



Bermuda Audubon Society
NEWSLETTER

Summer
1996

P O Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX Vol.7 No.2

MARSH WREN - NEW TO BERMUDA

by Eric Amos

On January 24, 1996, customers at the TCD observed a strange phenomena in the dense cow cane that marks the boundary of the carpark and Pembroke Marsh. For, lurching in and out of the bamboo-like growth was a group of about 10 birdwatchers bristling with binoculars, videos and long-lensed cameras, making a strange series of clucks and squeaks with their mouths and some were noisily kissing their hands. They also carried a semi-boombox type taperecorder which emitted the most extraordinary noises - squeaks, rattles and clicks.

The recording was the "song" of an elusive fugitive and the object of the search. A Marsh Wren - a 5" feathered mite of rich but subtle and cryptic colours which did not respond and ignored all the commotion as it worked busily and steadily, using it's sturdy legs and large feet to push through the

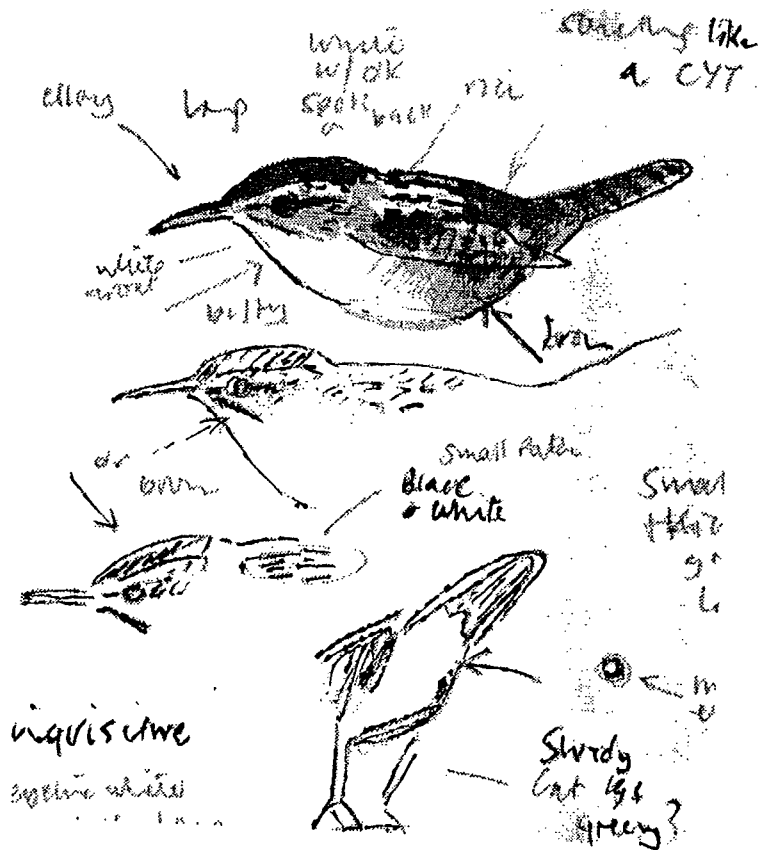
dense vegetation on the other side of the channel with only the occasional twitch of a leaf marking it's progress.

As a birder would glimpse the wren, he or she would shout urgent but vague directions as to how the others could locate it. "By the yellow leaf" (you looked urgently at dozens of yellowed leaves). "By the brown stem"- brown stem? We strained our eyes mostly in vain. Heads and bodies of interested non-birders often thrust their way into our ornithological retreat. They asked what we were looking at. We had more than 150 years of birdwatching experience between us, but only saw fleeting nanosecond glimpses of a shadowy brown mouselike bird lost in the densest parts of Pembroke Marsh. Driving school instructors and their nervous clients and taxi-drivers with cynical grins wanted to know what we were looking at!

In the end we all got to see it - all except Wendy Frith who came very late when most had gone (including the wren), claiming she got lost taking the "backroads" from Warwick. However, she had seen many a Marsh Wren and told me that her friend said the wren's song reminded him of someone exclaiming (the squeaks and grunts) over his tax returns. We don't do tax returns in Bermuda, but we have now added the Marsh Wren to the Bermuda list.

Marsh Wren, *cistothorus palustris* is widespread in marshes and swamps throughout Southern Canada and the U.S. It winters from the southern U.S. into Mexico. (It was first seen by Eric Amos on 23rd Jan 1996).

The following sketch and field notes were made by Eric Amos at Pembroke Marsh



Bermuda's Wintering Warblers

by David Wallace

I have a special interest in the group of passerines known as North American wood warblers, and I tried to locate as many as possible during the 1995/96 winter.

Sub-tropical Bermuda allows these warblers to be far north of their usual wintering grounds in the West Indies, Central and South America, providing suitable habitat and food source. The number of warblers is dependent on successful breeding in North America and the weather systems affecting Bermuda in the Fall. More birds are likely to make landfall with frontal systems associated with wind and heavy rain. Many birds stay for the winter, not departing until mid-March or April. So for my study I have documented warblers noted during late November to mid-March, when spring migrants begin to arrive and confuse the issue. By December, most warblers have determined their winter territories.

