

The Bermuda Audubon Society

President's Report
2019-20



Audubon Committee 2019-2020

Karen Border – President

Jennifer Gray – Vice President

Zelia Amaral – Treasurer

Janice Hetzel – Secretary

Devika Mather – Membership Secretary

Peter Lee

Jeremy Madeiros

Joanne Smith

Paul Watson

David Wingate

Summer 2019 Events



Last July's snorkelling trip to North Rock organised for BAS members was a popular new addition to our event calendar.

We enjoyed a perfect evening for our members' Sunset Cruise around Hamilton Harbour last summer.



Tern Project 2019

Only three pairs of common terns nested in Bermuda in 2019 and the season saw some setbacks with a clutch of abandoned eggs and two chicks lost overboard from the Little Sound buoy. However, four chicks successfully fledged in the end. The pair of roseate terns that had nested on Pearl Island in 2018 (the first breeding pair since the 1840s!) returned to nest again in 2019 and fledged two chicks.

A solar-powered sound system was installed on Pearl Island to attract common terns to nest there, instead of on precarious buoys. It successfully lured the pair from the failed nest on the Little Sound buoy, but it was too late in the season for a successful second nesting. The pair is nesting on Pearl Island again in 2020.



Photos courtesy Erich Hetzel, including two from the Tern Cam

Cahows had a record nesting season with 131 breeding pairs and 73 chicks fledged, of which 12 were from Nonsuch Island.

Autumn 2019 Events

A Spittal Pond fieldtrip was held to mark **World Shorebirds Day** in September, and a day of birding at the east end of the island marked **World Migratory Bird Day**.



BAS participated in Cornell/eBird's global '**October Big Day**' with a birding walk at Spittal Pond Nature Reserve led by Paul Watson. We also partnered with the Bermuda Zoological Society for a **Plant and Bird Tour of the Bermuda Botanical Gardens** in October.

Unfortunately, damage from Hurricane Humberto led to the cancellation of our annual Paget Island Bird Camp and high winds and rough seas cancelled all but one of our pelagic boat trips in November. But members met up at Cooper's Point for a land-based "sea watch" where they were rewarded with continuous views of about 15 Cahows.



A Peregrine Falcon found exhausted at Spittal Pond in November was taken into rehab at BAMZ and later released with a tracker. "Millie" has been tracked, mostly around Mid Ocean Golf Course and Harrington Sound, ever since.



Winter 2019-2020 Events



Bermuda Institute students built bluebird boxes as part of the Dollars for Hours programme run by PartnerRe. The Society sells the boxes through Aberfeldy Nurseries.

The Christmas Bird Count in 2019 recorded 90 species in total (down on previous years) including 17 species of warblers and 13 species of waterfowl. Starlings, House Sparrows and Kiskadees made up over 50% of the total count. Highlights included a Townsend's Warbler, a Northern Mockingbird and a Trindade Petrel.

Jeremy Madeiros gave a **talk at BUEI on the Cahow Recovery Programme** in January, with JP Rouja and visiting researcher Letizia Campioni from Italy, explaining the latest research including the use of GPS trackers and blood and feather sampling to investigate exposure to pollutants.



Members turned out for a **Volunteer Day** to cull casuarina seedlings and other invasives at our **Alfred Blackburn Smith Nature Reserve**.

Committee members manned a station at the **Bermuda National Trust's Children's Nature Walk** at Spittal Pond in February, helping youth spot, identify and appreciate some of our local birds.

Spring 2020

Sadly, the Covid-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of our planned events for the spring and summer, including a whale-watching trip in March, our annual Nonsuch Island field trip in May and a North Rock snorkel trip in June.

However, one silver lining of the lockdown has been how many people have found a renewed appreciation for our natural world and open spaces – we have received a large volume of calls from people observing birds for the first time and interested to know what they have seen.

Thanks to our Secretary Janice Hetzel for getting into the spirit of the times and giving a Zoom talk on “Bermuda Backyard Birding”.



