

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

Dear Member

THIRD QUARTER 1991

CENTENARY YEAR

You are cordially invited to attend the Centenary Week of Celebrations, details of which follow. R.S.V.P. will be appreciated for all functions through 624-3321 (Sec); 624-2709 (Asst. Sec) or 637-5123 (Dr. Tikasingh).

July 7th Sunday 10.30 a.m. Interfaith Service at the St. Ann's R.C. Church.

Worship leader: Father Christian Pereira
Sermon: The Rev. Cyril Paul
Prayers: Dr. Mohammed Aziz and
Pundit Sadanan Ramnarine

Members and guests should be seated by 10.10 a.m.)

Tree-planting ceremony at the Botanic Gardens -
Immediately after the Church service.

The Public is invited to these two events.

July 8th Monday, 6.30 pm - Official opening of the Museum Exhibit at the National Museum (Annexe). Members please indicate to Miss L. Zuniaga or Mrs. Barbara Zolna 628-3731 if you will attend. Note: We need this information for catering purposes.

The Exhibit will be opened to the public from July 9 to July 23 at the regular museum hours. (Tuesdays to Saturdays, 9.00 am. to 6.00 pm.)

July 9th Tuesday - 5.30 p.m. LECTURE - "Lead In Our Local Environment, Today's Concern Tomorrow's Problem?" by Dr. Ivon Chang Yen. This lecture will be held at St. Mary's College - Audio-Visual Room, Frederick Street. Open to the Public.

July 10th Wednesday 7.00 p.m. Anniversary Dinner at the St. Andrews Golf Club, Moka, Maraval. Open to members, their families and friends. The cost is \$60.00 - Please pay-up if attending. After-dinner lecture by Mr. Richard French.

July 11th 5.30 p.m. Members Evening at St. Mary's College, Audio-Visual Room. (Co-ordinator: Muriel Pierre, Tel. 622-3481)

July 12th to 14th Friday to Sunday - Field Trip to Tobago

- (1) Two lectures
- (2) Three field trips

We have booked a house in Blackrock at \$200 per night. We need that members URGENTLY confirm if they attending (Co-ordinator: Diane Renaud, Tel. 671-3583)

June 17th - July 15th - EXHIBITION of Books on Natural History of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean at the UWI Library, St. Augustine.

Library Hours: 17-20th June - 8.30 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.

June 21 to July 15 - 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Mondays only - June 24 and July 1 & 8 - 8.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m.

Saturdays - 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

For further information contact - Ms. L. ZUNIAGA 624-3321
or Dr. Elisha Tikasingh 637-5123

NOTE:

Stamp-launching - This activity originally carded for July 10th has been postponed to a later date, due to administrative difficulties.

You are also invited to attend the monthly meetings of the club to be held on Thursdays August 8th and September 12th 1991 at 5.30 p.m. at the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College. Also the field trips as listed:

A G E N D A

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

L E C T U R E S

July 7-14th - Per Centenary Celebrations Programme

August 8th - Members Evening

Sept. 12th - THE BIOLOGY OF THE CASCADU AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR CULTURE
BY Mr. Indar Rammarine

F I E L D T R I P S

July 28th - "SOHO" Cave (Leave Port of Spain at 6.00 a.m.)

August 25th - North Oropouche

Sept. 28/ 29th - CHACACHARE (Camp) Members only.

The Dinner Committee requests your assistance with the following:-

(1) We would like to get all kinds of fruits, cultivated or wild - to make a centre-piece decoration for the Dinner Reception area. Green vegetables will also do.

(2) Also needed to serve at the dinner is coconut water (on the 10th) Those who have - can you bring it in bottles on the night of the dinner.

We are not asking that you buy the above - bring whatever you have at home.

(3) We would also like to have a good supply of oldman's beard for decorating purposes - who can assist with this?

