



Bermuda Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2017

P.O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX Vol.28 No.1

www.audubon.bm

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Birds – How can you help?

The Bermuda Audubon Society is dedicated to conserving Bermuda's special bird life and habitats for the benefit of all. We are doing our best to help species like the Cahow, White-tailed Tropicbird and Eastern Bluebird but also to provide habitat for other breeding birds and the hundreds of other species that pass through Bermuda each year. With your help, we can ensure that some areas of Bermuda remain free from development and that birds have a safe haven. Go to www.audubon.bm for memberships details. However, members often say they can't do much about the dramatic fall in numbers of birds that visit Bermuda. So how can you help? Many Audubon members are also members of BirdsCaribbean, which is the largest regional organization dedicated to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in the Caribbean (including Bermuda, the Bahamas and all islands within the Caribbean basin). BirdsCaribbean serves as the Caribbean's primary forum to promote on-the-ground conservation action by increasing human capacity, raising awareness, and promoting sound science. Andrew Dobson has recently been elected as President and you can read his message at www.birdscaribbean.org. You can join national organisations championing the cause of birds like the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK) with over a million members, or the National Audubon Society (US). Organisations like these have considerable lobbying powers but face mounting challenges with the political changes in Europe and North America. The RSPB recently published The State of Nature report bringing together data and expertise from over 50 organisations, providing an update on how wildlife is faring across the UK and its seas, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories (including Bermuda). It can be read at www.rspb.org. Bermuda hosted the UK Overseas Conservation Forum's conference in 2003. The organisation is focused on conservation of the UKOT's threatened plant and animal species. Read more at www.ukotcf.org. Every year we participate in the Christmas Bird Count, an international effort organised by National Audubon www.audubon.org. Finally, you might like to consider joining BirdLife International www.birdlife.org the world's largest nature conservation partnership with 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide (one per country or territory); as a UK overseas territory, Bermuda is represented by the RSPB. I encourage you to read what BirdLife is doing to save species and their habitat, promote ecological sustainability and create a positive future for people.



Colour-ringed White-eyed Vireos

Paul Watson



As part of my bird banding program, I have made an effort to monitor local bird populations, particularly the beautiful White-eyed Vireo aka 'Chick of the Village'. At several of my banding sites in St George's, Ferry Reach and Devonshire I have placed 'colour bands' on the birds in addition to individually numbered US authorised metal leg bands. The project is in its early stages with 67 birds colour banded so far, however I have already had numerous visual sightings of colour-banded birds allowing me to record an individual bird's movements without having to 're-capture' in a mist net at a fixed

location. Interesting sightings include two birds caught and banded on 6th June 2016, at Ferry Point Park. A colour-banded vireo (pink+blue over yellow) was seen in Ballast Point Road, St David's on 16th December. The second colour-banded vireo (orange over red) moved to Cemetery Hill in St George's and was seen there on 1st January 2017.

I am asking Audubon members to record any visual sightings of colour-banded birds and report to geordie@northrock.bm or info@audubon.bm (or on BAS Facebook page). The birds will all be colour-banded on the left leg with either one or two coloured bands. The majority of colour-banded birds are seen at Ferry Point Park. Recording colours is from top to bottom or knee to foot i.e. on photos above attached yellow over blue (left) pink/blue over red (right).

Christmas Bird Count 2016

Andrew Dobson

In conjunction with National Audubon in the US, the Bermuda Audubon Society held its 42nd CBC on 17th December 2016.

About 20 members of the Bermuda Audubon Society conducted the annual Christmas Bird Count. Additional species can be included during count week (3 days either side of count day). Highlight of the count was the discovery of an Eider Duck, the first ever sighting of this species in Bermuda. On the count day itself, 93 species were seen and over 8,000 individual birds recorded. This was exactly the same number of species seen in 2015. The most numerous species was the European Starling, which combined with the Great Kiskadee and House Sparrow, made up over 50 per cent of the birds seen. Other highlights this year included the occurrence of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Snow Goose and Snow Bunting. A record 9 Glossy Ibis were seen and an impressive 19 species of wood warbler, including a record count of 57 Northern Parulas. The results are submitted to the National Audubon Society in the United States as part of a continent-wide study of birds that has been running for more than 100 years. Citizen science provides a way for people to connect with the natural world through activities that generate vital information for the conservation of birds. Count results are available on the National Audubon website, www.audubon.org/bird/cbc.

