



Bermuda Audubon Society
NEWSLETTER

SPRING
1994

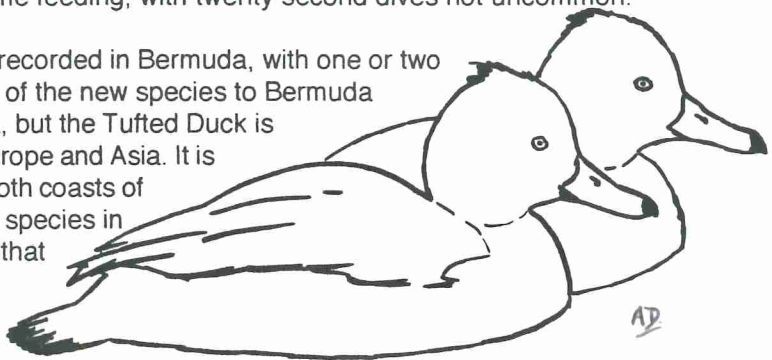
P. O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX **Vol.5 No.1**

Tufted Duck - New to Bermuda

On December 4th 1993, Eric Amos and Andrew Dobson identified two female Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* on the Audubon Society's nature reserve at Somerset Long Bay. They may well have been present since at least November 23rd when David Wallace noticed two drab brown ducks with four female Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris*.

During the early part of their stay the two birds spent most of their time sleeping with their heads tucked in, but suspicions were growing as to their identity. The relatively small ducks had dark brown plumage on the head, back and chest. The flanks were a lighter brown showing a barred effect due to the pale feather edges. Both birds had white on the undertail, strikingly so on one of the birds that it recalled Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*. Although Ferruginous Duck has occurred once in Bermuda (1987) this species could be discounted due to the overall differences in size, colour and headshape. The head had a hint of a vestigial tuft on the rear of the crown on both birds and an orange-yellow eye. There was a broad black band at the tip of the bill. Both birds had a small amount of white around the base of the bill, an indication of probable adult female status. This white feathering around the bill was more obvious on one of the ducks, but not as prominent as on female Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*. Lesser Scaup females present on Spittal Pond and Warwick Pond eliminated any confusion with this species. The two Tufted Ducks could easily be separated from the spectacled appearance of the Ring-necked Ducks even though they often associated with them. A freshwater diving duck, the Tufted Ducks spent a considerable time feeding, with twenty second dives not uncommon.

Over 350 species of birds have been recorded in Bermuda, with one or two species being added each year. Most of the new species to Bermuda are found commonly in North America, but the Tufted Duck is particularly exciting as it is native to Europe and Asia. It is a regular visitor in small numbers on both coasts of North America, so not an unexpected species in Bermuda. Although it was anticipated that these two ducks would stay for the whole winter, they were last seen on January 31st 1994. Quite extraordinarily, the reserve has also hosted a Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea* this winter. Only the second of this species to be recorded here, it arrived before Christmas and was still present in February.



Andrew Dobson

Society News

Anniversary Dinner

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the Bermuda Audubon Society. To mark the occasion a special dinner is to be held at the Hamilton Princess Hotel on Friday 20th May. The guest speaker will be Mr. Kenn Kaufman, associate editor of American Birds. Full details and invitations will be sent out shortly, but please book this date in your diary!

Cahow Sighting

The twenty Audubon members who braved a choppy sea aboard the Biological Station's BBSR2 on November 13th 1993 were rewarded with a rare daylight view of a flying Cahow, about 4 to 5 miles south-east of the island. To show how lucky we were - this was the first time David Wingate had seen a Cahow flying over the ocean during the day. The only other bird we spotted on the ocean was a late Longtail.

Whale Watch and Pelagic Birds

Our next boat trip is aboard the "Explorer" in search of whales and birds of the open ocean. The boat will leave Albouy's Point at 8.30am returning about 4.30pm. Cost \$60. To reserve a place phone Andrew Dobson at 238-3239. Payment must be made by cheque to Bermuda Audubon Society in advance. Full refund if the trip is cancelled due to bad weather.



