

## Reports from Island Representatives — St. Lucia (continued)

### STUDIES CONDUCTED

- (1) Inventory of fauna and flora of the proposed Praslin Protected Landscape, St. Lucia.
- (2) Inventory of flora and fauna of the Buccament Valley, St. Vincent, and the Grenadines.
- (3) Inventory of fauna and flora of Gros Piton, St. Lucia.

### TALKS AND SLIDE PRESENTATIONS

- (1) A talk with slides on St. Lucian Wildlife was presented to a tour company called St. Lucia Reps.
- (2) A talk to Sandals Middle Managers on the topic of the importance of the forest was given to a small island eco-system.
- (3) A talk was presented to La Guerre School on birdlife of St. Lucia.

### OVER-SEAS VISITS

India—January to March 1998 — course in human resource management.

Belize—1-10 August 1997 — communicating environmental messages.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

Donald Anthony climbed our tallest peak, Mount Gimie (3117 ft), in search of plants for our National Herbarium. He participated in a soil and water conservation project in an area prone to land slips in Fond St. Jaques. He held two meetings with the Permanent Secretary, the Chief Forestry Officer, and members of the hunters association who want the Ministry of Agriculture to re-open the hunting season.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES IN ANTIGUA-BARBUDA, AUGUST 1997 – JULY 1998

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### THE SAVE GUIANA ISLAND CAMPAIGN

For local conservationists, 1997 will be remembered as the year when Antiguan and Barbudans, both locally and throughout the world, energized and came together to speak out and to oppose the proposed development of some of Antigua's most important and ecologically sensitive landscapes.

In February 1997, the announcement of the proposed construction of an Asian-themed resort on Guiana Island and some parts of the mainland sent shock waves through Antigua and Barbuda. Within days, there were tremors of opposition in the local media. Within a month, pressure began mounting, with regular letters to the local press and at least one news item on the television every evening.

In October 1997, about 10,000 people marched in protest against the development project. The main opposition party had mounted a campaign against the proposed project, mainly high-lighting what it considered a "sweetheart" deal between the government and the Malaysian Investor, and the loss of the country's patrimony.

But to environmentalists, the main concern was the potential loss of biodiversity and open landscapes which, in Antigua, are being lost to commercial and housing development at an increasingly rapid rate. The environmentalists' fears were heightened when the Government and the investor dismissed the main Environmental Impact Assessment, claiming that the consultant had gone beyond the mandate which the government had set. Further development plans were produced, which went in the opposite direction to the recommendations of the report.

Over a year has passed since the first phase of the project was to have begun. No construction has started and Antiguan

and Barbudans continue to hope that this is a sign that the project will not get off the ground. Nevertheless, the Government has made provisions to transfer the ownership of the lands, including 12 offshore islands, all totaling nearly 2000 acres, to the investor. Even if the project does not come off, some of the island's most ecologically important lands will be in foreign hands with the potential to be sub-leased and sub-divided, a situation which would make the recovery of the property from the Malaysian investor or other owners difficult and expensive.

### CONSERVATION OF THE ANTIGUAN RACER (*ALSOPHIS ANTIGUAE*)

The Antigua Racer Conservation Project (ARCP) team continues to work to save the island's rare endemic snake from extinction. The racer now exists only on Great Bird Island. The 1997 census revealed an increase in the population of the racer on its tiny island home (about 20) from 50 to just over 100. This two-fold increase is attributed to a massive rat eradication effort to rid Great Bird of the introduced black rat (*Rattus rattus*). Other expected benefits of the rat eradication program are an increase in the seabird nesting populations and survival of marine turtle eggs and young.

The early 1998 results indicate a slight increase in the population, but the island may already have achieved the carrying capacity for the snake, and efforts are now being made to secure other rat- and mongoose- (*Herpestes auro-punctatus*) free offshore islands suitable for the translocation of a population of *Alsophis antiguae*.

The team took the opportunity to hold a two-day workshop to develop a strategy to save the snake and to chart a future for the Antigua Racer Conservation Project. The two-

day exercise was an important step in the evolution of a project which often developed on its own energies.

#### THE WETLANDS CONSERVATION AND MONITORING PROJECT

Antigua and Barbuda is now mid-way through the effort to assess the current status of the islands' wetlands. This project was conceived out of a need to update the current knowledge on the mangroves and other wetlands and to sensitize and work with stakeholders on ways to improve protection and the conservation of these important natural systems.

The Environmental Awareness Group has been holding discussions with hoteliers to develop interpretative and educational signs about the importance of wetlands conservation. Also being developed with two local hotels is a programme involving hotel employees and guests, and encourage them to take time out to visit nearby wetlands and record the bird species and numbers, as well as any changes or trends in the wetlands. It is hoped that this programme can be expanded to other hotels throughout the country.

The two implementing agencies are the Environmental Awareness Group EAG and the Island Resources Foundation (IRF).

The project is funded by UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, headquartered in Bridgetown, Barbados.

#### ANTIGUA-BARBUDA BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Antigua and Barbuda are just about to begin the Biodiversity Strategy enabling exercise. This process is scheduled to be completed within a year and will take into account the country's biodiversity resources, its institutional and legislative capacities, development plans, and its future direction for saving its biodiversity.

#### THE EAG BIRD CLUB

Earlier this year, the Environmental Awareness Group launched its Bird Club. The Club was launched to focus attention to the plight of bird species locally and throughout the world. The Club has already completed two training exercises on bird identification. It also participated in the World Birdwatch 1997, and hopes to become involved in Birdwatch 1998.

The Club undertakes regular trips to view birds, and to investigate local problems in bird conservation.