

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

The island of Jamaica is rich in biodiversity and has a number of plants and animals that are **INDIGENOUS** to Jamaica (that is, not brought to Jamaica by people). A large number of these plants and animals are found no where else in the world and are said to be **ENDEMIC** to Jamaica. Those plants and animals that are in danger of becoming extinct (that is, disappearing forever), are **ENDANGERED** and should be protected. It is very important that we take special care of these plants and animals, as they are a part of our national heritage.

Here are a few species of plants and animals that are **INDIGENOUS** to Jamaica.

PLANTS

NATIONAL TREE

Blue Mahoe (*Hibiscus elatus*)



The Blue Mahoe is found throughout the island, but is no longer abundant as it is commonly used as a source of lumber.

NATIONAL FLOWER

Lignum Vitae (*Guaiacum officinale*)



The Lignum Vitae tree is found only in the plains. It is also valued for its timber and as a lovely shade tree.

FERNS

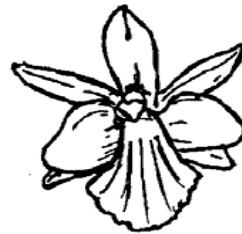
(*Cystopteris fragilis*)



Jamaica has at least 579 species of Ferns. Several species of ferns are found all over the island particularly in the forests. Ferns found in Fern Gully, St. Ann should not be removed.

ORCHIDS

(*Broughtonia sanguinea*) Endemic



Orchids are found throughout the island but are most abundant in the eastern parishes. There are about 220 species, 33 are **ENDEMIC** to Jamaica.

INSECTIVOROUS PLANTS

The Sundew (*Drosera capillaris*) is an indigenous insectivorous plant found only at **Mason River, Clarendon**. It is a rare plant that traps insects on its sticky leaves and feeds on the juices produced by the action of the plant's digestive enzymes.

BROMELIADS/WILD PINES

(*Guzmania monostachia*)



Jamaica's forests support about 60 species of wild pines. They are very important members of the forest community and harbour many small animals between their leaves. The wild pine crab, found only in Jamaica, lives in the water in the leaves of the wild pine.

RED MANGROVES

(*Rhizophora mangle*)



The red mangrove with its adventitious prop roots is found mainly along the coast. Four species of mangroves are found in Jamaica and they form very important nurseries for fishes and other marine animals. They also protect the coastline by reducing erosion and therefore should not be destroyed.

ANIMALS

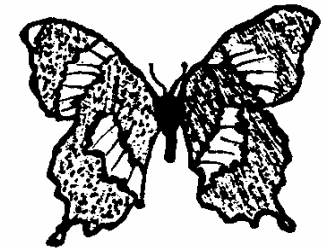
BLACK CORAL

(*Antipathes spp.*)

These are rare corals found in relatively shallow waters off Jamaica's coast. They are used to make semi-precious jewellery and are threatened by over-collection. They are now protected by law.

GIANT SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY

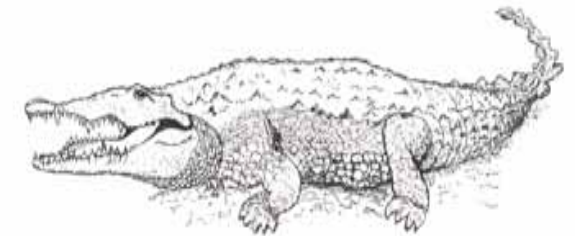
(*Papilio [Pterourus] homerus*) Endemic



The Giant Swallowtail is the largest butterfly in this hemisphere and is the largest swallowtail in the world. They are found only in inaccessible regions of the John Crow Mountains and the Cockpit Country. Their habitat is threatened by destruction.

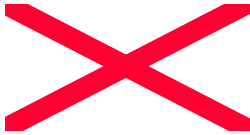
JAMAICAN CROCODILE

(*Crocodylus acutus*)



Found in mangroves, swamps and rivers around Jamaica, only one species occurs in Jamaica and is often mistakenly called an alligator. There are no alligators in Jamaica. It is against the law to capture or kill a crocodile.

JAMAICAN IGUANA (Cyclura collei)



Until quite recently the Jamaican Iguana was thought to be extinct. Although once common there is only a small population living in the Hellshire Hills. The Iguana is Jamaica's largest indigenous land animal and is protected by the law.

PARROTS ~~Black-Billed Parrot~~ (Amazona agilis)



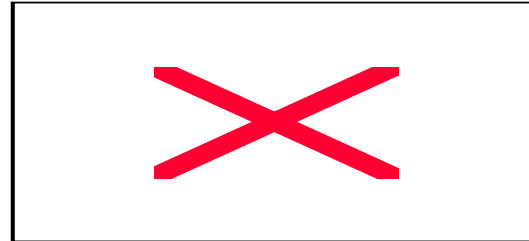
Jamaica has two ENDEMIC species of parrots: the black-billed and the yellow-billed. They are found in forests. It is illegal to capture, kill or to hurt parrots and they should not be sold as pets.

SEA TURTLES ~~Hawksbill Turtle~~ (Eretmochelys imbricata)



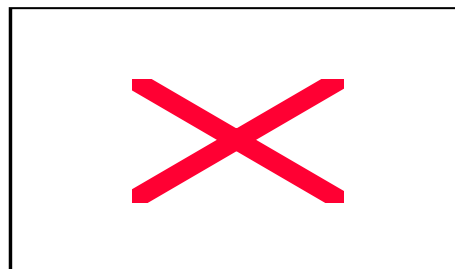
Four species of Sea Turtles are found in Jamaica's coastal waters: the Hawksbill, the Loggerhead, the Olive-Ridley and the Green Turtle. They are hunted for their shells and meat and are faced with the loss of their nesting beaches. Accordingly, their numbers are falling. They are now fully protected by the law.

MANATEE OR SEA COW (Trichechus manatus)



The Sea Cow, as it is known in Jamaica, is a large mammal found in Jamaica's shallow coastal waters mainly on the south coast. This gentle animal is a herbivore and feeds on sea grass. Although protected by law, they are often slaughtered for their meat.

CONEY (Geocapromys brownii)



Protected by the law, these fairly small animals are found in remote mountain forests. Only one species of Coney is found in Jamaica. Apart from the rat bats, they are Jamaica's only surviving native land mammals.

YELLOW SNAKE (Epicrates subflavus)

Otherwise called **Nanka**, this harmless snake is found in wet and dry lowland forests. This species of snake is found no where else in the world. They are not poisonous and feed on birds and mice. Please do not kill them, they will not harm you.



"Preserving our Natural Heritage"

FACTS ON SOME
JAMAICAN
PLANTS AND ANIMALS