

# THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

## FIRST QUARTER OF 1993

Dear Member

You are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the club to be held in the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College on Thursday January 14, 1993 at 5.30 p.m. Please note that this is the time to make changes to the Management Committee, so please attend the meeting and cast your vote.

### A G E N D A

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last A.G.M.
2. Business arising out of the Minutes
3. Honorary Secretary's Report for 1992
4. Honorary Treasurer's Report for 1992
5. Reports from all interest groups
6. Adoption of Proposed Addition to Rules
7. Other Business
8. Election of Officers for 1993

PROPOSED ADDITION TO RULES: "In the event of winding-up or dissolution of the Club, the surplus assets shall be paid or distributed to another charitable institution approved by the President."

The above clause is necessary to meet the requirements of the Board of Inland Revenue for application to 'Charitable Status'.

### NOTES TO the Election of Officers

Members elected to the Management Committee must be (a) Financial and (b) prepared as far as possible to attend all meetings of the Committee and of Membership meetings. (2) Honorary Auditors and other Committee Members must also be financial members.

Management Committee - Although all members are eligible for re-election, for various personal reasons the following do not offer themselves for re-election, Luisa Zuniaga/Hon. Secretary, Paul Christopher and Victor Quesnel. With the exception of Ishmael Samad who could not be contacted, all the other members offer themselves for re-election.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Became due on January 2, 1992. Please pay early.  
Adults \$30.- - Juniors \$15.00.

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YOU are also invited to attend the Monthly Meetings of the club to be held on Thursdays February 11th and March 11th 1993 at 5.30 p.m. at the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College. Also the field trips as listed below:-

### 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

Feb. 11th - SOME ASPECTS OF THE QUARRYING INDUSTRY by Carrall Alexander.

Mar. 11th - PANEL DISCUSSION on MANATEES by Jalaludin Khan.



## F I E L D   T R I P S

January 31st - PARA GRANDE (North Coast) - Leader J. Khan) See notes\*\*

February 28th - SOHO CAVE (Central Northern Range) Leader P. Comeau

March 28th - ROAD TO HELL (Manzanilla) - Leaders H. Boos & G. Kelshall

\*\* Notes from Mr. Jalaludin Khan - This trip could be considered a hard hike. Those attending should be very fit. Because of very narrow track and steep climb up-hill he recommends a relatively small number of members. CAUTION is a Must at all times and members are ESPECIALLY ASKED to keep information about the place private.

PLEASE NOTE that hike is through private lands. Therefore low impact hiking with organized group behaviour is requested. TRAVEL as light as possible - Wear good shoes, long pants and long sleeves.

OF INTEREST - Good birding, good study area for ecology students, etc. relatively untouched area for turtle nesting, good view of North Coast, etc

SOHO CAVE (from Trail Guide) - degree of difficulty moderate, distance four (4) miles, time 3/4 hours, highest elevation 2430 ft. Location in the Heights of Aripo.

ROAD TO HELL - Self explanatory

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### ESPECIALLY FOR NEW MEMBERS

What to expect from the Club and what the Club expects of you

1. The Club has monthly lecture/meetings and outings which you are invited to attend. When on outings members are required to observe the objectives of the club, especially in the conservation of Nature and natural resources, which of course demands that the surroundings be left as intact and as clean as possible. All garbage should be taken back with you to be disposed of and not left behind for other members to have to collect. NO Musical instruments should be brought on field trips to the forests - on these trips we want to listen to the music of nature. Young children will be allowed only if accompanied by their parents or guardians. Every member should bring along his or her basic requirements for the day i.e. water and food. In the rainy season a change of clothing is recommended.
  2. Quarterly bulletins are sent to all financial members. The annual subscription becomes payable in January.
  3. Biennially you will receive a copy of the Club's Journal "Living World"
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### FROM TOBAGO BRANCH - FIELD TRIP TO DOG RIVER (Sunday 27th September 1992)

By David Rooks

I have explored the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, visited all the beautiful places. I have seen few places to compare with the beauty of upper heights of the Dog River, Richmond, Tobago.

On Sunday 27th September, seven (7) fearless, intrepid naturalists ventured to explore this river. Fearless, for as you will remember our attempt to do so in November, 1991 led to an experience of extreme danger when we were caught in a rampaging flash flood, we had to swim for our lives and escaped by the skin of our teeth. This accounted for the fact that on this trek we only had 7 members, many others sincerely wishing to come but remembering that caution is the better part of valour, stayed home to look at television. It was definitely their great loss.

