

EL PITIRRE

Society of Caribbean Ornithology

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EL PITIRRE

El Pitirre is the newsletter of the Society of Caribbean Ornithology.

El Pitirre es el boletín informativo de la Sociedad de la Ornitología Caribeña.

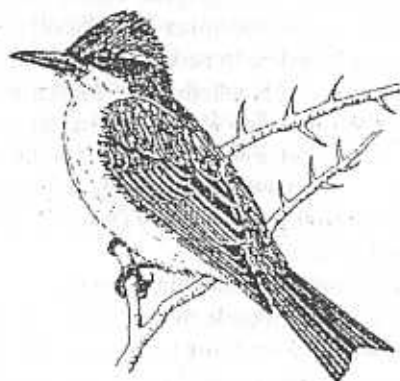
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News, comments or requests should be mailed to the editor for inclusion in the newsletter.

Noticias, comentarios o peticiones deben ser enviadas al editor para inclusión en el boletín.

Tyrannus dominicensis



Pitirre, Gray Kingbird, Pestigre, Petchary

The Society of Caribbean Ornithology is a non-profit organization whose goals are to promote the scientific study and conservation of Caribbean birds and their habitats, to provide a link among island ornithologists and those elsewhere, to provide a written forum for researchers in the region (refereed journal—Ornitología Caribeña, published in conjunction with the Puerto Rico Ornithological Society) and to provide data or technical aid to conservation groups in the Caribbean.

La Sociedad de la Ornitología Caribeña es una organización sin fines de lucro cuyas metas son promover el estudio científico y la conservación de la avifauna caribeña, auspiciar un simposio anual sobre la ornitología caribeña, publicar una revista profesional llamada Ornitología Caribeña (publicada en conjunto con la Sociedad Ornitológica de Puerto Rico), ser una fuente de comunicación entre ornitólogos caribeños y en otras áreas y proveer ayuda técnica o datos a grupos de conservación en el Caribe.

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FIRST REPORT OF VIRGINIA'S WARBLER FROM THE BAHAMA ISLANDS, WITH
COMMENTS ON OTHER RECORDS FROM THE WEST INDIES AND EASTERN NORTH
AMERICA

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The Virginia's Warbler (*Vermivora virginiae*) breeds in the mainly arid mountainous region of the interior western United States, usually above 2,000 m, and normally migrates down the spine of the North American continent to winter in the highlands of western Mexico north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (American Ornithologists' Union 1983). We report the first observation of this species from the Bahama Islands and relate our sighting to the relatively few other records east of its normal range.

On 8 March 1993, we took a mid-day break from studying birds in the Grand Bahama Island pinelands and visited Dover Sound Observation Hill (26°36'N, 78°38'W), a spoil mound at the northeastern end of the man-made Grand Lucayan Waterway. Topping out about 25 m above its surroundings and with a small adjacent artificial park and access road, the hill lies within an extensive region of mostly small red mangroves (*Rhizophora mangle*) on the northern coast of Grand Bahama. The hill is thickly vegetated along its slopes with shrubs and small trees, especially seagrape (*Coccoloba uvifera*) and poisonwood (*Metopium toxiferum*). When we "pished" from the top of the hill, several birds popped into view from among the vegetation along the northwestern slope, including Yellow Warblers (*Dendroica petechia*) and Palm Warblers (*Dendroica palmarum*). Among these was a different warbler which scolded repeatedly with an unfamiliar, loud and liquid "chip" note. It remained nearby for as long as we were present (at least 15 minutes) and repeatedly was attracted to the 4-m focus distance of our 10x40 binoculars. All observers had leisurely views, and PWS took field notes.

