

# THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD & TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

January 3, 1977

Dear Member:

The Annual General Meeting of the Club will be held at the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College on Thursday 13th January, 1977 at 5:30 p.m.

## A G E N D A

1. Reading and Confirmation of Minutes
2. Business Arising out of Minutes
3. Honorary Secretary's Report 1976
4. Honorary Treasurer's Report 1976
5. Election of Officers for 1977
6. Other Business

## FIELD EXCURSION FOR JANUARY

The first Field Excursion for 1977 will be held on Sunday 30th January to Mount Catherine, Chaguaramas.

Members are asked to meet at the Chagville Car Park, opposite the Convention Centre, at 7:00 a.m.

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## SEMINARS AT ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE

With the success of its 1976 Seminar Programme still in mind the Asa Wright Nature Centre is offering a programme of five (5) seminars in Natural History during 1977.

These are:-	ENTOMOLOGY	-	June 15 - 29
	ORNITHOLOGY	-	June 29 - July 13
	ART	-	July 13 - 27
	ECOLOGY	-	July 27 - August 10
	PHOTOGRAPHY	-	August 17 - 31

Each Seminar will be conducted by an expert in the particular field.

These are residential seminars and the cost per seminar is \$400 for Trinidad and Tobago residents.

## AWARD OF SCHOLARSHIPS

Of special interest is the award of scholarships for each seminar. Further information may be obtained from the Honorary Secretary of the Club.

DOES THE LITTLE HERMIT OCCUR IN TOBAGO? (V.C. Quesnel)

Only four of the sixteen humming birds recorded for Trinidad occur in Tobago and there is in addition one species that does not occur in Trinidad. During my recent vacation in Charlotteville I was birdwatching on the hill overlooking the bay when I saw what I thought was a Little Hermit (*Phaethornis lenguemareus*) feeding at a Canna flower. My view of the bird was very brief but in that second or two I saw or thought I saw the characteristic white central tail feathers of the Little Hermit. However, the head seemed to lack the characteristic superciliary stripe. I waited a long time for the bird to return without success. Next day I returned to the spot and was rewarded with the sight of a balisier (*Glaucis hirsuta*) but no Little Hermit appeared. The balisier is well known in Tobago but the Little Hermit has never been recorded there and it now appears likely that my identification of the first bird was wrong. However the Tobago forests seem capable of supporting the Little Hermit and it may yet turn up. Birdwatching members of the club may do well to keep a sharp look out for it whenever they visit our sister island.

EXCURSION TO MANZANILLA BAY (V.C. Quesnel)

The excursion to Manzanilla Bay, though not as well attended as most recent excursions, was nevertheless quite successful. The tide prevented us from exploring the eastern end of the beach but the cliffs at the western end provided many species of fossil shells which we hope will be reported on later by Charles and Ellie Rooks. My explorations revealed five species of lizard, *Cnemidophorus lemmiscatus* on the beach and just behind it, *Ameiva ameiva* near the swampy river and *Plica plica*, *Gonatodes vittatus* and *Sphaerodactylus molei* on the vegetation near the river. The *Sphaerodactylus* was a surprise crawling stealthily on the fronds of the excessively thorny *Bactris* palms. There were other surprises; the only cannon ball tree I've seen in the wild and *Brownea litifolia* (Cooperhoop) in bloom only twenty metres or so from the beach. Both Guy's Hermit and the Little Hermit were feeding at the Cooperhoop.

VISIT TO TOBAGO (Ian Lambie)

To be awakened by noisy cocricos at 5:30 in the morning may not be a pleasant experience for the uninitiated, but to members of the Club, it was their "reveille". The 24-member party arrived in Tobago on a Thursday night and "pitched camp" at the Grafton Estate. Members' cars arrived by coastal steamer on Friday morning, that Divali weekend in October.

Friday was devoted to visiting Plymouth, Castara and the very beautiful Englishman's Bay on the North Coast. On the return trip, a stop was made at the Arnos Vale Hotel where tea was taken and members witnessed the afternoon feeding of the birds. A yellow-billed cuckoo, in very poor physical condition, was picked up on the hotel's grounds. This is a migrant species and was probably suffering from extreme exhaustion and hunger after a strenuous trip.

On Saturday, an early departure was made for the trip along the Windward Road to Charlotteville. Stops were made at the King's Bay Waterfall and at Speyside. We utilised the facilities provided by the Tourist Board at Charlotteville and trust that these facilities will continue to be properly maintained. A courtesy call was paid on Mr. and Mrs. Egbert Lau of the Bird of Paradise Inn, on the return trip.

Surprisingly no jacamars were seen on this trip, but the green kingfishers on the banks of the Argyll River did not disappoint us, they were most present.

