

Jaragua Community Volunteers celebrate World Bird Festival

Last October, the local community of El Cajuil-located in the south-west of Dominican Republic-participated in **World Bird Festival (WBF)** activities. This environmental event is celebrated-since 2003-by **Grupo Jaragua** (BirdLife in the Dominican Republic) and the **Local Conservation Group Jaragua Community Volunteers**, to raise awareness in the communities surrounding Jaragua National Park about birds and their habitats. This National Park is an Important Bird Area and a core zone of the unique **Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve**. A total of 650 people were involved during the WBF through the following activities:

- Town meetings
- Presentations at the local community school
- A nature walk
- Distribution of educational materials
- Planting of endemic and native trees
- Dissemination and exchange of information via mailing lists
- Media coverage

The Jaragua Community Volunteers offered school presentations to eleven (11) students and a teacher from El Cajuil Educational Centre and talked about: (1) **importance of ecosystems in Hispaniola island for migratory birds**; (2) connection between birds, trees and the environment, and (3) **mangroves**: an important coastal ecosystem for birds. Afterwards, they guided the children through a nature trail where they identified various types of birds. At the end of the nature walk, they all had the opportunity to plant the school's backyard with endemic and native plants.



El Cajuil local community (Dom Rep)
participated in the World Bird Festival.

Foto: Grupo Jaragua

"We had an exciting planting session of three *Phyllostylon rhamnoidesi*, two Sea Torchwood (*Amyris elemifera*) and ten mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*) trees," said Esteban Garrido, local coordinator of the WBF. "We obtained the small trees from the plant nursery we manage in the Oviedo community and they will grow into trees that provide benefits to birds and people in the local community of El Cajuil", added Garrido. The children and their school teacher expressed their solemn commitment to care for and monitor the planted trees. At the end of the day, each participant received the coloring book "Migratory Birds of the Insular Caribbean" (by the [Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds](#)). The WBF activities were covered by traditional and new media. The Environmental Education team in Grupo Jaragua gave a television interview about the WBF and shared information with [Local Conservation Groups](#) (e.g. Asociación de Guías de la Naturaleza de Pedernales, Brigada Verde Sabana de la Mar, Asociación de Guías de la Laguna de Oviedo y Voluntarios Comunitarios de Jaragua) through the social media networks. The WBF activities were implemented by Grupo Jaragua as part of the site project, "The Mangroves of Laguna de Oviedo: state of conservation and reforestation in areas used by communities", with support from BirdLife International in the Americas. This site project is part of a [three-year project entitled, "Caribbean Conservation of mangroves in the face of a changing world"](#), implemented by BirdLife International with financial support from the [MacArthur Foundation](#).