

## REPORTS FROM REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

### PROJECTS IN THE BAHAMAS

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The Ornithology Group was formed early in 1994 through the broader Wildlife Committee of the Bahamas National Trust (BNT). The Group participated in the 1993 BirdLife International event in October and the BirdLife Pan American event in 1994. Our first Christmas Bird Count for New Providence and nearby islands was organized in December 1994 by Sandy Sprunt. Ninety-six species were identified. This gives us a starting point for future bird counts in this area.

Already a partnership agreement has been signed between Partners-in-Flight (PIF) in the United States and (1) The Ministry of Agriculture of the Bahamas, (2) The Bahamas National Trust, and (3) The College of the Bahamas (COB). It is now time for these three agencies, together with the PIF input, to help the Bahamas identify the way ahead.

Paul Allen (Cornell University) is conducting research on the Bahama Swallow (*Callichelidon cyaneoviridis*), including a re-evaluation of the species' status by estimating total population size. Since the species may be limited by a lack of nesting sites, the Ornithology Group has started a nest box program in the hope of enticing the birds to increase their nesting efforts. Boxes have been placed on New Providence, Andros, Grand Bahama, and Ship Channel Cay. The Group sought the help of Dr. Patrick Balfe, who made over 20 nest boxes. Committee members are placing them in suitable habitats and monitoring their use. Nest boxes may be sponsored by BNT members for \$10 per box. If a member's box attracts a nesting pair, that person will be notified.

Other than scientific projects undertaken in the Bahamas by visiting scientists and students, there are no projects presently under way by local COB students. It is important for the PIF agencies to try to identify, at least initially, modest projects that COB students could undertake.

One exciting piece of news for the Bahamas is that Tony White, a participant in the Trinidad meeting, is currently writing a book, "Birding Guide to the Bahama Islands," which he hopes to publish within the next two years. Tony plans to spend the majority of his time in the Bahamas from now on and is a great asset to the Group.

### PROJECTS IN ST. LUCIA

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1. Observation platform and parrot nest improvement projects.—In September 1994, assistance was received from the International Institute of Tropical Forestry, U.S.D.A.—

Forest Service, to construct observation platforms and train local biologists. Three platforms were constructed and one nest improvement was done together with the construction of one blind as part of the conservation program for the St. Lucia Parrot (*Amazona versicolor*).

2. As a result of Tropical Storm Debbie in September 1994 the main nature trail in St. Lucia suffered severe damage. A new nature trail was desperately needed and with assistance from RARE a new nature trail was constructed and will be officially opened soon.

3. In May 1995, 7 pairs of the St. Lucia whiptail (*Cnemidophorus vanzoi*) were translocated from Maria Major (the larger of the Maria Islands) to Praslin Island 11 km (7 mi) to the north. In 1993 Praslin Island there was a successful rat eradication program.

4. Funds were received from ICBP-PACS and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for work on the White-breasted Thrasher (*Ramphocinclus brachyurus*) in St. Lucia. A distribution survey found the birds further south of their historical range. Now they can be found from Louvet to Praslin, mainly in riparian habitats on the east coast. A number of nest observations were made revealing that nest predation is a major problem. Of 5 nests monitored, only 1 chick fledged. The fledglings spent a lot of time on the ground, making them easy prey to mongooses, snakes, rats, and opossums. The thrasher feeds on a variety of food items, including frogs, lizards, fruits, and insects.

5. A big reforestation project is on the way in St. Lucia. With the advent of Tropical Storm Debbie, much of our forest was lost to landslides. Funds from CIDA are assisting in reforesting these areas. As much as possible, indigenous tree species are used in the reforestation program.

6. Parrot Project.—In 1993, a project to study the ecology and conservation of the St. Lucia Parrot was initiated by the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust International (JWPT). This project was taken over by the Wildlife Preservation Trust (WPTI) in 1994. The objectives were two-fold: (1) to examine the breeding biology and parental behaviors of the St. Lucia Parrot during nesting; and (2) to study the phenology of plants that may be important as food to the St. Lucia Parrot. Over 10,000 hours of work were accrued by personnel on the project in 1994. The field team located 18 cavities that were suspected of being used by parrots as nest sites. Only six nests were active, however, and the chicks fledged. All the nests that were monitored had Pearly-eyed Thrashers (*Margarops fuscatus*) that molested the nesting parrots. In one nest as many as 75 interactions were recorded between the parrots and the thrashers during one nesting season. A total of 10 plant species are used by the parrot as food.