



The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE



www.asawright.org

NOVEMBER 2009



TUFTED COQUETTE

Lephornis ornata

As if Hummingbirds didn't have enough attention already, with their brilliant iridescent plumage, dexterous flight ability, blistering speeds, pinpoint accuracy, high energy diet and diminutive size, there are some like the Tufted Coquette which are further distinguishable and unique.

By far one of the Centre's star attractions and most sought-after birds, the Tufted Coquette is widely acknowledged as Trinidad's smallest resident bird at 2.75 inches (this size is also shared by the rare Rufous-shafted Woodstar Hummingbird). The tiny Coquette, sometimes mistaken for a large bee, can be seen from the main house verandah and around the estate visiting small flowers, especially those of the Vervain and Lantana plants.

While a popular target species for visiting bird watchers, its small size and hasty feeding behaviour make it a challenge to see, although when at rest its magnificence is truly revealed. The male and female strongly contrast but both share mainly green plumes. The male, however, is more glamorous with its bright crimson-coloured crest and crimson and green tufts beneath the throat. The female is devoid of both the crest and tufts seen on the male.

Visitors of all interests are eager and impressed to see the Tufted Coquette, not only one of the world's smallest birds but also one of the world's smallest vertebrates.... *Come see why!*

Celebrating 9,000 Trees

On Friday October 23 more than 100 staff members of the West Indian Tobacco Company and several invited guests gathered at Spring Hill to plant the final lot of 9,000 tree seedlings. Earlier in the year, the company had approached the Centre with a proposal to offset their industrial carbon emissions by planting 9,000 trees. In need of a partner to provide the land space and to ensure the trees were protected, the company chose Asa Wright.

Over 8,000 trees were planted at our L'Orange Estate in the Aripo valley by persons hired from Aripo Village by West Indian Tobacco. Asa Wright, through Education and Outreach Officer Kenneth Fournillier and Conservation Officer Atkin Isaac, advised the company on the selection of suitable trees and on the planting methods and sequences.



The final 500 trees were selected fruit trees planted at Spring Hill by the volunteers who arrived early enough to enjoy breakfast among the birds on the verandah. They were then taken to the Jonnie Fisk Conference Centre where the volunteers were addressed by AWC Chairman Dr. Carol James, West Indian Tobacco's Operations Director Mr. Sheldon Taitt, and Member of Parliament for Arima, the Honourable Penelope Beckles.

Dr. James, in welcoming the initiative, explained why the Centre had accepted the offer to partner with West Indian Tobacco on this conservation exercise. She called for more local companies to live up to this level of stewardship over the natural environment and adopt similar initiatives. Mr. Taitt spoke of his company's commitment to "neutralising their carbon footprint" with this exercise, and thanked Asa Wright for accepting and assisting the project.

Describing herself as "Member of Parliament for the Northern Range," Honourable Penelope Beckles declared her pleasure at having this project come to her constituency, and for the choice of hiring young people from Aripo to plant and nurture the trees until they can sustain themselves.

Following the addresses, the gathering was shown a video presentation of the tree-planting exercise, from concept to completion, before all walking out through the rain to plant the final 500 trees. All outfitted in bright yellow T-shirts supplied by West Indian Tobacco, 120 people, including Ms. Beckles and Dr. James, walked the length of the driveway to plant the fruit trees along the Arima Blanchiesseuse Road.



Nature's Nuptials

The Asa Wright Nature Centre & Lodge is fast becoming the popular choice for weddings, with several marriages being successfully hosted at the Centre. Couples seeking to "tie the knot" have all been wooed by the Centre's pastoral atmosphere, hospitable staff and delicious meals.

Couples looking for a unique location where nature blends with their wedding plans find fulfilment in the natural environment. A deciding feature for the hosting of all wedding ceremonies and receptions has been the use of native floral arrangements and decorations from on site. Couples along with their guests have all commented on the wonderful experience had on their big day.