

# THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

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## NOTICE OF MONTHLY MEETING

Dear Member,

You are invited to attend the Monthly Meeting of the Club to be held in the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College on Thursday 13th October 1977, at 5.30 p.m.

## AGENDA

1. Confirmation of Minutes of previous meeting.
2. Business arising out of the minutes.
3. Announcements.
4. LECTURE "Euphorbiacea" by Mr. T.F. Farrell.
5. Exhibits and Miscellaneous Notes.
6. Other Business.

## FIELD EXCURSION

On Sunday 30th October, the Club will be visiting an area above the Maracas Waterfall. We will be leaving the St. Mary's College on Pembroke Street at 7.00 a.m., with a short stop being made at the Curepe Junction on the Eastern Main Road (park on Riverside Road) at 7.30 a.m. Mr. Hans Boos will be the leader of this trip. Please be suitably clad for a hike over slippery terrain.

## 1978 PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

Members are invited to submit their suggestions for Lectures and Field Excursions for possible inclusion in the Club's 1978 Programme of Activities. Suggestions will be received at the Monthly Meeting on the 13th, or they may be mailed to the Honorary Secretary to reach him not later than 31st October, 1977.

## PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

With a growing number of members becoming seriously interested in Nature Photography, the Committee has decided to bring together all members who are interested in the subject. The Honorary Secretary will like to get together with such members at the conclusion of the Monthly Meeting.

## DRAWING AND PAINTING FROM NATURE

Several Junior Members have expressed the desire to form a group from among our drawing and painting enthusiasts. The nucleus will be formed by those Junior members who attended the recently concluded Art Seminar at the Asa Wright Nature Centre. Mrs. Daphne Pawan Taylor has agreed to assist the group in some of the technical aspects of Drawing and Painting from Nature.

FIELD TRIP to the AUSTIN-COROMANDEL Swamp on 27th March 1977 (V. C. Quesnel)

This was one of the most disappointing of recent field trips. The Austin-Coromandel swamp, tucked away as it is on the south coast of the Cedros peninsula, promised to be a haven for wildlife. There was also the hope that we would encounter some exotic species from Venezuela. In fact, we saw almost no wildlife at all. It was a blistering hot day and the animals seemed to have sought shelter from the excessive heat. Towards the close of our stay there the sight of two mud volcanoes added some interest but failed to compensate for the almost total lack of living things. As we prepared to depart, the area was just beginning to come to life again with tanagers, honeycreepers and humming birds becoming active in the flowering immortelles. An early morning or late afternoon visit would probably have been more productive.

Any Volunteers for a "Mothwatch" (V. C. Quesnel)

Once every few years the white tailed page, a day flying moth, migrates in enormous numbers. The time between migrations is usually seven years but may be as short as four years and the migration usually begins in September. The last one was in September 1973 and there are signs that another may occur in September this year. Information is needed on several aspects of these migrations and club members are invited to help in the collection of the information. Members living in south Trinidad and in Tobago in particular can help in charting the extent of the migration and all can help by collecting and preserving specimens killed on the roads by motor cars. These specimens, carefully dated, can give valuable information on breeding cycles. Anyone interested in this study can contact me for further details. Of course, if there is no migration this year we will simply postpone the whole operation until there is one.

FIELD TRIP to GRAND TACARIE - April 1977

Having hiked to Tacarib on Good Friday, 8th April, and just barely making the distance in eight hours, who would have believed that within two weeks I would be trekking the distance again, only this time in the opposite direction. However, on this occasion I carried no load and the trip was accomplished in five hours, at a leisurely pace.

SATURDAY 23rd APRIL - After rendezvousing at the beginning of the North Coast Road, the hiking party left by car for Blanchisseuse at 6.30 a.m. while the other group which was to travel by boat left this point one hour later.

The twenty hikers, including ten students from the Diego Martin Secondary School, carried no load and covered the distance in under four hours. The boating group was faced with problems even before leaving Blanchisseuse. Only two boats were available for the group of 37, and it was therefore decided to make two trips.

The sea was very turbulent with waves 3 to 4 metres high. The loading of the boats was accomplished with some difficulty but the off-loading was even more difficult and was eventually achieved only through the skill and dexterity of the boatman, Ruben Mulligan and his crew.

Of our four tents only two could be used since the others were both badly damaged. However, most persons spent a comfortable night during which four leatherback turtles were tagged.

SUNDAY 24th APRIL - It was apparent that the sea was much worse than it had been on the previous day, and when the boats had not arrived at 9.00 a.m. many members were already preparing to make the hike to Paria, where the seas may have been calmer, or to Blanchisseuse.

The boats arrived at 9.30 a.m. but could not approach the landing in the usual manner. The luggage had to be tossed into the boats from the cliff and persons boarded from this side with extreme difficulty. It was agreed that the boats would return to Paria for the next trip and those who were left behind set-off for Paria on foot. Included in this group was Claude and Suzanne Guillaume and their two sons aged 5 and 6 years.

The group took two and one half hours to walk to Paria, where they had a swim in the river and relaxed on the beach while awaiting the boats. However, Yves Guillaume arrived with the news that the seas at Blanchisseuse were very bad and the boats would not be returning. We set off once again to Blanchisseuse and it was a relief after two hours of walking to see David Rooks and other drivers with their cars at a point 1½ miles east of Blanchisseuse Village.

We were very fortunate that with such a large party and in such bad weather conditions no major accident occurred and everyone returned safely, although there were many stiff muscles and sore feet to be attended to.

Ian Lambie

#### BEACH PATROLS IN TOBAGO

Since the beginning of our Turtle Project in 1965, the Club has from time to time received reports of turtles nesting on beaches in Tobago.

During the Whit-weekend, Friday 27th May to Monday 30th May, a party of 25 members visited Tobago in search of evidence of turtle nesting activity.

What a surprise did they get. Not only did they find evidence of considerable nesting activity, but that despite the Conservation Laws which protect nesting turtles during the Close Season, March to September, the killing of turtles continued unabated on most of Tobago's beaches.

Four rotting leatherback carcasses were found at Stone Haven Bay, and five each (rotting carcasses) were found at Courland Bay (Turtle Beach) and at Bloody Bay. Evidence of nesting was also found at Parlatuvier, Charlotteville, and at Englishman's Bay. After our departure, Hannah Pavlik and her husband Fred, whom we had left in camp at Englishman's Bay, prevented a group of poachers from killing a leatherback which had come up to lay on the beach.

It has been suggested that we visit Tobago regularly during the next nesting season.

Ian Lambie



Honorary Secretary

1st October, 1977

Honorary Secretary -64 Roberts Street-Woodbrook, P.O.S. -Telephone 62/23694