

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

20th December, 1974.

Dear Member,

You are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Club to be held at the St. Mary's College Library on Thursday 9th January at 5.30 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. Reading and Confirmation of minutes of the last Annual General Meeting
2. Business arising out of the minutes
3. Honorary Secretary's Report for 1974
4. Honorary Treasurer's Report for 1974
5. Election of Officers for 1975
6. Any other business
7. SLIDE SHOW Members are invited to bring up to a maximum of 10 slides taken on recent Club excursions.

At this A.G.M. we welcome Junior Members as full voting members of the Club. Amendments of the Club rules passed at the meeting of 14th November 1974 are summarised below, but particularly relevant at this meeting is the expansion of the Management Committee by one (1) to include a Junior Member. If you wish to nominate a member for election to the Management Committee remember to secure their willingness to stand first.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Club rules have been amended so that all subscriptions are now payable on or before 31st March instead of 31st December. Please save the Club the time and expense of sending out reminders by paying your sub. promptly. (Members \$5. Junior Members \$2.50) Why not see the Treasurer at the A.G.M.? We also like to be kept up to date with changes of address. In May a list of current members and addresses will be drawn up and circulated to all members - make sure you are on it.

FIELD EXCURSION

The first field excursion of the year is to Aripo Savannah and Arena Forest on January 26th, and will be led by Dr David Wood. Departure from St. Mary's College, Pembroke St. at 8.00 a.m. and a short stop at Curepe Junction, Churchill/Roosevelt Highway at 8.30 a.m. Bring lunch and remember it is likely to be wet underfoot.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB - HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RULE CHANGES Summarized by Geoff Gibbs

1. JUNIOR MEMBERS HAVE NEW STATUS.....
anyone between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one can now be a Junior Member of the Club, with the right to vote at meetings; at least one member of the Committee must be a Junior Member.....
.....BUT HAVE TO PAY MORE (\$2.50 a year at present)
2. ALL MEMBERS TO PAY THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS BY MARCH 31ST
or be struck off the membership list; "unfinancial members" have been abolished - they are

now NON-MEMBERS!!

3. THE SECRETARY HAS EXTRA RESPONSIBILITIES - he has to keep minutes of Management Committee meetings as well as other meetings of the Club.
4. OUR NAME NOW INCLUDES TOBAGO as well as Trinidad; and the objects of the Club refer to CONSERVATION as well as NATURAL HISTORY.

A large number of changes were made in the Rules at the Marathon Meeting held on 14th November. The important ones are listed above. One suggested change (in Rule 22, about the powers of the Committee to refuse membership) was referred back for further consideration.

AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES

Amendments to three rules have been proposed by various members of the Club as a result of the November meeting and these are given in full below, with the new sections underlined. Explanatory notes are given in brackets at the end. When these have been voted on at the A.G.M., a new set of Rules will be printed and distributed to all members.

Rule 22 Subject to the provisions of Rules 21 and 22 membership is open to all interested in the aims and objectives of the Club. Every candidate for admission to the Club shall apply on the prescribed form. Applications for membership must be forwarded to the Honorary Secretary for submission to the Management Committee. The Honorary Secretary in issuing the notices convening the meeting of the Management Committee shall intimate the names of the candidates for election. The Management Committee shall have the right to refuse membership. The names of the elected members shall be published in the next Bulletin of the Club. (Candidates need no longer be proposed and seconded. Names of elected members to be published in the Bulletin rather than announced at meetings. Dr Brian Cooper proposes the first sentence as an addition to the rule and Dr Victor Quesnel proposes the deletion of the words 'without giving a reason').

Rule 8 The Honorary Secretary shall conduct and preserve the correspondence of the Club, preserve in regular files all documents belonging thereto that may come into his possession, keep a correct list of members of the Club with the dates of their elections, resignation or death, and notify all members of forthcoming meetings of the Club. He shall also take and preserve minutes of the proceedings of the Management Committee, of Annual General and Special Meetings. He shall lay before the Club at the Annual General Meeting a written report of the Club's activities during the preceding year. He shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and sub-committees. (Deleted: and 2 points of substance which arise and decisions taken at the Monthly Meetings of the Club).

