

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

April 2nd, 1974

Dear Member,

You are invited to attend the next meeting of the Club to be held at the St. Mary's College Library on Thursday April 18th 1974 at 5.30p.m.

A G E N D A

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last meeting.
2. Business arising out of the Minutes
3. Correspondence
4. LECTURE - 'Park Planning' by Mr. Clarence Bacchus
5. Exhibits and miscellaneous notes
6. Any other business

FIELD EXCURSION

This excursion will be a walk to the summit of El Tucuche in connection with the nature trail project, and takes place on Sunday April 28th. We will be leaving St. Mary's College, Pembroke St. promptly at 6.30a.m. and meeting Brian Cooper in the Square at St. Joseph at 7.00a.m. PLEASE BE PROMPT SO THAT THE STEEP PART OF THE CLIMB CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BEFORE IT GETS TOO HOT!!

Details if you haven't done the climb before. Round trip about 9 miles, including climb to 3000ft. Wear comfortable sturdy footwear. Be prepared for rain and sun. Bring some food and a water bottle, but don't carry more weight than absolutely necessary. Bring some insect repellent if you are troubled by mosquitoes. Parking space at the start of the trail is limited so try to 'double up' and come in as few cars as possible.

EXTRA EXCURSIONS

Bird-watching (especially for beginners). Saturday April 20th. Meet at the Caroni tourist boat terminal at 4.30p.m., for a walk into the swamp along the bank of Drain No. 9. Leader Geoff Gibbs. Members without transport could reach via a Chaguanas taxi. Bring binoculars if possible.

St. Joseph - to see the Samaan trees. Saturday May 4th.

Meet Mr. Ishmael Gamad at the WASA carpark, St. Joseph at 4.00p.m. Come and enjoy a walk through the beautiful samaans and hear Mr. Samad's proposals for the area.

'WORKSHOP' FOR JUNIOR MEMBERS - SATURDAY APRIL 20th (8.30 - 12.30p.m.)

This is the first venture in what the Committee hopes will be a regular programme of activities for Junior members. The aim of the Workshop is to show you what being a naturalist really means - how to start bird-watching, or studying plants or insects; what equipment you need (mostly home-made); where to go. There will be a programme of short talks and demonstrations, and an exhibition.

The workshop is being held in Bishop Anstey High School, (entrance Abercromby St.). The building will be open from 8.30 a.m. and we will be starting promptly at 9.00a.m. running through till 12.00 to 12.30p.m. Junior members will also have the opportunity of making suggestions for the future J.M. programme so please come along if you can.

REPORTS ON CLUB PROJECTS

TURTLE TAGGING PROJECT - by Peter Bacon

The turtle nesting season has begun and as in past years every available piece of available man power is required to collect biological information and to stop the slaughter of nesting females on the beaches.

Patrols will be organised throughout April, May and June and information can be had from Peter Bacon - 662.3319 or Eric Laforest 62.21745. Please don't rely on these two gentlemen to take you for walks on the beach. Try to organise a patrol yourself, taking a few friends along for company. The more patrols we have on as many beaches as possible the better our results will be.

If you see a turtle:-

- (a) Try not to disturb it
- (b) Only go near it if it is nesting - i.e. don't interfere if it is crawling up the beach.
- (c) Look for a tag on the front flipper. Read and WRITE DOWN the number.
- (d) Note the time of night, the weather conditions, any scars or injuries, and any other information you find of interest.
- (e) Try to identify the type of turtle.
- (f) There is a key to the turtles in the 1971 Journal, but if you don't have this - draw a sketch of the turtles back, count the plates and estimate how long the back is.
- (g) Give your records to the Club Secretary.
- (g) If there are hunters on the beach advise them about turtle conservation laws - but don't attempt to stop them physically.

TREE FLOWERING PROJECT - Why has it flopped? - by Kate Gibbs

The response to this project has been most disappointing. It was launched last July after receiving a lot of support at the Club's February meeting when new projects were discussed. Ray Fordham, Gordon Laurence, Victor Quearel and David Wood helped to select the species to be recorded, and to design the recording instruction sheets. Ray Fordham acted as co-ordinator until he left Trinidad in March 1974. The project has flopped because scarcely anyone is recording any trees, though lots of forms were given to interested members last June. Ray Fordham and Kate Gibbs have between them been recording 9 trees. Has anyone else recorded any?

