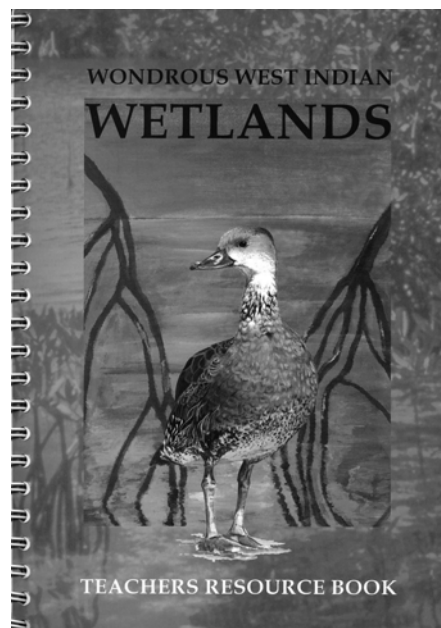


## NEWS FROM THE WEST INDIAN WHISTLING-DUCK AND WETLANDS CONSERVATION PROJECT

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TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOPS ON THE USE OF *WONDROUS WEST INDIAN WETLANDS: TEACHERS' RESOURCE BOOK*.—The West Indian Whistling-Duck Working Group (WIWD-WG) has been busy encouraging and promoting the use of its newly published book *Wondrous West Indian Wetlands: Teacher's Resource Book*. Published in July 2001, this 276-page workbook was written by the WIWD-WG for teachers and educators in the West Indies. The workbook provides resources for conducting a complete wetlands education unit in the classroom, including background information on ecological concepts and natural history, field techniques, and detailed instructions for student activities and projects. The diversity of wetland types found in the West Indies is surveyed, along with their inhabitants, their ecology, and the many ecosystem functions they perform. Classroom and field activities emphasize factors contributing to the loss of regional wetlands and the consequences of these losses for biodiversity, ecosystems and, ultimately, for people. The workbook considers conservation issues specifically pertinent to wetlands in the Caribbean, and provides ideas for student action projects in local communities. Global warming, invasive alien species, other causes of species endangerment, as well as local conservation success stories, and the importance of international treaties and conventions (e.g., Ramsar Convention) to the region are also discussed. The comprehensive and detailed nature of the information also makes the book a valuable resource for decision-makers in government and for members of the public participating in grassroots conservation efforts. The main messages in this book are that there are almost always alternatives to wetland destruction, degradation or unsustainable use, and that protecting the environment safeguards human health and makes economic sense.



Talented wetlands educator, Michele Kading (Head Interpreter) and her staff at Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre have helped the WIWD-WG develop the curriculum for a two-day teachers' workshop focusing specifically on the use of *Wondrous West Indian Wetlands*. The workshop agenda for **Day 1** includes a presentation on wetland teaching/interpretation techniques, an overview of the workbook's contents, activities and demonstrations for the whole group, and an opportunity for teachers (working in small groups; all instructions and materials supplied) to demonstrate to the larger group a sample activity of their choice from the book. All of **Day 2** is spent at a local wetland. Participants have the opportunity to try out all of the field activities that are in the workbook (e.g., line and quadrat plant transects, keeping field records, wetland monitoring, sound maps, wetland words and poetry, wetland assessment) as well as learn to identify the four species of mangroves and other wetland plants and animals. Learning to use binoculars and identifying birds from their field marks is also emphasized.

Michele Kading and Lisa Sorenson (Project Coordinator) recently led workshops on the use of the new workbook in Trinidad and Tobago (May 22–28, 2002), Antigua and Barbuda (November 6–8, 2002) and New Providence, Bahamas (January 21–24, 2003; teachers from seven different Family Islands also attended, thanks to a generous private donation which covered their travel expenses). The response to the workshops has been overwhelmingly positive. Some sample comments from the evaluations:

- I learned many things that I did not know before and the workshop, being so interactive, was very exciting.



Bahamian school teachers try out the quadrat plant sampling technique during the wetlands field trip portion of the Wetlands Education Workshops at the Bahamas National Trust (21–24 January 2003).

