

Aliens of Xamayca

A newsletter on non-indigenous species in Jamaica

ALIENS AMONGST US!

Alien species are plants or animals, which are introduced deliberately or unintentionally into areas where they are not naturally found. The presence of alien species may threaten biodiversity, which is “life on earth” and includes plants, animals, microorganisms and their habitats. When this happens, the species are termed invasive alien species (IAS).

HAITIAN BROWN TARANTULA

Phormictopus cancerides (Haitian Brown tarantula), a native to Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico was reported to be present in Jamaica and was discovered in the luggage of a traveller shortly after their return from Haiti (Reptile Alive, 2021). These large spiders can reach up to 20 cm in leg span, and have a reputation for defensive behaviour. They are also reported to be aggressive tarantulas and feed on mice and other small vertebrates.



Photo credit: Flexzone

Figure 1: The Haitian Brown Tarantula



Figure 2: Map showing movement of Tarantula from native range to Jamaica. Source:

The Haitian Brown Tarantulas 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 (Reptile Alive, 2021).

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.

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Tarantulas's biggest threat is habitat destruction. Human fear is also a danger to tarantulas. However, tarantulas rarely harm humans. Like most wild animals, they actually fear humans, and will only bite as a defense. Most species of tarantulas have venom that is no worse than bee venom and most tarantulas are harmless to people .

SUMMARY

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

Habitat: They can be found hiding under rocks, in burrows and under debris.

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

Lifespan: The 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. The females care for her eggs by turning the egg sac on a regular basis. One egg sac may contain over 2000 eggs.

Source: [http:// reptilesalive.com/news/tag/ haitian-tarantula/](http://reptilesalive.com/news/tag/haitian-tarantula/)

If you have seen this spider, please do not hesitate to report such sightings to the:

National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA)

10 & 11 Caledonia Avenue, Kingston 5

Telephone #: 876-754-7540

Contributor: Samantha Grant , Coordinator (Acting), NEPA

References:

Reptiles Alive. 2021. Haitian Tarantula. Retrieved on 20 August 2021 from [http:// reptilesalive.com/news/tag/ haitian-tarantula/](http://reptilesalive.com/news/tag/haitian-tarantula/)

LIME SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY

The Lime Swallowtail Butterfly (*Papilio demoleus*) is native to Southern Asia. It is common and widespread and gets its name from its host species, citrus plants. This butterfly ranges widely and is an extremely successful invader. Its proliferation appears to be aided by agricultural land use and urbanisation that create new, suitable open habitat and enhanced availability of resources (Lewis, 2021). The butterfly was first discovered in Jamaica on September 2006 in the citrus growing areas of Bog Walk, St. Catherine and Hounslow, St. Elizabeth (Lewis, 2021). It poses a threat to the local citrus industry, as it feeds on the leaf and bark of citrus plants less than two years old.



Figure: 3: Dorsal view of adult Lime Swallowtail.
Photo credit: Delano Lewis

Management Initiatives

1. **Quarantine** - The quarantine of nurseries was the first initiative of the Plant Health Surveillance and Pest Response System (PHS&PRS). Citrus seedlings are to be placed under protected cover to prevent entry of the pest; monitor for stages of the pest and to ensure cleanliness of the plants before sale. Nursery dealers should only be permitted to sell their citrus seedlings after a inspection with negative results is done by a representative of the Plant Quarantine Unit & Citrus Protection Agency (CPA).
2. **Spraying of Pesticides** - Pesticides labelled for control of eggs and caterpillars are recommended to remove any infestations present. Pesticide should be mainly contained to nurseries in order to protect local species considered harmless.
3. **Introduction of natural enemies** - An environmental- friendly treatment to the leaves is to introduce natural enemies such as parasitic wasps and birds. Wasps can be used to attack the caterpillars.

If you suspect that Lime Swallowtail Butterfly is on your premises, please contact the:

Research and Development Division Bodles, Agricultural Research Station, Old Harbour, Clarendon

Telephone: 876- 983-2281 or 876-983-2267

Email: bodlesresearch@moa.gov.jm

Contributor: Samantha Grant, Coordinator (Acting), NEPA

Reference:

Lewis, D. 2021. Lime Swallowtail. Retrieved on the 19 August from [lime swallowtail - Papilio demoleus Linnaeus \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ufl.edu/~linnaeus/lime_swallowtail)

Children's Corner

SEARCH-A-WORD

Find the missing alien species in the puzzle below



- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 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 |

COLOUR AND LEARN A LITTLE ABOUT ME , I AM ENDEMIC TO JAMAICA



Frog: I am slimy and tiny. With my pads to a leaf I cling, high up in a tree. My diet consists of insects, juicy flies and mosquitoes. Where I live in the rain-forest, there is water a-plenty to keep my skin moist. I should be prized, not despised, because I help to keep the balance of our nature.

Picture and text adapted from "A-Z of wildlife and wild places in Jamaica" (Natural History Society of Jamaica production)



Managing and protecting Jamaica's land, wood, air & water

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The Aliens of Xamayca is a quarterly newsletter that features non-native species in Jamaica.
 Persons interested in writing articles for the newsletter may submit them to the editor, Samantha Grant, Coordinator at samantha.grant@nepa.gov.jm.