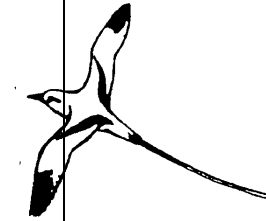




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Hamilton, BERMUDA



Bermuda Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002

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www.audubon.bm

Email: info@audubon.bm

Bohemian Waxwing – New Record for Bermuda

The first ever sighting of Bohemian Waxwings *Bombycilla garrulous* was at “Brannel”, #15 Dock Hill, Devonshire on December 29th 2001 when Michelle and Rebecca Conklin spotted three lovely little birds just above their heads as they played on their new Christmas trampoline. The birds were “fluffed up” like little butterballs on the branches of the trimmed casuarina trees on the Dock Hill side of the property. They pointed them out to their mother, Jennifer Gray, who phoned Andrew Dobson that evening discussing what they might be – “perhaps Bohemian waxwings”. The following morning, the three birds, now sleek and more active, spent much of the time high in the branches of a bare Pride of India tree, taking swift trips down to the birdbath below to drink. Their soft trills or “bleating” calls could be heard clear across the property as they chatted from their high sunny perch. Andrew Dobson arrived to see the birds and confirmed them to be Bohemian Waxwings, the first ever to have been recorded in Bermuda. (The similar Cedar Waxwings *Bombycilla cedrorum* are regular migrants and winter visitors to Bermuda). Other keen birders were called but the birds had already flown off before anyone else arrived. On the morning of December 31st there were only ever two birds present, but they were enjoyed by a number of visitors. In the late afternoon Jennifer was surprised to find five Bohemian Waxwings in the Pride of India tree. Amazingly, Andrew and his family had found the same five waxwings feeding on Mexican Pepper berries about a mile away on the Railway Trail and watched them fly back towards “Brannel”. The birds were last seen on January 6th and heard calling on January 7th. Bohemian Waxwings breed in Alaska and western Canada. In the winter they can stray as far east as New England with the odd vagrant as far south as Virginia. Their roaming lifestyle has earned them their “Bohemian” name. They are readily distinguished from Cedar Waxwings by their grey underparts (not yellowish), rufous undertail and yellow tips on outer web of primaries. The name “waxwing” is the result of drop-like, red waxy appendages on the end of the secondaries.



Waxwing, By D Powell

Future Events - For information on any of the events: tel. 292-1920

- **Sunday 10 February**
Fieldtrip – Hog Bay Park
Meet in car park at 2.00 pm
- **Wednesday 27 February**
Illustrated talk on the Wildlife of South Georgia by Steve Rodwell
Horticultural Hall, Botanical Gardens 7.30 pm
- **Saturday 9 March**
Woodland restoration – working party at Heydon Trust
Meet by Heydon Trust Chapel at 9.30 am
- **Saturday 16 March**
Bluebird nestbox workshop – Botanical Gardens
Jack King Building 9.00 am to 12 noon

Andrew Dobson and Jennifer Gray

Society News

Fieldtrips

Please try to join us on the field trip we have arranged for this month. We will be walking through the area of Hog Bay Park, a mix of woodland, farmland and coastal paths. Meet in the car park at the entrance to the park at 2.00 pm on Sunday 10th February.

Natural History Talk

Local teacher and ornithologist Steve Rodwell is presenting an illustrated lecture on the Wildlife of South Georgia. He has worked as a professional ornithologist in many parts of the world, including three years on Bird Island, South Georgia. Mark your diary now for Steve's illustrated talk – Wednesday 27th February at the Horticultural Hall 7.30 pm. Non-members welcome.

Working Party

Members of the Heydon Trust community in Somerset have asked the Society to assist them in restoring an area of woodland on their property. This provides a great opportunity to remove invasive plant species and replace them with native and endemic plants. The more volunteers we have the better. You will also have the opportunity to explore the area. Why not bring a picnic too! To give the organisers an idea of numbers, please call 292-1920 (after 6 pm) if you intend to come, or email info@audubon.bm

Bluebird Workshop

Please bring your family and friends to our annual workshop prior to the start of the bluebird breeding season. You will have the chance to make your own nextbox and learn how to monitor the birds during the breeding season. We intend to experiment with a new box, designed to appeal to bluebirds but not to sparrows. Join us between 9.00 am and 12 noon on Saturday 16th March in the Jack King Building at Botanical Gardens.

Executive Committee 2001-2002

President Andrew Dobson
Vice-president David Wingate
Treasurer Ted Cassidy
Secretary Penny Hill
Officers: Richard Amos
Jennifer Gray
Peter Holmes
Jeremy Madeiros
David O'Neill

LOST
"A Checklist and Guide to the Birds of Bermuda" by D.B. Wingate

Inadvertently given to The Barn with a number of books.

