



Bermuda Audubon Society NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX

Vol.2 No.1

SPRING 1991

New to Bermuda

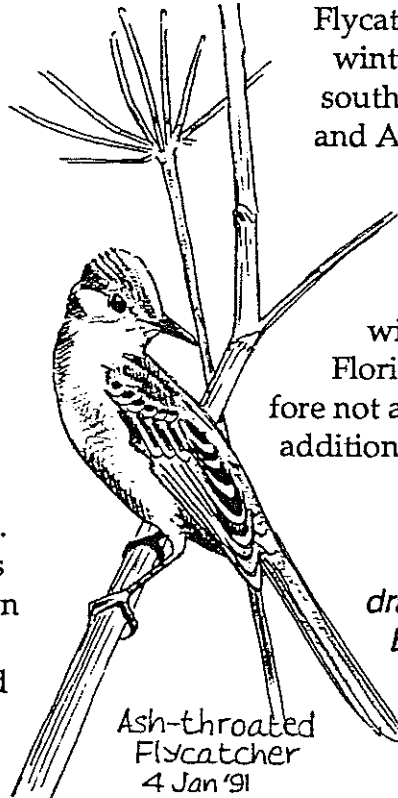
Ash-throated Flycatcher

On December 26th, 1990, whilst riding my gallant steed down Tribe Road #7 in Warwick heading for the South Shore, I spotted a bird sitting on a fence by Farmers Field.

I recognized it as a flycatcher and stopped to watch it for a while before riding on. The next day I remembered to tell my father about the bird and after looking at several of his field guides, I decided the bird was an Ash-throated Flycatcher. My father promptly told me this was unlikely as this flycatcher is a western species in North America and it had never been recorded in Bermuda and he cross-examined me for some while about the description.

He then set out to find it for himself (not trusting my judgement) and after several days he decided that I was correct and it was an Ash-throated Flycatcher - a new record for Bermuda!

Stacey J. Amos, Age 16



Ash-throated
Flycatcher
4 Jan '91

(The Ash-throated Flycatcher normally winters in extreme southern California and Arizona, southwards to Central America.

It is a casual winter visitor to Florida, and therefore not an unexpected addition to Bermuda's bird list.)

*drawing by
Eric Amos*

IDENTIFICATION:

White (ash) throat
Brown crest to head
Pale yellow underparts
Grey-brown upperparts
Chestnut colouring in wing and tail

Society News

A big welcome to those members who have joined us in 1991.

Since you received our last newsletter, the Society has been busy negotiating acquisitions to our reserves and organising a talk and field trip for its members.

Despite very windy conditions, twenty-five members enjoyed a field trip to Abbot's Cliff in January. We were greeted not only by David Wingate, but also by an osprey circling overhead! Dr. Wingate gave a brief history of the area and then showed us the various plant communities. The more intrepid members scrambled through dense undergrowth down the steep slope to the foot of Abbot's Cliff and were somewhat surprised to discover a beach of mussel shells - the remains of traditional mussel fishery which is still carried out in Harrington Sound.


Andrew Dobson's talk on Costa Rica attracted an audience of sixty people, and raised some welcome funds for the Society.

The committee has been busy completing the purchase of our latest reserve between Jubilee Road and Vesey Street. An exciting possibility is the acquisition of another reserve at Shelly Bay. More of this news in the next newsletter.

Forthcoming plans include a talk by Dr. Kathleen Blanchard on April 24th (see article), our A.G.M. on June 12th, and a field trip and barbecue at Nonsuch Island on July 21st. Hope to see you there!

Andrew Dobson

Wildlife Special
Gulf of St. Lawrence
Dr. Kathleen Blanchard
April 24
Horticultural Hall
Admission \$5 (students \$2.50)



The Bermuda Audubon Society is pleased to present an illustrated public lecture by Dr. Kathleen Blanchard of the Atlantic Center for the Environment. The focus of the talk will be the threatened wildlife of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Canada. Dr. Blanchard has directed a project in this region which earned international acclaim and national conservation awards. Over ten years of research findings will be examined and we will learn how the problem of seabird conservation explodes into an array of inter-connecting issues from the perspectives of geography, anthropology, law and education.

