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NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 1328 Hamilton HM FX
www.audubon.bm email: info@audubon.bm

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER - SECOND RECORD FOR BERMUDA

by Paul Watson

Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii)* - Photo: Neil Coe, Point Pelee NP, Ontario 2016

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

On Friday, 30th September, I decided to spend a few hours 'banding' at Ferry Point Park as part of my *Constant Effort Mist Netting* protocol. The forecast was bright with light easterly winds and by sunrise my nets were set. The day started well with an early Hermit Thrush sighting while I was setting up one of the nets. I silently cursed not catching that thrush but was hopeful there might be a few other good birds around. As I wasn't catching many, I did a tour of my usual haunts seeing a Gray-cheeked Thrush (which I later caught and banded), a Dickcissel and a few warbler species, which made for a pleasant walk.

While on the path near the military cemetery, walking back toward the railway trail, I saw a warbler feeding low in the scrub and fallen foliage from Hurricane Fiona. My immediate impression of the blue-grey plumage was that this was likely a Magnolia Warbler but, as I lifted my binoculars onto the bird at a distance of approximately 15 metres, I was immediately struck by the large size of the bird and was confident this was NOT a Magnolia. The back was blue-grey with black streaking, the belly and flanks were yellow, the flanks had black streaking through to the area of the undertail coverts and the undertail coverts were entirely white. My heart skipped a beat as I was certain I was looking at a Kirtland's warbler, a threatened warbler with a range restricted to the upper mid-west which had been recorded in Bermuda only once before (19th Dec 2004).

Magnolia Warbler (*Setophaga magnolia)* - Photo: Miguel Mejias, Bermuda, Sept 2022

I still had not had good views of the head which was important to me to be certain of the ID. I got as close as 10 metres when the bird flew away from me allowing flight views which showed an entirely blue-grey back (a Magnolia Warbler would have a yellow spot visible in flight). When the bird landed I also saw that the 2 outer tail feathers had a single small white spot. That nailed it for me...Kirtland's!! The bird stopped briefly and was vigorously pumping its tail before flying off over the adjacent hillside. (Unknown to me at this point, the tail pumping is an important field ID of this species.)

I immediately sent a 'WhatsApp' message to the birding group to get the word out and set about finding the bird again.

In an attempt to get a response from the bird I played its song and looked in the area toward which it had flown, with no luck. Mindful of my active nets I set about taking them down before again searching for the bird to no avail. I was confident what I had seen was a Kirtland's Warbler but as I'd not had views of the head I was not 100% certain.
I sent my description to the experts at Cornell university (eBird) and the response was that my description fit exactly what would be seen in the field and could have been nothing other than a Kirtland's Warbler. I was much happier after that! The only down-side to this sighting was that the bird was never re-located and wasn't seen by any other local birders.

eBird Checklist: www.ebird.org/checklist/S119705050

Learn more about the Kirtland's Warbler:
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Kirtlands_Warbler/overview
https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/kirtlands-warbler

DIARY OF A YOUNG NATURALIST

by David Wingate

[I was 15 years old and alone. My tools for exploration were primitive to say the least, with no consideration for safety precautions at all]

11 Feb. 1950

....I set out to Flatts, where after waiting about 2 hours I got my bicycle repaired and rode to Baileys Bay, where I found my Kayak in the same place. The water was dead calm and I set out for Coney island. I stopped off at the bay there for awhile. Next I set out for Tom Moores jungle. At the bay I looked about the place before emptying my Kayak. In doing so I broke a rib of the boat. I had lunch and then re-launched and paddled to Tucker's town at Castle point. I emptied the boat again, then set out first on a scouting expedition, then intentionally to Nonsuch island. Here I saw a group of Ruddy turnstones and, as throughout my trip, numerous Belted kingfishers. I did not see any sign of the Cahows however. It was quite rough and the islands were inaccesible, so I could not have a good look. I covered Nonsuch, looking in the abandoned buildings, then I returned right back to the Mid Ocean club bay, where I left my kayak and hiked to Bailey's bay where I picked up my bicycle and rode home....