Thanks in advance. For further information you may call Rosemary Hernandez 645-2132; Jim or Pat Milne 637-3576 or the Secretary or Assistant Secretary. (Tel. Nos. in your programmes)

PLEASE SUPPORT ALL THE CENTENARY ACTIVITIES - ITS THE CLUB'S ANNIVERSARY AND YOU MAKE THE CLUB.

A T T E N T I O N , Have you moved - is your address the same
Have you changed your telephone Number
Please keep us advised

ARIPO CAVE

by
Paul L. Comeau

Driving up Aripo Road just after dawn
With its hair-raising turns may stifle your yawns
The meagre breakfast you had will struggle to stay down
While the vehicle swerves left, are the brakes really sound?

On up to Millette's house at the top of the hill
You lace up your boots, there's no time to stand still
To the top of the ridge, a steep climb lies ahead
Then a short descent down to the dry river bed

The stench of the guano lingers now in the air
As the earth opens up you can't help but to stare
Is this Dante's inferno that gapes from below?
As oil birds start screeching, surely a curse they bestow

Lost souls out of Hades never sounded so forlorn
As these hideous creatures who shatter the peace of the morn
Slipping down and sliding, into the depths you must go
The sky up above acquires a strange eyrie glow

It feels like you're peering from the bottom of a pool
But the air all around you is anything but cool
The deeper you go into the bowels of the earth
The thicker the guano of which there's no dearth
Penetrating a world of blackness that swallows all light
You leave the realm of vision and enter eternal night
Soon you will abandon all signs of this life
Birds, bats and roaches, and sometimes a wife

The tunnel then narrows and takes a sharp turn
The thrill of adventure, is this what you yearn?
Suddenly a precipice plunges into the void
A point the faint-hearted will want to avoid

The moment has arrived when fear may take hold
Shall you turn back or will you be bold?
It's over the edge and into the unknown
Uneasiness is swallowed, courage needs to be shown

The drop levels off some 30 feet down
And a respectable tunnel is there to be found
It beckons you on to another big drop
This one ten feet less which brings you to the top

Of a monstrous great cavern that angles further on down
With boulders strewn everywhere all over the ground
The rubble that is scattered here and there on the floor
Is a reminder of danger that may yet lie in store

Eventually you reach a point where the ceiling and floor
Come so close together, is there room left to explore?
You've arrived at the Siphon and will have to decide
Do you want to get wet or do you prefer to stay dry?

The water is cold and will just catch your breath
As you crawl on your belly, a leg cramp you may get
Your knees and your elbows will become rather bruised
Your flashlight and helmet, they too are abused

The former may submerge, the light growing dim
A bump on the latter will rattle your spine and your chin
A smaller cavern will appear as you emerge from the floor
Is this the end of the venture or is there still more?

Behind a big rock off to the right
A sinuous tunnel is discerned that vanishes quickly from sight
Crawling through the limestone that the water has moulded
A serpentine hollow nature has twisted and folded

Doubling over to the point where your knees touch your chin
The water rushes by as it cascades within
Tumbling over the bedrock, you are soaked through your skin
The winding and descending seem to be without end

Your limbs are so weary, your feet are so tired
Your body is aching, why don't you expire?
The pools are refreshing at the base of each chute
So you quickly slide in without giving a hoot

Your water-filled boots weigh more than a ton
Just lifting them up is no longer much fun
What an effort it takes to push over a hump
Your foot may get stuck and your head take a thump

Punishment such as this probably addles the brain
So you begin to ponder, are you going insane?
Eventually you come to a hole in the floor
Where the water tumbles down and you see it no more

You find a lateral passage and try to squeeze through
But the tunnel has narrowed to the width of a flue
Where you may ask is the water expelled?
Better cease to wander for you may end up in Hell

Time to turn around and ascend from the dead
To the world of the living, for twilight lingers ahead
Retracing your steps and reversing the pattern
Back through the Serpentine, Siphon and Cavern

Rocking on cable ladders is certainly no joke
Maintaining your balance, how secure is the rope?
Trying to remember how to tie a good bowline
The ladders' gyrations will make for a slow climb

Is your mind playing tricks or is that a faint light
Subtly invading the inky blackness of night?
As brightness increases causing a squint in the eye
It's hard to believe that up there is the sky!