Society Lectures

Two superb lectures have recently been presented. Our November lecture featured three pelagic seabird specialists Ned Brinkley,

Brian Patterson and Todd Hass who gave a fascinating illustrated talk on recent bird and mammal sightings off the coast of the Carolinas. They were amply rewarded for their visit by seeing the Cahow over the ocean!

Robert Power gave a fabulous illustrated lecture on Bermuda's caves. Very few have had the opportunity or courage to explore the cave system that lies beneath Bermuda. It was a compliment to Robert that there was standing room only at his talk. Some of the slides were quite breath-taking.

Our next lecture promises to be just as appealing. Expert photographer Alan Marquardt is presenting an audio-visual show of **Bermuda's Underwater Life** and a look at underwater life in parts of the Caribbean. The show will take place on March 23rd 7.30pm at the Horticultural Hall.

Field Trips

Our December field trip to Devonshire Marsh featured the opening of our latest reserve - see separate article on the Winifred Gibbons Reserve.

A field trip by boat on 19th February proved a huge success, thanks to Audubon life-member Joffre Pitman and his glass-bottom boat. Despite cool weather, a very good range of birds were seen around Hamilton Harbour, the Great Sound and islands. Highlights included an Iceland Gull, two Snow Geese flying over Riddles Bay Golf Course, two Barn Owls and a probable Loggerhead Turtle!

By popular demand we are holding another **field trip to Paget Marsh** on Sunday 13th March. Meet at St. Paul's Church carpark at 2pm. Remember it is very wet underfoot - if you have "wellies" - wear them! If you have not explored the delights of Paget Marsh - do not miss your chance.

Andrew Dobson

The 1993/94 Winter in Bermuda

There has been great anticipation of a large influx of gulls and perhaps even finches as the weather in North America has been so cold this winter - but it was not to be!

Pied-billed Grebes could be found on most ponds, **Double-crested Cormorants** numbered up to 24 in the Little Sound and there was one report of a **Northern Gannet** in the early winter. All the regularly occurring species of **Bittern, Heron and Egret** have been present in small numbers, with at least six **Black-crowned Night-Herons** seen together at Spittal Pond. Three **Snow Geese** arrived although the one at Seymour's Pond (mentioned in the last newsletter) unfortunately died. The other two have become celebrities at Riddles Bay Golf Course. A single **Canada Goose** has taken up residence at Spittal Pond Farm. Apart from the **Tufted Ducks** (see separate article) the highlight amongst the wildfowl have been four or five **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** which arrived from mid-November. At least two still remain, often to be seen at Cloverdale Pond.

At least one **Osprey** has over-wintered, **Merlins** are sighted daily, but there has only been one **American Kestrel** reported. Several **Sora** have been found through recent months and a rare wintering **Purple Gallinule** at Pembroke Marsh is now acquiring its splendid purple plumage. Fifty-four **American Coot** were recorded on the Christmas Bird Count, but the **Caribbean Coot** at Somerset Long Bay is only Bermuda's second record and well north of its normal range. (The first was in the Spring and Summer of 1984). The **Sandhill Crane**, featured in our last newsletter seems extremely content with its stay in Bermuda.

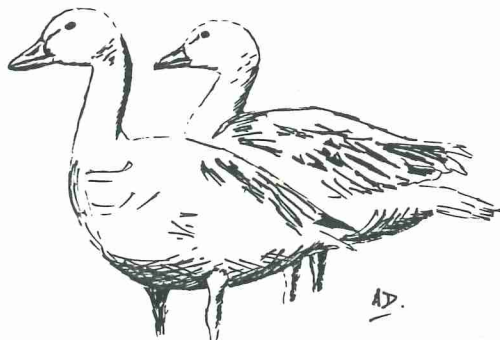
Highlights among the shorebirds have included an exceptional first winter record of **Upland Sandpiper** at the Civil Air Terminal. The same location has played host to two **Ruff**, two **Least Sandpipers**, a single **Short-billed Dowitcher**, as well as **Black-bellied Plover**, **Whimbrel**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Sanderling** and **Dunlin** during the winter.

