



Bermuda Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER

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Troubled Waters

Bruce Pearson is a highly acclaimed bird artist, author and naturalist. He first voyaged to the Southern Ocean over 35 years ago to study albatrosses and other seabirds. He recently returned to the region, working in a creative partnership with BirdLife International. The aim of the Troubled Waters partnership has been to link art and conservation to document a tragedy that has unfolded over decades out of sight on the open ocean where many hundreds of thousands of seabirds, albatrosses especially, have been snared accidentally by long-line fishing vessels. The project offered insights into our understanding of the seabirds' lives and the ocean environment, and inspire new engagement and identification with an extraordinarily urgent conservation crisis.

On learning that Bruce would be visiting friends in Bermuda, the Audubon Society jumped at the opportunity of inviting Bruce to give a public lecture. His visit also enables Bruce to engage with the Cahow and its conservation story with an exciting opportunity to develop new aspects of the Troubled Waters project.

The illustrated lecture will take place on Monday 10th November, 7:30 pm at BUEI. If you are an Audubon or BUEI member, remember to get the reduced ticket price.



BUEI & The Bermuda Audubon Society present:

TROUBLED WATERS

Trailing the albatross and cahow, an artist's journey

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10TH, 2014

Join us for an evening with world-renowned bird artist, author and naturalist, Bruce Pearson. Bruce first voyaged to the Southern Ocean over 35 years ago to study albatrosses and other seabirds, working in a creative partnership with BirdLife International. Hear about his recent return to the Southern Ocean, the aim of the *Troubled Waters* partnership and how Bruce's visit to Bermuda to engage with the cahow and its conservation story is an exciting opportunity to develop new aspects of the *Troubled Waters* project.

5:00-6:30pm: Sushi Happy Hour at Harbourfront
(specially priced drinks and sushi)

6pm: Harbourfront opens for dinner

7:30pm: Lecture starts, BUEI Auditorium

Members: \$20; Non-members: \$25.

Tickets available by calling **294-0204**
or visiting BUEI's Oceans Gift Shop.

Ticket holders are entitled to **10% off** dinner at the Harbourfront (food only) before or after the lecture. Please call **295-4207** for reservations and be sure to mention the lecture. Cannot be combined with any other special offers.

BRUCE PEARSON



For the past 20 years, Bruce Pearson's work has largely involved private commissions from individuals, museums and institutions; and by invitation from the Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF). Bruce has participated in international art events and exhibitions in USA, France, Holland, Spain, Poland, Ecuador and Peru. In the UK he has contributed work to a number of group exhibitions and has undertaken a range of solo commercial gallery shows. Prior to this, a lot of Bruce's work was largely as a freelance illustrator on a wide range of natural history books, magazines and journals, including writing and illustrating *An Artist on Migration* – one chapter of which was filmed and shown on BBC2 television. Other illustrations were for *Rare Mammals of the World*

and the *Gem Guide to Zoo Animals*. Throughout that time Bruce continued to exhibit larger fine art works when opportunities arose.



The effects of Fay and Gonzalo on Nonsuch Island

Jeremy Madeiros

I am happy to report that the coastal damage and erosion to the Castle Harbour Islands from the storms was far less than I feared from such a powerful hurricane(s). Very little in the way of cliff falls and losing large chunks of the islands, such as happened in *Fabian* (2003) and *Igor* (2010), mainly just minor rock flaking and washing away of loose material collapsed during the previous storms. The south beach on Nonsuch survived, although smaller in size, and it appears the lush dune vegetation helped greatly in preventing further erosion. North beach was washed away to bedrock but is already rebuilding. All buildings were without major damage, although the fresh water pond bird hide was pretty well blown apart. Quite a few of the larger live cedars on Nonsuch were uprooted, including the huge one behind the octagon building, but if they are not obstructing paths we can expect most of them to continue growing at an inclined angle. Some of the smaller ones will be straightened and staked. It seems as though the wet soil, softened from this summer's exceptionally wet conditions, followed by two hurricanes in quick succession, blowing from different directions (a very rare combination of conditions) loosened the roots or strained the trunks of these trees enough to cause the unusually high numbers of both cedars, coconut and other palms (species that are normally very hurricane-resistant) to uproot or snap off. Bay Grape trees suffered pretty badly, with several large ones either uprooted or unbranched. The endemic Olivewoods, (which are surely the most hurricane-resistant tree on Bermuda) are completely unaffected and the Palmetto palms, although tattered, are in good shape, with not a single large one uprooted or broken. The Cahow colony on Nonsuch was completely unaffected and is ready for the arrival of our national bird for their next breeding season.

