



4th March, 2024

BEST's approach to our work in 2023 may be described as 'holding steady in the flux'. Without a doubt we are in a time of transformation... of flux... and we felt the best we could do was hold steady on our course to inspire greater awareness and appreciation of the natural environment and the need for human activity to be better designed to exist in harmony with nature, not in competition with it.

That word, 'flux', conjures up images of chaos and a lack of control. While it might feel like that, we want to remember that within chaos lies opportunity: to reexamine what we are doing and why, and to make any adjustments that will serve our work better going forward. Rather than get thrown by the challenges, we batted down and held the course.

When considering the work that BEST undertakes, as an environmental watchdog, we ask that the reader consider a quote from John Muir: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." It is important that the scale of BEST's efforts be considered through that lens as, almost without exception, any initiative undertaken turns out to be just the tip of the iceberg: the magnitude only revealed once we take it on.

A brief overview of BEST's projects in 2023:

- ✓ We continued to review and respond to Planning applications that propose to impact land with a conservation zoning, and where there are concerns related to the application of the policies under the current Development Plan (2018). Along the way, we are discovering further issues related to processes/policies/practices that could benefit from further examination.

While our significant efforts, in collaboration with the Bermuda National Trust, the Bermuda Audubon Society and others, were not successful in stopping the issuance of the Fairmont Southampton Special Development Order (SDO), we remain steadfast in our position that the SDO is not in the best interest of Bermuda.

In 2024 we will roll out a Conservation Awareness Campaign aimed to increase support in the community for the careful management of land with protected zonings. For many years BEST has been a campaigner for the preservation of Bermuda's limited and diminishing green open spaces. Additionally, we will be having quarterly meetings with the Director of Planning and a representative of the Development Applications Board which, we hope, will result in a deeper understanding of our respective perspectives.

- ✓ While the Abandoned Boat Project continued (under KBB) to remove existing abandoned/sunken boats from Bermuda's marine environment, the component of the project that BEST is involved with has been side-tracked as we work to develop potential recommendations to improve the existing systems. The identification of the owners of vessels that are found to have been abandoned or sunken is currently onerous and ineffective.
- ✓ In further regard to marine conservation, we continue to engage with the issue of the Government's plan to adopt the Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme. We have ongoing reservations about the unresolved issues of the local fishermen, and about how the increased demands for the management of the Programme would be handled by Government Departments already unable to cope due to the long-term lack of funds and human resources. Those Departments would be charged with the responsibility for

managing new, additional legislation as part of a much more complex infrastructure should the BOPP go through and this, we contend, is cause for concern.

- ✓ The BEST/Bermuda College Lunch & Learn series included presentations on:
 - **Communicating Climate Science** – Dr. Rosemarie McMahon
 - **The Threat Perception of Climate Change and Public Preparedness for Extreme Weather-Related Events in Bermuda** – Dr Brett Lefkowitz
 - **A Conservation Dilemma: Sea Grass and Green Turtles** – Dr. Sarah Manuel
 - **Assessing the Extinction Risk of Bermuda’s Endemic Plants** – Alison Copeland
 - **Are Carbon & Biodiversity Credits Relevant to Bermuda?** – Karen Nagel
 - **Why Bermuda Needs to Recognize the Right to a Healthy Environment** – Aaron Crichlow of Bermuda is Love
 - **Fisheries: The Red Hind in Bermuda** – Joanna Pitt
- ✓ Climate Change – in the absence of a national policy or position related to climate change which would allow us to identify how a BEST contribution might be made to that end, we are planning to change tack slightly with a goal to monitor the Bermuda Government’s Climate Change Taskforce (which, we believe, has yet to begin) while we continue to lobby for that national policy/position and to identify possible climate change mitigation measures.
- ✓ Collaboration – we remain committed to ‘greater collaboration for greater impact’ and a key element of any BEST engagement with local environmental issues seeks to identify other individuals and organizations in order to increase the options to influence the outcome of our collective efforts.

The collaboration with KBB in support of Beyond Plastic Bermuda’s campaign continues while we wait for the Government’s promised legislation banning specific single-use plastics. Since 2021, the volunteer team at Beyond Plastic Bermuda has created a high level of awareness across the island of the harm plastics do to our environment and to our health.

- ✓ Communications and outreach continued across social and mainstream media in an effort to increase interest and support for local environmental projects.
- ✓ Volunteer engagement has proven challenging given that many people are still reassessing personal priorities to determine what available time they might have for volunteering. Consequently, we take a page out of the late Stuart Hayward’s book and ‘we cut our coat according to our cloth’. We may not be able to make the levels of headway wanted but we continue to work with what we have available.

We trust the above brief synopsis of our activities will allow you to see your way clear to support the good work of BEST which we carry out on behalf of all of Bermuda’s residents. Should you wish to meet in person or have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us on 292-3782 or email us at office@best.org.bm.

Additional information, including annual financial statements and donation information, can be found on our website: <https://best.org.bm>

With our BEST regards

Gail E.M. Miller
Board Chair - BEST