No visit to Tobago would be complete without a visit to the fabulous Buccoo Reef. So having fed the mot-mots early on Sunday morning we set off for Buccoo Point and our 8 o'clock rendezvous with David Johnson, our boat captain. During the two-hour tour we visited the Marine Gardens with its magnificent growths of brain coral, straghorn coral, sea whips and other gorgonians. Members who had not previously visited the Reef were spellbound by the vast numbers of fishes to be seen. Parrot fish, trigger fish, wrasses, surgeon fish, butterfly fish and goat fish were numerous and from under the stands of elkhorn coral, the large eyes of the squirrel fish peered at us. The visit to the reef concluded with a swim at the Nylon Pool and an inspection of the band of porites coral which fringes the Pool.

On our return to Grafton and a short walk along the Manakin Trail we were rewarded with two male blue-backed manakins, a grey-throated leaf-scraper, buff-throated woodcreepers, a jacamar and the more common barred ant shrike, red-crowned woodpeckers and mot mot.

ANNUAL CARIBBEAN CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (CCA) CONFERENCE (Ian Lambie)

Prime Minister Forbes Burnham received loud acclamation when he called for the return of all historical and cultural relics of the Caribbean region to their respective countries of origin. The Guyanese Prime Minister was delivering the opening address at the 10th Annual general meeting of the CCA which was held between September 30 and October 3 in Georgetown, Guyana.

During the meeting several important resolutions were adopted including one which called on regional governments to implement legislation to control the sale and use of dangerous agricultural chemicals.

On his arrival at the conference which was attended by 120 delegates, observers and guests, Mr. Burnham was met by CCA's president, Mr. John Connell; Professor J.J. Niles of the University of Guyana and Mr. Willard Wheatley, Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands who was a delegate at the meeting.

The Conference re-elected Mr. Connell as CCA's president; Prof. Niles was re-elected vice-president and Mr. Robert Devaux, secretary. Other members of the board were Rev. Donald Dod (Dominican Republic); Mr. Elton Georges (British Virgin Islands); Dr. Norwell Harrigon, Mr. Gerard Werter and Mr. Ian Lambie of Trinidad and Tobago.

Included in the program was an interesting and informative discussion on various aspects of development and its effects on the environment. Topics included "Contemporary Themes in Resource Investigation and their Relevance to Development Planning in the North-West Region" by Mr. Derek Bernard; "Pesticides and Rice Pest Control: Ecological Implications for Wildlife in Guyana" by Dr. H. Gulmahamad; "The White Sands of Guyana" by Mr. Ivan Welch; "Ecological Constraints to Socio-Economic Development in the Rupununi" by Mr. Indal Rambajan; "The National Trust in Guyana" by Mr. Arthur Seymour, CCA's adviser on cultural matters and "Nutrition in the Conservation of Human Resources" by an officer of the Guyana Consumers Association.

Other speakers included Mr. Lambie on "The Protection of Oil Birds and the Establishment of the Asa Wright Nature Center in Trinidad"; Mr. Barney Thompson on "The Habitat Conference" and Mr. David Wingate on "Environmental Education in Bermuda".

During the relaxing moments, delegates were taken on field trips to Linden and Bartica to observe some Guyana countryside and on a tour of the botanical gardens, the Coffey Monument, the Sea Wall project and a concert hall in Georgetown. Many delegates also found time to visit the museum to see its exhibits and the zoo where swamp birds of herons, egrets and anhingas were seen, many nesting.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

December 1976 was bustling with Environmental Conservation activities.

December 1 -- One-Day Seminar on LAND DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT organized by the Pollution Control Council at the Holiday Inn under the chairmanship of Mr. Ronald Williams. Attended by Messrs. Quesnel, Cooper, Rooks and Lambie.

December 10 -- The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists Club launched its ENVIRONMENTAL ALERT REPORTING SYSTEM at a Press Conference held at the Hotel Normandie. Good coverage was given by Press, Radio and Television. Attended by Messrs. Rooks, Kenny, Maingot, Yip Choy, Baptiste and Lambie.

December 13 -- The IOC/FAO/UNEP International Workshop on MARINE POLLUTION IN THE CARIBBEAN AND ADJACENT REGIONS held at the Hotel Normandie, under the chairmanship of Professor J.S. Kenny. Attended by Messrs. Laforest, Rooks, Baptiste and Lambie.

VISIT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CARIBBEAN CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION -- A recent visitor to Trinidad was Miss Jill Sheppard, the Executive Director of the C.C.A. During her visit she held discussions with members of the Management Committee of the Club. The Club is a member of the C.C.A. which has its headquarters in Barbados.

Ian Lambie