



The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE



www.asawright.org

Tel: (868) 667-4655 Email: asaright@tstt.net.tt

AUGUST 2012

ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE ON DISPLAY

Asa Wright Nature Centre spent a month of outreach during August, exhibiting our wonders at the UK Bird Fair in Rutland, England, and at the local Tourism Fair “Tour & Explore.” We also conducted a series of in-house safari camps for schoolchildren.

The UK Bird Fair is one of the most important annual Bird and Nature Exhibits, and Asa is now a regular exhibitor at this gathering, which was held from August 17th through 19th. We were represented by former Lodge Manager Ann Sealy, who knows quite well what is expected of us there, and by CEO Veronica Simon-Wallace. We presented the gorgeous, natural wonders of Trinidad and Tobago, and particularly Asa Wright’s Spring Hill Estate, to the interested Birders who come from all over Europe. We are sure they would have been enticed to stay with us to experience our verandah, forests, streams and bird life. We are anticipating seeing some of



CEO Veronica Simon-Wallace presents a bottle of Angostura Single Barrel Rum to a lucky patron at the Asa Wright Exhibit.

our regulars, and now, new visitors over the coming months.

Locally, the Centre participated, once again, in the Tourism Development Company’s “Tour and Explore” exhibit at the Centre of Excellence, Macoya. This TDC initiative is hosted each August and is directed primarily at young persons, demonstrating to them the natural and cultural wonders of their own country. Too often, we look

externally for special sights and activities, without realizing the wonders existing in our own islands. “Tour and Explore” consisted of presentations of our Northern range forests, our wetlands and turtle-nesting beaches, among other natural wonders of Trinidad & Tobago. Our booth was set in the specially designed Northern Range, and we attracted a constant flow of visitors, many of whom had not known of Asa Wright.





The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE

AUGUST 2012 • PAGE 2



FUTURE CUSTODIANS OF THE FORESTS



In keeping with our mission to preserve and conserve the forests of the Arima Valley, Asa Wright engaged the attention of the people who will inherit these forests and rivers. We set up, through July and August, a series of "Camp Safaris", which groups of children from all over Trinidad attended. The camps, organized and managed by Conservation Officer Johanne Ryan and Naturalist Guide Richard Smith (both of AWCN), assisted by UWI nature interns Gerana Alfonso and Christophire Kelly, engaged 302 children and 78 supporting adults.

The children showed tremendous interest in what they experienced, and were taught the importance of our natural heritage.



Eager, young explorers learned how to identify some of our birds, animals and flowers, were taught how to make sponge paint brushes and were encouraged to paint some of the wonders they had experienced. Camp Safari 2013 will build upon the experiences this year.



Gerana Alfonso

Christophire is a BSc (UWI) graduate in Agribusiness Management (2012), and part of UWI's AGBU 2008 Internship programme. She spent eight weeks at Spring Hill, working mostly on the Camp Safari and the Tour & Explore projects.

Gerana, our returning intern, is now an undergraduate at the UWI.

We wish Christophire and Gerana all the best in their careers in nature, and look forward to working with them in the future.

INTERNSHIPS – THE NEXT GENERATION

While we work to develop an interest in the environment among the very young, we are keenly aware of the need for continuity. Asa Wright has developed partnerships with the University of the West Indies, University of Trinidad & Tobago and with the Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry. Students and recent graduates can thus assist as interns at Asa Wright. This year, we were pleased to welcome back Gerana Alfonso, who had spent time with us in 2011, and Christophire Kelly, who both came to participate in our Camp Safari and other projects this year.

BAY-HEADED Tanager

(*Tangara gyrola*)



Bay-Headed Tanager
From a painting by Don Eckelberry

In the Trinidad forest, the Bay-headed Tanager is a distinct species, sporting its red 'bay' head and grass-green body. The subspecies, which exhibit variations in plumage, range from Costa Rica to Brazil. Some Tanagers may have blue under-parts while others have grass green under-parts. Some species in Trinidad have green bellies with a bluish tinge. All birds on average are 5.5 inches long.

Also named the Tete Cacao, these birds can be found singly or in pairs and even in flocks of mixed species. They forage among the mid to upper canopy for fruit. One favourite of the Bay-headed Tanagers at Springhill is the fruit of the 'Trema'. Less often, the Bay-headed Tanager will forage for insects.

The Tete Cacao moves along branches in quick movements, stopping ever so often with its head down seeming to observe the berries for which it is searching. Richard Ffrench described the call of the Bay-headed Tanager as a 'rather slow 5-note sequence, seee, see, see, see, tsou tsou, the last two notes lower in pitch' (Birds, 368). At Asa Wright, you may be fortunate to hear this melody. - J.L. Ryan

LITERATURE CITED

Hilty, S. L. 2003. *Birds of Venezuela*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
Ffrench, R. 1991 *Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.

WHAT'S THAT BIRD?



Have you seen a bird, or an animal, or a plant that you could not recognise, or were uncertain about? Well, send us your photograph, along with location, and your "guess", and we will try to identify the species for you, and publish your question and our response here!

Email your question and pic to:
asawrightconsedu@gmail.com.