

# BNT *Currents*

**International Year of the Coral Reef: 1997**

## **Promoting Coral Reef Awareness**

THE INTERNATIONAL CORAL Reef Initiative has declared 1997 as The International Year of the Coral Reef (IYOR). IYOR is a major effort in: Capacity building for reef management, Outreach and education, Researching patterns of degradation and their causes, Assessing the condition of coral reefs worldwide and, Leading sustainable management efforts for reefs.

Countries worldwide are planning and organizing activities promoting coral reef awareness. The Trust has elected to focus on the Andros Barrier Reef as a primary activity for the year. The Andros Barrier Reef is one of 52 sites in the BNT's proposal National Park system. Gary Larson, Executive Director of the Trust, and Special Advisors to the Trust travelled to Andros in February to begin the preliminary assessment and establish contact and input from the local communities. (See page 4 for story).



The Trust will not only be involved in Andros but is planning several public education events highlighting the marine environment and will be developing and distributing a Coral Reef Education Packet for

schools in September. For more information on the Trust's IYOR activities please call the Bahamas National Trust (393-1317) or consult the IYOR web page established at <http://www.coral.org/IYOR>

### **IN MEMORIAM**

**Mrs Marj Pritchard**, a lifelong friend and supporter of the Trust, volunteer Retreat Garden Guide, member of the Trust's Jollification Committee.

**Mr. Tony McKay**, singer, song-writer, and BNT friend, created and performed music in the Trust's award-winning music video "Quincy Rap".

Both are sorely missed.

## NATIONAL PARKS OF THE BAHAMAS

NAME	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
A. INAGUA NATIONAL PARK	GREAT INAGUA	287 square miles of Great Inagua Island, now internationally known as the site of the world's largest breeding colony (approximately 60,000) of West Indian flamingos.
B. UNION CREEK RESERVE	GREAT INAGUA	7 square miles of enclosed tidal creek on Great Inagua, serves as a very important research site for sea turtles, especially the Green Turtle.
C. EXUMA CAYS LAND & SEA PARK	EXUMA	Created in 1958 this 176 square mile park was the first of its kind in the world and is famous for its pristine beauty, outstanding anchorages and breathtaking marine environment. It is the first marine fishery reserve in the Caribbean.
D. PELICAN CAYS LAND & SEA PARK	GREAT ABACO	Located 8 miles north of Cherokee Sound, Great Abaco, this 2,100 acre land and sea area is a sister park to the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park. It contains beautiful undersea caves, extensive coral reefs and abounds with terrestrial plant and animal life.
E. PETERSON CAY NATIONAL PARK	GRAND BAHAMA	A one and a half acre geological wonder, being the only cay off Grand Bahama's leeward shore. This beautiful park is one of Grand Bahama's most heavily used weekend getaway spots.
F. LUCAYAN NATIONAL PARK	GRAND BAHAMA	East of Freeport, Grand Bahama, this 40 acre park encompasses the longest known underwater cave and cavern system in the world, with over six miles of caves and tunnels already charted. Above ground exhibits every vegetative zone found in the Bahamas.
G. CONCEPTION ISLAND NATIONAL PARK	CONCEPTION ISLAND	An important sanctuary for migratory birds, sea birds, and Green turtles. It also has great historical importance, being one of the three islands in the Bahamas on which Christopher Columbus is known to have landed.
H. THE RETREAT	NEW PROVIDENCE	An 11 acre garden of rare and exotic palms and native coppice in residential Nassau. It houses one of the largest private collections of palms in the world. Administrative headquarters of The Bahamas National Trust is located at The Retreat.
I. THE RAND NATURE CENTER	GRAND BAHAMA	Acquired by The Bahamas National Trust in 1992 the Rand Nature Center comprises 100 acres of natural beauty in the heart of downtown Freeport, Grand Bahama. The Nature Center boasts a resident flock of West Indian flamingos and a two thousand foot trail which winds through native coppice and pine barrens. The Center now houses the administrative office of The Bahamas National Trust in Grand Bahama.
J. BLACK SOUND CAY	ABACO	Located off Green Turtle Cay in Abaco, this miniature park comprises a thick stand of mangrove vegetation and is an important habitat to waterfowl and other avifauna which winter in the region.
K. ABACO NATIONAL PARK	ABACO	Established on May 9, 1994, the Abaco National Park comprises 20,500 acres in Southern Abaco. Included in this area is 5,000 acres of forest the major habitat of the Abaco population of the Bahama Parrot.
L. TILLOO CAY	ABACO	20 acres of wild and pristine natural environment that provides nesting for Tropic birds, as well as other birds.

