

Developing the Jamaica Clearing-House Mechanism

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Clearing-House Mechanism*

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A Little History

Having ratified to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1995, Jamaica accepted national responsibility for developing a Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) in support of national biodiversity conservation.

The Jamaica Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) is a national network of organizations & individuals gathering, collating and distributing public information on Jamaican biodiversity and its conservation.

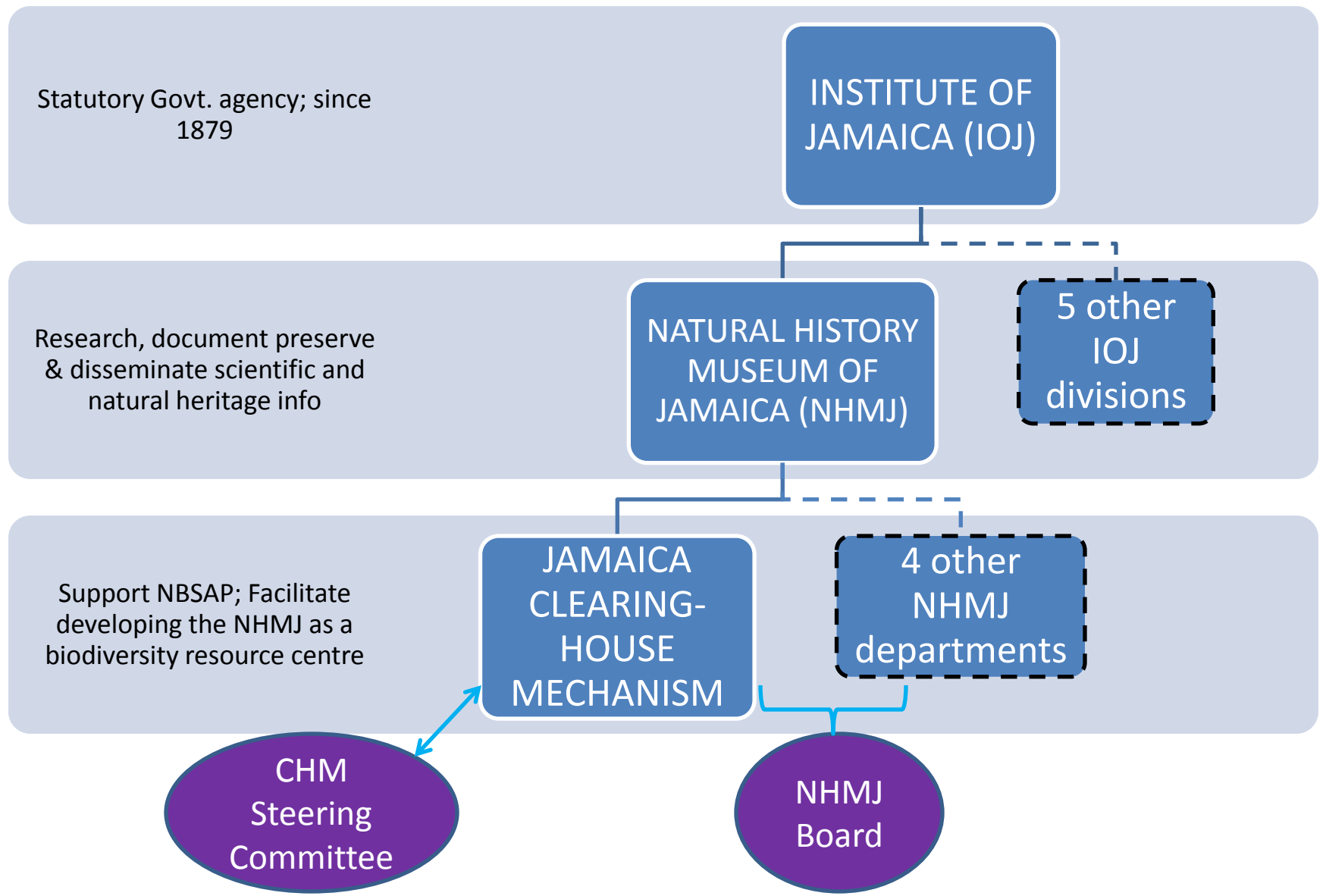
The National Focal Point entity is the Natural History Museum of Jamaica (NHMJ) of the Institute of Jamaica (IOJ).

The Jamaica CHM began operations in October 1999.



