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## **SCO Conference in Cuba**

**Andrew Dobson**

Jeremy Madeiros, David Wingate and I attended the 13th Meeting of the Society of Caribbean Ornithology held in Topes de Collante, Cuba 15-22 July. The Society of Caribbean Ornithology promotes the scientific study and conservation of Caribbean birds and their habitats, and provides a link for ornithologists. Of about 140 delegates, 40 were Cubans with the remainder from the US and Canada, Central America and the Caribbean, and even some from Europe. More than 60 papers were presented at the SCO Meeting. Bird topics ranged from migration and density to conservation and management. Additionally there were workshops on: wetland management; GIS (Geographic Information Systems), seabirds; migration; and the provision of IBAs (Important Bird Areas).

The meeting provided the opportunity for ornithologists from many nations to network and exchange ideas. It was particularly useful for the Cuban ornithologists, most of whom do not have the opportunity to travel outside their own country. Speakers at the meeting included the authors of the recently published book 'Birds of Cuba', Orlando Garrido and Arturo Kirkconnell. Orlando is very much the father figure of Cuban Ornithology, 70 years old and recently retired. He is still very active in the birding world and on the tennis court. In his young days he played Davis Cup tennis for Cuba, appeared at Wimbledon on a number of occasions. As a keen tennis player myself, I was fascinated by the story he told me of how he stopped play in his match in the Australian Open in order to retrieve a bug that had landed on the court, put it into the tennis ball container so that he could later identify it! The newspaper headlines the following day described the unusual actions of a tennis player!

Cuba has much more to offer than the big cigars, old American cars, Spanish colonial architecture and Che Guevara souvenirs. Accounting for more than half of the land in the



Caribbean, Cuba is about 1250 km from east to west and mountains rise to nearly 2000 metres. The economy is only slowly recovering from the loss of Soviet support following the collapse of communism in Russia. Until the events of this year, tourism was providing much needed foreign revenue. Foreign birders have been attracted to Cuba for about 20 years. Although Bermuda can boast a bird list slightly greater than Cuba's 354 species, it only has two endemics species

compared to more than 20 in Cuba, of which 15 are globally threatened. Nearly 50 per cent of the plant species are endemic. There are many threats to Cuba's unique wildlife: habitat loss as a result of clearance for farming, urban development, deforestation and mining; introduced species including mongoose and deer; and trade in endangered species. Even so, Cuba has an outstanding record of creating 81 nationally important protected areas. Following the meeting a number of us joined a 4-day field trip to the Zapata Peninsula – one of the largest protected areas and one of the best birding spots in Cuba. We managed to see 15 of Cuba's 21 species of endemic birds in this one area alone: Blue-headed Quail-Dove, Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Screech-Owl, Cuban Pygmy-Owl, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Fernandina's Flicker,



Zapata Wren , Cuban Vireo, Yellow-headed Warbler, Zapata Sparrow, Red-shouldered Blackbird and Cuban Blackbird and the species we all hoped to see, the Bee Hummingbird, the world's smallest bird.

The delegates from Bermuda are particularly grateful for the financial support received from the International Division of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and from the Bermuda Government (for the Chief Conservation Officer).

## Summer Bird Report June to July 2001

Andrew Dobson

Shearwaters still pass by Bermuda in late June and early July. A pelagic trip on 23<sup>rd</sup> June counted 22 **Greater Shearwaters** and 4 **Cory's Shearwaters**. Of particular note was a single **Manx Shearwater**, thought to be the latest ever seasonal record. Non-resident

duck species are rarely recorded in the summer, but a **Ring-necked Duck** was still present at Spittal Pond on 8<sup>th</sup> June. There have been a number of records of **Sooty Tern** in recent years. This summer was no exception, with sightings off Nonsuch Island on 16<sup>th</sup> July and again from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> July. A **Solitary Sandpiper** was seen at North Pond on 5<sup>th</sup> July. Not only did this date mark the start of returning shorebirds in Bermuda – but this was also the earliest fall Solitary by seven days. A **Red Knot** at Cooper’s Island on 31<sup>st</sup> July was probably the only one recorded this year. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** is uncommon in June but one was present at Spittal Pond on 8<sup>th</sup> June. The highlight of the season was a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** at North Pond from 29<sup>th</sup> July to 6<sup>th</sup> August, only the fourth record for Bermuda and the first since 1979. Most unseasonal was an **American Woodcock** on 1<sup>st</sup> June at Dolly’s Bay, the first summer record for this species. A **Yellow Warbler** on 26<sup>th</sup> July at Nonsuch Island was the first returning fall warbler species.

Although we are now well into the fall season, a full round-up of fall species will occur in the next newsletter. Unusual birds so far this fall have included **Gull-billed Tern**, **Lark Sparrow** and **Brown-headed Cowbird** amongst more than 140 migrant species.

Many thanks to the following for the observations: Eric Amos, Andrew Dobson, Jeremy Madeiros, Leila Madeiros, David Wallace, Paul Watson and David Wingate.

