



Bermuda Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER Winter 2008

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Two new bird records for Bermuda

Andrew Dobson



David Wingate was at Somerset Long Bay reserve on 30th June to install a lock on the gate and was surprised to find a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis* sitting with Mallards and Moorhens on one of the islets. It looked alert and wary so he doubted that it was an escape from a waterfowl collection. In fact there are no known whistling-ducks in captivity locally. The bird re-located to Spittal Pond where it remained until 5th July (photo – Andrew Dobson). The Black-bellied Whistling-Duck is usually found in freshwater marshes and shallow freshwater lakes in the tropics and sub-tropics. Its distribution ranges from the U.S. Gulf Coast states, through Central America to

northern Argentina, Paraguay and southern Brazil. The species is established in central and southern Florida. Casual records have been made on many Caribbean islands.

Audubon members Stephen and Beverley Barton reported seeing a beautiful bird in Gibbit's Bay on 26th October. It was about the size of a mallard, brilliant white all over except for very black wing tips. The bill was short and almost looked purple - legs were orange/brown. They watched it for about 10 minutes and then rushed home to get the camera, scope and field guide. Unfortunately when they got back they couldn't find it. Looking through the field guide the first bird they saw in the book that caught their eye as a possible ID was Ross's Goose *Chen rossii*. A potential 'first' for Bermuda had got away!



Fortunately it was rediscovered by another Audubon member, David Wallace on 25th November on Belmont golf course. A tiny white goose with black wingtips, the Ross's Goose is like a miniature version of the more abundant Snow Goose (three of which were reported in October). The Ross's Goose breeds in the central Arctic and winters primarily in central California, but it is becoming more frequent farther east. Last year the Bahamas

recorded their first Ross's Goose. This species breeds on the Arctic tundra and frequently associates with the larger Snow Goose. As it grazes on grass, it may well spend the winter on the golf course in the company of other wildfowl. Ross's Goose is not currently threatened. Its population is relatively small, but increasing significantly. Its main wintering areas are the interior valleys of California. It is a casual visitor to the U.S. East Coast from New Jersey to Florida.

Message from the President

Andrew Dobson

As we head towards the end of another year, the problems facing the environment, such as global warming, appear to have come off the front page as a result of an ever-worsening world economic recession. This is of course no surprise, but it means that it will be even harder to meet the environmental challenges both in Bermuda and elsewhere. Funding for projects will become harder to find, so we will have to double our efforts.

A huge 'thank you' to those of you who have supported our 'Buy Back Bermuda' campaign as a combined effort with the Bermuda National Trust (see the article in this newsletter). We have benefitted from a number of joint initiatives with local business. We are particularly grateful to the Bank of Bermuda and Butterfield Asset Management who have held staff work days on our nature reserves. We will soon be joining forces with PartnerRe and Berkeley School in a 'Dollars for Hours' project. Such ventures are hugely worthwhile - and can be a great deal of fun. These and other events organised by the Society are reported in the newsletter.

This year has been a busy one for the Society and a very rewarding one for me personally. In my dual roles as both President of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds and the Bermuda Audubon Society's President, it has been a particularly demanding year, and I thank my family for their patience and understanding. I have had the opportunity and privilege to represent the Society at a number of international conferences which have fortunately fallen during my vacation time and allowed me to attend. In February I was in McAllen, Texas for a 'Partners in Flight' conference at which I was able to give a presentation on seabird conservation on behalf of Jeremy Madeiros and myself. A busy summer saw me visiting a number of Caribbean islands and seeing the bird conservation work being done in Montserrat, Antigua and Barbuda. I then received funding as part of a Bermuda delegation of three

people to attend a 'Biodiversity and Climate Change' conference in Reunion in the Indian Ocean. Organised by the European Union for the overseas territories of EU members, more than 500 delegates were present to discuss the problems facing small island states in particular. Also in the summer I was able to represent Bermuda at a meeting in Asuncion, Paraguay for the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative - strengthening communication and cooperation among nations, international conventions and civil society. Most recently I had the opportunity to attend BirdLife International's world conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a meeting that takes place every 4 years. At this meeting a number of publications were launched, including the "Important Bird Areas in the Caribbean". This weighty book includes a chapter on Bermuda contributed by Jeremy Madeiros and myself.

