



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

6pm Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008

BUEI Auditorium

### Presidents Report

I am honoured to be presenting here tonight our report for June 2007 to June 2008. The Society successfully continues its work to conserve Bermuda's special bird life and habitats for the benefit of all, and it gives me great pleasure to share our progress with you.

My thanks go to a superb committee of management whose indispensable expertise and outstanding voluntary effort is the mainstay of our achievements. The contributions and sacrifices made by these individuals, who have a myriad of commitments and full time jobs outside the society, is truly deserving of much praise. At the end of 2007 Leila Madeiros stepped down from position of treasurer and we were lucky to engage the services of Judith Swain to fill the treasurer's seat upon her return to Bermuda in early 2008. We also engaged an outstanding volunteer Lyn Llewellyn to work on membership. This has been one of the finest teams I have had the privilege to work with.

Perhaps the most significant work of the Society this year was to venture into Strategic Planning with expert facilitation from the RSPB's Ken Smith and Sarah Sanders. Our aim was to identify our specific conservation role in Bermuda and reach consensus on a strategic objectives and an action plan for implementation to deliver these objectives. Over the course of a very long weekend the committee and invited stakeholders engaged in inspirational brainstorming and in-depth discussion, visits to nature reserves and the compilation of endless sheets of ideas, priorities constraints and opportunities. Culminating from this grand effort we have a draft strategic plan which will soon be posted on our web site. It was also agreed that in order to deliver on the set priorities the Society would pay a part-time secretary.

We are happy to introduce to our membership tonight the revised mission statement of the Trust which we feel sets us aside from other NGO's and reflects the true vision of the society. ***"To conserve Bermuda's special bird life and habitats for the benefit of all"***. My thanks to each and every individual on our team who sacrificed their personal commitments to engage in this worthwhile process and to the RSPB for their invaluable assistance.

This year our Nature Reserve extended beyond our own holdings with consultation provided on the Sea Swept Farm Pond which was dredged and expanded to form an improved wetland area. Audubon committee members also assisted with the planting of mangroves on the pod border and we look forward to seeing the pond mature and the birdlife arrive.

Avid birders will have noticed a decline in the numbers of migratory waterfowl visiting David's Pond in Paget Marsh due to a choking of the pond by the invasive floating salvinia plant. Audubon was assisted by staff of Conservation Services to test methodology for removal of this invasive. Unfortunately after many hours of hard labour and truck loads of salvinia carted away it was hard to tell we had done anything at all. Conclusions tell us that we will have to resort to heavier equipment or biological control in the future if a natural cycle of the plant does not result in a die-off soon.

In October we were pleased to receive the benefit of a "Day of Giving" offered by the Bank of Bermuda. Bank employees did a wonderful job clearing the entire fence line along South Road of Morning Glory vine and clearing the main path up onto the reserve. It was hard work but a good time was had by all.

Just last week the ABS reserve received attention once again when VP Fiona Doe worked with Kevin Horsefield and staff of Horsefields landscaping to cull casuarinas from the western end of the reserve.

Much of our attention went to our Somerset reserves this year starting with a major trash clean up along the Cambridge Road boundary of our Long Bay West reserve and the removal of some substantial abodes erected by squatters on the beachfront boundary. David Wingate and volunteers Evan Morby and Robert Chandler worked

tirelessly to remove Chinese Fan Palms and other invasives from the nesting islands within the pond and we have just completed installing 800 feet of sturdy new fencing around the reserve to protect the wildlife from further invasions of trash, squatters, scramblers and potential intruders.

After the opening of the first Buy Back Bermuda Nature reserve on Earth Day 2006 we are pleased and proud to see the greenery and birdlife abounding in this very special place. Interpretive signage has been completed and a monthly maintenance scheme will ensure the protection and enhancement of this reserve for years to come.

The Audubon Society has reinstated leases for three parcels of land in Devonshire Marsh. This will generate a small amount of income for the Society and offers protection and maintenance for these lands through sensitive grazing by farm animals. We have also been working closely with KBB to tackle the issue of garbage tipping in this area.

Following the success of the first Buy Back Bermuda campaign, the joint committee from the Bermuda Audubon Society and the Bermuda National Trust launched Buy Back Bermuda – Round Two in November of 2007. Our target this time...\$2.5 million to purchase and preserve two areas of green space, one at Skroggins Hill in Southampton and one near Shelly Bay in Hamilton Parish. In its first few months the campaign has already received donations and pledges of over \$1 million, but there is still a long way to go. We are grateful to the Government of Bermuda for supporting the campaign to the tune of \$300,000 and also to Sharon Vesey and her Trust who have generously donated the land at Skroggins Hill allowing for our restoration and management vision to fulfil its realization.

Bluebird box making workshops were held once again this year with the main event hosted by our Patron, Sir Richard Gozney, at Government House.

Collaboration between PartnerRe and the society saw a group of student from Mount St Agnes School assisting the society with the building and painting of bluebird boxes. For their efforts the school received a sizable donation from PartnerRe and the Society gained a fresh batch of boxes to supply for to the community.

A second group from the PartnerRe programme prepared and painted boxes in Mid Ocean pink just in time for us to revitalize the trail on the golf course in time for the PGA Golf Tournament in October.

