

Bermuda Audubon Society
Annual General Meeting 29 May 2024
President's Annual Report

I am pleased to be presenting our report for June 2023 – May 2024. The Society continues to make progress in its work to conserve Bermuda's special bird life and habitats for the benefit of all. My sincere thanks go to the excellent committee of management who volunteer their time and expertise to ensure our success.

EVENTS

We have had a very busy year full of educational and volunteer events. They were as follows:

2023

May 13	Nonsuch Trip
June 11	Pelagic Seabird Trip
Sept 9	Spittal Pond Field Trip
Aug 16	Info Table at Harbour Nights – Fairmont Southampton SDO
Oct 13-15	Fall Bird Camp – Cancelled
Oct 14	Birding Walk at Arboretum – Cancelled due to weather
Oct 20	Corporate Bluebird Box Building - Sovos
Oct 29	Stokes Point Work Party
Nov 11	Cahow Watching Trip – Cancelled due to weather
Nov 16	Youth Climate Summit – Audubon Booth
Nov 18	Cahow Watching Trip – Cancelled due to weather
Dec 2	Bird Walk at Ferry Reach with Bird Banding
Dec 6	PwC Volunteer Day at Eve's Pond
Dec 16	Christmas Bird Count

2024

Feb 8	Lecture at BUEI – Miguel Mejias – A Big Year for Birds in Bermuda
Feb 10	Seymour's Pond Volunteer Day
Feb 18	Government House Grounds Bird Watching Walk
March 16	ABS Reserve Volunteer Day
March 17	Whale Watching – Cancelled due to weather
April 2	BNT Children's Walk at Spittal Pond
April 14	Whale Watching – Cancelled due to weather
April 15	Lecture at BAMZ – Janice Hetzel – Bluebird Talk
April 18	Deloitte Impact Day
April 22	Bermuda College Class Trip to ABS to look at Edible Mushrooms
April 27	Whale Watching Trip – Cancelled due to weather
April 28	Sears Cave Visit with Allison Copeland
April 29	Eve's Pond Tour with P6 Students at Francis Patton School
May 4	Nonsuch Trip
May 11	70th Anniversary Celebration Dinner and David Wingate Tribute
May 18	Audubon Information Table at Greenpeace Open Boat Day
May 21	Lefroy House Field Trip
May 25	Pelagic Seabird Trip

BUY BACK BERMUDA

Buy Back Bermuda is grateful for the support of our membership which helps to support the combined energies of the Bermuda Audubon Society and the Bermuda National Trust into a single force to save Bermuda's priceless and dwindling open space. The ultimate objective: to pass on this legacy to future generations as a gift in perpetuity.

It is thanks to the generosity of people like you that we have been able to acquire and preserve 24 acres of land across Bermuda.

Somerset Long Bay East continues to mature nicely, and the cedar forest is taking hold. Storm damage to the foreshore has been remediated and a picnic table and seating installed on the ocean overlook.

Vesey Nature Reserve in Southampton is benefitting from woodland clearing of a monoculture forest area that will be planted with natives and endemics.

Eve's Pond Nature Reserve in Hamilton Parish is now a lush green oasis for wildlife with the young trees holding their own as we battle the arrival of invasives trying to sneak in.

All our nature reserves require constant care and attention and now High Point Nature Reserve will be our focus as we ready it for a 2025 opening to the public.

We hope that you are a regular visitor to our properties returning often with friends and family.

We continue to keep a careful watch over precious open spaces that are under threat of development and work hard to make the spaces we have beneficial to our wildlife and our people.

Thank you again for making our work possible and let us know if you would like to get involved, we need more help..

AUDUBON NATURE RESERVES

Cat and Partridge Islands

Plan to develop a management plan for the islands in the coming year.

Seymour's Pond

A hard-working team from Deloitte volunteered at Seymour's Pond as part of their impact day. They removed invasive species from the nesting island and planted native and endemics. The new plantings were surrounded with mulch. They also planted cedars below the road and other native and endemics along the pathway to the bird hide. Several large bags of bottles were also removed.

Somerset Long Bay West

Alfred Blackburn Smith

Our annual volunteer day was a big success. We continue to remove invasive seedlings. In April, students from Bermuda College had a fungi tour of the reserve led by Chris Faria. We completed a survey of the reserve with new markers put in place. Tiffany Wardman has applied to put a fence along the eastern end of her property that sits to the east of the reserve. There is a gate but it was unclear if access from the Coral Beach

Club will be prevented from this direction. BAS submitted an objection to this application.

Stokes Point East

Successful work party was held in the Fall. The paths were cleared and trash removed from the roadside. The Cedars and Palmettos planted along the roadside are doing extremely well.

Sear's Cave

Alison Copeland provided an excellent presentation on Sears Cave and the endemic ferns that have been planted there. A barn owl was seen leaving the cave. Work is needed to remove a growing Scheffleria/ Umbrella Tree and invasive Sword Ferns on the upper rim of opening.