Gulls have probably totalled less than 200, with a single **Iceland Gull** being the only real surprise. Two **Forster's Terns** have been present for much of the winter, and there was a one day sighting of a **Black Skimmer**.

Amongst the passerines, there has only been one **Yellow-breasted Sapsucker**, a single **American Robin** and a few **Hermit Thrushes**. Up to eleven **American Pipits** and five **Snow Buntings** have been seen at the airport. At least 22 species of warbler have been recorded this winter including an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Port Royal Golf Course. Wintering **Sparrows** have included **Chipping**, **Savannah**, **Song** and **Lincoln's**.

The Spring seemed to start very early, with the first **Longtails** seen at the end of January. The earliest **Manx Shearwater** was seen on 28th January and **Cory's Shearwaters** were passing Bermuda by the 19th February. A **Tree Swallow** was present in St. George's on 26th February.

Andrew Dobson



Membership Profile.....

.....Eric J.R.Amos
Artist and Author

As the organiser of the Christmas Bird Count and author of the recently published "Birds of Bermuda", it seemed appropriate to profile Eric Amos in this newsletter. Eric admitted to the following.....

I was born in North Cheam - a suburb of London, and at a very early age I became familiar with the common garden birds - Blue and Great Tits, Chaffinches, Blackbirds, Robins, House Sparrows and Starlings.

Towards the end of the 2nd World War, in July of 1944, when I was 9 years old and London was being ravaged by German rockets, we were evacuated to Devon, in the west of England. Here I found new species such as Tree Creepers, Nuthatches, Jays, Goldfinch and Long-tailed Tits. At the age of thirteen I began to draw the birds I saw.

My most memorable observation occurred during the very hard winter of 1947. While running to school I met up with a flock of Waxwings from Scandinavia, feeding on a holly bush.

Birds lost out to typical teenage pursuits and while at Art School, I was mostly infatuated by modern art and painting techniques. During National Service with the Royal Engineers I was posted to Korea but I cannot remember any of the sea birds that we must have encountered during the five week trip on a troop ship!

I came to Bermuda In 1956, worked as an import clerk in Hamilton and spent a great deal of my spare time at parties, playing poker and painting huge abstract oils. Five years later I returned to England with my wife Diana.

A few bird memories linger from this period.....a Red Kite soaring way over the Dome of St. Paul's in London, flashy Magpies in Amsterdam, a Wryneck in Dijon, a flock of Crested Tits in the foothills of the Pyrenees and the Swallows over the rooftops of Paris during our honeymoon

I renewed my childhood avian interest aboard the U.S. Antarctic research ship "Eltanin" in 1967. I bought my first binoculars in the ship's PX. and became a birdman at the age of 33! On those long working voyages to waters seldom visited by man, I became well acquainted with albatross, petrels, shearwaters, skuas and penguins among the ice and icebergs of the Southern Ocean.

In 1968 I returned to Bermuda and began to watch, count and paint the birds. In 1970 I had my first one man show and In 1972 I was featured in the "Bird Artists of the World" exhibition at the Tryon Gallery in London together with the likes of Guy Coheleach, Raymond Ching, Robert Bateman and C.F. Tunnicliffe! I have seen 319 of the 351 species on the Bermuda list. In 1991, I published my Guide to the Birds of Bermuda after more than twenty years of study.



Christmas Bird Count

1993

Thirteen Audubon members took part in the 94th North American National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count - the 19th CBC for Bermuda. We held our all day count on 29th December 1993 and the six groups of birders each had a separate area of Bermuda in which to note every bird seen. We recorded 90 species - only two less than last year. The numbers of the most abundant species were also remarkably similar to last year's totals.

