

REPORT WORKSHOP ON WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT FOR RELATED AGENCIES

By

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Introduction: After months of preparation and planning, the workshop on "Wildlife Management for Related Agencies" was realised on Wednesday August 13, 2003. On that day a number of persons representing a wide range of institutions and interests gathered at the Holy Redeemer Retreat House in Eggleston to deliberate on the broad subject of managing Dominica's wildlife resources. This workshop was convened as an activity of the ongoing 'Sustainable Wildlife Use and Management Project'.

The Forestry & Wildlife Division organized the workshop. It emerged as part of a public awareness and education strategy that was recently formulated in keeping with the terms of a co-operative project between the FFI and the Forestry Division. The project came into existence in 2001. Under that project, research works into the distribution and population status of a number of key wildlife species (Crapaud, Ramier, and Crabs. Agouti etc.) were undertaken. In addition a survey to determine the socio-economic impact of hunting of wildlife in Dominica was completed as well. The project has also provided for the start of work aimed at exploring the possibilities of wildlife farming of "Game Species" in Dominica. The Agouti has been singled out in this regard

Workshop Organizer: The staff of the Environmental Education Unit working in co-operation with other members of the senior staff at the Forestry and Wildlife Division planned, organized and coordinated the delivery of the workshop.

Funding: The workshop was sponsored by the United Kingdom based Flora and Fauna International, utilizing funds made available by the Darwin Initiative for the ongoing "Sustainable Wildlife Management Project".

Workshop Objectives: The workshop had the following broad objectives:

- To foster greater co-operation among related agencies and stakeholders regarding wildlife conservation measures
- To promote the important role that wildlife play in the socio-economic development of Dominica
- To familiarize non-forestry personnel with the current, relevant legislation and programs on wildlife management in Dominica.

It was expected that at the end of the day participants would have come away from the workshop with a greater understanding and appreciation for wildlife management activities.

Media Coverage: In the days before the workshop, the Forestry Division, as workshop organiser, prepared and sent a news release to the various media houses (copy of news release at appendix 1) Following this, staff members provided voice clippings and submitted to a number of requests for live radio interviews on the

workshop. The news item was carried on all four radio stations here. At least one weekly newspaper reported on the activity.

Participants: Some fifteen institutions/organisations were written to and invited to the workshop. (See attached list at appendix 2) Of this listing, 10 responded positively and actually sent participants (see table 2b). Two other bodies not invited in the initial group were also invited at a later date and actually participated. As it can be seen participants were drawn from various backgrounds and experiences. The common thread though was that in each situation there is a role for each one in the whole business of wildlife management.

Presentations: Following a brief opening ceremony, which, was addressed by the Director of Forestry & Wildlife (Mr. Eric Hypolite) and the newly appointed Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture & the Environment (Mr. Davis Letang), the meeting went into the business stage. There were three presentations. Two in the pre lunch period and one in the post lunch segment.

In the first session following the opening ceremony, Assistant Forest Officer Mr. Adolphus Christian delivered a “Powerpoint Presentation” on the topic – “*An overview of Dominica’s Wildlife*”. He outlined the various broad groups of wildlife species found on Dominica and identified the various programs that are currently ongoing, that were designed to ensure that Dominica’s wildlife is managed in a sustainable manner. He had much praise for the various organizations, particularly those external agencies that have contributed to Dominica’s wildlife management efforts.

In the second session of the morning Mr. Arlington James made a presentation on the topic “*Wildlife and Socio-economic Development in Dominica*”. Like Mr. Christian he presented the topic using the “Powerpoint’ media. Mr. James outlined the various ways in which wildlife, especially animal species, have contributed to the economic, social and cultural life of Dominica. Mr. James’ presentation was filmed in its entirety for subsequent showing on national television. At the time of writing the report, Mr. James’s presentation has been produced into a television program and shown on local television.

Following the lunch break, participants at the workshop heard from Miss Gloria Augustus, a State Attorney from the office of the Attorney General of Dominica. Miss Augustus explained the more significant aspects of the existing legislation pertaining to wildlife management here, including proposals for reviewing the legislation. She noted that there are three pieces of legislation in force in Dominica, which speaks to the issue of wildlife management. These are the “Forestry & Wildlife Act No.12 of 1976 (Chapter 60:02); the National Parks and Protected Areas Act 16 of 1975 (chapter 40:02) and the Forest Act inclusive of the Forest Rules – No. 25 of 1958 (Chapter 60:01).

