



Bermuda Audubon Society

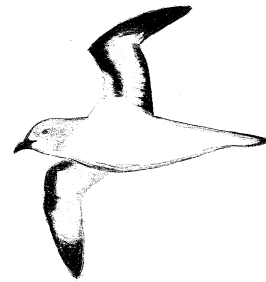
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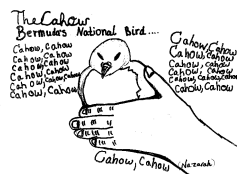
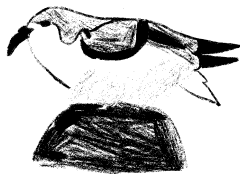
Rebecca

Cahow Art Competition

Karen Border

The winners of a primary school art competition to draw Bermuda's national bird, the Cahow, have been announced. The competition was run by the Bermuda Audubon Society at the end of the last school year, as part of its efforts to educate young people about the endangered endemic seabird. The Cahow art competition for school students proved to be a huge success. Students from the island's primary schools were invited to submit black and white drawings or paintings of Cahows. The overall winner was Rebecca Vesey of Somersfield Academy, with a very accurate pencil sketch (above). See the Bermuda Audubon's Facebook page for views of many entries.

The winners and runners up in each age group were - Age 7: Etienne Wolffe, Warwick Academy; Sophie Levenson, BHS. Age 8: Nazarah Bridgewater, West Pembroke; Ariana Lowther, BHS. Age 9: Reanna Bassett, West Pembroke; Ben Larrett, Somersfield. Age 10: Morgan Donawa, Somerset Primary; Samuel Darling, Somersfield. Age 11: Rebecca Vesey, Somersfield; Sakile Zuill, West Pembroke. Various committee members attended school assemblies to presents prizes which included bird books, t-shirts, bird stickers and wrist bands. The entries were judged by Dr. David Wingate, whose work to rescue the Cahow from near extinction is well known. "The winners were those who best captured the general look of a Cahow in their picture while showing artistic skill," said Dr. Wingate.



Nonsuch Island Natural History Camp 2012

Anna Dobson

Tired at the end of a long school term, I was a little apprehensive about a week-long camp and ending up like a tomato in the sun. I needn't have worried! I was fortunate to spend a week with a great group of students and leaders. My new friends were from each of the island's secondary schools and we were all looking forward to learning more about Bermuda's environment. Days were spent in the field with lectures in the lab



classroom during the evenings. One of the highlights for me was scrambling down Admiral's Cave with only our flashlights and a rope to guide us in places. While still in Walsingham we snorkelled in the large pond carefully avoiding the Upside-down Jellyfish. The most memorable snorkel of the week required a 10-mile boat trip to the edge of the coral platform at North Rock. The density of corals was striking and the variety of fish species quite impressive. Back on Nonsuch we were privileged to see a baby Cahow being fed by Jeremy Madeiros, a bird abandoned by its parents and likely to be the last bird to fledge this year. Other field trips involved traipsing across the South Shore dunes, fighting our way through the Hungry Bay mangroves, walking through Paget Marsh, touring the Spittal Pond nature reserve and carrying out a transect at Devonshire Bay. Our final trip was to Harrington Sound which I found particularly fascinating. A bio-erosional notch exists around the Sound formed by a rock boring clam. We snorkelled at various locations studying many marine creatures including the extraordinary Spaghetti Worms. We were lucky enough to be led by experts during the day and lecturers at night and not only did we make great friendships but also learnt so much science! *Photo (top) – Anna Dobson receiving the trophy as top student from The Governor, Mr George Fergusson and Conservation Officer, Jeremy Madeiros*



Fall Bird Report Aug-Nov 2012

Andrew Dobson

Highlights in this period included: the first time more than one Brown Booby has been present in Bermuda; a record Canada Goose count; the 4th and 5th records of White-winged Dove; five Red-breasted Nuthatches; and the first August record of Summer Tanager.



