

	<p>Bermuda Audubon Society</p> <p>NEWSLETTER Summer 2012</p> <p>P.O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX Vol.23 No.1</p>
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The Sargasso Sea Alliance



Over 500 years ago Christopher Columbus was one of the first to write about seeing 'great quantities of weed' on the ocean. More recently oceanographer Sylvia Earle has described the Sargasso Sea as 'the golden floating rainforest of the Atlantic Ocean'. The Sargasso Sea is a hugely important ecosystem. The golden rainforest is made up of sargassum seaweed which spends its entire life adrift, and reproduces by simply growing and breaking apart. The rafts of sargassum are home to a huge variety of life. It acts as a feeding ground for fish, birds and mammals. It provides a

nursery for young turtles and a spawning ground for many fish including the marlin and tuna. At least 10 of 145 species of invertebrates and 125 fishes associated with sargassum are found only here. The Sargasso Sea is used by many migrant species, notably whales and seabirds. The Sargasso Sea is threatened by over-fishing, commercial harvesting of sargassum, pollution etc. The importance of the Sargasso Sea is recognised by many governments and organisations. Launched in 2010, the **Sargasso Sea Alliance** is a partnership led by the Bermuda government in collaboration with scientists, international marine conservation groups and private donors who share the vision of protecting the Sargasso Sea. The **Bermuda Alliance for Sargasso Sea (BASS)** is supporting efforts by the SSA to establish the Sargasso Sea as a high seas protected area through research, education and community awareness. BASS members are Atlantic Conservation Partnership; Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute; Bermuda National Trust; Greenrock; Bermuda Institute of Ocean Science; Bermuda Sloop Foundation; LookBermuda Education Foundation; National Museum of Bermuda; Bermuda Audubon Society; and Bermuda Zoological Society. To learn more about the Sargasso Sea Alliance – please come along to the AGM and listen to Jennifer Gray's presentation. (Photo: Fiona Dobson)

Seabird nesting report

Jeremy Madeiros reports: The 2012 Cahow nesting season is rapidly counting down its final weeks, with several of the chicks already out exercising and at least two having fledged out to sea. The rest are rapidly losing their downy 'afros' and growing their flight feathers. This has been yet another record-breaking year, both for the total number of nesting pairs (101) and with the number of chicks produced by the population (58). The new nesting colony on Nonsuch Island that was established by translocating chicks from the original nesting islets to artificial burrows on Nonsuch has also continued to grow, with 13 pairs now established and seven chicks in residence in nest burrows on the island. Cahows have now returned to Nonsuch from all five years of the translocation project, with at least 41 of the original 102 fledged translocated chicks confirmed returning as adults, and more will likely be returning for at least the next few years. In addition, at least three non-translocated Cahows have been attracted to Nonsuch by the activity there, with two pairing up with translocated birds to form nesting pairs. As the nesting season comes to an end, it will become increasingly unlikely to see Cahows off Cooper's Point.

Another six geo-locational data loggers were recovered from Cahows by March of this year, after having 'hitched a ride' on the legs of adult birds for a second and in some cases a third year. I have been very pleased with the performance and longevity of these loggers, all of which met or exceeded their two-year lifespan. These had to be sent to the factory in Canada to have the archived data extracted, as their internal batteries had given out. After receiving the data back from the factory, it was found that all contained valuable and sometimes surprising data, from which maps are being made at present. This has enabled us to determine the oceanic movements of individual Cahows over multiple seasons, enabling maps of the entire oceanic range of the Cahow to be determined for the first time, as well as breeding and non-breeding foraging areas.