I was able to land on and assess all four of the smaller Cahow nesting islets, some of which had effects from the hurricane. Two of the lower-lying islets obviously had waves breaking right over them, and on one, 8 of the heavy concrete nest lids were lifted off, but most stayed on the islands and only three were washed overboard. These are being covered up temporarily until we can dive and recover them. On another island, five of the Cahow nest lids were washed off, but all have now been replaced and any blocked entrances opened up. On the other two higher islets, despite a small amount of erosion, all burrows were relatively undamaged, and although some of the nest entrances were blocked by rocks and debris, they have all been opened up and cleared of debris and are open for business. Therefore, out of a total of 108 active nests, only 3 nest burrows have temporary effects which will be easily fixed. As of October 21st, I had recorded single Cahows and pairs back in 10 nests among all the breeding islands, and was able to remove and check band numbers on five of them. One bird (a beautiful heavy robust male Cahow) looked as if it rode out the hurricane in its burrow, with waves washing right into the entrance. This bird seemed unfazed by the experience, but if this hurricane had hit just a week or two later, it may have caught a significant number of breeding adults in their burrows when in some cases they would have been submerged by the waves. The timing was, as they say, just too close for comfort but the birds seem to have come through again very well and, barring any late storms things overall look very good for the nesting season.

Blue Turtle Award 2013

The 2013 winner of JNCC's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Nature Conservation Award goes to Jeremy Madeiros (Press release from JNCC)



Jeremy Madeiros has worked in nature conservation in Bermuda for the last 23 years demonstrating long-term commitment to all aspects of the islands' environment. But it is his dedication over the last 14 years in helping conserve one of the world's most endangered seabirds which has seen him be the worthy winner of JNCC's Blue Turtle Award for 2013. The Bermuda Petrel, once abundant throughout the archipelago, was thought extinct for over three centuries. The eerie night cries of the seabird, commonly known as the Cahow, stopped early seafarers from settling on the islands which they thought were inhabited by devils. The dramatic rediscovery of 18 nesting pairs in 1951 made the

Cahow a 'Lazarus species' - a species found to be alive after having been considered extinct.

Jeremy began the visionary Cahow Translocation Project in 2004 after recognising that the greatest threat to this nocturnal ground-nesting bird was erosion and storm damage at their nesting sites. From 2004-2008, as terrestrial conservation officer for the Bermuda Department of Conservation Services, he translocated 102 near-fledged chicks from their original nests to artificial burrows on Nonsuch Island Nature Reserve, located off the south-east coast of Bermuda. Jeremy spent many nights away from his family, working in very difficult conditions, to hand-feed the chicks until they were ready to fledge. This programme has enabled the breeding population to begin a slow but accelerating increase from 18 pairs producing eight chicks annually to a new record number last year of 105 breeding pairs producing 53 successfully fledged chicks. In 2013, following on from the success of this project, Jeremy began a second four-year Translocation project to establish another colony on Nonsuch Island. The Cahow is a slow breeder, with the females only laying one egg per season, and spends most of its adult life out on the open seas feeding on small fish, shrimps and squid. At three to five years old birds return to their former nesting place and begin breeding, mating for life.

