

# Bermuda Audubon Society NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX

Vol.2 No.2

FALL 1991

## Bottle Bill Comment

Governments decision to reject a Bottle Bill, despite evidence from the recent Louis Harris poll that a majority of the population would support it, is discouraging. It reflects a continuing failure by our elected representatives to comprehend the fundamental connection between a Bottle Bill, with its economic incentives for recycling, and the overwhelming need for comprehensive recycling as a necessary step towards achieving a sustainable economic future.

This failure was revealed in the Minister's comment that "Bermuda can't afford the additional costs and handling burden of a bottle bill at this time." In fact, he should have said exactly the opposite!

Although no-one would argue that recycling is a burden, it will not only be economically rewarding in the long run but ecologically imperative as well. Education against littering has not and will not work as long as we have an economic system that encourages the throw-away society and penalizes those who want to recycle - for that is the situation as it stands at present.

Litterbugs are actually rewarded because they are able to evade their responsibility for recycling at no cost or inconvenience to themselves. Conscientious members of the community, on the other hand, are doubly penalized because they not only bear the burden of recycling their own trash without reward, but

*Continued on page 3*

## Audubon Activities

The Audubon Society hopes that you will be able to enjoy some of the forthcoming events.

A walk around SPITAL POND in early winter should provide views of grebes, herons, egrets, ducks and wintering warblers, as well as the resident birds.

The WALSINGHAM Field Trip gives an opportunity for members to see the restoration work that has been carried out, as well as the fascinating flora of the 'Jungle'.

GREAT HEAD PARK is a magnificent but little known area of Bermuda. Try not to miss this opportunity of a guided walk through dense woodland, along rocky coastline, and above the highest cliffs in Bermuda. In the event of bad weather, the field trips will be held on the following Sunday.

Few people realise that about 200 species of birds either reside or visit Bermuda each year - and that over 340 have been recorded in total. The indoor MEETING in February will give you a chance to see some of these species, photos taken by a number of amateur photographers in Bermuda.

A reminder to those members who have not yet paid their 1991- 92 SUBSCRIPTION - please do so as soon as possible if you wish to remain a member of the Society and receive the next Society newsletter.

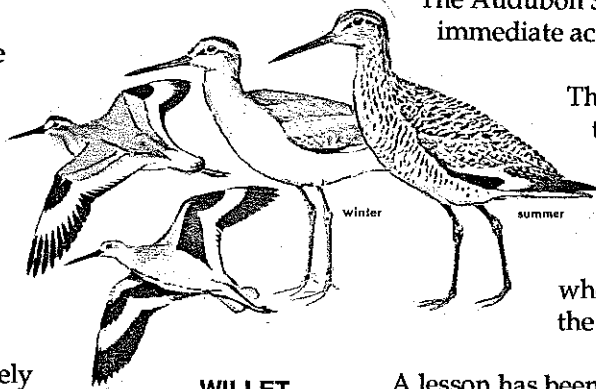
# Oiled Shorebirds

The vast lakes of crude oil covering hundreds of square miles in Kuwait are known to have killed thousands of migratory and local birds, especially cormorants, wildfowl and shorebirds. They land on these lakes, mistaking the oil for water.

It was of considerable concern that during August and September, birders in Bermuda were reporting badly oiled shorebirds.

At least ten species were affected, from the small sandpipers to the larger plovers and yellowlegs.

A large Willet, which rarely visits Bermuda, was so badly oiled that it could barely be identified. It was taken to the Aquarium for cleaning, later released and hopefully survived.



WILLET  
L 13 1/2"

The source of the oil was found to be the waste oil pond at the U.S. Naval Air Station. It is regularly set alight and used for fire-fighting practice. Thanks to the sightings and concern of local birders, the incident received front page news in the local press and even international coverage by UPI News Service.

The Audubon Society also sought immediate action.