This year's records included four species never previously seen on our CBC. Eric Amos had the privilege of recording **Tufted Duck** (two) and **Caribbean Coot** at Somerset Long Bay; David Wingate, Helge Trapnell, Jeremy and Leila Madeiros were relieved to find the **Sandhill Crane** still in its usual spot at Outerlea Dairy; and David Wallace scanned through the shorebirds on the Civil Air Terminal and was pleased to discover a **Ruff**.

Outerlea Farm also hosted two other rarities - **Fulvous Whistling-duck** and **Brown-headed Cowbird**. Andrew Dobson and Peter Holmes recorded an impressive nineteen **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** in one roost at Spittal Pond. The group comprising Penny Soares, Andrew and Patrick Harford managed to see both species of **Bittern** (American and Least). Steven DeSilva and Penny Hill logged an notable fifteen species of warbler in the Port Royal area.

So what is the purpose of the CBC? The results are sent to the National Audubon Society in New York. With similar counts being carried out in Northern, Central and even South America, trends in bird populations can be monitored. Evidence can be provided for the effects of hurricanes, deforestation and perhaps even global warming on our birds.

TOP SPECIES

NUMBER
(Last year in brackets)

European Starling	2142(2688)
House Sparrow	2049(2102)
Great Kiskadee	915 (1214)
Mourning Dove	561 (820)
Eurasian Goldfinch	410 (430)
Rock Dove	382 (299)
Grey Catbird	234* (228)
American Crow	209* (170)
Ruddy Turnstone	196 (144)
White-eyed Vireo	189 (206)
Killdeer	182 (1)
Mallard	149 (264)
Yellow-rumped Warbler	134 (212)
Eastern Bluebird	122* (111)
Ring-billed Gull	113 (110)

(* = highest CBC count)

Other species with highest CBC counts:

Ovenbird	94*
Cedar Waxwing	62*
Yellow-throated Warbler	16*
Pine Warbler	7*
Tufted Duck	2*
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	2*
Caribbean Coot	1*
Ruff	1*

Our thanks go to Eric Amos for organising the Christmas Bird Count once again, and all the willing birders who wish it was every weekend!

Andrew Dobson



Winifred Gibbons Nature Reserve

At the start of a field trip around Devonshire Marsh on 5th December 1993, a sign was unveiled at our latest reserve by Dr. Grant Gibbons. The new reserve has been named the Winifred Gibbons Nature Reserve in memory of Mrs. Winifred Gibbons M.B.E., the wife of the Hon. Edmund Gibbons. Members of the Gibbons family were thanked for their generous donation to the Society of 2 acres of marshland adjoining the Society's Freer Cox Memorial Nature Reserve.

This marks the third major donation of land for conservation purposes in Devonshire Parish by the Gibbons family. The two previous donations to the Bermuda National Trust, were the 4 acre Edmund Gibbons Nature Reserve near Devonshire Bay and the huge Locust Hall property. We feel it is especially fitting in this age of enlightenment regarding Women's Rights and women's achievements, that this latest gift should bear the name of a member of the Gibbons family whose outstanding contributions to society during her lifetime were recognised with the award of the MBE.

There have been a number of gifts, bequests and purchases of land in Devonshire Marsh over recent years, all leading towards the eventual goal of managing the last large unspoiled peat marsh basin as one large nature reserve unit in accordance with the current zoning. It began with the lease to Bermuda Audubon Society by the Devonshire Parish Vestry of the 10 acre Freer Cox Memorial Nature Reserve in 1964. This was followed by the gift of the 1 acre Firefly Reserve by Mrs. Kitty Zuill in 1970.

Then in 1982 Mrs. Edmund Zuill generously donated approximately 8 acres at the eastern

end of Devonshire Marsh and a further 4 acres has been recently purchased from the residue of the Zuill estate to create a 12 acre reserve between the industrial area and Nationals Sports Club.

More recently in 1989 and 1991 two more properties have been received by the Trust as a gift and bequest respectively. The larger of these totalling 6 acres in the western basin of Devonshire Marsh south of Watlington Waterworks was a bequest of the Hereward Watlington estate.

