

MEETINGS - 3RD QUARTER 1985

You are invited to attend the monthly meetings of the club to be held on Thursdays July 11th, August 8th and September 12th 1985 at 5.30 pm at the Audio Visual Room of St. Mary's College.

A G E N D A

1. Confirmation of the Minutes
2. Business arising out of the Minutes
3. Announcements
4. Exhibits and Miscellaneous notes
5. Other Business
6. Lecture

L E C T U R E S

July 11th - THE SOCIAL REGULATION OF EGG LAYING BEHAVIOUR IN SOME STINGLESS BEES FROM TRINIDAD
by Dr. Marinus Sommeijer

Aug. 3th - MEMBERS EVENING

Sept. 12th - PRACTICAL ECOLOGY by Mr. Grant Davidson

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REPORT OF THE BIRD GROUP ON OVERNIGHT CAMP AT ARIPO SAVANNAH - (A.M. Kacal)

On 9th March 1985 the bird group went to camp at the Aripo Savannah so that they could be there for the dawn chorus of birds. The reason for this was that on usual trip to the savannah the arrival was too late to see much bird life.

The group consisted of Anne Marie Kacal, David Rooks, Frankie Farrell, Victor Quesnel, Luisa Zuniaga, Paul Christopher and Graham White. We stayed on the savannah until about 12 Noon the following day.

One of the group's most exciting finds was a pair of Bat Falcons nesting near to our camp. On two occasions members of the group saw the pair mating and during the late afternoon on Saturday we were able to see the falcons hunting bats.

Birds seen that weekend at entrance to savannah - Yellow rumped caciques, Cocoa thrush, Bare eyed thrush, Sulphury flycatcher - All feeding on a Royal Palm. Red Bellied macaws feeding on palms. Great kiskadee, Tinamo, Crested Oropendola, White bearded manakin, Orange winged parrots (a large flock), Turkey vulture, Rufous browed peppershrike, Fork tailed Palm Swift, Barred antshrike, Bare eyed thrush, Blue chinned sapphire, Ruby topaz hummingbird, White lined tanager, Scaled pigeon, Palm tanager, Blue grey tanager, Lilac tailed parrotlets, White hawks, Rufous breasted hermit. (Pauraque seen on road at night.

Large flocks of red bellied macaws were seen in the morning, these flocks were over 100 strong and were seen feeding in the palms all morning.

A Moriche Oriole was seen by Paul Christopher and Grayam White on the 10th on the way back to the cars.

ONE HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY - July 10, 1991 - We are calling on members to volunteer to serve on the planning and organising committee. Please telephone the Secretary, Assistant Secretary or Sylvia Kacal at 624-3619.

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F I E L D T R I P S

July 28th EL TUCUCHE (Leave POS 6 A.M.) Very strenuous walk.

Aug. 24/25th CAMP AT ICACOS

Sept. 29th SALIBIA REEF (Leave POS 6A.M.) Easy walking on the beach.

FIELD TRIP TO LAGON BOUFFE ON 24TH FEB. 1985 (V. Quesnel)

There was a good turn out for this trip which was led by Paul Comeau. An easy walk through sparsely vegetated country took us to the bouffe which is a lake with a few active vents belching forth gas and mud. The vegetation in the vicinity is somewhat like that at Moruga Bouffe being definitely affected by the salt content of the water. I made a list of all the plants I could identify but will not reproduce it here. Some of the more prominent ones were seaside mahoe (Pariti tiliaceum), matapal (Clusia rosea), and Rhabdadenia biflora. Not too far away was a cannonball (Couroupita guianensis) and a massive silk cotton (Ceiba pentandra) that may be even bigger than the one we measured at Moruga.

I did not pay too much attention to the birds in the area but did note the Plumbeous Kite and some other hawks. As we were leaving Diane Renaud spotted a large butterfly with a striking brick red pattern that I later identified as the Leaf shoemaker (Anaea itys). It is not all that common and was a good find.

