



ANGUILLA NATIONAL TRUST

Preservation For Generations

Press Release

Anguilla National Trust continues with monthly wetland bird count

Since October 2005, the Anguilla National Trust has been conducting monthly wetland bird counts. With the help of a few dedicated volunteers, the ANT has been recording total number and species of birds observed at each of Anguilla's mainland ponds.

Over the last few months, the Trust has been restructuring the methodology of the counts in an effort to collect more detailed and accurate information. Farah Mukhida, Protected Areas Manager at the Trust explains: "We've been experimenting to see what works best. In the beginning, we used to do the surveys of all 25 of Anguilla's ponds in a single day, but we found that the results of the counts were slightly skewed. When we tried to do our bird counts in one day, what we found was that during the 10am to 3pm period, few birds would be observed on the ponds – the mid-day heat was just too strong and doing the counts during this time really didn't reflect the diversity or abundance of birds that could potentially be found on those ponds during the cooler times of the day.

"So working with the number of volunteers and staff that we do have, we feel that it would be better to conduct the assessments over a three-day period – and counting birds only in the mornings between 5.30am and 10am – instead of trying to go to all of the ponds in a one-day stretch. This way, while we may have some over-lap in numbers of birds between ponds – since they are most certainly moving between them – we are getting a better idea of diversity at the ponds on any given day.

"We've divided the island into three main sections – east, central, and west – and we cover each section in one morning. What would be ideal for the counts would be for three teams of two or three individuals to each take a section of the island and we all conduct the assessments on the same morning each month. But until this happens, we'll make do the best we can. And even now, we are getting some interesting and important data."

The June bird count recorded almost 2000 birds. The pond with the greatest number of birds was Cauls Pond with 575 birds (but only 8 different types of birds) followed by Long Pond with 435 birds (10 different types of birds). Mukhida draws specific attention to Long Pond in the Farrington. "At the moment, there is a large colony of least terns nesting on the eastern sandy portion of the pond. For people visiting the area, while it may be tempting to walk close to the birds to get a better look, it would be best to leave them alone and to stay away. When people encroach on the area, they put enormous stress on the birds and it often makes them fly away from their nests and this exposes their eggs to predators and to the elements." The Anguilla National Trust would like to further request that anyone visiting Long Pond during the tern nesting season (or any pond where birds are nesting) to walk carefully to avoid any nests and, just as importantly, to not touch the eggs should they come across any.

The wetland bird count is an on-going project being conducted by the ANT and the organisation welcomes the help of volunteers, whether they be avid bird watchers or people who enjoy being outdoors. Individuals who are interested in learning more about the counts and the methods used or who are interested in taking part in the programme are asked to contact the Trust at 497 5297.

About the Anguilla National Trust

The Anguilla National Trust was established in 1993 to act as custodian of Anguilla's heritage, preserving and promoting the island's natural environment and its archaeological, historical and cultural resources for present and future generations. It is in the business of ensuring the sustainability of Anguilla's heritage. The ANT is a dynamic people-centred organisation working in collaboration with public and private sector entities to manage Anguilla's natural social and cultural heritage.

P. O. BOX 1234 • THE VALLEY • ANGUILLA
TEL: 264-497-5297 • FAX: 264-497-5571 • axanat@anguillanet.com