

28th June 1981

MEETINGS * 3rd QUARTER

You are invited to attend our 90th Birthday Celebrations in July and the regular monthly meetings in August and September 1981.

90th Birthday Celebrations

The club will celebrate its 90th anniversary on Friday 10th July with a tree-planting ceremony in the Queen's Park Savanna or Botanic Gardens. Even at this late date the details are not finalized mainly because of delays in the post. Discussions are still proceeding with Ministry of Agriculture staff. Permission has not yet been officially received though it had been sought some four weeks ago. However, we expect permission eventually and the Minister of Education has agreed 'subject to his commitment in parliament' to launch the ceremony. The site tentatively selected by Botanic Gardens staff is opposite the Prince's Building site but this seems less than ideal to us. However, there will be publicity in the press to inform members and anyone uncertain of the final decisions can ring the secretary or president of the club. We look forward to your support.

The second function to celebrate the anniversary will be an exhibition to be held at St Mary's College Centenary Hall from 26th July to 31st July. Opening hours will be from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Lectures and slide shows will also be featured. The setting up phase will begin on 22nd July and help from members will be required for preparing the hall. Please be generous with your time and help your management committee to make this exhibition a success. This event, too, will receive publicity in the press and information can also be obtained from members of the Management committee.

Monthly Meetings

The monthly meetings for August and September will be held in the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College at 5.30 p.m. on 13th Aug. and 10th Sept.

Agenda

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

Lectures 13th Aug. "The communal nest of anis" by Dr. Sandra Vehrencamp
10th Sept. "The Mayaro Beach tarballs" by Mr. Nigel Boos

Field Trips

The field trip originally sarded for 26th July clashes with the opening of the exhibition. This trip has now been rescheduled for

8th August - 9th August - Chacachacara Island. Departure from St Mary's College, Pembroke St at 7.00 a.m. to Island Home Owners Association at 7.30 a.m. and thence to Chac by boat for overnight camp. Boat fee probably 2.00. Persons intending to take part should notify the management committee by 1st August at latest.

21st - 23rd August. Tobago. Cars go by boat on morning of Friday 21st; members leave by air 6 p.m. and return by air 5 p.m. Sunday. Persons intending to make the trip are asked to inform the management committee by Sunday 19th July at the latest giving make of car and registration if taking a car. Fee: \$60 per person; includes passage but not food.

26th - 27th Sept. Platanal. Details later. It is hoped to camp in Platanal overnight so as to allow time for exploration of Cerro del Oropouche, a nearby mountain peak, or the old trail over the ridge to Grande Riviere. Prepare for mud.

Field Trip to Fig Walk, 21 - 22 March 1981 (T.F. Farrell)

Previously the arrangers of the field excursions have been under the impression that a trip to Fig Walk must be spread over two days. The experience of this outing showed that the trip can be done in one day but the idea of going into the forest, spending the night there and returning the next day adds a certain glamour and excitement to the occasion.

Quite a sizeable crowd turned up all prepared to brave the unseasonal rainy weather we had been having. Fortunately, whatever rain there was was not excessive and the night was beautiful and dry with the forest lit up by a bright moon.

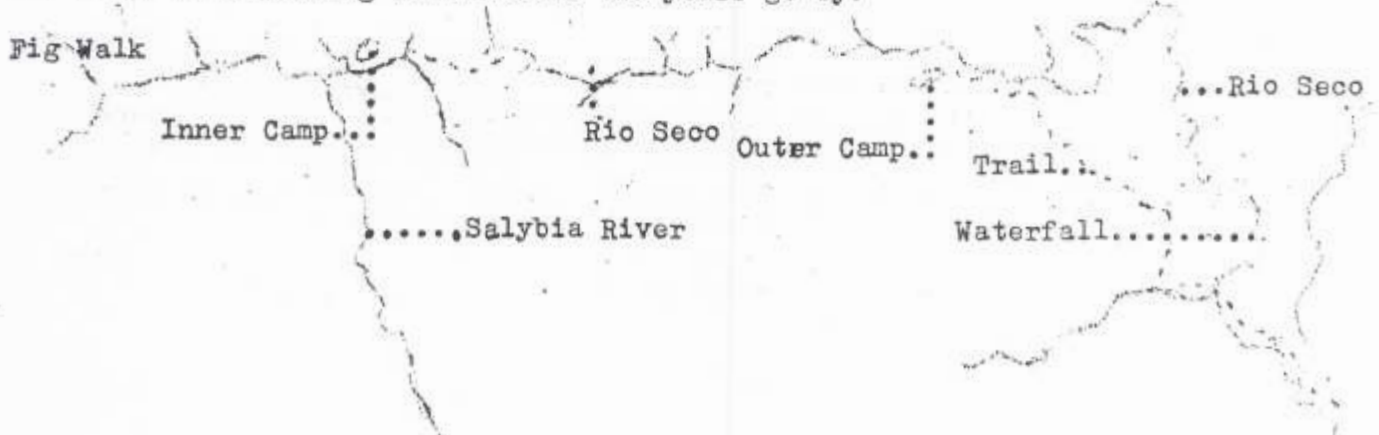
By far the greater part of the walk is through Mora forest. At the beginning there is clear evidence that the forest is being exploited and some areas have been cleared of nearly all the big trees. Further on, one is rewarded by the sight of a forest practically untouched by man. The forest is typical Mora forest with most of the trees that reach canopy height being Mora. The undergrowth is heavily interspersed with Mora saplings displaying young leaves of a pinkish green colour. The obvious success of the Mora seedlings in the competition for ground space probably derives from the ample supply of food in the oversize cotyledons.