# The Trust Recognizes Historic Preservation Efforts

THE TRUST'S HISTORIC Preservation Committee recently recognized three sites as outstanding contributions to historic preservation.

The three recipients were: St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church at the Bight, Cat Island; the Nassau law office of Member of Parliament James Knowles; and Cumberland House in Nassau owned by Varicorp Ltd.

St. Francis of Assisi Church was designed and built by Father Jerome Hawes, a missionary, and dedicated in March, 1945. Volunteers for the restoration work were architect Alicia Oxley, carpenter/builder Raymond Chandler and painter Father Stan, a parish priest in Abaco.

Although the church had been in a state of disrepair and exposed to the elements, the structure had stood up well. The concrete interior was cleaned and sealed and the roof was restored with cedar shingle. The church was repainted as closely as possible to the original colours.

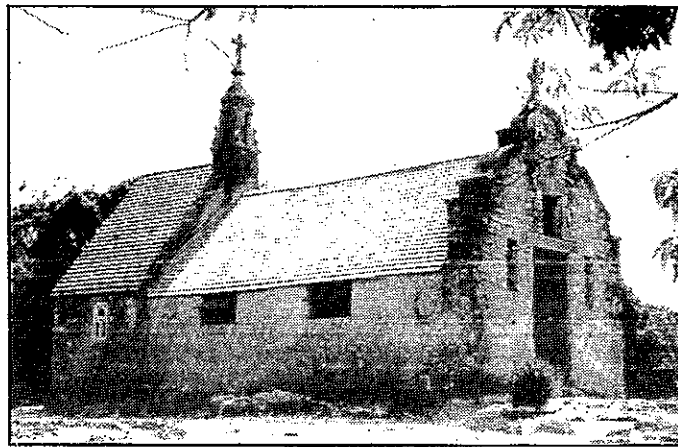
Early in Bahamian history legislators were summoned to meetings of the House of Assembly by the

ringing of a bell from the third floor of the prison, which is today the Nassau Public Library. James F. Knowles' law office is reminiscent of those days. The stone and stucco structure on the northern side of Shirley Street midway between Charlotte Street and Parliament Street dates from about 1888. Mr. Knowles bought the property in 1987.

Historic preservation can be economically viable and culturally desirable

Cumberland house, owned by Varicorp Ltd, was restored as an office complex in 1989. The original two-story building, built of quarried limestone block, mahogany, cedar and Abaco pine, is shown

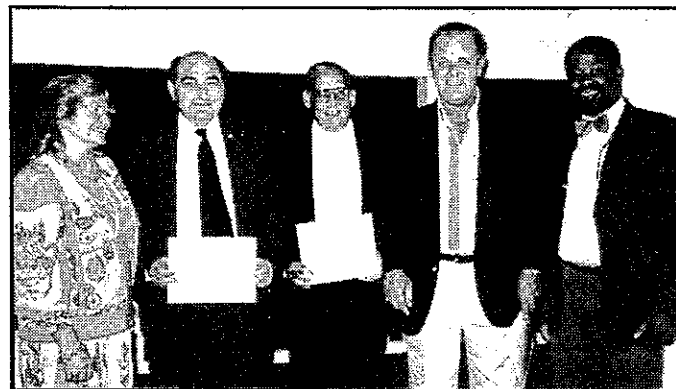
on a Nassau town plan of 1770. It was a private home until 1950 when it was converted into a restaurant/guest house. It was a famous restaurant when owned by Lorraine Onderdonk and Hedwig Hauck, before they transferred the operation to Buena Vista Hotel in the 1960's. In the 1970's it became a nightclub and thereafter the building went into decline. It was abandoned in the 1980's and became a haven for drug pushers, purse snatchers and va-



St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church at the Bight, Cat Island was built in 1945 and restored by volunteers.



Cumberland House dates to the 1770's and was restored as an office complex in 1989.



Recipients of the Trust's Historic Preservation award with Deputy President Sandy Buckner. Pictured from left are: Mrs Buckner, Lionel Levine of Varicorp Ltd, Most Rev. Lawrence Burke, Bishop, Catholic Diocese of the Bahamas, attorney and Member of Parliament James Knowles; and architect Anthony Jervis who directed the restoration of Cumberland House.

grants. Lawyer Lionel Levine saw its potential and commissioned architect Anthony Jervis to restore the building. For his work Mr Jervis received a preservation award from the Governor-General.