Purchase of New Reserve

In 2022 we received a bequest for the purpose of purchasing land for a nature reserve. We have been in discussions with representatives of the Trust which owns nearly 7 acres of Devonshire Marsh at the Lime House property. We hope to move this along before the end of the year. Please let us know if you are aware of property for sale that would be suitable for a nature reserve. Also, consider how you will protect your own properties from future overdevelopment.

ADVOCACY

Part Group

We continue to work collaboratively with the Bermuda National Trust (BNT), the Bermuda Environmental Sustainability Taskforce (BEST), the Bermuda Agricultural Group Heritage Collective and other interested individuals in a group we have called the Planning Application Review Team (PART). This group meets weekly to review and discuss planning applications that have been advertised that may impact areas with conservation or protective zoning. Over the past year the Bermuda Audubon Society has reviewed at 107 applications and submitted 30 letters of objection and 4 letters of concern. Ten applications that we had objected to have been appealed. Two are still pending, 7 were approved on appeal and one that had already been approved had a condition removed on appeal. We appealed the decision to allow development of a cottage in the Arboretum on the basis that there was no Parks Commission and our appeal was denied.

Southlands Park

We initiated legal action in response to the approval of the events lawn in woodland reserve at Southlands Park. As a result of our filing, the appeal decision was withdrawn and we received \$2000 to cover a portion of our costs. The recent consultation was in response to this action as the Minister responsible for Parks had not followed the provisions of the National Parks Act that require this process. This will be watched very closely.

Ocean View Golf Course Warehouse

We initiated legal action in response to the approval of the placement of a warehouse in the middle of an area of woodland reserve. One key point was the lack of consideration of the impact of the development on the White-eyed vireo, a level one protected species under the Protected Species Act. We understand that they intend to withdraw this approval as well and a portion of costs will be reimbursed.

National Parks Commission

The National Parks Commission was finally reappointed on 3 April 2024. Heather Bottelli is our representative on the Commission.

Fairmont Southampton SDO

Despite our concerted efforts to fight the SDO, Minister Roban stated in October that he approved the SDO. However, the SDO has not yet been advertised in the Official Gazette or laid before Parliament as required by the law. Requests for an update have received no useful response.

Educational Videos

Help Protect Southlands Park

Reasons to Protect Southlands Park

Southlands Park Still Needs Your Help

Nature Matters, Lets Protect It

Fairmont Southampton SDO – the time to act is now

CONSERVATION

Terns

The Tern Recovery Programme continues to move ahead despite disappointing results. Common Terns are our most endangered local bird species at this time. In 2022, we had 11 Common Terns in Bermuda during breeding season. All of them were likely female and no chicks were produced. . We also had 5 Roseate Terns, but they also were unsuccessful. Equipment to attract Sooty Terns was removed from Southampton Island.

Bluebirds

We continue to sell bluebird boxes and kits through Aberfeldys who kindly provide this service and we get the full sales price. Thank you to Jennifer Gray and Danny Greene for making this happen. The Bermuda Bluebird Society maintains and monitors bluebird trails throughout the island and also provide advice and assistance in setting up boxes on private property. We greatly appreciate the tireless work of Stuart Smith and his team of volunteer monitors.

Longtails

Longtail Igloos are still in demand. Thank you to Erich Hetzel and Alistair Border for constructing them to keep pace.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Our Newsletters continue to be well received full of information and updates on our birds and activities. We also maintain an active Facebook Page and have tried to

increase our posts on Instagram. The website has been a great source of information for the public about development issues. Our birding community is very active and share their sightings on eBird. This data is invaluable for the assessment of the status of bird life in Bermuda and North America.

WHAT'S AHEAD

This year we need to work on our strategic plan. We also plan to have a workshop in conjunction with CURB to begin the process of considering a name change. A

THANK YOUs

We have so many people to thank and we express our deepest appreciation for everyone that has contributed their interest, time, sweat, money and support to this amazing organization. Please accept my apologies if I have forgotten anyone from the list below.

BAS Committee of Management, Members, Donors and Volunteers

H.E. Ms. Rena Lalgie, Governor of Bermuda – Patron

Bermuda National Trust– Management of jointly owned reserves, partner in advocacy

BZS Lecture Series and Boat Trips – Nigel Pollard, Lisa Greene, Camilla Stringer

Department of Conservation Services – Nature Reserves and Biodiversity Support

Horsfield Landscape and Design – ABS Nature Reserve Maintenance

SolTerra Landscape and Design – access to Seymour's Pond Nesting Island

Bermuda Bluebird Society – Stuart Smith and his team of volunteers

Danny Greene – Carpentry for bluebird boxes and Longtail Sculptures

Gorhams/SAL – Discount for bluebird box supplies

Aberfeldy Nurseries – Bluebird Box Sales

Erich Hetzel/Miguel Mejias/David Wingate – Tern Recovery Programme

Alistair Border/Erich Hetzel – Longtail Igloo Construction

Bermuda Red Cross – Storage Space

Robert Chandler – ABS Reserve Maintenance and Bluebird Box Construction

BdaTix – No added fees on donations

Deloitte – Ongoing sponsorship of Seymour's Pond

Cahow Artists – Heather Nova, Barbara Finsness, Eva Botelli, NanoHour, Sydney Rego and Corrina Rego.

Peter Backenberg – video production