

# THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB  
21 Sept. 1980

## MEETINGS - 4th QUARTER

You are invited to attend the meetings of the club to be held on 9th-October and 13th November 1980. At each meeting the agenda will be:

1. Confirmation of minutes
2. Business arising out of the minutes
3. Announcements
4. Lecture
5. Exhibits and miscellaneous notes
6. Other business

The lectures will be:

- 9th Oct. - Herbal Medicines by Mr Kelvin Best. (the lecture on Mammals of Trinidad by Miss Mary Alkins was delivered in September owing to Mr Best's inability to attend that meeting).
- 13th Nov. - Sandflies - Scourge of the North Coast by Dr Mike Nathan.

## FIELD TRIPS

- 26th Oct. - Central Range  
Departure 7.00 a.m. from St Mary's College, Pembroke St and  
7.30 a.m. from Curapc Roundabout
- 30th Nov. - Erin Savanna  
Departure 6.30 a.m. from St Mary's College, Pembroke St and  
7.30 from San Fernando Roundabout, San Fernando Bypass.

## CHRISTMAS PARTY

The club will hold its Christmas Party on Saturday 6th December. Details will be announced at the meeting in November but present plans envisage a barbecue. If you cannot attend the November meeting ring a member of the Management Committee for details.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Every year at about Christmas time the Asa Wright Nature Centre organizes a bird count which will take place this year on Saturday 27th December 1980. Details will be announced at the November meeting and can also be obtained from the Chairman of the Nature Centre Mr Ian Lambie.

## AWARD

This year the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club was awarded the Medal of Merit (Gold) for its work in ecology. Our president Mr Ian Lambie received the medal and citation on behalf of the club at the presentation on Independence Day - a just reward for the twenty years of work he put into the club as its Honorary Secretary and now its President.



Field Trip to Tacarib on 24th - 26th May 1980 (V.C. Quesnel)

This year the rainy season was a bit earlier than usual and had already made a tentative appearance by the time of our visit to Tacarib. Dark clouds were banking up in the East as we prepared to leave Blanchisseuse. Two boat-loads of campers went by sea; others walked. This year I was with the hikers and was accompanied by Frankie Farrell and Luisa Zuniaga. Blanchisseuse had welcomed us with thousands of the little pink wind flower, Zephyranthes, brought out by the early rains and as we started our long hike we were cheered by the lovely orange blossoms of three cat's claw dweepers cascading from their tall supporting trees and the bright scarlet inflorescences of the chaconia also early because of the rains.

The most notable trees along the way were hog plum (Spondias mombin), cedar (Cedrela odorata), cannon ball (Couroupita guianensis), sand box (Hura crepitans), toporite (Hernandia sonora), wild chataigne (Pachira insignis), cajuca, (Viola surinamensis), mahoe (Sterculia caribea), crappo (Carapa guianensis) and white olivier (Terminalia obovata). The lovely, lilac flowers of the black fiddlewood carpeted the path in several places. In the undergrowth were the usual shrubs like Palicourea crocea and Duggena hirsuta and herbs like balisier (Heliconia wagneriana), Costus spp., Tussacia pulchella and Maranta gibba. Cabbage palms were also fairly common and in a couple of places extensive groves of the hatstand tree, Rheedia acuminata.

We arrived at Tacarib at about 5.30 p.m. tired, damp and loaded with specimens, long after all the others had settled in. We picked a spot on the beach, pitched camp quickly and decided that it was time for supper. I did not take part in the patrols and learned next day that four turtles had come up to lay, one very near our tent. The patrollers tagged three of them.

Most of the campers remained a second night but some walked out with us on Sunday morning. Apart from being very rainy the walk was uneventful. During the second night four more turtles came up to lay and again three of them were tagged.

Before leaving on Sunday morning I noted or collected all the plants I could find actually growing on the beach or immediately behind it. Here is the list: Coconut (Cocos nucifera), seaside grape (Coccoloba uvifera), Indian almond (Terminalia catappa), Dalbergia ecastaphyllum, seaside mahoe (Pariti tiliaceus) Vigna repens, Sporobolus indicus, Ipomea pes-caprae, Erythrina pallida, Solanum nigrum and the grass Antheophora hermaphrodita.

Field trip to Maracas Bay from Santa Cruz, 27th July 1980 (V. Quesnel)

Before the North Coast Road was constructed Maracas Bay could be reached overland only by the path from Santa Cruz. I had hiked along it to Maracas as a school boy in the early 1940s and hadn't been back since so I looked forward to the trip with interest. As it turned out, the trail was much wider than I remembered it and the forests less dense. Now, on walking from the ridge down the north slope I was reminded of the forests on the North slope of Naranja.

The trees common in lower montane forest were there, the one of most interest to me being Coussarea paniculata which I had never seen in flower before but which was now in full bloom at several spots along the trail putting on quite a show. Incense (Protium guianense) was fruiting the fruit being bright orange red splitting open to reveal a black seed with a white aril. At the ridge grew Besleria longipes, one of the Gesneriaceae, and like so many others of this family it seems to have potential as an ornamental house plant with its attractive succulent leaves and unusual greenish yellow flowers.

The butterfly collectors saw many of the common species but took nothing of any special interest. Towards the end of our return trip a flock of five or six toucans entertained us for a while as they cavorted about in the branches of a small tree. Their calls mingled with the raucous screams of a flock of parrots, to produce for a moment a sense of Nature at its wildest and most remote from human interference.