The Trust promotes new uses for old buildings. Restoration and conversion projects are vital in keeping the character and charm of old Nassau and other communities throughout the country.

## U.S. Parks Service Expert Shares Knowledge of Invasive Exotics

OBSERVING A STRONG and growing presence of the Brazilian Pepper tree, *Schinus terebinthifolius*, the BNT Native Flora Group invited Bob Doren, assistant director of the Everglades National Park Research Center, to come to Nassau to discuss *Schinus* and other invasive exotics such as *Melaleuca* and the *Casaurina*.

Mr. Doren advised that the Brazilian pepper is referred to as a "biological pollutant" because it adapts well to a habitat that is not its own, dominates native plants and eventually replaces entire natural plant communities. It is also highly toxic and can trigger flu like symptoms, sneezing and sinus congestion in some individuals; its sap can cause a rash, severe itching and swelling of the eyes. Grazing animals such as horses and cows have been known to die from ingestion of its leaves. As its vernacular name suggests, the dried fruits of Brazilian pepper are used as a spice and sold in the U.S. as "pink peppercorn". Its use in this way is inappropriate and potentially dangerous.

Brazilian Pepper provides relatively poor wildlife habitat. In a study of use of a mature stand of Brazilian pepper by native avifauna it was found that avian species and total population density declined when compared to native pinelands and forest edge habitats. Such results, expected when a species-rich habitat is replaced by one which is biologically less diverse, stress the need to protect native habitats from exotic, pest plant encroachment.

Site inspections during Mr. Doren's visit confirmed the growing presence of *Schinus*. Dr. John Hammerton, of the Ministry of Agriculture showed great concern over the spread of this invasive species and will be making recommendations to that Ministry as to how to control the spread.

Mr. Dorens visit was possible through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Bahamas National Trust and the U.S. National Parks Service - a cooperative agreement between the like-minded agencies.



*The Brazilian Pepper is an evergreen shrub or small tree 3-7 meters tall. The flowers of the Brazilian Pepper are produced in showy branched inflorescence. On the female trees, flowering is followed by the production of small bright, red fleshy berries containing a single seed. Fruit production occurs from November to February and the bright ornamental berries have resulted in the tree becoming known as Bahamian Holly*

## EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES IN ANDROS

The Bahamas National Trust has been interested in protecting the Andros Barrier Reef for over 20 years. It was included in the Trust's National Park System Proposal submitted to Government in 1983.

Last year local residents of Andros representing the Andros Fishing Guides Association and the Small Hope Bay Lodge came to the Trust asking for help in establishing protection for the natural resources of Andros. In response to this local initiative the Trust put together a rapid assessment team consisting of Gary Larson, Drs. Carleton Ray, Karen Bjorndal, Alan Bolten, and Geraldine McCormick-Ray.

The team was able to see an amazing amount of Andros in only a few days because of the tremendous logistical support provided by: Peter Douglas and Jeff Birch (Small Hope Bay Lodge), Prescott Smith and Andy Smith (Andros Fishing Guide Association), Paul Selmantz and Kathryn Ford (Forfar Field Station), Luther Brown (Bahamas Environmental Research Center), and Brian Hew (Kumeline Resort). The team drove through North Andros to Red Bays, went by small boat through the Bights and mangrove creeks on the west side, Stafford Creek and Fresh Creek, and the reefs of Central

Andros, and made a low-altitude flight of the whole island. A very positive meeting was held with the Local Government leaders for Central Andros.

What the team found was both exciting and encouraging. The natural resources of Andros are without doubt spectacular and in need of protection. The local people the team met understand the value of conservation and are the ones asking for formal protection of their island's natural resources. The Trust has committed to work with the local people to bring this goal about.

To take advantage of the International Year of the Reef the Trust will highlight the Andros Barrier Reef. However, the Trust is mindful of other critical components of the island's ecosystem - such as the blue holes, creeks, bights, and the west side. The Trust's preferred approach, endorsed by the local people met on the team's trip, would be to consider the whole of Andros as a system and determine what protection is needed to best ensure the future sustainability of its natural resources.

