



To be honest, I don't enjoy long plane flights and I've never felt totally at ease running meetings for adults, so when the opportunity suddenly arose to prepare and deliver a full day session for teachers in Bermuda, I was rather hesitant. However, I agreed to go and on December 7th I was on my way. Bermuda is four hours behind us and unfortunately, throughout my stay, my body clock woke me up at 6.30 a.m. which of course, was 2.30 a.m. their time.

Although my first day was taken up completing my final preparations, it did go sunny in the afternoon so I took a number of breaks to wander around the grounds and to go down to the rocky shore. The temperature was around 72°f. What immediately struck me were the numbers of House Sparrows and Starlings that were everywhere. However, of real interest were the Great Kiskadees that were particularly attracted to the water fountain at the front of the hotel. Although quickly scared off by cars, people and Starlings, it was possible to get some fairly decent photographs by just waiting. Walking down the steps to the beach, I could see a number of waders scurrying about. I was somewhat disappointed to discover that they were Turnstone. However, after watching them for a while, two sandpiper type birds flew in. Could they be Western or Semi-palmated? No, they turned out to be Sanderling!



Above and below: Great Kiskadee



Above: Turnstone



Above: Sanderling

The next day was the teacher training meeting in Hamilton. I left and returned to the hotel in the dark although it was beautifully sunny all day.

The third day was my free day and of course, the sun never shone. I decided to walk to a place called Paget Nature Park which turned out to be a swamp area with extremely dense vegetation and tree growth. I did though, come across a clearing that overlooked a pool and perched in a bush was a juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Another suddenly appeared and stood no more than three feet away from me. I had to move back and take the converter off my camera before I could take a photograph. In a ploughed field near the entrance, were a number of Mourning Doves. On the map I had, I saw that if I walked along the Railway Trail, I could reach a large pool that was Bermuda's second largest bird reserve. Along the way, there were more Mourning Doves and a warbler which I couldn't identify. After an hour and a half, I still hadn't reached the pool and having asked directions, was told that one could only reach it by walking along a road for a few miles and that the map I had was inaccurate. This road turned out to be dangerous with constant bends and no pavement, so I gave up and went back to the hotel, seeing a few Common Ground Doves on the way.





Above: Immature Yellow-crowned Night Herons



Above: Common Ground Dove

My final day there was sunny until lunch time. In a tree next to my room I noticed something perched which turned out to be an Eastern Bluebird. There were three but they were very wary and I never really got close enough for a decent photograph. I checked the beach again but apart from a few Great Kiskadees, there was nothing else. I decided to go back to Paget to get some heron shots in the sun. Unfortunately, there were none to be seen at the pool although I did come across one that was partially hidden and that just stared at me! It then clouded over and it was time to go back to the hotel, get packed and then head for the airport.



Above: Eastern Bluebirds

The flight back was overnight and I was sat near to a young child that spent most of the time crying and screaming. After around 40 minutes sleep, I then had to wait at Gatwick for almost 6 hours for the flight back to Manchester.

My abiding memory will be that of the Kiskadees.

I still don't enjoy long plane flights or feel relaxed when running teachers' meetings but overall pleased that I went even though I would have liked to have spent much more time there and got properly acclimatised.

**Jon Taverner, December 2011**

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