



Nature's jottings

Newsletter of the Natural History Society of Jamaica

Sept. 06

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

FIELD TRIP: a river picnic at the Hillside Reggae Falls, near Serge Island in St. Thomas, on Sat. Sept. 23rd. The Falls which is the remains of a dam which was constructed to harness hydro power for the Serge Island Sugar estate. After hurricane Charlie in 1951, Serge Island and the community of Garbon Hall, which were supplied with electricity by hydro electric power from the generator at the Falls, were two of the only communities in St. Thomas which had electricity. Now completely damaged, it is located on the Johnson River, one of the tributaries of the Morant River in the Blue and John Crow Mountain Park, and is becoming a popular attraction for local and foreign visitors.

What remains since hurricane Gilbert are some of the collection system, now quite spectator friendly, with a steep secondary forest to the right of the Falls and primary forest further back. A rail line at the top of the Falls used to transport marble mined further up in the hills, to a factory located in the area. The forest by the river is quite species rich with native tree species and the invasive Bamboo apparently planted at the top of the forest has been spreading here and there. There is considerable re-forestation in the adjacent hills with Caribbean Pine. Among the several native herbs seen were, *Asclepias curassavica*, (Asclepiadeceae), *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*, (Verbenaceae), and *Rytidophyllum tomentosum*, (Gesneriaceae), the Red Head, Blue Vervain and Search Me Heart, respectively, many Bromeliads, some Agave sp. and apparently a dark red vine species of *Ipoemia* sp. There are many beautiful panoramic vistas seen from the road, of the river and Falls below. Several rivers appear to flow into the Morant River, one of which is the Johnson River, likely originating from Johnson Mountain, visited by the NHSJ some years ago.

Local youngsters were seen fishing in the river, and their catch that day consisted of American eel, sandfish, black Talipia, and crayfish.

We will be attempting to have Mr. Harvey Knight JP, the President of the Hillside Development Committee, Chief of the Morant Bay Fire Service and Chairman of the Serge Island Small Farmers Scheme meet and tell us about the area. Directions to the Falls will be provided and some of its History.

Meeting place for this trip is the SRC for car pooling at 9.00am.

There will be a barbecue prepared on site and soft drinks will be available. The cost per person for this trip, including food and drink, is \$500.

Bring swimsuits, sunscreen if needed, and suitable footwear for walking in the riverbed to the Falls !

IF YOU WILL BE ATTENDING LET US KNOW BY SEPT. 16 BY CALLING TREVOR AT 942-2233 or 970-2574 or Hermann at 702 2888.

DATES TO REMEMBER!

Dr. Gary Rosenberg, the snail expert from Philadelphia, will be visiting UWI from October 9 – 15. Many of us should remember one of his previous snail collecting trips in Jamaica when his address to the NHSJ and which was followed by collecting in the field.

Dr. Rosenberg has expressed interest in addressing the NHSJ again and is inviting NHSJ members in assisting him and his party with their snail search. The provisional date for his talk is Mon. Oct. 9.

For information, Jamaica has 563 snail species: of which 90% are endemic, and by comparison with the USA; the part of the States east of the Mississippi, has 431 species, so with our far less land mass we have a greater number of species than that part of the USA.

Some of the sites Dr. Rosenberg hopes to visit are:

Creighton Hall, St. Thomas (target: *Geomelania grayana*)

Easington, St. Thomas (target: *Colobostylus sagittifer*)

Good Hope, St. Andrew (target: *Apoma diminuta*)

Gordon Castle, Dallas Mountain, St. Andrew (target: *Colobostylus interruptus*)

Aenon Town, Clarendon (target: *Anoma jarvisi*)

Somerset, Manchester (target: *Anoma splendens*)

Glasgow, Westmoreland/Hanover border (target: *Anoma* sp.)

These field visits targeting specific snails that live in the area are planned for Oct. 11-15th. Those members interested in joining Dr. Rosenberg and his team, can confirm details with him during his visit and address to the Society.

FIELD TRIP DISCLAIMER

Below is a draft of a Disclaimer notice, which the NHSJ Executive Committee will shortly have ready for all field trip participants to sign.

DISCLAIMER

The Natural History Society of Jamaica (NHSJ) is not liable for:

(a) any loss, damage or destruction of property or

(b) any personal injury,

sustained to, or by participants howsoever incurred while on field trips organised by the above named society.