Emerging from the depths it feels rather strange
That you've seen the abyss and yet still remain sane
Collecting your thoughts, your wits and your pride
Down the mountain you go, wearily, as daylight subsides

Report on Trip to El Tucuche - Sunday May 26, 1991 - by R. F. Barnes

The party of 19 set off in good spirits, after parking the cars in the estate yard at Ortinola, only to find that a logging tractor/grader had completely changed the character of the trail.

As soon as we reached the third stream crossing we found a broad muddy road in place of the former pleasant grassy track. It was luckily fairly dry and so easy walking, but in the wet season it will be more difficult, as was shown by the next few stream crossings, which, instead of clear water trickling over stones, consisted of ankle-deep mud and dirty water.

The road is still fairly well shaded, and we made good time up the slope for about half an hour, when two members turned back, since one of them was feeling unwell. The rest of us carried on and, after several good views of the valley and the northern plain, eventually reached a broad cleared grassy area of about 2 acres where the logging road stopped, except for a few short tracks into the surrounding forest where a few trees had been cut.

We were at this time about 200 feet below and to the west of the col between Naranja and Piedra Blanca. We took the logging track that pointed most nearly towards the col, but it petered out after about 100 yards, so we started to cut through the bush in roughly the same direction.

This was the beginning of more than two hours of unremitting labour for the four of the party who wielded the only cutlass in turn, and an interminable wait, scramble a few feet, and wait again for the rest of us! The cutting through was greatly slowed down by the innumerable fallen trees in the area.

We finally, more by good luck than judgement, reached the ridge where the dense clumps of balisier and other secondary bush gave way to tall trees and sparse undergrowth. From here we went down steeply to the north-east until we reached a steep cliff, Turning to the east we skirted the cliff until we joined the true trail some 200 yards west of the col. This part of the trip was brightened by the many specimens of the Bromeliads Vreisia splendens and Guzmania lingulata at about eye-level on the thinner tree trunks.

After liquid refreshment we set off happily along the trail behind Naranja, first mainly to the north-west and then turning towards the south-west. The trail was overgrown in places, and in one place we had to circumnavigate a tangle of fallen trees. By about midday - after nearly 5 hours walking - we reached the col between Naranja and El Tucuche, only to find that about 20 yards onto El Tucuche, where the path turns south along the face of the mountain, the trail completely disappeared. There were several trees fallen in the area, and we were unable to pick up the trail on the further side. As everyone by the time was fairly tired, and hungry!, we sat along a fallen log and had lunch.

After lunch we set off back round Naranja and made good time until we reached the col, where the trail turned down to Ortinola and also continues on round the north side of Piedra Blanca. The trail down was fairly easy to follow, except in three or four places where trees had fallen, and I was lucky enough to spot a nice flowering specimen of a vine in the Apocynaceae (the same family as the Yellow Allamanda) which was subsequently identified by the Herbarium as Prastonia britonii. It had only been collected once before, in 1922, by Broadway!

Presently we came out onto the tractor road again, between two large trees, which we marked. The one up the slope now bears a heart with an arrow below, and the lower one has a notch cut in its left buttress, so it should be easy to find where to turn right off the tractor road onto the old trail to the col.

Some 40 minutes later the leaders reached the estate again, and by 4.30 p. m. everyone was back down, after a strenuous but very enjoyable hike. Amongst the many birds seen was a mot-mot. Lots of noisy bell birds enlivened our trek below the col. One member of the party collected several inflorescences of different Heliconia spp. and one of Calathea casupito in the Marantaceae.

Even though we did not reach our objective on this occasion, I believe it was a successful trip. I was greatly impressed by the good humour and level-headedness of all members of the party, particularly under the considerable pressure of the most difficult and boring part of the trip. It augers well for the future of the Club in our second 100 years!

Luisa Zuniaga
Honorary Secretary

1 Errol Park Road
St. Ann's
June 19, 1991