



The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE



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KANNAN

A true friend honoured in Arkansas

Doctor Ragupathy Kannan is a Professor of Tropical Biology at the University of Arkansas in the United States. On his Facebook information page, Kannan, as he popularly known, lists his activities as “Birds Birds Birds” and “Snakes”.

With this background, and these interests, it was no surprise that Professor Kannan would eventually arrive at the Asa Wright Nature Centre! He first visited us in 2009 with a group of his students, for a “study and working visit”. His students received hands-on knowledge of our birds and reptiles and toured all of the better-known nature sites in Trinidad.

Within a couple of weeks of the group’s departure, Kannan returned to us, bringing his wife and son for a vacation to the place he had come to love!



On the Blanchisseuse Road: Professor Kannan (centre) with his group.

In 2010 it was “back to work”, and Ragupathy Kannan made his second working trip to Trinidad and Asa Wright with another group of biology students from Arkansas. While we know that for this year he is visiting Belize, we do hope to encourage Kannan to continue bringing his study groups here in the future.

And we also take this opportunity to congratulate Kannan on his recent award from the University of Arkansas. He was kind enough

to share with us the good news that he was the “2011 recipient of the Excellence in Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities Award for contributions made to the University of Arkansas”.

This is undoubtedly a great honour for Kannan, and we believe thoroughly deserved. We noted the interest and camaraderie his students showed in their work while they were with us. We now look forward to more visits from our award-winning friend.





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My Wonderful Encounter with Nature

I have learnt one very important lesson on my visit to Asa Wright Nature Centre, and that is that animals are more fascinating in their natural habitat than in the zoo.

Nature plays a very essential part on our earth and it is very disturbing to me and many others that man is willing to destroy these precious flora and fauna for the sake of industrialisation.

So far, I have encountered a couple things about nature that left me puzzled, such as “Why were the Crested oropendula nests only on the side of the tree that faces civilisation?” and “How does a small hummingbird have enough muscle mass to flap its wings as fast as it



Jerone George-Douglas, 11 years old, came to the Asa Wright Nature Centre on Easter weekend with his parents, and the place so inspired him that he wrote this article.

does?” I have encountered at least six animals since I’ve been at this nature reserve. They have a keen sense of hearing, so if you see one you must be very quiet or else they will run away. In addition,

the melodious sounds of the birds bombarded me wherever I went. What joy!

Some people take nature for granted. It is very beautiful and tranquil and if everyone would take some time to visit this nature reserve and observe the beauty, everyone would understand the wonders of it.

On my first hike down the Discovery Trail in this nature reserve I heard many unfamiliar sounds, but for most of the sounds we could not find the source. There were many colourful, bright and exotic birds in the forest. Although I have not been on the other trails, from what I have heard from the other guests, the trails are just as wonderful.

The food at Asa Wright Nature Centre is exquisite. It is mostly made up of fruits and vegetables that are grown in the area and are picked at the peak of freshness. They also have a natural/man-made pool. The water in the pool flows down from the mountains and pours into the pool. Normally people sit under the area where the water pours so that it falls onto their backs and heads and acts like a massager.

I have never been to a nature reserve before and I am glad it was this astounding one that my parents chose. I am sad that my family and I are leaving after spending only one day. I hope we can come back to this amazing place as soon as possible.

ORANGE-WINGED PARROT (*Amazona amazonica*)

Not only is the Orange-winged Parrot a noisy creature but it is the most common parrot in Trinidad and Tobago. These two features allow it to be seen regularly by birders and non-birders alike, despite its expert ability to be camouflaged among foliage.

A bright green parrot for the most part, this bird also has namesake orange wing specula which are apparent when birds are in flight. Still there is more colour to this parrot than meets the eye. The Common Amazon Parrot, as it is also known, has some yellow on the crown and cheeks and blue above the eyes. The tail edge is also yellow with orange streaks on the outer parts. There is even some blue on the inner wing. Put this all together and you get a stunning display when wings and tails are outstretched. This is a common sight during



the rain, when parrots spread their tails and wings to flaunt their hidden beauty.

At 13 inches in length the “Green Parrot” is a large one. You can as easily spot these birds flying through the capital city Port of Spain as you can though the forested corners of the country. Large flocks are

often heralded by cacophonous squawks. Once settled on branches these parrots will quietly feast on flowers of the Immortelle (*Erythrina poeppigiana*), fruits of palm trees, hog-plum (*Spondias monbin*), mango and many other flowers, fruits and seeds. Their breeding season peaks from late February to March and young ones are ready to fly after two months.

In many countries, these Amazon Parrots are known to be loveable pets although they are less loquacious than other species. As in several parts of the island, they create a spectacle roaming free in the hills of the Arima Valley.

J.L. Ryan

References:

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