



The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE



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JUNE 2011

Another Rain Forest

Wedding

Spring Hill hosted a delightful wedding on the weekend of 12th June, when Shree Caesar originally of Marabella wed Kent Hash of Baltimore, Maryland. Over twenty of the couple's close overseas friends and relatives arrived at Asa Wright several days ahead of the ceremony, and enjoyed their own company in nature's rain forest setting.

Not necessarily naturalists when they arrived here, we hope that the charm of our forest trails and bird songs would have been enough to convert some of these happy people into permanent nature lovers and bird watchers.

The overseas group was joined by almost a hundred local family and friends and family of the bride on Sunday, for the actual wedding.

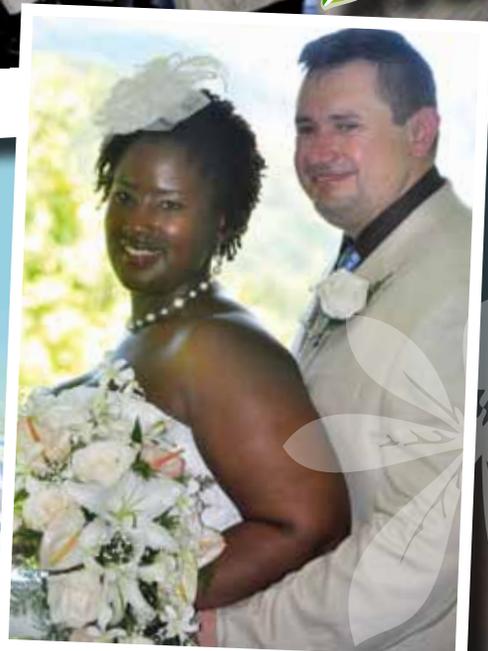
The ceremony was conducted Pastor Martha Lutchmansingh in the beautiful Jade Vine Arbour, following which the party moved across to the Jonnie Fisk Conference Centre, popularly remembered as the "Mango Room", for the reception.

The banquet was catered by our Joanne Singh-Ramlal and her team of chefs, and served by our impeccable dining room staff. The meal featured the best of Asa Wright's wide selection of local culinary delights.

Guests danced into the night to a gentle blend of live entertainment and



The wedding party.



Shree Caesar and Kent Hash wed at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

DJ music, with everyone remembering our adage that "noise disturbs wildlife".

We wish the happy couple all the best for the future, for we believe that weddings held in paradise lead to marriages made in heaven.





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Virtual Field Trips

Since the dawn of the computer, technology and education have become inextricably linked. Teachers are constantly discovering new ways of nurturing this relationship, and the Asa Wright Nature Centre, of course, would like to keep pace with this trend. So when Mrs. Nadine McHenry provided the opportunity to collaborate with us on virtual field trips, we were intrigued.

Plans for this "Sharing the Environment" project kicked off in early 2010 with teacher training workshops at the Centre. Institutions in Trinidad (Atwell's Educational Institute, St. Mary's Children's Home, Asa Wright Nature Centre) worked with those in the U.S. (Widener University and its charter school) so that students from each region could experience via Skype one another's environment. Then, in May of 2011, students of Atwell's Educational Institute and their new friends from the U.S. were able to embark on a field to rainforest at Asa Wright Nature Centre.

The first group of young "nature detectives" searched for local flora and fauna; producers and consumers. They spotted our regulars: agouti, golden tegus, hummingbirds, tanagers, several insects and even found a nest of baby spiders! Although our U.S. friends experienced a bit of difficulty viewing



Students "sharing the environment" through Skype.

PHOTO: Ken Fournillier

certain organisms via Skype, students enjoyed the field trips. The second group of scientists delighted their senses through sights, sounds and scents of the rainforest. While they were able to experience the aromatic scent of Bay leaf and delicate scent of lime, the foreign students were able to see these leaves like lemon grass and Chadon Beni, fruits like Guava and Vervine flowers. The young ones were then brought for a blind-folded tasting session in the Jade Vine Arbour.

Students found it easy to recognise the flavours of banana, mango and guava but could not as easily identify the taste of passion fruit.

We wish that our American counterparts could have tasted the tropical fruits with us but we are glad they were able to take a little piece Trinidad with them in their memories. We hope to have many more of these Virtual Field Trips in the future.

— J.L. Ryan



ASA on Exhibit

Asa Wright presented ourselves at two major Exhibits during June.

The first was the World Environment Day Exhibition at the Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre on June 5th and 6th. This event was arranged by the Environmental Management Authority with the theme "Celebrating Forests for People," so it was only natural that we were there.

Our second presentation was at the Trade and Investment Conference at the Hyatt Regency, where our booth, showing the forests of the Arima Valley, attracted much attention in an exhibition consisting largely of manufactured goods and business services.

We believe that our message of sustainability in all things was received by all.



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PHOTO: Dr. Theodore Fergusson



PHOTO: Kris Sookdeo, via Martyn Kenefick

The Black Hawk-Eagle (*Spizaetus tyrannus*)

The magnificence of the Black Hawk-Eagle could be due to its large size of approximately 27 inches or its powerful soaring flight. The latest attention in the press to our injured Black Hawk-Eagle has certainly endeared many Trinbagonians to this raptor.

Black Hawk-Eagles are secretive birds that perch low on trees and use their amber eyes to hunt for birds, mammals and reptiles such as squirrels, bats, iguanas and snakes. Their range extends from Mexico to Argentina. In Trinidad these raptors can be found in lowland scrub forest in the North East, Central and South parts of the country. However, they have also been seen in hill land, namely at the Asa Wright Nature Centre.

If the raptor is perched you will see its predominantly black feathers and

outstanding dark crest with a white base. But its distinctive feature is exposed when in flight: the black and white checkered pattern on the outer flight feathers. The four greyish bars on the tail and black and white barrings on the outer wings are also apparent on a soaring bird. In fact, it looks similar to the Ornate Hawk-Eagle except for a few distinguishing features. Besides the checks on the wings, look out for its darker-coloured plumage, rounder wings and longer tail. Also listen for its loud "wee, wee, wee, wu-weeeee."

The Black Hawk-Eagle is considered to be a rare bird. After all, this species only nests every two or three years. Still there have been sightings of the bird recorded in Trinidad in the past nine years. And remember, they have been seen at Spring Hill!

– J.L. Ryan

References:

French, Richard. 1991. *A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*.

Hilty, Steven L. 2003. *Birds of Venezuela*.

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Rare Birds Committee