As we all reflect on the events of 2008, I wish a very Happy Christmas and every best wish for the New Year. I hope that your resolution, like mine, will be to create a better natural environment for us all.

Celebrating IMBD in the Caribbean and Bermuda - Tundra to Tropics: Connecting Birds, Habitats and People

Andrew Dobson

The Bermuda Audubon Society took part in the International Migratory Bird Day in October. A yearly event, the IMBD actually spans the whole month of October when the fall migration of birds reaches its peak. Migratory birds undertake remarkable journeys twice a year. The fact that these birds pass through our country means that they have been part of our environment long before man settled here. These birds, like our own residents, are part of our natural heritage and we have a duty to conserve the habitats they need to feed and to rest on migration. The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds, of which Mr. Dobson is currently President, produced a special poster highlighting the theme of this year's IMBD Tundra to Tropics: Connecting Birds, Habitats, and People. These posters and Bird and Habitat Fact Sheets are available for download at www.scsb.org

During the middle weekend of October, members of the Bermuda Audubon Society held their annual birding camp on Paget Island to coincide with the IMBD. Both of the two species featured on the special poster were seen during the weekend - a Blackpoll Warbler, a small songbird migrating from the boreal forests of Canada to its wintering grounds in northern South America - and the Ruddy Turnstone, a long-distance migrant which breeds in the Arctic Tundra and winters as far south as Argentina. Other IMBD-related events in Bermuda included a field trip to Spittal Pond led by Andrew Dobson as part of the Bermuda Zoological Society's natural history course, and an Elderhostel bird week at BIOS where lecturers included Andrew Dobson and David Wingate. The IMBD is coordinated by 'Partners in Flight' specifically to highlight the migration of nearly 350 species of migratory birds between nesting habitats in North America and non-breeding grounds in South and Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. During October in Bermuda, well over 100 species are recorded, especially a wide variety of shorebirds and warblers, as well vireos, cuckoos, kingbirds, flycatchers, swifts, swallows, thrushes, orioles and tanagers. More species are present during the fall than

any other season in Bermuda. It is a delight and a challenge to observe as many of these incredible creatures as possible during their southward migration.

The Vesey Nature Reserve – Buy Back Bermuda Campaign

David Wingate



A gift of 7.5 acres of open space has been given to the Buy Back Bermuda Campaign by Sharon Vesey in memory of the Vesey family name. The Bermuda Audubon Society and the Bermuda National Trust received the deeds from members of the Vesey family during a boat trip to view the reserve in October (see photo- Sharon Vesey, David Wingate, Mrs. Henry Vesey, David Saul and Andrew Dobson). Thanks to the tremendous generosity of Sharon, a piece of Bermuda's natural heritage will be saved in perpetuity for the enjoyment of all and will help the Buy Back Bermuda committee to realise their vision of not only saving our precious open spaces but implementing management plans that enhance the Buy Back Bermuda reserves. It is a challenge to secure prized open space in Bermuda but to have the means to restore these spaces, now that the land has been gifted, is an opportunity that adds great value for everyone. By tackling the daunting issue of invasive species and making available fitting habitats for wildlife and walking trails, resting spots and interpretive signs for people, we can enhance the quality of the reserve and the experience for its visitors. For Buy Back Bermuda this gift is truly the finest icing on the cake and everyone gets to benefit.

The reserve extends from the verges of Evans Pond in Southampton over the ridgeline of Skroggins Hill to the shoreline of the Little Sound. It borders the Government-owned Evans Bay Nature Reserve and is adjacent to the railway trail. The site is predominantly lush untouched woodland, with many live cedars and rare native flora. Evans Pond in the bottom of the valley is a tidal saltwater pond bordered by mangroves and arable farmland. Such features are key to the survival of local flora and fauna and are an integral part of our natural history and culture. Overgrown quarries occur along the northwest slope of the valley and are of great interest for the native and introduced ferns they support.

Features of the Vesey Nature Reserve

The deep valley enclosing Evans Pond is highly visible from the main road and the Railway Trail linear park in Southampton which border it on the west side. The east-west orientated ridgeline is highly visible from the Little Sound and from the Far Rockaway government housing estate and the fast ferry dock which border it on the north side. It is effectively separated from the Evans Pond valley by the sheer face of an abandoned quarry which is entirely concealed under dense woodland. Other overgrown abandoned quarries occur along the north slope of the Evans Pond valley and are of great interest.