Rule 35 The order of business at the monthly meetings shall be as far as practicable, as follows:-

- (a) Announcements
- (b) Lecture
- (c) Exhibits and miscellaneous notes
- (d) Any other business

The Honorary Secretary shall record any matters raised under (d) for consideration at the next meeting of the Management Committee.

(The changes in rules 8 and 35 have been proposed by Brian Cooper, Mr T. F. Farrell and Kate Gibbs. The purpose of these changes is to absolve the Secretary from having to take minutes at monthly meetings of the Club, but to ensure that members do have the opportunity to raise any matter under (d) Rule 35, which can be fully discussed if the Chairman permits, and is automatically put on the agenda of the next Management Committee meeting where a decision can be made if appropriate. The quarterly longer Bulletins will include an item "Management Committee News" through which the whole membership of the Club can be kept informed of the decisions taken, not just the minority who happen to be able to attend the meetings).

A FIELD NATURALIST IN VENEZUELA - by Geoff Gibbs

After 3 years exploration of Trinidad & Tobago's 2,000 square miles, plus

visits on business to the Windward and Leeward islands, not forgetting Dimshire's 166 square miles, I got the itch to visit little Venezuela, not far away and a mere 352,000 square miles to cover. Not speaking much Spanish, I enlisted Richard French, only to find that he didn't either, so we invited Dave Wood and Derek Simons along as well. We applied for three months leave of absence from our respective wives, and were granted two weeks at the end of August.

Our first lucky break was to hire the last VW at Caracas airport; our next was an introduction to Paul Schwartz, an American ornithologist working at Rancho Grande Research Station 3,000 ft up in the coastal mountains above Maracay. We spent almost a week here altogether, watching birds during the day and trying to identify them in the evening. Rancho Grande, well described by Beebe in his book 'High Jungle', is beautifully situated in cloud forest which forms part of a 400 square mile National Park. We saw an incredible variety of birds here: White-tipped Quetzal, Long-tailed Sylph (a superb hummingbird), puffbirds, ovenbirds like the Guttulated Foliage-gleaner, and lots of flycatchers, wrens and tanagers, including several species endemic to the Coast Range. The woodcreepers, foliage-gleaners and tanagers, formed mixed flocks which worked their way through the epiphytes in the cloud forest. It was amusing to watch a foliage-gleaner turfing the inhabitants out of a bromeliad, just like a pot-hound going through a dustbin.

Our next stop was the Venezuelan Andes, in the S.W. of the country, where we spent 4 nights. We got the VW up to 13,000 ft (very cold) and watched birds in the high-level scrub forests and also in the 'paramo' zone above the tree line. Nearly all the birds here were strange to us and we felt the lack of a Venezuelan field-guide. The weather was also against us - the cloud rolled in or up the hillsides by lunchtime every day we were in the Andes, and bird-watching stopped. However, it was interesting to see the farms in the high valleys with little fields of vegetables and barley at 9,000 feet.

We moved on to the W. end of the Llanos, the rolling plains S. & E. of the mountains. Richard was especially keen to see some of the birds of the Llanos which featured on Paul's (Schwartz) records. Actually finding the birds here proved rather frustrating, but we eventually saw quite a variety. The tree-ducks (2 species) were memorable - they do sit in trees - and we saw a number of birds of prey including Aplomado and Laughing Falcons and Crane Hawk. A loud cry from the middle of a marsh was confidently recognised as a Horned Screamer - just like on the record!!

