

# THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

1st April 1977

Dear Member

You are invited to attend the Monthly Meeting of the Club to be held at the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College on Thursday 14th April 1977 at 5.30 p.m.

## AGENDA

1. Confirmation of Minutes
2. Business arising out of Minutes
3. ANNOUNCEMENTS
4. LECTURE - "Chicken Hawks" by Mr. Richard French
5. Exhibits and Miscellaneous Notes
6. Other Business

## FIELD EXCURSION

Our Annual Turtle Patrol on the TACARIB Beach will be held on Saturday 23rd - Sunday 24th APRIL. We will be leaving the Saddle Road-North Coast Road Junction at 6.30 a.m. (for those wishing to hike from Blanchisseuse) and 7.30 a.m. (for those travelling by boat). Bring along your camping equipment, torchlights, food, etc. But please don't forget to notify the President or the Secretary of your wish to participate not later than 15th April.

## TURTLE TAGGING PROJECT

Patrols are continuing weekly on the Matura and Las Cuevas Beaches. On Tuesday 27th March one turtle and three nests were seen on the Matura Beach by Gerard Williams, Ian Lambie and friends. Should you wish to join the patrols please call Mr. Laforest at 21745 or Ian Lambie at 23694.

## A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The revised edition of this beautiful book by Richard French is now available at \$36.00 per copy. Please place your order with the Honorary Secretary.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that Annual subscriptions should be paid on or before 31st MARCH of each year. If you are in arrears please forward your cheque to the Honorary Treasurer, Mr. John Correia, at 25 Baden Powell Street, Woodbrook. The Sub is \$5.00 and \$2.50 for Junior Members.

## REPORT on the trip to Mount Catherine on 30th January 1977 (V. Guesnel)

This field trip to Mount Catherine took place at almost the identical time of year as the trip in 1976, yet there were noticeable differences. In 1976 vines of the family Convolvulaceae were flowering in profusion. This year, although the same species were in flower, only a few individuals were seen and my impression is that many of them came to their maximum flowering much earlier than last year. On the other hand, although cypre was again in flower, my impression was that this tree was just beginning to flower - later than last year.

The whole area was dry and parched and many plants on the lower slopes were wilting and obviously under stress from water loss. It was already evident that this would be a severe dry season.

Butterflies were virtually absent from the summit though several species were seen lower down. This too may be a reflection of the dry conditions. A tiny snake brought to my attention was easily caught and proved to be a Leptotyphlops. Unfortunately, it managed to escape from the plastic bag in which I placed it before it could be photographed or even examined carefully.

As on the last trip, no red howlers were seen.

REPORT on the field trip to Scotland Bay on 6th March 1977 - Botany Group  
(V. Cuesnel)

This trip began with a bang, so to speak. While awaiting the word to proceed through the restricted area to Stauble's Bay, Erian Cooper and myself watched a Starthroat humming bird feeding at the flowers of a hibiscus hedge opposite the Chagacabana Hotel. This was particularly interesting to me since the starthroats that visit my garden feed at Hibiscus only once.

On arriving at Scotland Bay a party of 21 comprising the Botany Group hiked with me along the road leading to Teteron Bay for perhaps half a kilometre. Plants in flower were few: Lantana camara, Black sage, Phryganocidea corymbosa, Ipomea titiacea, Merremia glabra, cypre, Gliricidium sepium. The vegetation as a whole seemed dry and dormant. Here we saw some of the largest bachac trails I have ever seen and found one moderately large nest of Atta cephalotes, the forest bachac. A few birds, tanagers, flycatchers and a black and white manakin flitted back and forth.