The woodland within the valley is a relatively high quality mixed secondary woodland dominated by fiddlewood, allspice, Brazil pepper, Japanese loquat, Surinam cherry, Japanese pittosporum, Chinese fan palm and lucky nut, but with a high percentage of surviving Bermuda cedars and other native flora. The scrubby upper slopes of the ridgeline support the only known surviving population of *Rhacoma crossopetalum* on Bermuda. A rare shrub confined to the valley is *Pavonia spinifex*. Both the black and the red mangrove grow around the edge of the pond. The pond itself supports a diverse and unique marine community which includes a small population of the endemic Bermuda killifish. Various heron species roost in the mangroves.

The vegetation on the long wide ridgeline which slopes down to the Little Sound is dominated by Brazil pepper, allspice, common sage bush, Surinam cherry, Japanese pittosporum and white cedar, and averages 6' to 15' in height, but still supports a host of native flora, including many healthy young Bermuda cedars, Jamaica dogwood and the rare *Rhacoma*. Casuarinas have self-colonised along the Little Sound shoreline and may require culling in the future.

If you have not yet done so and would like to contribute, please send your donation to Buy Back Bermuda, P.O. Box 61, Hamilton HM AX. Call Karen Border on 238-8628 if you have any questions.

EnviroShorts



On 4th September the Bermuda Audubon Society held a special reception at BUEI to acknowledge those involved in the EnviroShorts project. Producer and series presenter Sangita Iyer was thanked, as well as our very special sponsors of the series, The Bank of Bermuda Foundation, Butterfield and Vallis, BELCo, Bermuda Waterworks Limited and the ACE Foundation. (Photo – Hon. Mr. R. Horton - Education Minister, Sangita Iyer, Andrew Dobson). The Society held

a special launch of the 'EnviroShorts' DVD on Saturday 22 November at the Bermuda

Aquarium and Zoo gift shop. Sangita Iyer, the producer of the series, was there to sign copies assisted by Scott Neil, who was the Consulting Script Editor of the series. Many thanks to committee members Lyn Llewellyn and Judith Swain who made sure everything went smoothly. There has been a huge interest from the public in the TV series with requests to get hold of the DVD. Our aim was to give copies of the DVD to all the schools on the island. This has now been done and we made sure that we also produced enough copies to sell to interested members of the public. There are thirteen 30-min programmes packed into a boxed set of 3 DVDs. Bermuda topics include: Open spaces, Invasive plants and animals, Turtles, Caves, Mangroves, Sewage & Water,



Native and endemic plants, Animals, Waste disposal, Pollution, Global warming, Alternative energy, Farming & fishing, Coral reefs and sea grass, Sustainable development. The Audubon Society is aiming to get the environmental message to as many segments of Bermuda's population as possible. The response from schools has been terrific, with many classes already using episodes from the series in their lessons. The DVDs are on sale

for \$30 at many outlets on the island. For further information, email info@audubon.bm (Photo caption - Mr. Andrew Dobson, President of the Bermuda Audubon Society, presenting an 'EnviroShorts' DVD to Mrs. Lisa Siese, Science and Social Studies Coordinator at Somerset Primary School with P6 students.)

Audubon participates in first annual Eco-Fest

Richard Amos

The Bermuda Audubon Society was pleased to take part in the first ever annual Bermuda "Eco-Fest" on Saturday, 18th October 2008. The event was organized by the Bermuda Association of School Eco-Clubs (BASE) and took place in the gardens of "Waterville" headquarters of the Bermuda National Trust at Crow Lane.

