



The Bellbird Newsletter

THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE



www.asawright.org

Tel: (868) 667-4655 Email: asaright@tstt.net.tt

SEPTEMBER 2011



British Bird Fair in England

By **Ann Sealey**
(Manager, Lodge Operations)

Asa Wright Nature Centre (AWNC) Reservations Agent Deborah Castillo and I attended the British Bird Fair in England. The fair, which is held annually in the month of August, took place this year from the 19th to 21st and the AWNC occupied booth 12 in marquee 1.

The fair started on Friday and visitors crowded Asa Wright's small booth, praising our staff for their wonderful experiences while staying at the centre. It is customary every year to greet guests who stayed with us, those who are planning their visit, and others who for many years have wanted to come but never did.

On Friday the 19th a talk was held in honour of Richard ffrench, who recently passed away. This



Photos: George Carr

talk was given by Martyn Keneflick and attended by Mrs. ffrench, her daughter Julie and her husband, Allyson White (mother of Graham White), plus 160 persons who paid their respects to the great bird man. I was privileged to attend this talk and I must say Martyn did a fantastic job in highlighting the AWNC and its affiliation to Mr. ffrench.

I am extremely grateful to all those who made these trips possible over the years. This is something that should be continued by the centre, mainly because of all the exposure the centre gets for the three days that of the fair. I believe that 90 per cent of the visitors to the Bird Fair know about the AWNC and only positive remarks have been heard coming from the visitors and participants.

THE WHITE-CHESTED EMERALD

(*Amazilia chionopectus*)

Although very common in Trinidad, the White-chested Emerald has a geographic range which is restricted to Eastern Venezuela and the Guianas.

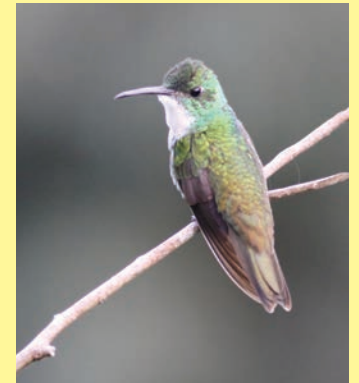


Photo: Courtney van Beek

In Trinidad, the White-chested Emerald can be seen from gardens to forest edges. So you may have caught a glimpse of this bird before, but did you recognise it?

For the inexperienced birder, this little hummer may prove difficult to identify. However once you notice the bronze rump and tail, dazzling green upperparts and white underparts, you can be sure that the tiny but swift bird is truly a White-chested Emerald.

This member of the fascinating *Trochilidae* or Hummingbird family measures about 3.5 inches. It also has a beak that is 2 cm long. It often squeaks softly while perched and makes soft clicks while feeding. It shows a preference for large trees such as *Erythrina* and *Samanea*. When not drinking nectar from its favourite flowers, the White-chested Emerald eats small insects. Their nest is cup-shaped and woven from fibre with decorative additions of lichen. The species breeds from December to April.

Learning to identify this hummer can be an exciting adventure that can be done on neighbourhood walks or relaxing days in your backyard. Or you can become acquainted with the White-chested Emerald right here at Asa Wright. Here, you won't run into any trouble as our guides will gladly point out the shimmering beauty.

J.L. Ryan





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Event Planners Come to Spring Hill

Last June one of our good friends at Lonsdale Saatchi & Saatchi, Marlene Chin, was a guest at the Spring Hill wedding of Shree Caesar (formerly of Marabella) and Kent Hash of Baltimore. Enthralled with the ambience of a “rainforest wedding”, she subsequently arranged for a group of wedding and event planners to visit Asa Wright and to experience that very special magic for themselves!

So, just after our reopening in September, on a rainy Saturday, a group of six International Special Events Society (ISES) members and friends who specialise in planning weddings and corporate events spent a day with us to learn more about the very special nature of the Asa Wright Nature Centre.

A presentation on the Centre’s facilities was followed by a site inspection tour of the Jade Vine Arbor and the Jonnie Fisk Conference Centre (formerly known as the Mango Room). The planners also took the opportunity to look at the rooms at the centre, from the huge high-ceiling chambers in the main house, to the charming cottages set amidst the flowering gardens.

A delicious lunch was served in the centre’s dining room after which the group relaxed on the iconic Asa Wright Verandah. Notwithstanding the usual lunch time showery spell, the planners saw the wonderful potential of bringing to Asa Wright special events like intimate



1) ISES planners (from left to right) Omeeta Jaggernaut, Siobhan Thompson, Simone Sant-Ghuran, Judy Coward, Kathleen Maynard and Frances Pollanais-Le Foucade chat with Peter O'Connor at the Centre.

2) “Get Away” The Centre is also the perfect place for hosting retreats and corporate meetings.

3) Asa Wright Nature Centre offers an idyllic and picturesque venue for hosting intimate weddings and special events.

Photos by Ken Fournillier

weddings and corporate retreats that are compatible with the essential peace and serenity of Spring Hill.

We now look forward to sharing our rain forest with some of the special events which might grace our premises in the future.

A Nobel Visit at Asa Wright

In September, we were honoured to have Nobel Laureate economist Professor Joseph Stiglitz stay at our very own Asa Wright Nature Centre. Mr. Stiglitz is currently a university professor at Columbia University and has authored many books on economics. Having previously made a brief trip to Asa Wright during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2009, Professor Stiglitz was eager for another peaceful rainforest experience.

Outreach Specialist, Mr. Kenneth Fournillier, interviewed him at Dunston’s Cave. During their conversation, Professor Stiglitz referred to the friendly staff as well as the fantastic guides, food and birds as the factors that encouraged him to return. He said he wanted to share such a discovery with his wife. We would like to thank Mr. Stiglitz for willingly doing this interview and we also thank him and his wife for being terrific guests!

Our Education and Community

J.L. Ryan



Photo by Ken Fournillier