

Thursday, July 29, 2004

**Local/National News**

**Power company assisting with efforts to prevent rare birds from becoming extinct**

By NAVARDO SAUNDERS

Freeport News Reporter

Officials of the Grand Bahama Power Company are working closely with two renowned wildlife experts to prevent a rare breed of birds from becoming extinct.

Fewer than 1,000 Bahama Nuthatches are in the world and they all are in Grand Bahama.

“Our extensive population surveys confirmed that the Bahama Nuthatch is a very rare species; fewer than 1,000 exist, and they are confined solely to Grand Bahama,” wildlife experts William K. Hayes, of the Department of Natural Sciences at Loma Linda University in California, and Robert X. Barry, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Iowa, said in a report.

The report was released on Tuesday by Rodger Johnson, Director of Public Relations at the Grand Bahama Power Company, at a wildlife habitat off Queen’s Highway.

Dave Dunbar, President and Chief Executive officer, G.B Power Company, and Carlton Bosfield, Director of Safety and Training, were also present.

The Bahama Nuthatch is a distinct species, different from the Brown Headed Nuthatch in the United States. It is distinguished by its longer beak, shorter wings and very distinctive vocalizations.



**RARE BREED** — William K. Hayes, left, of the Department of Natural Sciences at Loma Linda University in California, and Robert X. Barry of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Iowa speaking at Tuesday’s press conference held to announce efforts to prevent the Bahama Nuthatch, a rare breed of birds, from becoming extinct.  
*(Photo by Derek Carroll)*

The report states that the “Bahama Nuthatch is indeed one of the world’s rarest birds and will receive considerable attention from birders, scientists and organizations interested in saving the species.”

The Grand Bahama Power Company has been involved in protecting endangered species for sometime now.

Recently Mr. Hayes and Mr. Barry constructed 30 nest boxes for the Bahama Swallow, also an endangered species. Eleven nest boxes have also been built for the Bahama Nuthatch. The boxes have been installed at various locations considered suitable habitats.

Mr. Johnson urged persons who may see the boxes not to interfere with them.

Zeko McKenzie, a Grand Bahamian, has been trained by Mr. Barry and Mr. Hayes to conduct field work and provide training for employees of the

Grand Bahama Power Company, who would like to assist with field studies, surveys, the study of the birds’ reproductive biology and monitoring of nest boxes.

Mr. Hayes and Mr. Barry conducted their initial field work in July 2004 and said more extensive field studies will be conducted during the Nuthatch’s breeding season, which they believe spans from November to June.

“We will develop an educational programme and public relations campaign as part of the project,” the report said.

Officials of the Grand Bahama Power Company urged the public to refrain from killing harmless species of birds, noting that birds are a part of the ecosystem and contribute to the beauty and unique diversity of Grand Bahama.