A **Horned Grebe** seen in Harrington Sound 14 Nov (JM) was also seen near Shelly Bay 18 Nov (CG). The first returning **Cahows** in Bermuda were noted 17 Oct (JM). Three Cahows were seen together about one mile off Spittal Pond (DBW). The summering **Brown Booby** was seen with a second bird at Church Bay 4 Sep (CB). This is the first time two Brown Boobies have been seen in Bermuda. The two boobies were still present 29 Sep. Another was seen at Mangrove Bay 12 Nov (WF). An imm **Brown Pelican** was

present in the East End 2-30 Nov+ (AD) (*Photo Andrew Dobson*). Single **Magnificent Frigatebirds** were seen over Mullet Bay 3 Aug, The Causeway 16 Oct (PW) and Wreck Hill 2 Nov (PH). Twelve **Great Egrets** were seen at Spittal Pond 17 Oct (AD). Seven **Canada Geese** (a land based maxima) in St. David's 9 Nov were at various locations to Nov 30+ (AD). A **Eurasian Wigeon** at Spittal Pond 23 Oct (DBW) was the first of four present at various locations to 30 Nov+. The first returning **Blue-winged Teal** were noted on Spittal Pond 30 Aug (AD). An early immature **Northern Shoveler** was on Cloverdale Pond 15 Sep (AD). A **Long-tailed Duck** was on Tucker's Point GC 17 Nov (AD). A **Red-breasted Merganser** was on Spittal Pond 14 Nov (AD) and four were at Spanish Point 28 Nov (HM). A **White-winged Scoter** was seen in Mangrove Lake 24 Nov (AD). A **Black Scoter** was in Ely's Harbour 23 Nov (PW). A **Northern Harrier** was seen over Flatt's Village and a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was over Hinson's Island, both 4



Oct (PW). An **American Avocet** was at Port Royal GC 10-17 Oct (AD). Two **Piping Plover** were on Nonsuch Is. 17 Aug (JM) while another frequented Castle Harbour beaches throughout October. An **Upland Sandpiper** was on Port Royal GC 15-16 Sep (AD). A **Hudsonian Godwit** was on Mid-Ocean GC 25 Sep-7 Oct (GB) (*Photo Andrew Dobson*). A **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Port Royal GC 11-12 Nov (AD). An early **Dunlin** was on Warwick Pond 4-8 Sep, re-locating to Port Royal GC until 29 Sep (AD). A second Dunlin was at East End Dairy 7-13 Oct (TW). A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was

on Port Royal GC. 30 Aug (PH) with a high count of 7 at the Airport 17 Sep (AD). A **Ruff** was at the East End Dairy 29-30 Sep (AD). Another **Ring-billed Gull** with numbered orange wing tags 'A707' was seen in Hamilton Harbour 29 Nov (JH). This bird was tagged in Worcester, Mass on 15 Nov. A **Sandwich Tern** was at the East End, Bermuda 2-10 Nov (PW). **Common Terns** peaked at 25 in Harrington Sound 20 Oct (AD). A juv. **Black Tern** was on Port Royal G.C. 2-7 Sep (PH) while an adult in Castle Harbour 15 Nov was very late (PW). A **White-winged Dove** (Bermuda's 4th record) flew over Barry Rd, St Georges 3 Nov (PW) while another visited a Jenningsland garden 17 Nov (JM). A late **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was on Cooper's Island 30 Nov (AD). Single **Short-eared Owls** were seen over the Castle Harbour Islands 6 Nov (JM) and Daniel's Island 14 Nov (PW). Two **Common Nighthawks** were feeding over Nonsuch Is. 25-26 Sep (JM) while groups of 8 birds were seen over both the Airport 13 Oct (PW) and Warwick 15 Oct (AD). A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was seen feeding on Wreck Road 29-30 Oct (DBW). An **Eastern Phoebe** was at Coney Island 6 Oct (NM). A **Great-crested Flycatcher** was discovered on St. Georges GC 13 Oct (AD, PW). Four **Eastern Kingbirds** were noted on St. George's GC. 30 Aug (PW). **Yellow-throated Vireos** were seen at Ferry Point Park 22 Oct and Botanical Gardens 25 Oct (AD) while one retrieved from a cat was released on Wreck Road 21 Oct (DBW). A **Blue-headed Vireo** was at Fort Scaur 3 Nov (NM). A **Horned Lark** was seen at Morgan's Point 26 Nov (AC). A record five **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were discovered this fall. An exhausted bird was found on a moored boat in Dockyard 12 Sep (NP). The same observer saw another in Dockyard 1 Oct. A third was seen on Coney Island 20 Oct (TW), a fourth was in the Arboretum 27 Oct (NM) and a fifth on Wreck Road 30 Oct (WF). An **American Robin** was seen on Wreck Road 21 Oct (DBW). Two **American Pipits** were on Port Royal GC 12-15 Nov (AD). Of the rarer warbler sightings, a **Louisiana Waterthrush** was at Jubilee Road 23 Aug (AD), a **Kentucky Warbler** was seen in Jenningsland 26 Aug (JM), a **Mourning Warbler** was at Ferry Point Park 30 Sep (NM) and single **Canada Warblers** were seen at Cemetery Hill 1 Sep (PW) and Heydon Trust 26 Sep (AD). A **Summer Tanager** near Fort St. Catherine 30 Aug was the first August record (PW). A **Clay-coloured Sparrow** was at the Maritime Museum 7 Nov (PH). A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was seen at Coney Island 12 Nov (AD). A **Fox Sparrow** was seen at Fort Scaur, 31 Oct (WF). A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at Shelly Bay Mangroves 20 Oct (AD). Two **White-throated Sparrows** were at the Maritime Museum 8 Nov (PH). A **White-crowned Sparrow** was on Mid-Ocean GC 24 Oct (AD) and two were at the Maritime Museum 9 Nov (PH). A **Dark-eyed Junco** was in the Arboretum 23 Oct (AD). A female **Snow Bunting** was on South Road,