The purpose of the Eco-Fest is to showcase some of the environmental and related projects being done by students and teachers at several school Eco-Clubs and to encourage the formation and linking of Eco-Clubs at schools throughout the Island. The event was kicked off by BASE Chairperson Ms. Caitlin O'Doherty and featured static table displays from a number of schools and environmental organizations including Keep Bermuda Beautiful, Clearwater Middle School, Somerset Primary, Works and Engineering, the Bermuda Zoological Society and the Bermuda National Trust. The Audubon Society table was crowded with various examples of bluebird nest box designs and a Longtail "igloo". Our table also boasted David Wingate educational posters of Bermuda plants and animals, "Enviroshorts" and "Bermuda's Treasure Island" DVDs as well as Bluebird Conservation Leaflets and Buy Back Bermuda flyers. The Audubon

table was manned by Audubon Society Vice-President Richard Amos, Society Executive Secretary Karen Border and junior member Miss Morgan Amos. Richard spent the afternoon fielding questions from Eco-fest visitors on Bluebird and Longtail conservation and provided information on Audubon Society Nature Reserves. Meanwhile Karen and Morgan were kept busy distributing leaflets and selling magazines, posters and DVDs.

In addition to static displays there were various activities for children including educational game challenges and guided walks. There was even a musical performance by a school singing group. The climax of the event was a keynote address delivered by National Trust Director Ms. Jennifer Gray. Ms. Gray congratulated the BASE team for their efforts to encourage Eco club activity in schools and for organizing the Eco-fest. Ms. Gray described the Eco-fest as, “... *a fantastic opportunity for educators, youth, family and friends to gain a greater awareness of like-minded environmental organizations and the resources available for sharing.*” Ms. Gray spoke of the importance and benefits of a collaborative approach to the challenge of sustainable living and development and commended teachers and advisors who had invested time in Eco-clubs and Bermuda’s youth. Ms. Gray called on young people to be environmental champions and to influence for the better the thinking of their parents, politicians and peers. Ms Gray concluded her address with a favourite quote from Margaret Mead: “*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.*”

In all, more than one hundred children and adults attended the event during the course of the afternoon. Teachers from various schools were conspicuous amongst the attendees and were responsible for many of the purchases of posters and DVDs at the Audubon display table. The Bermuda Audubon Society is grateful to BASE for the opportunity to participate in this year’s Eco-fest and looks forward to supporting the group’s future endeavours.

Anyone wishing to learn more about BASE and its activities should contact Caitlin O’Doherty on: basebda@gmail.com

Bird Report late May 2008 to December 2008

Andrew Dobson



Highlights in the period included the first records in Bermuda for Black-bellied Whistling-Duck and Ross’s Goose. However, these rare sightings failed to hide the fact this year’s fall migration was very poor. There were noticeably low numbers of warblers. Only 34 of the 39 warbler species on the Bermuda list were seen this fall and for at least 10 of these species, less than six individual birds were seen.

