

Dear Member

We apologise for any inconvenience caused by the change of lecture in February and ask that you note that Dr. Camps' lecture has been postponed to April 1986, and that the March lecture will be on "National Parks Planning and Management" by Mr. Richard Huber.

MEETINGS - 2ND QUARTER 1986

You are invited to attend the monthly meetings of the club to be held on Thursdays April 10th, May 8th and June 12th 1986 at 5.30 p.m. 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

PROPOSED LECTURES

- April 10th - Voyage to the South Pacific by Dr. Michael Camps
May 8th - The Role of the National Herbarium of Trinidad & Tobago
by Mrs. Yasmin Comeas
June 12th - Feathered Jewels by Mr. Ian Lambie

PROPOSED FIELD TRIPS

- April 26/27th - Camp at Matura (Turtle tagging and Rio Seco)
May 24/25th - Camp at Charlotteville, Tobago (Leave on Friday afternoon)
(Members Only)
June 27th - Not yet decided. Check your Programme when received.

PLEASE NOTE: Children allowed only if accompanied by their parents who are to be responsible for them.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Became due on January 1st. Non financial members will not receive any bulletins, etc. after this issue.

HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS: Colin Agostini has accepted the chairmanship of the committee for this occasion. Any member having ideas and/or willing to help please contact him at 624-3332 or the Secretary or Assistant Secretary.

SOME UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTINGS - by David Rooks

- 1) Albinism: (a) An albino orange-winged parrot (Amazona amazonica) in Trinity Forest Reserve, Moruga. Circa mid 1961. Seen amongst other normal orange-winged parrots.
(b) Carib Grackle (Quiscalus lugubris) South Valsayn, second two primaries on both wings totally white. Early 1984 in a large flock of grackles on a dry tree within 20 feet of the writer.
- 2) Single King Vulture (Sarcoramphus papa) in Trinity Forest Reserve, Moruga, mid 1961.
- 3) Carib Grackles feeding side by side with wading birds at the overflow from the Laventille sewerage treatment ponds up to their breasts in the water and apparently sharing the same food. Witnessed by S. Kacal, A.M. Kacal and the writer. January 1985.

NESTING OF THE SOUTHERN LAPWING by Pat Milne

It seems that within recent years the Southern Lapwing has been nesting in Trinidad. (In the 1985-1986 journal ffrench lists some recent records) Around May last year I first noticed a pair with four young ones living for several weeks near the dam on the Trintoç Camp at Clark Road, Penal. Again this year, around the same time, I was very excited when I saw a pair one evening but I never saw them, or any others after that. However on 21-22nd September 1985, again at Penal in the same spot, I saw five on Saturday evening and three on Sunday morning. They seemed to be two pairs and one young one. I noticed they were quite accustomed to people passing, traffic and loud noises, so perhaps this is an indication that they are breeding here regularly. We will see what happens next year.

"Big ffrench" is thirteen years old. (V. Quesnel)

In the Quarterly Bulletin for the fourth quarter of 1985 I reported the sighting of several Spotted Tody-flycatchers, Todirostrum maculatum, at Icacos on 24th - 25th August 1985 and stated that this bird had not been seen since the first record of its presence in 1957. I had consulted ffrench's Guide to the birds of Trinidad and Tobago and found no reference to it between 1957 and the date of publication. Soon after the bulletin was circulated Graham White found a reference to a nesting pair at Icacos in a paper by ffrench and Manolis in Living World 1983-1984, p.29. This species had in fact been seen regularly since 1981. I had forgotten that 'Big ffrench' is thirteen years old now and that many discoveries have been made since its publication in 1973. It is the first book one should consult for information about Trinidad birds but issues of our journal, Living World, for the past ten years or so should also be consulted because much of the new information is recorded there.

"Little ffrench" has just been born (V. Quesnel)

A letter from Richard ffrench reveals that his new booklet on the common birds of our islands is in print and ready for distribution this month (February). For the person who is not seriously studying birds but wants to know something about the commoner species this is the book to have and it will cost much less than "Big ffrench". I imagine though that serious bird watchers will want to own both books. Let us give it a rousing welcome.