Bird Report December 2016 to April 2017

Andrew Dobson

Highlights included the third record of American White Pelican, the first record of Dovekie for 50 years and a Rusty Blackbird.



An adult **Snow Goose** discovered on Mid-Ocean GC 8 Dec (GB) then remained at Bermuda Airport to 10 Jan (AD). An imm. Snow Goose was on Mangrove Lake 16 Mar (AD). A female **Common Eider**, the first record for Bermuda was seen at Clearwater 19 Dec (AD, AMD, FD, KD) – see Vol.27 No.3. Two male **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** were at various locations 2 Jan-19 Mar (AD) *photo left Andrew Dobson*. A **Black Scoter** flew past Cooper's Point 14 Mar (PW). A Bermuda maxima four **Ruddy Duck** were on Mangrove Lake 7 Dec (AD). The first **Manx Shearwaters** of the year passed Cooper's Point 24 Feb (PW). The first returning **White-tailed Tropicbirds** were noted at Warwick

Long Bay 12 Feb (AD). A **Masked Booby** was photographed from Horseshoe Bay 25 Jan (JS). One **Northern Gannet** passed Cooper's Point 19 Dec (AD, AMD, FD), two were seen off St Georges 1 Jan (PW) and one was still present to 6 Jan (AC). Four **White Pelicans** were photographed flying over Catchment Hill, 1 Jan (AD) for only the third record in Bermuda. A **Brown Pelican** was seen over the Little Sound 10 Apr (PA). A **Least Bittern** was at Pitman's Pond 16 Dec (IP) and 31 Jan (DBW). Ten **Great Egrets** were roosting together on Bluck Is 11 Apr (AD, EH). Two imm. **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were at Flatts 2 Feb (DBW). Up to 5 **Glossy Ibis** spent the winter season at various locations in Bermuda (mult.obs.). An immature **Purple Gallinule** was seen in Devonshire Marsh 12-23 Feb (AD, EH, JS). Seven **Semipalmated Plovers** were photographed at Dockyard 18 Feb (AD). **Least Sandpipers** are uncommon in the winter, with numbers increasing to 9 in Devonshire Marsh 22 Feb (AD). A **Pomarine Jaeger** passed Cooper's Point, 24 Feb (PW). The first **Dovekie** (*photo right Annie Lee*) in Bermuda for 50 years was discovered at Ferry Point 10 Jan (SM). An early returning banded **Common Tern** was in Harrington Sound 18 Mar (PA). Two **Forster's Terns** were at Spanish Point 11 Dec-5 Jan (AD, EH). A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was at Pitman's Pond 5 Dec (DBW). A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was in Jenningsland 19 Dec-19 Feb (JM, LM) and Smiths Hill 7-8 Apr (AD). A late **Tree Swallow** was over Ship's Hill 9 Dec (PW). A **Hermit Thrush** was discovered in the Smiths Hills 17 Dec (JM). Single **American Robins** were at Seymour's Pond 18 Feb (DBW), Jubilee Road 9 Mar (AD) and Spittal Pond 31 Mar (DT). An **American Pipit** was on Devonshire Marsh 11 Feb (AD, JS). Two **Snow Buntings** were seen on Bermuda Airport 26 Jan (PW). Twenty-one warbler species were recorded in Bermuda during the winter months including **Swainson's Warbler** on Hinson's Is 18 Dec (EH, JH) and **Blue-winged Warbler** at Port Royal GC 21 Jan (AD, EH). Wintering sparrows included **Chipping Sparrow** at Fort Scaur 20 Jan (PW), **Dark-eyed Junco** at Fort Albert 4 Jan (PH, PW) and Paget Is 21 Mar (PW), **White-throated Sparrow** at Turtle Hill GC 18 Feb (AD) and **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Port Royal GC



7 Feb and Spittal Pond 16 Mar- a Apr (AD). A **Dickcissel** was photographed on Mid-Ocean GC, 6 Dec (NM), and another was caught in chicken coop in Devonshire 23 Feb (EB). A third was on Wreck Road 2 Apr (AD) *photo above Andrew Dobson*. A **Rusty Blackbird** was seen at Jubilee Road 3 Dec (AD, EH) (perhaps the same bird see on Turtle Hill GC in November).

Observers: Peter Adhemar, Geoff Bell, Eva Botelli, Alison Copeland, Andrew Dobson, Anna Dobson (AMD), Fiona Dobson, Katrina Dobson, Paul Hackett, Erich Hetzel, Janice Hetzel, Jeremy Madeiros, Leila Madeiros, Seabird McKeon, Neal Morris, Ingela Perrson, Joanne Smith, Jack Swelstad, David Tobias, Paul Watson, David Wingate.