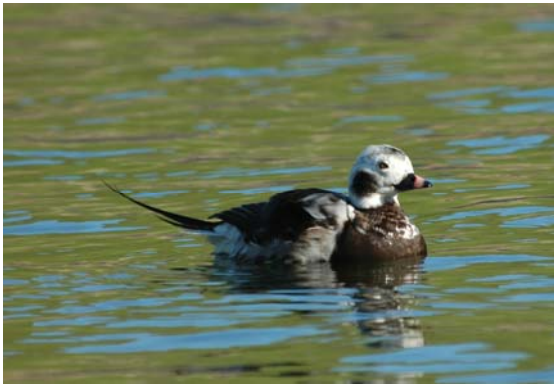
Late May to July

One breeding pair of **Pied-billed Grebes** produced five young on Pitman's Pond (DBW). Recovery of the endangered **Bermuda Petrel** continues with a record 85 breeding pairs raising a record 40 fledglings (JM). A **Magnificent Frigatebird** was seen at various locations 2-7 Jun (WF, PH). A **Masked Booby** was at Sally Tuckers, off the west end of Bermuda 7 Jul (CB). A juv. **Brown Pelican** was on Pearl Island 26 May (PW). Summering heron species included Great Blue Heron, Great Egret (2) and Snowy Egret (1), while an ad. Tricolored Heron was at Spittal Pond 11-12 July and ad. Cattle Egret at Spittal Pond 21 Jun-11 Jul (DBW). A **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** found at Somerset Long Bay Pond 30 Jun (DBW) was the first record for Bermuda. It was last seen at Spittal Pond 5 Jul (EA). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Spittal Pond and male **Ring-necked Duck** at Ship's Hill Pond both summered (AD). One or two **Ospreys** were present in the summer with frequent sightings in the Great Sound and Harrington Sound. Less than 20 nesting pairs of **Common Moorhen** survive on 11 ponds and their breeding success is poor since the establishment of the Red-eared Terrapin as an invasive species in the 1980s. Both food competition and predation of new hatched chicks may be involved (DBW). Two **American Coots** over-summered at Spittal Pond (DBW). A **Purple Gallinule** was at Cooper's Island nature reserve 21 May (BM, JM). Three sub-adult **Semipalmated Plover** summered at Spanish Point (DBW). As usual a few **Ruddy Turnstones** and **Black-bellied Plover** also remained during the summer, as did one imm. **Great Black-backed Gull**. Early shorebirds included an ad. male **Wilson's Phalarope** at Warwick Pond 11-23 Jul (DBW), **Lesser Yellowlegs** (4) 17 Jul at Spittal Pond, **Least Sandpipers** (8) and a **Stilt Sandpiper** at North Pond 24 Jul (EA). One ad. **Laughing Gull** was seen in various locations during Jun and Jul (AD, JM, DBW). A **Gull-billed Tern** was at Spittal Pond, 23-25 Jul (DBW). Single **Sandwich Terns** were seen 15 Jun at Ferry Point (PW) and 3 Jul in Harrington Sound (DBW). The Bermuda **Common Tern** population continues to be very marginal since hurricane Fabian in 2003. 14 Adults of which only 3 were males reared only three broods totalling 8 fledged young this summer (DBW). The first returning **Belted Kingfisher** arrived 28 Jul on Nonsuch Is. (JM). A **Grey Kingbird** was at Spittal Pond 31 May (RG). An early **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Jenningsland 9 Aug (JM). An **American Redstart** on Nonsuch Is. 9 Aug (JM) was the first fall warbler (JM). A first-summer male **Red-winged Blackbird** at North Pond 15 Jun was the first June record for 30 years (RC, AD).

August to December

A pair of **Cahows** were found in a burrow on Nonsuch Island 10 Nov (the first occurrence for 400 yrs). By the month's end, six burrows had been prospected (JM). Single **Magnificent Frigatebirds** were over Spittal Pond 7 Oct (Bill) and Government House grounds and North Shore 20 Nov (RG, HW). An imm. **Brown Booby** (*Photo - Andrew Dobson*) at dusk on the Warwick Long Bay stack 1 Sep (JMe) was last seen 11 Oct at Achilles Bay (AD). Possibly the same bird was seen off Hog Bay Park 29 Nov (AD). An **American Bittern** was on Pembroke Marsh 19-26 Nov (DW). An imm. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was at Spittal Pond 24 Oct-26 Nov (PW). Two **Snow Geese** were seen flying strongly west over Cloverdale 22 Nov (AD). They were later discovered at Government House grounds. Another flew in off the sea at Cooper's Point 23 Nov (AD) and probably the same bird was present at Port Royal GC from 26 Nov. Bermuda's first record of **Ross's Goose** 26 Oct near Gibbit's Bay (B&SB) was re-discovered on Belmont

GC 25 Nov-Dec (DW, ph.AD). A **Canada Goose** was discovered at Freer Cox NR 10 Dec (KR, DBW). Five **Wood Ducks** were at Port Royal GC 26 Nov (DW). The long-staying male **Eurasian Wigeon** and a male **American Wigeon** male were at South Pond 11 Nov (AD). A **Northern Pintail** 15 Aug at Spittal Pond was the earliest fall record by 15 days (EA). A flock of 16 **Ring-necked Duck** were at Trott's Pond 22 Nov(AD). A record 21 **Lesser Scaup** were recorded 22 Nov, with 14 at Spittal Pond (the largest single flock ever recorded in Bermuda) and 7 at Trott's Pond (AD, PW). A male **Long-tailed Duck** was present on Ship's Hill Pond 20-22 Oct (DW), the first record since 1990 and only the 6th record for Bermuda (*Photo – Andrew Dobson*). A **Bufflehead** arrived on North Pond 11 Nov (DW). A record 17 **Hooded Merganser** were seen at various locations 26 Nov (DW). A **Cooper's Hawk** flew over Mid-Ocean GC 19 Nov (PW). Single **Piping Plovers** were seen at Horseshoe Bay 3 Oct (JM) and Cooper's Is. 13 Oct (AD). A **Willet** was seen at North Pond 14 Aug (EA). An **Upland Sandpiper** was noted in Botanical Gardens 3 Aug (K&RL). Five **Red Knot** were seen 11 miles NNE of Bermuda 27 Oct (PW). A **Buff-**