The warbler, about 11 cm in length, was clearly a *Vermivora* based on its overall size and shape, and its sharp, rather wedge-shaped bill with slightly decurved culmen. It was mostly gray above and dull grayish white below, except for a prominent pure yellow patch on the middle of the breast. It also had a bright, deep yellow rump and undertail coverts, the yellow essentially forming a band around the base of the body. The flight feathers and retrices were darker brownish gray than the rest of the body. The eye-ring was prominently white, and a small chestnut patch was evident in the center of the crown whenever the bird showed agitation. Its legs and bill were mostly dark horn, the lower mandible slightly paler than the upper. We identified this bird as a Virginia's Warbler based on our experience with the species in western North America and from the National Geographic Society (1987) field guide, later also from Ridgway (1902). The

individual we saw looked much like the color photograph of a Virginia's Warbler in Farrand (1983).

No records apparently have been published of Virginia's Warbler in Central America south or east of their normal wintering range, which extends to the vicinity of Nejapa, Oaxaca, Mexico (16°37'N, 96°01'W), at an elevation of ca. 1,000 m (Binford 1989). However, another recent sighting of a Virginia's Warbler in the West Indies is surprisingly similar to ours: one well-described from coastal mangroves about 60 km sw of Havana, Cuba, on 2 March 1989 (Wunderle et al. 1992). Virginia's Warblers are rare but regular visitors, especially in autumn, along the Pacific coast of California (Roberson 1980), but they are seldom reported in continental North America east of the Rocky Mountain foothills. There nevertheless are at least four substantiated records of this species more than 1,000 km east of its normal range: a male collected near Lake Erie at Pt. Pelee, Ontario, on 16 May 1958 (Dow 1962); a female photographed in the hand near Dearborn, Michigan, ca. 80 km northwest of Pt. Pelee, on 13 May 1993 (M. Harhold in Kaufman 1993); one photographed in the hand along the mid-Atlantic seaboard at Island Beach, New Jersey, on 6 October 1962 (F. Homick in French 1963, Adams 1968); and one collected near the Gulf of Mexico northwest of Cameron, Louisiana, on 17 December 1988 (S.W. Cardiff in Muth 1989). At least seven sight reports of Virginia's Warblers near the ca. 200-km arc of the Gulf of Mexico between Galveston, Texas, and Cameron, Louisiana, were also published in *American Birds* between 1979 and 1990, both for autumn (September to November) and spring (April), as was another photographic report from Island Beach, New Jersey, on 24 September 1966 (Scott and Cutler 1967) which we were unable to verify. This pattern overall seems insufficient to assess whether the March reports of Virginia's Warblers from the West Indies might represent displaced winter residents or migrants. Birds at the southern end of this species' normal wintering range in Oaxaca have been noted only through mid February (Binford 1989), but the Mexican data are few.

Because it is a relatively little-visited region, either historically by collecting ornithologists or more recently by modern birders, the northern West Indies may harbor many little-suspected avian phenomena. Patterns are only likely to emerge as more data become available. Townsend's Warblers (*Dendroica townsendi*), for example, normally also found mainly in the mountains of Western North America, have been photographed on Grand Bahama Island, 28 April

1984 (A. Edwards in Norton 1984), and on Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos Islands, 19 January 1986 (G. Rosenberg in Pashley 1988). There also are at least seven records of reports of Townsend's Warblers in nearby Florida, but none of Virginia's Warblers (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992). Although we did not find this individual to be so, Virginia's Warblers have a reputation for being shy and retiring (Bent 1953). The few reports east of this species' normal range may simply reflect those characters, in contrast to the greater number of eastern records of less furtive western species like Townsend's Warblers.

We thank William Boyle, Ronald French, Wayne Hoffman, Richard Kane, William Loftus, Fred Lohrer, James Meritt, John Miller, Sandra Sherman, Mabel Warburton, James Wiley, and Joseph Wunderle for providing documentation or assisting in securing information concerning Virginia's Warblers east of their normal range. Thomas Hornick kindly furnished the original photos of the Virginia's Warbler taken in 1962 by his late brother, Frank, at Island Beach, New Jersey. These now are deposited in the VIREO collection at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia in file number X08/54.

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FIRST RECORD OF THE RUFF (*PHILOMACHUS PUGNAX*) FOR ANTIGUA-BARBUDA

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St. John's
Antigua, W.I.