The problem looks at illegal harvest by local people who are steeped in tradition and a dependency on their environment. Practical solutions involve looking at culture and economy in fishing villages, conservation and resource management, and creative educational techniques. We will learn how people respond to a rapidly changing society that forces them to make critical choices about their culture and environment.

Virginia DeSilva

Don't miss this rare opportunity!

Field Trip 'NONSUCH ISLAND July 21

Guided tours of the island

Adults \$12 Children \$8
(includes return boat trip and barbecue)

Vegetarian meal available on request

**Reserve your tickets by phoning
2 9 3 - 7 3 9 4**

Boat departs Tuckers Town Dock
9.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m.

Return trips from Nonsuch Island
1 p.m. and 4 p.m. onwards

Bermuda Audubon Society

HOTLINE 293 - 7394

to report any
environmental
problems
especially in
relation to
birds.

Buy a subscription for a friend

Name _____

Address _____

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Adult \$5.00 Life \$100

Student \$2.50 Patron \$250

(Cheques payable to Bermuda Audubon Society)

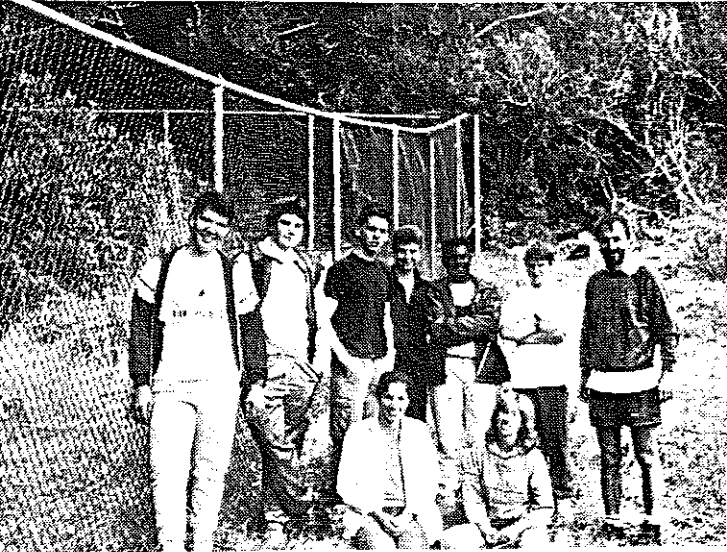
Existing member New member

Please return to: **The Bermuda Audubon Society**
P.O. Box HM 1328,
Hamilton HM FX

Sears Cave Reserve

Working Party - Saturday, May 4th, 9 a.m.

Help us complete the fencing around Sears Cave - a security measure to guard against future misuse, especially trash dumping



Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme members from Northlands School. Left to right: Emanuel Vaiadao, Brian Robinson, Herbie Alves, Graham Soares, Jevon Symons, Andrew Barber, with Audubon Secretary Andrew Dobson. Seated: Committee member Virginia DeSilva and Katrina Dobson.



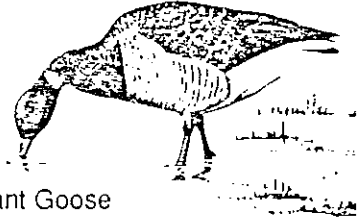
Left to right: Andrew Barber, Katrina Dobson, Herbie Alves and Jevon Symons.

Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

by Andrew Dobson

The National Audubon Society of the U.S.A. has held a CBC for 91 years - a chance for birders to have some fun, and also contribute towards our knowledge of changing trends in bird numbers.

A CBC has been held in Bermuda for the last 16 years, adding to the overall picture of bird patterns in both Bermuda and the Americas.