By this stage both time and money were beginning to run out, so we handed back the VW and took a long-distance bus back to Rancho Grande and then Caracas, where we spent a couple of days before flying back to Trinidad. The two weeks cost each of us about TT\$350 (excluding airfare), of which about half was car-hire. This was quite an expensive item at \$13 a day, plus 16 cents per km - and we did 2,000 km altogether. However the hire-cars were available at 29 towns throughout Venezuela, so costs could be cut considerably by using the excellent bus system to cover any long distances. Contrary to popular opinion, accomodation is cheaper than in the West Indies, averaging \$6 per person per night (no meals) in the hotels and motels we stayed in. Finally, Venezuela seems quite a safe place to visit - Richard and I had no trouble with thugs, but the other two travelled on to Bogota (Colombia) after the first week, where Derek's watch was snatched from his wrist and Dave's pocket picked. Still, it's better than being stuck with bird-watchers for a whole fortnight!!
Footnote: Richard, Dave, Derek or myself would be pleased to provide further information about travel in Venezuela to any member interested.

NEW MEMBERS

‡ denotes Junior Member

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|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Anthony Romeo | Ronald Romear‡ | Marilyn Mok |
| Mrs Pam Proudfoot | Mr and Mrs Gordon Deane | Mrs J. A. Purdom |
| Judy M. Rankin | Wendy Bates‡ | Miss Hazel Scott |
| Geoffrey Smith‡ | Debra Bates | Howard Evans |
| Jennifer James‡ | Simeon Broomes‡ | Colin Sampson‡ |
| Lorraine Ribeiro‡ | Norman Lutchman‡ | Cheryl Ann Reid‡ |
| Kenrick Lowman‡ | Gerard Williams | Lebra Phillips‡ |
| Ainsley Phillips | Virginia Lancina | Brian Borde‡ |
| Keith Williams‡ | Roger St Rose‡ | Gale Salandy‡ |
| Dr and Mrs A. Braun | | |

SHORT NEWS ITEMS

SIMLA Simla, in the Arima Valley, formerly the field station of the New York Zoological Society was incorporated into the Asa Wright Nature Centre on February 23rd 1974. Provisions made in the agreement include that the Simla properties be operated as a sanctuary, that they serve all those interested in natural history

Cont'd/4/or scientific study

or scientific study, and that any proceeds from the sale of Simla properties be restricted to a fund for conservation within Trinidad and Tobago. Members can get a glimpse of what went on at Simla in its heyday through the Special Tropical Research Issue (Aug/Sept, 1974) of Animal Kingdom, the magazine of the N.Y.ZOO.SOC. This issue is entirely devoted to the work of William Beebe, about two-thirds of it about work done at Simla. It contains beautiful photographs of some Trinidad birds, fascinating information about caterpillars and mantids and much more. A specimen copy will be on display at the A.G.M. and Mrs Kate Gibbs will take names of any members interested in obtaining their own copy. \$1.25 U.S. approx. \$2.50 - \$3.00 TT depending on postage rates.

WASTE PRODUCTS-AND THE ENVIRONMENT - A SYMPOSIUM organised by the Faculty of Engineering, U.W.I. Oct. 2nd - 4th 1974. This wide-ranging symposium contained a number of papers of interest to members of the Club and in addition to obtaining a copy of the symposium proceedings for the Club Library we hope to include one or more of the speakers in our programme for 1975.

1975 JOURNAL We now have advertisements, real or promised, to the value of \$300 but we need more!! Please will anyone who has a personal contact with a firm that might put an advertisement in the Journal get in touch with Kate Gibbs, who will supply you with a duplicated sheet 'Information for Advertisers'.

CHRISTMAS PARTY The Committee were unfortunately unable to organise a party this year, but a number of members did have an enjoyable get-together at Chagville on December 7th. Volunteers to organise a party for Christmas 1975 should contact the Secretary in October.

FOR SALE Brian Cooper has a limited number of Trinidad topographical maps. Scale 1:150,000 - one sheet covers the whole island. They are not available in Trinidad. Price TT\$2. Contact Brian at ... Tel. 662-4686, before the A.G.M. if you want one. Kate Gibbs has a few copies of the very informative, illustrated leaflet 'Sea Turtles of the Caribbean' by Mohammed Hanif, a publication of the Virgin Is. Conservation Society. Price 50 cents TT. Tel 662-3597.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL MEMBERS, and how about the following for New Year Resolutions : - GET THE BARGE STOPPED and DO SOMETHING POSITIVE ABOUT TURTLES WHILE THERE ARE SPILL SOIL LEFT.