Field Trip to Mt Harris on 29th June 1980 (T.F. Farrell)

For our visit to the Mt Harris area the Forestry Division had been asked to assist and the excursion went smoothly thanks to a carefully worked out itinerary and a plethora of forest officers. Before reaching the starting point of the actual excursion the party of about 60 to 70 persons stopped at the famous sixty million year old sandstone rock at the sixth or seventh milepost on the Cunapo Southern Road. Notices put up by the Forestry Division gave a few facts about the



~~rock and the forest in the immediate area.~~ On arrival at the forestry station a little further on the party was met by the forest officers who served as guides and sources of information at the various points of interest.

The first trip was to the old rest house area. The rest house is almost completely demolished but the path leading to it passes through the mixed Mt. Harris forest. A slight diversion leads to a small waterfall.

The second trip was to the highest point in the area. The foresters had made a small clearing at the top which enabled the party to have a view of the Nariva Swamp.

The third trip was to the original teak plantation in Trinidad. Seeds from Burma were imported by Mr C.S. Rogers, the first Conservator of Forests, and planted in 1913 or 1915 in the Mt Harris area. The biggest teak trees (Tectona grandis) in Trinidad are to be found here.

The next visit was to the "coal mine". The path lead to a small ravine with a trickle of water flowing through. The loose stones and gravel all around were brownish black in colour and on closer examination looked like lumps of coal, not as crystalline as anthracite but certainly harder than charcoal.

The area at Mt Harris controlled by the Forestry Division is about 45,000 acres in extent and, apart from the teak, is what can be described as mixed-conversion forest. Improvement felling has been carried out and species from other areas have been introduced. Therefore, for the naturalist making a study of trees it is very convenient.

Some thirty two specimens, including a few herbs, were pointed out to me. Probably the most plentiful tree was bois mulattre (Pentaclethra macroloba). Other members of the Leguminosae were puni (Pithecelobium jupunba), sackysac (Inga laurina) and cooperhoop (Brownea latifolia) which were all fairly plentiful. The family Euphorbiaceae was represented by tapana (Hieronyma caribea) and honeywood (Alchornia glandulosa). The two trees that gave their names to the most prevalent forest in Trinidad were, of course present i.e. crappo (Carapa guianensis) and guatecare (Eschweilera subglandulosa). White olivier (Terminalia obovata), mahoe (Sterculia caribea), jereton (Didymopanax morototoni), balata (Manilkaria bidentata), cedar (Cedrela odorata) and silk cotton (Ceiba occidentalis) were also seen. Two palms cocorite (Maximiliana caribea) and gri-gri (Bactris cuesa?) could be seen here and there. Two trees both called sardine were pointed out. One, commonly known also as bois toucan (Laetia procera) was identified. The other was only said to be a member of the Melastomataceae. Some of the more uncommon trees were figuier, laurier, cajuca, serotto, lay-lay, wild calabash, gommier and wild cashima.

The club is grateful to Messrs Maraj, Bickram, Musgrave, Durity, Armour and James and all the other officers of the Forestry Division for a stimulating excursion.

### 90th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The Management committee has discussed the the 90th birthday celebrations and decided that they should be held in the week preceding 10th July next year in the Centenary Hall at St. Mary's College if it will be available. The various activities and the persons proposed as organizers are listed below. If your name appears below please inform the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible whether or not you are prepared to serve in the capacity suggested so that detailed planning may begin.

#### 1. NATURAL HISTORY EXHIBITION

##### Exhibits

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Botanical - Quesnel, Farrell                           | Fishes - Wood, Lee Yuen, Price, Joseph  |
| Birds - ffrench, Mejias                                | Shells - Percharde, Barrow, Monsanto    |
| Butterflies - Urish, Alston Smith                      | Corals - Kenny                          |
| Bees - Butcher, Bennett                                | Fungi - Duncan                          |
| Other insects - Cross, Pollard                         | Geological - Milne-Home)                |
| Reptiles - Boos  | Fossils - Carr-Brown )                  |
| Mammals - Alkins, Tikasingh)                           | Photography - Bellamy, Boos, Lambie     |
| Bats - Martinez )                                      | Paintings - Reyes, Rooks, Bailey, Akong |
| Books - Hutchinson, Greatbatch                         |   |
| <u>Admissions</u> - Laforest, Joan Greatbatch          |   |
| <u>Finances and Gate Receipts</u> - J. Hilton, Correia |   |
| <u>Security and Insurance</u> - Acham, D. Rooks        |   |

2. Lectures and films - Lambie

3. Publications - Quesnel, Mohammed, A. Hilton

4. Anniversary Dinner (and Opening Ceremony) - Laforest
5. Schools' Painting Competition - Molly Gaskin
6. Public Relations, Publicity - A. Hilton, Acham

NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMME

Suggestions for next year's field trips, lectures and lecturers would be welcomed by the Management Committee. Please contact any member of the committee or write the Hon. Sec.

MAMMAL RECORDS

So little is known about some of Trinidad's mammals that any reliable facts are worth having on record. Mary Alkins's lecture stimulated much discussion and revealed the existence of some information scattered in the memories or note books of some members. Please write the Hon. Sec. giving any information (sightings, feeding etc.) about the rarer mammals, particularly the manatee and the otter.

1981 - 1982 JOURNAL

The deadline for contributions has passed but we do not have enough material to go to press. Several promised articles have not yet been received. Please get them to the Hon. Sec. by 14th Oct. at the latest.

V.C. Quesnel  
Hon Sec.