On 23 September 1993 at 18:00 hr, Kevel Lindsay and I were watching a Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) in the wet cow-meadows to the east of the Jolly Harbour construction area on Antigua's west coast, when a large wader flew in with several Pectoral Sandpipers (*Calidris melanotos*) and alighted in deep grass in an open storm drain. Almost immediately, the larger bird took flight, going north with the sandpipers. I observed that the larger bird had no wing bars, but had distinct white outer upper-tail coverts. I re-located the bird, with little or none of the standing bird's body visible

behind long grass, but again it flushed from a considerable distance and I was unable to closely examine it.

At 06:00 the following morning, I found the bird at the same site as the previous day, but now it was less wary and allowed a close approach. I determined the bird to be a juvenile male Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*). The Ruff made occasional short flights, "hanging" in the air on landing, and thereby clearly displaying the white axillaries and underwing feathers, with the characteristic "horseshoe" upper tail pattern. It fed among a Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mex-*

Ruff in Antigua-Barbuda (continued)

anus; to which it was comparable in size), Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*), and several Pectoral Sandpipers in tall grass, where it often disappeared from view. I left after 30 mins.

The Ruff winters from West Africa to India, with accidental or occasional occurrence in the western Atlantic, from Barbados to North America (American Ornithologists' Union 1983, Evans 1990). The record reported here represents the

first in the state of Antigua-Barbuda.

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RESEARCH NOTES

NEW RECORDS OF BIRDS BANDED IN HAVANA, CUBA

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Since 1988, bird populations around La Habana have been monitored by the Cuban Bird Banding Laboratory of the Instituto de Ecología y Sistemática and Canadian institutions (Long Pond Bird Observatory and Canadian Wildlife Service) through capture and banding, using mist nets.

During the fall migration of 1993, a major banding effort was conducted in Casablanca (Havana city). We banded 103 birds of 13 species, among which were two species records for Cuba: an Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax vireescens*) was banded on 8 October 1993 (band number 1840-75612), and a Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) was banded (no. 8011-

34049) on 29 October 1993.

Three other rare species were banded in Havana for the first time: Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), Bay-breasted Warbler (*Dendroica castanea*), and the Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*). Among the more common species banded were the Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*), Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*), Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*), and American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*).

NOTICE OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS

CORN, J.L., N. BARRÉ, B. THIBOT, T. E. CREEKMORE, G. I. GARRIS, AND V. F. NETTLES. 1993. Potential Role of Cattle Egrets, *Bubulcus ibis* (Ciconiformes: Ardeidae), in the Dissemination of *Amblyomma variegatum* (Acari: Ixodidae) in the Eastern Caribbean. *J. Med. Entomol.* 30(6):1029-1037.

Abstract.—The potential role of Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), in the dissemination of *Amblyomma variegatum* in the Eastern Caribbean was evaluated through the examination of egrets from Guadeloupe and Antigua from September 1988 to May 1991. The mean prevalences of infestation by larvae and nymphs were 2.3 and 0.5% respectively. The mean intensity and relative density of infestation by larvae were 8.8 (S.D. = 9.80) and 0.2 (S.D. = 0.28), respectively. Cattle Egrets examined in Guadeloupe during February-March 1991 were not infested, but 5.9% were infested by larvae during June-July 1991. Inter-island movement of Cattle Egrets was evaluated using marked 1,129 egrets. Emigration of egrets included movement of birds marked in Antigua or Guadeloupe to 14 Caribbean islands and the Florida Keys. That Cattle Egrets served as hosts for immature *A. variegatum*

in the Eastern Caribbean and moved between islands in the region demonstrates that these birds could serve as the disseminator of the tick. Estimates of the numbers of infested Cattle Egrets emigrating from Antigua and Guadeloupe ranged from 0 to 0.24% of the current populations.

