

IN MEMORIAM



LISA SALMON

10 NOVEMBER 1907 – 2 AUGUST 2000

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LISA SALMON, THE FIRST LADY of Jamaican Ornithology, passed away on 2 August 2000 at the age of 92. In her lifetime, Lisa's eccentric passion for birds made her a national figure, and her independent style, spunk, and wit in all she said and did was a hallmark of The Lisa Experience. She was best known for her home – Rocklands Bird Sanctuary and Feeding Station – near Anchovy, St. James. Here, by great patience, Lisa trained wild birds to be hand-fed, to the delight of multitudes of people that came from far and wide.

Lisa's close friend, Audrey Downer, remembers her: "Lisa was mad keen on animals. She wouldn't even use an oven when a mouse nested in it. To Lisa, bird shooters/hunters were the worst. She was a woman determined as she was fearless, packing her licensed .45 [caliber pistol] where-ever she went. Nothing was going to scare her."

Lisa's campaign against the hunting of birds was "fought" both on the local and international front, from the neighborhood young boys with their sling shots to as far afield as a letter to the Pope protesting the Italian practice of eating lark's tongues. In response, the Pope reportedly sent her a picture of himself.

Miss Lisa, as she was affectionately called, was an avian ecologist of no mean order. In her younger days, she spent extensive periods roaming western Jamaica observing, photographing, and taking detailed notes on all aspects of bird biology. She cared for abandoned nestlings and injured birds with the patience of a saint, calling many of them by name. But Lisa was much more than a researcher and bird lover. She was an educator, who invested much time and resources in using the print media, her artwork, and photographs to do bird education. In addition to giving slide shows at local schools and libraries, along with guided field trips, Lisa was a strong believer in teacher training.

The fame of Lisa Salmon, a woman who could coax beautiful hummingbirds to sit on the fingers of visitors to Rocklands, eventually spread internationally. Subsequently, Lisa's bird-feeding pastime was featured in numerous documentaries and publications from *Vogue* magazine, to *National Geographic*, to the BBC's – the "Really Wild Show." In its heyday from the 1950s to 1980s, Rocklands Bird Sanctuary and Feeding Station became one of the most popular tourist attractions in the Montego Bay area. Her porch and forest garden, the centers of her bird feeding activities, were graced by the presence of American Presidents, among other international heads of state, European royalty, and celebrities. "Everybody who was anybody who came to Jamaica went to see Lisa and her birds," her friend Audrey remembers. The late James Bond (author of *Birds of the West Indies*), who it is said was equally blunt and vivacious, also reportedly spent much time at Rocklands knocking heads with Lisa.

Lisa Salmon was a founding member of the Gosse Bird Club (now BirdLife Jamaica), the only Jamaican organization specifically interested in birds and their habitats, and one of the oldest environmental non-government organizations of the island. In recognition of her tremendous contribution to this organization, she was made an Honorary Member at the inaugural meeting of the Club in 1963. Beyond this, Lisa received many citations and awards from numerous organizations, among which are the Silver Musgrave Medal and the Centenary Medal from the Institute of Jamaica and a Grace Kennedy Award. She received citations from the Natural History Society of Jamaica, The Jamaica Tourist Board, The St. James Cultural Society, and the Anchovy Cultural Society. In addition, she was made an honorary member of the Natural History Society of Jamaica.

Lisa will be greatly missed by many, and her contribution to the knowledge and appreciation of our natural history will long be remembered.