As for tropicbirds, the first chicks have been hatching for some time now, with the first noted on 4th May, and 13 recently hatched chicks were recorded in nests on the southwest point on Nonsuch alone on 25th May. I have however been having a lot of trouble with crows raiding some of the nests and stealing eggs, finding almost twenty crow-predated eggs on Cooper's and Nonsuch Islands and Horn Rock. Eddie Wright has been going out for us to try and eliminate this problem, as crows are an invasive introduced pest species that also cause huge problems and financial losses to farmers. On a happier note, over 50 new tropicbird "igloo" nests were coated and prepared by a 15-strong volunteer group from Coldwell Banker, supervised by Karen Border and myself on 11th May, and a very enthusiastic group of Warwick Academy Year 12 students (including my son Seth) installed five tropicbird igloo artificial nests on the cliff edge at Cooper's Island on 12th May, bringing the number of artificial tropicbird nests installed on Cooper's Island over the last two years to more than 30. There were tropicbirds flying up to inspect the igloo nests even before the students had finished cementing them into place, so these should go some way towards helping this species, which has lost scores of nest sites in the Castle Harbour Islands area over the last 10 years to hurricane erosion and cliff collapse.



David Wingate reports:

The future of the Common Tern as a breeding species in Bermuda is looking very grim. The small breeding population was severely impacted by recent hurricane events. A complete survey of usual nesting sites in May of this year has only produced two chicks so far. In the Hamilton Harbour islands 3 or 4 adults have made three nests. However, none of the eggs have hatched suggesting that they may be female-female pairs. In Harrington Sound six adults have only managed to hatch two chicks. David reports that "We may only get two chicks

from the early nesting pre-established pairs. Unless new males turn up later in the season that could be all for this year." (Photo: One of the banded 'Bermuda' Common Terns - May 2012 -Andrew Dobson).

Christmas Bird Count

Andrew Dobson

In conjunction with National Audubon in the US, the Bermuda Audubon Society held its 37th CBC on 27th December 2011. Features of this year's count included:

- 7,659 individual birds were counted (over 1,000 less than last year's total)
- 88 species of birds (101 in 2010, 100 in 2009 and 97 in 2008)
- Two new species for count day
- European Starling was the most common species (27% of the count)



Bermuda had another successful count on a calm day between gales the day before and after. Fifteen birdwatchers were split between nine separate areas of Bermuda. Organiser of the local count and president of the Society, Andrew Dobson (see photo left), was accompanied by Sir Richard Gozney (right) and Audubon member Keith Rossiter (centre) on his section of the count. The Governor is patron of the Society and a keen birdwatcher. In woodland at Spittal Pond they discovered the bird of the day, a MacGillivray's Warbler, a 5-inch bird which breeds in the western US and Canada. The participants

counted every bird from dawn to dusk as well as adding any additional species seen during the week. Completing much of the census on foot, observers also used car, bike and boat. One Garganey – a small duck from Europe was also recorded on the count for the first time. Other rare birds included two Iceland Gulls, a very distinctive white-winged gull and also three Yellow-billed Cuckoos. It is extremely rare to find cuckoos wintering in Bermuda but these birds had obviously remained following a large fall of these birds in October.

However, about 52% of all birds recorded were starlings, kiskadees or sparrows – all invasive species which shouldn't really be in Bermuda and they have certainly had an impact on our local birds. Few US counts, if any, can record as many warbler species as Bermuda does each year due to our mild winter weather. 18 warbler species were recorded this year and 240 individuals. The island provides the most northerly winter refuge for many of these species each year. Most warblers have migrated well to the south, wintering in Central or South America. However, this relatively low number of migrant warblers continues a depressing downward trend in the population of these species. This year the lowest ever number of American Redstarts was recorded (a warbler species). It is a reflection of the loss of habitat in the summer (breeding grounds) and wintering areas and in some cases the effects of global warming. Citizen Science is a way for people to connect with the natural world through fun activities that generate vital information for the conservation of birds. This partnership benefits us all: observers learn about birds by taking part in these science-based activities, and National Audubon's science staff gain invaluable information. Most importantly, the birds benefit because it helps Audubon focus on those birds and habitats that most need our help.

