

Aliens of Kamayca

a newsletter on non-indigenous species in Jamaica

COMMON ALIEN AMONGST US – BAMBOO

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Common Alien Amongst Us – Bamboo 1

Invasive Alert New Species: Haitian Brown Tarantula 2

Mitigating the Threat of Invasive Aliens Species in the Insular Caribbean (MTIASIC) Project: Lionfish Management 3

Children's Corner 4



A perennial evergreen labelled the fastest growing in the world. It is said to grow at a rate of 60cm per day and has the potential to mature within a growing season of 3 - 4 months dependent on the availability of the appropriate soil and climatic condition. Arising asexually by vegetative reproduction from the underground system of rhizomes, it becomes the aerial culm or an above ground stem. The stem exhibits some degree of hollowness characteristic of bamboo species. These eventually grow to become mature plants attaining heights of over 12m which often grows in dense clusters.

The most common species of bamboo in Jamaica is *Bambusa vulgaris* and it is believed to have been introduced in the 18th century from Hispaniola. It is a native of the Old World Tropics but now has the reputation of being one of the most common bamboo species in the

world (Adams, 1972). *B. vulgaris* is one of the 1450 species of bamboo divided among 70 genera of the family Poaceae. It has become well established in the forest structure of Jamaica not only having its place as a common vegetation but it is used by many residents as a valuable resource.

Distribution

Bamboo has a widespread distribution in Jamaica and has been recorded from sea level to areas of high elevation such as the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park. It is also common amongst riverine vegetation associated with freshwater bodies such as rivers and ponds. It quickly inhabits lands previously cleared for agriculture, hillsides, pastures and deforested mountainous areas. Efforts to reduce the impact of soil erosion have resulted in bamboo being planted where the native vegetation is often removed. This continues to result in the displacement of native species. Its rapid growth slows the recruitment of native tree species which has earned it the label as an invasive alien species.

The dense clusters of bamboo trees have translated into tourist attractions in some sections of the island. The scenic view is caused by

the extremely tall strands of bamboo on both sides of the road reaching heights over 10m and its arching over the roadway. One such area is Holland Bay where bamboo trees run along the entire 2½ mile corridor from Middle Quarters to Lacovia, St. Elizabeth.

Uses of Bamboo

- *Traditional medicine*
- *Ecotourism – river rafting*
- *Building material*
- *Construction Industry*
- *Farming purposes e.g. tools*
- *Hunting and fishing*
- *Fuel and lighting*
- *Furniture and personal items*
- *Musical instruments*
- *Handicrafts*
- *Ornamental/boundary markers*
- *Making baskets, fences*

Contributor: Monique Curtis NEPA

References:
<http://www.springerlink.com/content/f28m44w15221p451/>
 (T)The past and present uses of bamboo in Jamaica

Adams, C.D. 1972. Flowering plants of Jamaica, U.W.I., Mona, Jamaica

INVASIVE ALERT NEW SPECIES: HAITIAN BROWN TARANTULA



Source: <http://static-p4.fotolia.com/>

Jamaica has recorded its first reported sighting of the **Haitian Brown Tarantula** (*Phormictopus cancerides*). A native to Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico (Breene 1998), these large spiders can reach 20cm in leg span and have a reputation for defensive behaviour and hairkicking. Adult males are a lovely purplish colour. The spider is reported to be an aggressive tarantula that feeds on mice and other small vertebrates.

The Haitian Brown Tarantula is reported to be one of the ten worst tarantulas in the world. They are solitary spiders that rarely leave their homes most times emerging in search of food. The venom administered by their bite however is not fatal to humans.

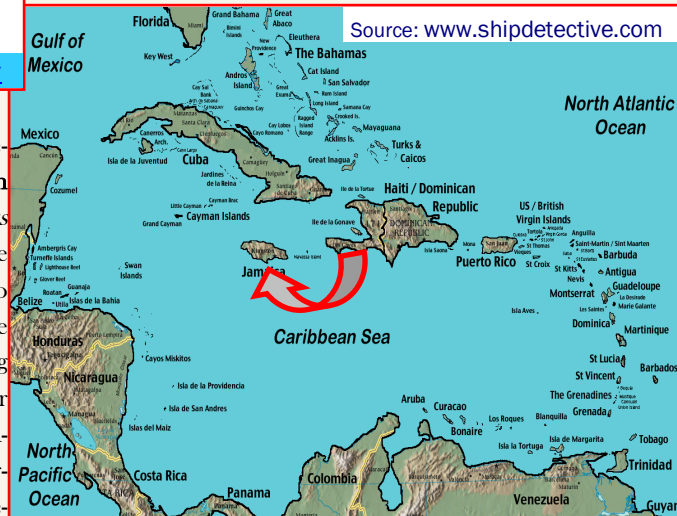
They are fast becoming a favourite in the pet trade and can be seen advertised for sale on the internet mostly in North America. These online sales often warn of their aggressive nature and are only recommended for experienced keepers.