Other types of tree are of course seen in these forest, but one, the wild chataigne (Pachira insignis) is especially common. Along the banks of the Rio Seco an understory plant that is frequently seen is the Mountain Rose (Brownea latifolia). The usual forest floor plants were also to be seen in profusion, but two plants whose scientific names are not available to us now are noticeably frequent in this area. They belong to the family Cyclanthaceae, the same family to which the Panama Hat plant (Carludovica insignis) belongs. One whose leaves resembles those of a young palm starts its growth on the ground but later climbs the trees like a vine and then severs its connection with the ground. The local name is Mamoo. The other grows entirely on the ground its appearance being that of a tuft of long, nearly vertical leaves. The herbarium specimens were not available when enquires were made about them.

Richard French has provided a list of the interesting birds he saw: Green kingfishers, Jacamars, Motmots, Quail-doves, Tinamous. Silvered Antbirds were common on the banks of the Rio Seco. Near the camp site were Atilla, a White Hawk, four species of woodpecker, and three Trogons. He did not encounter the Pawi he had hoped to see but Siwa, our guide, said he heard some. Possibly because of the weather few butterflies were seen.

We were told by Siwa that a group of professional hunters had taken over the "Inner camp" at which we had intended to spend the night. He had however prepared another site for us which did just as well. We were dismayed to hear that the hunters were possibly setting trap guns so any excursions off the beaten path will be made with a great deal of trepidation from now on.

Victor Quessel could not come on 21st March but met us on our way back on 22nd. His report follows: "John Seyjagat and I made the trip on the Sunday leaving the car at 8.20 a.m. and following the signs left by the overnighers to help us. By walking steadily and refusing to stop for collecting we were on the Salybia River by 11.10 a.m. The "inner camp" which is on a tributary of the Salybia is thus less than 3 hr's walk from the starting point. We walked along the Salybia looking for the stand of "figs" that gives Fig Walk its name but turned back at 11.30 a.m. without having reached it. On the way back I counted steps to various landmarks for future reference. Approximately 725 steps eastward from the point at which the trail leaves the Rio Seco we came upon the remarkably sharp boundary between the Mora forest and the crappo - guatecare forest. At this point it is literally possible to spread your feet apart and have one foot in Mora forest and the other in crappo - guatecare forest. The boundary is that sharp. A club project could well be a regular check on the boundary to see if it is extending westward as the years go by."



Field Trip to Bush-Bush on 26th April 1981 (V. Quesnel)

The trip to Bush-Bush was originally fixed for this date because it is only in April that the swamp has dried out sufficiently for a hike in to be possible. As it turned out this April was the wettest in 43 years and hiking in was out of the question though swimming in might have been possible. However, we elected to go by boat. From the starting point near the main road the trip took 15 min.

The Nariva Swamp is a beautiful place full of wildlife and interesting vegetation and well worth repeated visits. Bush-Bush is simply a sandy knoll that rises no more than a few metres above water level. According to the Virus Lab. reports (see later) the island is about 2 - 3 miles long and from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile wide. The forest is degraded probably because of the logging activity that was permitted a few years ago. Nevertheless it is still a naturalist's paradise. There were reports of many birds, lizards, fish and insects and some members were lucky enough to see capuchin monkeys, the red bellied macaw and the water coral snake, Liophis cobella. Anyone wishing to know in detail what Bush-Bush has to offer should consult the reports of Virus Lab. staff published in the 1973 issue of our journal.

The Virus Lab. team did not report in detail on the vegetation and on this one short visit we could not make a complete inventory of the species. Many of the trees were unfamiliar to me but the major ones I recognised were: cajuca (Virola surinamensis), mahoe, (Sterculia caribaea), bois bande (Parinari campestris), keskidee (Vismia falcata), jereton (Didymopanax morototoni), puni (Pithecelobium jupunba), kakapol (Rudgea freemani) and camayung (Amaioua corymbosa). There were also several palms, the impressive moriche in abundance, Bactris spp., Desmoncus spp. and cocorite (Maximiliana elegans). The ground vegetation was mainly terite (Ischnosiphon arouma), Monotagma spicata, Psychotria cuspidata, and the balisiers Heliconia wagneriana and H. hirsuta. New plants for Trinidad keep turning up all the time and on this occasion Denise Lee discovered a member of the Marantaceae which on submission to the National Herbarium proved to be a new record for Trinidad. We do not yet know if it is also new to science.

One surprise of the trip was the presence of a herd of 30 - 40 head of cattle. This has been reported to the Chief Game Warden with a request for action to remove them.

Field trip to Paria and Tacarib on 30th - 31st May (V. Quesnel)

On arrival at Blanchisseuse we found that the boatman who had agreed to take us to Tacarib had gone to the forest to "pull logs". After vain attempts to find another boatman who would take us we decided to wait for Ruben to come in from his fishing trip. "Our" boatman, Morville Charles, popularly known as Copperhead, arrived after midday but showed no inclination to honour his commitment. After listening to his excuses and talking to him for five or ten minutes we realized that he had no intention of taking us to Tacarib so we went to a site near the mouth of the Marianne River and camped there instead. Some hikers had gone to Paria with instructions not to proceed further until the boat arrived to pick them up. Two of our group volunteered to walk there and say what had happened and give them the option of returning to Blanchisseuse or camping at Paria for the night. Most stayed at Paria. However, it was impossible to explore the cave at Paria as was originally planned. The campers patrolled the beach at night and reported that one turtle came up to lay. Some members of the party at Blanchisseuse examined the beach there and found evidence of old turtle nests and on Sunday one egg case was found proving that turtles nest there at least occasionally. There was not much else of any scientific interest and this must be counted as one of our less rewarding trips. Some of the campers from Paria did walk to Tacarib the next day i.e. Sunday and got back to Blanchisseuse late in the afternoon. Rather a strenuous undertaking for one day.