The Society appreciates the prompt action taken by the USNAS Commanding Officer, Capt. Arnold, who permanently closed the fire-fighting facility.

A lesson has been learnt, but it does demonstrate how disastrous any major oil spill would be for Bermuda's birds.

Andrew Dobson

Bermuda Audubon Society

**HOTLINE**

**236-6483**

to report any environmental problems especially in relation to birds.

## Bermuda Audubon Society Committee 1991 -1992

### PRESIDENT

David Wingate

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### SECRETARY

Andrew Dobson

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also take responsibility for the litterbug's trash in the most inefficient, time-wasting and unrewarding way imaginable i.e. by participating in voluntary litter clean-ups and trashathons. (It is especially ironic that trashathons and litter clean-ups take as a measure of their success the amount of trash collected - in other words the more trash that's out there, the more successful these efforts are!) We are not denigrating the good intentions and self sacrifice of these efforts, but simply pointing out that there must be a fairer and more efficient way. Consciously or not, litterbugs are getting a good deal and you can bet they are not the ones who participate in clean-ups!

The beauty of bottle bill legislation is that it can turn this ridiculous situation around. Litterbugs would be fined automatically by losing their deposits and those who take the trouble to pick up other peoples' litter could recover the deposit at a recycling centre. This is anti-litter education the way it works best - through economic incentive.

The logic of economic incentive comes with the recognition that all of our trash has at least some recovery value. In the case of items which commonly become litter on the landscape, the value may simply be that of keeping the environment tidy - a considerable plus in a community depending on tourists. But trash can have a resource value too, as already demonstrated by the successful aluminium recycling programme. The resource value of different kinds of trash depends, of course, on the availability of markets for it, but we can be absolutely certain of one thing: In an era of overpopulation and increasing natural resource-scarcity, these markets are growing all the time and will soon make most kinds of trash economically recoverable.

As we see it, the burden of receiving and handling the empties need not be carried by the supermarkets and other retail outlets which sell bottle bill items. All that is necessary is for Government to tax each item for the agreed amount of the deposit at the import or manufacturing stage. The retail centres simply pass this on to the consumer by adding the equivalent of the deposit to the retail cost. (As everybody has to do this, the argument of reduced sales does not hold.) The customer then has the option to recover the deposit, not at the retail centres but at specially established recycling centres, set up by Government at convenient points around the island. There is no reward as such for recycling ones own purchase - on the contrary, it is a minor inconvenience necessary to avoid losing the deposit. However the long-term benefits to the community are a litter-free environment and - provided comprehensive recycling measures are in place - ultimately a lower cost for consumer goods and a huge reduction in the scale and cost of managing garbage landfill sites.

Designing and implementing a comprehensive recycling system won't be easy and it will certainly involve some degree of inconvenience, self-discipline and change in consumer habits, notably the pre-sorting of household waste before disposal or recycling. But the sooner our representatives catch up with public opinion and realize that this is an ecological imperative for a sustainable future, the sooner we will get on with the task at hand!

If you support our views on Bottle Bill legislation, take action! Share your ideas with friends and neighbours, talk to your Government representative or write a letter to the Editor of the daily paper. You can help rid our roadsides of unsightly bottles.

# The 1991 Fall in Bermuda

by Andrew Dobson

Most local birders agree that 1991 has been a 'good fall' for birds. Even if the quantity of birds has not been exceptional, the quality - the variety of species - has been good.

Migrant shorebirds peak in number earlier in the Fall than warblers and other passerines. This year there was a good range of shorebirds even though the water levels were high at Spittal and Warwick Ponds. Birds still found suitable feeding on great mats of floating algae at Spittal and Bartram's Pond (Stokes Point Reserve). Other shorebirds had to be searched for on wet farmland. The cattle farm at St. George's proved very popular, with up to 40 Pectoral Sandpipers amongst 10 species of shorebird. A delightful Buff-breasted Sandpiper was my personal favourite - staying for several days in the company of Yellowlegs, Sandpipers and Turnstones at the Princess Golf Course.