Judy Solomon and Richard Jeavons have agreed to take over co-ordinating the project for one more year, until July 1975, when it will be abandoned if it doesn't receive considerably more support than in 1973/74. The recording forms are going to be modified, so each form covers a shorter period of time (3 or 6 months) so that there is more contact between participants and co-ordinators during the year. The instruction sheets will also be revised. It doesn't matter when you start recording a tree. Pick a yellow poui near you now, and get going, and get in some practise before we try to re-launch the project this June. Enquiries and comments welcome, to me or the co-ordinators:-

Miss Judy Solomon c/o CARIRI, U.W.I., St Augustine
Richard Jeavons, c/o Dept. of Crop Science, U.W.I., St. Aug.

CHAGUARAMAS PROJECT

We have now had 2 Club excursions to Chaguaramas (Mt. Catherine/Tucker Valley and Scotland Bay), and a number of members have made additional visits to the area, so we have a general idea of what the N.E. peninsula looks like and which parts are fairly accessible or inaccessible. The next stage is to decide what biological information we need to collect and how, in order to submit a report on the area to the Ministry of Planning and Development and the Chaguaramas Development Authority by the end of this year.

Lots of things need to be done, collecting and collating existing published and unpublished material on the area, compiling species lists, mapping vegetation, noting any sites of special scientific interest, and to some extent monitoring existing recreational use in the proposed national park area. A meeting to decide what our priorities are and how we hope to achieve them, will be announced in the May Bulletin, and we hope all interested members will attend.

REPORT FROM THE BLUE RIVER ACTION COMMITTEE - by its TFNC representatives

The BRAC has met four times (Jan 23rd, Feb 11th, March 11th and 21st) since meeting with Dr. Edward Towle (the independent mediator) last November. Dr. Towle's report was handed into Government at the beginning of December and to date Government have made absolutely no public statement about the report apart from a passage in Dr. Eric Williams' broadcast to the nation on Dec. 20th. He said "With respect to the progas, whilst I am sure an acceptable solution will be found, the immediate concern must be to avoid Christmas shortage, and so Shell has been given permission to make one barge trip up the Blue River to build up its stock to meet the Christmas demand."

Numerous attempts were made in January to contact Mr. Prevatt or one of his secretaries to find out why the barge was being allowed to make further trips, (the number had already snow-balled to 3 or 4 a week) without success. A letter raising this and other points was therefore sent to Mr. Prevatt with copies to the Prime Minister and the press on February 12th. As yet we have received no reply.

The programme of visits to professional bodies and schools has continued with at least 10 visits or accompanied tours of the swamp taking place this year, largely due to the efforts of Peter Bacon, Ian Lambie and Prof. Julian Kenny. Professional bodies and organisations, trade unions and County Councils have been circulated with

an information leaflet (issued Jan. 30th) and copies of the Towle report to inform as wide a cross-section of the public as possible of the true facts of the case. Organisations which have recently joined the original 10 members of BRAC include the Geography Teachers Association, ECO-ONE, the Association of Professional Engineers and Tapia. Overseas conservation organisations have continued to be informed of our progress, and a short report was carried by New Scientist, a weekly English journal (the issue of 28.2.74, page 562).

The number of trips made by the barge per week has gradually increased and with it the damage. The barge has run aground several times illustrating the unsuitability of the channel for such a large vessel. On one occasion three barges were seen at Cunupia at once - the Shell LPG barge, a second Shell barge and a dredger mounted on a barge. The barge has been speeding far in excess of the "just over walking speed" quoted by Shell, causing wash of the banks and throwing up ridges of mud in the canal at considerable inconvenience to the tour boat operators. The Express newspaper on March 27th described how boatmen had to take shovels and buckets to clear mud thrown up by the Shell barge, to clear a part of the canal so that their 200 passengers, who had booked to see the swamp, could make their visit. The boatmen, fishermen and oystermen, having thus seen the barge in operation agree that it must be removed permanently from the swamp.

If you haven't yet done anything to help remove the Shell barge from the Blue River and have Caroni Swamp declared a National Park, will you please write a letter giving your views to your representative in the Red House and to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, and do it NOW FOR NOW, we must keep the pressure up. Copies of the Towle Report are still available (possibly on loan if stocks are getting low) from P.O. Box 410, Port-of-Spain. A few people are working hard to settle this barge problem, but they will only succeed if you help.