REACTIVATED JOURNAL

VIDA SILVESTRE NEOTROPICAL, a trilingual technical journal, was reactivated in 1993 at the Regional Wildlife Management Program for Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica. Geographically, the journal includes Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Manuscripts may be submitted in Spanish, Portuguese, and English on neotropical wildlife, wildland management and conservation. For subscription information or publication requirements, write to Vida Silvestre Neotropical, Programa Regional en Manejo de Vida Silvestre, Universidad Nacional, Apartado 1350-3000, Heredia, Costa Rica.

SOCIETY RECEIVES GRANT FROM RARE CENTER

The Society of Caribbean Ornithology has received a generous grant from the RARE Center for Tropical Conservation. The grant will help support the distribution of the Society's newsletter, *El Pitirre*, to Members and Associate Members in the West Indies.

NEW MEMBERS ELECTED TO SCO BOARD

Two new members have been elected to the Society's Board of Directors: Donald Anthony will represent St. Lucia, whereas Simon Guerrero will represent the Dominican Republic. As announced at the 1993 annual meeting, Francisco Vilella will replace Frank Rivera as the Board member from Puerto Rico.

DIRECTORY OF REFERENCE COLLECTIONS AND SPECIALISTS IN CARIBBEAN BIODIVERSITY

This is a request for information that will be included in the Directory of Reference Collections and Specialists in Caribbean Biodiversity. The goal is to promote the inventory of biodiversity in the Caribbean islands and Bahamas by providing a guide to Caribbean collection resources and to taxonomic specialists capable of identifying specimens from Caribbean inventories. The directory is envisioned as the first step in establishing a general program to provide assistance and support to systematics collections in the region. Once we have made initial contact among institutions with biodiversity collections, we will design additional surveys to uncover common problems in the maintenance of Caribbean reference collections.

The preliminary Directory will consist of two parts. First, a section on reference collections will provide a description of Caribbean institutions that maintain research collections. This section is intended to provide Caribbean-based specialists with current information on the institutional resources available to them in the Basin. It will also draw attention to Caribbean institutions as repositories for material resulting from inventories that are currently underway. We hope this effort will result in more rapid transfer of information on Caribbean biodiversity to the institutions where it will be used.

The second part will comprise a list of specialists with key words chosen by them to describe their research interests and professional activities related to collections or biodiversity. The list will include persons involved in the maintenance and care of collections, persons conducting inventories, and taxonomic specialists who have expertise in the identification and classification of Caribbean species. The goal is to

Biodiversity directory (continued)

reduce backlogs and increase the effectiveness of the Caribbean inventory by improving access to taxonomic expertise. Users of the Directory will be advised to contact specialists in advance of sending specimens for identification.

To be included in the listing, please fill out the accompanying form for specialists and return it to the address below that is most convenient for you.

The Directory will be distributed at no charge to all respondents and to other interested parties on request.

Gilberto Silva
Museo Nacional de Historia Natural
Capitolio Nacional
Ciudad de La Habana 10200, Cuba
Telephone: 53-7 63-2589

Sixto Incháustegui
Grupo Jaragua
El Vergel 33
Santo Domingo, República Dominicana
FAX: (809) 566-2798

Michael L. Smith
Center for Marine Conservation
1725 DeSales Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20036, U.S.A.

NOTICE

WILD BIRD CONSERVATION ACT OF 1992

SUMMARY OF EFFECTS

The Wild Bird Conservation Act (Act), a significant new step in international conservation efforts to protect exotic birds subject to trade, became effective on 23 October 1992. The Act focuses on bird species listed in the Appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). If you import birds, you must now meet requirements imposed by this new law in addition to existing requirements imposed by CITES, the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, or other regulations that may apply.

IMPORTATIONS ALLOWED UNDER THE ACT

Permit Required

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) may issue permits to allow importation of otherwise prohibited species if the Service determines the importation does not undermine the species' survival. A permit must be issued by the Service prior to importation. Permits may be issued only for the following purposes:

- scientific research;
- zoological breeding or display;
- pet importation when owners are returning to the United

Wild Bird Act (continued)

- States after at least a year's absence; and
- cooperative breeding programs, if the programs have been approved by the Service.

