



Bermuda Audubon Society
NEWSLETTER

Summer
1997

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Distinguished ornithologist to pay return visit to his wartime "home away from home" after 50 years

Dr. William R. P. Bourne was one of many lucky children who were sent out to the colonies to escape the blitz during the Second World War. His experiences in Bermuda evidently awakened a latent interest in natural history, particularly birds. So intensely did he pursue this hobby that years later, following receipt of a medical degree, he wrote a paper on the birds of Bermuda, based on his recollections, which was accepted by the prestigious British ornithological journal *Ibis*. This paper had extraordinary significance because it described the status of Bermuda's birds just before the tragic demise of the cedar forest which changed the character of the island for ever.

Dr. Bourne's experiences in Bermuda stimulated a lifelong interest in islands, and island seabirds, in particular, and his publications in this field are numerous and highly regarded.

He and his wife will be guests of the Wingates on Nonsuch Island from 24th April to 8th May. No doubt, he will be amazed at the changes fifty years have wrought on the island home of his childhood recollections. On 6th May, he will be lecturing to the society on his reminiscences of Bermuda and where that led him in his subsequent career. It should be a tremendously interesting talk.

David B. Wingate

Dr.Bourne's Talk
Tuesday 6th May
7.30 pm
Horticultural Hall
Botanical Gardens

Paget Marsh Boardwalk

Dennis Sherwin's donation to the Bermuda National Trust for a boardwalk in Paget Marsh is to be a joint project with Audubon. The extraordinarily generous \$350,000 donation has finally made possible the realisation of a long-standing dream - to make the unique natural features of Paget Marsh more accessible for educational and tourist use.

Boardwalks can make swampy areas accessible in safety and comfort for tour groups, without the environmental damage that would otherwise result from trampling - but they are expensive! Work has begun on the selection of a route but it seems certain that the best option will be mainly on the Audubon-owned central section of the marsh with access from the northern corner of the marsh below Lovers Lane. This area offers the maximum diversity of habitats including pure stands of red mangrove, sawgrass/bracken savannah, wax-myrtle thicket and cedar palmetto forest with its understory of *Osunda* ferns.

Audubon's contribution to the project will be the restoration of one additional habitat - an open pond which was filled in with rubble and trash in the 1920s. This pond will be linked in to the perimeter ditch that presently surrounds the marsh and will

serve not only as a visual amenity and waterbird pond at the start of the boardwalk, but also as a water barrier, providing better control over the point of access. A joint committee of Trust, Audubon and Parks Department personnel hope to present an application for planning approval before the end of the summer.

David B. Wingate

Brown Booby Band Recovery

Shortly after Hurricane Hortense moved up the eastern seaboard of America last year, an adult brown booby was found roosting on the Dockyard jetty. It was so exhausted that the finders were able to catch it and take it to the Aquarium. At the same time, they noticed that it was wearing a leg band. This band number was duly reported to the Bird Banding Office before the end of September, but their response wasn't received until late March this year! Meanwhile, the booby recovered in the green turtle enclosure at the Aquarium and departed of its own volition on 26th September.

We now know that it was banded as a nestling on Cockroach Island, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, on 26th April, 1994. The bander was Judy Pierce, Division of Fish & Wildlife, Department of Planning & Natural Resources, St. Thomas.

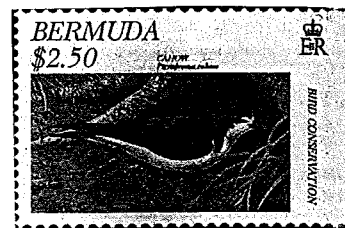
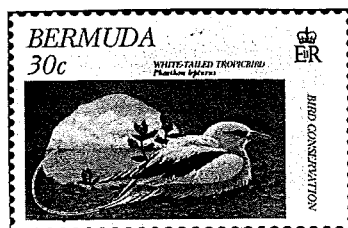
David B. Wingate

Longtail Nest-box Research Grant Update

A grant from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office of the U.K. for conservation in the Dependent Territories, is being used specifically for the development of a mass-producible "nest box" for longtails. The idea of using the styrofoam fibreglass bonding techniques developed by SKB Coatings in Bermuda was first suggested by Bruce Lorhan.

After researching the best size and shape, the first prototypes were produced and delivered in December, and the first installations began on Nonsuch in early April. By early May, we expect to have thirty-eight in place on the Castle Harbour islands, where they are most likely to be colonised quickly. They have already demonstrated their advantages in terms of light weight for transport and ease of installation in remote field locations. They can also be made to blend in beautifully with the natural rock.