FIELD TRIP TO BOIS NEUF ON 31 MARCH 1985 (V. Quesnel)

This was a trip that I had long wanted to make but it turned out to be a disappointment because I never reached Bois Neuf. We knew in advance that the trip would be impossible without a guide for the area is thick with marijuana plants whose growers protect them with trap guns. Our guide walked fast and apparently did reach Bois Neuf with two or three members of the club but the rest of us had to turn back without reaching our objective.

Bois Neuf is a hill in the Nariva Swamp and during the wet season is isolated by water. In the dry season a muddy trail to it can be followed. On the outskirts of the swamp the vegetation was that of a degraded lowland forest with trees such as guatecare (in fruit), cajuca, crappo, blackheart, genip, bois mulatre and bois pois (with flowers springing directly from the trunk) and secondary species such as keskidee. There were scattered cabbage palms (Roystonea oleracea) and as we got deeper into the swamp more and more pic-moc (Bactris spp.) until they clustered so closely as to exclude almost everything else. Here the going got very tough indeed because the mud was soft and deep and tended to throw one off balance. In such a situation the natural tendency is to grab something for support but the only support available was pic-moc with its abundance of long slender thorns. This so slowed progress that most of us had to turn back long before reaching Bois Neuf.

Still, there were gains. A possibly unrecorded species of the Marantaceae was collected and the ornithologists had a good day seeing Plumbeous Kites, toucans, the White-tailed Trogon a Green Kingfisher and many other birds. The large snail Ampullaria giga was common and so were clusters of green eggs attributed to it. Graham White reported seeing at least ten mottes (Tupinambis nigropunctatus). The area is thus, rich in wild life and would be fascinating to explore in more detail if it were safer.

FIELD TRIP TO THE CUMACA CAVE ON 29TH APRIL 1985 (V. Quesnel)

Our trip was well timed on this occasion because the trail to Brothers Estate was dry instead of being wet and muddy as it usually is. Most of the group went into the cave with David Rooks where he organized a count of the oilbird nests. He found a considerable increase over the approximately 250 nests found on our trip on 7th March 1976. This difference is probably not due to an inaccurate count on the earlier occasion but to genuine increase in number. In 1976 the birds occupied only the first chamber. Now, the birds have established nests in the second chamber as well.

In the hope of getting clues to the origin of the water in the cave a small group explored a ravine just to the west of the cave and leading up into the hills in a more or less south westerly direction. As on a previous occasion we found water disappearing through the porous limestone of the stream bed at one point but not in sufficient amounts to account for the water in the cave. Other ravines in the area need to be explored, probably in the wet season. This would be a difficult task but might prove worth the effort.

FIELD TRIP FROM SANTA CRUZ TO MARACAS BAY ON 26th MAY 1985 (V. Quesnel)

I do not know whether it was the long week-end or the decision that the trip was to be only one way but this was the most poorly attended field trip of any that I have taken

part in. Only eight people turned up for what is quite an easy and attractive walk through lower montane rain forest. Some of the common trees noted were jaxeton, puni, tapana, yellow olivier, keskidee (Vismia cayenensis), incense (Protium guianensis), mahoe and many figs (Ficus spp) that we could not identify to the species level. Maraquil (Cupania sp.) was in fruit. The fruit is a tawny, wooly, top-shaped capsule that splits open into three compartments each of which contains a black seed with a bright orange aril. Incense was just coming into flower.

There were several seedlings of an unidentified member of the Rubiaceae that I had found previously on Morne Catherine but no sign of an adult tree. I took a seedling home to see if I could grow it to maturity and eventually identify it. There was, too, an unrecorded Psychotria (another "rube") that I had first found on the Rio Seco some years ago. I have had no success yet in identifying it. For me, therefore, the trip was worthwhile for these specimens alone. However, there was more. I collected a cigale which is the male of the same species as a female that flew into my glass at a meeting of the club's Management Committee a couple of weeks ago. This new specimen was making a "crackling" sound just before it was caught and it will be identified in due course. Having got fed up with hearing cigales on almost every field trip and having no knowledge whatever of them I recently began to collect them with the intention of having them identified and matching species with song. So far, I have had three identified by a kind Prof. at the University of Michigan and matched them to their songs. The road ahead is long, though, for if our cigale fauna is comparable to that of Costa Rica (as I think it may well be) then we have about 30 species!!