CBC results will be available as they are entered onto the National Audubon website www.audubon.org/bird/cbc

Bird Report January to May 2012

Andrew Dobson

Highlights of the spring period included some exciting sea watching from Cooper's Point where record numbers of Leach's and Wilson's Storm-Petrels were observed from land; a record passage of Cory's Shearwater was observed; and both Great and South Polar Skua were recorded. Birds from Europe included Garganey, Eurasian Teal and Ruff. A record flock of Chimney Swifts was seen in St. Georges.

Cahows to Terns



A record 101 breeding pairs of **Cahows** were confirmed 22 Mar (JM). On the way back from a whale-watching trip on 12 Apr, a probable **Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** was seen by David Wingate. This species has not been seen in Bermuda waters before. A first-year **Snow Goose** was discovered on Mid-Ocean GC 5 Apr (GB). A **Canada Goose** was an unusual spring arrival at Spittal Pond 14 May (DBW). The wintering female **Garganey** was last seen on Spittal Pond 23 Apr (AD). The two long-staying male **Eurasian Teal** were last seen together on Tucker's Point GC 13 Mar with one of these on Mid-Ocean GC 18

Mar (AD) (Photo Andrew Dobson). A **Swallow-tailed Kite** was seen over Paget 10-11 Mar (KH-S) and over Bermuda Airport 13 Mar (PW). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was seen at Wreck Road 24-31 Mar (DBW) with perhaps the same bird over the Hamilton Harbour islands 25 Mar (AD). Another was at Fort St. Catherine 6 Apr (PW). A long-staying pair of **Red-tailed Hawks** built a nest at Morgan's Point, Bermuda 31 Mar (AD, PW, DBW). A **Peregrine Falcon** was over Government House 28 Mar (RG). One of the wintering **Red Knot** was still present at Coopers Is 13 Apr (TW) and a summer plumaged Red Knot was at Spanish Point 24 May (DBW). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Spittal Pond 13-23 May (AD). A **Ruff** (female) seen at Cooper's Island 4 Apr (DBW) and 16 May (TW) may have been the same individual. A female **Wilson's Phalarope** was discovered at Jubilee Road 12 May. It then remained at Spittal Pond 13-23 May (AD). A wintering **Iceland Gull** in St Georges Harbour 20 Apr provided the latest recorded date in Bermuda (AD). A **Roseate Tern** was in the Hamilton Harbour islands 16-17 May (DBW). Two of Bermuda's breeding **Common Terns** (both banded) were first noted returning in Harrington Sound 27 Mar (AD).

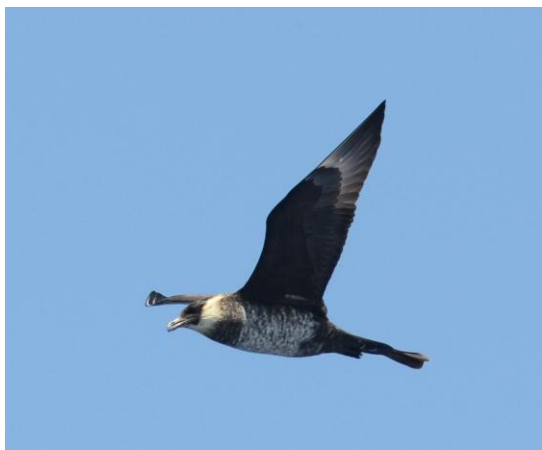
Cuckoos to Blackbirds

A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was seen at Bermuda Airport 13 Mar (NM). A **Common Nighthawk** was seen roosting in Devonshire 9 and 12 Apr (AC). A record breaking number of **Chimney Swift** (32+) was seen over St Georges GC 28 Apr (PW). There were still 9 present in St. Georges 15 May (PW). A **Northern Flicker** was seen at Warwick Pond 15 Mar (TW) Single **Yellow-throated Vireos** were seen at Lagoon Park 10 Apr and Coral Beach Club 15 Apr (DW). The first spring **Barn Swallow** was reported from the East End 7 Mar (PW). A **Veery** was seen at