FIELD TRIP TO SALIBIA REEF, TOCO, on September 29th 1985 (F. Farrell)

In the report on this trip published in the 1st Quarter Bulletin of 1986 I was unable to give the identifications of the corals and the fish. Mr. John Harding, one of our members, has very kindly given me some help in this matter. He has written me a letter in which he gives possible identifications, but as can readily be appreciated, not having seen the specimens he could not be positive in those identifications. From his letter I quote:

"First to the corals. The Finger coral could be one of these three :
(A) Club Finger coral (Porites porites) (b) Finger coral (Porites furcata)
(c) Small Finger coral (Porites divaricata). The Club Finger coral has blunt swollen tips. The Finger coral tapers at the branch tips and the Small Finger coral has smaller branches than the Finger coral and ~~does not~~ does not taper at the ends. The Staghorn coral is (Acropora cervicornis). The green and brown corals you saw may be the Mountainous star coral (Montastraca annularis). This is a major reef coral which forms boulders five feet or more across and up to ten feet high. Colour may be green, brown or grey. This is as close as I can come from your description in the newsletter.

The Fish will be very difficult to accurately identify unless you can identify them from pictures or very accurate drawings. Why this is so will now be explained. There are many species of fish in each 'family'. In the gobie 'family' I know of 4 species, the Neon goby (Gobiosoma occanops), the Bridlegoby (Coryphopterus glaucofraenum), the Cleaning goby (Gobiosoma genie) and the Sharknose goby (Gobiosoma evelynae).

In the case of the Parrot fish and the Snappers it is even worse. I know of eight species. The 3 Parrotfish are the Stoplight parrotfish (Sparisoma viride), the Queen Parrotfish (Scarus vetula), the Blue Parrotfish (Scarus coeruleus), the Midnight parrotfish (Scarus coelestinus), the Rainbow Parrotfish (Scarus guacamaia), the Redband Parrotfish (Sparisoma aurofrenatum), the Striped Parrotfish (Scarus croicensis) and the Princess Parrotfish (Scarus taeniopterus). One note on the Parrotfish. They turn coral and rock into fine sand in the process of grazing algae from them.

The 3 Snapper Fish species are the Schoolmaster (*Lutjanus apodus*), the Mutton Snapper (*Lutjanus analis*), the Dog snapper (*Lutjanus jocu*), the Grey snapper (*Lutjanus griseus*), the Cubera snapper (*Lutjanus cyanopterus*), the Lane snapper (*Lutjanus synagris*) the Mahogany snapper (*Lutjanus mahogani*) and the Yellowtail snapper (*Ocyurus chrysurus*). A couple of the snappers may be poisonous if eaten. I regret that the scientific name for the Footballers escapes me at present.

Ian Lambie has given me the name of the footballers, also called Sergeant majors. It is *ABUDEFDUF SAXATILIS*.

FIELD TRIP TO LA LAJA WATERFALL 27th October 1985 (V. Quesnel)

I am not sure exactly what happened to cause the confusion on this trip. Either there are two waterfalls in the Guanapo valley or there is one waterfall accessible by two different routes. Anyway, although the route was scouted ahead of time, communication between the scouters and the leaders of the trip were somehow garbled or misinterpreted and the large party, which included many young people from a hikers club, was lead along a route that failed to take us to the waterfall. Fortunately, this was discovered to be the wrong route early enough to leave time for another try. We turned back and then made another approach by the main trace running near the Guanapo River. This lead to a gorge which was impressive enough to be some compensation for the missed waterfall and most persons went no further. In the end most people seemed reasonably happy although the botanists had little to collect. The gorge is probably worth another trip if we can get there earlier and have time to explore the surroundings. Advice about this from those who were at the gorge would be welcomed by the Management Committee.

Arrangements had been made for a camera crew from TTT to film the trip. It's a good thing they never turned up.

FIELD TRIP TO THE OROPOUCHE SWAMP (SOUTH) on November 24th 1985 -
(Frankie Farrell, Graham White and Scott Alston-Smith)

This area has seldom been visited by the club and it was done at the suggestion of David Rooks. David organized an exploratory trip so that the leader would be well prepared to guide the group on excursion day. It was obvious from this visit that the area was well supplied with birds. Unfortunately David could not come on the 24th, nor could Victor Quesnel and so leadership devolved on myself (Frankie).