Pied-billed Grebe family, Photo by Tim White

Photography Club

The photography walks organised by Devika Mather have been taking place monthly, save for a couple of cancellations due to inclement weather. The group normally meets on either a Saturday or Sunday morning and group sizes range from 5-15.

Places visited include Spittal Pond, Fort Scaur, Ferry Reach, the old St George's golf course, Coney Island, Somerset Long Bay, Alfred Blackburn Smith Reserve and the Arboretum.

Themes have included "Birds in Flight" and Longtails.



*Black and White Warbler,
Photo by Devika Mather*



Whimbrel, Photo by Herb Marshall



Green Heron, Photo by Sarah Caldwell

Bird Conservation

In addition to the Tern Project, the society also continues its support programmes for Bermuda's Bluebirds and Longtails.

Bluebirds

Audubon has been encouraging sign-up to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's **NestWatch database**.

Longtails

The society continues to sell **Longtail igloos**. A **video** showing how to install an igloo is available on our website and YouTube.



The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

NestWatch

Where Birds Come to Life

HELP MEASURE NATURE'S SUCCESS
nests, clutches, broods, and fledglings

For over a decade people like you have helped scientists by collecting valuable data on the successes and failures of nesting birds.

↓ EXPLORE THESE BIRDS: WE'D LOVE MORE DATA

 Eastern Bluebird	 Tree Swallow	 House Wren	 Black-capped Chickadee
 Western Bluebird	 American Robin	 Eastern Phoebe	 Barn Swallow

Nature Reserves

At the end of 2019, we began a major **restoration of Somerset Long Bay Nature Reserve**, which had been taken over by invasive vines. Using large machinery, the vines and the dead trees supporting them were removed. With the help of volunteers, we removed trash turned up by digger and pulled remaining vines from the live trees.

Cow cane remains a problem at the reserve and will be dug out and removed over the coming months, before replanting with native and endemic trees and shrubs can begin.

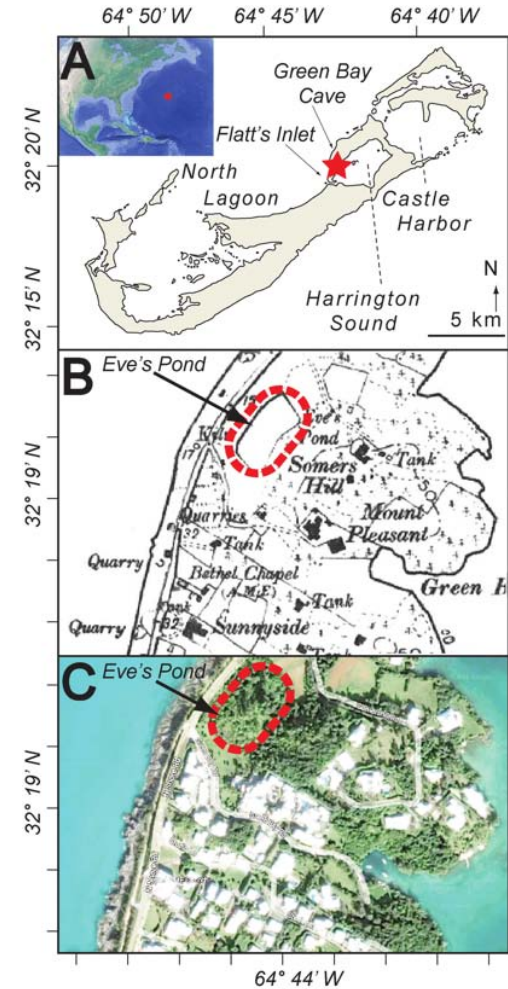


We have installed **new signage** at several of our nature reserves. The signs now have consistent branding and our website address.