## **Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan - A Community Approach to Conservation Planning**

**Annie Glasspool. Project Leader, Bermuda Biodiversity Project**

In early 2000, a new conservation initiative was launched with the aim of bringing the wider community together in helping to forge a common vision for biodiversity conservation in Bermuda. Born out of the widespread recognition by many residents that there is an urgent need for a coordinated, community-based plan for conserving our increasingly threatened biodiversity, the overall goal of the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) is to establish realistic conservation targets and prioritised, practical options for achieving them – essentially a step by step agenda for conservation.

But the development of the BSAP is much more than just the production of a ‘what-to-do’, and ‘how-to-do-it’ document. Rather it is a process, in which people from a wide range of different backgrounds, come together with the common goal of protecting our natural heritage. We are of course already fortunate in Bermuda to have a number of environmental organisations and individuals working hard to conserve our biodiversity. But, with the conflicts between community and environmental needs escalating in the face of the rapid pace of development, any conservation action plan must have the support of the wider community if it is to be successfully implemented. This means including all sectors of our community in the process, from businessmen to clergymen. Exploring ways to accommodate different priorities is one of the challenges we face, and open communication is essential for developing solutions. The BSAP is proving to be an

important forum for us to work together, to learn from each other and exchange ideas, and to build on the very strong foundations that already exist to protect our unique wildlife.

And, whilst our intent in launching this initiative is to satisfy a recognised need within Bermuda, the development of this BSAP will be a major step for Bermuda towards committing to the principles of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The UK has already signed the CBD on behalf of its Overseas Territories and has also expressed the intention of extending ratification directly to each Overseas Territory. Bermuda is assuming a leadership role as the first Overseas Territory to develop a BSAP and the outcome of this initiative is being closely followed.

The importance of this initiative is reflected in financial support from the U.K. Government's Darwin Initiative, which funds worldwide work to safeguard biological diversity. The Bermuda Government and the Bermuda Zoological Society also support the project.

## **ENVIRONMENT CHARTER FOR THE UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES**

The Bermuda Audubon Society is fully supportive of the Environment Charter for UK Overseas Territories and congratulates the Bermuda Government for recently becoming a signatory to the Charter.

### **Guiding principles for the UK government, for the government of Bermuda and for the people of Bermuda.**

- 1.) To recognise that all people need a healthy environment for their well-being and livelihoods and that all can help to conserve and sustain it.
- 2.) To use our natural resources wisely, being fair to present and future generations.
- 3.) To identify environmental opportunities, costs and risks in all policies and strategies.
- 4.) To seek expert advice and consult openly with interested parties on decisions affecting the environment.
- 5.) To aim for solutions which benefit both the environment and development.
- 6.) To contribute towards the protection and improvement of the global environment
- 7.) To safeguard and restore native species, habitats and landscape features, and control or eradicate invasive species.
- 8.) To encourage activities and technologies that benefit the environment.
- 9.) To control pollution, with the polluter paying for the prevention or remedies
- 10.) To study and celebrate our environmental heritage as a treasure to share with our children.

### **The government of the UK is committed to:**

- 1.) help build capacity to support and implement integrated environmental management which is consistent with Bermuda's own plans for sustainable development.

- 2.) assist Bermuda in reviewing and updating environmental legislation.
- 3.) facilitate the extension of the UK's ratification of Multilateral Environmental Agreements of benefit to Bermuda and which Bermuda has the capacity to implement.
- 4.) keep Bermuda informed regarding new developments in relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements and invite Bermuda to participate where appropriate in the UK's delegation to international environmental negotiations and conferences.
- 5.) help Bermuda to ensure it has the legislation, institutional capacity and mechanisms it needs to meet international obligations.
- 6.) promote better co-operation and the sharing of experiences and expertise between Bermuda, other Overseas Territories and small island states and communities which face similar environmental problems.
- 7.) use UK, regional and local expertise to give advice and improve knowledge of technical and scientific issues. This includes regular consultation with interested non-governmental organisations and networks.
- 8.) use the existing Environmental Fund for Overseas Territories, and promote access to other sources of public funding, for projects of lasting benefit to Bermuda's environment.
- 9.) Help Bermuda identify further funding partners for environmental projects, such as donors, the private sector or non-government organisations.
- 10.) Recognise the diversity of the challenges facing the Overseas Territories in very different socio-economic and geographical situations.
- 11.) Abide by the principles set out in the Rio declaration on environmental and development and the work towards meeting International Development Targets on the environment.