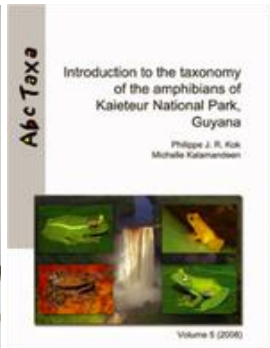
Urania sloanus, an extinct moth endemic to Jamaica from the NHMJ biological collection

Institutional Structure



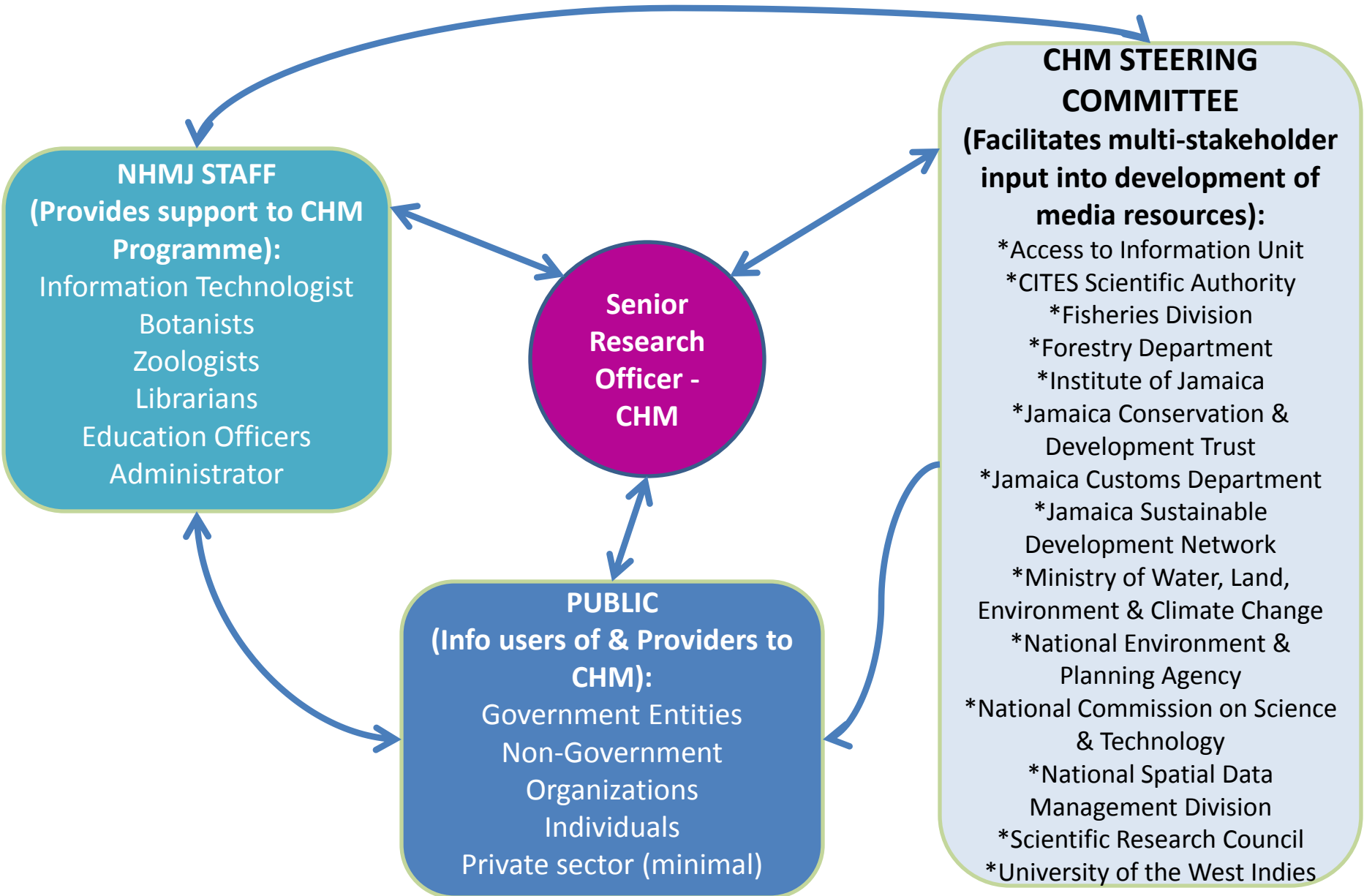
Jamaica CHM Programme

- Website development (www.jamaicachm.org.jm)
- Public education and outreach e.g. e-newsletter *Biodiversity News*
- Information request services
- Database management for literature, photos, invasive species and directory of environmental entities
- Expansion of the NHMJ Science Library collection of biodiversity and biosafety-related publications
- Projects related to biodiversity or biosafety
- Facilitating technological capacity e.g. Database management, GIS
- Participation in technical or policy related groups or committees



A vertical banner with logos and text. At the top is the "iabin" logo. Below it is the text "Biological Invasions and JAMAICAN ECOSYSTEM ECONOMY and SOCIETY". At the bottom are logos for the National Library, Jamaica, and the Caribbean Community.