breasted Sandpiper on Port Royal GC 11 Sep was joined by another 13 Sep(AD). Two **Short-billed Dowitchers** were on Port Royal GC ponds 18-29 Nov (AD). Four **Pomarine Jaegers** were seen from the St. Georges Ferry off North Shore 6 Oct (WS). Two Jaegers were seen at distance on a boat trip off Cooper's Is. 15 Nov (AD). A **Black-headed Gull** 23-24 Sep was the earliest fall record by about one month (PW). Another was seen at Dockyard 14 Dec (DW). An

imm. **Sabine's Gull** was found dead in sargassum in Flatts Inlet 21 Nov (CF). A **Black Tern** was present on Spittal Pond 2-7 Oct (KR). A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was seen at Pokiok 7 Oct (PH). A late influx of **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** included three in the West End 17 Dec (DW, K&RL). Several **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were noted - one was in a St. George's garden 16 Oct (PW), two were seen at Barngrove, Tee Street 3 Oct (WS), one was present 2-20 Nov in a Smith's Parish garden (J&K L) and on at least one date, two birds were seen. An **Eastern Phoebe** was seen at Spittal Pond 29 Nov (DBW). Single **Great Crested Flycatchers** were seen 7 Nov at Whale Bay Fort (DW) and Wreck Hill (WF). A **Grey Kingbird** at Somerset Long Bay NR 14 Aug was the earliest fall record by 21 days (PH). A **Horned Lark** was on the Airport 26 Sep (PW). A late flock of 16 **Tree Swallows** was at the East End dairy 10 Dec (DO). A **Northern Wheatear** was on the Airport 21-26 Sep (DBW) and another was in a Hamilton Parish garden 16-19 Oct (PA). Two **American Robin** noted on the grass perimeter of Bermuda Airport on 23 Nov were the prelude to a number of sightings in Bermuda (AD). An **American Pipit** was on the Airport 9 Dec (JM, PW). A **Golden-winged Warbler** was in Shelly Bay fields 5-7 Oct (DBW). A **Cerulean Warbler** was seen on St. Georges GC 3 Oct (EA). A late **Prothonotary Warbler** was seen in Hog Bay Park 29 Nov (AD). A **Connecticut Warbler** was at Wreck Hill 7 Oct (WF). Single **Yellow-breasted Chats** were seen at Shelly Bay Park 17 Sep (DBW), Ferry Point Park 4-6 Oct (DBW) and Wreck Road 10 Dec (DW). Single **Summer Tanagers** were seen at Mid-Ocean GC 6 Dec (DBW), Tudor Farm 10 Dec (DW), and Jenningsland 14 Dec (JM). Single **Lincoln's Sparrows** were found at Lukes Farm 1 Dec and Spittal Pond 16 Dec (DW). A **White-throated Sparrow** was in Hog Bay

Park 29 Nov (AD). A **Lapland Longspur** was heard overhead at the Airport 10 Dec (PH). Two **Dickcissel** were seen on St. Georges GC 3 Oct (EA) and a further two at Hog Bay Park 11 Oct (AD, DW). A first year male **Red-winged Blackbird** was in Riddell's Bay mangroves 27 Nov (DW). A juv. **Common Grackle** was seen at Riddell's Bay mangroves 10 Oct (WS, PW). A **Brown-headed Cowbird** 14 Aug at North Pond was the earliest fall record by 6 weeks (EA).

Escapees

The mystery of several calling **Northern Bobwhites** during Aug/Sept in Devonshire was solved. Eight birds had escaped from captivity in Orange Valley Road (BL).

Observers:

Peter Adhemar, Eric Amos, Beverley & Stephen Barton, Chris Burville, Rob Chandler, Andrew Dobson, Chris Flook, Wendy Frith, Richard Gozney, Peter Hopkin, Kay & Ray Latter, Bruce Lorhan, Jade & Keith Lovell, Jeremy Madeiros, Blake Mathys, John Meadows (JMe), David O'Neill, Keith Rossiter, William Stone, David Wallace (DW), Paul Watson, Harry Whitcher, David Wingate (DBW).