*Celebrating International Year  
of the Coral Reef*

## KNOW THAT TURTLE!

Three kinds of sea turtles are commonly seen in Bahamian waters: the Green, Loggerhead and Hawksbill. All receive some protection under the Fisheries (Resources) Regulations. There is an open and closed season for the Green and Loggerhead turtles while hunting of the Hawksbill turtle is prohibited year-round.

Sea turtles face many threats that have caused their numbers to decline. Eggs and individual turtles are collected for food, commercial development contributes to the loss and pollution of nesting beaches and coastal areas used by turtles, and predation by dogs, raccoons, fish and birds impact negatively on turtle populations.

As part of the International Year of the Coral Reef, and in an effort to create an awareness of these special marine animals, the Education Office of the Bahamas National Trust has produced a Sea Turtle Education Packet. The packet is designed to encourage teachers to use the many teaching aides the Trust has available on sea turtles thereby reaching thousands of Bahamian schoolchildren with this conservation message.

The packet contains fact sheets on the Loggerhead, Green and Hawksbill turtles, a list of sea turtle information in the BNT Reference Library, an audio/visual list, legislation summary, and colouring book. In the coming months the BNT Education Office will work with the Ministry of Education to produce student worksheets on sea turtles to complement the packet.

A Sea Turtle Packet is being supplied to all schools in the Bahamas. Public school distribution is being coordinated by the Ministry of Education. Teachers wishing to have a personal copy may collect one from the BNT Education Office while supplies last.

In conjunction with the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research, the Trust is distributing a Sea Turtle Survey to help document the different species and their distribution around New Providence. This issue of Currents contains the survey, and we ask that all members use it to record turtle sightings and forward the results to the Trust. We are grateful to volunteer Amy Wynn for her help in producing the survey form.

## Retreat Gets New Roof



The main building of The Retreat was reroofed in February. Meaning that the offices and porch will no longer leak during heavy rainfall.

## BNT Premieres 4th Historical Documentary

The Trust's newest historical documentary focuses on Eleuthera, Harbour Island, and Spanish Wells. It premiered in the ballroom of Government House recently to an appreciative audience, which included the Governor-General.

The video is the fourth in the Trust's Proud and Singular Heritage Series produced under the auspices of the Historic Preservation Committee and sponsored exclusively by Commonwealth Bank. Production is by the Counsellors Ltd with well-known Bahamian author Patricia Ginton-Meicholas acting as researcher, writer and director.

James Cockwell, president of Commonwealth Bank, has indicated that copies of all the videos in the series will be supplied to every Bahamian school, as part of Commonwealth Bank's community-building initiatives.

All four videos in the Heritage series (Nassau's Historic Mile; Historic Nassau Over the Hill; Historic Family Islands: Cat Island, Exuma and Long Island; Historic Family Islands: Eleuthera, Harbour Island and Spanish Wells) are on sale at the Trust headquarters. A fifth documentary—Historic Family Islands: The Abacos—is now in production.

## Look for the BNT on the Internet

The Bahamas National Trust now has a page on the World-Wide Web. Check the following URL to learn about the BNT and its work: <http://www.bahamas.net.bs/environment>. You can also e-mail us at [bnt@bahamas.net.bs](mailto:bnt@bahamas.net.bs).

# 1996 International Coastal Cleanup Day

THE TRUST'S MARINE Group coordinated four coastal cleanups last September in conjunction with the Center For Marine Conservation. Cleanups were organized on New Providence, Grand Bahama, Inagua and Conception Island National Park.

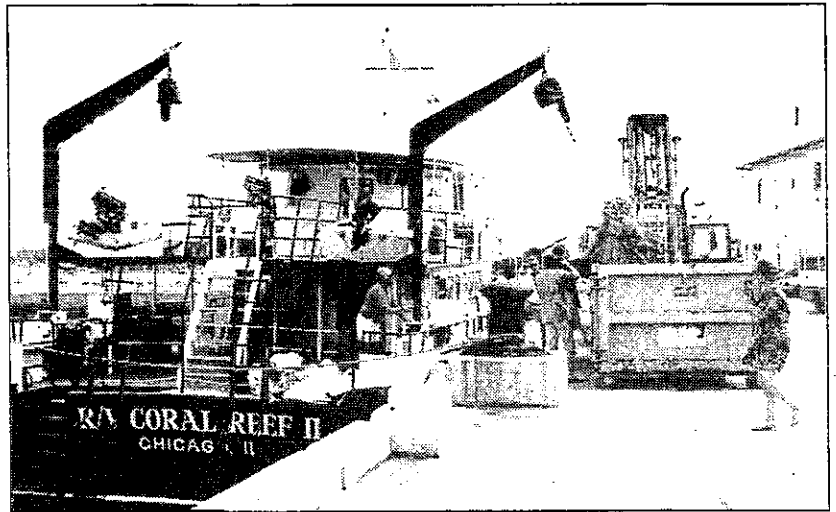
Some 160 volunteers turned out in Nassau to remove debris from Yamacraw Beach on the Eastern end of the island, and Goodman's Bay and Jaws Beach on the western end. Amongst a plethora of unusual items almost 2,000 aluminum cans were collected.

