

## Survey Reflects Worldwide Concern for the Environment

On June 20, 1989, Lou Harris of Lou Harris and Associates reported on the first worldwide survey of public opinion and leadership attitudes on the environment at a briefing sponsored by the Energy and Environment Study Committee and Americans for the Environment. The survey, conducted for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), clearly shows that people are alarmed at the state of their environment. Although not yet fully complete, the survey is already the most comprehensive global environmental opinion survey to date.

The study, "The Rising Tide: Public Opinion, Policy and Politics," notes that industrially developed countries and developing countries are equally concerned over the present and future state of their environment. Most people surveyed are pessimistic about future progress, but feel the negative trend could be reversed if environmental protection were to become a national and an international priority. Harris predicted that governments will fall simply because they fail to control environmental degradation. He concluded that next to war and peace, the environment may be the most important global issue that we face today.

For more information, contact Joan Martin-Brown at UNEP, 1889 F St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, U.S.A. (202-289-8456). A copy of the report may be obtained by sending U.S.\$5.00 to Americans for the Environment, 1400 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, U.S.A.

From *The Ecological Society of America Newsletter* No. 11, September 5, 1989. Submitted by Fred Schaffner.

## Book Review

**Ay-Ay: an Island Almanac**, by George A. Seaman. Macmillan Publ., Ltd., London, November 1989. U.S.\$8.00, paper.

Hurricane Hugo and the tiny Caribbean island of St. Croix will forevermore be linked together. The U.S. island of St. Croix took a direct hit from that September 1989 storm, which may go down in the history of hurricanes as being the fiercest on record. Seemingly rising out of that disaster comes a wonderful 155-page book - *Ay-Ay: an Island Almanac* - that describes in a beautiful style the natural character of that tiny speck of land in the vast

## Book Review (Continued)

Atlantic/Caribbean ocean. Author George Seaman, a St. Croix native, paints a word picture of St. Croix the way it was before Hugo, from a perspective of one who explored and understands that island's every nook and cranny. "Within her borders," he writes, "dwelt all the beauty and magic a man could wish for ...."

Rarely does a book appeal to me as does Seaman's *Ay-Ay*. It has the same character as Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*, Louis Halle's *Spring in Washington*, and Sally Carrighar's *Wild Heritage*. All are chuck-full of information, but written in a style that makes them special. These books must be part of one's personal library, so that favorite sections can be read time and again.

*Ay-Ay* is more than a word picture of a Caribbean island. It contains a treasurehouse of morsels that is a must read for anyone who loves nature and its infinite diversity. *Ay-Ay* blends the tropical Caribbean climate with the great whales and the tiny bananaquit, the African tulip tree and the kalaloo crab, the spring arrival of zenaida doves and fall arrival of shorebirds, and the native trees Cruzans use at Christmastime. Its 12 chapters describe the fascinating changes that occur during the 12 months of the year.

Seaman describes January as the end of a "great pivotal journey." He writes that, "the entire earth and the heavens are making tentative and quivering resolutions against the new galactic voyage ahead. It is the celestial cycle's primordial moment. It is the Alpha of the planet's roster of exquisitely precise decisions. It is our home's bugle call to march. It is the zero hour for a diminutive, insular press to roll out its bulletin. It is January."

February is described as the driest month, the "month of purification...of the earth by the winds and the sun." Seaman points out, "There are many 'firsts' in this month - previews and songs of glories. A hesitant and isolated John Phillip (black-whiskered vireo) reaches the careful ear, hardly to be credited as the song which will dominate the woods and hills of July. A shining white cap of a hurtling blue javelin announces the vanguard of the white-crowned pigeon legions which will later seek our mangrove swamps in which to breed. And weirdest and most beautiful of all, that onomatopoeic first call of the chuck-will's-widow out of the evening's depth."

In April, Seaman describes the spring migration of zenaida doves. "In apparent endless numbers, pairs and groups come in from the west. This vernal migration of our 'mountain dove' does not, of course, always coincide with the celebration of Easter, but since it occurs annually after the vernal

equinox, the birds are referred to in the Spanish islands as the 'doves of St. John'."