After an hour we returned to base and with a reduced group struck off to the north east. In this locality birds were numerous, particularly humming birds, tanagers and honey creepers. After a short while watching these we decided to try to reach the ridge overlooking Mahout Bay. After three false starts along paths which disappeared into impenetrable scrubbery during one of which we saw a red howler at close quarters, we crossed a dried up stream bed and pushed through the bush more or less parallel. On reaching a conspicuous and surprisingly large ravine we followed it and eventually found ourselves on the ridge overlooking Mahout Bay. Right at the top of the ridge we spotted another red howler which slung away in the tree tops at our approach. On the way up we had seen a fine specimen of the iguanid lizard, Plica plica, (sometimes called Old Man), emperor butterflies and some birds. On the ridge a black poui, Tabebuia rufescens, was in flower, black throated mangoes were feeding at the flowers.

The trip up had been long drawn up because of the search for a route. The return was accomplished in only 15 or 20 minutes. The last prize, near the beach, was Eustoma exaltatum a pretty purple flower which Dr. Adams of U.W.I. first recorded in August last year as being new to the Trinidad flora. It is a limestone-loving plant and has flourished at the site probably because of the coral dredged up and deposited there by the Americans during the war.

BIRDS AND FISHES SEEN AT SCOTLAND BAY (Ian Lambie)

BIRDS

1. Osprey
2. Yellow headed caracara
3. Belted kingfisher
4. Black hawk
5. Bay headed tanager
6. Red legged honeycreeper
7. Buff throated woodcreeper
8. Blue dacnis
9. Ruby topaz humming bird
10. Blue chinned sapphire
11. Violaceous Euphonia

FISHES

1. French angelfish
2. Spotfin butterfly fish
3. Foureye butterfly fish
4. Banded butterfly fish
5. Night sergeant
6. Sergeant major
7. Yellowtail damselfish
8. Dusky damselfish
9. Cocoa damselfish
10. Spanish hogfish
11. Queen parrotfish
12. Blennies



## CONSERVATION NEWS

1. The Save the Savannah Committee held an extremely successful meeting at the Marian Hall, Holy Name Convent, on March 22nd. About 200 persons attended and gave their support to the fight to keep the savannah as an open space. The discussions must have impressed on everyone how easy it would be for the savannah to be destroyed by encroaching buildings without anyone really wanting to destroy it. Dozens of persons volunteered to work on various sub-committees dealing with different aspects of the work to preserve and enhance the savannah. Members of the Club who may want to help in this matter are asked to contact Mr. David Rooks who is our representative on the Committee.
2. The Management committee is most concerned about the present spate of bush fires. The secretary issued a press release on 18th March calling for the establishment of a forest fire prevention committee. The Club will actively promote this. We intend to prepare a full scale campaign to prevent forest fires and launch this before the next dry season. Suggestions and ideas are welcome. Contact any member of the management committee.
3. A meeting of the Caribbean Conservation Association will be held in Barbados on Saturday 26th March. Our energetic secretary will be there and will report back to us in due course.

## TRIP TO TOBAGO

WHIT-WEEKEND 28th-30th MAY. Campers Pay \$60.00 per person. Non-Campers Pay \$60.00 and make their own arrangements for accommodation. Thirty (30) seats booked with T & TAS - Eight (8) cars booked with Port Authority.

## HOW OUR CLUB FEELS ABOUT "BUSH FIRES"

The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club is greatly concerned about the continuing destruction of our forested hillsides during the annual DRY SEASON.

It appears to the Club that our citizens have resigned themselves to the fact that every year a little more of our environment is to be destroyed by BUSH FIRES.

The month of March 1977 has been a particularly bad one for BUSH FIRES in and around Port of Spain, Diego Martin, Chaguaramas and other areas in the Northern Range.

While the immediate effects of these BUSH FIRES are apparent, the long term effects which give rise to accelerated loss of topsoil through erosion, loss of porosity of the soil, flooding in the rainy season and the eventual reduction of our underground water resources, are not appreciated.

Simply put, the loss of soil-cover through BUSH FIRES this year will result in less water being available for use in the years to come.

The Club recommends the immediate establishment of a FOREST FIRE PREVENTION COMMITTEE, not only to devise ways and means of arresting this threat to our well-being but also to institute a Countrywide FIRE PREVENTION EDUCATION PROJECT.

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