Buy Back Bermuda

Spring 2020 saw the start of **Eve's Pond Nature Reserve** project, on the 3.5 acre property in Hamilton Parish near Shelly Bay, that was acquired in Buy Back Bermuda's Campaign #2. It once had a tidal pond, hence the name, that was filled in with sand dredged from Flatts Inlet in 1941. Many huge casuarinas and other invasive trees were removed and the pond has been re-dug in the valley of the site. The new nature reserve will be opened to the public following replanting and the creation of walking trails.



Buy Back Bermuda is a joint initiative of the Bermuda Audubon Society and the Bermuda National Trust, to acquire and conserve open space for the benefit of the whole community.

Education and Advocacy

Education and advocacy are important parts of our mandate. Over the course of the past year we have given bird talks, field trips and Bluebird box building classes for a number of schools and youth groups.

The society sponsored Alieny González, a doctoral student at University of Havana, to attend the BirdsCaribbean conference in July 2019.



This cleared hillside at Judkin Lane is now being quarried



Janice Hetzel talks to Bermuda Cub Scouts about Bluebirds

With the help of Kim Smith at BEST, we keep a eye on planning applications and have submitted several objections where merited. Of particular note in the past year was our campaign against quarrying at Judkin Lane, which included letters to the Minister and editorials in the press. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, the quarry permission was granted.

Encouraging Diversity

In the context of the recent movement for racial justice that we have seen explode around the world, it is timely that the Bermuda Audubon Society should look at ways in which we can increase the diversity of our membership and show solidarity with our members of colour.

You may have seen the video of the white woman who called the police on a black birder in Central Park who asked her to put her dog on a leash. This poster (right) was produced by bird photographer Walter Kitundu who was photo-documenting red-tailed hawks in San Francisco's Alta Plaza Park and had white people call 911 on him so many times that he had to stick signs around the park explaining who he was and what he was doing.

Increasing the diversity of our membership has long been a part of the society's strategic plan, but we must work harder to make it clear that we are an organisation that welcomes everyone and invite more diverse participation in our events.

ADVISORY!



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN?

He is a black man and also a bird photographer. While this combination may be rare rest assured it is generally not considered **DANGEROUS**. Having these characteristics does not automatically qualify him as "**SUSPICIOUS**." Granted, he does often stand still for long periods, near bushes, and exhibit short bursts of speed in pursuit of a good image. Be aware that, overall, he finds the birds in the park much more interesting than the people striding through it - and his camera is not trained on you. He will not harm your dogs, children, sisters, mothers, brothers, or friends. He may even offer you help when needed, or a smile, a chance to see a close up of a hawk or hummingbird. Do not **CALL THE POLICE** unless you see him being accosted by another party. Do not **FLAG DOWN A PATROL CAR**. Save your **FEAR** for something that counts. And have a lovely day.

(Below are actual photos taken by this man)



© Walter Kitundu via Twitter

Cooperation and Partnerships

Locally:

B.E.S.T. • Bermuda National Trust (Buy Back Bermuda) •
Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute • Bermuda Zoological
Society • Conservation Services, Bermuda Government • Eco
Bermuda • Keep Bermuda Beautiful • Parks Commission

Internationally:

BirdLife International • BirdsCaribbean • National Audubon
Society • North American Birds • Royal Society for the Protection
of Birds (UK) • UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

Thank you!

To our loyal members, volunteers and supporters

H.E. Mr John Rankin, Governor of Bermuda (Patron)

Aberfeldy Nurseries – Bluebird box sales

BAMZ – ocean fieldtrips

Bermuda National Trust – Buy Back Bermuda and jointly managed nature reserves

Bermuda Marine Services – Tern project support

Bermuda Red Cross – storage space

Dept of Conservation Services

Deloitte – Seymour's Pond nature reserve sponsor

Horsfield Landscaping – ABS nature reserve maintenance

Partner Re – Dollars for Hours

Stuart Smith and his Bluebird Society volunteers

Jamie Steeves – For maintenance of Vesey Street verges

Tom Vesey and Ted Cassidy – Making Bluebird boxes & kits