



Nature's jottings

Newsletter of the Natural History Society of Jamaica Aug. 2011

Compiled by Klaus W. Wolf, Electron Microscopy Unit, UWI, Mona

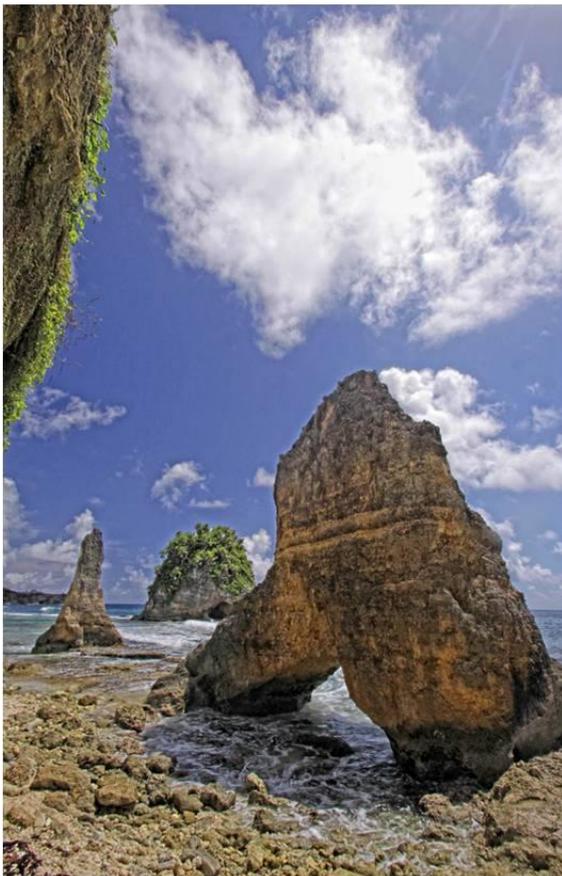


Forthcoming Event/s



- **Turtle Bay and Ecclesdown - An Outing for Naturalists, Photographers and Beachcombers on Sept. 24, 2011**

We meet at 7.30 a.m. at the Scientific Research Council and head for Turtle Bay in Portland, where we expect to arrive around 11.00 (the roads in eastern St. Thomas are in bad shape). The bay can be conveniently reached within a few minutes from the parking lot through a private property (courtesy of Mr. Patrick Salter, who will kindly allow the Society easy access to the beach below, through his beautiful weekend house)





The place shows strange rock formations - geologists call them stacks - and there are opportunities for swimming. There is very little shade, however, and this should be taken into account by members. Bring your own lunch/water, sun protection and walking shoes. Garbage covers the bay, and some may wish to join the Society on a beach clean up. The executive will bring some large garbage bags. We will stay at Turtle Bay until about 1.00 p.m., before we head to Ecclesdown, where Mr. Bimson Frater awaits us.

He has been asked to collect velvet worms on his farm. If he has managed to find worms, they are in all likelihood the endemic species *Plicatoperipatus jamaicensis*, that has previously been found in the region (Heredity, Vol. 67, 221–229, 1991). This is an unusual “worm” in the Phylum Onychophora, an “evolutionary link” between the Phyla Annelida and Arthropoda, and which have a limited distribution in the world.

A hike of about 30 minutes will bring us to a stream, where an endemic Jamaican fresh water crab occurs. For the John Crow Mountains, the species *Sesarma ayatum* (Brachyura, Sesarmidae) has been described only in 1998 (Zoologica Scripta, Vol. 21, 373-380, 1998).

There will be a fee of \$300 for this field trip to members to cover a gift for Mr. Salter and to reward Mr. Frater for his services. Non-members will be required to pay an additional \$300, or \$100 for students. We will need a confirmation from persons who wish to attend by Wed. 21st, for our planning. Members and friends, who wish to attend are asked to call **970 2574** (Trevor Yee) or write to **klaus.wolf@uwimona.edu.jm** (Klaus W. Wolf). We may have to limit the number of persons attending so as not to have too large a group.