The pet trade is also becoming a

source of introduction of other potential invasive species into the Jamaican environment. These species have become residents and often times prob-

term impacts of these species on the local environment.

The Haitian Brown was discovered in the luggage of a



Source: www.shipdetective.com

lematic to native species in our rivers and terrestrial habitats.

Invasive and potential invasive species enter the island, via sometimes, the most unexpected ways. These include our ports (sea and air) in the cargo. Caution should be taken as they are transported in our luggage as we travel back and forth from country to country. Therefore travelers should be vigilant about the stowaways that are transported into the island. The invasive nature of uninvited creatures are only realized when they have established populations and are causing a noticeable impact.

The early warning of the entry of a species that could become an invasive would assist the reduction of the short to long

traveler shortly after their return from Haiti. This should be some cause for concern as the animal entered undetected and if undiscovered could have established itself.

QUICK SUMMARY:

Range: naturally occur in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and other parts of the Caribbean.

Habitat: enjoys hiding under rocks, in burrows, and under debris.

Size: are big spiders sometimes growing 7 to 9 inches in diameter.

Lifespan: males may only live 18-24 months, but females can live much sometimes over 20

years.

Reproduction: they construct a golf ball sized egg sac out of silk. Females care for her eggs by turning the egg sac on a regular basis. One egg sac may contain over 2000 eggs.

Conservation: the biggest threat is habitat destruction. Human fear is also a danger to tarantulas; however, they rarely harm humans. Like most wild animals, tarantulas actually fear humans, and will only bite as a defense. Most species have venom that is no worse than bee venom, so, most are harmless to people. If someone is allergic to insect bites then extreme caution should be exercised.

If you have seen this spider, please do not hesitate to contact the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) at 754-7540 and report such sightings.

**Contributor: David Reid
NEPA**

References:

Quick Summary: <http://reptilesalive.com/news/tag/haitian-tarantula/>

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20091028230509AAg4Gxd>

MITIGATING THE THREAT OF INVASIVE ALIENS SPECIES IN THE INSULAR CARIBBEAN (MTIASIC) PROJECT: LIONFISH MANAGEMENT

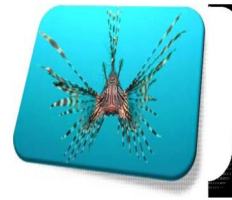
This Caribbean wide four (4) year project which commenced in 2009 is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and features 5 participating countries; Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St. Lucia, and Trinidad & Tobago. The implementing agencies are the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) for the Caribbean and Latin America.

The project's main objective is to mitigate the threat to local biodiversity and economy from IAS. The project aims at:

- developing a National IAS Strategy;
- the establishment of Caribbean-wide cooperation in addressing IAS;
- the development of a Regional IAS Strategy;
- increasing general IAS awareness through the generation, management and dissemination of knowledge;
- increasing the countries capacity to detect, respond, control, and manage IAS impact in terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems.

The aim is to achieve the outlined strategies through five main initiatives:

- increasing the national capacity to address poten-



tial risks posed to biodiversity of global significance from invasive alien species;

- increasing regional cooperation to reduce risk posed to biodiversity of global significance from IAS;
- strengthening access to data and establishment of best practice and public awareness of IAS;
- increasing capacity to strengthen prevention of new IAS introductions and increased capacity to respond, control and manage IAS impacting globally significant biodiversity; and
- the implementation of pilot projects to control and manage the spread of target IAS species.

Jamaica's Pilot Project to control Lionfish

Title: *Management & Control of the Marine Invasive Species, Pterois volitans and Pterois miles (Lionfish) to prevent the impending population explosion in the Caribbean Sea*

The first sighting of the Lionfish in Jamaica was officially documented and confirmed by

members of the Ecosystems Management Branch of the National Environment & Planning Agency (NEPA) in April 2008 at a dive site called The Plains located at Franklin D. Resort in Runaway Bay, St. Ann. To date, the lionfish has been sighted off the coast of all parishes except Clarendon, Manchester and St. Catherine. Their absence in these areas may be as a result of the infrequency of recreational diving in these areas and a lack of reporting. Numerous reports have been received on sightings on the north coast. The acquisition of a juvenile specimen has confirmed suspicions that they are reproducing.