Paget 12 Nov (AD). **Common Redpoll** was seen at Spittal Pond 30 Nov (AD) (*Photo Andrew Dobson*). A **Pine Siskin** was on Port Royal GC 11 Nov (WF).

Observers: Alison Copeland, Geoff Bell, Chris Burville, Andrew Dobson, Wendy Frith, Charles Gosling, Janice Hetzel, Peter Hopkin, Jeremy Madeiros, Herb Marshall, Neal Morris, Nigel Pollard, Adam Power, Paul Watson, Tim White, David Wingate.

Gulls in the News

Andrew Dobson



In December 2010 an immature Ring-billed Gull was seen in Bermuda bearing florescent orange wing-tags: A480. (Photo Neal Morris). Digital photography even allowed the numbers of the leg bands to be read. Banding records in the US allowed us to know that it had been captured on 20 September 2010 in a Wal-Mart car park at Northborough, Mass. The method of capture was a rocket net baited with crackers! On 29 November Audubon member

Janice Hetzel discovered a second orange-tagged Ring-billed Gull: A707. This bird was caught and tagged on 15 Nov 2012 in Price Chopper's parking lot in Worcester, Mass. The method of capture was once again a rocket net but this time baited with bread and Doritos! Audubon member Neal Morris photographed the bird at Dockyard on 1 December.



On 12 November, Andrew Dobson found an immature Laughing Gull in a buttonwood thicket on Coney Island. The bird was stuck in the thicket because it was trailing a fishing line and small weight from its bill. On capturing the bird it was obvious that the bird had swallowed the hook and the chances of the bird's survival looked slim. The bird was taken to the bird re-hab unit at BAMZ. The following day Dr. Andrew Medeiros extracted the hook from the bird's oesophagus and it then spent over two weeks regaining weight. Lynn Thorne provided daily feed and weight checks. On 2 December it was released into Harrington Sound

and flew away strongly. The bird would have undergone far more serious surgery had the hook been a barbed hook. Where possible the practice of using barb-less hooks is to be encouraged in case of accidents like this. There is no excuse for fishing lines being left unattended. The gull wouldn't have taken the hook unless it was baited. If birds take bait from an attended line and get caught by the hook, then fishermen are encouraged to call the Aquarium who are often able to collect the bird and take it into care.



Resurrecting the Red Mulberry *Morus rubra* as an officially recognized component of Bermuda's pre-colonial flora

David B. Wingate

Ever since Bermuda was first settled, confusion has reigned over whether the mulberry trees on the island were native i.e. part of the pre-colonial woodland flora, or whether they were introduced from Europe after settlement. Confusion arose for two reasons: the American and European mulberries are hard to tell apart, and records of the introduction of European mulberries to promote a silk culture date from as early as 1612.