Frankie Farrell achieved one of his minor ambitions by cutting a leaf of a cocorite palm and measuring it. In fact, all three of us, Frankie, Luisa and I, measured it, Frankie and I by shoe lengths and Luisa with a leaflet more or less one arm's length. The results were Frankie 36 ft., Luisa 35 ft. and I 34.5 ft. Add another 2 ft. for the base that was not cut and we have a leaf approximately 37 ft. long. Some leaf! Of course, a palm leaf is what nearly everyone calls a palm branch.

BIRD GROUP'S TRIP TO OROPOUCHE LAGOON ON 21st APRIL 1985 (A.M. Kacal)

This trip was fairly successful as far as birds were concerned although the area was very dry and very little wet marsh lands was seen.

We visited Mosquito Creek, Trinidad Point, Gordineau River and La Fortune Pluck Road. One interesting fact is that during the whole day not one bananaquit was seen. This is a record as every where we have ever been seems to have bananaquits.

Birds seen were, Yellow hooded blackbird, Yellow throated spinetail, Black hawk, Spotted sandpiper, Pale vented pigeon, Great keskidee, Louisiana heron, Blue black grassquit, Great blue heron, Crested oropendola, Bicoloured conebill, White necked heron, Tropical mockingbird, White headed marsh tyrant, Barn swallow, Wattled jacana, Green rumped parrotlet, Yellow Oriole, Carib Grackle, Lesser yellowlegs, Osprey, Black crested antshrike, Blue grey tanagers, Cattle Egret, Tropical kingbird, Great egret, Black vulture, Red breasted blackbird, Pied Water tyrant, Shiny cowbird, Grey hawk. Scarlet Ibis were also seen and the interesting thing about this was that all the birds seen were immature. About 15 were seen together. A large flock of Louisiana Herons was also seen.

Cacundie was also visited but because it was too late in the day and too hot for many birds to be out, we hardly saw any life. Those seen were:- White headed marsh tyrant, Carib Grackle, Louisiana Heron, Cattle egret, Pale vented pigeon, Striped cuckoo, Tropical mockingbird, Snowy Egret, Little blue heron, Spotted sandpiper, Black hawk, Northern waterthrush, Tropical kingbird.

Luisa Zuniaga
Honorary Secretary

June 7, 1985.

THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

J U L Y 10TH 1991

Is Our Club's 100th Anniversary

This event is a very important occasion for the club and in the long run a most important one for our Nation since it is largely or should I say solely through the actions and activities of the club and its members that the Nation has become aware of the crucial part the environment and nature plays in the everyday quality of our life.

This is Your Club, This is The Nation's
Field Naturalists' Club

Every member of this club is expected to start thinking deeply as to how they want their club to celebrate this great event. Every member should want and expect to make a personal contribution.

Come forward in your numbers, come forward with your ideas

Whatever we decide to do must be done on a significant scale that will mark this as a major National historical event. Whatever we decide to do must be done with supreme professionalism as only Trinidadians and Tobagonians can do when they put their heart and soul to it.

(Remember Carnival, Remember the Pope's visit)

Six years is not a very long time to plan - There will be money to be raised. Papers and articles to be published. Exhibitions to be planned. Venues to be booked long in advance to ensure we get them on the exact dates we want them. Very important personages with busy schedules to be invited long in advance before anyone else gets their clutches on them. Etc. Etc.

NOW is the time to act. NOW! NOW! NOW!

Volunteer your valuable time and brains to serve on a planning and organising committee.

Give your names to:- Sylvia Kacal Tel. 624-3619
or Luisa Zuniaga Tel. 624-3321

We invite your preliminary suggestions which will be discussed at Management level, however, we will remain open to further ideas or suggestions that you can offer at any time and look forward to your consistent interest.

June 9, 1985.