Most of the observations are my own, although I have included

records from some of my colleagues to compile as comprehensive a list as possible. I covered as much habitat as possible, visiting most locations twice to better assess wintering numbers - all golf courses, public parks and footpaths, baselands, farmland, woodland and some private property. As this is my first comprehensive study of wintering warblers, it should be noted that the apparent increase in many species may be misleading. Previous maxima are based on Christmas Bird Counts and individual observations, especially those of Eric Amos. Nevertheless, I hope this might form the basis for further study as Bermuda's environment changes.

I am grateful to the following for providing their records: E.Amos, S.DeSilva, A.Dobson, P.Holmes, J.Madeiras, D.Wingate.

David Wallace is chief horticulturalist for Horizon Properties and is an avid birder. The table overleaf summarises his findings. *Ed.*

WARBLERS IN BERMUDA - WINTER 1995/96

SPECIES	Number	%	Notes
Yellow-rumped Warbler	389 (280)	26.5	The most abundant warbler as expected. Found in varied habitats.
Ovenbird	300 (149)	20.4	Exclusive to woodland which is crucial to its presence in Bermuda. Thirty-six on the Annex at Southampton.
American Redstart	202 (110)	13.8	Widespread. Twenty-seven in the Smith's Hill. Only one adult male seen by Steven De Silva on the Annex.
Common Yellowthroat	108 (85)	7.4	Common in scrub habitat. Males and females in similar numbers.
Palm Warbler	103 (156)	7.0	A common species especially on golf courses.
Black-and-white Warbler	86 (52)	5.9	Widespread in woodland copses and mangroves.
Northern Waterthrush	83 (105)	5.7	Mainly in mangrove habitat. Any change to this habitat will affect numbers.
Northern Parula	52 (30)	3.5	Males and females in similar numbers.
Cape May Warbler	30 (63)	2.0	Males and females in similar numbers. Seven at Port Royal GC during March.
Prairie Warbler	26 (20)	1.8	Widespread locations across Bermuda.
Black-throated Green Warbler	14 (23)	1.0	Fourteen were seen on the Christmas Bird Count.
Worm-eating Warbler	14 (10)	1.0	Usually in deep woodland. A good number.
Black-throated Blue Warbler	11 (4)	0.7	An excellent number. Three were males.
Pine Warbler	11 (5)	0.7	An excellent number including five at Port Royal GC. Several were singing by early spring.
Hooded Warbler	11 (20)	0.7	Another species of deep woodland. Only two males.
Blue-winged Warbler	5 (6)	0.3	Only recently accepted as a frequently wintering bird.
Magnolia Warbler	5 (16)	0.3	All in the central parishes.
Orange-crowned Warbler	4 (3)	0.3	Included two together on Paget Island seen by David Wingate.
Yellow-throated Warbler	4 (23)	0.3	Most commonly on golf courses.
Nashville Warbler	3 (4)	0.1	Lagoon Pk, Tribe Rd #7 Warwick and Mid-Ocean GC.
Kentucky Warbler	2 (3)	0.1	A surprise to find birds at Castle Harbour GC and Ord Road woodland.
Chestnut-sided Warbler	1 (1)	0.1	Only the second winter record. Seen by Peter Holmes in Ferry Point Park
Prothonotary Warbler	1 (1)	0.1	One seen by Andrew Dobson along Parson's Lane in January.
Swainson's Warbler	1 (3)	0.1	A good find - seen in the same Port Royal woodland in November and March.
Connecticut Warbler	1 -	0.1	One at Pembroke Marsh in early December seen by Eric Amos may well have been a late migrant.
Yellow-breasted Chat	1 (3)	0.1	One in late January along the Railway Trail in Paget.
26 Warbler species	1,469 birds	100.0	

Figures in brackets indicate previous maxima.

Membership Renewal/Application

(see address label for expiry date)

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P.O.Box HM 1328 Hamilton HM FX

**Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 12 June 7.30 pm**

followed by

Slide Show

"Bermuda's Birds 1995-96"

**Horticultural Hall
Botanical Gardens**

The Society would welcome new faces onto its committee, especially those with secretarial skills. Please send nominations to the Society's secretary as soon as possible.

**Bermuda Audubon Society
Hotline 238-3239**

**Bird News Society Business
Environmental Concerns**

Committee 1995-96

President	Jeremy Madeiros
Vice-President	Andrew Dobson
Treasurer	Ted Cassidy
Secretary	Heather DeSilva

Committee members

Penny Hill
Peter Holmes
David O'Neill
Helge Trapnell
David Wingate
Andrew Dobson

Newsletter

If undelivered please return to:



Bermuda Audubon Society
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Future Events

Wednesday 12 June	Annual General Meeting 7.30 pm Slide Show "Bermuda's Birds 1995-96" Horticultural Hall, Botanical Gardens
Saturday 22 June to Saturday 29 June	Nonsuch Island Natural History Camp for students
Sunday 14 July	Nonsuch Island Open Day Depart from Biological Station 9.30 pm Return from Nonsuch Island 3.30 pm Reservations 292-0707 Cost \$20
Sunday 8 September	Spittal Pond Field Trip - migratory birds 7.30am East End car park. - plus refreshments
Friday 4 to Sunday 6 October	Birdwatching Weekend on Paget Island Depart Ordnance Island 6.00 pm Reservations 238-3239 Cost \$40