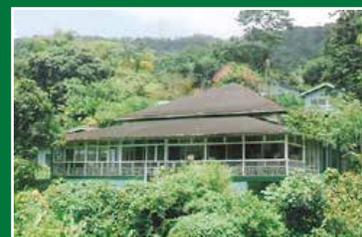




The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE



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August 2013

25 years at Rutland

This year marked the twenty fifth anniversary of the British Bird Fair at Rutland, England. And once again, the Asa Wright Nature Centre was there, showcasing the birds of Trinidad and Tobago, and enticing birders to visit us to experience the range of habitats we have in our islands.

CEO Veronica Simon-Wallace led the Asa Wright presence at Rutland, ably supported by Martyn Kenefick and Geoff and Kate Gibbs.

Over 4,000 persons visited the Fair, and the Asa Pavilion was busy throughout: newcomers discovering the potential we offer; old friends dropping by to say hello and to reminisce on their times at Spring Hill. Very recent visitors to Asa Wright, Mr and Mrs Mckeenan, also came by



Veronica gives raffle winners their White Oak Rum

to thank everyone for their lovely stay with us, and to generously donate to the Conservation Fund. Tour operators Speyside Wildlife, Heatherlea and naturalist Peter Dunn gave lectures on Trinidad and Tobago's birding and wildlife, adding extra support for the Asa Wright Nature Centre and

its marvels.

And just for a touch of "Trini Spirit(s)" to Rutland, we raffled a bottle of Single Barrel Rum on Friday and a bottle of White Oak Rum on Sunday! We look forward to seeing many of our Rutland Friends in T&T over the next few months.

Look Out for Bioblitz

This year's Bioblitz will be based at the Asa Wright Nature Centre on the 21st and 22nd of September. The aim is for wildlife experts to record as many different species of plants and animals within 24 hours.

On Sunday 22nd registered members of the public are invited to come and watch the experts at work. There will be free guided walks of the AWNC trails at 7 a.m., 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Due to restricted parking at the Centre there will be taxis running from Temple Village on the Sunday at 6:30 a.m., 8:30 a.m and 10:00 a.m. There will be space available for parking at the village.

To register and reserve a space on the bus please call Denise (683 1358) or Kimberly (399 3189).

CLOSURE NOTICE

Asa Wright Centre
will be closed from
Monday 2nd
September, 2013
until
Sunday 15th
September, 2013



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.



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Scouts volunteering in our Butterfly Garden

By Kimberly Chu Foon

Did you know that there are more than 650 species of butterflies in Trinidad and Tobago? It's an amazingly high number given the island's size.

At the Asa Wright Nature Centre, we've got lots of them. From the brilliant Blue Transparent to the eye-catching Blue Morpho, the Centre overflows with these spectacular creatures. One way of getting a lot of butterflies concentrated in a small area is to create a butterfly garden and that's exactly what we're doing here. There are many plants that act as food sources and hosts for butterflies. In particular, milkweeds and lantana are really good at reeling them



"Always Prepared" – Boy Scouts in the Butterfly Garden

in. Located next to our herb garden, it has been a constant work in progress as we continue to find species that butterflies are interested in. On the 15th of August, we had some members of the

First Endeavour Scout Troop volunteer with us. With the help of our gardener Mr. Bharat, we worked with the Scout volunteers who were happy to help us with some landscaping and planting in our butterfly garden. What a fantastic job they did! They arrived all geared up and ready to do some hard work. By the end of the day, our butterfly garden had seen quite an upgrade.

There is still some more work to be done and hopefully we can get even more volunteers to assist us. When was the last time you volunteered? It's a great way to dedicate your time to a good cause and gain some experience while you're at it.

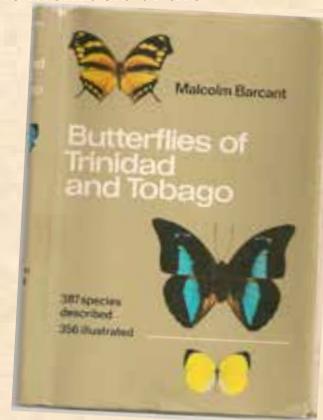
Return of 'The Butterflies'