For most of my career I was a passive victim of that confusion, but in recent years three lines of evidence have converged to convince me that the red mulberry of America was, in fact, native and ought to have been included in my native woodland restoration projects on Nonsuch Island, Walsingham, and elsewhere right from their start in the 1960's to early 1980's. That evidence is as follows:

1. At least three members of the ship wrecked Sea Venture party left detailed accounts in which they specify that a mulberry tree with delicious fruit was common among the other trees found growing on Bermuda in 1610. From later accounts, published in John H. Lefroy's Memorials of the early settlement, it is evident that these trees, together with the strong silken webs of the native silk spider, (which were mistakenly confused with silkworm silk), became the inspiration for starting a silk worm industry. Thus cuttings and seed of European black mulberry and white mulberry were sent out as early as 1612 - 1616 and set the stage for the subsequent confusion.
2. The red mulberry of America is a common associate of the southern hackberry on river floodplains and moist bottomlands of the south-eastern United States. Like the hackberry its seeds are primarily dispersed by birds, so it is a ready colonizer across water and a common element in the flora of spoil islands which are created by the dredging of the inland waterway along the Atlantic coast. The pioneering flora on those spoil islands contains many other species which were dominant in the original native flora of Bermuda such as the afore-mentioned hackberry, juniper, palmetto, wax myrtle and doc-bush. This is hardly surprising because a large part of Bermuda's native flora was derived via birds, wind and ocean currents from the south-eastern United States and the Bahama archipelago.
3. While every last vestige of Bermuda's pre-colonial moist bottomland forest (where red mulberry would have been most likely to grow naturally) was cleared for agriculture, housing and roads from very early on in Bermuda's post-colonial history, three of our most famous botanist/naturalists from the 19th century made specific mention that they found red mulberry in the rocky woodlands of the Walsingham tract. Two of those trees were re-located by me in the mid-20th century and one has even managed to survive in competition with aggressive invasive flora such as the fiddlewood, Surinam cherry, Brazil pepper and Chinese fan palm right into the 21st century. The Walsingham area

has always been recognized as a refuge for rare native flora on account of its rugged, cave riddled topography which survived the onslaught of human land clearance better there than any other part of the island. It was there that the last of the yellow wood trees survived, and there that the association of the hackberry with the "white wood" of the early settlers' accounts was first made.

With the launch of the Bermuda Biodiversity Project in 1997 and the creation of the Conservation Services Department in 2003 a concerted effort has been underway to make an inventory of what is left of our native heritage and to re-examine the taxonomic status of those species that were considered to be endemic using modern methods of DNA comparison. I am using this opportunity to re-examine the status of the mulberry in Bermuda. The end goal of this research will be to undertake conservation and restoration or 'recovery programmes' for those species that require help.

My project invites public participation in locating as many local mulberry trees on Bermuda as possible and it is already evident from public feedback that there are many more than I thought. Foliage from a representative selection of these trees will be collected for taxonomic identification to species and for a more refined taxonomic analysis using DNA analysis. Mulberries are still being widely propagated and disseminated in private gardens via garden clubs and plant nurseries, but as yet I am not even sure which species are still represented out of the three or four species that have previously been recorded. Whether the supposedly relict mulberry from Walsingham will prove taxonomically distinct as a native sub-species or whether the modern mix of trees in gardens includes hybrids between the species remains to be determined. In America, hybridization between the aggressively invasive white mulberry and the native red mulberry is now so prevalent that it threatens the integrity of the American species. This could conceivably be happening in Bermuda too, but on the other hand, if it isn't, our geographically isolated local red mulberry trees might be a reservoir for the pure stock.



If the taxonomic and DNA evidence lend further support to my hypothesis, I would like to see the red mulberry more extensively propagated and promoted for planting in our nature reserves and gardens. It is, after all, a very attractive and fast growing tree with delicious fruit in the spring which attracts many birds including some of our spring migration specialities like the scarlet tanager and rose-breasted grosbeak. (*Photo of Baltimore Oriole in mulberry tree - Andrew Dobson*).

Society News

20 Years Ago

The Bermuda Audubon Newsletter reported the first sighting of a Pacific Loon in Bermuda. You can view more than 60 newsletters dating back to 1990 that are archived on our website. Just click on 'Newsletters' at www.audubon.bm

Cahow Pelagic Trips

Two pelagic trips took place in November with two other trips cancelled due to bad weather. It provided the opportunity for another 25 Audubon members to see Cahows out on the open ocean. We certainly plan to do the same again next year. Our thanks to Triangle Diving and boat captain Stefan for taking us out.

