



Bermuda Audubon Society

# NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017

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## Western Tanager – first photographic record – Ian Fisher



Thursday 26th October 2017 dawned bright but windy. Paul Watson & I were out birding as usual and by mid-afternoon we had reached Ferry Point Park. After putting up a couple of mist nets on the sheltered north side, we took a walk out to the point. Just past the magazine ruin, we flushed a tanager which conveniently sat up, side on, in a small casuarina. We both immediately latched onto the two whitish wing bars and Paul proclaimed, “It’s a Western!” The bird then sat front on whilst I took a few photographs, then frustratingly flew off. Paul went to check the nets whilst I tracked the bird down to secure the all-important side on photos. I re-found the bird, but it didn’t allow as close an approach as that first sighting, but I did manage a few side on photos detailing the diagnostic wing-bars.

Unfortunately, the bird wasn’t seen again that day, but we managed to see it again in the same general area on the evening of 29th. The combination of two whitish wing-bars, pale tertial edgings and the greyish mantle make the identification relatively straightforward and our bird was similar to the ‘pale’ adult female depicted in Sibley: *The North American Bird Guide*. This is the second record for Bermuda, the first was also seen at Ferry Point Park by David Wingate on 21st October 2006.

# White-tailed Tropicbird Breeding Survey 2017

Jeremy Madeiros, Senior Terrestrial Conservation Officer,  
Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources

The White-tailed Tropicbird (Longtail) *Phaethon lepturus catsbyii* is the island's only common nesting seabird, and is much admired as Bermuda's harbinger of spring. One of three tropicbird species found around the world, various races of WTT are found in the tropical regions of the Pacific, Indian and South Atlantic Oceans, in addition to the North Atlantic. Bermuda supports over 50% of the *catsbyii* race of the species, with up to 3500 breeding pairs of tropicbirds nesting in natural cavities and crevices in the extensive coastal cliffs in many locations scattered around the island. Bermuda's tropicbird population is therefore internationally important, and is also the most northerly breeding population in existence. To better understand the status and health of Bermuda's tropicbird population, a survey of almost 300 nest sites at ten locations around the island has been carried out every spring and summer since 2006 by the terrestrial conservation division. This survey looks at breeding success rates at both managed and unmanaged sites and chick growth rates. Identification bands have been fitted to over 1200 tropicbird chicks as well as nearly 300 adult birds. Breeding success was compared between artificial "igloo" nests developed by the Bermuda Audubon Society, and natural nest sites. The survey, over an 11-year period, has confirmed consistently higher breeding success in the artificial nests than in natural sites, underlining the value of installing these to supplement the natural sites. This strategy appears to be successful, as the highest number of successfully fledging chicks since the survey began was recorded in 2017.



Fig. 1 Survey locations	Nests	Fledged chicks
Long Rock	20	16
Inner Pear Rock (Outer)	21	12
Inner Pear Rock (Inner)	13	7
Green Island	11	5
Nonsuch Island	89	63
North Cock Rock	4	3
Horn Rock	43	25
Southampton Island	41	24
Bay Island (Bailey's Bay)	25	13
Shelly Bay West Coastline	24	14

Fig. 2 Nesting results	
Tropicbird nests surveyed	291
Natural nest sites surveyed	196
Artificial nest sites surveyed	95
Successfully fledged chicks (all nests)	182
Chicks fledged from natural nest sites	119
Chicks fledged from artificial nest sites	63
Total breeding success rate (2017)	62.5%
Breeding success of natural nest sites	60.7%
Breeding success of artificial nest sites	66.3%



Photos Andrew Dobson  
Top: Artificial igloo nest  
Centre: Adult tropicbird in igloo  
Bottom: Tropicbird chick in igloo

## Bird Report August to November 2017

Andrew Dobson

Highlights included the first photographic record of Western Tanager, Bermuda's third Black-capped Petrel, a Rusty Blackbird and an exceptional fallout of Eastern Wood-Pewees.



