Volume 5, Issue 3 June 2012

# Aliens of Kamayca a newsleller on non-indigenous species in Jamaica

#### INVASIVE AVIAN SPECIES

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Children's Corner

Some birds have been introduced by man and others have introduced themselves. The earliest record we have is from 1810, and the most recent, 2005, for a total of 13 or 14 species. This number is much less than what some islands have experienced such as Hawaii or Puerto Rico, where invasive species have severely impacted the native birdlife.

There is little evidence of our native species being put at risk by invasive species, perhaps because they are accustomed to frequent incursions by regular annual migrations from the north in the Fall and from the south in Spring. Below is the history of some of the invasive avian species in Jamaica.

#### Saffron Finch

Reverend Shakespeare came to Jamaica in 1810 along with a cage of Saffron Finches he had acquired in the Canary Islands en-route to Jamaica. He took up residence in Hodges, St. Elizabeth, where the birds escaped or were released. When P. H. Gosse studied Jamaica's birdlife in 1846/7, he found that the Saffron Finch had already spread from "Savla-mar to Long Hill" (probably Spur Tree).



## European Starling and English House Sparrow

These two species were brought from Britain about 1890 and released at Fort George Estate, St. Mary. Both have survived but have not become dominant as seen in the US eastern seaboard.

Starlings are found in small flocks, usually near cattle properties. There is a resident flock around Hope Gardens.



European Starling (©John Fletcher)

House Sparrows were fairly common along the St. Mary/ Portland coast until the 1950's (thought to be dependent on food scraps along the railway), but disappeared when the railway closed; however, they have re-established themselves in Ocho Rios.



#### Green-rumped Parrotlet

This tiny green bird was brought into Jamaica about 1918, and now exists in small flocks that are difficult to see. The Green-rumped Parrotlet appears to be very susceptible to hurricanes, after which its numbers drop drastically.



Green-rumped parrotlet female (left) and male

#### American Kestrel

There is no specific evidence that this familiar little Hawk was introduced. This bird was not recorded by Gosse and was very rare in the first half of the 20th century. The Kestrel is now common throughout the island.

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### INVASIVE AVIAN SPECIES CONT'D



American Kestrel (©John Fletcher)

#### Cattle Egret

The Cattle Egret is originally from Africa, but has spread worldwide. This bird arrived about 1951, having moved from Brazil and throughout the Caribbean. The bird is very common in Jamaica and has replaced the Smooth-billed Ani as "Cow-waiting Boy".



(©http://www.bio.miami.edu/pze/Ciconiiformes.html)

## Yellow-crowned Bishop, Orange Bishop, Chestnut Munia and Bronze Munia

In September 1988, Hurricane Gilbert blew away a cage containing four imported birds. These four species survived and have expanded their ranges, but would still be considered uncommon in Jamaica. The Orange Bishop may be seen in cane fields, especially Caymanas.



Orange Bishop (©Hugh Vaughan)

The Yellow-crowned Bishop can be found in the only area close to Kingston suitable for its breeding, the Dyke ponds in the north-east corner of Caymanas lands.

#### Shiny Cowbird

This bird is a parasitic nester, which lays its eggs in the nests of other birds. The Shiny Cowbird has gradually spread through the Caribbean and up into the United States, but had bypassed Jamaica until 1994, when it was first identified near the Yallahs Ponds in St. Thomas. Since that time, the Shiny Cowbird has moved across Jamaica, and favours the nests of the Jamaican Oriole, which may eventually suffer a reduction in its numbers.



Shiny Cowbird male (left) and female (right)

#### Rose-ringed Parakeet

This large green parakeet appeared in suburban St. Andrew about 2003; probably escaped cage birds. The flock is now estimated at 40 birds and can often be seen between Jacks Hill and Constant Spring. The bird was recently spotted in Stony Hill.



Rose-ringed Parakeet (©John Fletcher

#### Great-tailed Grackle

This bird was first seen close to Kingston's international airport in June 2005. The arrival of this bird is a mystery, as it is a native of Central America and is not previously known in the Caribbean. The Greattailed Grackle is twice the size of the Greater Antillean Grackle (Kling Kling). In 2007, a family group was seen and photographed in Portmore and in 2008, the bird was seen in Black River.



Great-tailed Grackle male (left) and female (ri

Contributor: John Fletcher, BirdLife Jamaica

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# FLEMINGIA STROBILIFERA(L.) W.T.AITON

Wild Hops or Luck Plant (Flemingia strobilifera (synonym: Moghania strobilifera (L.) J. St. – Hill. ex Kuntze)}, a member of

the Fabaceae (Bean) family, is a shrub generally 0.5 to 2m high.