Somerset Long Bay NR 29 Apr (DW) (*Photo Andrew Dobson*). Single **Swainson's Thrush** were noted at Wreck Hill Estate 25 Apr (WF) and Springfield NR 27-29 Apr (AD, DW). Ferry Reach – Two **American Robins** were found at Ferry Reach 10 Mar with another two at Pembroke Rectory 16 Mar (AD). The largest flock of spring **Cedar Waxwings** was (29) at Shelly Bay 5 May (JM). A **Louisiana Waterthrush** was discovered at Spittal Pond 16-18 Mar (AD) and Pembroke Marsh 21 Apr (NM). The **Red-winged Blackbird** at Devonshire Marsh was last seen 8 Mar (AD) while another was seen at Spittal Pond Farm 6 Apr (GL). Single male **Scarlet Tanagers** were seen at Evans Pond 3 May (NP) and in Warwick 5 May (JT).

(*Photo – Pomarine Jaeger near Challenger Banks April 2012 – Andrew Dobson*).



Sea-watching from Cooper's Point

10 Mar: **Manx Shearwaters** were passing Cooper's Point a one per minute (PW).

20 Mar: A 30 minute sea-watch at Cooper's Point (PW) recorded **Cory's Shearwater** (81 – a record count) and **Manx Shearwater** (15), while a 60 minute sea-watch at Elbow Beach on the same day noted **Cory's Shearwater** (50), **Manx Shearwater** (2).

22 Apr: Between 3:30 and 6:00 pm (AD, PW), **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** (15), **Leach's Storm-Petrel** (23), unidentified Storm Petrel (30), **Pomarine Jaeger** (17), **Parasitic Jaeger** (4), unidentified jaeger (15),

Manx Shearwater (23), **Cory's Shearwater** (2), **Cahow** (1)

18 May: Cooper's Point (1 hr) (PW) - **Cory's Shearwater** (14), **Greater Shearwater** (10), **Sooty Shearwater** (40), **Leach's Storm-Petrel**, **Great Skua**, **Pomarine Jaeger**, **Parasitic Jaeger**

19 May: Cooper's Point (7.30-10.30 hrs) (AD, PH, PW, DBW) - **Cory's Shearwater** (14), **Greater Shearwater** (5), **Sooty Shearwater** (50), **Manx Shearwater** (2), **Leach's Storm-Petrel**, **Skua sp.**, **Pomarine Jaeger** (6), **Long-tailed Jaeger** (4)

20 May: Cooper's Point (8.00-12.00 hrs) (AD, PW) - **Cory's Shearwater** (20), **Greater Shearwater** (8), **Sooty Shearwater** (128), **Manx Shearwater** (2) **Great Skua**, **South Polar Skua**, **Skua sp.**, **Pomarine Jaeger** (7), **Parasitic Jaeger** (2), **Long-tailed Jaeger** (10)

Observers: Alison Copeland, Andrew Dobson, Wendy Frith, Richard Gozney, Kelvin Hastings-Smith, Peter Hopkin, Graham Lamb, Jeremy Madeiros, Neal Morris, Natasha Powers, James Tavares, David Wallace (DW), Paul Watson, Tim White, David Wingate (DBW).

Have you renewed your membership?

- **Pay Your Membership Online**

We are now set up for online memberships. If you have not yet paid your 2011-2012 dues you can now do so by credit card online at www.bermudatix.bm – just click on Bermuda Audubon Society under 'Memberships' on the Home Page.

..... or a cheque in the mail to the Treasurer (address above) Family: \$30 Individual: \$20

Society News

In Celebration of the Cahow



In celebration of over 100 breeding pairs of Cahow, a real milestone on their road to recovery, the Bermuda Audubon Society is offering a limited edition of a Cahow print. It will be an archival-quality photographic print (11 x 16 ½) by local photographer Chris Burville. Chris has spent more time than anyone out on the ocean in pursuit of the ultimate Cahow photo. The cost of \$100 per print will include a signed white mat to fit a 16 x 20 frame (framing not included).