Key Stakeholder and Participant Network



Capacity for Jamaica CHM Development

| PROGRAMME COMPONENT | TECHNICAL | HUMAN RESOURCES |
|---|---|--|
| Website development (www.jamaicachm.org.jm) | Open source software: WordPress 3.6 (content management system, MySQL); Google search | 1 Web Content Manager (CHM Officer) 1 Webmaster Programmer from IOJ IT Dept. CHM Steering Committee |
| Public education and outreach | CHM website, electronic newsletter, publications; NHMJ specimens; inter-agency collaborations. | CHM Officer, other NHMJ staff. Occasionally, staff of collaborating agencies |
| Information request services | Online request form (most requests received by email, some by phone or word of mouth); NHMJ and other organizations provide expertise | CHM Officer, other NHMJ staff; resource persons at national, regional and international organizations |
| Database management | Database design, programming support, database administration | CHM Officer, IOJ IT staff including CHM Webmaster |
| Expansion of the NHMJ Science Library collection of biodiversity and biosafety-related publications | Utilize technical/professional networks for donations of publications ; occasionally donations from resource persons. | CHM Officer, NHMJ Librarians |

Capacity for Jamaica CHM Development (cont.)

| PROGRAMME COMPONENT | TECHNICAL | HUMAN RESOURCES |
|---|--|--|
| Projects related to biodiversity or biosafety | Project management experience mainly for small to medium-sized projects. Expertise in procurement procedures of the Govt. of Jamaica | Mainly CHM Officer with some technical support from wider NHMJ and support from IOJ Accounts Dept. and IOJ Procurement Committee |
| Facilitating technological capacity e.g. Database management, GIS | Conducted basic needs assessment for database software; GIS user; networking with information technologists | CHM Officer, NHMJ Information Technology Officer |
| Participation in technical or policy related groups or committees | Biological, social and cultural knowledge | CHM Officer with other NHMJ staff as resource persons |

FINANCIAL: No budget allocation for the CHM Department. Mostly dependent on IOJ/NHMJ budget & on project grants.

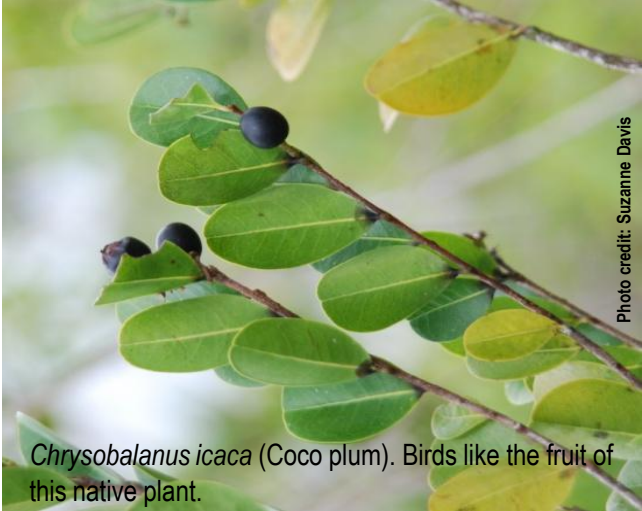
Jamaica CHM Challenges and Responses

| | CHALLENGE | RESPONSE |
|-----------|---|---|
| PAST | Reliance on mainly website for information exchange and sharing had very limited impact in Jamaican context | Diversification of data and information exchange media: electronic, in print, in person |
| RECURRING | <p>Under-staffing of the CHM and IT Departments</p> <p>Competition with other IOJ departments for available database management skills</p> <p>Lack of an IOJ Projects Department increases the project management demand on CHM especially for larger projects</p> <p>Periodically running out of web space</p> <p>Limited resources to expand from <i>ad hoc</i> and small scale public awareness activities on the CHM and biodiversity</p> | <p>Continual lobbying for another job post for the CHM. Utilizing interns and volunteers.</p> <p>Establishing partnership for management of invasive alien species database</p> <p>In the process of identifying national/other partners who may be able to provide project management support</p> <p>Contribute to IOJ expansion of web space with external funds</p> <p>Rely on occasional project funds and collaborative efforts for greater scope and outreach</p> |

