

# Conservation of the Brown-headed Nuthatch on Grand Bahama Island



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# Bahamian Avifauna

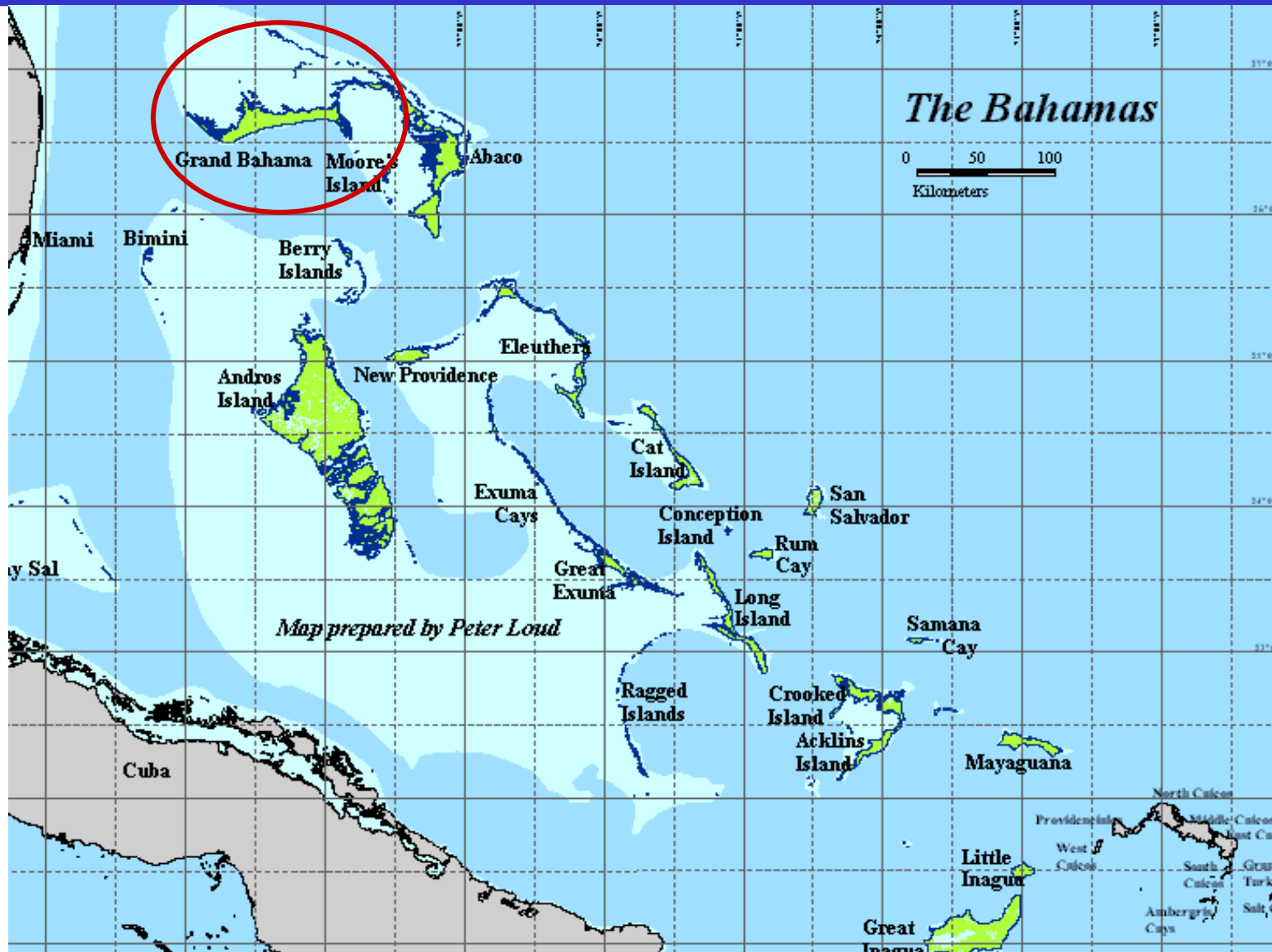
- High avian diversity and abundance during both breeding and nonbreeding seasons
- Three Bahamian Endemics
  - Bahama Yellowthroat, Bahama Swallow
- Multitude of endemic subspecies
  - Hairy Woodpecker, West Indian Woodpecker, Bahama Parrot, **Brown-headed Nuthatch**

# Brown-headed Nuthatch

- Only found on Grand Bahama Island
- Described by James Bond as subspecies, *insularis* (1931)
- Emlen found them to be common (1970s)
- Smith and Smith (1990) found them to be nearly extirpated



# Grand Bahama Island



# Objectives

- 1) Determine the nuthatch's taxonomic status
- 2) Estimate population size
- 3) Investigate nesting and identify habitat associations
- 4) Develop conservation plan

# Taxonomic Status

## Preliminary results

- Morphological differences compared to continental race
- Unique vocalizations
- Lack molecular evidence to verify taxonomic status











# Population Surveys

July 2004

- Located nuthatches at 23 locations
- Observed family groups with juveniles
- Only found in Lucayen Estates

April 2005

- Located nuthatches at 15 of the 23 locations
- Found little evidence of breeding

# Nest Sites

- Tall nest heights similar to those found in south Florida
- Suggest that the geographic origin of the nuthatch on the Bahamas may have occurred via dispersal through south Florida.



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# Future?

- Currently have proposals to NGS for a full taxonomic evaluation and an island wide population survey
- Nuthatch can serve as a flagship species to draw attention to the pine rocklands on Grand Bahama and other pine islands