To order a print, please send a \$100 cheque payable to the "Bermuda Audubon Society" to The Treasurer, Bermuda Audubon Society, P.O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HMFx, Bermuda

- **Working parties**

- Three working parties have helped prepare Longtail (tropicbird) igloos prior to installation around the coast. Members helped with the first batch at Cooper's Island. The second batch was prepared by a team from Coldwell Banker and the final batch was made ready by a group of Year 12 students from Warwick Academy. (See photos below).
- Aberfeldy Nurseries once again hosted a very successful bluebird nest box workshop. Andrew Dobson gave a short talk about bluebirds and nest box construction. Members of the public then made about 50 boxes. (See photos below).
- Nature reserve working parties have carried out work at Seymour's Pond and Sear's Cave in recent months. (See photos below).



World Migration Bird Day

The Bermuda Audubon Society celebrated World Migratory Bird Day May 12th with a fieldtrip to the ABS nature reserve in Paget. About 40 people enjoyed great weather, great sandwiches (thank you Coral Beach Club) and a great display from the tropicbirds. Appropriately for World Migratory Bird Day - a Wilson's Phalarope (a rare migrant through Bermuda) arrived in Bermuda (photo left - Andrew Dobson)

- **Bluebird Nest Box Trophy**

The winner of this year's bluebird nest box competition was Monet Nisbett from the Bermuda High School for Girls. (See photo of boxes).

- **David Wingate at the Linnaean Society**

On May 9th David Wingate gave a talk to the Linnaean Society of New York at the American Museum of Natural History 'Saving the Cahow and other seabirds of the urbanized oceanic island of Bermuda: challenges and successes'. (See photos below). He is pictured with Deirdre Brennan, who produced the documentary on Nonsuch Island and the Cahow 'Bermuda's Treasure Island'.

- **Farewell to our Patron**

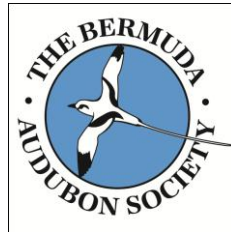
A big "thank you and farewell" to Sir Richard Gozney and Lady Gozney as they leave Bermuda for the UK. Sir Richard not only honoured us as our Patron for the past four years but he also took an active interest in the Society, attending fieldtrips and working parties as well as hosting meetings at Government House. Thanks to his enthusiasm, the bluebird trail in Government House grounds continues to produce young. As a keen birder he can't have a better retirement present than the North Norfolk coast!

With a steady trickle of members leaving the island it is good to know that members appreciate the efforts of the Society. This email was recently received from Karen Kardell who is returning to the US. "The most rewarding thing I found here (other than my job, which I loved) was the Audubon Society and what this small and dedicated group of people have accomplished. I have enjoyed every lovely trip and every opportunity to meet fellow birders here. Please keep me on file, feel free to share my email address, and should any members be traveling to the Seattle area, I will be happy to provide birding spots, best places to stay, take folks out personally in the Puget Sound region, gatherings, etc. We are on the Pacific Flyway, so, if you handle the weather, it's one of the greatest places to bird. I so truly wish that more Bermudians actually realized what they have here - the efforts that the Society has gone through to preserve what few places are left, and of course the enigmatic and brilliant Cahow breeding spots. It IS a model for the world's islands, and I feel so fortunate to have experienced some of it. It will remain one of the treasured parts of my life."

- **CEBF/IMBD**

The Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival (CEBF) is currently being held around the region with the theme of 'Connecting People to Bird Conservation'. This fits nicely with the Society's mission to engage with the local community. Many events have taken place under this theme.