Following the two sessions in the morning, participants engaged themselves in active discussions on the issues that were raised. Some of these include:

1. With respect to the crapaud and its present health status, participants were of the opinion that not enough emphasis was being placed on dissuading people from hunting the species. Whilst it is agreed that there has been a lot of education in the media, it was the consensus that the message ought to be straight forward, even if it means frightening people about possible, even if as yet undetermined consequences for their own health after having eaten the flesh of sick animals. The Forestry officials present explained the potential credibility problem in assuming that position.
2. In public pronouncements and education on hunting of game animals, a differentiation ought to be made between Forest Reserves and National Parks. Hunting is permitted in Forest Reserves, but outlawed in National Parks.
3. The need to change the behaviour of hunters when out in the field on hunting trips. It was noted that hunters ought to develop qualities of knowing what to take and leave behind. Issues of species, size, sex, numbers per hunting trip etc. were cited. The troubling issue of hunting on private lands was also discussed.
4. The destruction caused by inadequate management of agricultural implements following use in applying pesticides. Occasionally there have been incidents of agricultural implements being washed in nearby rivers resulting in serious consequences for the aquatic life.
5. The formation of wildlife/environmental clubs particularly in the school system to assist with fostering local management of wildlife.
6. The potential for business that exists in “Bird Watching” as part of the economic diversification also came up for discussion.
7. A significant contribution regarding the program of “Debt for Nature Swap” was raised. Under that program which started in the mid 1980’s, an international conservation organization would offer to pay a particular foreign debt of a country (in this case Dominica) in exchange for local investments by Dominica in conservation-oriented projects in the country.

In the post lunch discussion period on the legislation as presented by the state attorney, the following issues were raised as well;

1. Captive Breeding of Wildlife
2. The non-issuing of hunting and fishing licenses to non-residents and locals making representation on behalf of non-nationals for hunting licenses.
3. Importation of Exotic species, particularly pet birds.
4. Sale / disposal of wildlife by restaurants after the season for hunting and fishing has been closed.
5. Greater monitoring and control of research activities by foreign nationals

6. Hunting activities at night
7. Inadequate penalties under existing legislation. It is proposed that the fines be increased to \$25,000.00.
8. The possible compounding of wildlife offences rather than referring the matter directly to the court system as currently exists.
9. Compensation for information leading to the discovery and successful prosecution of wildlife law offenders

Forging Ahead / Building Partnerships: Assistant Forest Officer – A. E Christian served as moderator for that very important session. Participants engaged in a very lively discussion and made recommendations touching on the way forward. Time however did not permit the process for delegating of responsibilities. The issues and suggestions raised include but not limited to the following areas:

1. There is a need for a more aggressive and engaging public awareness program. Special emphasis must be given to the present status of the Dominica crapaud (Mountain Chicken). There should be a ban on taking the Mountain Chicken.
2. There is room for the involvement of many more stakeholders eg. The Quarantine Unit of the Division of Agriculture.
3. Everything should be done to keep Dominica's wildlife as an integral component of the island's tourism product.
4. Regarding opening of the hunting season in 2003, participants felt that the present economic situation in Dominica will mitigate against any decision not to open the season. They were of the opinion too, that irrespective of an open or closed season, there would be incidents of hunting given the austerity. They recommended a shortening of the hunting season spanning two months – November to December. This should be done with more monitoring and greater effort and vigilance in stamping out the incidence of illegal hunting.
5. A meeting of stakeholders from the tourism sub-sector, (the NDC, Tour Guides, Tour Operators and taxi Drivers should be convened to re-emphasize the need for all of Dominica to join hands in saving the country's wildlife resources.

The workshop ended in an upbeat mood. All participants expressed satisfaction with the day's proceedings and came away from the workshop, energized to play their part, small as it might be, thus ensuring that Dominica's wildlife resources remain in healthy, abundant supplies for a long time to come. They expressed a desire to see if not similar, but some activity in the future to bring the stakeholders together again.

Acknowledgements: The Forestry Division would like to thank all those institutions and individuals who in one way or the other assisted in making the workshop a reality. Special mention must be made of the sponsors

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and the Darwin Initiative. Mr. Chris Magin at FFI played a crucial role in ensuring that the funding arrived on island well in advance of the activity. We thank the many participants who gave up their regular working day to participate in the workshop. The office of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture & the Environment supported the activity from its inception. Mention must be made of Mr. Raymond Austrie former acting Permanent Secretary who approved the activity and Mr. Davis Letang, who days before the function assumed the role of Permanent Secretary in the Ministry. The Acting Director of Forestry & Wildlife Mr. Eric Hypolite led the way in ensuring that all logistics, especially the funding, was in place in advance of the workshop. To the presenters, Forest Officer Arlington James, Assistant Forest Officer A. E Christian and Miss Septra Gloria Augustus, State Attorney, the Division extends its sincere thanks. Management at the retreat house in Eggleston contributed by allowing the use of the facility for an activity not entirely in keeping with the program of the retreat house. We cannot overlook the contribution of the Prime Unit who on very short notice allowed the use of their "Powerpoint" projector thus ensuring that the materials that were prepared were adequately presented. Thanks are also extended to the chauffeurs, secretarial staff and everyone else who assisted with and made the activity possible.