In addition, the Service allows birds listed under CITES that were exported from the United States by their owners to return to the United States. These importations are allowed provided the birds were exported legally with a CITES permit and a copy of that permit is presented when the birds are to be returned to the United States. Also, owners must accompany these birds when they are returned to the United States.

Permit Not Required

The Act provides for certain otherwise prohibited importations without a permit provided the Service has approved the species, the captive breeding facility, or a scientifically based management plan for the species.

APPLYING FOR A PERMIT TO IMPORT BIRDS

Permit applications and any other information you may need are available from the Office of Management Authority, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 420, Arlington, Virginia 22203, U.S.A.; Telephone: 1-800-358-2104 or (703) 358-2093; FAX: (703) 358-2281.

OPPORTUNITIES

The Foundation of Field Research offers support for a graduate student or professional to conduct research on an introduced population of African Mona monkeys (*Cercopithecus mona*) on the island of Grenada. The foundation will provide use of its research center on the island, food, airfare, and a limited budget for supplies from 1 August 1994 to 1 August 1995. For further details contact: Foundation for Field Research, P.O. Box 771, St. George's, Grenada, West Indies, Telephone (809) 440-8854, FAX (809) 440-2330.

The Mona monkey Project, Grand Etang National Park, Grenada seeks a field assistant from now until August 1994. Responsibilities include assisting the Principal Investigator with collection of natural history data and assisting the Field Manager with general logistics. Applicants should have, as a minimum, a B.A. or B.S. in anthropology, wildlife biology, or a related biological science, be in good physical condition, and have some previous field experience. Room and board at the field station will be provided. Contact: Mary Glenn, c/o K. Bensen, Peace Corps, P.O. Box 766, St. George's, Grenada, West Indies; Telephone (809) 440-9779.

International Graduate Student Fellowship Program at the American Museum of Natural History's Center for

Opportunities (continued)

Biodiversity and Conservation. AMNH invites applications from non-U.S. citizens to enter a new doctoral program under the auspices of the Museum's Center for Biodiversity and Conservation. Students will have an outstanding opportunity to study a diversified curriculum in systematics, biodiversity, conservation, and public policy. Through their training, graduates of the program will advance environmental research and conservation programs in their countries. Students must simultaneously apply to the Museum and to one of four cooperating universities depending on field of interest. Students should have a bachelors degree and must fulfill university admission requirements. Students will receive travel assistance, full fellowship support for 12 months, and tuition will be fully paid. Applicants should contact the Office of Grants and Fellowships to discuss their interests, background, and eligibility for the Program. The Museum's deadline for full application on prescribed forms is 1 January 1995; this will include a resumé of your academic background, work experience, research interests, and the names of three referees familiar with your work. For further information on these requirements and those of the cooperating universities, contact:

Office of Grants and Fellowships
American Museum of Natural History
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024, U.S.A.
Telephone: 212-769-5467
Fax: 212-769-5495
E-mail: bynum@amnh.org

MEETINGS OF INTEREST

29 April 1994 – XIII Symposium on Caribbean Flora and Fauna, Humacao University College, University of Puerto Rico, Humacao, Puerto Rico. (Dr. Miguel P. Sastre, Telephone: 809-850-9388; FAX: 809-850-0710; E-mail: M_SASTRE@CUHAC.UPR.CLU.EDU).

11-15 May 1994 – Joint meeting of The Association of Systematics Collections and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, Missouri Botanical Garden. (ASC, 730 11th Street, N.W., Second Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, U.S.A. Telephone: 202-347-2850).

7-12 June 1994 – Joint annual meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology and The Association for Tropical Biology, University of Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. (Eduardo Santana, Department of Wildlife Biology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706, U.S.A. FAX: 608-262-6099; or Laboratorio Natural Las Joyas, Universidad de Guadalajara, Apdo. Postal 1-3933, Guadalajara, Jalisco, C.P. 44100, Mexico. FAX: 52-338-7-27-49).

