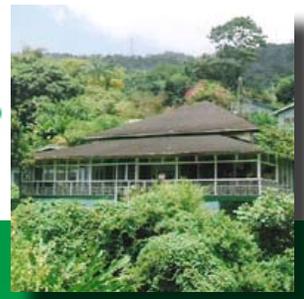




The Bellbird Newsletter



www.asawright.org

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE

April 2010



Outreach Programme Returns to Schools **Asa Wright Back in Class**

For the past three years, students and children have been the only stable and increasing segment of excursionists and day-trippers to the Asa Wright Nature Centre. So it is timely that the Education Outreach Programme is now being reintroduced, conducted by Denise Etienne, who at Asa Wright is a contributor to the overall growth in student and young visitors under age 12.

Denise, employed with the Asa Wright Nature Centre for over 10 years, has worked in the Tour Guide department and once held the position of Senior Guide. During her career at the Centre her knowledge and passion for nature has flourished with a particular interest in naturalist teaching. She formalised this interest in 2008 during a nine-month teacher naturalist workshop at the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed in New Jersey. Upon her return, discussions between her and members of the Board led to the creation of the "Valley Schools Outreach Programme" (VSOP) and she was appointed to the Education department.

According to Denise, this programme is broadly developed to connect the "great outdoors" to various classroom subjects at the Primary level. Some objectives include exciting and educating students with nature which exists in their own schoolyards, enhancing basic English skills (grammar, spelling and creative/poetry writing), as well as creative art skills and imagination, by various activities using examples from nature.



An estimated 700 students from 14 schools have been visited in the past two years, all located within and surrounding the Arima Valley. Classes selected to participate are standards two and three, with children aged seven to 10 years old. Students and teachers are briefed on the programme's objectives and what is expected of them. Most of the exercises are conducted at the school through weekly visits by Denise, but also include a field trip to the Asa Wright Centre.

A new term began in April and it is Denise's hope that the programme will some day be expanded to schools outside of the Arima area incorporating national spread, acceptance and participation. Persons willing to contribute and/or participate in this programme are asked to contact the Centre at asawright@tstt.net.tt or **667-4655**.

Copper-rumped Hummingbird



(*Amazilia tobaci erythronotus*)

Whether green, blue, turquoise or aquamarine... whether tufted, hooded or crested, hummingbirds are star attractions wherever they appear. This highly popular bird family, concentrated within the American tropics and Caribbean, comes in a variety of sizes and colour combinations. Of the species, the Copper-rumped Hummingbird is the most common and well-distributed on both our islands. At home in forests, savannahs and swamps, it also frequents flowering yards in residential areas.

First-time visiting birdwatchers to Asa Wright Nature Centre are more likely to see the Copper-rumped Hummingbird before any other species, as they forage between flowering plants and nectar feeders.

While not as brilliantly hued as many of its more flamboyant cousins, this species is particularly known for its belligerence towards rival birds (not always other hummingbirds) invading its territory. This behaviour may be typical of many (if not all) hummingbird species, but the Copper-rumped is the best example of the family's aggressive territorialism.

The Copper-rumped Hummingbird can be further recognised by its straight bill, green crown, bright green face and underparts, white rear flanks, rufous wings and undertail coverts, green nape and back, coppery bronze lower mantle and rump, and greyish blue tail. Adult male and female birds look alike and can be seen from the main house verandah and throughout the Asa Wright property.

Come see for yourself!



Poui Blossoms

Spots of Gold

There is a local saying: "When the Poui blossoms appear, exams are near." This seems accurate as many secondary school students are preparing for GCE/CXC exams. The spontaneous and sporadic appearance of brilliant golden yellow throughout the hills of the Northern Range indicates that it's the eve of exams and students should be ready.

For the rest of us not preparing for exams, this bright and beautiful revelation is a sign that the dry season is nearing its end and we prepare for rain – much needed after this year's harsh dry season and the reckless burning and desecration of so much of our forests.

Fortunately for us at the Centre, we have been spared the ravages of the flames which consumed so much of the lower reaches of the valley, and we are especially fortunate to still have the opportunity to enjoy the blossoming of our Yellow Poui Trees.

Come quickly to see these Spots of Gold as they brighten the hills of the Arima Valley.

Asa Wright an ideal venue for meetings

The rich biodiversity, serenity and aesthetics of the Asa Wright Nature Centre have long been the main attractions for visiting nature enthusiasts. However, in recent times visitors of a different type, seeking new venues to host their meetings and events, have grown both in number and frequency.

Throughout the past 20-odd years, companies, organisations, as well as individuals, have found the Asa Wright Nature Centre to be an attractive alternative to the traditional venues for hosting meetings, seminars, workshops, retreats, weddings and other events. The main attractions for conference visitors include the Centre's "out of the way" location, our

forest ambience, vivid flora and fauna, tasty local buffet dishes and competitive rates. These, combined with the opportunity to be led on guided tours, are unique and key motivators when considering a visit.

Most meeting/conference groups come to enjoy the rustic open-air amenities of both the Jonnie Fisk Conference Centre (formerly called the Mango Room) and the Jade Vine Patio. Groups are usually small, ranging between 10 and 70 persons, depending on the seating style required and/or function type. Such intimate settings prove ideal for the overall experience as a deliberate segment of the visit is to be inspired by the Centre's natural environment through our guided tours.

Institutions and individuals interested in hosting meetings or events at the Centre are encouraged to contact us early with information on date, function type, group size, meal and other special requirements. We look forward to hosting you.