The Society received a beautifully carved European Goldfinch by Canadian wood carver Larry Weston. The goldfinch joins a bluebird on display at the BUEI which was the first in the series donated by Mr. Weston. We look forward to the next in a series of local bird carvings which Mr. Weston has offered to our Society and are thankful to BUEI for the collaboration and display space.

With an investment into an order of 100 igloos the society continues to address the housing crisis for this species. We are grateful to Jeremy Madeiros and his Conservation Crew for preparing the igloos with Bermuda's special SKB coatings. We have installed igloos this year on Lambda and Pearl Islands during a field day with hard working volunteers. Our thanks to Jim Butterfield who was instrumental to the project providing boat transport and Tim Patton's working barge.

Field trips this year took our members and friends on the annual member's day to Nonsuch Island in July, hosted by Jeremy and Leila Madeiros and with transportation courtesy of David Saul and his fine vessel. Likewise, in November, Graham Maddocks took a group of sea fairing bird hunters off the south shore in a successful search of Cahows in flight.

October saw once again the fun filled Paget Island Bird Camp where despite rain and storm a good time was had by all. In December the Annual Christmas Bird Count had a host of people out twitching and resulted in 6,921 birds sighted representing 95 species. A total of 250 species have now been recorded on the bird count since 1975. In February the society returned to the aid of the National Trust for the Annual Children's Walk where hundreds of children with teachers, guides and parents enjoyed a beautiful day of environmental learning. In April David Wingate led members on an informative tour that started at Scaur Hill and visited the Gilbert Nature Reserve, Somerset Long Bay East and West Reserves and the Dockyard Jetty's.

Lectures put on by the Society this year included "*50 Years of Observation and insight on Bermuda's Rarest Seabird*" an oversight of the Common Tern in Bermuda by David Wingate, "*Teaching Geese, Cranes and Swans Migratory Routes by Ultralight*" a fascinating account of teaching birds migratory routes via ultra light by Dr, Bill Sladen and "*RSPB's Work in Overseas Territories*" the amazing work of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds by Sarah Sanders.

Nothing has pleased us more than the success of our television series ENVIROSHORTS. After many months of research and filming the series aired on TV 9 from October through January. We have been overwhelmed with the tremendous response to the series and are in the process of creating DVD's for distribution to all educational facilities and public libraries. If you missed the series be sure to pick up a DVD in the fall.

Our public awareness campaign has reached out in a number ways this year. In November the society had a presence at Vermont Museum for the National Trust Culturefest Celebration. Coverage in the press has been tremendous with numerous bird related front page stories in the papers. We are indebted to Andrew Dobson and the talented Chris Burville whose skills help in a big way to get this kind of coverage. The Society man's station at the Farmers Market during the Christmas and Easter Season where bluebird boxes, longtail igloos, DVD's books and memberships are sold. Volunteers are also available to answer questions and generally promote the Society. We continue our annual contribution to the BZS library of the impressive Birds of the World Series and we collaborated with like minded NGO's to promote best practices such as the Earth Hour event with Greenrock.

The Bermuda Audubon Society web site continues to be updated and improved providing a wealth of information locally and globally. Printed newsletters are distributed to members and also posted on the website.

The Bluebird education programme continues under the coordination of Karen Border and the purchase of a new lap top computer and LCD projector will enable more presentation to more schools in the coming year.

The Society continues to work with Dr. Jamie Bacon of the Amphibian Project who conducts toxicology and species monitoring work in our reserve ponds and we are pleased that Julian Avery has returned once again to continue a study of the local bluebird population. Visiting scientists joined Dr. Wolfgang Sterrer in our Sears Cave Reserve to study lichen populations.

This is an appropriate time in my report to acknowledge the many volunteer hours and the ongoing dedication and commitment to bluebirds shown by Stuart Smith and his posse of bluebird trail monitors.

The society continues to serve as environmental watchdogs and advocate strongly for resolution on issues that threaten our environment. Included in the topics addressed this past year were Nature Reserve Vandalism, the proposed importation of soil for a cricket pitch, the new cruise ship port at Dockyard and with associated channel work and pigeon control on the island. We continue to serve on ECO sharing information and resources and encourage advocacy in our membership and in the community.

Our collaboration with local partners continues to grow as an environmental awakening in Bermuda emerges. Bank of Bermuda - Bermuda Amphibian Project - Bermuda Aquarium Museum and Zoo - Bermuda Broadcasting Company - Bermuda National Trust - Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute - Bermuda Red Cross - Department of Conservation Services - Department of Parks - Environmental Coalition (ECO) - Greenrock - Horsefield Landscaping - Keep Bermuda Beautiful - Ministry of the Environment - PartnerRe. Our collaborations with key partners overseas continues and helps to enhance our presence globally Earth Charter - U K Overseas Territories Conservation Forum - Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - Rutgers University

In closing I would like to thank my incredible executive committee. The accomplishments of this organisation are largely due to their relentless undying devotion and incredible support. As I have said before serving for the Bermuda Audubon Society ranks amongst the most enriching experiences of my life and I look forward to exciting years ahead.

A special thank you to our Patron Sir Richard Gozney who brings not only his patronage and support but a wealth of knowledge on bird life. He has truly become part of our team.

*Jennifer Gray*

**P.O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX**

**Email: [info@audubon.bm](mailto:info@audubon.bm)**

**Web site: [www.audubon.bm](http://www.audubon.bm)**