

Cahow (Bermuda petrel) Recovery Project

One of the rarest sea-birds on Earth, the Cahow nests only on Bermuda, and is endemic to the island. Conservation management has increased its population from 18 pairs with only 8 fledged chicks in 1960 to 101 pairs with 57 fledged chicks in 2012.



Project Objectives

- To control or eliminate threats affecting The Cahow on its nesting islands
- To build artificial burrows on nesting islands, enabling the population to increase
- Fit identification bands on Cahows to study breeding biology and lifespan
- Establish new nesting colonies on larger islands safe from storm erosion/flooding
- Study oceanic range of Cahow using geolocational data loggers

Photos provided by Jeremy Madeiros

Summary

The **Cahow or Bermuda petrel** (*Pterodroma cahow*) is endemic to Bermuda and has been listed as a globally endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Natural Resources (IUCN). The Cahow spends most of its life on the open ocean, returning in November to four tiny islets in the **Castle Harbour Islands Nature Reserve** to nest in deep crevices and artificial burrows. A single egg is laid in early January, with downy chicks hatching in early March after a 53-day incubation period. Chicks are fed squid and fish gathered by the adult birds on foraging trips that can span thousands of miles of ocean. Chicks fledge to sea in late May and early June about 90 days after hatching, not to return to the breeding sites until they are 3 to 5 years of age.

Due to hurricane erosion and flooding of the small nesting islets, a project to establish a new nesting colony on the larger and higher **Nonsuch Island** was carried out from 2004 to 2008. **Translocation** of 102 chicks was carried out from the original nesting islets to a complex of **artificial nest burrows** constructed on Nonsuch. In 2008, the first translocated birds returned to Nonsuch as adults. In 2009, a new pair produced the first Cahow chick since 1625 to hatch on Nonsuch. By 2012, a total of 30 translocated Cahows had returned to Nonsuch, with 10 pairs incubating eggs, and 7 chicks fledging successfully.

In 2012, the total population of Cahows nesting both on Nonsuch and the original nesting islets had increased to a record 101 nesting pairs, with 57 chicks successfully fledging to sea.

Cahows are a member of the Gadfly Petrel family, which are related to Albatrosses and Shearwaters. They are long-winged sea-birds which are fast and agile fliers, living on the open ocean, never visiting land except to breed.



Translocated Cahow chick being fed Anchovy

This project is funded by :

Department of Conservation Services

Atlantic Conservation Partnership

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And numerous private individuals



Adult Cahow flying over nesting island at night



10-day old downy Cahow chick



Full-fledged Cahow chick exercising outside burrow before departing to sea

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GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA

Ministry of Public Works

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