"As April is the month of promise, May is the month of fulfilment. Along the roads there are fallen flowers, the chartreuse of genep and the pink of dog almond." Later, he writes, "The lyrical fecundity of May is not alone in the vibrating boom of red-necked pigeons but emanates from all living things in one way or another and covers the entire island, appearing to reach even to the stars. Now on a clear night Crux, the Southern Cross, appears early and hangs straight and bright above our south coast. I have always liked to believe that here was where this symbolic constellation appeared brightest to Columbus and so inspired him to name the island Sancta Cruz, or Holy Cross."

Describing July, he writes, "Summer stilts are yapping, more nervous and watchful than ever since some have youngsters with no power of flight. Martins [our swallows] trill from the skies above Mt. Eagle, their nests no doubt still safe in the draft holes of Lower Love chimney."

The common bird song for October "is the rasping but cheerful *zee-e-e-te* of our little yellow-breast, *Coereba flaveola*. There is no better known bird on our island or one with more common names: sugar bird, bananquit, honey creeper, etc. This pretty and lively little creature is our national bird, and maybe rightly so, since it is found abundantly throughout the island and has a history closely associated with us as a once great sugar producing island."

For December, Seaman writes, "The sea has become alive again after the sultry calms of October. Along our north coast, particularly, an incessant low roar marks the seasonal change. It is a sound sweet to the islander and one always remembered. Sometimes one awakes in the absence of this ancient sonance in fear that it has been lost. It is an island decibel, first and last, describing in a hundred voices the moods of our encircling mother. It is always there, from birth to death, in calm and beauty, in rage and doom. It is one of the pulsing nuances that divide an island world from any other. It is a primordial throb in the saline blood of living man. It is the susurrus; it is thunder; it is the sea laving all island shores."

Few people know that Alexander Hamilton, that historic signer of the American Constitution, grew up on St. Croix. Young Alexander was an apprentice clerk in a Christiansted store in September 1772, when St. Croix experienced a devastating hurricane. His letter to his father, describing that hurricane, is included in full by Seaman. "Our distressed helpless condition taught us humility and a contempt of ourselves," he wrote. "The horror of the night - the prospect of immediate cruel death - or, as one may say, of being crushed by the Almighty in his anger -

- filled us with terror."

I have not read another book that gives me a better sense of the natural character of a small island and man's existence there as does Seaman's *Ay-Ay*. It is biologically and historically accurate, and contains a smorgasbord of readable facts. It is worth the £4.95 or approximately U.S.\$8.00 price. **Ro Wauer.**

### New Book on West Indian Biogeography

"Biogeography of the West Indies: Past, Present, and Future," edited by Charles A. Woods. 1989. 896 pp. U.S.\$125.00 + \$2.00 postage and handling. Sandhill Crane Press, Inc., 2406 NW 47th Terrace, Gainesville, Florida 32606, U.S.A.

### Abstracts of Selected Papers Presented at the Third Annual Meeting of the Society of Caribbean Ornithology, Dominican Republic, August 1989 [Concluded from *El Pitirre* Vol. 2(2)]

Use of Agricultural Habitat by Avian Migrants in Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Belize. C.S. Robbins, B.A. Dowell, R.L. Sutton, A.H. Sutton, and D.D. Weyer. During January-February of 1987-89 we conducted systematic surveys (mist netting and point counts) of bird populations in citrus, cacao, coffee, mango, rice, and pine plantations to determine comparative use by migrants and to compare use of agricultural habitats with use of native forests. Results for Belize and the Greater Antilles are discussed. Mature citrus and cacao (under a canopy of *Erythrina*) attracted large numbers of migrants. Shade coffee was much favored over sun coffee. Pine plantations had low densities of both migrants and residents. Fallow rice had huge numbers of indigo buntings and good numbers of common yellowthroats, but poor diversity of migrants. Heavily sprayed habitats contained little animal food and had low to extremely low bird populations. Some species, such as least flycatcher, gray catbird, and Tennessee, magnolia, and black-and-white warblers use certain agricultural habitats in large numbers. Others, such as spotted thrushes, vireos, Louisiana waterthrushes, and Kentucky warblers, were found only rarely in agricultural habitats.

Morphological Development on Captive Puerto Rican Plain Pigeon (*Columba inornata wetmorei*). Carlos