

JAMAICA  
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NATIONAL INITIATIVES

*Important Bird Areas Programme*

In June 2001, BirdLife International's Partner in Jamaica (BirdLife Jamaica) began implementing the Important Bird Areas [IBA] programme for Jamaica. The IBA programme identifies and assesses sites of international importance for birds and seeks to establish, at a national level, a network of protected areas critical for those species which are site dependent or habitat sensitive. This network will be part of the global network for IBA's coordinated by BirdLife International (i.e., the Partners).

Activities will include the development of a national inventory of sites critical for bird and biodiversity conservation in Jamaica, training and fieldwork, advocacy and education programmes, and strengthening partnerships with local, regional, and international organizations. National support is being sought through the establishment of a National Liaison Committee, which includes representatives from relevant government and non-government organizations. This committee is expected to ensure cooperation and participation among all the participants in the IBA programme and make recommendations for goals, policies, IBA's conservation planning, and action.

BirdLife Jamaica envisions the IBA programme as a long-term strategy towards effective conservation of Jamaica's birds and their habitats.

*Forest Conservation and Management*

The Forestry Department has received approval from the Ministry of Agriculture for the National Forest Management and Conservation Plan (NFMCP). They are awaiting adoption of the Plan after it has been tabled before Parliament. The overall goal of this five-year Plan is to promote and improve the conservation and sustainable use of Jamaica's forest resources.

One of the outcomes of developing the NFMCP was recognition of the need to revise the 1996 For-

estry Land Use Policy. The revision is in progress and major related issues are covered in the Forest Plan. Further information which may be downloaded from the Forestry Department's website at [www.forestry.gov.jm](http://www.forestry.gov.jm).

*Parks and Protected Areas*

Jamaica has two national parks, the Blue and John Crow Mountain National Park (BJCMNP) and the Montego Bay Marine Park. Other protected areas that have been declared include the Portland Bight Area, and the Negril and Green Island Watersheds. Several other areas, such as the Cockpit Country, Dolphin Head area, and the Black River Morass, are slated to be declared national parks or various categories of protected areas eventually.

The Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) is the government agency responsible for the development of appropriate policy and authorization of management. In the mid-1990s, the NRCA began delegating park management to non-government organizations (NGOs). According to the "State of the Environment Report 1997," the Jamaica Conservation Development Trust (JCDDT) was delegated manager of the BJCMNP in 1996. The development of trails and the resulting increase by users was expected to generate income that would enable employment of guides and help meet operational costs. To date, the BJCMNP has struggled continually to overcome financial administrative and technical difficulties.

In spite of the "Policy for the National System of Protected Areas" approved by Parliament in November 1997, the future of parks and protected areas in Jamaica remains questionable. Up to 1999, the BJCMNP was the only park or protected area that had been delegated legal NGO management. Since then, only intent of legal delegation has been indicated to NGOs for existing protected areas. As is expected, this matter has become one of great concern for the Jamaican environmental community.

### *Legislation and Related Issues*

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), a national biodiversity information network known as the Jamaica Clearing-House Mechanism (JA CHM) was established in 1999. Jamaica ratified to the CBD in 1995. The JA CHM website can be seen at <http://www.jamaicachm.org.jm>

During the period October 1999 through June 2001, the Endangered Species Protection, Conservation and Regulation of Trade Act 1999 was passed and the green paper, "Towards a National Policy and Strategy on Environmental Systems," was tabled in parliament.

### ORGANIZATION

BirdLife Jamaica was granted Charitable Status by the Government of Jamaica, and also launched its web site: [www.birdlifejamaica.com](http://www.birdlifejamaica.com).

### BIRD CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH

#### *Jamaica Seabird Group*

The Jamaica Seabird Group was launched by BirdLife Jamaica on 16 December 2000. The objectives of the Group are:

- To stimulate interest in and provide a forum for the discussion of Jamaican seabird issues.
- To determine seabird status and conservation needs through field study, and to promote conservation projects for seabirds.
- To provide a link between BirdLife Jamaica and international seabird groups.
- To clarify the status of the Jamaican Petrel.

The major activity of the Group over the past year has been a seabird survey of the Kingston Harbour. The surveys have been led by Group Chairman, Leo Douglas, and active member John Fletcher. Contrary to previous thoughts, the survey has revealed that the Laughing Gull is most abundant from October to March. An estimated average of 35 birds has been recorded from May to August, whereas over 1500 individuals have been estimated for the rest of the year.

There is also an ongoing band recovery programme which has resulted in information exchange with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### *Bird Projects at University of the West Indies, Mona*

Shaun Shawn Morrison (formerly of the Depart-

ment of Life Sciences, University of the West Indies) completed a project on the effects of species such as the Brown Pelican, Least Tern, and Great Egrets on *Tilapia* fish ponds in St. Catherine. There is also an ongoing band recovery programme which has resulted in information exchange with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Other projects carried out as partial requirement for the Behavioural Ecology course at the university were: "The use of 'pishing' and playback to investigate territorial behaviour in some birds," by Marlon Beale, and "Territorial defense of a food source by a male Red-billed Streamertail," by Kamika Fletcher. Both reports were reproduced in BirdLife Jamaica's *Broadsheet* No. 76 (March 2001). Marlon Beale is now working with BirdLife Jamaica and will be registered as a post-graduate student in the next semester.