- This introduction to wetlands was informative and served as an eye-opener to what is just “outside” my door. Thanks.
- Being able to see [on the fieldtrip] what was discussed in the workshop has made me aware of the importance of wetlands.
- The activities were very interesting and helped tremendously to highlight essential concepts. Activities would be very suitable for class sessions, especially pour-a-pond.
- I really learned many things from this workshop. I have gained a new appreciation for a treasure [wetlands] that I never really gave much thought to. Thank you!

We thank the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental/Education Division in Tobago, the Pointe-a-Pierre Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in Trinidad, the Environmental Awareness Group in Antigua/Barbuda, and the Bahamas National Trust in Nassau for sponsoring the workshops and organizing local teacher and natural resource personnel participation. We also thank the Adventure Learning Centre in New Providence for providing their excellent facilities for the wetlands field trips. Beatriz Hernandez Machado (from Puerto Rico) and Florence Sergile (from Haiti) attended the recent Bahamas workshops for training as workshop facilitators in their home countries – we thank them for their time and help with the project. We are very grateful to Michele Kading for continuing to share with us her talents and gifts as a wetlands educator. We also thank the staff and volunteers at Oak Hammock Marsh for their many hours of work putting together “workshop kits”—a rolling suitcase containing all the supplies needed to deliver a wetlands workshop. Workshop kits will be supplied to all the large Caribbean countries so that local NGO personnel and teachers can use them. Workshop kits are now in the Bahamas and Puerto Rico and follow-up workshops delivered by the BNT staff are already scheduled for February 2003. Plans are underway for a series of workshops in Jamaica this spring (organized and sponsored locally by Birdlife Jamaica, Ridge to Reef Watershed Project, Negril Environment Protection Trust, Montego Bay Marine Park, Portland Environmental Protection Association, CCAM, and others). Workshops will also be held in the coming months in the Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Turks and Caicos Islands, US and British Virgin Islands, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Please contact Lisa Sorenson (lsoren@bu.edu) if you are interested in holding a workshop in your country.

UPDATE ON SPANISH VERSION OF *WONDROUS WEST INDIAN WETLANDS: TEACHERS’ RESOURCE BOOK*.—The Spanish translation of the workbook was completed by Maria Font (University of Puerto Rico Seagrant Pro-

gram) and the translation was proofread by Beatriz Hernandez, Lourdes Mugica, and Denis Dennis Avila. We thank them for their hard work and long hours with this endeavor. The final changes and corrections are being completed by Maria Font and the book will be sent to RSPB for publication by the end of February 2003. We expect the Spanish version of the book to be published in time for the SCSCB meeting in Tobago (July 2003). We are looking forward to workshops introducing the workbook's use in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.

**FUNDRAISING.**—The WIWD Working Group submitted grant proposals to four agencies to fund West Indian Whistling-Duck and Wetlands Conservation Project activities over the next one to two years. We were pleased and grateful to learn that we were awarded funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Division of International Conservation), American Bird Conservancy, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, and Wetlands International's "Partners for Wise Use of Wetlands 2002–2003 Programme" (funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate-General for International Cooperation). The funds will go towards wetland education workshops in eight countries, workshop kits, publication of the Spanish version of the workbook, development of the project website ([www.whistlingduck.org](http://www.whistlingduck.org)), translation of the workbook and educational materials into French, development of Watchable Wildlife Ponds in four countries, writing of a WIWD survey manual, and the wetland flora and fauna field guide.

**WATCHABLE WILDLIFE PONDS.**—The project encourages and supports the development of wetlands equipped with interpretive signs and viewing areas where local people, school groups, and tourists can easily observe whistling-ducks and other wildlife. Often it is only through providing such opportunities to experience nature firsthand that individuals can gain appreciation of and respect for the wetland environment. We will begin development of Wilson and Harrold Ponds in New Providence, Bahamas—a newly designated National Park—as a *Watchable Wildlife Pond*. This will involve installing a viewing platform, boardwalk and interpretive signage of the most common birds seen in the area. We will also work on developing Watchable Wildlife Ponds in Antigua (Jolly Ponds), the DR (Laguna Oviedo), and Jamaica (Negril Royal Palm Reserve).