- David Wingate gave a guided tour of the newly restored Seymour's Pond on 10th March to the Bermuda Garden Club.
- To commemorate 400 years of permanent settlement in Bermuda (1612-2012) and Warwick Academy's 350th Anniversary (1662-2012), David Wingate gave a special lecture at the school on 23rd March focusing on 400 years of dramatic change for Bermuda's birds.
- Andrew Dobson presented an illustrated talk about the Society and local birds to the International Women's Group on 18th April.
- In celebration of Earth Day, David Wingate gave a guided tour of Buy Back Bermuda's nature reserve at Somerset Long Bay East on 22nd April. Buy Back Bermuda is a joint initiative of The Bermuda Audubon Society and the Bermuda National Trust.
- David Saul gave a bluebird talk to Saltus Cavendish students in April. (See photos below).
- 25 students from Warwick Academy went on a fieldtrip to Nonsuch Island to learn about the restoration project and see Bermuda's national bird - the endemic Cahow or Bermuda Petrel.



Bermuda Audubon Society Annual General Meeting

**6pm Tuesday 12 June 2012
Bermuda Aquarium Education Room**

AGENDA

President's Report

Treasurer's Report

Election of Officers and Committee of Management

**The AGM will be followed by a short illustrated talk on
Birds of the Year by Andrew Dobson and
The Sargasso Sea Alliance by Jennifer Gray**

All members are invited to attend

Please email info@audubon.bm or tel. 238-8628

If you wish to nominate someone to serve on the Bermuda Audubon Society committee please email Karen Border info@audubon.bm . Both the proposer and nominee must be paid up members of the Society

- **Join the Bermuda Audubon Society on Facebook**
 - **Keep up to date with all the Society's news and events**
 - **Bird photos from Bermuda are posted by members every week**
 - **Your chance to find out what is happening and to comment if you wish**
 - **Go to www.facebook.com and search for 'Bermuda Audubon Society'**

PICTORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Nest box making at Aberfeldy Nurseries



Warwick Academy students Emi Froud and Kamryn Minors with Jeremy Madeiros and a Cahow chick.



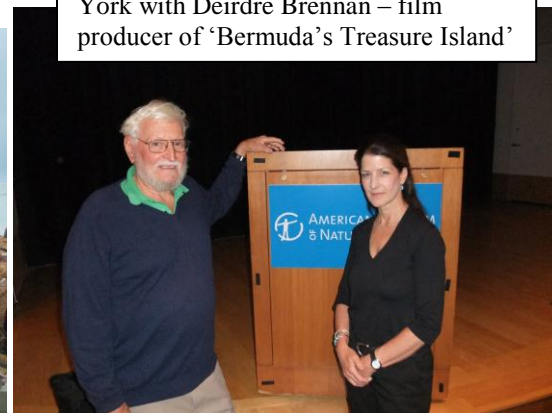
Bluebird nest boxes at the Annual Show



Coldwell Banker longtail igloo team



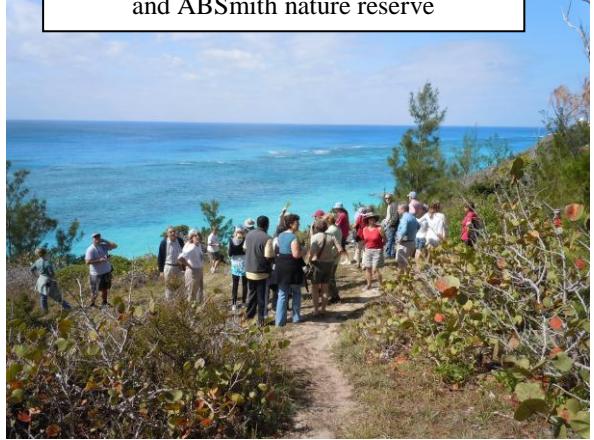
David Wingate at the AMNH in New York with Deirdre Brennan – film producer of 'Bermuda's Treasure Island'



David Saul talks to Saltus students about bluebirds



Audubon fieldtrip to Coral Beach Club and ABSmith nature reserve



Left: Bluebird seminar and nest box workshop at Aberfeldy Nurseries
Below: Working party at Sears Cave nature reserve



Audubon volunteers preparing longtail igloos



Volunteers at Sear Cave nature reserve