NEW MEMBERS 1974

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|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Anthony Buon* | Linda Dyer* | Gem Motivier* |
| Brenda Arthur-Wong* | Louis Dhanooel | Shobee Maraj* |
| Chelston Bratnwhite | Donna Fulton* | Christine Morgan* |
| Marion Borda* | Patrice Gopaul* | Roselyn Marfoe* |
| Hans Boos | Cicely Georges* | Patrice Murray* |
| Ben Bourboom | Wynette Greenaway* | Lerlyn Marcelle* |
| Linda Blake* | Amena Hassanali | Rose Anne Medina |
| Annabelle Burnham* | Pearl Howard* | Mary Murray |
| Fred Bennett | Catherine Harper* | David Neale* |
| Marguerite Chang | Phyllis Hoyte* | Sharon Perryman* |
| Carrol Christian | Barbara Hull | Susan Phelps* |
| Chloe Christian | Clayton Hull | Annette Pindoe* |
| Sharon Christopher* | Richard Jeevons | Ingrid Quesnel* |
| Ann Choong* | Charmaine Lee* | David Rooks |
| Heather Choe-Ting* | Ann Mohammed | Patsy-Ann Ruddes* |
| Reynold Chung* | Anthony Manwah* | Mr. & Mrs. Robert Rich |
| Paul Charbonno* | Judy Motivier* | Charles Stephens |
| Trot Seepersad* | Fariza Shaama* | Jean Tappin* |
| Moira Scott-Fleming* | Lana Salandy* | Masjid Yasaen |

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* denotes junior member

BOOK REVIEWS

SEA TURTLES - Their natural history and conservation by Robert Bustard
Collins 1972. 220 pages. TT\$15, £3.00

All members who have taken part in the Club's turtle tagging project will enjoy reading Dr. Bustard's book. He gives a good description of the world's seven sea turtle species, five of which occur in Trinidad waters, and an up to date account of their nesting behavior, eggs and young, migrations and other aspects of their biology. The book is profusely illustrated with excellent photographs and a number of diagrams and drawings.

The central theme of the book is Bustard's own research programme in Australia. Readers may wish that more information on the Atlantic turtle populations had been included, but it is obvious that the conservation practices and legislation which the author has stimulated in Queensland are some of the most significant anywhere in the world. The book provides a clear account of the present knowledge of this interesting group of animals and could be a useful guide to future conservation work in Trinidad and Tobago. Peter B. Bacon, Dept. of Biological Sciences, U.W.I.

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - by R.F. Dasmann, J.P. Milton and P.H. Freeman
John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 1973 - 262 pages. £2.00 Paper Edition.

This book will be of great interest to anyone concerned with national development. It provides ecological guidelines for use by development planners and decision makers and also explores the inter-relationships between economic development, conservation and ecology. The authors have used environmental evaluation of past development projects - both those that have succeeded and those that have failed - to show that sufficient ecological knowledge is already available to ensure that development can proceed without loss of productivity and environmental values, both of which have frequently resulted in the past.

Although all seven chapters are well worth reading, some chapters, particularly five, six and seven, are more relevant to development planning in the tropics and particularly in the Caribbean. The first chapter is concerned with the goals of development and their attainment and is followed by a chapter on general ecological considerations in which concepts like carrying capacity, limiting factors, fragility and stability in ecosystems are explained very clearly. In chapter five on the development of tourism, two main points are stressed. These are that tourism is basically dependent on unspoilt environment, and that the infrastructure of tourism - hotels, roads, sewage schemes etc. - could in the long run adversely affect the industry through the deterioration of the environment. Agriculturalists in the Caribbean could gain much from the discussion in chapter six of agroecosystem management and its strong, though justified, criticisms of many modern farming practices. The final chapter reviews the potential ecological impact of reservoir construction and irrigation in the tropical context, and suggests principles and methods of improving future project planning.

The decision makers in Trinidad and Tobago appear at the present time to be more concerned with the political interpretation of economic development and do not have qualified ecologists on their teams when deciding the cost/benefit ratio of particular development projects in this country. Consequently, everyone of us has a responsibility for seeing that our environment does not deteriorate further as economic development proceeds. To do this we must be well informed - so this lucid and comprehensive book becomes essential reading. Tyra Bacon

SHORT NEWS ITEMS

SAMAAN TREES - You may have noticed the SAVE OUR SAMAAAN TREES posters around the Savannah in P.O.S. or at St. Joseph and read in the press of Mr. I. Samad's campaign to have these magnificent trees protected from the chainsaw and timber merchant - particularly in St. Joseph in the north and at Phillipine in the south - where he would like to see National Parks declared. Such a move would both preserve the samaans and enable the public to enjoy them to the full.

If you have a favourite samaan tree near your home why not put up a poster by it? These will be available at the April meeting of the Club, and you are invited to join Mr. Samad for a walk at St. Joseph on Saturday May 4th to hear his proposals for the area. (See extra excursions, page 1).