Gulls have yet to return, but Common Terns have been increasing to over 10 birds feeding and roosting in Harrington Sound. A number of Ospreys have been passing through, and a group of five passing Church Bay was quite exceptional. Only a few Merlins and American Kestrels have arrived, but two or three Peregrines have been creating havoc amongst the local bird community.

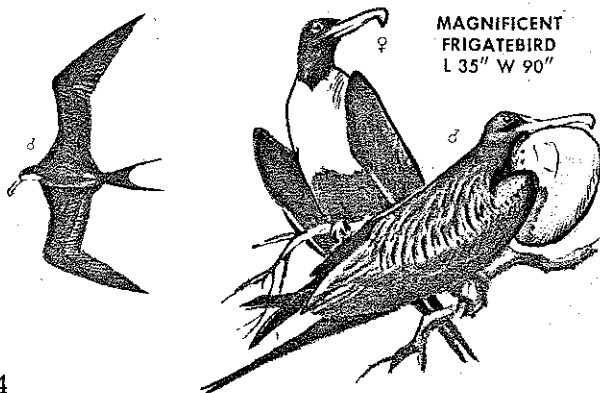
Cuckoos, swifts, flycatchers, swallows, martins, orioles, bobolinks, and tanagers have all come through much on time. Scarlet Tanagers (yellow in the Fall) have been present in good numbers. Less common Fall migrants have included Glossy Ibis (2), Northern Flicker (a woodpecker), Northern Wheatear (2), Great Crested Flycatcher (3), Wood Thrush, Yellow-breasted Chat and Clay-coloured Sparrow.

September and the first half of October really belong to warblers - the small songbirds which undertake a long journey south for the winter. A number of frontal weather systems coming off the east coast of the USA with associated heavy rainfall produced a good 'fall' of warblers. On occasions it was possible to see 20, 30, or even 40 birds in one tree! By mid-October, all but one of the 38 warbler species ever recorded in Bermuda had been seen. Cerulian Warblers are never guaranteed in the Fall, and of four observed, two were together at Astwood's Park. A few weeks later, the same line of trees supported Bermuda's sixth Townsend's Warbler - normally found on the western side of USA and Canada.

Without a doubt, the most extraordinary records of the Fall are the two Corncrakes - unfortunately both now dead. Only four of these European rails had previously been recorded in Bermuda - so two in one season is most unusual. One was 'peeled' off the road and identified by its skin; the other was rescued from a cat in St. David's, but died while in captivity at the Aquarium.

## STOP PRESS

**A Magnificent Frigatebird present over Hamilton Harbour on 25th October.**

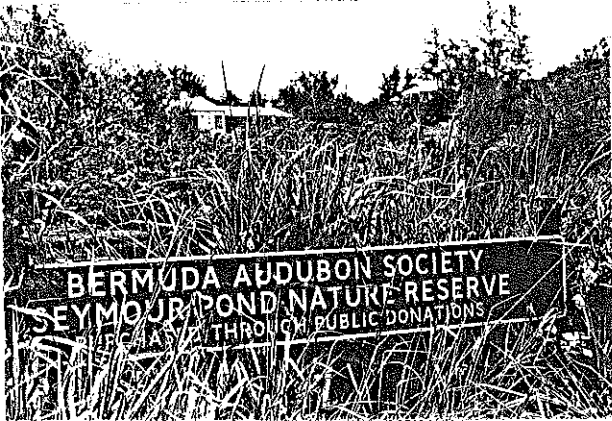
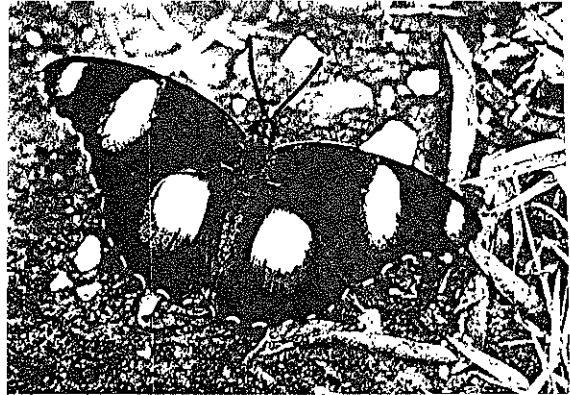


