

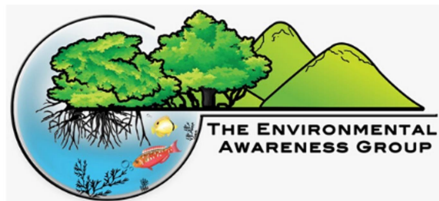


# PROMOTING CITIZEN SCIENCE THROUGH BIRDING!

## UPDATE REPORT

ON BEHALF OF

*The Environmental Awareness Group*



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## Update Summary

In March 2019, Ms Shanna Challenger and Ms Natalya Lawrence successfully submitted a project proposal to the Cape Cod Birding Club (CCBC), that would see a cadre of Antiguan and Barbudan residents trained to monitor and gather bird data at three key sites in the country: Fitches Creek , Bethesda Dam and Christian Cove. These sites, designated as Important Bird Areas are not only vital wetlands that provide invaluable ecosystem services to the country, but are habitat for vulnerable waterfowl and other wetland birds, landbirds and shorebirds. The team jumped at this opportunity, that would allow them to train residents in something that the team members were already passionate about – Bird Conservation and Citizen Science. Further, they also saw this as one of the first steps to achieving their longterm dream of converting major wetlands into areas of multiple sustainable use, including for bird and mangrove conservation, as well interpretive, watchable wetlands for low impact tourism, recreational and wellness activities. Currently, some major wetlands are used as illegal dumping sites, and with some of the sites being privately owned, there is the threat of development if landowners do not understand the value of the site in its natural state.

The project was slated to take place from May until the end of 2019, but a major positive development occurred since. The team was able to use this current project to leverage further funding both of equipment and money that would support this project work in the same wetland sites. To date, 15 pairs of binoculars and 2 spotting scopes and tripods have been donated from BirdsCaribbean, to aid in the elaboration of this project. The binoculars will ultimately be given to the team of residents who will be trained to monitor wetlands and their birds, and who will become a part of the EAG's first ever birding club! Because the second source of funding was not finalized until later in the year, the team has asked the CCBC for an extension into April, 2020, which will allow them to use the resources from both sources to implement the major in-the-classroom training activities, as well as the simultaneous counts at the wetland sites.

## Summary Table of Activity Status

Action	Status
<b>Conduct classroom training sessions</b>	Classroom training sessions will take place in the first quarter of 2020.
<b>Conduct field training sessions</b>	Field training began taking place in July 2019. Participants were taken out to wetlands and coastal areas to learn to identify birds by silhouette, sound, flight pattern and behaviour.

Action	Status
	<p>A total of 7 new birders participated: Ruleo Camacho, Grantley Edwards, Nathan Wilson, Katecia Thompson, Torie Warner, Sophia Steele, Kelly Hay.</p> <p>Field sessions will continue in December and into 2020.</p>
<p><b>Conduct simultaneous counts at three wetland IBAs</b></p>	<p>This will be completed in the first quarter of 2020, following the classroom training.</p>
<p><b>Repeated counts</b></p>	<p>An EAG Bird Club that will charge itself with the regular monitoring of key sites that will feed data to the local EIMAS and internationally to eBird. This will continue past the completion of the two funding projects – Cape Cod Birding Club and BirdsCaribbean.</p>

### Photos from field training sessions in July 2019



Participants learning how to identify birds during a bird count on offshore islands in July 2017. Photo Courtesy Natalya Lawrence



Another participant conducting a bird count. Photo courtesy Natalya Lawrence



Participants also learn the value of mangrove plants, and the science behind the growth of mangrove forests. Photo courtesy Natalya Lawrence



Participants also learn the value of mangrove plants, and the science behind the growth of mangrove forests. Photo courtesy Natalya Lawrence



Participant learns to record bird observation data. Photo courtesy Natalya Lawrence



**West Indian Whistling-Ducks were observed several times one morning during the field training session. Photo courtesy Natalya Lawrence**

### **Additional Comments**

- ☞ The EAG was invited by the Cape Cod Birding Club to submit a proposal and we are indeed thankful for the invitation, and grateful and excited for the funding support to implement this project!
  
- ☞ Because of the team's interest in environmental education of the country's residents, restoration of wetlands and conservation of bird species, the team was able to use both this grant and the BirdsCaribbean grant to leverage funding from The Sandals Foundation for the Wondrous Wetlands tours with local school children. Though the team has received funding from The Sandals Foundation before, this is the first time that funding was raised to support wetland tours and education among school-aged children.
  
- ☞ The team will be printing educational material related to wetlands and their birds to be used for training and environmental education outreach.
  
- ☞ The team has had great success with educational outreach to the general public. While the scope of this project did not call for measuring the changes in knowledge of the general population, we feel that the television interviews and photo exhibitions easily reached at least 500 persons so far. The team has definitely inspired many residents to stop and appreciate local and migratory birds and their habitats.

Photo Exhibition by the Project Team, at the Department of Environment's Arbour Day Fair



Yellow Warbler or Mangrove Warbler on display at 2019 Arbour Day Fair  
Courtesy Kariana Kelsick



West Indian Whistling-Duck on Display at 2019 Arbour Day Fair, Courtesy  
Kariana Kelsick



School students read about and admire local wildlife. The student in the foreground peppered Natalya with questions. Courtesy Department of Environment



Least Tern on display at 2019 Arbour Day Fair. Courtesy Kariana Kelsick





**This police officer was left speechless upon learning of biodiversity found on our shores. The Arbour Day 2019 Fair ran from 9 am to 4 pm, and the officer stayed at our booth for most of the day, asking many questions and staring at the photos. Courtesy Kariana Kelsick**