#### *West Indian Whistling-Duck (WIWD) and Wetlands Conservation Activities (1999-2001)*

BirdLife Jamaica has continued to promote conservation of the West Indian Whistling-Duck and its habitat through its education and media-related activities. Three hundred more WIWD posters were ordered for distribution to schools, NGOs, and other interest groups. The "Keep the Whistlers Whistling" badges have been popular at public outreach exhibits. A slide presentation on the WIWD and its conservation issues was given to BirdLife Jamaica members. The WIWD was prominently featured by BirdLife Jamaica in four newspaper articles. Three articles appeared in the national newspapers, the *Gleaner* and the *Observer*, whereas the other appeared in the *Jamaica Observer Tourist Times*.

In preparation for its activities on World Wetlands Day (2 February 2001), the Institute of Jamaica, Natural History Division (NHD), used the performing arts. The "Wetland Rap Song," composed by WIWD Working Group members at the WIWD and Wetlands Education Workshop of 1999, was dubbed by one of Jamaica's recording dub poets. Mr. Cleon Golding, alias "Ras Jaja," who works with the Natural History Division, made some minor changes to the wetland song and then brought it to life with his talents.

The NHD, while conducting a biodiversity survey at the Negril Royal Palm Reserve in July 2001, detected seven West Indian Whistling-Ducks. In conversation with the groundsmen, Suzanne Davis learned that the ducks had been seen at the Reserve for over 10 years. They tended to move around in relatively small flocks of about eight individuals.

The largest flock seen, however, had about 25 birds.

*Dolphin Head Project*

A United Nations Development Programme-funded project has been conducted in the Dolphin Head area in cooperation with the Forestry Department. On behalf of BirdLife Jamaica, Susan Koenig conducted surveys of birds, as well as other wildlife. These surveys form part of the biophysical survey under the procedure established by the Forestry Department.

*Bird Conservation Research Activities*

Eight bird research projects are currently underway in Jamaica, whereas four have been completed since 1999 (Table 1).

PUBLIC EDUCATION, PUBLICITY, AND OTHERS

The Education Sub-committee of BirdLife Jamaica has taken up the US Fish and Wildlife Service's offer to fund the publication of guides for common birds in Caribbean islands. The guide for

the common birds of Jamaica is in the draft stage and will be completed by the end of 2001.

Over the past two years, the Media Relations Committee of BirdLife Jamaica has brought commendable recognition to Jamaican birds and their habitats and related conservation issues. On an almost monthly basis, either a newspaper feature, or radio or television interview via the Jamaican media, is produced. The Society of Caribbean Ornithology has also participated in interviews with Earth Alert of IRIE FM radio.

In early 2001, a new CD entitled "Bird Songs in Jamaica," became available. The CD was produced by George B. Reynard and Robert L. Sutton, with the support of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Mr. Brandon Hay represented Jamaica at the following regional training workshops:

Shorebird Monitoring Techniques in French Guiana, November 1999 – organised by the National Hunting Office.

Seabird Monitoring Techniques in Culebra, Puerto Rico, May 2000 – organised by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Table 1. Bird research in Jamaica for the period 1999 through 2001.

Project	Project leader/ coordinator	Institution/participants	Funder <sup>1</sup>	Status
Important Bird Areas in Jamaica	Catherine Levy/ Azalee Lawson	BirdLife Jamaica and BirdLife International	Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation NFWF)	In progress
A Survey and Inventory of the Birds of the Mason River Game Sanctuary, Clarendon	Catherine Levy/ Suzanne Davis	BirdLife Jamaica and Institute of Jamaica	EFJ	In progress
West Indian Whistling Duck (WIWD) and Wetlands Conservation	Suzanne Davis and Ann Sutton	Collaborative effort among Jamaicans involved in WIWD and Wetlands Conservation		In progress
Aerial Surveys of Migratory Ducks Islandwide	Ann Sutton and Brandon Hay	Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (CCAM)	Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) and Ducks Unlimited	In progress
Seabird Survey of Kingston Harbour	Leo Douglas and John Fletcher	BirdLife Jamaica	Private funds	In progress
Constant Effort Mist Netting at Marshalls Pen, Mandeville	Ann and Robert Sutton		Private funds	In progress
Game Birds in Portland Bight, Jamaica	Brandon Hay	University of West Indies, Mona Campus	NRCA, Private funds	In progress
Community Composition of Birds for 6 Habitats in the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park	Marcia Mundle	Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust and the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	TNC	In progress
Population and Distribution of Psittacines in the Cockpit Country, Jamaica	Herlitz Davis	BirdLife Jamaica and University of the West Indies (UWI)	EFJ and American Bird Conservancy	Completed
The Impact of Human Disturbance on Tropical Dry Limestone Forest of Jamaica on Resident and Migrant Bird Communities	Leo Douglas	University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica and Tulane University, USA	Ministry of Education, UWI, and National Science Foundation	Completed
Assessment of Landbirds in the Wetlands of Portland Bight (1999 -2000)	Ann Sutton and Brandon Hay	CCAM	NFWF	Completed
Survey of the Avifauna of Dolphin Head area	Susan Koenig	Forestry Department and BirdLife Jamaica	United Nations Development Programme	Completed

<sup>1</sup>Funders do not include in-kind contributors.