



Bermuda Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER Summer 2019

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Endemic Bermuda Land Snail Makes a Come-Back **Jennifer Gray**

An endangered species of land snail unique to Bermuda is making a come-back after being presumed extinct. Two separate surviving populations were discovered during the past five years, and a highly successful breeding programme by the Zoological Society of London and Chester Zoo has resulted in thousands of the snails being released back into safe habitats in Bermuda, where they are doing well.

The Greater Bermuda Land Snail (*Poecilozonites bermudensis*), a mighty name for a snail that reaches only 25mm, is predominant in its fossilized form in the paleosol layer across Bermuda suggesting it was once very abundant. The introduction of several predatory snails in the 1950s led to its rapid decline and by the 1990s it was thought to be extinct.

It was rediscovered in 2014 in a small alley microhabitat in the middle of the city of Hamilton, where a small population of the snails had been able to survive in the absence of predatory snails, living on the damp algae-covered concrete walls and under litter in the alley. A total of 166 live specimens were sent overseas to the Zoological Society of London and Chester Zoo for propagation and just 14 months later 2621 specimens were recorded. With the Hamilton City building next to the alley cited for redevelopment, 204 specimens were collected from the alley and reintroduced to Nonsuch Island. Breeding and range expansion has been observed for a limited number of these snails.



In 2017, much to everyone's surprise, a second surviving population was discovered on an island in the inner Hamilton Harbour, which was found to be free of predatory snails.

In February 2019, 4,000 snails were repatriated from Chester Zoo, marked and released on Nonsuch Island and another private island in Harrington Sound where there is no evidence of predatory snails.



Mark Outerbridge, wildlife ecologist at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said the survival and growth of the newly re-established populations is being carefully monitored. Meanwhile, the captive breeding programme will continue and the department is looking to identify and manage more optimal habitats so that further reintroductions can be made.

Trindade Petrel - possible breeding attempt?

Paul Watson

Hot on the heels of a bird seen flying over Devonshire on multiple occasions in early 2019, a second Trindade Petrel (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*) has again been recorded 'on land' in Bermuda. Robert Branco was visiting Spittal Pond on 2 July when he heard a very loud 'ki ki ki ki' call. Following the call, he found a dark seabird sitting in what looked like a nest scrape, about five feet from the main path.

After the bird called multiple times, he was concerned that due to its close proximity to the main path, it would be in danger from any passing dogs, feral cats or rats, and decided to take the bird to BAMZ for safety. A full check-up revealed a very healthy dark morph Trindade Petrel in what is only the third photo-documented record and sixth sight record of this species in Bermuda. Even more interesting, the behaviour and location where it was found mirror its nesting habits on Trindade and Martin Vaz islands in the South Atlantic (approx. 700 miles off the coast of Brazil). Is this species expanding its range?

After a short stint at BAMZ where the bird received a little 'bling' in the form of a leg ID band, it was placed into the 'Cahow-cam' burrow on Nonsuch Island on the 4 July where it remained until 1:14pm on 6 July when it flew back out on the ocean. Will it return to Spittal Pond? Checks will see.



Trindade Petrel - photo by Robert Branco

Shearwaters Delight on Pelagic Outing

Paul Watson

On Sunday 19 May a group of 14 set off from BAMZ for a trip offshore in search of pelagic seabirds. Immediately after heading offshore distant Shearwaters were seen, two Great and a likely Manx Shearwater.

Heading off the edge of the Bermuda platform we were rewarded with a Cory's Shearwater- distant, but with respectable views. Two single Sooty Shearwaters were next, with exceptional views of the second, then several more flew past including four birds together, affording more great views and photographs. A total of 14 Sooty Shearwater were seen.



Greater Shearwater - photo by Ian Fisher

Pouring small amounts of cod liver oil (to produce a surface slick the seabirds can smell) produced our first Great Shearwater, which graced the boat with flybys as it meandered around the slick whilst checking us out.

In addition to the oil there was also squid and fry on hand to attract birds closer to the boat and we were not disappointed. Two further Great Shearwater were fed right off the back of the boat and performed a lovely surface dance and unforgettable images swimming underwater after squid and fry sinking into the ocean depths, as they would with live fish.



In addition to the Shearwaters, we were treated to Tropicbirds 'plunge' feeding - dropping from great heights into the ocean to catch fish and squid - a selection of flying fish and flying squid. Large numbers of Portuguese Men-of-War and Valella ('By-the-Wind Sailor) were also seen in their natural ocean environment.

Thanks to Erich and Janice Hetzel for arranging the excursion and Nigel Pollard for captaining the 'Endurance'. We hope to organise another pelagic trip next spring - do join us!

Thieves Steal Fencing from Sear's Cave Reserve

Janice Hetzel

On Saturday 25 May, two people brazenly removed 30 feet of chain link fence from the border of our Sear's Cave Nature Reserve, leaving the potentially dangerous, open sinkhole accessible to the public.

Thanks to some very observant neighbours who noticed suspicious activity and recorded number plates, the theft was quickly reported to the police and an arrest has been made with a second arrest pending. Replacement of the fence cost the Bermuda Audubon Society \$1005.

Thank you to A-1 Fencing for promptly repairing the fence even though they had many other obligations at the time. We are also extremely grateful to the neighbours, without whom the culprits would probably never have been found.



The stolen fence at Sear's Cave (left) was soon replaced (right).

Bird Report March - June 2019

Janice Hetzel

The long-staying **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** at Somerset Long Bay was last seen 5 May (TW). An additional four Black-bellied Whistling Duck were seen in Warwick on 20 June (ES). One was also seen on 21 June (TA) and 23 June (PT) at two other Warwick Locations.