Volunteer recognition



Each year, The Centre on Philanthropy hosts a Volunteer Recognition Reception as part of Bermuda's National Volunteer Day celebrations. This event provides non-profit members with an opportunity to formally thank their dedicated volunteers. Audubon's volunteer recognised in 2012 is Paul 'Geordie' Watson. Paul has been on the committee for about 5 years. Many members have benefitted from his considerable birding knowledge during bird camps, pelagic trip and other Audubon events. Thank you Paul and also thank you to the Centre on Philanthropy for all their efforts over the past year.

Dollars for Hours



PartnerRe once again ran its Dollars for Hours programme, linking schools to local charities. In return for a generous \$30,000 donation to each school, the students were involved in a project with the charity. Bermuda High School was partnered with the Bermuda Audubon Society and we were fortunate enough to have many bluebird nest boxes made for the nest breeding season. Our thanks go not only to

PartnerRe but also to the staff and students of Bermuda High School who made this possible.

Paget Island Bird Camp



Another very successful camp was held at Paget Island on the second weekend in October. 55 species were observed by about 20 Audubon members – some of whom camped while others preferred the dormitory accommodation. Highlights included a Great-crested Flycatcher on St Georges GC and a Connecticut Warbler on Paget Island.

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'

New Committee

At the Annual General Meeting, the following committee was elected for 2012-2013

President: Andrew Dobson

Treasurer: Peter Holmes

Executive Sec: Karen Border

Committee members: Jennifer Gray, Peter Lee, Jeremy Madeiros, Drew Pettit, Kim Smith, Paul Watson, David Wingate

Peter Holmes had to stand down as Treasurer in the fall. Many thanks Peter for your time on the committee. A welcome to new treasurer Angela Kendall.

Christmas Gifts

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 – or call 238-8628 if you need one in a hurry for Christmas!

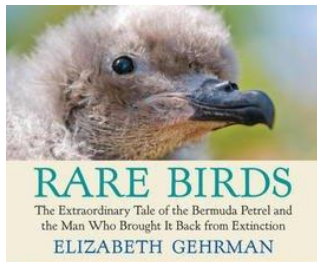
Treasure Island DVD

The demand for our very special DVD featuring Nonsuch Island and the Cahow has been so great that we have had to order another batch. The DVD is available from the Bermuda Audubon. Price is \$15. Phone Karen Border at 238-8628 to purchase one – a great stocking filler!

Bluebird nest boxes

These are available from Aberfeldy Nursery. Why not buy a kit (instruction leaflet provided) – a great Christmas present and a fun family activity. All proceeds go to the Audubon Society – so thank you to Aberfeldy for providing us with a retail outlet.

Rare Birds by Elizabeth Gehrman



Recently published, this book is available at the Aquarium shop and other local book stores. Here are some reviews:

“Gehrman's detailed account of Wingate's life demonstrates what amazing feats can be accomplished given sufficient time and determination. Environmentalists and bird lovers alike will enjoy this look at the restoration of an endangered bird.”

– *Kirkus Reviews*

“There are few success stories in the efforts to stop the relentless assault on the species we share the planet with, and *Rare Birds* is a lovely chronicle of one of them. The story of Wingate's heroic efforts to bring the docile Cahow back from the brink of extinction is unassumingly but beautifully told, and chockfull of fascinating natural history. It captures the particular fragility and intensity of the life on islands, including that of the protagonist himself.”

– **Alex Shoumatoff, *Vanity Fair* contributing editor**

“You'll be swept along by Elizabeth Gehrman's clean, racing prose as you learn about the threats the petrels face--including Snowy owls, DDT and the American military--as the species fights its way back to life. Finally, you'll meet the rarest bird of all, David Wingate, the gentle, stubborn, charming quixotic bird-man, who has staked his whole life on playing midwife to the bird's return.”

– **David Gessner,**
author of *Return of the Osprey*

Future Events

19 Jan 2013 - Working party - 9.30 am

Alfred Blackburn Smith nature reserve

Get in the conservation spirit for the New Year

Come and help improve this fantastic nature reserve

(Enter Coral Beach Club entrance and take first right turn)