These excerpts will be a recurring feature of our Newsletters through which our readers can follow along in the footsteps of a young David Wingate

THE 2022 BALD EAGLE HAS LANDED...IN BOTH THE GOOD AND BAD GRACES OF BERMUDIANS

by Dr. Miguel Mejias

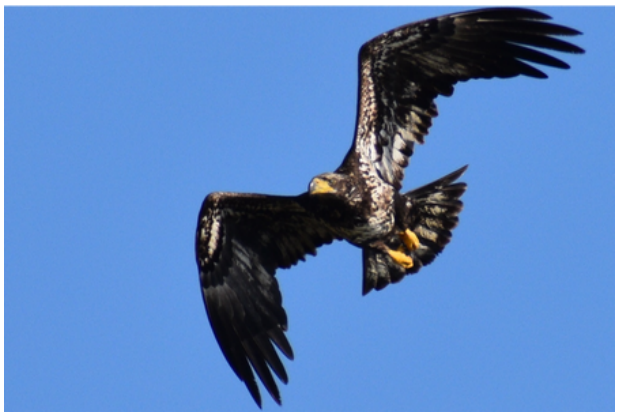

Figure 1. Vagrant Bald Eagle seen flying in Bermuda Photo: Miguel Mejias

"Is the eagle still here?" Lately, I cannot seem to go a week without hearing that line. To be honest I'm just happy that locals are beginning to take notice of the bird life around them. I suppose a raptor packing a wingspan of nearly 8 feet, and about 12 pounds of dominance, is hard to miss overhead! It has been nearly 1 year (since March 2022) since the vagrant Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus eucocephalus)* arrived in our country (Fig. 1). Throughout its 8-month tenure as apex predator of the land, the Bald Eagle has become quite the polarizing figure. There are some who marvel in its size, power, and rarity, viewing it as a much-welcomed visitor that adds excitement to the island as it hunts along our coastlines. In contrast, others are calling for its exile, seeing it as a wildlife threat that has apparently overstayed its welcome.

Before I give my two cents, I believe a brief history of the species is in order. The Bald Eagle is native to North America. Migratory populations breed throughout Canada, before migrating south to the US states for the winter, joining the year-round resident eagles of the latter country. In 1782, it became the national bird of the United States of America, although one of the country's Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, was rooting for the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) to take the position. During the early 1960s, this iconic raptor flirted with extinction following the use of DDT, a pesticide that kills mosquitoes, as users were unknowingly causing chronic nesting failure amongst breeding birds (Sharpe and Garcelon 2005). Stern warnings and publications from conservationists, including the book "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson, and even a testimony in Tennessee on DDT's impact on the Bermuda Petrel (*Pterodroma cahow*) by Bermuda's own Dr. David Wingate, contributed to its subsequent disuse in the USA in 1972. This decision would lead to a resurgence in the Bald Eagle population, and other bird species, in many parts of its range; several bird species, including the Bald eagle, would receive legal protection in North America under the Endangered Species ACT of 1973.

Figure 2. Vagrant Bald Eagle perched on metal post at Port Royal GC. Photo: Miguel Mejias

The Bermuda Bald Eagle is often seen flying along the south shore coast, especially between Somerset Bridge and Horseshoe Bay; keen eyes can spot it soaring to heights of about 10-15,000 feet! It occasionally appears in the more central parts of the island, including Spittal Pond and Harrington Sound. However, Port Royal Golf Course has become something of a haunt for the eagle, where the black metal poles of the driving range netting serve as a favorite perch (Fig. 2). The last confirmed sighting I am aware of was from Chris Gibbons, who saw it over Port Royal GC on October 29th.

So, where is the displeasure of its presence on the island coming from? Well, its food choices. Indeed, the eagle has shown to have quite the palate; this is hardly surprising of a large omnivore. So far, has been photographed taking a domesticated Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata domestica*), Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos domesticus*) and most surprising, and troubling to some, White-tailed Tropicbirds (*Phaethon lepturus catesbyi*) or "longtails". While no Bermudian wishes any harm to our beloved longtails, such predation events are not significant enough to threaten the population. We estimate that there are about 3,500 nesting pairs in Bermuda (Mejías et al. 2017), and this number could very well be an underestimate! Furthermore, a few thousand longtails fledge from the island every summer. Thus, a single Bald Eagle is highly unlikely to cause any long-term harm to the longtail population. Since the fall departure of the longtails, the eagle appears to have switched to a diet of feral chickens (*Gallus gallus domesticus*); an image of the eagle taking off with a chicken in one talon has been circulating on social media. For the same reasons mentioned above, the eagle will not make a significant dent in our feral chicken population - to the dismay of most islanders!