Meetings (continued)

13-19 June 1994 – **American Birding Association Convention '94**, Best Western International Inn, 1505 North Broadway, Minot, North Dakota 58701, U.S.A. (Carol Wallace, ABA Convention Registrar, P.O. Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80934, U.S.A. Telephone: 800-850-BIRD).

21-24 June 1994 – **Assessing the Quantity and Distribution of Caribbean Biodiversity**, Habana, Cuba. (Michael L. Smith, Center for Marine Conservation, 1725 DeSales Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036).

mid-June 1994 – **Second Mesoamerican Workshop on the Conservation and Management of Macaws**, Costa Rica. (Center for the Study of Tropical Birds, Inc., 218 Conway Dr., San Antonio, Texas 78209-1716, U.S.A.. FAX: 512-828-5911).

26 June 1994 – **The American Ornithologists' Union, The Cooper Ornithological Society, and The Wilson Ornithological Society**, joint meeting, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, U.S.A.

24-30 July 1994 – **Animal Behavior Society**, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. (James C. Ha, Regional Primate Research Center, University of Washington, 1-421 Health Sciences Building, Seattle, Washington 98195, U.S.A.).

9-14 August 1994 – **6th Annual Society for Ecological Restoration Conference**, Lansing Community College, Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A. (Roger Welch, Program Chair, Lansing Community College, 422 N. Washington Square, Dept. 31, Lansing, Michigan 48901, U.S.A.; Telephone: 517-483-9675).

12-18 August 1994 – **21st World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation**, "Global partnership for bird conservation," Rosenheim, Germany. (Bayerische Akademie für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege (ANL), ICBP World Conference, Postfach 1261, D-8229

Laufen/Salzach, Germany).

21-27 August 1994 – **XXI International Ornithological Congress**, Hofburg, Vienna, Austria. (Interconvention, Friedrichstrasse 7, A-1450 Vienna, Austria. Telephone: +43-1-586-7260).

14-16 October 1994 – **Joint Meeting, Association of Field Ornithologists**, Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Frost Valley Conference Center in the southern Catskills. (Dr. Valerie Freer, Science Department, Sullivan County community College, Loch Sheldrake, New York 12759, U.S.A.).

24-28 October 1994 – **III International Conference of Ecological Economics**, Costa Rica. (Organizing Committee, III ICEE, P.O. box 555, 3000 Heredia, Costa Rica; FAX: 506-37-6868).

3-6 November 1994 – **Raptor Research Foundation Annual Meeting**, Flagstaff, Arizona, U.S.A. (Patricia A. Hall, Local Chairperson, 436 E. David Dr., Flagstaff, Arizona 86001, U.S.A.; Telephone: 602-774-0041).

9-12 November 1994 – **The 18th State Meeting of the Colonial Waterbird Society**, Shell Island Resort Hotel, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. (James Kushlan, Department of Biology, University of Mississippi, University, Mississippi 38677, U.S.A.; Telephone: 601-232-7203; FAX: 601-232-5144).

21-22 November 1994 – **Limnology and Waterfowl** (Monitoring, modeling, and management), Sopron, Hungary. (J. Kerekes, Canadian Wildlife Service, Bedford Institute of Oceanography, P.O. Box 1006, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada; Telephone: 902-426-6356; FAX: 902-426-7209).

5-11 August 1995 – **V Neotropical Ornithological Congress**, Asuncion, Paraguay. (Nancy Lopez de Kochalka, c/o Comité Organizador Local del V CON, Museo Nacional de Historia Natural del Paraguay, Sucursal 19, Campus, Central XI, Paraguay, South America; Telephone: 595-21-505075).

IN MEMORIAM

GABRIEL LEWIS CHARLES, MBE

1935—1993

Born in the small east-coast village of Dennery, Gabriel Lewis Charles came from a family with a long history of serving Saint Lucia with dedication and pride. He was the son of James Charles, a Senator and Minister of Communications and Works in the late Federation of the West Indies, and brother to George Charles, Saint Lucia's, first Chief Minister.