Please call Penny Soares 232-3700

Membership renewals were due in June. Please check the address label to see if your membership has expired or email info@audubon.bm

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, HMFY

Date of application: _____

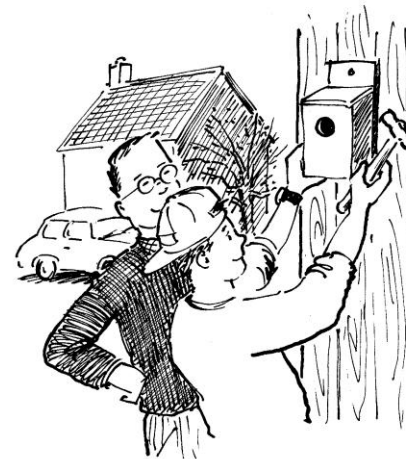


Illustration by A Bright

Don't forget the Bluebird Workshop!

**Saturday 16 March
Jack King Building
Botanical Gardens
9.00 am to 12 noon**

**Bermuda Audubon
Society Web Site
For details of events
Newsletters and lots
more information
www.audubon.bm**

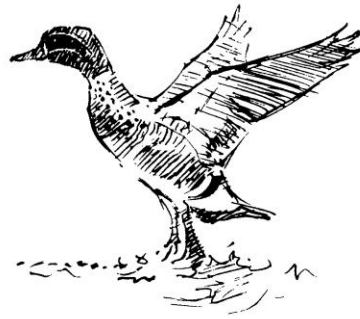
Bird Report Aug 2001 – Jan 2002

Andrew Dobson

For many observers, the fall migration was disappointing in terms of numbers of birds recorded. Whether it reflects a declining number of birds in North America is debatable, but local factors were not favourable for attracting and keeping birds. There were long periods without suitable frontal systems to bring birds from the continent; Warwick and Spittal Pond were bank full all season revealing little in the way of muddy margins; and arable fields were ploughed early leaving little weedy habitat. A number of late season storms, notably Tropical Storm Karen, which became a hurricane as it passed over Bermuda (Oct.11/12) denuded Bermuda of much vegetation. As well as fallen trees, salt spray damaged much foliage, which took some weeks to recover. Nevertheless, there were some real highlights especially in the late fall and winter, including Brown Pelican, Northern Goshawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren (2), Bohemian Waxwing, Lark Sparrow and White-winged Crossbill (2).

Shearwaters to Rails

A **Cory's Shearwater** (RP) off North Shore, Dec 14 is a rarely recorded species in winter. A **Leach's Storm-Petrel** (HW) Sept.19 came aboard a tour boat off St. David's and was released the following day. An immature **Brown Pelican** was first noted at Burgess Point, Jan 8 where it has remained for the month. A **Eurasian Teal** (AD) found at Pembroke Marsh, Dec 16 was still present in late January. Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** (AD, SR) at Daniel's Head, Dec 8 were relocated in the Great Sound on the Christmas Bird Count. The first **Northern Harrier** (DBW) of the season was noted on the Castle Islands, Oct 18 with at least two present in Dec/Jan. A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** (AD) at Spittal Pond, Oct 10 was the first of several fall sightings. A **Northern Goshawk** (WF, DBW) over Abbot's Cliff, Jan 18 was the first since 1985. A **Red-tailed Hawk** (DBW, WF) over Alton Hill, Nov 23 was totally unexpected but provided a real treat for those who participated in the Society's fieldtrip around Seaswept Farm. The last two records were in 1983 and 1929! It remained to mid-December. The only **Virginia Rail** (DBW) of the fall was at Devonshire Marsh, Nov 17. **Soras** were relatively common, with 10 (AD) an unusually high number at Pembroke Marsh, Dec 16.



Eurasian Teal by J Busby

Shorebirds to Terns

An **American Golden-Plover** (AD, SR) at Daniel's Head, Dec 8 is uncommon in December. **Semipalmated Plovers** (JM et al) occasionally winter and two were regularly at Daniel's Head beach. Sightings of the endangered **Piping Plover** are always noteworthy. They were recorded on Aug 21 at the Airport – an aircraft kill (DBW); on Aug 29 at Elbow Beach (SR); on Sept 7 at the Airport (SR); and on Oct 3 at Cooper's Island (DBW). A **Dunlin** (JM) was at Daniel's Head, Nov 13. An **American Woodcock** (HW) was reported from St. David's, Nov 30. Just as there are increasing numbers on the U.S. east coast, **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** have become more common in Bermuda in recent years, so a record 19 birds (SR) at Dockyard, Nov 29 was not unexpected. A **Black-legged Kittiwake** (DW) was present from early Dec into 2002. A **Gull-billed Tern** (AD) at Dockyard Sept 9 to Oct 8 was a very rare fall record. **Forster's Tern** is often recorded in winter and one has wintered this year Castle Harbour, seen regularly along the Causeway. The only **Black Tern** unfortunately died in captivity at BAMZ on Sep.13.