The foliate leaves are ovate to elliptical with sharply or gradually pointed tips and rounded bases. The leaves are 5 to 20cm long and 3 to 10cm broad. Wild Hops has conspicuous inflated bracts that are green becoming brown upon maturity. The flowers are creamy, greenish yellow or pinkish, and are enclosed in the baggy bracts that are arranged alternately in a zigzag pattern.



Wild Hops is common in fields, along field margins, along tracks or in general waste places near streams and in abandoned pastures. The plant thrives between altitudes of sea-level to 915m. Flowering occurs December through to August. Fruits can be observed in December through to March as well as July through to August.

The gregarious or thicket forming nature of the Wild Hops is synonymous with it being an invasive species. The plant, once established, continues to spread and aggressively competes with native species for needed resources. This competition takes place mostly in disturbed areas where it comes in as a weedy shrub.

Wild Hops is used in floral arrangements because of its attractive inflated bracts. Some florists spray the bracts in various colours to suit the arrangement. It is these bracts which resemble the true Hops, which is used in the brewing of

beers that influenced the vernacular name of Wild Hops. The leaves and roots are used in several countries for treating various ailments.

Wild Hops is said to be a native of the East Indies and islands of the Indian Ocean and was introduced into some West Indian islands including Jamaica, Hispaniola, St. Vincent, Barbados and Trinidad. By now, this plant should have spread throughout the West Indies.

Contributor: Keron Campbell, IOJ

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#### THE ORCHID MONK

Oeceoclades maculata (Lindle.) Lindle., commonly called the Monk Orchid or Ground Orchid is a pan-tropical terrestrial orchid typically 20 to 43 cm in height with white stout fibrous roots. The leaves tend to be leathery, succulent and olive green in colour with dark green mottling.



Non-fragrant flowers produced from August to

November. The sepals and petals are light brown to pinkish green. The plant has minute dust-like wind dispersed seeds that are typical of its family (Cohen and Ackerman, 2009)



The Monk Orchid can be found in forests up to 1200m in elevation. In Jamaica, this orchid is frequently seen in leaf litter throughout the forests. The orchid is thought to

be native of the African continent, and is now common throughout tropical North America, Central America, South America and the Caribbean region.

The Monk Orchid is not cited in the Flowering Plants of Jamaica and might not have been a part of our landscape at the time of its publication. Today, the orchid is cited as one of the most invasive orchids in the world and with its present expansive distribution it might be here for a long time.

Contributor: Keron Campell, IOJ

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## SEARCH-A-WORD

Find the missing alien species in the puzzle below:

E	T	s	M	О	N	G	О	О	s	Е	L	L	A	Q	R	M
W	N	T	E	S	U	L	В	G	T	W	Н	E	L	P	P	A
Н	E	M	N	В	C	D	O	F	R	A	T	Z	Y	E	U	N
I	K	G	Н	O	U	F	A	G	A	E	T	R	W	A	C	G
T	C	o	P	T	S	L	M	В	W	T	Н	S	Q	K	Y	O
E	I	X	T	D	A	S	L	Y	В	O	V	D	Н	I	L	T
T	Н	A	Z	S	R	O	G	F	E	Y	O	N	S	J	I	R
A	C	K	E	E	S	R	В	K	R	D	E	D	U	J	L	D
I	Q	Z	W	В	N	R	C	J	R	o	U	P	T	A	R	X
L	Н	A	W	Q	S	E	N	I	Y	C	G	I	P	C	E	G
E	K	C	A	T	T	L	E	E	G	R	E	T	Y	K	G	o
D	S	O	T	X	J	T	S	M	U	O	L	P	L	F	N	Н
D	S	T	Z	M	A	K	U	T	A	G	W	V	A	R	I	D
E	R	T	D	O	S	C	Н	K	V	В	Q	A	C	U	G	L
E	D	O	G	X	L	В	R	E	A	D	F	R	U	I	T	I
R	Q	N	W	Н	T	N	I	C	A	Y	Н	R	E	T	A	W

Mongoose White-tailed Deer Strawberry Guava Wild Hog Ackee Breadfruit Chicken Sorrel Dog Cat Rat Eucalyptus Pig Goat Ginger Lily Cattle Egret Neem Mango Apple Jackfruit Cotton Logwood Bullfrog Water Hyacinth

# HOW MANY WORDS CAN YOU MAKE?

A	Е	С
U	L	A
Е	M	L

Make words containing 3 or more letters.

The letter in the shaded box MUST be used at all times and you have to unscramble the 9-letter word to be considered **excellent**.

If you make 15 words, you are **okay**. If you make 20 words, you are **good** and if you make 30 words or more, you are **very good**.

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