Workshop Coordinator's Recommendation: It is hereby recommended to organise a similar activity that is specially targeted at practicing media personnel here. Their participation at this first session was overlooked, but the opportunity presents itself now for direct intervention with them. The ultimate objective would be to solicit their support for wildlife conservation by exposing them to the various issues confronting wildlife management programs.

Since it has always proven difficult to have optimum participation of media workers during the regular working day, it is suggested that workshop be held over two evenings. Each session will be no more than two & a half hours long. There may be need to review topics fro presentation. In preparing for that workshop, it is important that the organisation representing media workers, the Media Workers Association of Dominica (MWAD) is involved in planning the process.

Appendix 1

NEWS RELEASE

The Forestry, Wildlife & National Parks Division will on Wednesday August 13, hold a one-day workshop on wildlife management. The workshop is targeted at a number of local agencies including the Police, Customs, Port, Hoteliers, Tour Operators, Tourism officials, the Department of Legal Affairs, the Environmental Coordinating Unit, Fisheries Division and Forestry among a number of other institutions.

The one-day workshop, which, will be held at the Holy Redeemer Retreat House at Eggleston, has three specific objectives. These are:

- To foster greater co-operation among related agencies and stakeholders regarding wildlife conservation measures.
- To promote the important role that wildlife plays in Dominica's socio-economic development.
- To familiarize non-forestry personnel with the relevant existing legislation and programs on wildlife management in Dominica.

It is expected that at the end of the day participants will come away from the workshop with a greater understanding of the important role that wildlife play in the country's economic development and thus commit themselves to assisting with its preservation.

The workshop, which, is sponsored by the U.K based **FAUNA AND FLORA INTERNATIONAL** and the **DARWIN INITIATIVE** is part of the ongoing "**Sustainable Wildlife Management Project**" and will be facilitated by officers of the Forestry Division and a State Attorney from the office of the Hon. Attorney General.

Appendix 2

List of Invitees to the Workshop

The Commissioner of Police
 The Comptroller of Customs
 The Director of Tourism
 The Chief Magistrate
 The Director of Public Prosecutions
 The General Manager – Dominica Port Authority
 Head – Environmental Coordinating Unit
 The President Dominica Hoteliers Association
 The Chief Fisheries Officer
 Chief veterinary Officer
 Director of Surveys & Commissioner of Lands
 Director – Dominica Bureau of Standards
 Head – Prime Unit
 Coordinator – Small Projects Assistance Team (SPAT)
 Dominica Taxi Association

Appendix 2b

Organizations represented at Workshop

Prime Unit	-	Mr. Steven Joseph
Tourism Division	-	Mrs Patricia Linton
Dominica Port Authority	-	Arthurley Winston
Dominica Port Authority	-	Jefferson Casey
Customs & Excise	-	Vincent Christmas
Dominica Taxi Association	-	Jonathan Vidal
Lands & Surveys Division	-	Vivian Eugene
Environmental Coordinating Unit	-	Lloyd Pascal
Attorney General's Office	-	Miss Gloria Augustus
Veterinary Unit	-	Dr. Collin McIntyre & Dr. Caryl Lockhart
Hunters Association	-	Mr. Kenneth Tyson
Holy Redeemer House	-	Rev. Fr. Franklyn Cuffy (C.ssr)
Forestry Division		Eric Hypolite, Arlington James, Adolphus Christian, Ronald Charles, Albert Gallion, Stephen Durand, Cyrille John, Randolph Winston, Bertrand Jno. Baptiste, Phillip Mathew
Government Information Service (GIS)	-	McPherson St. Luce, Albert Toussaint.

Appendix 3**Program**

- 9:15 am - Welcome & Opening Remarks by Environmental Education Officer (R. Charles)
- 9:20 am - Remarks by acting Director of Forestry & Wildlife (E. Hypolite)
- 9:30 am - Address by Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Environment (Davis Letang)
- 9:45 am - Break (Coffee, Juice & Snacks)
- 10:00 am - Overview of Dominica's Wildlife by Protection Officer (A.E Christian)
- 10:30 am - Wildlife and Socio-Economic Development in Dominica (A. James)
- 11:15 am - Plenary Discussion
- 12:30 pm - Lunch
- 1:15 pm - The Law & Wildlife Management (G. Augustus)
- 2:15 pm - Plenary Discussion – “The Law & Wildlife Management” (R. Charles)
- 2:45 pm - Forging Partnerships / Building Consensus on the Way Forward (Mr. A.E Christian)
- 4:00 pm - Closing Remarks –Workshop Coordinator.