David B. Wingate



Bird Conservation Stamps

On 17th April 1997 commemorative stamps for bird conservation were issued. The stamps feature the White-tailed Tropicbird or Longtail *Phaethon lepturus* (30c and 60c), and the Cahow *Pterodroma cahow* (80c and \$2.50). A sheet of information inside the first day cover outlines the history of the Cahow from its decimation by the early settlers in the early 17th century, to its rediscovery in 1951 and its subsequent trebling of its 1951 population to over fifty pairs today. The pressures on Bermuda's Longtail population is also documented and it is appropriate that these stamps should draw attention to the pressures affecting the survival of the two species of seabird and the conservation measures that are being attempted to protect them. World renowned bird artist Norman Arlott has designed the stamps. Sets of stamps and first day covers are available from all Post Offices. If you live abroad and are interested in obtaining these stamps, please contact The Bermuda Philatelic Bureau, General Post Office, Hamilton HM PM, Bermuda.

Andrew Dobson

Wintering Warblers 96-97

For a second consecutive year I have recorded warblers seen between late November and early March. Most of mainland Bermuda was covered, and I relied on colleagues to fill in the gaps. I walked public land (parks, golf courses etc.), former military lands, and private property (with permission). Most of my birding was conducted on fair weather days, and I made efforts to visit each location twice to compare notes. (See table for results).

The number of individual birds seen was very similar to last year's count although I birded for approximately 14 hours more this winter. The most noticeable change was the dramatic reduction in American Redstarts (202 to 75). Deep woodland species such as Ovenbirds, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers were present in record numbers, while some of the more unusual or difficult to find species such as

Yellow-breasted Chat, Orange-crowned, Prothonotary and Swainson's Warblers all showed well. The Louisiana Waterthrush is the first to have wintered in Bermuda. Two single sightings of separate *Oporornis* warblers remain the most frustrating warbler sightings this winter but were probably Mourning Warblers. The lone male Wilson's Warbler at Ferry Point Park was an exciting find as it is a rare winter visitor.

Other passerine species of interest through the winter were Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (4), Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Hermit Thrush (7). Over 2,000 migratory birds over-wintered on Bermuda, of which about 75% were warblers, and while most of these will now have departed, I am eagerly awaiting the Autumn migration to discover which avian jewels will call Bermuda home.

David Wallace

Bermuda Audubon Society Committee 1996-97

President	David Wingate
Vice-Pres.	Jeremy Madeiros
Treasurer	Ted Cassidy
Secretary	Penny Hill
Committee Members	
Peter Holmes	Bruce Lorhan
David O'Neill	Roseanne Stapff
Helge Wingate	
Newsletter	Andrew Dobson

NOTICE

Bermuda Audubon Society Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 11th June
7.30 pm
Horticultural Hall
Botanical Gardens

Nominations for committee
to the secretary a.s.a.p.

WARBLERS IN BERMUDA - WINTER 1996/97

SPECIES	Individuals and percentage of total				
	96-97	%	95-96	%	Previous high
Ovenbird	402	26.8	300	20.4	(300)
Yellow-rumped Warbler	357	23.8	389	26.5	(389)
Northern Waterthrush	157	10.5	83	5.7	(105)
Black-and-white Warbler	105	7.0	86	5.9	(86)
Common Yellowthroat	97	6.5	108	7.4	(108)
Palm Warbler	85	5.7	103	7.0	(156)
American Redstart	75	5.0	202	13.8	(202)
Northern Parula	58	3.9	52	3.5	(52)
Cape May Warbler	25	1.7	30	2.0	(30)
Hooded Warbler	23	1.5	11	0.7	(20)
Worm-eating Warbler	20	1.3	14	1.0	(14)
Prairie Warbler	17	1.1	26	1.8	(26)
Orange-crowned Warbler	11	0.7	4	0.3	(4)
Pine Warbler	10	0.7	11	0.7	(11)
Black-throated Green Warbler	9	0.6	14	1.0	(23)
Yellow-throated Warbler	9	0.6	4	0.3	(23)
Blue-winged Warbler	8	0.5	5	0.3	(6)
Magnolia Warbler	7	0.5	5	0.3	(16)
Black-throated Blue Warbler	6	0.4	11	0.7	(11)
Yellow-breasted Chat	6	0.4	1	0.1	(3)
Swainson's Warbler	4	0.3	1	0.1	(3)
Prothonotary Warbler	3	0.2	1	0.1	(1)
Nashville Warbler	2	0.1	3	0.1	(4)
<i>Oporornis sp.</i>	2	0.1	-	-	(1)
Tennessee Warbler	1	0.1	-	-	(7)
Louisiana Waterthrush	1	0.1	-	-	-
Wilson's Warbler	1	0.1	-	-	(1)
Chestnut-sided Warbler	-	-	1	0.1	(1)
Kentucky Warbler	-	-	2	0.1	(3)
Connecticut Warbler	-	-	1	0.1	-
Total individuals	1,501	100.0	1,469	100.0	
Total warbler species	27		26		
Total birding hours	174		160		

