

TTC FNC
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THE FIELD-NATURALIST

Bulletin of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

MEETINGS - 4th QUARTER

You are invited to attend the monthly meetings of the club to be held in the Audio-Visual Room of St Mary's College on 8th Oct. and 12th Nov. 1981 at 5.30 p.m.

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: 8th Oct. - Trinidad Orchids by Mr. Bernard D'Abadie
 12th Nov. - Life in temporary pools by Dr. Julian Kenny

FIELD-TRIPS

25th Oct. - L'Anclais Point (South Coast) Leave St Mary's College, Pembroke St. at 6.00 a.m. Rendezvous at Stag Brewery at 6.20 a.m. and Fire Station San Fernando Bypass at 7.00 a.m.

29th Nov. - Brasso Seco to Paria. Leave St Mary's College, Pembroke St. at 6.00 a.m. Rendezvous at Curepe Roundabout at 6.30 a.m.

Christmas Party

The club's Christmas party will be held on Saturday 5th Dec. Details will be announced later. Make a note of the date now.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Every year at about Christmas time the Asa Wright Nature Centre organizes a bird count and this year's count will be on Sunday 27th Dec. Details will be announced at the November meeting and can also be obtained from our president, Mr. Ian Lambie.

Programme for 1982

Some time in the next few weeks the Management Committee will begin planning the programme for 1982. Suggestions for lectures and field trips will be welcome.

FIELD TRIP TO CARONI SWAMP ON 28TH JUNE 1981

(F. F. Farrel)

The trip to Caroni Swamp, contrary to the Club's usual practice, was an afternoon one. This was because the trip was planned to end at dusk when the Scarlet Ibis and the Egret came to roost in certain areas of the swamp where they can be seen in great numbers all crowded together.

A boat was provided by Nanan Wildlife Sanctuary tours and Mr. Winston Nanan served as guide. Thirty four club members turned out for the trip and all were easily accommodated in Nanan's boat as well as a few others not belonging to the party. Winston Nanan proved to be very knowledgeable about the flora and fauna of the swamp and was able to give both the popular and scientific names of the animals and plants he pointed out.

Before the trip started, talks were given by Mr. Thomas Gill of the Forestry Dept., who explained what was being done to convert the swamp into a natural park; Mr. Ian Lambie who gave an account of the modifications over the years made to the swamp; and, Mr. W. Nanan, who gave a general description of the flora and fauna of the area.

First of all a walk was taken along the bank of the no. 9 canal. This enabled the group to look at the trees, shrubs and herbs growing at the side of the canal and also look at some of the birds in the open area near the canal which was mainly under water, and in which some boys were actually bathing.

Along the edge of the canal were to be found the three kinds of mangrove found in the Caroni Swamp namely the Red Mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*); the Black Mangrove (*Avicennia nitida*); and the White Mangrove (*Loguncularia racemosa*). Drawing an analogy with the animal kingdom, the Red Mangrove can be fed to the vivifarious i.e. the seeds germinate on the mother plant before separating from it. This was clearly seen as the long torpedo shafted radicles could be seen hanging down from the twigs. Others were seen after falling off to the ground with the radicles firmly embedded in the mud.

The most prominent shrubs were Christmas Bush (*Eupatorium odoratum*), as well as some sedges (*Cyperus* spp. and *Elcocharis mutata*). Another herb looking like a grass, but not a grass, was *Batis maritima*. This was quite plentiful.

Other herbs were *Heliconia prittacorum* of the ginger family (*Malvastrum* spp. of the hibiscus family and the prickly *Solanum* spp. of the tomato family. Then there was the *Cydista* spp. of the poui family which commonly grows in swampy areas.

Two vines were seen. One of them which is commonly found in swampy areas was *Stigmaphylon* spp. of the West Indian cherry family. The other was *Paullinia* spp. with its tripple three fold leaves.

On the water *Eichornia crassifolia*, the water hyacinth, and *Hymphaea* spp. the water lily were growing.

Many birds were seen in the swampy area between nos. 8 and 9 canals. There was the orange or large billed tern, the common Gallinule; the Acrotrich formorant, the little blue heron, the green heron, the tricola, red heron, the great blue heron and the fork tailed fly catcher which comes from Chile and Argentina. Also, a Rufous browed popper shrieks was heard, but not seen.

The boat trip took the party down the no. 9 canal into the Blue River to its mouth. During this journey Mr. Nanan pointed out the oysters growing on the Red Mangrove roots and the little spidery looking crab (*Erratus Pisoni*) running up and down them. Other crabs seen were fiddler crabs and one with no common name known to me, *Gouliophus eristata*.

At the mouth of the Blue River, board walks had been constructed. These carried the visitors out to the sea where the common brown pelican was seen..

The boat trip ended at the Scarlet Ibis and White Egrets viewing points. While approaching these points, Mulletts were seen in the water from time to time. At the first point, Scarlet Ibis and Egrets roosted together; the Ibis being the most predominant. At the second point, only Egrets were seen. Three kinds were observed namely, the common or American Egret; the Battle Egret; and, the Snowy Egret.

The boat returned to the starting point after sunset and off loaded a group of people who had, with Winston Nanan's help, thoroughly enjoyed the trip.

