

Birding with the Trust

Annual Report Presented by Dale Doucette

"Wild beasts and birds are by right not the property merely of the people today, but the property of the unborn generations, whose belongings we have no right to squander."

Theodore Roosevelt



Great Things Are Happening

Birding Team - The Day to Day Stuff

Audubon Vieques Christmas Bird Count

Bird Walks - High Season Bird Watching Events

Birding Committee - Strategic Planning, Fundraising, and Partnerships

MOTUS - Wildlife Tracking System

Birding Trail #1 - Birding Trail #2 and #3 are in the works

Ecotourism Birding Guide Training Program and Resources (TBD)

Year of Birding 2024/2025 - Showcase of birds, art, and activities

Birds Are In Trouble

Three billion breeding adults have been lost in the last half century.

Habitat loss, pesticides, window strikes, and domestic cats are man-made challenges.

Climate change is a “threat multiplier.”

Harry Stevens, Washington Post

To help reverse the decline of bird populations we must better understand them, where they go, what they do, and what challenges they face.

Help Raise The Flag

I see reason for hope, but I also make a plea for vigilance on behalf of wild nature.

More citizens' action, undertaken by more of us working in concert, can lead us to a new and better world.

Let's all raise the flag for wilderness, wood warblers, and all the wild things.

— Bruce M. Beehler, *North on the Wing: Travels with the Songbird Migration of Spring*

Citizen Science In Action

By serving as Citizen Scientists and by collaborating with other conservation initiatives and partners, the VCHT Birding Team and Birding Committee collect data and promote an interest in birding through education, the use of technology, and seasonal bird walks.



Merlin



The Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a census of birds in the Western Hemisphere performed by volunteers and administered by the National Audubon Society. The CBC and other data help inform conservation efforts.

We held a successful Vieques Audubon Christmas Bird Count on December 30, 2023. Twenty people identified **72 species** and a total of **2,110 birds** in Vieques. This year our field teams also welcomed Backyard Birders who joined us from the comfort of their homes.

Email the **vcht.birding.team@gmail.com** if you would like to join us!

Citizen Scientist Tools

eBird is a global, internet-based platform for collating observations of birds, housed in Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology. eBird gathers data on bird distribution and abundance and disseminates the information for public and scientific use. Hundreds of thousands of birders use eBird.



All VCHT bird walks are posted on eBird. VCHT Board Member Daphne Gemmill is the **eBird** reviewer for Vieques. The Merlin Bird ID app and the PR--->Antigua phone app are also widely used in Vieques.

Past, Present, and Future

Important Bird Area

2007 - BirdLife International

Important Shorebird Area

2023 - Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN)

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) Site

2024 - Application In Process

Cabo Rojo Salt Flats is one of only three sites in the Caribbean, and the only one in Puerto Rico

The Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance

Our Reach Goal - Ramsar Convention, Ramsar, Iran (1971)

The Caribbean Waterbird Census

The **Caribbean Waterbird Census** (CWC) is a wetland monitoring program led by BirdsCaribbean to learn about the distribution, status, and abundance of waterbirds in the Caribbean in order to better conserve and manage the birds and their habitats.

eBird reports from all VCHT bird walks and counts from other team walks are entered electronically into the CWC.