Love it or hate it, the Bald Eagle has adapted quite well in Bermuda and will leave on its own terms. To me, its presence in Bermuda is a reminder of the success conservationists had in swiftly banning DDT for the sake of wildlife. Our bird is a juvenile, and the species takes 4-5 years to obtain the iconic brown body and white ("bald") head of an adult. How long will the eagle stay in Bermuda? Your guess is as good as mine. One thing I do know: It's never a dull moment when a Bald Eagle visits Bermuda, and I'm happy to have been alive to see the 2022 eagle.

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2022 CAHOW RECOVERY PROGRAM UPDATE – A RECORD YEAR FOR BERMUDA'S NATIONAL BIRD

by Jeremy L. Madeiros

Fig. 1: Adult Cahow at sea offshore from Nonsuch Island

The Bermuda Petrel (Cahow) *Pterodroma cahow* is a pelagic seabird not often seen by the public on Bermuda, despite being officially declared as the island's National Bird in 2003. It is endemic to the Islands of Bermuda, nesting no-where else on Earth. In contrast to the well-known Longtail, or Tropicbird, which is highly visible during daylight hours around Bermuda's coastlines during the Spring and Summer months, the Cahow only approaches land at night, nesting during the Winter and Spring on a few offshore islands in the Castle Harbour area.

Originally abundant, the Cahow numbered as many as half a million pairs at the time of Bermuda's discovery in the early 1500s, but was catastrophically impacted by the introduction of mammal predators such as rats, cats, dogs and hogs. By the 1620s the Cahow was thought to be extinct, a belief that persisted for 330 years until the rediscovery in 1951 of a tiny remnant population on four small, rocky half-acre offshore islets.

The Bermuda Petrel (Cahow) Recovery Program is a long-term management, research and recovery program that has been in place since 1960, with a primary objective being the recovery of the Cahow's breeding population through the following:

a) The control of threats to the species;

b) The construction of artificial concrete nesting burrows, to compensate for a lack of suitable natural burrows on the tiny soilless nesting islands;

c) The establishment of entirely new nesting colonies on larger islands less vulnerable to hurricane erosion and flooding and sea-level rise.

Other primary objectives of the program include the following:

1) to promote public education and understanding of the importance of the Cahow to the natural heritage and unique natural environment of Bermuda, as well as the cultural significance of the species.

2) to use new technology and techniques to determine the oceanic range and significant foraging areas for the species,

and to determine if there are threats such as offshore oil and gas exploration and extraction, that may overlap with the

Cahow's oceanic range.

The Cahow Recovery Program has been successful in addressing most of the threats affecting the Cahow on the breeding islands in Bermuda, enabling the population to increase from only 18 breeding pairs producing a combined total of 7 to 8 chicks annually in the early 1960s, to a record number of 156 breeding pairs in 2022, producing a record total of 77 successfully fledged chicks. This is up from 143 pairs producing 71 fledged chicks in 2021.

One of the main concerns for the future survival and continued recovery of the Cahow is the effect of climate change and global warming on the tiny original offshore nesting islets on Bermuda. This is primarily due to the impacts of sea-level rise on the islands, most of which are of very low elevation, and of stronger, more frequent hurricane events, which have caused massive erosion and flooding from huge waves and storm surge on these exposed islands.

To address the threats caused by climate change, new Cahow nesting colonies have been established on the nearby larger, more elevated Nonsuch Island Nature Reserve. Nonsuch is seven times larger than the combined area of all four original nesting islands, and has been restored since 1964 as a "Living Museum" with the original endemic and native forest cover and animal communities that used to cover the main islands of Bermuda, but have been almost completely replaced by introduced invasive species.