DONATION TO THE CLUB - Mr. Jan Linblad has very generously donated two of his films to the Club. One, of tropical rainforest filmed in Trinidad, is already in our possession, the second is about the Caroni Swamp, including pictures of scarlet ibis, and is arriving soon. When we have both films the Secretary will be investigating the possibility of the Club loaning or acquiring a 16mm film projector, so that we can make full use of the films and show them throughout the island.

CLUB RULES - The committee has decided to appoint a sub-committee, the chairman and members of which will be announced shortly, to recommend revisions in the Club's rules. These were last revised in 1960 and with the expansion of the Club in both membership and activities it is felt the time is ripe for some changes - particularly with reference to streamlining procedure at Club meetings, organisation of activities for junior members and the setting up a southern branch of the Club, or at least of starting a regular lecture programme in south, (similar if shorter, than that in P.O.S.) Copies of existing Club rules may be borrowed from the Secretary and the Sub-committee will be inviting suggestions from members soon.

NEXT LONG BULLETIN - Due out July 1st. Deadline for contributions June 15th, anything considered, send to Kate Gibbs, 2 Los Godos Ave., Santa Margarita Circ. Road, St. Augustine.

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Club held at the St. Mary's College Library on Thursday 14th March, 1974 at 5.55p.m.

PRESENT WERE : Mr.G.E.L.Laforest, President, Mr.T.F.Farrell, Vice-Pres., Mr.I.Lambie, Hon.Sec., Mrs.K.Gibbs, Hon.Asst.Sec., Mr.J.A.Correia, Hon.Treasurer, Dr.E.Tikasingsh and Dr.B.Cooper and other members and visitors.

READING AND CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th February, 1974 were read and confirmed.

BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

- (a) Report on the Field Excursion to Mt.Catherine and Tucker Valley was deferred to "Other Business" when members would have an opportunity to view the beautiful display mounted by Kate Gibbs.
- (b) Easter-weekend Trip to Guyana. Mr.Laforest outlined the proposed itinerary for this trip and requested that interested persons submit their names immediately. He reminded members of the need to obtain a Tax Clearance, Guyana or U.S.Currency and the necessary equipment and food which they should carry. Travel arrangements to be made through a Travel Agent.
- (c) Assistance to Mr.Bal Ramdial deferred to "Other Business".

MEMBERSHIP At the last Committee Meeting of the Club 44 persons were admitted to membership. The Associate (Junior) Membership now stands at 80 and the Hon.Secretary outlined the proposal for a special programme for our Associate Members most of whom are preparing for the "O" level Examinations in June.

CORRESPONDENCE Letter from Mr.Ishmael Samad drawing the Club's attention to the destruction of Saman Trees on the grounds of the Government Farm.

LECTURE : "An introduction to the biology of stingless bees"

by Mr.Marinus Sommeijer

A summary of the lecture having been circulated at the meeting by Mr.Sommeijer it is considered unnecessary to record in these minutes what was said by the lecturer. However, the replies given during the question-time are recorded hereunder.

Mr.Sommeijer said that some stingless bees do try to chase honey bees out of their nest, especially during the rainy season when food supplies may be short. During this period he said, there may be robbery among honey bees themselves.

In reply to another question he said, that in Brazil stingless bees are reared commercially. However, in Trinidad, although the bigger Trigonini may be kept for honey production, the yield was so low, that he would advise anyone interested in honey production to keep honey bees.

Mr.Gordon Laurence said that it had been brought to his attention that when/

that when stingless bees attacked a hive of honey bees they (Stingless) gave off a pungent odour which caused the honey bees to leave the hive and observations have shown that they did not return.

Stingless bees produce a high frequency sound by contracting certain muscles in their bodies. These sounds could be heard by other stingless bees. On the contrary, honey bees could not hear the sounds produced by other honey bees.

At this point a short discussion between Mr. Sommeijer, Mr. Cross, and Mr. Ulric Butcher as to the chemical composition of honey and the quality of the product in relation to the source of nectar and pollen, took place. It was agreed that the source of the bees food supply did determine the flavour and quality of the honey produced.

At the conclusion a vote of thanks was moved to Mr. Sommeijer by Mrs. Kate Gibbs.

FIELD EXCURSION Arrangements for the Field Trip to Scotland Bay on Sunday 31st March were announced. Members were asked to submit their names and motor-car registration numbers to the Honorary Secretary. No children to be allowed on this trip.

EXHIBITS Members were invited to view (a) Mr Sommeijer's exhibits of stingless bees, (b) A display of the material collected and recorded during the Chaguaramas Field Trip and, (c) Display of completed forms from our Flowering Tree Project.

The meeting concluded at 8.10 p.m. although there were a number of other matters to be discussed.

Ian Lambie
Honorary Secretary