After leaving St. Mary's College in 1955, Gabriel joined the government service working for the Ministry of Agriculture as an Animal Husbandry Officer, stationed at Vieux Fort.

In 1956, seeking to broaden his horizons, Gabriel left St. Lucia for the United Kingdom. After trying his hand at a variety of jobs, he answered a newspaper advertisement for the position of Forest Worker in the Lake District. The next several years saw Gabriel manning fire breaks, planting trees, and becoming an integral part of the region's social scene. He became an indispensable part of the local cricket team, and wooed his way into the hearts of the local girls, eventually marrying one, Margaret Carter, in 1962. Throughout his time in England, Gabriel strived to better himself academically and, in 1960, he obtained a Diploma in Forestry from the Forest of Dean.

In 1961, Gabriel returned to the land of his birth and spent the next six years as a Forestry Assistant, with special responsibility for the Soufriere range. He and his bride lived at Edmund Forest, cut off from the rest of civilization by lack of electricity and vehicular access. It was during these times that Gabriel oversaw the planting of hundreds of acres of blue mahoe and mahogany trees – forests that remain to this day, and which are living testimony to his environmental commitment and "green thumb." This was also a time when Gabriel began his own family; he and Margaret would ultimately raise four children, three daughters and a son.

Throughout the 1970s Gabriel rose through the ranks of the Forestry Division, serving first as Senior Forest Assistant, and then as its first local Forestry Supervisor. In the years that followed, Gabriel steered the Forestry Division from being one of low morale and little significance, into a full-blown Department that is now a household name. He played a pivotal role in seeing that his staff was well-trained and -equipped, while zealously promoting not only the reforestation of cleared lands, but also the protection of what remained of the island's untouched forest. He championed the plight of the Saint Lucian Parrot, and through his persistence, saw that species declared the island's national bird. In voice and in deed, Gabriel promoted the conservation of all of the island's natural resources. He was a founding member of the local Naturalist's Society, Chairman of the Environmental Commission, and Deputy Chairman of the Saint Lucia Beaches & Parks Commission.

Wherever there was a rallying call for conservation, you would find Gabriel: on the board of the National Trust, at workshops, or attending international conventions. His reasoned voice was respected by all, and his deep devotion to his country won him fame and awards, including

- The Global 500 Honor Roll of the United Nations Environment Programme
- The Fred K. Packard Award for outstanding work in the field of international conservation
- The Les Piton Gold Award for Environmental Management and Resources Protection (1991)

A crowning moment in his career was being the recipient of the MBE (Member of the British Empire) which he received personally from Queen Elizabeth II in June 1985. But, Gabriel was a humble man. The award he cherished most was to know that his efforts were making a difference and that the beauty that is Saint Lucia will be there for the island's children and their children.

In 1990, Gabriel retired from Government Service after serving for more than 35 years, the last 8 of which he served as its Chief Forest Officer. After his retirement, he was re-employed coordinating St. Lucia's participation in the Forestry Action Programme (FAO). In January 1993 he joined his friend of over 15 years, Paul Butler, becoming Assistant Director of the U.S. based *RARE Center* for Tropical Conservation.

On 31 August 1993, while monitoring a *RARE Center* project, Gabriel was involved in a tragic automobile accident from which he died. His last days had been spent walking through "his" forest, watching "his" parrots and enjoying the fruits of his labor.

Gabriel is buried at the Choc Cemetery. His simple grave is marked by two mussaenda trees, symbols of what he lived for, and for what he has left behind. Gabriel's family has lost a husband and a father. Saint Lucia has lost a true "son of the soil."

*The early bird song hangs in the still air,
A benediction on the sleeping land,
No trace of movement yet, no life is there.
The bush glows golden under dawn's soft hand.*

*But slowly, as the sun lights up the scene,
The air clears, and the glow is gone.
The fresh clean shades of early morning green
Emerge like new paint on a palette thrown.*
(Grech 1976)

PAUL BUTLER, *RARE Center for Bird Conservation, P.O. Box 1537, Castries, St. Lucia*

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