



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University Lecture to explore the Preservation of Biodiversity

Kingston, Jamaica (January 15, 2015) –The American Friends of Jamaica, Inc. (AFJ)/Cobb Family Foundation (CFF) Lecture Series will examine steps to prevent the extinction of unique (endemic) Jamaican species. The lecture to be presented by Professor Byron S. Wilson, Department of Life Sciences, Faculty of Science and Technology (UWI), is entitled, “Imminent Extinctions in the ‘Land of Wood and Water’: can they be averted?”

Ambassador Sue Cobb, Chairman of the CFF comments, “We live on a super-exciting planet but a super-fragile one; everything is interconnected. I know that the United States and Jamaican governments have collaborated over the years on a number of conservation measures. We look forward to Dr. Wilson’s perspective.”

Dr. Byron Wilson received his undergraduate degree in Zoology from the University of California, Berkeley and a PhD in Zoology from the University of Washington (USA). Dr. Wilson moved to Jamaica in 1997 to work on the Jamaican iguana recovery project. After several years as a Research Fellow at The University of the West Indies, Mona, Dr. Wilson was hired as a lecturer in 2001. He was promoted to Professor in 2012. His research in Jamaica has focused on the conservation of the island’s threatened species and natural habitats. Current projects include the ecology of the American crocodile, the taxonomic and conservation status of the endemic Jamaican slider turtle, the status of the island’s endemic amphibian species, and long-term monitoring of dry forest fauna in the context of a predator control experiment in the Hellshire Hills. Additional collaborations (with Lead Researcher Dr. Kurt McLaren) include a MacArthur Foundation-funded project focusing on the ecology and conservation of the Cockpit Country and Black River Lower Morass, and forest ecology studies in the Hellshire Hills and John Crow Mountains.

The Lecture Series is made possible by an endowment from the Cobb Family Foundation in partnership with The American Friends of Jamaica, Inc. The purpose of the Lecture Series is to provide a public forum for a talented Jamaican researcher - selected by his/her peers - to present academic findings on an important topic relating to Jamaica’s future. The lecture is presented in collaboration with the UWI and the Jamaican Fulbright Humphrey Alumni Association with support of the US Embassy Kingston. It will be held at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at the Assembly Hall, UWI, Mona Campus. All are invited to attend.

About the American Friends of Jamaica, Inc.

Since its inception in 1982, the American Friends of Jamaica, Inc. has donated over US\$12 million to Jamaican charities focused in the areas of education, healthcare and economic development. In 2014, J\$14M in AFJ grants were awarded to organizations such as Alpha Boys School, Genesis Academy, Rose Town Foundation, ISSA Trust Foundation, St. Mary’s Prep, Breds Foundation and Tennis Jamaica. In addition to fundraising through annual gala events, the AFJ has a comprehensive strategy involving individual giving and partnerships with corporations and foundations such as the Guardsman Group of Companies, Ltd., Jamaica Broilers Group, JetBlue Airways, Iberostar, Sandals, Couples Resorts, Island Outpost, Rose Hall Development, KPMG, GraceKennedy Foods, and the Jamaica Tourist Board.

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