

# THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

## MEETINGS - 3rd QUARTER 1982

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 July 8th, August 12th and September 9th 1982 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 AND FIELD TRIPS for the quarter will be per attached programme of activities.

### WEEKEND OF 25th-26th SEPTEMBER 1982

Your Management Committee is of the opinion that the Club's policy relative to Wildlife Management and Environmental Conservation is not clearly understood by the majority of members.

Further, that the period allocated to "Other Business" at Monthly Meetings is inadequate to fully discuss the several important issues which are raised from time to time and to arrive at satisfactory conclusions.

Therefore, the Committee considers it desirable that a week-end be set aside every year when members can discuss important matters, including the various threats to our wildlife and our Natural Environment, and to determine what action if any is to be taken by the Club.

Suitably qualified persons have been invited to participate in these discussions.

During the week-end programme time will be allocated for the showing of films and slides.

Accommodation will be available at the Asa Wright Nature Centre (SIMLA and SPRINGHILL) for twenty-five members.

The subscription will be \$25.00 per member payable to the Honorary Secretary not later than 9th September, 1982. Members will be required to supply their own food, drink and cutlery. Stove and fridge available.

### 1983-1984 JOURNAL (V. Quesnel)

Articles for the forthcoming issue of Living World should reach me by September at the latest. Apart from the longer and more "professional" article I would be glad to have short notes on interesting observations and new records from club members. This is your journal. Help to make it reflect the Club's activities.

FIELD TRIP - NORTH POST TO MACQUERIPE (T. F. Farrell)

This field trip was held on Sunday, March 28th 1982. It was decided to divide into two groups, one going from North Post to Macqueripe and the other from Macqueripe to North Post. The latter group was quite small comprising about 12 persons.

The problem of transportation had to be solved since neither group intended to make the return journey on foot, making it necessary for each group as it ended its journey, to be returned to its starting point. However, as will be explained later, the arrangements for this worked out very nicely.

My choice was to join the group from Macqueripe to North Post. I found the trip, from the point of view of the naturalist, to be rather uneventful. Many years ago there must have been a well cut and well maintained bridle path between the two points as was obvious at some points along the way. Continued neglect and the effect of water erosion during heavy rainfall have in some places completely obliterated the original path. It was necessary consequently to take a diversion in the form of a narrow pathway which led a good way down the slope of the hills and then rose up again to the old bridle path.

The trail led through what was obviously an area cultivated in cacao and coconuts but abandoned some considerable time ago. Secondary vegetation was interspersed here and there with the remains of the original forest. For instance I saw one of the largest wild chataigne trees (*Pachira* spp) I can ever remember seeing. One beautiful tree with whitish smooth bark branching profusely from low down was putting on a set of new leaves. Although not positively identified I think it was a *Ficus*. Another *Ficus* the *figuex*, a large forest tree, was fairly common.

One observer heard a bright rumped *Attilo spadiceus* calling in the forest close to Macqueripe. This bird is uncommon but is known to inhabit the Northern Range. The number of different calls it makes are unmistakable.

As soon as I got to North Post and almost before I had to sit down two cars came over from Macqueripe. These brought over the drivers of the cars of the group that started at North Post and then took back practically the whole group of people who started from Macqueripe.

FIELD TRIP TO SOLDADO ROCK ON 28th MARCH 1982 (V. Guesnel)

Transportation for this trip was arranged with Trinmar by our friends in the Geological Society of Trinidad and Tobago. Space was limited so we restricted the number of persons to 30. In the event only sixteen came including two or three from the Geological Society who acted as guides. Although the powerful engine of the boat made conversation difficult we nevertheless had interesting discussions with Peter Percharde and Felix Aquino on the geology of Soldado and the surrounding area, on evolution and on Marine molluscs. Geological sampling has revealed that the stratigraphy of Soldado is unlike anything nearby and the rocks it most resembles are near Caracas. Soldado itself is not attached to underlying rock but rests on a bed of clay. In fact, it may have been "rolled" into its present position during fairly recent geological times from a point on the Venezuelan coast some hundreds of kilometres to the west.

One of my first impressions as we approached the island was that the stink of seabird guano was not nearly as bad as on my first visit some years ago. We had to swim ashore on that occasion. This time a pirogue ferried us from the launch to the shore. After a brief introduction to the island by the geologists we spread out in groups of two and three to see what we could find. The botanists collected five common species which with a single specimen of another made up the entire flora of the island. The most conspicuous animals were, of course, the seabirds, sooty and noddy terns, boobies, pelicans and frigate birds. Five other species of tern, a petrel and Artic Skuas were also seen during the boat trips to or from the island. A small group of us counted the pelicans. There were 201 perched on the rocks and 6-12 flying. At least 15 dead pelicans in various stages of decomposition littered the rocky shore and we wondered what might have killed them. One of them, dead only a few hours, was taken back to the Zoology Department at UNI where some tissue would be offered to the Pesticide Unit for analysis while the skin would be preserved for the department's museum.

It has been known for a long time that iguanas live on the island. This expedition found another lizard - a *Sphaerodactylus* (probably *molei*). Grasshoppers, spiders, ants, centipedes, black dung beetles and pill bugs were present in fair numbers and some were collected for possible later identification.

Our departure disturbed the frigate birds and they moved out 100 or more south of the island. As the boat pulled away from the shore they began streaming back almost in single file to soar above the island on the thermal updrafts. This made them easy to count and I counted 126. All in all it was a very interesting and profitable day and our thanks go out to all those who made it possible.

FIELD TRIP TO TOCO-MATELOT ON 24-25th APRIL 1932 (V. Ouesnel)

We spent the afternoon of 24th April being conducted around Dr. Richardson's estate by Dr. Richardson himself who showed us how he had converted an old cacao estate into a cedar and mahogany plantation. The trees had done very well and the oldest of them, now about 27 years old, were nearly ready for felling. Dr. Richardson claimed that the timber would be more profitable than the cacao and recommended this type of plantation for steep hill land. After this we divided up into two groups one going to Sans Souci beach to camp for the night and the other going to Muriel Pierre's house nearby.

The next day the two groups joined again for a walk to Petit Reviere but this proved disappointing when we took a wrong turn that delayed us so much that we never got to Petit Reviere. Furthermore, the walk was mostly through cultivated land and produced little of interest to either botanists or zoologists. However, the campers at Sans Souci did find evidence of leatherback turtles nesting on the beach.

Luisa Zuniaga  
Honorary Secretary