Scientific) names of the birds mentioned)	Brown Pelican	Plercanus occidentalis
	Large-billed tern	Phaetusa sumplex
	Common gallinule	Gallinula eblorofusth
	Nco-trofix Cormorant	Phalacroconax olivaceus
	Little Blue Heron	Florida eaerulca
	Green Heron	Butorides virescous
	Tricolo Heron	Hydranassa tricolor
	Great Blue Heron	Ardea Herodias
	Fork-tailed Flycatcher	Museivora tyrannus
	Rufosus - browed pepper shrieks	-- Cyclarhis guyaneus
	Scarlet Ibis	Eudocimus rube
	Snowy Egret	Egretta Chula
	Cattle Egret	Bubuleus ibis
	Common or American Egret	Casmerochius albus

REQUEST FOR A COPY OF BARCANT'S BOOK ON BUTTERFLIES (Cilian Moll)

I have been collecting butterflies in Trinidad for the past three years, but have never been able to identify them properly as all my efforts to obtain a copy of Barcant's book have been unsuccessful.

On joining the Trinidad andTobago Field Naturalists' Club I take the opportunity of making this appeal. If anyone has a second-hand copy to sell or knows of anyone with one please contact me, Mrs Gilian Moll, at San Antonio Nursery, Santa Cruz, Tel. 638-8742 or at a meeting of the club.

MISSING PERSON (V. Quesnel)

I am still trying to remember who the person was that gave me \$20 to give to the treasurer for this year's subscription. My earlier notice went unnoticed by this person. Please stop being a missing person and report to me. If your memory needs jogging you handed this to me at the beginning of the trip to Fig Walk.

TRIP TO CHACACHACARE ISLAND ON 8th AND 9th AUGUST, 1981

(F.F. FARRELL)

A party of some thirty five (35) people went on this trip. The starting point was the launch jetty at Chaguaramas near the Chagacabana Beach Hotel. Nelson Audalcio's launch was hired, but as it was small, two trips had to be made.

The Camp was at a small bay near the launching point under a number of large Manchineel trees.

The Botany Group, led by Victor Quesnel and myself, aimed to explore areas not covered by Johannah Darlington who had carried out an ecological survey of the vegetation of the island in 1966, and had written an account of it in the 1967 journal of the Club. She had confined her study mainly to the West of the island and accordingly the Botany Group wanted to see what it could find in the Eastern part of the island. Another aim of the Group was to find out if any ferns grew on the island.

Actually the Group did not penetrate far into the east, but did get into the forest, which we believe Johannah Darlington did not do. On the first day, a Saturday, the Group went along the road to the lighthouse, which Darlington had done, but at two different points which went into the forest. On the second day a valley more to the east was explored. This was between the Camp site and the old Leper settlement.

The most important find was climbing fern, *Lygodium* Spp, which I found when we plunged into the forest. The find is interesting because Chacachacare has a very low rainfall and ferns cannot complete sexual union between their male and female gametes in the absence of water,

The Group had a list of common plants found on the island prepared by Mr. Bharai Kalloo, a herbarium employee of the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine. The list appended to Darlington's article in the journal closely approximates to this list. Of the 110 plants listed, our Group recognised 30. Undoubtedly, if there had been more time, many more would have been found. What was interesting however was that the Group found 15 plants not mentioned in the list. A few other Specimens collected, which were not known to the Group, have not yet been identified. The plants recognised were:-

P. unguis-cati (L.) Mart
Ruellia tuberosa L.
Sansevieria thyrsoflora Thumb.
Sesuvium portulacastrum L.
Sida acuta Burm.
S. seaforthianum Andr.
Stachytarpheta indica Vahl.
Tecoma stans Juss
Tridax procumbens L.
Lygodium
Cassia Bascillaris
Chiococca Alba
Penipa americana
Guatarida Paryiflora
Smilax sp.
Ceiba Pentandra
Lonchocarpus Punctatus
Bursera Simaruba
Commelina Elegans
Solanum Bicolor
Eulophidium Sp.
Anthurium Huegelis
Tarebuia Sp
Bromelia Pinguin

The flora of Chacachacare is obviously quite varied. The Botany Group realises that much more work has to be done on it, and intends to devote more time to it on future trips to the islands.

An interesting experiment was carried out in connection with the Machineel trees. This tree is reputed to have Caustic sap, which can cause blisters on living tissue. Local legend has it that even raindrops falling from the tree can have this effect..

The 1966 excursion to Chacachacare proved this to be untrue because although the Camp was under the Machineel trees and heavy rainfall, no one suffered any ill effects. To find out whether the sap had any caustic effect, four persons rubbed it on their skin. Two of these developed slight blisters after several hours. One experimenter actually ate a small piece of the fruit. He only felt a slight tingling in his throat for a few hours afterwards.

Zoology notes from the Chacachacare trip (V.C. Quesnel)

The highlights were the finding of Anolis chrysolepis and Gonatodes ceciliae two lizards, and both new records for the island; the lizard Gymnophthalmus speciosus which was newly recorded for Trinidad by Hans Boos only a few months previously; a hawksbill turtle which came up to lay on the night of 8th August. She did not lay because of difficulties in digging the nest but the following morning a turtle's nest was found on a different part of the beach. Three eggs which were not covered were taken for incubation at the zoo. The most interesting birds seen were the Venezuelan Wood Rail, Aramides axillaris and the White-fringed Ant-Wren, Formicivora grisea. The latter was very common