**The government of Bermuda will:**

- 1.) bring together government departments, representatives of local industry and commerce, environmental champions and other community representatives in a forum to formulate a detailed strategy for action.
- 2.) ensure the protection and restoration of key habitats, species and landscape features through legislation and appropriate management structures and mechanisms, including a protected areas policy, and attempt the control and eradication of invasive species.
- 3.) ensure that the environmental considerations are integrated within social and economic planning processes; promote sustainable patterns of production and consumption within the territory.
- 4.) undertake environmental impact assessments before approving major projects and while developing our growth management strategy.
- 5.) commit to open and consultative decision-making on developments and plans which may affect the environment; ensure that environmental impact assessments include consultation with stakeholders.
- 6.) implement effectively obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements already extended to Bermuda and work towards the extension of other relevant agreements.
- 7.) review the range, quality and availability of baseline data for natural resources and biodiversity.
- 8.) ensure that legislation and policies reflect the principle that the polluter should pay for prevention or remedies; establish effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
- 9.) encourage teaching within schools to promote the value of our local environment (natural and built) and to explain its role within the region and global environment.
- 10.) promote publications that spread awareness of the special features of the environment in Bermuda; promote within the territory the guiding principles set out above.

- 11.) abide by the principles set out in the Rio declaration on environment and development and work towards meeting International Development Targets on the environment.

## Society News

### **Eden Project**

The Audubon Society was represented at this year's Eden Project. Many people visited our display and were given advice on the installation of bluebird nest boxes and Longtail 'igloos'.

### **Fieldtrips**

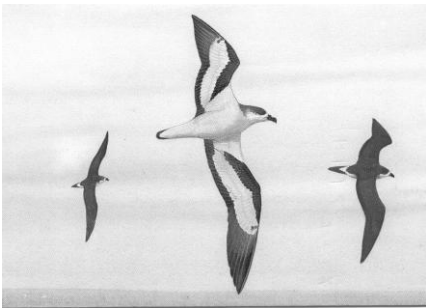
Please try to join us on the field trips we have arranged for November. Audubon member Michael Hayward is offering his boat 'Explorer' to the Society for a cruise around the Harbour Islands and Great Sound on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> November. On previous trips we have enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon on the water as well as observing some interesting wildlife.

The fieldtrip to Alton Hill provides members with the opportunity of walking along the coast at High Point in Southampton, a beautiful and secluded part of Bermuda. Please look at the future programme for full details.

### **Natural History Talk**

Former nature reserve warden and keen naturalist Ian Fisher is once again presenting an illustrated lecture to the Society. If you missed his 'Bardsey Island' talk last year, you missed a treat. On this occasion he is talking about his birding trip through California and Oregon. Mark your diary now for Ian's illustrated talk – Tuesday 6th Nov at Horticultural Hall 7.30 pm.

## **Bermuda Audubon Society – Special Anniversary Card**



Sales of the special card have gone so well that the society would like to print some more if there are sufficient orders. If you were too late to order last time or would like more cards – please order by Fri 9<sup>th</sup> November.

The Society wishes to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the re-discovery of the Cahow (Bermuda Petrel) with a special card. The card features three Cahows in flight (see black-and-white illustration) part of an original painting by British artist Peter Hayman. Permission for use of the painting has kindly been given by Dr. David Saul, a former President of the Audubon Society.

The card is in colour and measures 6 x 4 ins. It is blank inside so that it may be used for any occasion. It is most appropriate for use as a Christmas card. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fishermen in St. David's referred to a strange bird they heard over the ocean at night in December as the "Christmas Bird". Unknown to them, this was undoubtedly the mating calls of the Cahow.

The cards will be sold in packs of 10 for \$10.00 per pack. If you would like to order one or more packs, please complete the order form below and return it with your cheque or cash.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TEL. NO. \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF PACKS \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_  
(Cheques payable to the Bermuda Audubon Society)

Mail to: Bermuda Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1328, Hamilton HM FX

### **Future Events** - For information on any of the events: tel. 292-1920

- **Sunday 4 November**  
Boat trip on Michael Hayward's 'Explorer'.  
Meet at Albouy's Point at 12.00 noon. Return 4.00 pm  
\$20 adults. \$10 children. Reservations : tel. 292-1920
- **Tuesday 6 November**  
Illustrated talk on California and Oregon by Ian Fisher  
Horticultural Hall, Botanical Gardens 7.30 pm
- **Sunday 25 November**  
Fieldtrip – Sea Swept Farm, Alton Hill, High Point  
(Southampton)  
Meet on Middle Road at the junction of South Road and  
Middle Road
- **Christmas Bird Count**  
Date to be announced

### **Executive Committee 2001-2002**

The following executive committee was formed at the society's Annual General Meeting:

President Andrew Dobson  
Vice-president David Wingate  
Treasurer Ted Cassidy  
Secretary Penny Hill  
Officers: Richard Amos  
Jennifer Gray  
Peter Holmes  
David O'Neill

Newsletter Andrew Dobson

Membership renewals were due in June. Please check the address label to see if your membership has expired or email [info@audubon.bm](mailto:info@audubon.bm)

<b>Membership Application/Renewal</b>	
Title (Mr. Mrs. etc) _____	Name: _____
Address: _____ _____	
_____	Post code: _____
Tel. no. (H) _____	(W) _____
Email: _____	
Please tick	
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$5
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$30 (two or more persons)
<input type="checkbox"/> Life	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Donation	_____ (Cheques payable to "Bermuda Audubon Society") P.O.Box HM1328 Hamilton, HMFx
Date of application: _____	