Those of us who were determined to go, kept an eye on the weather and our friend Robin Maraj assured us that there were no threatening cloud masses around. We set out from the Post Office, Scarborough at 7 a.m. as by that time we realised we were to be the full complement.

We arrived at our starting point on the Dog River and began walking at 7.40 a.m. All along the banks of the river there were signs of the high floods of the previous Monday, the night of the heart stopping lightning and thunder. The river water however was now immaculately clear, unlike how it had been when we started out in 1991. It was a day of gray, blue and white skies, the kind that makes poetry.



We walked up to the old dam and soon after the deep pool where we had made the fateful decision to turn back the last time, in trying to cross, I slipped on a rock and fell in dunking my camera and so got no pictures. The river surroundings are open to this point. Along the way we saw a few birds but only common ones. From this pool onwards the forest closed in, we entered a land of enchantment, a place of extraordinary pristine beauty, God's cathedral designed and made by himself. Every few meters there were gorgeous Emperor butterflies, we even saw two mating. A land of untouched rain forest, a forest of pure natural beauty. A river of continuous clear pools, water flowing in force, fresh and deliciously cool. Huge smooth volcanic rocks, a smell of enervating freshness, the perfume of life.

Each bend of the river brought scenes of even greater beauty. We were spellbound. I could not resist and being already wet walked into the water with all my clothes. We continued clambering over the enormous rocks for another few hundred meters when in front there unfolded a scene of unsurpassed beauty, a waterfall carved by God's hand with a deep pool of luscious green water flowing below it.

We stood and stared in awe and wonder. I dived in but could not touch the bottom. The water temperature I estimated at about 22°C. It made you feel to just stay there and soak forever, which I did.

The rest of the troop went over the falls where they found another pool, this new one had a natural slide. Resting comfortably in this pool was a speckled caiman, Tobago's alligator (*Caiman crocodilus*)

In the forested area, we had not spent too much time bird watching but we easily saw Rufous-breasted hermit, Red-rumped woodpecker, Blue-black Manakin, Tropical Kingbird, Crested Oropendola, Palm tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Rufous-breasted Wren, and what I thought might be a Gray-fronted Dove but French does not list it for Tobago. The bird appeared to be similar to the white-tipped Dove but no white edging on the tail. I did not have my binoculars at that moment and so will have to have the better luck next time. A little more time spent in serious bird watching I'm sure will turn up interesting species of this untouched place.

A matter of serious concern to us was that search as we might we could not find a single wild animal footprint, the place had been hunted clean, nothing has been left for present or future generations to enjoy. This is an inexcusable shame. Hunting in Tobago must be controlled, the missing animals replaced in the forest and a moratorium on hunting of not less than five years instituted so as to allow the wild creatures a breathing space to recoup. I am told by reliable old hunters that very little is caught anymore, it is obvious that all are suffering. There is no longer any reason for the inaction.

At about 11.30 a.m. we started back out each one exclaiming what a marvellous experience we had and how much we enjoyed it. We got back to our cars at about 12.30 p.m. To those of you who didn't come, don't eat your hearts out, see you next time.

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REPORT from Mr. Jalaludin Khan/Special Interest Group/Manatees  
The Manatee Awareness Network (M.A.N.)

OBJECTIVES: To raise public awareness of the endangered status of the Manatee and to focus on wider issues of active conservation of biological diversity. (Special focus on Trinidad East Coast)

OVERVIEW of Projects 1992

September 22-27th - I.M.A. Marine Heritage Exhibition. (A multidisciplinary educational exhibition). Much ground work was achieved here with the production of a manatee conservation exhibit. Achieved - the testing of public knowledge and sensitizing the public about manatees and their habitat protection. SPECIAL VOTE OF THANKS to all club members and friends who helped. Especially those who managed and designed the exhibit. Also thanks to foreign assistance. We are grateful.

- (2) October - Woodbrook Secondary School - Exhibit was three weeks in school library.
- (3) November - Exhibit displayed at the Emperor Valley Zoo's family day.

PROPOSED Activities for 1993

1. January to December - Research and campaigning to raise public awareness.
2. March 11th - Panel discussion/Video display on manatees - the crisis of our biodiversity.
3. July, August and September - Field Trips.

Proposed projects for 1993 - Production and Development

1. Development of a Research and Development group.
2. Manatee/Biodiversity conservation pamphlets.
3. Manatee Conservation Video
4. General Campaigning - Focus on mass media (TV, radio)

Materials available for free and for loan

1. General Manatee information/available for copying.
  2. Manatee an educator's Guide: Highly informative book with a multi-disciplinary education format. Available for copying.
  3. Habitat surveys
  4. Manatee Video/Exhibit/ for loan only.
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Luisa Zuniaga  
Honorary Secretary  
1 Errol Park Road  
St. Ann's, P.O.S.