On hearing of his win Jeremy said: *"I am very surprised and honoured to have received this award, which I would like to accept on behalf of all of my fellow researchers, workers and volunteers, who have provided assistance and support for this challenging and demanding project. Special thanks to Nicholas Carlile and David Priddell of the New South Wales Department of the Environment and Climate Change, for special inspiration, training and instruction, without which the translocation program could not have taken place. It is a privilege to work with such a fascinating species and symbol of Bermuda, thought to be extinct for so long, but which has proven to be such a tough survivor, providing hope for other endangered species around the world."*

JNCC's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Programme Manager Tony Weighell, one of the Award's judges, said: *"Jeremy has shown outstanding personal commitment to the conservation of the Bermuda Petrel. The award recognises not only his commitment but the undoubted support of friends and family which made it possible for him to spend many nights working under difficult conditions hand feeding chicks."*

Nonsuch Natural History Camp 2014

Ruskin Cave (winner of the Mervyn White memorial shield)

I didn't know the Nonsuch Island camp existed until my biology teacher, Mrs. Walker, told me that I ought to be a part of the programme and I am so glad that she did. At the start of the week it was a bit weird meeting new people and getting to adjust to staying with people you've never met before but by the end of the week it felt like we were all a part of one big family, counsellors included. It was amazing how a group of nine complete strangers transformed into a group of best friends with bonds that will last a lifetime. Many of the other campers found it a struggle to be away from their phones, internet and computers but by the end of the camp they barely missed them. My original thoughts were that the camp would be 8 days of intense reports and work but you barely notice the work as you're surrounded by friends that are willing to help out. While growing up, I have always been interested in Bermuda's marine life but the camp really opens up your mind to all the biodiversity Bermuda has in the surrounding oceans and rocky coast to the forest landscape and marshes. Throughout the week we also had the privilege to receive lectures from various specialists about their own field of work from the turtle project and Sargasso Sea with Mrs. Jenifer Grey to Bermuda's growing diversity of migrating birds with Mr. Andrew Dobson and every one of them were interesting and memorable in their own way. I am so glad that I



was able to be a part of this fantastic programme, it has really opened my eyes to all of Bermuda's ecosystems and how amazing Bermuda truly is. Due to the experiences I have had I now know for sure that I want to study marine biology and also be a part of the Nonsuch Island natural history course in the future to help inspire other students. I recommend any interested student to take part in this camp.

Saltus School student Ruskin Cave, 16 receives his award from Audubon president Andrew Dobson and camp director Camilla Stringer. The camp was run by Bermuda Audubon Society and Bermuda Zoological Society. Funding is provided

by Catlin Insurance, PartnerRe and The Garden Club of Bermuda, offering students aged 15 to 18 an opportunity for hands-on learning about natural history from local experts.

Bird Report June to Oct 2014

Andrew Dobson

June to July 2014 - Highlights in this period included: a flock of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, the second confirmed record of Wilson's Plover since the 1960s and another record year for the Cahow.



Thirteen **Black-bellied Whistling Duck** (photo above) were discovered on Port Royal GC 7-12 June (AD). There had only been one previous record of this species in Bermuda in 2008. A **Canada Goose** summered at Ocean View GC 29 June-4 Oct (AD). Two **Wood Ducks** spent the summer in Bermuda at various locations (AD). The final translocated **Cahow** chick fledged from Nonsuch Is. 9 Jul. JM reports a record number of both breeding pairs of Cahows (108) and successfully fledging chicks this season (59). A **Wilson's Plover** (photo above) was at Cooper's Point 1-20 June (AD), the second confirmed sighting since the 1960s. There was also a **Red Knot** at Cooper's Is 1 June (AD, TW). A **Black Tern** was in Castle Harbour 24 Aug (JM).

August to October – Highlights include very early Horned Grebes, a record number of Least Terns and a rarely seen Northern Rough-winged Swallow.