On Grand Bahama some 859 pounds of garbage—including bottles, plastic and rubber materials—was collected at Barbary Beach.

The Conception Island cleanup was made possible by Chicago's John G. Shedd Aquarium which loaned their research vessel, Coral Reef II. Taking part were Gary Larson, the Trust's executive director; Carolyn

Wardle, of the Ornithology Group; Cadrington Coleby, of the Native Flora Group; Bailey Smith and Lorraine Minns, of George Town, Exuma; Richard Franz, of the Florida Museum of Natural History; Ton Vlugman, of the Pan American Health Organization; Anna Vlugman; Sandra Buckner, the BNT's deputy president; and Hugh Buckner.

The group collected over 700 pounds of garbage, more than half of which consisted of lost fishing nets. An astounding 94 pairs of shoes were also collected. Also found were two bottles with messages, one from Cape Cod, Massachusetts written in 1992.



Unloading the collected debris in Nassau into Bahamas Waste Management Systems skip from the MV Coral Reef at Prince George Dock

The cleanup was an excellent opportunity to visit Conception Island National Park—an important sea bird nesting area.

Due to hurricane threats Inagua's cleanup was postponed to October. Under the direction of BNT wardens Henry Nixon and Casper Burrows over 30 volunteers from Inagua All-age School gathered at Craig's

Bight Beach to clean up and record the debris collected.

The Trust acknowledges and thanks all of the participants in the 1996 Coastal Cleanup as well as the following corporate sponsors: Aquapure Water, Bahamas Waste Management, Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, John G. Shedd Aquarium, The Tribune and the Nassau Guardian.

**T**he first world Conservation Congress was held last fall in Montreal. Organized by IUCN/The World Conservation Union, the Congress attracted over 2,000 conservationists from over 120 countries around the world and was the largest international environmental conference since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The Bahamas National

Trust was represented at the Congress by Ambassador Lynn Holowesko, BNT Deputy President Sandra Buckner, BNT Executive Director Gary Larson and BNT Deputy Director Susan Larson. To cover the intense and diverse schedule of the two-week Congress BNT delegates split up each morning and attended workshops and lectures, IUCN members' working sessions, resolution discussions and special events on different themes, issues and strategies. Integrating coastal and marine management, promoting conservation on private lands, developing a business approach to protected ar-



## BNT AT WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS

reas management, greening national accounts, implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity and financing sustainable development were just some of the topics covered by the Trust's team. BNT representatives met almost daily with delegates from other Caribbean countries as part of the regional group of IUCN's Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas. The Trust's

representatives all agreed the Congress was very worthwhile and brought home a wealth of information and materials. For example, coral reef and world-wide national park posters are being distributed to Bahamian schools; first hand-involvement in the International Year of the Coral Reef (IYOR) at the Congress paved the way for Ambassador Holowesko to establish an IYOR Committee for the Bahamas; the Trust is exploring further the possible use of an innovative database showcased at the Congress to catalogue, search on and incorporate electronic information in its own reference library.

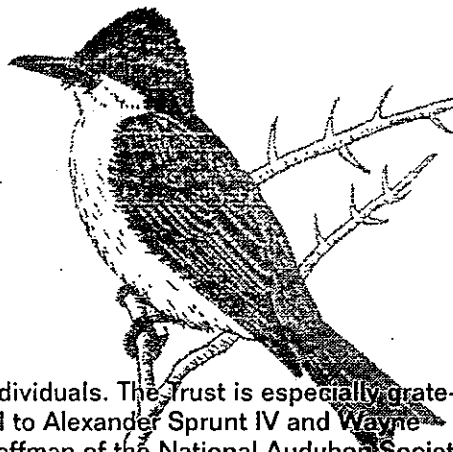
# Christmas is for the Birds

THE BNT ORNITHOLOGY GROUP PARTICIPATED IN THE 97TH NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (CBC) LAST YEAR.