Strategic Directions

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Jamaica provides the following strategic directions for the Jamaica CHM:

- *Expand the CHM to accommodate national needs in the area of information sharing and to facilitate partnerships in the area of technology transfer.
- *Establish a National Clearing-House Committee, including representatives from Government, non-government and academic environments, to improve collaboration and data sharing.
- *Promote the creation of biological databases to facilitate use of Geographic Information System (GIS).
- *Maintain links among regional organisations and institutions that collect information on biodiversity using national CHM.
- *Continue participation in regional initiatives such as Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) to increase sharing of data and information.
- *Support the development of a meta-database of biological data within the CBD CHM.



Chrysobalanus icaca (Coco plum). Birds like the fruit of this native plant.

Photo credit: Suzanne Davis

Status of CHM Projects in the Biodiversity Action Plan

| TITLE OF ACTION | SPECIFIC ACTIVITY | STATUS (as of April 2013) |
|--|--|---|
| Expansion of the National Clearing-House Mechanism | Period: 2004 – 2007 Establishment of a National Clearing-House Mechanism Committee | DONE |
| | Establishment of systems of consistent transfer and of quality controlled data to the National CHM | DONE |
| | Creation of biological data in digital format to facilitate use of Geographical Information Systems | DONE WITH MODIFICATION: |
| | Participation in a regional metadata project developed by the Inter-American Biodiversity information Network | DONE. Jamaica CHM was the lead for national projects for developing invasive alien species network and first database. |
| Repatriation of Indigenous Biodiversity Information | Identification of institutions that house information relevant to Jamaican biodiversity | ONGOING |
| | Analysis of the type of information and its relevance to various areas of biodiversity conversation | Some scientific papers on Jamaican biodiversity shared with CHM by overseas researchers. CHM in dialogue with NHMJ about collaborative museum project |
| | Establishment of a dedicated web-page hosted by the Institute of Jamaica to provide an electronic link to databases of identified institutions | DONE |

Status of CHM Projects in the Biodiversity Action Plan (Cont.)

| TITLE OF ACTION | SPECIFIC ACTIVITY | STATUS (as of April 2013) |
|---|--|---|
| Build on Existing Regional Data and Information Exchange Mechanism | Institute procedures and agreements for data and information access and use between relevant institutions and agencies in the region | NOT DONE. Unlikely in light of available resources. |
| | Continuing participation in regional initiatives such as IABIN and CARINET | Changing circumstances within IABIN has led to reduced participation in past 2 years. CARINET has closed. |
| | Identifying priorities and mechanisms for data transfer and promoting development of a meta-database for biodiversity data within the Clearing-House Mechanism | Preliminary efforts made in identifying some data and information needs and impacts of data transfer. |
| | Collaboration between the National Clearing-House Mechanism and other organizations in the assessment and evaluation of national databases | TO BE DEVELOPED |

Future Activities For The Jamaica CHM

| PRIORITY | PRIORITY LEVEL | REQUIREMENTS |
|--|----------------|--|
| Utilize the “new” open source version of the Invasive Alien Species database developed by IABIN | URGENT | COLLABORATION REQUIRED (for hosting the database; CHM remains responsible for content management) ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REQUIRED |
| Repatriation of Indigenous Biodiversity Information | HIGH | COLLABORATION REQUIRED; ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REQUIRED |
| Promoting development of a meta-database for biodiversity data within the Clearing-House Mechanism | HIGH | COLLABORATION REQUIRED; ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REQUIRED |

- *CURRENT SITUATION
- *STRATEGIC VISION
- *SUPPORT & COOPERATION

Potential Support for Other CHMs

Share lessons learnt by the Jamaica CHM over the past 3 years using open source software (i.e. WordPress) for developing CHM website.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Jamaica Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) website. The browser address bar displays 'jamaicachm.org.jm/voj_wp/'. The website features a green header with the Jamaican flag and the text 'JAMAICA CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Home, About, Activities, Biodiversity, Biosafety, Tools & Services, Data Sharing, and Contact. The main content area is titled 'CHM Home' and includes a search bar, a 'FEATURE' section with 'National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)', a 'PUBLICATION FOR AUGUST' section with an interview link, a 'PHOTO CATALOGUE' section, and an 'EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS' section. The page is decorated with large green fern leaves on the sides.

Acknowledgements

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THE END