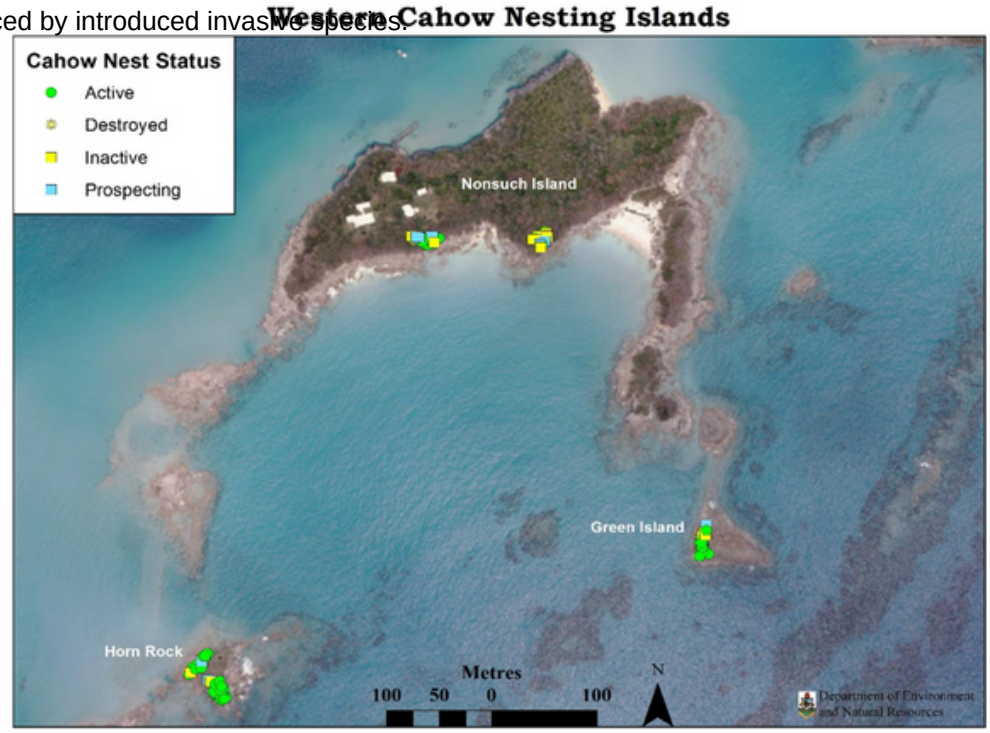

Fig. 2: Location of newly established Cahow nesting colonies on Nonsuch Island

Two nesting colonies of Cahows were established in separate projects by the Terrestrial Conservation Officer in 2004-2008 and 2013-2017 through the translocation of near-fledged chicks from the original islands to artificial concrete nest burrows constructed on Nonsuch *(Fig. 2). Chicks are monitored through their development and moved to the new nests about 21 days before fledging. They are then hand-fed fresh Squid and Anchovies every day, until they fledge to sea, not returning for 3 to 5 years. The two translocation projects have been successful with a 49 % return rate of fledged chicks, leading to the first nesting pairs and hatched chicks by 2009 to be recorded on Nonsuch Island since the 1620s. These nesting colonies have rapidly grown by 2022 to become the second-largest sub-population of all the nesting islands at 35 breeding pairs, and continue to grow and attract even non-translocated Cahows from the original islands. This is largely due to the fact that the new colonies are located at a much higher elevation on Nonsuch than on any of the other islands, and have not been disrupted or damaged by hurricane waves, storm surge and erosion.

Fig. 3: fitting of GLS tracking tag to Cahow fledgling on Nonsuch Island, late May, 2022

Fig. 4: Downy 15-day old Cahow chick removed from nest for weighing & measurement

During the 2022 breeding season, work was carried out retrieving Geolocator (GLS) tags that were fitted to the legs of adult Cahows 1 to 2 years before, enabling tracking of their movements at sea and identifying important feeding areas, which include the grand banks east of Nova Scotia and cooler, more productive waters well north of the Gulf Stream. In May and June, 37 GLS tags were fitted for the first time to fledglings just about to leave the nests, which will gather data for 3 years, archiving it until the tags can be recovered when the young birds return to nest. This will fill an important gap in knowledge, as nothing is presently known about where young Cahows go during the years when they are exploring and learning to survive on the open ocean.

Work was also carried out upgrading the highly successful live-stream “CahowCam” infrared video system on the island, the result of our partnership with J.P. Rouja and the Cornell Bird Laboratory. These videos enable a local and international audience to observe the nesting activities and chick rearing of Cahows in their underground burrows.