Owls to Waxwings

The remains of a **Long-eared Owl** were found at St. George's Cemetery, Nov 14 (SR). Unfortunately, there are more records of dead Long-eared Owls than live ones in Bermuda. **Common Nighthawks** were indeed more common this fall. The flock of 14 birds (AD) was reported from Belmont GC, Oct 1. A **Northern Flicker** (SR) was seen at St. George's GC, Nov 3. A scattering of **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** records included two together (AD) at the Arboretum, Nov 1. One or two **Eastern Phoebes** are recorded annually, but this fall there were at least six individuals with two over-wintering at Spittal Pond and Kindley Field. **Cliff Swallows** arrived in good numbers this year. A record flock of up to 40 birds (PW) was at the East End Dairy, Aug 26. The less common vireos were hard to find. A **Yellow-throated Vireo** (AD) was seen in the Botanical Gardens, Oct 14. A **Warbling Vireo** appeared briefly (AD, SR) on Port Royal GC, Sept 22. A **Philadelphia Vireo** (AD) was at Coral Beach Club, Oct 10, and a **Blue-headed Vireo** (SR) was in the Arboretum, Nov 3. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** is a real rarity in Bermuda. One at Ferry Point Park, Nov 10 (SR et al) was only the 6th record in 30 years. Equally rare is the **House Wren**. Visiting birder Ian Fisher discovered one at St. George's Cemetery, Nov 4. It was then obvious that two birds were present (both singing males), which remained into 2002. A **Golden-crowned Kinglet** (DW) was at Ireland Island Cemetery, Dec 16. Thrushes seem to become harder to find every year, so any thrushes are worth mentioning. A **Grey-cheeked Thrush** (AD) was at Tudor Farm, Oct 27. **Swainson's Thrushes** (AD, JM) were seen at Jenningsland, Paget Island and Port Royal GC between Oct 7-9. An **American Robin** (JM) was observed in Penhurst Park, Oct 8. A **Northern Mockingbird** (RB) was reported from Port Royal GC, Nov 10. **American Pipits** (AD) arrived at Kindley Field, Jan 5. Three **Bohemian Waxwings** (JG) were seen on Dec 28 at Dock Hill – a new record for Bermuda. The eventual five birds were last seen on Dec. 6th

Warblers to Crossbills

Of 38 warbler species recorded in Bermuda, all but Townsend's and Cerulean Warbler were recorded this fall. A single **Golden-winged Warbler** (DW) was at Horseshoe Bay, Sept 15. A **Palm Warbler** (DBW) at Ferry Reach, Sept 7 was the earliest record by about 6 days. **Swainson's Warblers** were more common than usual. Three in a day in Somerset (DW) on Sept 26 was most unusual. A **Yellow Warbler** (SR) at Port Royal GC, Jan 26 and a **Kentucky Warbler** (JM) in the Smiths Hills, Nov 29 and still present in December both provided rare wintering records. Three **Summer Tanagers** (AD et al) on St. George's GC Sept 30 was unusual and one found in Botanical Gardens (DW) on Jan 21 was exceptional. A flock of nine **Scarlet Tanagers** on Ocean View GC, Oct 3 was also noteworthy. The only **Chipping Sparrow** (IF) was at St. Cemetery Hill, Nov 13. **Clay-coloured Sparrows** were recorded at Lagoon Park, Sept 18 (DBW) and Kindley Field, Oct 27 (SR). A **Lark Sparrow** (EA) at Ferry Point Park, Oct 22 was only the 4th record for Bermuda. **Song Sparrows** (SR) were seen at Kindley Field, Oct 27 (two birds) and Lagoon Park, Nov 18. A **Snow Bunting** (SR) was seen at Little Head Park, Nov 14. A **Dickcissel** (DBW et al) was on Nonsuch Island, Nov 12, while one at Prospect Fields (SR) on Dec 12 was one of three individuals seen in December. Two **Red-winged Blackbirds** (AD, PH) were recorded during the annual CBC at Spittal Pond, Dec 16. An immature **Brown-headed Cowbird** (AD et al) at East End Dairy, Oct 6 was seen during the Audubon bird camp. A pair of **White-winged Crossbills** (JH, AD) at Astwood Park, Nov 14-17 provided another extremely rare bird record. An **Evening Grosbeak** (GP) was present in Botanical Gardens, Dec 31 to Jan 5.