January 4, 1993.



T & T F.N.C. - FIELD TRIP TO GOODWIN HEIGHTS NATURE CENTRE  
(ST. ANN'S PEAK)

JULY 26TH 1992 - BY DAN L. JAGGERNAUTH

Meeting at St. Mary's College, Pembroke Street side, for our July Field Trip, from where we drove around the beautiful Queen's Park Savannah. Some of the more "health conscious people" could be seen jogging (early morning) which is the best time for a "sweat out", when the "carbon monoxide" from the exhaust of motor vehicles is "less dense". We then drove up Ariapita Road, with a sight of the "multi-million dollar" Valley View Hotel. Old and new vehicles "screamed tires" through the steep, bumpy roads and passed the "mechanically fit test", reaching Goodwin Heights Nature Centre at 8:05 A.M. A large car park and a view of many horses, next door.

We then journeyed up Cashew Hill with Dr. Victor Quesnel and Eden Shand leading the path. After fifteen (15) minutes of strenuous walking, we saw hundreds of beautiful pine trees (*Pinus Caribaea*). A few steps ahead lay a scenic valley, as Hans Boos and Jalaludin called it the "unexplored valley". Continuing precipitously on a well constructed concrete pathway; specially "grooved" on both sides. This makes it much easily accessible with a "four wheel drive" and a "two foot" (man powered). The lower Montane forest here, is well interspersed with "Cocorite Palms" (*Maximiliana Maripa*).

On reaching Fondes Amande's Road, we took a ten (10) minutes break and then veered right. Charles De Gannes indicated the Tiger Butterfly (*Tithorea Harmonia*), with its black and yellow-brown colours. Ahead of us - two (2) large Tele-Communication Screens.

It's 9:30 A.M. and an open view of the valley below. As we awaited some folks at the back, many photographs were taken of a (Chenille Caterpillar) as indicated by Hans Boos. Quite an admirable environment here. It's unbelievable, that this picturesque, secluded and "romantic" setting exists just minutes drive from the bustling city of Port-of-Spain.

Continuing through the trail, I took up a "black feather" and looked at it. It was that of a "Black Vulture" (*Coragyps Atratus*). Ismael Samad then made a request for the feather. I gave him and after some observation, he placed it into his "shirt pocket" amidst his pens - enriching his appearance of a "Saga Boy".

Reaching the dense forest, Dr. Victor Quesnel indicated the "Clusia or Matapal". He said, "When the skin of the vine is peeled off, it turns 'yellow'". The experiment went on and the "Clusia Vine" really turned yellow. (Well done Victor)! As he continued to explain the vegetative state of plants, our President observing twenty-five (25) minutes had gone by with the "Clusia", then said, "Shall we move on now"?

Also hiking with us on this field trip was (84 years young) Mr. Frankie Farrell. Frankie is a living example of a man with strength, courage and determination. Many Field Naturalists who wish to reach his age and still be healthy, can make their dreams bear reality. Those who hike regularly or even take constant light exercise are less susceptible to diseases than others. As we grow older our muscles shrink and our joints stiffen. Moderate exercise, a balanced eating diet and maintaining a good body weight, are important assets in reaching our goal and staying healthy. It will not necessarily change our age, but certainly change how we age. We love to have you on our Field Trips, Frankie, - you are an inspiration to all the youngsters and the entire Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalist Club.

Walking through the drizzling rain, we headed for the peak. Reaching the St. Ann's Peak at 11.30 A.M., it was lunch time. A lone healthy Cedar tree (*Cedrella Odorata*) and the strong smell of its leaves, a misty view around us, we then decided to move on after thirty (30) minutes. Our President, Hans Boos, led the way. After five (5) minutes walk, he stopped and said, "My watch is lost". We turned back and a diligent search went on for ten (10) minutes, with no avail. Then Glen (from the Protective Services) said to Hans Boos, "For lost articles to be found, please call on 'Saint Philomena'". We then called on Saint Philomena and the search continued. After three (3) minutes our President's expensive watch was found. It was handed over to him and his countenance was transformed. (Thanks to Glen and Saint Philomena).

Walking down the slippery valley, Victor Quesnel was amazed by a gigantic "Matchwood tree" measuring more than three (3) metres in girth. It was observed that Victor frequently tasted leaves, bark and "flowers from trees" without having any negative effect on him. We hope that others do not try it, without knowledge of the plant or permission from Victor Quesnel, who has a wealth of experience.