MAGNIFICENT  
FRIGATEBIRD  
L 35" W 90"

## WILDLIFE NEWS

Two Mimic Butterflies *Hypolimnys misippus* were first observed by Eric Amos at Astwood's Park on 14th October, 1991. These attractive butterflies, both males, had striking upper wing patterns - dark brown to black with large white, purple-rimmed spots. Found mainly in the tropical areas of the Old World, these two Mimics are thought to have arrived from a population in the Caribbean where they were introduced in the early days of the slave trade. One of the Mimics was present until at least the 18th October, and they represent the first occurrence of the Mimic Butterfly on Bermuda.

## Mimic Butterfly



## Seymour Pond

at Barnes' Corner, Southampton

The Society's nature reserve at Seymour Pond is a good spot to see wintering birds. Moorhens are resident, Pied-billed Grebe, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Black Duck, Ring-necked Duck and Hooded Merganser are regularly seen on the pond - but try not to disturb them by approaching too close - watch from the road.

### How you can help the environment AND THE SOCIETY?



The  
Bank of Bermuda  
Limited

Members may have read in the local press about a new programme launched by the Bank of Bermuda. Each time a customer uses his or her BermudaCard, 10% of the total transaction value goes towards an environmental charity. Each time someone signs up for a BermudaCard, \$100 goes directly to a charity. At the end of each month a name is drawn from all the Bank's customers and a donation is made in their name to a charity of their choice ... so the Society would like to thank you and the Bank of Bermuda in anticipation of some extra funds this year.

## UPDATE on the CAHOW

1991 was another disappointing year in terms of breeding success with only 19 chicks fledged successfully from 43 nesting pairs. This was one up from the previous year, but still well below the 28 chicks reared in 1989.

The encouraging news of 1991, however, was a dramatic resurgence of new-pair formation after a three year hiatus during which no new pairs formed and adult mortality was higher. By 1990 it was apparent that a new set of lights installed at the US NAval Air Station in 1987 were inhibiting new-pair formation. Thanks to the full cooperation of the Base authorities this problem was rectified in November 1990 and resulted in an immediate resurgence of new pair formation which should be reflected in higher breeding success during the coming year.

During September and October the Government Conservation Division have been busy preparing the cahow nesting islets for the next several decades of population increase. In addition to creating new artificial nesting burrows sufficient to accommodate another doubling of the population, the work has included the first official Bermuda engineering works designed to prevent sea flooding in anticipation of a periodic sea-level rise due to global warming!

Several Cahow burrows on one islet are already subject to periodic flooding in major storms and, in order to protect them, a massive wall of 20 ft. length was built across a low-lying area between two rock outcrops to deflect wave wash. The wall is so well concealed by facing with natural rock slabs that it is not distinguishable from the natural rock surface when viewed from the sea. It has already justified the effort by preventing disaster from Tropical Storm Grace on 26 October, 1991.

*The primary role of this Society is the acquisition, restoration and management of Bermuda's unique natural habitats as Nature Reserves. We now own and or manage 10 reserves totalling 30 acres. As these reserves have been established for the benefit and enjoyment of our membership and the general public, we will feature a different reserve in each newsletter.*

### Stokes Point Nature Reserve

Located adjacent to Mullet Bay, this 2.322 acre reserve was acquired from Miss Nea T. Smith and Mrs. Anne L. Smith by a mortgage agreement in May 1980 for \$30,000. A fund drive launched in that year culminated in our final payment for this land by 1985.