Observers: Eric Amos, Robert Blakesley, Andrew Dobson (compiler), Ian Fisher, Wendy Frith, Jennifer Gray, Junior Hill, Jeremy Madeiros, George Peterich, Steve Rodwell, Paul Watson, David Wallace (DW), David Wingate (DBW), Helge Wingate

Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan - A Community Approach to Conservation Planning

Annie Glasspool. Project Leader, Bermuda Biodiversity Project

In early 2000, a new conservation initiative was launched with the aim of bringing the wider community together in helping to forge a common vision for biodiversity conservation in Bermuda. Born out of the widespread recognition by many residents that there is an urgent need for a coordinated, community-based plan for conserving our increasingly threatened biodiversity, the overall goal of the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) is to establish realistic conservation targets and prioritised, practical options for achieving them – essentially a step by step agenda for conservation.

But the development of the BSAP is much more than just the production of a ‘what-to-do’, and ‘how-to-do-it’ document. Rather it is a process, in which people from a wide range of different backgrounds, come together with the common goal of protecting our natural heritage. We are of course already fortunate in Bermuda to have a number of environmental organisations and individuals working hard to conserve our biodiversity. But, with the conflicts between community and environmental needs escalating in the face of the rapid pace of development, any conservation action plan must have the support of the wider community if it is to be successfully implemented. This means including all sectors of our community in the process, from businessmen to clergymen. Exploring ways to accommodate different priorities is one of the challenges we face, and open communication is essential for developing solutions. The BSAP is proving to be an important forum for us to work together, to learn from each other and exchange ideas, and to build on the very strong foundations that already exist to protect our unique wildlife.

And, whilst our intent in launching this initiative is to satisfy a recognised need within Bermuda, the development of this BSAP will be a major step for Bermuda towards committing to the principles of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The UK has already signed the CBD on behalf of its Overseas Territories and has also expressed the intention of extending ratification directly to each Overseas Territory. Bermuda is assuming a leadership role as the first Overseas Territory to develop a BSAP and the outcome of this initiative is being closely followed.

The importance of this initiative is reflected in financial support from the U.K. Government’s Darwin Initiative, which funds worldwide work to safeguard biological diversity. The Bermuda Government and the Bermuda Zoological Society also support the project.

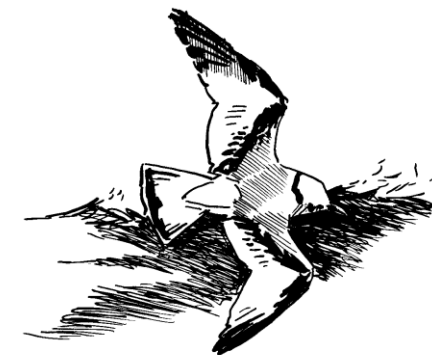
Learn more by purchasing the "Bermuda Biodiversity Country Study" published by BAMZ/BZS and available from the Aquarium bookshop at \$25.00

Christmas Bird Count – Dec 2001

Andrew Dobson

On Sunday 16th December, the Bermuda Audubon Society carried out its 27th Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Eleven members of the society, all experienced birders, were out from dawn to dusk counting every bird they could find on the island. Results of the count were compiled by Eric Amos and sent by computer to the National Audubon Society in the US, which collates all the results for the Americas, something they have been doing for 102 years since the first count.

The purpose of the count is to look at the health of bird populations and to determine whether there are any long-term trends with particular species. The count may well provide evidence to the effects on bird populations of global warming and habitat loss. Our numbers were slightly down this year, but that was mainly due to the weather, dull conditions and a stiff breeze for much of the day. We did manage 88 species of birds, which is an average number for a CBC in Bermuda. Over 7,500 birds were counted altogether. There are many more birds on the island, but the observers walk similar routes each year covering as much of the island as they can in the time available.



Black-legged Kittiwake by D Powell

Two species had never been recorded on the CBC before. House Wrens very rarely reach Bermuda from the North American continent, but one heard singing at St. George's Cemetery was one of two birds known to have arrived there this winter.

A Blue Grosbeak on the Heydon Trust property was unexpected. Seen commonly in the fall months, this species has usually migrated far to our south for the winter. Other unusual birds found on the count included a Black-legged Kittiwake (a small gull), a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (a woodpecker) and two Red-winged Blackbirds. Nearly twenty species of tiny wood warblers were also seen.

The count day was not without incident. One observer, who had better remain nameless, was bundled into the back of a police car following the report of a prowler in a neighbour's property. Fortunately he didn't fit the description and was immediately released. Another participant lost his bike keys and later lost his field guide (both were recovered some days later!)

Results of the Bermuda CBC are available to everyone at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc

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