The Christmas Count is the longest-running census of North American birds and it is done entirely by volunteers, from beginning birders to expert ornithologists. Each year during the last two weeks in December enthusiasts choose a day to census as much of their count area (a 15-mile diameter circle) as they can in 24 hours.

Afterwards, the National Audubon Society tallies the results. Checked by experts and published as a telephone book-sized journal the data provides long-term information about population trends of many bird species and alerts professionals to any developing threats. The CBC also shows movements of irruptive species that periodically move south from far north and rare birds that are out of their normal range.

This is the third year the Trust has participated in the CBC. In the Bahamas, New Providence had the highest number of species counted in 1995, with 99 species and 9,942 individuals. This year the count was 97 species and 5,263



individuals. The Trust is especially grateful to Alexander Sprunt IV and Wayne Hoffman of the National Audubon Society who travel from the Florida Keys each year to help with this exercise.

Also participating in the December count were Aileen Bainton, John Bethell, Sandra Buckner, Terry Capell, Paul Dean, Susan Dickson, Lynn Gape, Tony Hepburn, Peter Higgs, Lionel Levine, Maurice Isaacs, Neil McKinney, Merle Mills, Bruce Purdy, Iris Richardson, Larry Roberts, Vernal Smith, Craig Stoker and Carolyn Wardle.

The Trust extends its thanks to all volunteers who participated in this ornithological exercise. It is a valuable contribution to the scientific information on winter birds in the Bahamas.



CONGRATULATIONS

AND

BEST WISHES

to

Exuma Park Warden

Ray Darville

and Evelyn Darville

on the birth of their son

JONATHAN ROBERT

DARVILLE-HUGHES

Born

November 11, 1996.

At the Society for Caribbean Ornithology's 1996 Conference held in Nassau the SCO's West Indian Whistling Duck Working Group met and agreed to put together a proposal for the Conservation of the West Indian Whistling Duck. The

Project was granted funding early this year by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Western

Hemisphere Program to provide educational materials and training to personnel in six different countries throughout the region: Antigua, Barbuda, Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Turks/Caicos islands. While the West Indian Whistling Duck will serve as a "flagship" species, the programme will provide a unique opportunity to educate the public on other wetland species that are in need of conservation measures and on the importance of wetland conservation in general.

The BNT's Education Office and Wildlife Committee and the Conservation Officers of the Ministry of Agriculture worked closely with the Whistling Duck Working Group and are looking forward to the implementation of the programme later this year.



Some of the members attending the meeting to discuss the proposal to hold a White-crowned Pigeon workshop. From left: David Blankenship, Lynn Gape, Pericles Maillis, Sandra Buckner, Maurice Isaacs, Sandy Sprunt, Edmund Pinder

# Fall Fund Raisers Continue to Shine

THE TRUST'S TWO MAJOR fund raising events were again big successes in 1996. The sixth annual Wine and Art Festival took place in October. Generously sponsored each year by Wholesale Wines and Spirits and Butler and Sands, this popular one-day event raises approximately \$10,000 each year and introduces many people to the Trust and the gardens of the Retreat.

Over 15 artists displayed their work and an added attraction was the Bahamas Concert Orchestra which performed during the day on the Poinciana Lawn.

Attendance surpassed that of previous years. Visitors enjoyed a superb selection of wines and an exceptional display of art, as well as a special exhibit of wildlife-oriented postage stamps from the Bahamas Post Office. The Trust is grateful to Diane Holowesko and to George Kelly, of Wholesale Wines and Spir-

its for their organization of this special event each year.

The Fourth Annual Christmas Jollification was attended by over 8,000 people. The Jollification Committee, under the direction of Lee Ogilvie, put 10 months of preparation into this highly successful event. "We were overwhelmed with the response from the artisans," said Lee Ogilvie, all of our space was reserved by the end of July."

Proceeds from this highly successful event directly support the gardens of the Retreat. The 1997 Jollification will be held November 21, 12, & 23. Anyone interested in exhibiting or in joining the committee should contact Lynn Gape at 393-1317.

The seventh annual Wine & Art Festival will be held on Saturday October 25, 1997 so mark your calendars now.



*Hi Ho Silver!*



Bahamas National Trust  
P.O. Box N-4105,  
Nassau, Bahamas

Conservation and Preservation for a Better Quality of Life!