

Bird Festival Inspires Youth Across the Caribbean ^[1]

Submitted on 26 June 2018 - 4:12pm

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Haitian students plant trees to help local birds. (Photo by Société Écologique d'Haïti)

"We're so excited to have an event in Haiti this year!"

Ingrid Flores is delighted to add a new country to her map of events. She is the coordinator of the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival (CEBF). It is organized every year by BirdsCaribbean. Partners across the region host events as part of the festival each spring. Its focus is on the types of birds that are unique to each island, or to the Caribbean itself. This year, events took place in at least 16 islands and involved over 2,000 people.

For the first time, partners in Haiti joined the celebrations. The Société Écologique d'Haïti saw the CEBF as "the perfect opportunity" to boost nature education in Haitian schools. 290 students in Forêt des Pins and Les Cayes learned how hunting and caging birds is harmful. They also enjoyed planting trees and learning how trees help birds.

In the Dominican Republic, The Peregrine Fund led activities in five places during Ridgway's Hawk Week. This beautiful hawk lives only on the island of Hispaniola. Listed as "Critically Endangered," its numbers are falling. Over 300 people went on bird walks. They were thrilled to see a live hawk at one event.

On Jamaica's south coast, the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation visited children from toddlers to age 11 years at four local schools. At one school, teachers hung bird art made by the children in classrooms. To the east, 50 members of BirdLife Jamaica visited the Source Farm Foundation and Ecovillage. They joined residents for guided bird walks in the nearby hills.

On the island of St. Martin, groups worked to restore wild spaces. The island still shows damage from Hurricane Irma. Les Fruits de Mer launched a new nursery to provide native tree seedlings at their Endemic Animal Festival. Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) hosted visits to the Little Bay Pond bird watching hut, which was rebuilt with hurricane relief funds raised by BirdsCaribbean.

Many BirdsCaribbean partners in Puerto Rico were busy in 16 locations, including schools. Here they spread the word about endemic birds. Students at a science high school in San Juan were full of questions. They expressed a wish to conduct their own bird counts next year.

"As many islands still recover from hurricane damage, we were excited to share local birds and nature with people," said Lisa Sorenson, Executive Director of BirdsCaribbean. "For the 17th year, the festival has reached thousands of people across the Caribbean."

About BirdsCaribbean

BirdsCaribbean is a vibrant international network of members and partners committed to conserving Caribbean birds and their habitats. We raise awareness, promote sound science, and empower local partners to build a region where people appreciate, conserve and benefit from thriving bird populations and ecosystems. We are a non-profit (501 (c) 3) membership organization. More than 100,000 people participate in our programmes each year, making BirdsCaribbean the most broad-based conservation organization in the region. You can learn more about us, our work, and how to join at: <http://www.birdscaribbean.org> [3].

For more information, and to arrange an interview, please contact:

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