Stokes Point Reserve was acquired with the aim of restoring a mangrove-bordered pond which had been filled in as a garbage tip in the 1940's. Restoration began in 1987 with the hire of a PWD gragline, operated by "Sluggo" Talbot. The dredging restored a 5 ft x 8 ft. deep brackish and slightly tidal pond of approx. one acre, leaving two small islands in the centre. The excavated material was used to backfill some old stone quarries and to create a raised and level embankment between the pond and Mullet Bay Road. It took about two years for the salt to leach out of this mixture of glass, metal, rubble soil and peat before vegetation would grow, but in the final analysis it produced an extremely rich growing medium for trees. In the interim period volunteers hand-raked and removed glass and metal from the surface to create a smooth lawn. This lawn was planted with Bermuda Cedars, Palmettos, Olive-woods and other native trees by students of St. David's Primary and St George's Prep Schools in October 1985 and a nature trail was established at that time.

The pond was named in honour of the 19th Century naturalist John T Bartram, who had lived at Stokes Point. A bronze plaque, donated by Esso Bermuda, was erected, and

several of Bartram's heirs were present at the unveiling. In the same year the new pond was stocked with *Gambusia* minnows and invertebrate life from Spittal Pond. In 1986, the endemic Killifish *Fundulus bermudae* was introduced into the pond from its only pre-existing reserve in Lover's Lake, Tucker's Town. A year later, Red Mangrove propagules (*Rhizophora mangle*) were planted around the islands in the pond.

In the six years since it was restored, Stokes Point Reserve has become an outstanding success. The Bermuda Cedar plantation is by any standard the most rapidly growing and healthy stand of cedars on Bermuda and the Killifish have become abundant in the pond providing a secure second sanctuary for this rare species. Although the brackish pond is not suitable for waterfowl as are many of our

fresh-water ponds, it does support a rich growth of Wigeon Grass *Ruppia maritima* and bird species regularly stopping there include: American Wigeon, Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Coot, Sora, Virginia Rail, all the herons and egrets, Belted Kingfisher and many shorebird species. The success of the pond as shorebird habitat has been an unexpected surprise because it is too deep and steep-sided to support mud flats. Instead, a species of floating algae creates the equivalent of a mud flat by forming dense mats on the surface during summer. This algal mat can support the weight of the birds and provide a rich feeding habitat. Outstanding shorebird records at the pond this fall were Wilson's Phalarope and Red Knot.

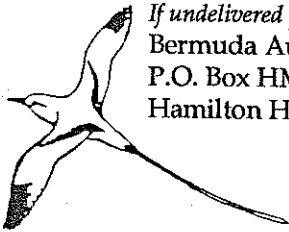
David B. Wingate

### Membership subscriptions - A REMINDER ....

Many Audubon Society members have not paid their 1991 membership fee. Please would you complete the form below and return it as soon as possible.

Name _____	
Address _____	
_____ Tel. No. _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult ..... \$5.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Life ..... \$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Student ..... \$2.50	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron ..... \$250
(Cheques payable to Bermuda Audubon Society)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Existing member	<input type="checkbox"/> New member
Please return to: <b>The Bermuda Audubon Society</b> P.O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX	

DATE	EVENT	TIME	PLACE
Nov 17	Spittal Pond NATURE WALK	1:30 pm.	West end Car Park (Bring binoculars)
Jan 19	Walsingham Reserve FIELD TRIP	1:30 pm.	Meet at Tom Moore's Tavern
Feb 13	"A Celebration of Bermuda's Birds" SLIDESHOW	7:30 pm.	Horticultural Hall (Botanical Gardens)
Mar 8	Great Head Park FIELD TRIP	1.30 pm.	Entrance to Park at St. David's Road



*If undelivered please return to:*  
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 Hamilton HM FX