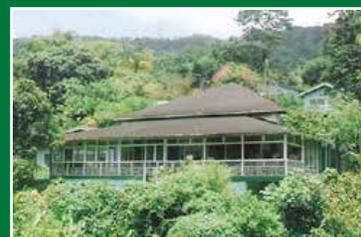




# The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE



[www.asawright.org](http://www.asawright.org)

Tel: (868) 667-4655

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APRIL 2013

## Earth Day

By Kimberly Chu Foon

Did you know that Earth Day was just a few weeks ago on Monday the 22nd of April? If you did, I hope you did something extra special and if you didn't, don't worry, there will be another next year. Earth Day is an annual event which is always held on April 22nd. Founded by Senator Gaylord Nelson, it began in the United States in the year 1970 and was spearheaded by Denis Hayes, an environmental activist who later founded the Earth Day Network and expanded this to over 180 participating nations. Every Earth Day, events are held around the world to demonstrate the support of environmental protection.

Here at the Asa Wright Nature Centre we celebrated Earth Day in one of the most quintessential ways one can. We planted trees! A few members of our staff at the Centre ventured along the trails and we each took turns in planting guava and mamey seapote trees. As you may already know, trees are extremely important in our environment. They produce oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide and prevent soil erosion among many other things. Planting trees is consequently a great idea for Earth Day as one tree can have its own significant impact on the environment.



*Denise Etienne and Lodge Manager Ann Sealey planting a tree for Earth Day*

If you want to celebrate Earth Day at home you don't have to be extravagant. The smallest things can contribute in a very big way. You can recycle your used materials, take a walk instead of driving, use more energy efficient lights such as compact fluorescent lamps and do many other little things that

can have big impacts. So for the next Earth Day, these are some of the things that you can do to celebrate, but what may be an even better idea is to live every day as if it was Earth Day. In this way, all of the little things that we do can become quite significant indeed.



## 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 [dinettienne44@gmail.com](mailto:dinettienne44@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.**



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## Visiting Artist Chirag Thumbar

By Johanne L. Ryan

Chirag Thumbar is accustomed to painting large felines like tigers and leopards. He is not accustomed to painting orchids, lichens, ferns and other such inhabitants of the tropical forests of Trinidad. Chirag hails from Gujarat in the north west of India. There, he says the climate is very dry, a stark contrast to our tropical rainforest. Chirag is on his first visit to Trinidad, a visit made possible through the Don Eckelberry Scholarship Award. He is the winner of this award for the year 2012. Mr. Thumbar is enjoying his time here at Asa Wright. "The staff is friendly," he says.

While here, Chirag wants to capture, through the media of acrylic, pencil and water colour, the variety of habitat,



*Chirag's sketch of the flora found at Asa Wright Nature Centre*

flora and fauna in Trinidad. The collection of sketches he has done so far at Asa Wright, easily convey the beauty of nature to any viewer.

He is but one artist among a family of artists. Both his father and uncle were artists and taught him much about art. Chirag started drawing at the young age of twelve, and later went



*Chirag Thumbar, Don Eckelberry scholarship winner, at work*

on to study Fine Arts as an adult. He currently works at the Centre for Environment Education in India where he is able to fulfil his passions in art and education. He uses art as a medium to explore nature's beauty and therefore encourage people to conserve nature. His illustrations are used in educational materials.

When asked about his favourite bird he immediately says the Toucan but then

added the Green Honey creeper, Motmot and White-necked Jacobin. It seems that at Springhill we have quite a collection of charming avians!

Take a look at some of Chirag's artwork and see the beauty of Trinidad's wildlife.

Then, pay a visit to his blog [www.cthumbar.blogspot.com](http://www.cthumbar.blogspot.com), to see his outstanding paintings of Indian wildlife.



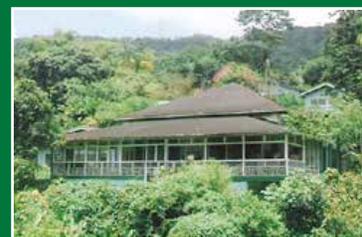
## Sustainability Tourism Conference

Asa Wright Nature Centre was represented at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation which hosted its 14th annual Caribbean Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development in Trinidad and Tobago. This conference was held at Hyatt Regency Hotel from 15th to 18th April, 2013. The theme was "Keeping the Right Balance: Enhancing Destination Sustainability through Products, Partnerships, and Profitability". The programme featured panel discussions, special presentations and interactive workshops to create opportunities for delegates to interact with leading local, regional and international experts and tourism practitioners.



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## Earth Week Environmental Symposium

By Peter O'Connor

Following the Sustainability Conference, we moved over to the Auditorium of the Central Bank Building on Saturday 20th April to support the "Earth Week Environmental Symposium" developed and presented by the Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship chapters of the University of the West Indies, University of Trinidad & Tobago, and the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of T&T. This was a three-day Symposium on the Environment from a faith-based perspective. We were pleased to have Asa Wright on display in this setting.

## Yellow-headed Caracara (Milvago chimachima)

By Johanne L. Ryan

The Yellow-headed Caracara is another member of the Falconidae family. It was formerly a visitor to the island but is now considered a resident bird and can be found from the bustling city of Port of Spain to the lush forest of Brasso Seco. A reader, Leslie-Ann from Port of Spain, often spots this charmer from her office window, allowing her to get this close-up shot of the Yellow-headed Caracara.

The Yellow-headed Caracara ranges from Costa Rica and southern Panama through South America. But breeding has been recorded in Trinidad since 1984. As raptors go, it

is small, usually about 41 cm long. But it makes sure it is heard as it screams, "shree-oo", with a raspy tone. An omnivore, this bird will feed on carrion, animals and plants. It is not picky in its choice of food. In South America, it is known for eating ticks off the backs of cattle. This habit has left it the nickname 'tickbird'.

The Yellow-headed Caracara is mostly pale yellow, with a dark eye stripe and dark brown banding on the tail. Normally found roaming savannahs, swamps and forest edges, this Caracara can also be seen perched atop trees or even along roadsides or rivers, patrolling, looking for its next victim.



The Yellow-headed Caracara. Photo by Leslie-Ann Boisselle

One day you may look up to sky and find yourself below the gracefully flying Yellow-headed Caracara. Be on the lookout!

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

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



## 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!

## 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.