A **Ruddy Duck** was seen on Tucker's Point GC 30 Sept (PW). Two **Horned Grebes** were seen at Ferry Reach 29 Oct (J&JP, PW). Ten **Great Blue Herons** were seen on the Castle Harbour Islands 25 Oct (JM) with a further eleven at Cross Bay 29 Oct (CB). A **Glossy Ibis** was at Pitman's Pond to 23 Aug-5 Oct (AD). An adult **Purple Gallinule** was at Pitman's Pond 21 Aug (AD). A **Western Sandpiper** was at Jubilee Road 6-7 Sept (DBW). Ten **Least Terns** were in Mangrove Bay 29 Aug (WF, DBW) increasing to 16 on 30 Aug (AD, PW) with another 10 at the Airport 1 Sept (AD). **Common Nighthawks** have been very scarce this year with single sightings over Mid-Ocean 29 Aug (PA) and Warwick 1 Sept (AD). A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** showed well at Ferry Point Park 20 Sept. (AD, PW). A single **Great Crested Flycatcher** was seen at Ferry Point Park 7 Oct and 11 Oct (PW). A single **Blue-headed Vireo** was in Jenningsland 26 Oct (JM) and the only **Warbling Vireo** was on Riddell's Bay GC 9 Sept (AD) while single Philadelphia Vireos were seen at Ferry Point Park 19 Oct (PW) and on Hinson's Is. 23 Oct (E&JH). A **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** was a surprise at Spittal Pond 19 Oct (AD). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Ferry Point Park 30 Oct (AD, PW). A **Swainson's Thrush** was seen at Cemetery Hill 6 Oct (PW). An **American Robin** was at BIOS on 30 Oct (AD). Thirty-two species of warbler had been recorded this season to the end of October. A **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Devonshire Marsh 3 Aug (BL) was the first warbler of the fall. A single **Swainson's Warbler** was at Tudor Hill 5 Oct (AD, DBW). The first of at least 4 **Golden-winged Warbler** sightings was made at Ferry Point 19 Sept (PW). **Magnolia Warblers** (see photo) were one of the more commonly recorded species this year. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was on Gwelly Lane 27 Oct (WF). A **White-throated Sparrow** at Ferry Point 19 Sept (PW) was the earliest ever recorded. Possibly the same bird was seen there 19 Oct (PW). Single **Dickcissel** were seen at in Southampton 19 Sept (AD) and St. Georges GC 19 Oct (AD, PW). An **Orchard Oriole** was seen on St. Georges GC 24 Sept (PW).



Observers: Peter Adhemar, Chris Burville, Andrew Dobson, Wendy Frith, Erich and Janice Hetzel, Jeremy Madeiros, Jayden & Julia Parker, Tim White, Paul Watson, David Wingate. Photos: Andrew Dobson.

A Bluebird Diary

Rosemary and David Davis

Eastern Bluebirds (Photo Fiona Dobson)



May 11th - there was much excitement as we noticed a pair of bluebirds swooping about our garden in Warwick. They were investigating our nesting box, going in and out of it and looking around the garden at the same time, chattering nonstop to each other. We observed them a lot over the weekend. Our living room window is only about 7 yards away from the nesting box and we then noticed they were coming to our windows and bumping the glass lightly with body and beak. We had a glass ornament of a bluebird hanging in the window so removed it in case it was really bothering them. They eventually seemed to settle down and must have decided that their reflections in the window panes were not a threat to them. It was unbelievable to see the male bluebird attack a sparrow in mid-air and wrestle it to the ground (wish we had a camera ready then). To our knowledge sparrows have not bothered them since. Kiskadees like to sit on the roof of the box and the bluebirds will only tolerate their presence for so long before chasing them off.

May 19th - we observed the nest building process which seemed to go on for a long time. It was amusing to see the female trying to go through the entrance with something in her beak which was wider than the hole and she had to turn sideways to get it inside. The male on a couple of occasions came out of the nest with something in his beak as much as to tell his wife he didn't want it in their house.

May 22nd/23rd - we found 2 eggs had been laid and in the next few days a total of 4 eggs were in the nest. My husband gently whistles to Mrs. Bluebird and she pops her head out and flies out, giving us permission to have a peek inside.

June 8th - the birds started coming to the windows again in agitation. We taped up some computer paper to the window and it was flapping about so they stopped worrying about it. We think because their eggs were getting ready to hatch that they were over anxious. There are four cute babies now. We can see the nesting box from three locations, our favourite being on our patio where we sit with our binoculars and in the evening with a glass of wine. We had another peek at the babies yesterday and they look very content and are definitely putting weight on. The parents are feeding the little ones a lot and now we will be marking the days off anticipating the fledglings. We dared to take a peek one day and my impression was of blue-grey feathers hanging over the side of the nest and could only see one bird.

June 23rd - the feeding regime is in full operation. We can hear the chicks from where we sit on the patio. As soon as one of the parents goes to feed them the chorus of chirping is quite loud, and then subsides again.

June 25th - my calculations brought me to today as the possible fledging. We needed to be out of the house for only an hour and a half today and would you believe in that time we missed the semi-final. The real finale is today and we can be thrilled that there are four young bluebirds finding their wings in our garden with the parents ever watchful.