Despite the continuing recovery of the Cahow, it is still critically endangered and one of the rarest seabirds on Earth. Continued management, to control both old and new, emerging threats, will be essential to enable the continued recovery of Bermuda’s beautiful National Bird.

Fig. 5: Ten-week old Cahow chick with principle Conservation Officer on Nonsuch Island.

Report compiled by: Jeremy L. Madeiros, Principle Terrestrial Conservation Officer
Terrestrial Conservation Division
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
BERMUDA

2022 SUMMARY OF THE COMMON TERN AND ROSEATE TERN

by Dr. Miguel Mejias

Figure 1. The author taking fieldnotes at a tern nesting site in Mangrove Bay, while a Common Tern soars overhead. Photo: Erich Hetzel

Both the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and Roseate Tern (*S. dougallii)* remain critically endangered in Bermuda. Only 13 adults, comprising both species, were found during the 2022 breeding season. Nisbet et al. (2010) attributes the significant decline of Bermudian Common Terns to hurricanes, whereas the Bermudian Roseate Tern still comprise a small number of founding individuals following their recent recolonization (Mejías et al. 2020). The original Roseate Tern population became extirpated in the 1870s via specimen collections (Reid 1877). Currently, both species nest each year, although young, from either species, are not always produced. Thus, the longevity of either species as long-term breeders in Bermuda remains uncertain. Below, I summarize the events that transpired for both species during the 2022 breeding season.

COMMON TERN 2022 BREEDING SEASON

In total, I confirmed the presence of 9 Common Tern adults; April 3rd, 2022, marked the first Common Tern sighting of the season, which was reported by BZS Captain Trevor Rawson, in Flatts Inlet. Unfortunately, no breeding activity occurred in Harrington Sound, a usual breeding hotspot. On May 22nd, 2022, local birder, LeShun Smith, spotted one adult Common Tern on an islet in Mangrove Bay. Three days later, Erich Hetzel and I found a 5-egg clutch on the islet (Fig. 1). Tern clutches >4 means the nest belongs to a female-female pair, and that the eggs are infertile. Following a tip from Eva Bottelli, I confirmed the return of Common Terns to their nesting site in St. George's Harbour (Fig 2). A double-banded Common Tern adult, which originally hatched from a clutch of locally translocated eggs in 2016, was also with the St. George's pair.

Figure 2. Nesting pair of Common Terns at a St. George's Harbour breeding site. Photo: Miguel Mejías

On June 12th, 2022, I confirmed a 3-gg clutch from the St. George's pair, all of which hatched by June 30th. At least once a week, I weighed and measured the two growing tern chicks. Unfortunately, I found the "runt" of the brood dead on July 2nd, 2022. On July 13th, 2022, accompanied this time by Neal Morris, I fitted both chicks with uniquely numbered encoly leg bands and a plastic green band for individual recognition from afar. My father and I witnessed the fledging of both banded chicks on July 26th, 2022. By August 6th, 2022, the banded fledglings were often seen being fed by adults near "stone crusher corner," about 3 kilometer from their nesting site (Fig. 3).

Although the two chicks had successfully fledged, they would have to contend with hurricanes Earl (Category 2, September 8th) and Fiona (Category 3, September 23). Thankfully, Bermuda and its terns were spared a direct hit from both storms. On September 22nd, the two juveniles were spotted on some buoys in Harrington Sound by Tim White, the day before Fiona's impact. The day after the storm, Peter Adhemar spotted one of the banded juveniles in Harrington Sound, this time, however, with 15 Common Terns; most of these were undoubtedly migrants brought in by Fiona. Although we were only able to confirm the presence of 1 of 2 tern chicks, I am hopeful both birds, as well as their parent, survived the storm together.

Figure 3. Fledgling Common Tern from St. George's, sporting metal and colour bands. Photo: Miguel Mejías

ROSEATE TERN 2022 BREEDING SEASON

In total, I confirmed 4 Roseate Tern adults. On May 16th, 2022, Captain Trevor Rawson sent me a photograph of 2 Roseate Terns in Harrington Sound, the first sighting of them for 2022. Interestingly, one of the birds had metal bands on both legs, which is how we band our chicks in Bermuda. Thus, this was the first confirmation of recruitment for our Bermudian Roseate Terns. Unfortunately, neither Roseate Tern was seen again in Harrington Sound. On May 25th, 2022, Erich Hetzel and I spotted 3 Roseate Terns in Mangrove Bay. By June 22nd, we found 4 Roseate Terns and a 2-egg clutch at their usual nesting islet in the Great Sound. Unfortunately, we were unable to confirm if the double-banded Roseate spotted in Harrington Sound was among the 4 birds.