Birds and People by Mark Cocker and David Tipling

Mark Cocker gave a presentation about his Birds and People book project (see below) at the BirdLife World Conference. We all have our own special stories about birds and people and their importance in our culture. It's a great way to increase the public's awareness of birds and the importance of doing all we can to protect them. Notice that you will be acknowledged for your contributions. Mark would love to hear from you.

A unique collaboration in a unique book

BirdLife International and the publishers Random House are working together on a groundbreaking project to document the cultural importance of birds. Birds and People is written by one of Britain's foremost writers on nature, Mark Cocker, illustrated with the images of acclaimed wildlife photographer, David Tipling. Their work is supported by research undertaken by a distinguished bird scholar and author Jonathan Elphick. Between them the three-man team has produced over 50 books.

Birds and People - Introduction

Birds have been at the heart of human cultures for thousands of years. Their central place in our affections is well demonstrated by the many millions of people who support national organisations which make up the BirdLife International partnership. Migrant birds like the Barn Swallow help define our sense of season. The calls of gulls and terns are almost inseparable from our experience of the seaside. Eagles conjure a sense of wilderness, just as they are often invoked to help build a sense of nationhood. Birds can be seen everywhere on our architecture, flags, bank notes and coins. The sense of freedom awakened by birds in flight has been a source of inspiration alike to tribal communities and the world's major civilisations. Writers, poets, artists and composers have drawn on the qualities of birds for thousands of years. Today birds often play the role of ambassador in our entire relationship with nature. They are cherished as companions, as aesthetic adornments and as expression of some unspoken bond

between ourselves and the rest of nature. The book will explore the extraordinary part which birds have played in human cultures worldwide.

Birds and People - You can contribute

This is a unique form of ornithological book, given that it is as much about ourselves and our responses to birds, as it is about birds themselves. A special characteristic is its inclusion of hundreds, possibly thousands, of contributions from people right around the world. Everyone who contributes will be acknowledged. The most revealing eye-witness accounts will also be incorporated so that the book builds into a global chorus of different voices and different cultures on the innumerable connections between humankind and birds. In total it will tell the story of a singular, universal relationship.

What is a contribution to Birds and People?

We want stories which illuminate our wider relationship with birds. Most contributions are less than 300 words. They can be humorous, personal, technical or informal. They can describe how birds help define our sense of place, season and even ourselves. Birds have been totems or emblems for communities as much as nations. Your story may describe a personal favourite. It may describe how a song gives meaning to a place or a part of your life. It may be a piece of folklore or surviving belief. Many communities still fear owls or the cries of owls. In Central America, children still hunt hummingbirds with catapults believing that to eat its heart will make them brave and improve their sight. At Christmastime friends and family pull on the chicken or turkey's wishbone, believing it will allow their wishes to come true. Birds are part of our language, giving us place names as well as sayings. If you are still unsure, then write or email us and ask the authors.

You can contribute in a number of ways

Send your stories by e-mail to mark.cocker@randomhouse.co.uk or

david.tipling@randomhouse.co.uk

Send your stories by surface post to the project at Birds and People, C/o Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA, UK.

Mark Cocker,
The Hollies,
The Street,
Claxton,
Norwich NR14 7AA,
UK.

Society News

Andrew Dobson

New Year's Day Walk - Spanish Rock – Spittal Pond – 1.00 to 3.30 pm

On January 1, 2009 Imagine Bermuda 2009, with the cooperation of the Bermuda Audubon Society, Bermuda National Trust, the Parks Dept. and churches & clubs in the area, will hold a walk to Spanish Rock – the site of one of the first visitations on the island – some 460 years ago. This tour will be geared for residents on that first day of the island's 400th Anniversary to reflect on the significance of the occasion.

The highlight of this tour will be presentations by:

- David Wingate: the island's no.1 environmentalist; who has worked for decades to preserve Bermuda's nature reserves and an expert on our natural history.
- Lance Furbert: an expert on the human history of the island who shares a passion for Bermuda's heritage.
- Ruth Thomas: Bermuda's no. 1 Story-teller, will provide a presentation on Jeffery's Cave; an enclave from slavery.
- Andrew Dobson: of the Audubon Society will be there to identify the bird species present.
- Eddie McGonagle: of the Astronomical Society, will provide a hand's-on demonstration on Telescopes; marking 400th anniversary of that invention.