Your Jottings

***Cordia bifurcata*, and *Cordia bullata*, one a rare and the other an endemic species of *Cordia* (Boraginaceae) found in and around the woodland at Fort George Estate, Stony Hill, St. Andrew, by Dr. Trevor Yee.**

In further trying to identify more of the plants in the slowly diminishing woodland at Fort George Estate in Stony Hill, one of the plants from the woodland and the surrounding neighbourhood, has been identified as *Cordia bifurcata* (Boraginaceae) by Mr. Patrick Lewis of UWI's herbarium. This plant is described in Adams as being rare and local and as having been previously reported from St. Ann.

The plant is a shrub with attractive somewhat glossy dark green leaves, which have short white hairs on the midrib and on the underside veins. It has white tubular flowers, with a quite small, campanulate (bell-shaped) corolla only about 2-3 mm long, and borne in an inflorescence, that is corymbose. The fruits are red, similarly pointed as those of *C. sebastena*, but smaller and about 3-5 mm in length. The plant is quite common in the woodland and even more so in the homes on Rectory Road, neighbouring the woodland, growing in garden soil.

Adams had reported that *C. bifurcata* flowers and fruits in October, and the first specimens collected were flowering and fruiting about this time, about November 2005, but more lately, other specimens have also been collected in July, 2006, also flowering and fruiting at that time of the year. The range of *C. bifurcata* is described as Costa Rica to Brasil and Northern Argentina.

While collecting specimens of *C. bifurcata*, it was noticed that there was also another species of *Cordia*, later identified by Patrick Lewis as *Cordia bullata*, growing in the woodland and the surrounding homes on Rectory Road, also on relatively wet limestone and garden soil, respectively.

C. bullata is described in Adams as being more widespread in distribution but is endemic to the island. It is also a shrub, with much more hairy leaves on both the upper and lower surfaces of the leaf, (ad- and abaxially), and rough to quite abrasive to the touch. The flowers and fruits are quite similar to *C. bifurcata* in appearance, a white corolla about 2-3 mm in height and red fruits, very similar to those of *C. bifurcata*, also pointed and about 3-5 mm in length. The flowers are borne in more globular inflorescences, which are about 1 cm. in diameter. This latter species is described as flowering during most of the year and fruiting July- November, in Adams. It was also collected flowering and fruiting from Rectory Road, St. Andrew, also in July, 2006.

GOOD NEWS AND NOT SO GOOD NEWS

The good news is that the NHSJ has been successful in its application for funding for the publication of the maps for the Blue and John Crow Mountain Guide. This is a project to be done in collaboration with the JCDT.

We were however, unsuccessful in our application for the funding of Vols. 1 and 2 of the old Natural History notes.

Remember that we presently have 3 other projects being funded by the EFJ. These are: the Endemic Trees of Jamaica, a joint project with the IOJ, almost completed; the Blue and John Crow Mountain Guide, which hopefully, will have been published and on sale by the end of the year; and a project by our Education Committee on Reefs, Mangroves, and Hurricanes.

MEMBERS

Condolences

We all shared Wendy Lee's sadness on learning of the death of her father, Dr. James Lee who was well known for his interest and delight in things Jamaican

and for his many contributions, particularly in Geology but also in other fields such as Archaeology.

President, Trevor Yee, and other members of the Society expressed condolences to Wendy on behalf of the Society.

The following notice was received from Dayne Buddo.

This is to introduce the new Focal Point for the Jamaica Clearing-House Mechanism as well as the Biosafety Clearing-House, Mr. Sean Townsend.

I invite you to extend the same level of support for Mr. Townsend that I have enjoyed over the past two years.

We shall miss Dayne's prompt updates from the Jamaica Clearing House Mechanism at the IOJ. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

MORE DEPARTURES AND A VISITOR

In the last few months 2 of our ardent field trip participants have left Jamaica. Diane Renaud, who served on the executive, returned to Trinidad and Philip Allsworth Jones has retired to Britain.

Elaine Thompson, who served as a Secretary of the Society in 2000/2001, and who had returned to Canada some years ago, was in Jamaica for a holiday with her 2 daughters and looked us up. They were able to join Trevor on one of his plant collecting field trips, in the Cockpit Country

Prepared by Jill Byles 4/9/06