

ISSUE #3  
Nov 2009

# FLICKER



MONTHLY BULLETIN of the CAYMAN ISLANDS  
DEPARTMENT of ENVIRONMENT TERRESTRIAL ECOLOGY UNIT



John Bothwell pilots the submersible

## Museum 'Naturelle'...

The Cayman Islands may be famous for its coral reefs and sandy beaches, however, reefs and beaches are just two pieces of a mosaic of different habitats which maintain our local ecological balance and support the natural abundance of life. The National Biodiversity Action Plan for the Cayman Islands lists no fewer than nineteen distinct habitats types; each supporting a diversity of unique plants and animals.

While all habitats are essential to the maintenance of the variety of life locally, some habitats are 'more equal than others' when it comes to accessibility. The Mastic Trail may entice the more intrepid amongst

us to brave some "Forest and Woodland" habitat, however few of us would willingly tackle the interior of the "Mangrove", and fewer still the rigors of the "Open Sea".

For this reason, those with an interest in exploring the seldom-seen regions of our Islands will be fascinated by an extraordinary new permanent exhibit in [Cayman Islands National Museum](#). Following Hurricane Ivan, the Museum, a partner in the Cayman Islands [Darwin Initiative](#), has undergone extensive remodeling, transforming the interior into a cutting-edge Natural History experience.

Visitors to the Museum now embark upon a full-blown indoor expedition, transported to the heart of Cayman's most mysterious environments, to glimpse our most elusive creatures, courtesy of imaginative interpretation and cutting-edge interactive displays. Installations including a complete walk-through bat cave, and the opportunity to explore our sea at the helm of a personal submersible. From extinct and prehistoric creatures, to the modern challenges of sustainable living on a small island with limited resources, the exhibit



The mangrove exhibit



enables visitors to experience aspects of our Islands which many lifelong residents have yet to see. The innovative displays and interactive features ensure that there is something for everyone - from the enquiring to the wandering mind.

## New Species...

Kristan Godbeer of the Cayman Islands Department of Environment was taking a weekend stroll along the [Mastic Trail](#), when he caught sight of a small bright coloured creature, among some grass. Upon closer inspection, he found a very odd, fat looking spider. The colour is quite striking; a shiny black with a vivid red underside. Excited by this new find, he corresponded with spider expert Dr. Sarah Crews of the University of California, Berkeley. The spider appears to be an undescribed species of the family Tetragnathidae, Genus *Alcimosphenus*. This is probably a female, as males are extremely small (1-2 mm) and difficult to detect. Dr. Crews said "...they (*Alcimosphenus*) are only found in the West Indies. My guess is there are several species, probably one or more on each island, and they just need some work (to identify them)".



New spider (*Alcimosphenus* sp.)



Black & White Warbler ♀

## Migrant Spectacle...

The fall migration is well underway, and many birds are stopping off in the Cayman Islands before going on to complete their journeys. Flocks of foraging Bobolink *Dolichonix oryzivorus* can currently be seen in pastureland, and flocks of up to ten Swainson's Thrushes *Catharus ustulatus* have been seen picking berries in mature gardens. An impressive array of warblers, including the colourful Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* have been sighted in a garden in George Town, and Scarlet Tanagers *Piranga olivacea* and Summer Tanagers *Piranga rubra* have made an appearance.

Migrants can be readily seen in stands of fruiting sea grapes along south Sound, and if you feel more energetic, you could visit the Mastic Trail. Most reports have come from people who have mature gardens with [native plants](#), which reveals, if you opt for landscaping with native trees, you will likely view this colourful natural spectacle, from your own window.

Find out more about Cayman's birds, with our ["Virtual Bird Guide"](#).

### Editors

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### PHOTOS

Kristan D. Godbeer ©



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