Winter Round-up

A Common Loon found at Dolly's Bay in St. Davids on 22nd December was the first for this species since 1976. Obviously an ill bird, it was taken to the rehabilitation unit at BAMZ but died overnight. A Manx Shearwater passing Bermuda on 30th January was unusually early. Amongst the herons and egrets perhaps as many as a dozen Great Egrets wintered this year but only one Tricolored Heron. The Spittal Pond roost of our own Yellow-crowned Night-Herons reached a record 29 birds in late December. Only one of the five White Ibises remained into the winter, an immature bird which spent most of its time at Jubilee Road and was still present into April. **This is the first wintering record for this species in Bermuda.** Not every winter brings geese, but this winter two Snow Geese took up grazing rights on Ocean View G.C. and a Canada Goose resided at Camden Marsh. Of the less commonly occurring duck species, a Northern Pintail was seen regularly at Jubilee Road and a Common Goldeneye remained at Spittal Pond. One Eurasian Wigeon was seen at Spittal Pond on 15th December, while two were present at Lovers Lake from 26th January into March.

Only two Piping Plovers were recorded this winter, seen at Morgan's Point in December and Spanish Point on 24th January. One of the three Bar-tailed Godwits was last seen on 24th December at the Civil Air Terminal. Five Least Sand-

pipers which wintered at St. George's Dairy were most unusual. Unusual gulls included a possible Thayer's Gull seen by Eric Amos at Ferry Reach on 7th December (**this would be a new species for Bermuda**), while single Glaucous and Iceland Gulls were seen throughout the winter period. Quite amazingly, another Ruby-throated Hummingbird wintered, following the first wintering record for this species last year. Bruce Lorhan regularly had one near his Devonshire house in the fall and again in his garden after Christmas. Seven Horned Larks seen at the airport on 25th January is the largest number since eight in early 1990. The Madeiros garden bird list is already impressive, and 1997 started well with a Brown Creeper feeding on their jacaranda tree on 16th January to 24th March. This species has not wintered since 1969-70.

A Yellow-throated Vireo on St. Mark's Road on 4th January and another in Paget on 19th February were rare wintering records. This is the third winter running that this species has been recorded. An impressive list of 27 wood warbler species has been recorded this winter. A Louisiana Waterthrush at Compston's Pond (last seen in early January) is **the first wintering record in Bermuda.** As many as eleven Orange-crowned Warblers, four Swainson's Warblers and six Yellow-breasted Chats and a Wilson's Warbler have also been seen. This is only the 5th wintering Wilson's Warbler (the last one was in 1977-78).

A Blue Grosbeak on 2nd December at St. David's was most unusual. This species has only been recorded once before in the winter period but was probably a late migrant. A White-crowned Sparrow on 5th February at Riddell's Bay GC was a most unusual winter record. A flock of up to thirty Snow Buntings have been seen at the airport or Cooper's Island.

.....and so far this Spring.....

At the time of writing (late April) the spring migration has been off to a fairly slow start. Whale migration is always the big event and this year many Humpbacked Whales have been seen off South Shore with many sightings from land-based observers. On 17th April traffic was brought to a halt as home-bound commuters on

South Road were treated to a spectacular display of whale energy off the Warwick and Southampton reefs. At least ten whales including one calf spent about an hour thrilling locals and tourists with constant breaching, flipper flapping and diving.

Butterflies are also recorded on their northward migration. A Red Admiral arrived in strong winds on Horseshoe Beach on 22nd March and a Painted Lady was seen in Warwick on 20th April.

The most notable spring event in the birding world has been the Breeding success of Pied-billed Grebes in raising one young grebe at the society's Somerset Long Bay nature reserve.

Andrew Dobson

Membership Renewal/Application

(see address label for expiry date)

Name.....Tel.No.....

Address.....

Adult.....\$10.00 New Member
Student.....\$ 5.00 Renewal
Donation.....\$.....

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



If undelivered please return to:

Bermuda Audubon Society
P O Box HM 1328
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Future Events

Tuesday 6 May	Talk by Dr. Bourne (see front page) 7.30 pm Horticultural Hall, Botanical Gardens
Sunday 1 June	Tour of Cooper's Island and pelagic birding by telescope. 2.00 pm
Wednesday 11 June	Annual General Meeting 7.30 pm Horticultural Hall, Botanical Gardens
Saturday 21 June to Saturday 28 June	Nonsuch Island Natural History Camp for students
Sunday 17 August	Nonsuch Island Open Day Depart from Biological Station 9.30 pm Return from Nonsuch Island 3.30 pm Reservations 297-2623 Cost \$20
Friday 4 October to Sunday 6 October	Birdwatching Weekend on Paget Island Reservations and details 297-2623