



Pawi Pic 1: CANARI facilitator Neila Bobb-Prescott having an interactive session with group participants.



Pawi Pic 2: Bird Life International representative Dr. Phillip Mc Gowan giving a review of outcomes from the previous day's work.



Photos courtesy the Environmental Management Authority

PROTECTING THE PAWI

The Trinidad Piping Guan or Pawi, *Pipile pipile*, is Trinidad's only endemic bird, *i.e.* found exclusively in Trinidad—nowhere else in the world. It is a black, turkey-like bird with a white face, black beak, brilliant blue wattles extending from its neck, and red legs. The Pawi is a gregarious, arboreal bird with a wingspan of up to 60 centimeters.

Once abundant throughout the Northern Range and the southern Trinity Hills, and also occurring in lowland areas such as the Nariva Swamp and Aripo Savannas, the Pawi has been extirpated from all areas except for remote primary forests in the North East of Trinidad. Illegal hunting and habitat destruction through forest fires, timber extraction, and conversion to plantation agriculture are known causes of this species' decline. The population is now estimated at 70-200 individuals, but is probably closer to 200.

Endemic species are generally more susceptible to extinction pressures, and the Pawi, with its reduced population as well as isolation in a small portion of the island, is acknowledged to be hovering on the brink of extinction. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognizes the severe threat to the Pawi rating it as Critically Endangered. Our local Pawi ranks in the top five birds worldwide in its family class threatened with extinction.

This was one of the reasons that local interest groups, conservationists and governmental agencies were involved in a 2-day workshop with stakeholders to draft a recovery plan for this bird. This workshop took place on the 8th and 9th of July 2010 and was hosted collaboratively by the Pawi Study Group, Guardian Life Wildlife Fund, Forestry Division, Asa Wright Nature Centre and the Environmental Management Authority (EMA).

The workshop was held at the Caroni Swamp Nature Center with sessions being facilitated by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute. The process of species recovery planning was also guided by Dr. Phillip Mc Gowan representing Birdlife International, which is a respected authority globally, regarding conservation of avifauna and their associated habitats. Also contributing to the process was Mr. Christian Devenish representing World Pheasant Association, an organization involved in conservation work on birds in the order Galliformes to which our Pawi belongs.

The two-day workshop was intensive and filled with activities ranging from games to working group sessions. The workshop aimed to capture maximum input from all stakeholders present regarding their experience, observation, needs and their vision/interpretation of a recovery plan document and what is required to achieve its goals.

The first day of the workshop focused on the sharing of information and experiences including recent sightings as well as, the identification of threats to the species. The second day had greater focus on the process of drafting the recovery plan and its various elements. Stakeholders contributing to the planning process included governmental agencies such as the EMA and the Forestry Division, NGOs such as Nature Seekers and Caribbean Forest Conservation Association (CFCA) and CBOs such as, the South Eastern Hunters Association, Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guiding Association, Pawi Sports Culture and Eco Club to name a few.

Dr. Joth Singh Managing Director/CEO of the EMA said that the EMA is very committed to supporting workshops such as these as they explore ways of ensuring the continuity of the Pawi and provide avenues for augmenting threatened species legislation such as the Environmentally Sensitive Species Rules, under which the Pawi is protected.

At the end of the process, a vision, goals, specific objectives and even a few projects were identified and developed for the species recovery plan. In addition to this, the workshop also provided an opportunity for stakeholders to share findings, passion, and ideas. This facilitated a deeper insight into the needs, strengths and constraints of each stakeholder and a renewed commitment to saving this species from the extinction pressures it currently faces.

Courtesy the Environmental Management Authority