

## FIRST RECORDS OF BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*BOMBYCILLA GARRULUS*) FOR BERMUDA

ANDREW LE F. DOBSON<sup>1</sup> AND JENNIFER GRAY<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Bermuda Audubon Society, P.O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX, Bermuda;* and <sup>2</sup>*Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo, Flatts, Bermuda.*

*Abstract.*—We report the first records of Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*) for Bermuda. Three adults were seen on 29 December 2001 in a house garden on Dock Hill, Devonshire. By the 31 December 2001, the flock size had increased to five birds (photographed). The birds were last seen on 6 January 2002. There was a report of them being heard calling on 7 January 2002. All observations were in Devonshire in the private garden or nearby Railway Trail.

*Key words:* Accipiter gentilis, Bermuda, Bohemian Waxwing, Bombycilla cedrorum, Bombycilla garrulus, Cedar Waxwing, Loxigilla leucoptera, Northern Goshawk, White-winged Crossbill

*Resumen.*—PRIMEROS REGISTROS DEL AMPELIS BOHEMIO (*BOMBYCILLA GARRULUS*) EN BERMUDA. Reportamos los primeros registros del Ampelis Bohemio (*Bombycilla garrulus*) en Bermuda. Tres adultos fueron vistos el 29 de diciembre de 2001 en un jardín residencial en Dock Hill, Devonshire. Para el 31 de diciembre la bandada había aumentado a cinco individuos (fotografiados). La última observación de las aves fue el 6 de enero de 2002. Hubo un reporte de estas aves vocalizando el 7 de enero de 2002. Todas las observaciones fueron en Devonshire, en el jardín privado o en el cercano sendero Railway.

*Palabras clave:* Accipiter gentilis, Ampelis Americano, Ampelis Bohemio, Bermuda, Bombycilla cedrorum, Bombycilla garrulus, Loxigilla leucoptera

THE BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*) is widely distributed in the Northern Hemisphere in North America and northern Eurasia. In North America it breeds in Alaska and western Canada. In the winter it can stray east as far as New England and the east coast states of New Jersey to Delaware. There are sight records as far south as Virginia and southern Texas (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). Their roaming lifestyle has earned them their "Bohemian" name (Kaufman 1996).

At 11:30 h on 29 December 2001, Michelle and Rebecca Conklin spotted three lovely little birds just above their heads as they played on their new Christmas trampoline at their home in Dock Hill, Devonshire. The birds were "fluffed up" like little butterballs on the branches of the trimmed Casuarinas (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) on the north side of the property. They pointed them out to their mother, J. Gray, who phoned Dobson that evening discussing what they might be – "perhaps Bohemian Waxwings". The following morning, the three birds, now sleek and more active, spent much of the time high in the branches of a bare Pride of India (*Melia azedarach*), taking swift trips down to the birdbath below to drink. Their soft trills or "bleating" calls could be heard clear across the property as they chatted from their high sunny perch. Dobson arrived to see the birds and confirmed them to be Bohemian Waxwings, the first ever to have been recorded in Bermuda. They were also seen feeding on the berries of As-

paragus Fern (*Asparagus densiflorus*). Other keen birders were called but the birds had already flown off before anyone else arrived. On the morning of 31 December there were only ever two birds present, but they were enjoyed by a number of visitors. In the late afternoon Gray was surprised to find five Bohemian Waxwings in the Pride of India tree. Amazingly, Dobson and his family had found the same five waxwings feeding on berries of Mexican Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) about a mile away on the Railway Trail and watched them fly back towards Dock Hill. The birds were last seen on 6 January and heard calling on 7 January.

### DESCRIPTION

A larger, plump body and gray belly immediately distinguished it from smaller Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). A short, thick bill. Black face-mask and throat with some white bordering. Crest resting on rear of gray-brown head. White and yellow markings on wing feathers. The red appendages on the tips of the secondaries on all five birds would suggest they were all adult birds. Short gray tail with brown undertail coverts. Prominent yellow tips to square end of tail. Direct flight. Two other species of bird were perched in the trees with the waxwings. The waxwings were similar in size to European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) but smaller than Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*). The birds frequently called, giving a lower pitched "sirr" compared with *B. cedrorum*.

DISCUSSION

The similar Cedar Waxwing is a regular migrant and winter visitor to Bermuda (Dobson 2002) and a rare non-breeding winter resident in the West Indies (Raffaele *et al.* 1998). Bohemian Waxwings are readily distinguished from *B. cedorum*. by their gray underparts (not yellowish), rufous undertail and yellow tips on outer web of primaries. The red appendages on the tips of the secondaries on all five birds would suggest them all to be adult birds. This species was not unexpected in Bermuda bearing in mind the irruptive nature of its migration in some years. Other rarely recorded species during the winter of 2001–2002 included a Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and two White-winged Crossbills (*Loxia leucoptera*).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to the Gray family for welcoming

many people to their garden. Others who shared their observations with us include E. Amos, W. Frith, B. Lorhan, J. Madeiros, L. Madieros, S. Rodwell, P. Soares, D. Wallace and P. Watson.

LITERATURE CITED

- AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION. 1998. Checklist of North American birds. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, DC.
- DOBSON, A. 2002. A Birdwatching Guide to Bermuda. Arlequin Press, Chelmsford, England.
- KAUFMAN, K. 1996. Lives of North American Birds. Houghton Mifflin, New York.
- RAFFAELE, H., J. WILEY, O. GARRIDO, A. KEITH, AND J RAFFAELE. 1998. A guide to the birds of the West Indies. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, New Jersey.