The Lionfish Pilot Project will be implemented under 4 main components:

- the tracking and documenting of island-wide distribution of the species. This is aimed at coordinating data collection, filling gaps in existing data, and allowing for the development of distribution trends.
- Examine the prey prefer-

ence. The assessment of the prey preferences will be done by the setting up of *ex-situ* and *in-situ* experiments at the UWI Discovery Bay Marine Lab as well as the comparison of results from these experiments with specimen information gathered in the field during the collection of distribution data from other areas of Jamaica.

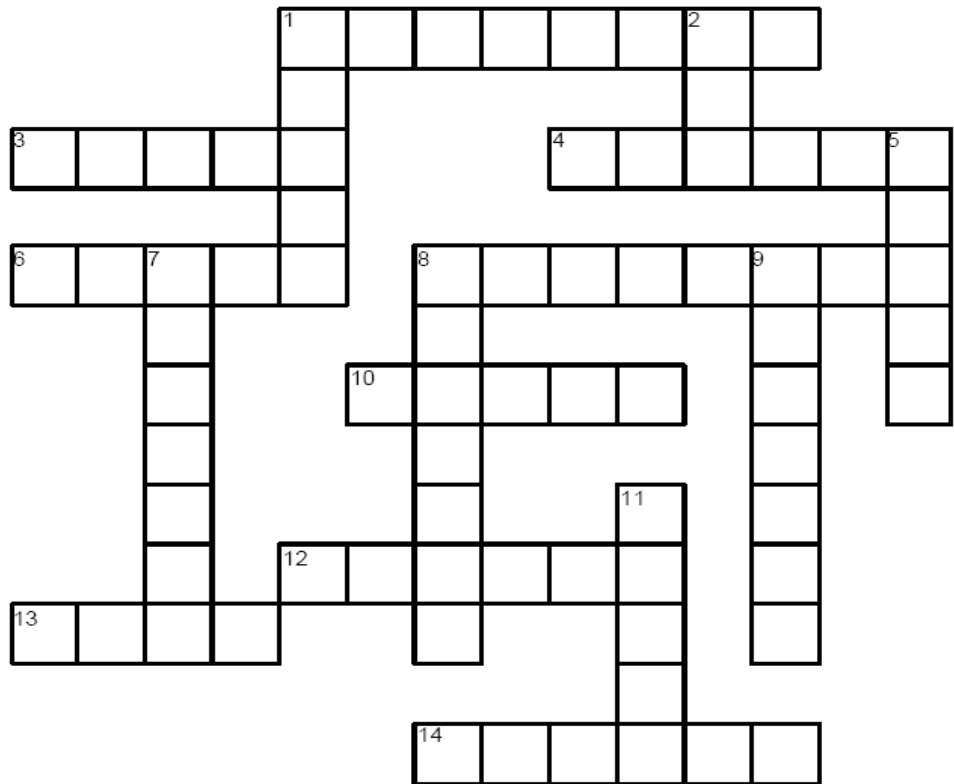
- the development of passive capture mechanism such as the use of a traps which can be deployed to catch lionfish with the minimal input of diving. The development of a low cost capture method with high effectiveness and selectivity will be integral to early detection and control of the invasion of the species into new countries and new areas.
- development of a Lionfish Management Plan. The development of the management plan will be done using information from other regional countries, some of which have already developed management plans for this invasive species. Additionally, results from the research done during this project will also feature heavily in the plan.

**Contributor: Nelsa English
National Coordinator
IAS Project, Jamaica**

CHILDRENS' CORNER

Word Bank

air
 animals
 clean
 earth
 Earth Day
 fish
 forest
 green
 litter
 plants
 pollute
 preserve
 recycle
 trash
 trees
 water



ACROSS

- 1 April 22. (Two words.)
- 3 All living things need this liquid to live.
- 4 A large area covered in trees.
- 6 Another word for garbage.
- 8 To keep safe from harm.
- 10 The opposite of dirty.
- 12 Trash thrown on the ground.
- 13 They often die when water is polluted.
- 14 Trees, vines, shrubs, flowers, and herbs.
- 5 To make the environment dirty.
- 9 To reuse instead of throw away.
- 11 A popular color to wear on Earth Day.

DOWN

- 1 Our planet.
- 2 Car exhaust pollutes this.
- 5 Often planted on Earth Day.
- 7 Endangered ones include bald eagles, pandas, and killer whales.



© 2008, The Holiday Zone. All Rights Reserved.

<http://www.theholidayzone.com/>



The Aliens of Xamayca is a quarterly newsletter of the Ecosystems Management Branch of NEPA that features non-native species in Jamaica. Persons interested in writing articles for the newsletter may submit them to the editor at monique.curtis@nepa.gov.jm.