At least two **Black-necked Stilt** were present at various Bermuda locations 10 May - 22 June (JW, NM). The **Black-bellied Plover** were last seen on 21 May at Spanish Point (TW). A **Piping Plover** was at Cooper's Island 1 Mar-10 Apr (TW). A **Ruff** was seen at Westover Farm, 23 Mar (EH). A **Least Sandpiper** was seen at Spittal Pond on 22 June (NM).

A **Great Skua** was viewed about one mile offshore from Cooper's Point 10 May (PW). A **South Polar Skua** passed Cooper's Point, 20 May (IF, PW). A possible two **Sabine's Gulls** viewed from Cooper's Is. were flying about one mile off-shore 21 Mar (PW). A wintering **Black-headed Gull** was in Hamilton Harbour 17 Apr (EH).

A **Leach's Storm-Petrel** returned to a Bermuda Petrel nest burrow for the third year running on 22 April and actually shared the burrow with a Cahow and its chick before the chick fledged (JM). The Storm Petrel continues to visit the burrow to this date. A **Black-capped Petrel** flew off-shore past Cooper's Point 21 Mar (PW).

A **Masked Booby** was photographed offshore on 9 June (JSt). An imm. **Brown Pelican** photographed in the Little Sound 28 April (EH) relocated to Shelly Bay to 17 May (NM). An imm. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was at Spittal Pond 3 Mar (NM).



Black-necked Stilt - photo by Neal Morris

A **Roseate Tern** returned to the Great Sound 1 May (PW) with 3 present by 29 May (EH, JH). Two are nesting on an island in Great Sound and we expect all three to remain through the summer. **Common Terns** were first seen on 7 April at Coney Island (NM). Four **Arctic Terns** passed Cooper's Point 20 May (IF, PW) and another was seen offshore on 23 May (IF, PW). A **Royal Tern** was seen in Great Sound on 18 May (IF, PW).

A Royal Tern was also photographed remotely in the Great Sound 13 June (EH).



Royal Tern with decoys - photo by Ian Fisher

A **Swallow-tailed Kite** was seen in the Bermuda's west end 6-16 Apr (IP). A late **Northern Harrier** was over Morgan's Point 4 May (JS).

A **Yellow-throated Vireo** was seen in the Arboretum 31 Mar (NM). A **Red-eyed Vireo** was seen in Walsingham, 4 May (NM). An overwintering **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was last seen in the Arboretum 31 Mar (NM). The long-staying **Marsh Wren** at Spittal Pond was last seen 24 Mar (NM). Also, an **American Robin**, present since 5 Jan (JS) was last seen at Ft. Scaur 17 Mar (PW). A **Dark-eyed Junco** was seen at Lagoon Park 5 Mar (PF). A long-staying **White-crowned Sparrow** was seen at Spanish Point 3 Apr (EH). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** remained at Ferry Point Park to 13 Apr (NM). A **Red-winged Blackbird** was last seen on Jubilee Road 9 Mar (NM). A **Blue Grosbeak** was seen at Ferry Point Park 13 April (NM) and another was seen on Trinity Church Road on 21 April.

Observers: Takeysha Atwell, Ian Fisher, Paul Fisher, Erich Hetzel, Janice Hetzel, Neal Morris, Ingela Perrson, Joanne Smith, Joshua Stone, Erin Stovell, Patrick Talbot, Paul Watson, John Weale, Tim White

Society News

Environmental education is one of the Society's mandates. Over the past few months secretary Janice Hetzel has worked with a number of student groups.

As part of BHS STEAM week, a group of students became citizen scientists. They checked all of the bluebird boxes at Government House (*photo right*) and recorded the data for input into NestWatch. They then went back to school and assembled bluebird boxes and placed them on the BHS grounds.



Many thanks to Natalie Lightbourne, Emma Mayor, Sierra Pacheco, Jessie Marshall and Robin Stempel who are working on their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. They needed a purpose for their practice journey in Bermuda and they chose to collect useful information about our nature reserves. They assessed the quality of the reserves, observed and recorded all the birds that they saw and also noted if any invasive cats or rats were seen.

Students at Saltus learned about Bluebird conservation and how to build a Bluebird box at their Bermuda Cultural Showcase on 31 May (*photo below*). They also learned about how to be citizen scientists with NestWatch.



Committee of Management 2019-2020

At the Society's AGM, held at Government House on 13 May, the following people were elected to the Committee of Management:

Karen Border - President
Jennifer Gray - Vice-President
Janice Hetzel - Secretary
Zelia Amaral - Treasurer
Devika Mather - Membership Secretary
Peter Lee
Jeremy Madeiros
Joanne Smith
Paul Watson
David Wingate

Future Events

Sorry, our [North Rock Snorkel](#) and [Sunset Harbour Cruise](#) in July are fully booked. More outings are planned for the fall - be sure to look out for emails and sign up quickly!

Spittal Pond Field Trip

Saturday 7 September 8:00am

A guided bird walk at Spittal Pond as part of the World Shorebird Count. Meet at eastern car park.

Paget Island Bird Camp

Save the Date: 11-13 October.

Join us for an exciting weekend of camaraderie and bird watching on beautiful Paget Island with daily field trips to the mainland. Not interested in bird watching? Then you can stay back and relax in the quiet and beauty of Paget Island.

Email info@audubon.bm or call 735-0441 for more information on any events.

Longtail Igloos For Sale

Price \$120. Email info@audubon.bm or call 238-8628 to order.