The Tour will be a symbolic opportunity for reflection at the dawn of this 400th Anniversary Year; providing an opportunity to appreciate our shared and diverse heritage. The walk will begin at the eastern car park at Spittal Pond and proceed to the western car park. 1.00-3.30 pm.

Volunteer Recognition

Two of our members were recognized at a reception at Government House on National Volunteer Day, December 5th 2008. The Governor, Sir Richard Gozney, presented certificates to Fiona Doe for her work on the BAS committee and in particular her work on nature reserves; and to 10 year-old Morgan Amos for her support with the bluebird nestbox programme in particular.

Corporate workdays - Volunteers take a 'green break' from market stress



There's nothing like swinging a mattock or tugging out weeds to relieve stress. Staff of the Bank of Butterfield's Asset Management Department found that out when they took a break from the financial markets to take part in their annual volunteer day on Sunday 26

October, working on the Audubon and Buy Back Bermuda Reserves at Somerset Long Bay. Armed with mattocks, weed wrenches and rakes, the twenty-five strong team, made up of employees and their families, dug out invasive species which threaten to overrun the reserves. They also cleared weeds and vines from around young cedars and other native plants, to give them room to grow. The group achieved a tremendous amount of work in just a few hours, saving the Society thousands of dollars on hiring contractors. Several volunteers commented that it made a pleasant change from picking up other people's dumped trash, which they have done in previous years.

In November, staff from the Bank of Bermuda carried out path clearance work at our Alfred Blackburn Smith reserve in November. The efforts of organizations like these are hugely appreciated by the Society.

Field trips

An early morning visit to Spittal Pond in early September was well attended and provided members with the opportunity to see some fall migrants on and around the pond. Highlights included close views of Solitary, Semipalmated, Stilt and White-rumped Sandpipers. Many thanks to Andrew Dobson and David Wingate who acted as guides.



This year's pelagic trip on 'Tenacity' to coincide with the November off-shore gathering of Cahows was a great success. A full boat-load of hopeful members braved a somewhat choppy sea and moderate winds about two miles off Cooper's Point. About six Cahows were seen, with several of them passing right next to the boat and offering fantastic views. A big thank you to captain Graham Maddocks and to

committee member Paul Watson for organising the trip.

Following two previous cancellations due to bad weather, the Society was finally able to hold a very successful field trip to Nonsuch Island in November. Thanks are due to David Saul for ferrying members over to the island, and to Jeremy Madeiros and David Wingate for their excellent guided tours.

Bermuda Audubon in the News

The Bermudian *Winter 2008* - 'A Weekend of Birding' by Liz Jones features her experience on the Society's Paget Island bird camp.

Ross's Goose - New species for Bermuda

<http://www.theroyalgazette.com/siftology.royalgazette/Article/article.jsp?articleId=7d8bd3f30030000§ionId=60>

<http://www.bermudasun.bm/main.asp?SectionID=24&SubSectionID=270&ArticleID=39661&TM=48467.91>

Launch of the EnviroShorts DVD

<http://www.royalgazette.com/siftology.royalgazette/Article/article.jsp?articleId=7d894b330030000§ionId=60>

<http://www.royalgazette.com/siftology.royalgazette/Article/article.jsp?sectionId=60&articleId=7d8ba3730030004>

Important Bird Areas of the Caribbean: key sites for conservation

<http://www.bermudasun.bm/main.asp?SectionID=9&SubSectionID=230&ArticleID=39532>
<http://www.midoceannews.bm/siftology.midoceannews/Article/article.jsp?sectionId=60&articleId=7d8b39130080230>

The book is available through the Natural History Book Service:

<http://www.nhbs.com/title.php?tefno=160918>

Brown Booby in Bermuda

<http://www.midoceannews.bm/siftology.midoceannews/Article/article.jsp?articleId=7d892bb3008000a§ionId=60>

Longtail on new money isn't 'our' species

<http://www.royalgazette.com/siftology.royalgazette/Article/article.jsp?sectionId=60&articleId=7d8be4330030005>

International Migratory Bird Day

<http://www.midoceannews.bm/siftology.midoceannews/Article/article.jsp?sectionId=60&articleId=7d8af8d30080215>