In attempt to band more of our terns, Erich and I successfully captured 1 adult with a walk-in trap (Fig. 4). Like our Common Tern chicks, I fitted the adult Roseate Tern with a single metal ID band on 1 leg and a plastic green leg band on the other. I also took body measurements of the bird just prior to its release. Although we originally thought that the founding Roseate Terns, which arrived in 2018, were thought to be of Caribbean origin (Mejías et al. 2020), world tern expert, Dr. Ian Nisbet, believes the measurements were more similar to the Northeastern Roseate Tern population in North America; these birds breed along the coasts of Massachusetts, Maine, and Nova Scotia. However, additional measurements and genetic work will be needed to confirm their origin. Unfortunately, the 2-egg clutch did not hatch, most likely due to infertility. We are hopeful that the Roseate pair safely return and successfully produce young in 2023.

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BUY BACK BERMUDA LAUNCHES FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN 3

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BIRD REPORT: JULY - OCTOBER 2022

by Joanne Smith

Though the summer months were very quiet as always, once the Fall migration kicked into full swing in September and particularly October, we ended up with quite a list for the period including four species that hadn't been seen in 5 or more years: Gray-headed Swamp-hen, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Northern Flicker and Kirtland's Warbler - this last only the second record ever.

Visiting ducks began arriving in July and August, including Black-bellied Whistling Duck at Cloverdale Pond (20 Aug, PA) with Sept and October bringing most of our other regulars including Northern Shoveler at Bernard Park (24 Oct, LS) and Greater Scaup at the Airport Pond (12 Oct, PW). A Black-billed Cuckoo was seen by several birders at the Five Forts GC in St. George (17 Aug PW/AW/MM) with Yellow-billed Cuckoo also reported there in September (25 Sept PW) but especially abundant in October with 15 reported in that same location.

Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythropthalmus)* Photo: Miguel Mejias

Gray-headed Swamphen (*Porphyrio poliocephalus)* Photo: LeShun Smith

Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Calidris subruficollis)* Photo: Tim White

One of the most viewed birds this fall was a Gray-headed Swamp-hen that took up residence in the flooded fields at Bernard Park (20 Oct, PW), the previous Bermuda record being in 2016 in the west end. Nearby Pembroke marsh yielded a Virginia Rail (25 Oct, PW). The first shorebirds were seen in July, including an Upland Sandpiper at the Airport Pond (28 July, PW), with many more appearing over the next two months, including a Hudsonian Godwit near Clearwater (10 Sept, JH), a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Outer Lea Farm (5 Sept, PW), a Long-billed Dowitcher at the Bernard Park fields (20 Oct, EB) and Wilson's Phalarope at both Mid Ocean GC and Spittal Pond (5 Sept, AW/NM).

A Brown Noddy sighting got the entire birding community out to Hungry Bay following the passage of Hurricane Fiona, but it was only to be the original observer (23 Sept, GB) who could record it. Our Roseate and Common Terns continued through the summer into late September, a Gull-Billed Tern was seen at Spittal Pond in July (27 Jul, PW) and a Least Tern at Cooper's Point in September (10 Sept, JH/EH/JS). The first Bermuda Petrel reported on eBird this fall was 24 October (PW) from Coopers Point and the last White-tailed Tropicbird (Longtail) was reported 23 Oct seen from St. Georges (PW) There was only one sighting of a Magnificent Frigate bird in St. David's (22 Sept, NM).

Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum)* Photo: Miguel Mejias

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus)* Photo: Herb Marshall

A Barn Owl was seen in Devonshire (13 Sept, EB) and our Bald Eagle remained through October. A variety of Flycatchers passed through, including Gray Kingbird in Smiths (16 Aug, KC), Alder Flycatcher near Pembroke Marsh (19 Sept, MM/JS/PW), Acadian and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers at Five Forts GC (2 Oct, PW) and a Least Flycatcher near Mills Creek (11 Oct, RB). A high count of 16 Eastern Wood-Peewees was seen on one golf course in St. George (21 Oct, PW). Swallows began arriving in July/August with Tree at Somerset Long Bay (23 Aug, PM), Cliff (3 Aug, EG) and Bank (9 Aug, KC) at Spittal Pond. Chimney Swifts were seen at Cemetery Hill (20 Oct, PW) and there were two sightings of Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Outer Lea (25 Oct, HM) and Spittal Pond (26 Oct, PW) – the first recorded since 2014.

A Northern Flicker got everyone out at least once to Ocean View Golf Course, particularly the photographers (26 Oct MM). A Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen near Mangrove Bay (24 Sept, Anonymous) while September/October brought an influx of thrushes including Gray-cheeked Thrush (28 Sept, MM/LS) and Swainson's Thrush (29 Sept, NM) first seen at the Arboretum, a Wood Thrush (21 Oct, PW) at Five Forts GC and a Veery and a Hermit Thrush at Ferry Point Park (22 & 30 Sept, PW). Migrant sparrows included Lincoln's Sparrow (24 Sept, PW) and Clay-colored Sparrow in Dockyard (28 Oct, HM/MM/PW).

Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii)* Photo: LeShun Smith

Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Setophaga pensylvanica)* Photo: LeShun Smith

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra)* Photo: Erich Hetzel

The earliest warblers showed up in July with the first being a Louisiana Waterthrush, unsurprisingly, at Seymour's Pond (20 Jul, OP) but by the end of October 32 warbler species had been recorded including: Kentucky (4 Sep, PW) and Swainson's Warblers (25 Sep, EH/JH) at the Arboretum, a Mourning Warbler at Ferry Point Park (18 Sep, PA), Connecticut at Hog Bay (25 Sep, NM) and Chestnut-sided, Canada and Blackburnian Warblers at Ferry Point (22 Oct, PW netted) to name a few. A Yellow-breasted Chat was also seen at Ocean View GC (28 Oct. NM)

Both Summer (Ferry Point Park, 18 Sep, MM/JS/PW) and Scarlet Tanager (Five Forts GC, 24 Sep, PW) were seen, as well as a Dickcissel at Ferry Point Park (30 Sep, PW) and the first Common Nighthawk reported was at Port Royal GC (3 Oct, RB).

Observers: Peter Adhemar (PA), Geoff Bell (GB), Eva Botelli (EB), Richard Brewer (RB), Kenrith Carter (KC), Erich Hetzel (EH), Janice Hetzel (JH), Herb Marshall (HM), Miguel Mejias (MM), Neal Morris (NM), Philip Moser (PM), Odysseas Papageorgiou (OP), Joanne Smith (JS), LeShun Smith (LS), Paul Watson (PW), Andrea Webb (AW),

SOUTHLANDS AT RISK

by Janice Hetzel

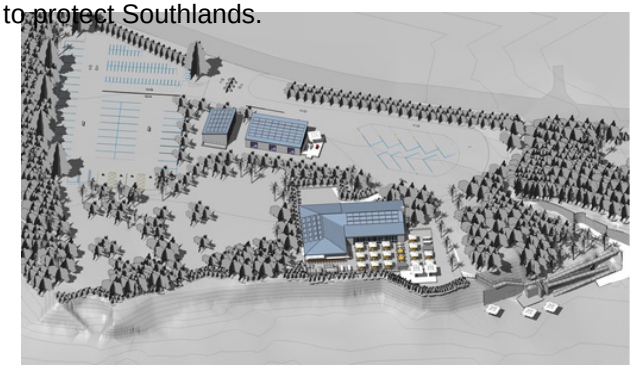
We are greatly concerned about plans by the Bermudiana Beach Resort and the Bermuda Government to destroy nearly .75 acres of coastal woodland in Southlands Park. Their plan is to construct an events lawn, bathrooms for the hotel and additional parking (44 cars, 47 bikes) on Park property. These plans were resoundingly rejected by the National Parks Commission in 2020 and nothing has changed to make this proposal more acceptable. The area of the proposed development contains a mature coastal woodland containing a variety of native and endemic species. It is appropriately zoned Woodland Reserve to protect the habitat. The Conservation Management Plan submitted for the development suggests that the area will be enhanced by removal of invasive species. Invasive species removal, guided by best conservation practices is usually a good idea, but requires replacement with native and endemic flora. Removing the invasive species and replacing them with an events lawn, bathrooms and parking has no conservation benefit and would be a significant loss for the people of Bermuda and our natural environment. If the Bermudiana Beach Resort requires an events lawn and additional parking, these amenities should be located on the brownfield site to the east of the property. This area is zoned tourism and would be most appropriate for this development.