NHSJ Seminar entitled “Current Trends in Videography” by Dr. Mark Thomas.

Dr. Thomas is a professional scientist and became interested in video art through the production of educational films. He is a winner of a bronze medal at the 2011 National Visual Arts Competition and winner of a sectional price in this contest. This seminar is scheduled for Oct. 13, 5.30 p.m. in the Botany Seminar Room, UWI Mona, Dept. Life Sciences, Block B upstairs. Refreshments precede the presentation.



Reports about past Events



- **Outing to Roaring River Estate (St. Ann), 21st February 2010**
TEXT BY JILL BYLES, PHOTOS BY KLAUS W. WOLF

Due to the Sigma Walk that day, the start of the trip was delayed a bit, partly to allow participants to pass in front of us - what an astonishing number there were - and partly because one of our bus pick up points was blocked.

Damian Whyte, Environmental Officer with the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), was at Roaring River Estate west to the well known Dunn’s River Falls to give us some details. For several years the property of about 2500 acres has been owned by UDC, with the portion containing the waterfalls being leased to Jamaica Public Services Limited , who ‘protects’ them to use for hydro power (unfortunate for those who prefer natural beauty to progress). Therefore the falls are normally dry, except when maintenance is required on the pipe; then the waterfall is returned home for a while!

There are plans to divest the property to be used for ‘ecotourism.’ Hotels and a golf course are being proposed. The word ecotourism today means nothing more than that you can see trees and birds etc from your hotel window. There used to be a lot of cattle on the estate, but water pollution was taking place so that was stopped. Nowadays there are only about 17 horses used for carrying staff around the property. There are many points of interest on the property, but on this trip there was only time for a visit to the Great House and the (dry) falls



The empty Great House was a bit disappointing as the main building had a façade built around it, but the view was terrific and it did have toilets!

Wendy Lee from the St. Ann Environment Protection Association had joined us and she reported that an osprey flew over while we were there.

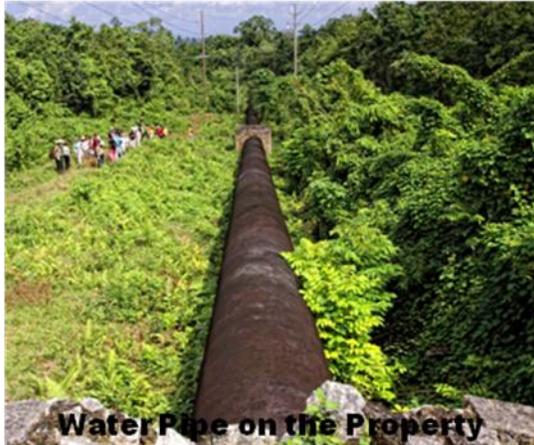


The walk to the falls passed numerous huge *Samanea saman* (guango) and other trees covered with *Ficus americana*, aka Strangler fig. There were many young pimentos, as there had originally been a pimento farm. In spite of using insect repellent, some of us proved attractive to grass lice.

Although no water was flowing, the rocks were very slippery with moss and/or alga and there were a couple of caves near the top with bats, which could not be identified.

Also present were some calcified trees. Quote from 'The Waterfalls of Jamaica' by Brian Hudson "Water percolates through the beds of limestone, dissolving

calcium carbonate from the rock, and forming deposits of calcite. These can cause the build up of travertine and tufa creating low terraces and cistern-like pools (eg Dunn's River and YS Falls) and encrust broken boughs and limbs". Tufa is a variety of limestone produced from precipitates of carbonate minerals at ambient temperatures and characterized by large biological components as well as being highly porous.



Water Pipe on the Property



Fossilized Material in the Dry River Bed

To see what we missed, being 100 years too late, the Falls in full flow are shown on pp26, 27 of Brian Hudson's book and in 'Jamaica – A Geological Portrait' by Anthony Porter, p111