With a little trouble I got the group to the area recommended by David called Trinidad Point. I am unable to say how this name originated. The general plan was that those interested in birds would go along one of the raised banks passing through the swamp. Another group interested in plants and butterflies would go along a road passing through a somewhat drier section. This roadway led to a few active oil wells and it was not long before a jeep with two men in it drew up and started to question us as to what we were doing in the area. They were obviously rural police and I had to undertake to answer their questions. It took some time for them to accept that a number of adult men and women had only come to the area to look at the plants and the birds, butterflies and other animals, but when the idea eventually got through they were quite polite and friendly but suggested that if we came back to the area again we should get permission to do so.

Scott Alston-Smith caught a few butterflies: some Hesperids and a Lycaenid, *THECLA BESIDIA*. Another interesting catch was a Riodinid, *NYMULA PELOPS*, commonly called a yellow nymula. This butterfly has yellow wings with a rather broad brown to reddish brown border. It is not a common butterfly and when found is observed to be highly localised.

At some point along the road a mongoose was seen, but I was not present at the time.

The bird group, led by Graham White, found that the lagoon lived up to expectations. First there was a Blue-back Grassquit, *VOLATINIA JACARINA*, commonly called Ci-ci Zeb, or Johny Jump-up. This bird has the habit of jumping up about a foot high in the same spot, sometimes over very long periods. Two ducks were seen: the Black-bellied Tree Duck, *DENDROCYGNA AUTUMNALIS* and the Blue-winged Teal, *ANAS DISCORS*. The former commonly called Wichichi, was once considered a pest because it fed on the rice fields at night. Excessive hunting and a decrease in the feeding areas resulted in the bird becoming quite scarce. It makes a whistling sound, hence its common name. The Blue-winged Teal is a

common visitor from the north between the months of September as late as May the following year. Four Long-winged harriers, (CIRCUS BUFFONI) were seen. This was the sighting of the day. Of the four individuals seen one showed adult dark-phase and another adult light-phase plumage, while another showed immature plumage. Harriers are rather rare birds of prey which feed on fish. Almost inevitably the very common Ruddy Ground-Dove, COLUMBINA TAIAPACOTI, was seen. Another migrant was the Northern Waterthrush, SEIURUS NOVEBORACENSIS, which appears in this region during approximately the same months as the Blue-winged Teal. The two vultures were seen: the Black Vulture or Corbeau, CORAGYPS ATRATUS, and the Turkey Vulture or King Corbeau, CATHARTES AURA. These two somewhat similar looking birds can be easily distinguished. There are differences in shape and size, in manner of flight and the latter has a red neck. Three herons put in an appearance: the Green-backed Heron or Gaulin, BUTORIDES VIRESCENS; the Little Blue Heron, FLORIDA CAERULEA; and the Tricoloured Heron, HYDRANASSA TRICOLOR. The Cattle Egret or Tick Bird, BUBULEUS IBIS, closely related to the herons, was also seen. Tyrant flycatchers were observed, notably the Pied Water Tyrant, also called the Washerwoman or the Nun, FLUVICOLA PICA, and the White-headed March Tyrant, also called the Widow or the Nun, ARUNDINICOLA LEUCOCEPHALA. Other birds observed were the Grey-breasted Martin, PROGNE CHALYBEA, which is essentially gregarious; the Tropical Kingbird or Grey-headed Kiskadee, TYRANNUS MELANCHOLICUS; four Ospreys or Fish Hawks, PANDION HALIAETUS; the Yellow-throated Spinetail, CERTHIAxis CINNAMOMEA; the Yellow Warbler or Trinidad Canary, DENDROICA PETECHIA, a visitor from abroad; a Peregrine Falcon or Duck Hawk, FALCO PEREGRINUS, another visitor from the North; and a Solitary Sandpiper, TRINGA SOLITARIA. Still another visitor from abroad. Almost inevitably those widely distributed and common birds, the Smooth-billed Ani or Merle Corbeau and the Tropical Mockingbird were seen. Their scientific names are CROTOPHAGA ANI and MIMUS GILVUS respectively.

Many well known plants were observed and some not so well known collected. As the identifications of the latter have not yet been received I am holding back the listing of these plants for a later bulletin.

Luisa Zuniaga
Honorary Secretary
February 24, 1986.