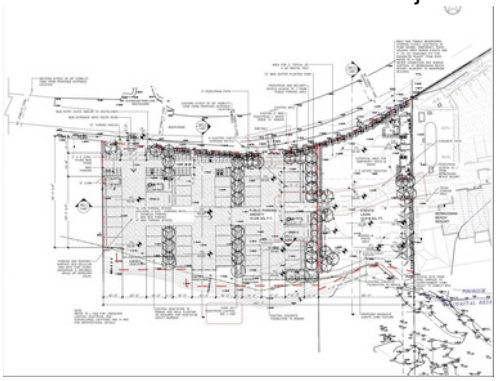
Earlier this year, the Bermudiana Beach Resort received planning approval to build a catering facility that would likely service the proposed events lawn on the Southlands side of the property. The facility sits right on the property line with the Park without the required 15 foot setback. The justification for the lack of setback was that the boundary on the park side was heavily vegetated so the building would not be seen by those using the park. This is quite disingenuous as they have full intention of removing the vegetation on the park side all the way to the cliff edge as part of the events lawn, bathroom and parking development. In fact, the drawings included a pathway and gate to the events lawn, even though plans for the events lawn had been previously refused.

Also of concern, are the draft plans commissioned by the Estates Section of the Ministry of Public Works to further develop the western part of the Southlands shoreline. These plans propose a large restaurant on the cliffside, a concession storage building, bathrooms and additional parkiing for 45 cars, 78 bikes and up to 9 minibuses or taxis. The scale of this proposal is dramatically out of proportion to the needs of the Park. These "upgrades" will also require significant armouring of the coastal cliffs to protect the development from shoreline erosion. The clear impacts of climate change have made this intensification of development on the shoreline unacceptable. Taken together with the events lawn/parking proposal for the eastern end, a significant part of the southern side of the Park will be developed and the natural environment and beauty will be lost.

This proposal is particularly egregious as it is located in a National Park, not just any National Park, but Southlands Park. This park exists because the people of Bermuda came together and insisted that it be protected. A recent survey by the Department of Parks showed that most respondents wanted the park to remain in as much of a natural state as possible. The Government of Bermuda, as the caretaker of these publicly held lands, has a duty and responsibiltiy to ensure that they are appropriately managed and protected for the benefit of all. This means saying no to the indefensible destruction of the coastal woodland in Southlands Park.

If you would like to save Southlands, we ask you to speak up about these proposals. Speak to your MP and the other members of Parliament and tell them that this is not what you want for Southlands Park. Share your concerns and spread the word on social media. Contact us at info@audubon.bm for additional information or to join the effort to protect Southlands.





SOCIETY EVENTS

Girl Guide Project - 23 July 2022

We were delighted to have the help of visiting US Girl Scouts who joined with local Girl Guides for a major cleanup and conservation project at Somerset Long Bay and Nine Beaches. They picked up trash and glass from the beaches, cleared invasives and mulched young trees. It was hot work and they did an excellent job

Spittal Pond Field Trip - 5 September 2022

We celebrated World Shorebirds Day with a walk around Spittal Pond guided by Paul Watson. Threatening weather did not stop our intrepid birders and ten species of migratory shorebird were identified around the pond.

Paget Island Bird Camp - 7-9 October 2022

We enjoyed the peace and tranquility of Paget Island, went birding, explored Fort Cunningham, ate delicious meals, and even had evening entertainment including movie night and a trivia quiz. An excellent way to spend a fall weekend.

Ferry Point Park Bird Walk & Bird Banding Demonstration - 22 October 2022

Birds galore as Paul Watson's nets filled with a variety of species for us to see up close and in the hand. We had a great turn out of bird watchers and thirty-seven species were seen in all.