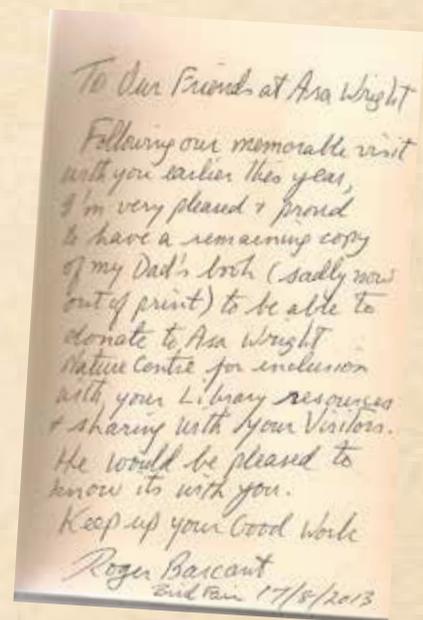
Roger Barcant hands over a copy of his uncle's book

And while the boy scouts were enhancing our Butterfly Garden, Asa Wright Nature Centre was receiving one of the remaining copies of

Malcolm Barcant's book *Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago* from the author's nephew, Roger Barcant. Roger and his wife Eva had stayed



at Spring Hill earlier this year, and offered us a copy of the work for our library. Malcolm's unique butterfly collection is on permanent display at the Angostura Museum, and his book is no longer in print. So it was a special treat that Roger bestowed upon the Centre by giving us this book, to help us identify the



butterflies in our rehabilitated garden.

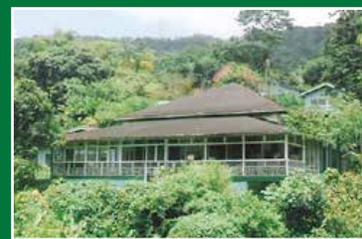
Roger handed the book to CEO Veronica Simon-Wallace at the Rutland Bird Fair.



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Ornate Hawk-Eagle (*Spizaetus ornatus*)

By Johanne L. Ryan

The Ornate Hawk-Eagle is one of the most intriguing avian species found in Trinidad and Tobago due to its unique appearance and uncommon status. In the last few months, the bird has been spotted by guests, guides Mukesh and Molly, and probably others. These recent sightings give us the opportunity to highlight the Ornate Hawk-Eagle, a species especially known to inhabit Trinidad's Northern Range as well as Southern Mexico to Peru and Argentina.

When the Ornate Hawk-Eagle perches, it appears to be ready to take-off in flight. It is at this time, when it perches, that one can get a



*Ornate Hawk Eagle on Discovery Trail.
Photo: Wieslawa Haber*

good look at the raptor. This Hawk-Eagle, which measures 61 cm has a distinctive pointed crest which is raised vertically when the bird is excited. The sides of its head and breast are rufous while its throat is white. The rest of the underparts, including the feathered legs, are striped

black and white, with brown and black bands on the tail. This bird of prey feeds mainly on birds and possibly the occasional agouti. Here, it is known as the 'Chicken Hawk' and some farmers have attested to the birds liking for a meal of chicken. In Central America, it is also known to eat snakes.

The raptor vocalises a series of high-pitched notes 'whee-oo, whee-oo'. Or it can also make a loud 'ca-lee-oo' followed by chuckling notes.

Nests, which are usually made of sticks and placed high in a tree fork, have been recorded regularly in the Arima Valley at Asa Wright Nature Centre since 1985, mostly in February and March (ffrench 2012).

Nesting sites may be re-used for several years. The

breeding cycle of the Ornate Hawk-Eagle lasts several months. For example, adults may begin nest-building in November, the young may hatch in March and fledglings may still remain within nest environs in September.

Pairs may engage in aerial displays in which the female rolls onto her back while the male, remaining above her, reaches for her talons from behind.

The Ornate Hawk-Eagle is another one of T&T's spectacular raptors. Look out for him in a forest near you.

References:

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

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

The Zoo visits Asa

By Denise Etienne

Ever wanted to see an Ocelot up close, or pet a Porcupine? Well some of our staff and neighbouring community members had such an opportunity in August, when the Emperor Valley Zoo visited to hold their "Zoo to You" programme. They brought along a variety of local animals including snakes, tortoises, turtles, owls, quenk, caiman, porcupine and the

ocelot, plus a lively macaw. Zoological Officer Sharlene Khan gave a very informative presentation on the roles, conservation, what is allowed and not allowed to be hunted of the various animals. Her colleague, Zoo-Keeper Perrnath Harry assisted her with handling some of the animals and encouraged members from the group to gently interact with the animals. Sharlene stressed



Getting to know you! – youngsters meet a macajuel

that anyone interested in owning any of these animals as a pet, you need to go

through the right channels and apply for a license from the Forestry Division.