birdscaribbean.org



Black-necked Stilt

01/10/2024 09:37

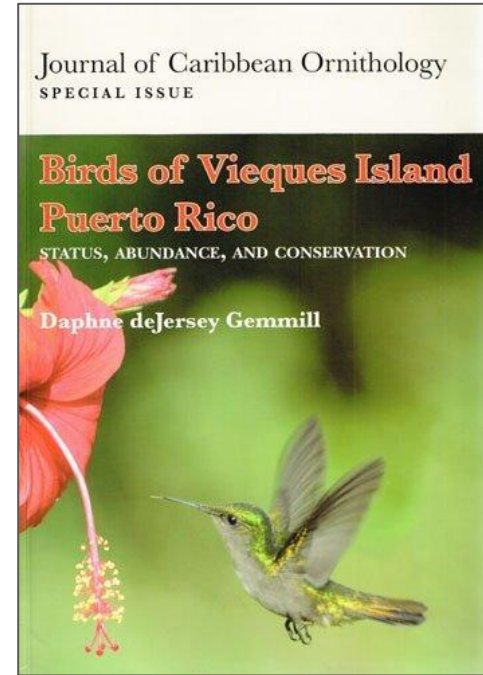


Stilt Sandpiper

Birding Trails and Birding Tourism



Recognizing the need for self-guided birding information in Vieques, Daphne Gemmill wrote our first Birding Trail resource guide which was recently published in the *Vieques Insider*.

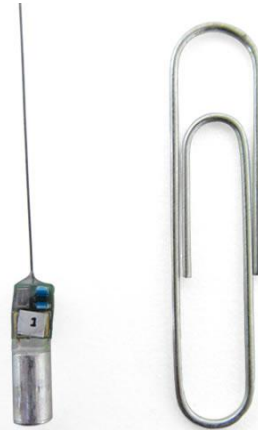


Motus Network



In 2022 Daphne Gemmill held a Bird-a-thon and raised over \$17,000 to purchase and install a Motus tower and related hardware in Vieques.

In collaboration with Fish and Wildlife and BirdsCaribbean, the Motus tower will be installed the week of March 22, 2024, at the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge headquarters. All data will be available to the public!



Nano Tag
and Antenna

motus.org

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) is a science-based, partnership-driven, conservation initiative for protecting the ecological integrity of critical habitats for shorebirds throughout the Americas. Its headquarters are in Manomet, Massachusetts.

Thanks to 30 years of survey data by Daphne Gemmill of the birds in Vieques, surveys made by Erick Bermúdez, Cesar Montero and others, and eBird reports from the VCHT Birding Team, Daphne has completed the application to have Vieques designated as a WHSRN site.

VCHT Bird Walks

As of December 20, 2023, the VCHT Birding Team has conducted seven bird walks, including two Saturday walks which were held for Spanish language speakers. The Birding Team also participated in the Christmas Bird Count. Two additional walks are scheduled for March 6 and March 20, 2024.

Bird Walks begin on the Malecon and proceed to the east end of Sun Bay, pausing along the route to observe a variety of species. Within the Vieques Bio Bay Reserve, which is co-managed by VCHT, there are several lagoons. The largest is the Sun Bay Lagoon or Salitral. It is directly connected to the Bio Bay and is home to a variety of shorebirds. The surrounding mangrove forest is also a rich habitat for other bird species.



02/07/2024 09:05

Citizen Scientists in Action



02/21/2024 08:59



**We also asked this bird to show us
what it sees from a “Bird’s-eye” view.**







Birds in Flight by Priscilla Doucette

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vm79ApX8BNlo4vX3tnKLxRvEEZw2DJEK/view?usp=sharing>

Speak Up For Birds

My passionate plea, to each of you, is to be an advocate for birds and habitat conservation. Speak up, speak out, and do good things for our birds and the environment.

Buy bird-friendly coffee; make your windows safer; keep your cats indoors; lend your eyes and ears as citizen scientists; help a child discover birds; garden with native plants; embrace your patch, your very own habitat, and make it bird friendly; buy a migratory bird stamp; and use less plastic.



Our birds need us as much as we need them... perhaps now more than ever.

Why Speak Up?



**Birds are no longer the only “canary”
in the “coal mine” that we call Planet Earth!**

The VCHT Birding Team

The VCHT Birding Committee

Daphne, Vilma, Dale, Priscilla, Chuck, Olga, Rob, Marie and Mike

Helping to develop a birding presence on Vieques, to protect the birds we love and the habitats they live in, and to nurture and grow future generations of young birders and environmental conservationists.