Society News – more events to celebrate 60 years

Secondary Schools Bermuda Bird Art Competition



An art competition featuring Bermuda birds and open to all Middle and Senior School students culminated in an exhibition in the Bermuda Society of Arts Edinburgh Gallery 6-24 June. The Bermuda Audubon Society had invited students to submit original artwork or photographs featuring Bermuda birds, particularly the island's native and endemic species, in order to compete for prizes up to \$200. Bermuda Audubon Society President Andrew Dobson said, "This year is a rather special year for us; it's our 60th anniversary. We've got all sorts of events during the year, including this exhibition – bird art

that's been done by middle, lower secondary, and upper secondary students. There's a fabulous array of art; we have some sculptures, some drawings, some paintings, and photography."

60th Anniversary Dinner

The Bermuda Audubon Society celebrated its 60th anniversary on June 15th with a dinner at Beau Rivage and special lecture by Dr Nigel Collar of BirdLife International (photo right). He gave a broad-ranging talk that touched on the impact of birds in everything from Renaissance art to the modern environmental movement. Dr Collar, the principal author on HBW/BirdLife, an illustrated checklist of the birds of the world, spoke to about 70 people who attended the celebratory dinner, including Governor and Audubon Society patron George Fergusson.



Bluebird Nest box auction

It was an evening to remember at the Bermuda Society of Arts on June 20th. Andrew Dobson auctioned 50 bluebird nest boxes supplied by the Audubon Society. These were transformed by local artists including Will Collieson's 'Banan-O-Rama' (photo left).

World Shorebirds Day

Twenty-five members of the Bermuda Audubon Society took part in World Shorebirds Day on 6th September. As well as giving members the opportunity to get to know about the migrant shorebirds that are

passing through Bermuda, it was also an opportunity to raise global public awareness about the conservation of, and research about, shorebirds. About half of the world's shorebird populations are in decline, and the rate of habitat loss is worse than ever before. Healthy populations of shorebirds mean healthy wetlands, something that thousands of human lives depend upon. Members gathered early in the morning at the East End dairy and were introduced to a variety of plovers and sandpipers feeding in the mud. More than 250 shorebirds of 17 species were recorded at various sites around the island including beaches, dairies, golf courses, nature reserves and Devonshire Marsh. Audubon President Andrew Dobson said "World Shorebird Day has given people the opportunity to marvel about these great global navigators. Of particular note we saw 18 American Golden-Plovers, a large shorebird which makes one of the longest migratory journeys of any shorebird. It breeds on the high Arctic tundra of Alaska and Canada and winters in the grasslands of central and southern South America."



Paget Island Bird Camp

The annual bird camp took place on Paget Island 10-12 October to coincide with International Migratory Bird Day. Despite the ravages of Tropical Storm Fay which battered the island on Saturday night and Sunday morning we still managed to do some birding. Horizontal rain and sea spray with hurricane force gusts necessitated a lengthy cooked breakfast before the winds died down and we birded on the island where the trees had been somewhat re-arranged! Blackpoll Warblers were the most abundant of 18 warbler species recorded.

Events – for your diary

Troubled Waters lecture at BUEI auditorium – Monday 10 November 7:30 pm
Audubon and BUEI members \$20, non-members \$25

Cahow Field Trips in November 2014

Sat 8th, Sun 9th, Tue 11th (Public Holiday), Sat 15th, Sun 16th, Sat 22nd, Sun 23rd

- Do you want to see the Cahow (Bermuda Petrel) on the open ocean?
- The birds gather a couple of miles off-shore prior to coming into their burrows under cover of darkness.
- The best place to experience this amazing opportunity is off Cooper's Point in the late afternoon.
- Why November? Pairs of Cahows are performing courting displays and laying claim to their nesting burrows.

In a joint venture between the Bermuda Audubon Society and the Bermuda Zoological Society, a maximum of 24 persons will board the 'Endurance'.

Departure: 2pm Aquarium Dock. Return: 6.30pm

Cost: \$50 per person which will include a donation to the Cahow Recovery Programme

To make a reservation, email info@audubon.bm