



The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE



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MARCH 2013

A new driveway for Spring Hill



From the doorstep to the main road



Open for business...here come the visitors!

YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALIST OF THE MONTH

If you think your child has done something helpful to preserve the environment, please feel free to share it with us. Either write a short story, or send a few pictures to dinetienne44@gmail.com

He/she may be selected as our Young Environmentalist for the month! Once your child is featured in our monthly newsletter, he/she and two adults will be given a complimentary day visit to Asa Wright Nature Center, which includes viewing birds/animals on the verandah, a nature tour and use of the clear-water pool. **Ages 5-16.**

The work began in December with the construction of two retaining walls where the old driveway was slipping. And when these walls were completed, the contractors installed some new and larger drains under the road.

But the really important thing, as far as our visitors have been concerned, had been the need for resurfacing the driveway. The surface had deteriorated badly, and walls and drains were needed to ensure that the new surface would last. So the old surface was scraped off, and new curbs and paving were installed.

It is now a pleasure to drive or walk along the road, and we ask everyone to monitor their speed until we install the humps to ensure that we drive as carefully as we used to before the resurfacing!

Landscaping will be done in the areas where the retaining walls were built, and we hope to have flowering shrubbery in these spots to bring in birds for all our walking bird lovers to enjoy!

We know that there were days during the works where some of our visitors were inconvenienced. We apologise for this but we know that on your next visit you will appreciate the new, smooth driveway.



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BIRD BANDING PROJECT LAUNCHED AT ASA WRIGHT



Green Kingfisher ready for banding

Asa Wright Nature Centre successfully initiated its first Bird Banding project just two weeks ago. It was spearheaded by certified Bird Bander and Trainer, Caleb Walker, in conjunction with certified Bird Bander and Klamath Bird Observatory representative for Trinidad, Carl Fitzjames. Both Caleb and Carl were trained at the Klamath Bird Observatory in Oregon, U.S.A. This project arose out of the need to build a database of the birds in Trinidad and Tobago. By building this database, people can gain more information on breeding, molting times and feeding habits of birds. One can also learn about the lengths of time different species take to develop from juveniles to adults. The project will take place at two ends of the Arima Valley: the William Beebe Tropical Research Station and Brasso Seco.

The first session took place in the verdant forest of Brasso Seco. As the mist rose above the mountains, Carl, Caleb and more of Asa Wright's staff Kimberly and Johanne began their early-morning bird monitoring exercise. Birds such as the Green Kingfisher, White-lined Tanager, Violaceous Euphonia and Golden-headed Manakin were caught and examined. Carl and Caleb used the utmost care when handling the birds, as all certified banders are trained to do. We at Asa Wright earnestly support this initiative and eagerly await future banding sessions.

Article and photos by Johanne L. Ryan



Caleb banding a bird



Carl showing Kimberly how it's done



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BAT FALCON

Falco ruficularis

The Bat Falcon, a resident breeder in Trinidad, inhabits the forest and surrounding areas of the Asa Wright Nature Centre. Last year it could frequently be seen perched atop an Immortelle branch where it surveyed the territory for its meals. That branch, conveniently positioned to the eastern side of the verandah allowed, once or twice, fortunate guests and guides to witness feeding time at the perch. The food of choice for this species is, of course, bats. However, the Bat Falcon will also feed on small birds, mammals and insects.

Bat Falcons are small raptors (27 cm in length) belonging to the family Falconidae, which consists of Falcons and Caracaras. Representatives of the latter group can also be seen in Trinidad. This raptor's range extends from southern Mexico to northern Argentina.

The Bat Falcon makes high-pitched call of 'kiu,kiu,kiu.' It is a rather charming raptor with an outstanding black and white striped upper breast and cinnamon lower breast. It has a black head and grey throat but yellow eye-rings and feet. In Trinidad, breeding has been recorded in February. A clutch of two eggs is normally laid in a nest that is built high off the ground.

The Bat Falcon is found in pairs and appears to be territorial. Take a walk at dawn or dusk to catch a glimpse

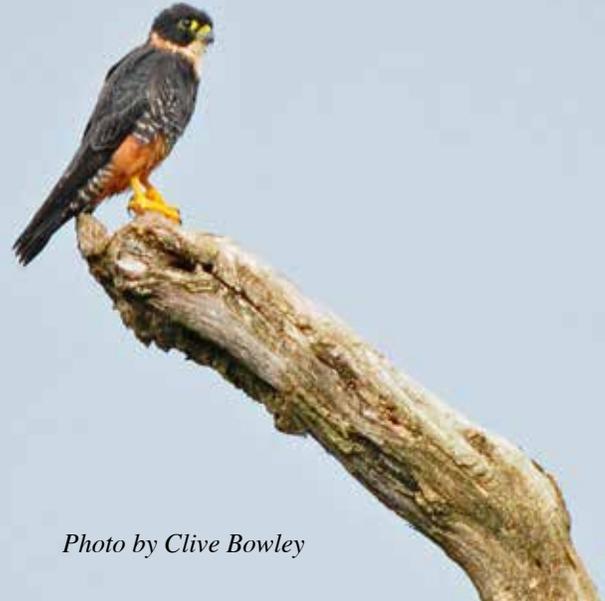


Photo by Clive Bowley

of this falcon--as these are the times when it is most active--in direct, quick flight or soaring in circles.

Johanne L. Ryan

References:

French, Richard. *A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*. Cornell University Press. 2012.

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.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Channel-billed Toucan is the only species of Toucan found in Trinidad. They enjoy sitting in the canopy eating fruits and occasional insects.