Society News

Important Bird Areas – Bermuda

Important Bird Areas

Bermuda

Andrew Dobson and Jeremy Madeiros



Cahow, or Bermuda Petrel *Pterodroma cahow*

Abstract Bermuda is a UK Overseas Territory in the western North Atlantic and was uninhabited before being settled by the British over 400 years ago. It is one of the most isolated inhabited island groups in the world. Despite its remoteness and its suburban landscape, it has a remarkable avian richness and history. The rediscovery of the breeding grounds of the Cahow, or Bermuda Petrel *Pterodroma cahow*, in 1951 made international news in an age without social media. The continuing success of the Cahow recovery programme provides hope for similar projects elsewhere. There is a globally significant population of White-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus* and there are proposals to confer endemic subspecies status on the locally breeding Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. Current threats to Bermuda's biodiversity include climate change, the increasing frequency and intensity of tropical storms, and invasive species.

The journal *British Birds* is running a series of articles on IBAs (Important Bird Areas) in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Eleven articles have already been published, with the latest account featuring Bermuda by Andrew Dobson and Jeremy Madeiros. (Published on 08 March 2017)

Abstract Bermuda is a UK Overseas Territory in the western North Atlantic and was uninhabited before being settled by the British over 400 years ago. It is one of the most isolated inhabited islands in the world. Despite its remoteness and its suburban landscape, it has a remarkable avian richness and history. The rediscovery of the breeding grounds of the Cahow, or Bermuda Petrel *Pterodroma cahow*, in 1951 made international news in an age without social media. The continuing success of the Cahow recovery programme provides hope for similar projects

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To read the full article you can subscribe to *British Birds* or you can buy an individual issue.

www.britishbirds.co.uk

Bermuda crow survey – your opportunity to help

Citizen science in action – your chance to take part in a crow survey being conducted by Prof. Paul Hackett (click on link below)



Paul says, “We are conducting a study into the lives of American crows in Bermuda. We will be collecting data from bird watchers such as you about Bermuda's population of American Crows and their behaviours. The link will display an online survey to fill in whenever you see an American crow over the next 12 months. The survey may be completed on a computer, tablet or on your phone. We do not want any personal details about you but please add your name, or a consistent way of identifying yourself, on each survey. The survey

will be confidential between the research team and Bermuda Audubon Society. Please complete a new survey each time you observe either a single crow or a group of crows. Do not complete a new survey for each crow in a single group of crows.

<https://www.hackettspace.com/crow-behaviour-bda>

What's been happening?



- Great support for the two lectures on 'Birds and People' given by Andrew Dobson at BUEI in January and February. His lecture was recorded and is probably still available on CITV.
- 'The Messenger' movie was well received by a full house at BUEI in February.
- A big thank you to employees of Coldwell Banker (photo above left) who prepared Longtail igloos for the forthcoming breeding season.
- Another big thank you to Horsfield Landscape and Design who are providing free services to assist in the management of our Alfred Blackburn Smith nature reserve in Paget.
- A good turnout of members came to the Spittal Pond fieldtrip in April (photo above left).
- Zelia Amaral has kindly agreed to take over as Treasurer from Angela Kendall, who has stepped down after doing a fabulous job for four years.

Future Events

Bluebird nest box competition

This will take place at the Annual Exhibition in the grounds of the Botanical gardens 20-22 April 2017. The Audubon Society trophy will be presented to the best student box.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM will take place at Government House Monday 22 May 6pm prompt. There will be an illustrated review of the birding year following the business meeting. For security reasons, please RSVP to info@audubon.bm or call 238-8628.

Nonsuch Island Members' Fieldtrip

Saturday 20 May. 10:00am to 3:00pm. The trip will include a morning tour with Cahow encounter and time to swim & snorkel in the afternoon. Bring a picnic lunch and swim/snorkel gear if you wish. Boat leaves from Tucker's Point dock (details will be sent to those who sign up). Price \$50 Spaces are limited. To sign up email info@audubon.bm or call 238-8628 with names and a contact number.

Spittal Pond Fieldtrip

Saturday 2 September. A guided bird walk at Spittal Pond as part of the World Shorebird Count. Meet at the eastern car park at 8:00am.

Paget Island Bird Camp

Friday 13 to Sunday 15 October. Email info@audubon.bm for more details.