The other Trust property, adjoining this new reserve to the southwest is presently leased to Island Construction as an industrial storage yard for rubble and soil - representing a continuation of its pre-existing use. Island Construction's industrial yard incidentally also adjoins this new Audubon reserve to the south and we are hoping to have a congenial working relationship to protect this unique area.

The new Winifred Gibbons Nature Reserve is remarkable in that it retains endemic and native marsh flora in a pristine state virtually unaffected by the invasive exotic plant introductions which have overwhelmed and displaced native flora in so many other parts of Bermuda. Particularly notable on this reserve are the ancient wax-myrtle bushes along the ditch edge and the exceptionally wide representation of native marsh ferns, including the now extremely rare Ten Day Fern *Polystichum adianteforme*.

The purpose of our field trip was to look at all of the recent Nature Reserve acquisitions, introducing our membership to the native flora that they support and the migratory bird species which make use of the marsh. Included among these this year is Bermuda's first wintering record of a Sandhill Crane.

David B. Wingate



Official opening of the
Winifred Gibbons Reserve
From left to right:
Dr. David Wingate, Dr. Grant Gibbons
and Mr. Andrew Dobson.

BERMUDA AUDUBON SOCIETY
WINIFRED GIBBONS WIFE
NATURE RESERVE
DONATED IN 1993 BY THE HEIRS OF
THE HON. SIR DAVID AND WINIFRED GIBBONS.
THIS TWO ACRE RESERVE CONTAINS
A REMARKABLE SAMPLE OF ENDEMIC
AND NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA.
*The cutting or removal of plants
and dumping of trash is prohibited.*



JASON
PROJECT

Take your family out to a coral barrier reef!

With the JASON V Expedition to Belize

Bring your family and join us at the Bermuda Biological Station for Research for Bermuda's second experience of the exciting JASON Project!

Thanks to live satellite T.V. transmission, you're right there with the scientists as they explore the tropical rain forest, an underground cave system with a river running through it, an ancient Mayan city, untouched for a thousand years and the crystal waters of a tropical barrier reef.

It's a fascinating and exciting experience for young and old and it's brought to you by the JASON team, Cable & Wireless and the Bermuda Biological Station.

Feb 28th - Mar 11th, Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 5pm. PROMPT.

Mar 12th at 11am - noon, 12.30 - 1.30pm and 2 - 3pm,

all at Hanson Hall at the Biological Station!

Call 297-1880 to receive your information packet and to reserve your place. Seating is limited, so call early!



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Bermuda Audubon Society

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THE BERMUDA ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY AND THE
BERMUDA NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM invites
applications for a beginner's course in

BIRD TAXIDERMISTRY

A three week course consisting of six three-hour sessions, starting the week of March 14th, tentatively on Tues. and Thurs. during the day, but perhaps in the evening.

Instructor: Mrs. Shirley Tuzo. Fee \$100

Course location: Bermuda Natural History Museum at the Aquarium, Flatts.

Please apply in writing stating your educational background and your reasons for wanting to take this course to: Curator, Bermuda History Museum, P.O. Box FL145, Flatts FLBX. (Fax. 293-3176)

Places are limited. For more information, call Lisa Greene at 293-2727.

Closing date: March 4th, 1994.

FUTURE EVENTS:

Sunday 13 March	Field Trip - Paget Marsh Meet at St. Paul's carpark 2.00 pm.
Wednesday 23 March	Audio-visual Presentation - Alan Marquardt "Underwater Life in Bermuda and the Caribbean" Horticultural Hall 7.30 pm.
Saturday 9 April	Whale Watch and Pelagic Birds Leave from Albouy's Point 8.30 am \$60.00 Tel.238-3239 for reservations.
Friday 20 May	40th Anniversary Dinner Kenn Kaufman "Natural History in the 21st Century" Hamilton Princess 7.30 pm.
Wednesday 15 June	Annual General Meeting Horticultural Hall 7.30 pm.

If undelivered please return to:
Bermuda Audubon Society
P.O. Box HM 1328
Hamilton HM FX