A **Brant** (photo left, Andrew Dobson) and immature **Common Merganser** were both discovered on Port Royal GC 17-25 Nov (AD). A record 125 **Cahow** nests were confirmed in Oct/Nov at the start of the Cahow breeding season (JM). A **Black-capped Petrel** was photographed 5 miles southwest of Bermuda 2 Nov (KW). Unusual in the fall, a **Cory's Shearwater** was seen off St. David's Head 13 Nov (DBW, TW). A **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** was seen south of Cooper's Point 16 Nov (PF, KS). A **Magnificent Frigatebird** was seen off Pompano 22 Sep (AJ). An adult **Masked**

**Booby** was photographed off Cooper's Point 17 Nov (JG). An adult **Brown Booby** was photographed off Fort St. Catherine 19 Nov (KS). An adult **White Ibis** was at Spittal Pond 11-16 Sep (EH). A **Piping Plover** was at Cooper's Is. 8-15 Sep (FD). A **Ruff** was at Jubilee Road 28 Oct-2 Nov (IF, PW). A **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Clearwater 28 Aug-2 Sep (PW). A probable **Sabine's Gull** was seen during a pelagic trip about 2 miles off St. David's Head 15 Nov (BF). A **Black-headed Gull** was present at various locations 11-23 Nov (AD). A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was seen at North Pond 21 Nov (DBW). A **Northern Flicker** was on Paget Is. 14-15 Oct (AD, PW). Over 30 **Eastern Wood-Pewees** were recorded at various locations 14 Oct-6 Nov for the highest fallout of this species recorded in Bermuda (AD). Thirty-three species of wood warbler were recorded during the period including a Canada Warbler banded at Ferry Point 16 Sep (PW) and single **Swainson's Warblers** at Shelly Bay Marsh 22 Oct (NM) and one banded on Paget Is. 14 Oct (PW). Above average numbers of **Bay-Breasted Warblers** (25+) and **Golden-winged Warblers** (8) were reported from various locations Sep 3-Nov 6 (AD, EH, DBW, PW). Bermuda's second record of **Western Tanager** was photographed at Ferry Point Park 26-29 Oct (IF, PW). This coincided with a notable arrival of **Scarlet** and **Summer Tanagers** Oct 20-Nov 6 (AD). A **Lark Sparrow** was photographed at Clearwater 29 Aug (below left, Erich Hetzel). A **Swamp Sparrow** was seen on St. Georges GC 5 Oct (PW). Single **Clay-coloured Sparrows** were seen at Riddell's Bay GC 24-25 Oct (IF, PW) and Ferry Point 2-3 Nov (PW). An adult **White-crowned Sparrow** was a good find at Ferry Point Park 6-7 Oct (PW). A **Rusty Blackbird** (only the second record since 1975) was on Mid-Ocean GC 14-21 Nov (GB) (below right, Andrew Dobson)



Observers: Geoff Bell, Andrew Dobson, Fiona Dobson, Erich Hetzel, Averill Jones, Bob Flood, Peter Flood, Jay Gilliam, Jeremy Madeiros, Neal Morris, Kate Sutherland, Paul Watson, Tim White, David Wingate, Kevin Winter.

# Society News

## Membership

Renew your membership now before the rates go up. See details at <http://audubon.bm/join>  
Starting on January 1, 2018 our new rates will be:

Life Membership	\$750.00 (\$500)
Adult	25.00 (\$20)
Family	40.00 (\$30)
Student	5.00 (\$5)

We hope that you still find these rates reasonable and we appreciate your continued support. Your membership allows us to continue our efforts at bird conservation, education, habitat preservation and environmental advocacy as we fulfill our mission “to conserve Bermuda’s special bird life and habitats for the benefit of all.”

Some highlights of our membership year include:

- Summer Harbour Cruise
- Spittal Pond Field Trip
- Paget Island Bird Camp
- Cahow Watching Boat Trips
- Cooper’s Island Nature Walk
- Bluebird Box Building Workshop
- Nonsuch Island Field Trip

## Ideal for Christmas



Double-sided bird ID cards. \$5 per card.  
Available in local stores.  
Audubon Society hats \$25 (\$20 members). Email [info@audubon.bm](mailto:info@audubon.bm)

## Future Events

**Saturday 2 December** - Working Party at ABS Reserve in Paget. 9-11 am  
**Saturday 30 December** – Christmas Bird Count  
Contact [info@Audubon.bm](mailto:info@Audubon.bm) for further details about either event