

A PRECIOUS NEVIS WETLAND SUMMARILY DESTROYED: AN ISLAND TREASURE IS NO MORE

Sometime in May of 2012 the mangrove wetland area at what is sometimes referred to as Paradise Beach, that section of Pinney's Beach north of The Four Seasons Resort and south of The St. Thomas Elementary School, was bulldozed and completely destroyed, effectively forever destroyed, as the photographs will graphically attest.



Photographs taken May 2012 by Mark Michael Ludlow RPA

These few and precious mangrove wetland areas are or, in this case, were national Nevis island treasures and internationally important wintering grounds for migrating species of birds as well as numerous resident species of plants and animals. During the weeks preceding the destruction of the wetlands area, a team of international scientists from the United States, Brazil, as well as Nevis conducted National Geographic Society funded ornithological (biological/bird) research in those exact same wetlands, confirming their obvious importance: Unbeknownst to them this area was about to be destroyed forever!

It is unconscionable that this wetland was destroyed. Setting aside the more important reasons why wetlands should be protected and saved from avarice and destruction, if money is your primary objective and if increased tourism and eco-tourism, in particular, are desired island and national goals for both the generation of jobs and the capture of those expenditures those visitors might potentially make, then the destruction of the natural beauty of Nevis is counterproductive: The natural beauty, emphasis on natural, is a large part of why people visit Nevis. Here is part of the opportunity that will be lost to Nevis; in any one year circa 10% of the world's population travels beyond their own borders: Worldwide tourism expenditures exceed circa \$4 trillion US dollars per year and the eco-tourism portion of that annual travel may be circa \$1 trillion US dollars per year. The consequence for Nevis is eco-tourists do not travel to destroyed natural environments – pure and simple! If killing the golden goose is the objective, then Nevis has permitted and gone another step in that direction – permitting the destruction of its irreplaceable natural beauty and the destruction of irreplaceable areas of island, national, and international importance.

When is the government of Nevis going to stop permitting the wholesale destruction of its limited natural resources? An 'anything for a dollar' government does not serve its citizens well – it is the selling of one's soul for no soul tomorrow. Is this the legacy to be left the children of Nevis? When will there be rigorous environmental laws on Nevis and equally, if not more importantly, when will Nevis rigorously enforce those laws?

About the author:

Mark Michael Ludlow is a PhD student at The University of Wales – Trinity Saint David, Wales, United Kingdom, and resides part-time at his residence on Nevis. He is also a Registered Professional Archaeologist (RPA) and the founder of The Nevis Ornithological Society (The NOS).

