

SUMMARY OF BIRD ACTIVITIES BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE DIVISION OF DOMINICA

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Representative for Dominica

INTRODUCTION

Dominica is a small island with an area of 720 ha km² (290 sq. miles) and a human population of 71,500. The island, which is only 29 km long by 16 km wide, is in the center of the Eastern Caribbean chain and lies between the French Overseas Department of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Dominica is extremely mountainous, with four of its many peaks reaching over 1230 m (4000 ft.). The tallest mountain, Morne Diablotin, is 1461 m (4747 ft.) in elevation. In contrast with several of the other Caribbean islands, Dominica has been able to preserve much of its natural vegetation. In fact, about 60% of the island is still under some form of natural vegetation cover.

OVERVIEW

The Forestry and Wildlife Division of Dominica does not have a great deal of experience in ornithology-related activities, such as regular monitoring, population counts, or general research. However, the Division has been quite involved in bird conservation in general, and with public awareness or environmental education programs with the objective of informing the public of the importance of birds and instilling an appreciation of these creatures. The Division has also made strides in influencing the passage of certain pieces of legislation aimed at the conservation and management of birds, in the areas of protection and regulation of the importation and exportation of birds, as well as the hunting and closed seasons, and what species of birds may or may not be taken.

The Division has been involved for the past six years in several bird research projects (e.g., annual parrot monitoring) and, more recently (i.e., for the past two years), in seasonal research of parrot breeding biology, nesting, and feeding habits. The Division also participated in the 1994 BirdLife International World Birdwatch activities.

CONSERVATION

Employees of the Forestry and Wildlife Division of Dominica patrol the forested areas on a regular basis. It is the duty of the Forestry Officers to implement the provisions of the Forestry and Wildlife Act. The Division also maintains regular contact with hunters in an effort to solicit their opinions and suggestions in an effort to improve bird protection, management, policies, and techniques.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The Forestry and Wildlife Division has a weekly environmental education program, which is effectively used to both inform and educate the public. During its annual

Forestry Week, the Division also hosts both television and radio programs, which are used to improve public awareness and to solicit public suggestions and advice on matters of protection and conservation.

In 1989, RARE Center, represented by Paul Butler, in collaboration with the Forestry and Wildlife Division, launched Project Sisserou in Dominica. This project was aimed at advising the public about the protection, importance, and need to appreciate our two endemic parrot species.

During the past 10 or more years the Division has produced numerous publications (e.g., the *New Forester*, an annual publication; many pamphlets, brochures, and booklets, several of which address various aspects of bird conservation; e.g., our 1989 production of *A - Z in Birds*).

Every year visits are made to both primary and secondary schools where various topics dealing with birds are introduced and discussed with students by Forestry and Wildlife Division officials.

LEGISLATION

The Forestry and Wildlife (Revised) Act Chapter 60:02 deals with many aspects of bird protection and conservation. The act indicates when birds should and should not be hunted. Those that should not be hunted are considered protected birds (e.g., the two endemic parrot and hummingbird species).

According to the Wildlife Act, no birds (dead or alive) should be exported or imported without the necessary permit from the Forestry and Wildlife Division, together with a series of veterinary level documents all aimed at proper management and protection of local birds. Added to these requirements are a set of local regulations and restrictions.

PARROT MONITORING

The Forestry and Wildlife Division has been routinely monitoring the two endemic parrot species for the past 16+ years. Intermittently, the Division has been involved in specific parrot projects. During the years 1992 and 1993 the Division, in collaboration with an English zoologist and researcher, had been involved in a period of organized and intensive parrot monitoring exercises. During these exercises, population counts were taken at various localities on the island,

PARROT RESEARCH

In 1994, a formal parrot research program was initiated. In 1993, a joint research project was initiated between the Forestry and Wildlife Division, Ministry of Agriculture, of

the Commonwealth of Dominica, and Wildlife Preservation Trust International (WPTI) of the United States to study the Imperial or Sisserou Parrot (*Amazona imperialis*), and the Jaco or Red-necked Parrot (*A. arausiaca*), both endemic to Dominica.

In 1995, there was a misunderstanding between the two parties resulting in the withdrawal of WPTI. Nevertheless, the Division continued its research on the two parrot species, collecting valuable data up through the present. The program is intended to continue for the next 2-3 years. Summarization of observations of pre-laying, incubation, nestling, and fledging activities are underway.

CONCLUSION

Whereas the Forestry and Wildlife Division has some capacity

to organize bird research work, effectively enforce the laws, and conduct education and conservation programs, the Division's staff is limited in their capacities to complete tasks. The Division is in need of technical training at the Bachelor's and Master's degree levels and training of junior staff at the intermediate level (i.e., Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry [ECIAF], Rangers Certificate and Diploma Certificate courses). Whereas many research needs could be identified and projects developed, financing still remains a major problem. Although these limitations continue to plague the extent and depth of the Forestry and Wildlife Division's research and conservation efforts, the Division perseveres, thanks to the efforts, commitment, and dedication of our field officers. The Division would welcome any level of assistance possible.

ISLAND REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

JAMAICA REPORT

SUZANNE DAVIS
Representative for Jamaica

Indeed, the past year has been one of rapid growth for the environmental and conservation movement in Jamaica. A steady interest in environmental and conservation issues is finally gaining momentum at all levels of society.

Commitment to the protection of Jamaica's natural resources by the island's Government has been indicated through:

- (1) The development of a proposed policy for a National System of Parks and Protected Areas.
- (2) A second revision of the Wildlife Protection Act.
- (3) The development of the Jamaica National Environmental Act Plan (JANEAP) 1995.

The Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA), which has the responsibility to effectively administer the policies and plans related to the proper use of Jamaica's natural resources, recently published the Jamaica State of the Environment (SOE) Report. The report, which will be published on an annual basis, aims to provide readily available information about Jamaica's environment. The SOE Report was prepared in collaboration with other regulatory and resource management agencies, as well as with academic research institutions and non-government organizations (NGOs).

At the NGO level there has also been recognition of the increasing need for information sharing and collaboration among organizations. The National Environmental Societies Trust, in December 1995, combined its Annual General Meeting with a conference, at which NGO representatives

presented papers on various areas of interest. The conference was well supported and it is hoped it will become an annual event. Another first was the staging of Green Expo hosted by the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust. The Expo provided an opportunity for NGOs, the private sector, and Government to produce an impressive display of environmental and technical information and services.

Where has the ornithology movement fallen in this process of change? With the acquisition of an office in October 1995, the Gosse Bird Club is now better equipped to spearhead the study and conservation of birds and their habitats. The office, which is based at 93 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6, was obtained through the Institutional Strengthening Project, which was funded by Green Fund.

The Club's part-time Office Director and Secretary have facilitated improved net-working among Gosse Bird Club members and with environmental agencies. This welcomed administrative support has been accompanied by an overwhelming demand on the Club's human and physical resources.

The Gosse Bird Club continues to contribute to national decisions on ornithological issues through its collaboration with the NRCA by representation on the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee of the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park.

The Club is:

- (1) currently responsible for the project, *Inventory of Birds in the Blue and John Crow Mountains*. The Project Leader