



JO-ANNE NINA SEWLAL

'Spider Woman' scholarship offers look at Darwin

A student of the University of the West Indies, St Augustine campus, was among 27 scientists around the world who participated in a scholarship training course.

Jo-Anne Nina Sewlal, who has a PhD in arachnology, joined young scientists from 21 countries to participate in the Darwin International Scholarship course.

Sewlal is a three-time winner of the Vincent Roth Award given by the American Arachnology Society. Arachnology is the study of spiders. She is the first person to win the award three times.

Her latest accomplishment of being selected for the scholarship was funded by UWI and the Field Studies Council.

The scholarship course was the first of its kind, organised by the Field Studies Council in the United Kingdom.

It took place at its Preston Montford Field Centre in Shrewsbury the town of his birth, and kicked off celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin.

According to a press release, "Sewlal's goal is to fill the gap of knowledge about the biodiversity of the neotropics through her research."

The scholars explored the life of Charles Darwin, learning the latest techniques in monitoring and researching the natural environment.

They also were challenged to think creatively about how to effectively communicate biodiversity to others.

Their activities included a journey in the footsteps of Charles Darwin to Cwm Idwal in Wales, a visit to the Natural History Museum, a series of hands-on workshops on identifying and monitoring species and distribution of certificates by the Lady Mayor of Shrewsbury.

Sewlal's PhD dissertation focuses on the biodiversity of three orb-weaving spider families. She also has researched and documented the spider fauna in various islands in the Eastern Caribbean including St Kitts, Nevis, Antigua, Anguilla, Grenada and St Vincent.

The young scientist, who is also known as "Spider Woman" by her peers, is the author of more than 130 publications including 16 scientific papers. Her publications are on a wide range of topics including spiders, ants, birds, reptiles, amphibians and plants.