eighth of the world's bird species. Superbly produced with detail not only on identification, but also on threats and conservation measures. The main purpose of this book is to 'spread the word'. It will be available to individuals and organizations in countries where conservation is needed. Read about the Cahow! This book is expensive – but how much do you spend on a night out in a restaurant? Go out and buy a copy – you will be helping cover the cost of this huge conservation project and helping the survival of bird species. A.D.

If you have difficulty in obtaining any of these titles, try the following specialist bookstores:

Natural History Bookstore: [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com)

Amazon Bookstore: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### **Research Paper**

The following paper by Storrs L. Olson and David B. Wingate was recently published in the Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington (31 July 2000) - "Two new species of flightless rails (Aves: Rallidae) from the Middle Pleistocene "crane fauna" of Bermuda".

Congratulations to both authors! If anyone would like to see this paper, please call Penny Hill at the BAMZ library (293-2727).

### **Recent Trips**



Joffre Pitman's boat and DBW's head successfully negotiate Somerset Bridge. Audubon members enjoyed an afternoon's birding by boat. Thanks Joffre!





Scanning for Cahows from Cooper's Point – better luck next time!

**Future Events** - For information on any of the events: tel. 292-1920 or email [info@audubon.bm](mailto:info@audubon.bm)

- **Sunday 11 February**  
South Shore Dunes Field Trip  
Meet at Warwick Long Bay car park east of the playground 2.00 pm
- **Saturday 10 March**  
Working Party – vegetation clearance and planting  
South Shore Paget, west of Coral Beach. 11.00 am to 3.00 pm  
More information : tel. 292-1920
- **Saturday 17 March**  
Bluebird Workshop – Government House  
Enter from Langton Hill – 9.30 am.  
Pre-registration is required for security reasons  
Email or phone in your names (see above)
- **Sunday 25 March**  
Fort Scaur Field Trip – including the Heydon Trust  
Meet at car park 2.00 pm

## *Introduction to Birdwatching Course*

- Lecturers: Andrew Dobson and David Wingate
- Topics will include: bird identification, migration, the museum bird collection, essential equipment and birding in the field, when and where to watch birds in Bermuda.
- Dates: 1,8,15,22 February (Thursdays) Two fieldtrips will also be arranged.
- Venue: Education room, BAMZ
- The course will be run as a joint venture between the Bermuda Zoological Society and the Bermuda Audubon Society
- Registration: Front desk at BAMZ or call 238-3239 - Cost \$40.00

### **Membership Application/Renewal**

Title (Mr. Mrs. etc) \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Post code: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. no. (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick

Student \$5

Adult \$20

Family \$30 (two or more persons)

Life \$500

Donation \_\_\_\_\_ (Cheques payable to "Bermuda Audubon Society")  
P.O.Box HM1328 Hamilton, HMFx

Date of application: \_\_\_\_\_

Bermuda Audubon Committee 2000-2001

President	Andrew Dobson
Vice-President	David Wingate
Treasurer	Ted Cassidy
Secretary	Penny Hill
Committee members:	Richard Amos
	Heather DeSilva
	Jennifer Gray
	Peter Holmes
	David O'Neill

Newsletter	Andrew Dobson
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If you wish to contact the Society – email [info@audubon.bm](mailto:info@audubon.bm)  
or contact the Secretary 292-1920