Brant Goose

Under the organization of Eric Amos, seven of us spent the daylight hours of 21st December 'in the field,' armed only with binoculars, notebook and several gallons of coffee.

The day produced 7,515 birds of 90 species. Four species had never been recorded on a previous CBC in Bermuda - a Gannet, Brant goose, Red-winged Blackbird and a Rosybill duck (of dubious origin!)

The Winter and Early Spring in Bermuda

by Andrew Dobson

Pied-billed Grebes have been present on most of the larger ponds this winter, with up to three on both Spittal Pond and Lover's Lake. Unlike last winter, few cormorants have wintered here, although eight species of heron and egret have stayed, including a colourful adult Little Blue Heron at Warwick Pond.

The only goose of the winter, a Brant was first spotted on Castle Harbour Golf Course, but obviously found the green fees too high and spent the rest of the winter on Mid-Ocean Golf Course! Certainly a good 'birdie'. The usual range of duck species arrived throughout the winter months - Gadwall, Pintail, Teal, Shoveler, Wigeon, Ring-neck Duck, Scaup, Merganser and Ruddy Duck amongst others. The presumed polluted water at Spittal Pond gives great cause for concern. Ducks have been largely absent from the main pond all winter, while small ponds like the Society's reserves at Seymour's Pond and Somerset Long Bay have proved popular with wild-fowl. However, Spittal Pond did host the duck of the winter - an Old Squaw - an attractive small black and white duck with long tail. Unable to obtain sufficient food, it was found dead after two weeks at the pond.

Two or possibly three ospreys have overwintered - frequently seen fishing in Harrington Sound or along South Shore. Apart from the ever-present Ruddy Turnstone and Black-bellied Plover and wintering Killdeer, shorebirds have been conspicuous by their absence. The Bermuda shoreline is one of the wintering grounds of the endangered Piping Plover, but few of these have been seen.

Similarly, the Sanderling, once commonly seen running busily along the beach at the waters edge.

Gulls continue to increase each winter, almost certainly a reflection of Bermuda's growing population and the amount of trash at Pembroke dump! Hundreds of gulls gather there each day.

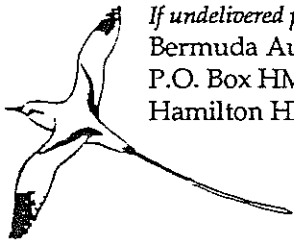
Of the passerines (the perching birds), several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (a woodpecker) have wintered. They are responsible for the horizontal rows of holes which they drill into casuarinas in particular. One of the highlights of winter birding is being able to view more than a dozen warbler species - impossible at a similar latitude in continental America. Palm and Myrtle Warblers often accompany Bluebirds on the golf course, while the creeper-like Black and White Warbler, Ovenbird and Northern Water-thrush can be coaxed out of wooded thickets.

Every season there are always surprises - the Ash-throated Flycatcher is documented on the cover of this issue. Two Blue Grosbeaks wintered for the first time in Bermuda, and up to three Red-winged Blackbirds in the mangroves at Spittal Pond were also unusual.

At the time of writing (mid-March) signs of spring are well established. Longtails were first sighted off Castle Harbour on February 11th. A spectacular Swallow-tailed Kite was another bird to try golf. It graced Port Royal Golf Course for at least a week in early March, often seen swooping between golfers in pursuit of lizards.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Event	Time	Place
APRIL 24th	Illustrated Talk "Gulf of St. Lawrence Wildlife" by Dr. Kathleen Blanchard	8 p.m.	Horticultural Hall
MAY 4th	Reserve Working Party All members welcome	9 a.m.	Sears Cave (1st right northwards along St. Marks Road.)
JUNE 12th	Annual General Meeting followed by illustrated talk on New Zealand by Dr. David Wingate	7.30 p.m.	Horticultural Hall
JULY 21st	Field Trip and Barbecue Nonsuch Island	9.30 a.m. 1.30 p.m.	Boats leave from Tuckers Town dock



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