Another fifteen (15) minutes walk took us to the road which leads to (Cookie, the bird lady). Those who visited her, will always remember the peaceful environment she lives in. Cookie (Celine Cesaire) lived in Martinique many years ago. She married a French Soldier - Yves De La Mott. In 1950 De La Mott purchased fifty (50) acres of mountainous land in Trinidad. He build a beautiful house for Celine Cesaire and fifteen (15) years later, died of "cancer". Cookie continued to live here in solitude until today. She love "birds" but not "snakes". She is 78 years old, a real nice person, and more active than many others her age. We continued our journey down and reached our vehicles safely.



T & T F.N.C. - FIELD TRIP TO GRANDE RIVIERE  
OCTOBER 25TH, 1992 - By Dan L. Jaggernaut

Driving through winding countryside roads, with vistas of lush valleys and evergreen hills, gave the ideal enthusiasm for our field trip to Grande Riviere. The two hours long drive from U.W.I. lured many to dip into their "lunch bags". Selwyn Gomes made an early morning trip and Edward Charles overnighted in order to help with the trail. Waiting for us too far up - after fifteen (15) minutes, they drove down to the Community Centre. Those who were delayed at the back finally arrived; we then drove further up through the plantations. Our President, (Hans Boos') "four wheel drive" handled the "rugged road" quite well. Ahead of us, a sign which read, "Grande Riviere Labour Intensive Development Program". A steep descending drive and then a long stretch where all vehicles parked. This road actually crossed over the river.

It's 9:30 A.M. and the journey began with "Cyril", our tour guide, leading the path. We walked constantly for twenty-five (25) minutes and saw a "Hunter's Camp". Cyril then said, "This camp is used for shooting the 'Pawi bird' and must be demolished. 'Rafters' came tumbling down, as Field Naturalists demonstrated, they are physically fit for any battle. One energetic youngster, "Barefooted Jamey", yelled in "Karate styling" and did a "front kick" sending one of the posts straight to the ground. The complete annihilation took four and a half (4½) minutes.

We continued the up-hill walk through an old logging trail, deepened by constant erosion. Some Field Naturalists started sweating heavily - but still spoke "vociferously", lessening the chances of seeing animals in the wild. Entering the coffee plantations (*Coffea Arabica*) thousands of "healthy saplings" lay beneath the shady trees.

Waiting for those at the back, our President (Hans Boos) then called to the attention of everyone. He said, "If we are to see anything significant, we must speak as little as possible". He also urged "Bare-footed Jamey" not to wander off the trail.

Continuing slowly, some very massive "Nutmeg trees" (*Myristica Fragans*) were sighted. Our President then indicated an area, where he held a (Balsain Mapipire) one week ago. As the journey went on "much more silently", it was much more rewarding. Four (4) (Pawi birds) were then sighted by Selwyn Gomes. The decline of the beautiful "Pawi birds" is due to "illegal hunting and habitat destruction". Grande Riviere is one of the few places where the Pawi bird still exists. Moving progressively slower now, our tour guide, Cyril, continued to cut a 'new trail'. This urged Noel Vaucrossen to ask him, "Are you sure we are not lost"? Cyril then replied, "A monkey cannot get lost in the forest". These words cheered up many of our Naturalists.

It's 11:45 A.M. on the ridge and lunch time for some - others preferred to wait until we reached the river. Quite breezy and natural here, as Beverly and Roop gazed on. Also adding lustre to the trip was beautiful Kathleen, after a long holiday. We then moved on, heading for the river. Cyril walked on with too much speed and left a group at the back, speculating which way to go. Edmund Charles then called and told me to direct those at the back while he "raced on" to cut down Cyril's pace. The sound of the river could be heard, but our tour guide went in the opposite direction. Eurico questioned, why should we go in the opposite direction - not knowing, it was only to 'avert a steep decline'. By this time Edmund slowed down our tour guide, and we cruised down to the river.

Reaching the Grande Riviere river at 12:35 P.M. was a dream fulfilled for seventy (70) Field Naturalists. The crystal clear waters of this Grand River was ideal for energetic Mark De Gannes and 'Barefooted' Jamey. It's lunch time for some, as Peggy shared some of her lunch - as she always does. Doing some great diving here are Trish and June. Haroon's camera lens always seem to be well focused on the beautiful ladies. Edmund Charles - exploring up the river; and lower down, others completely relaxed.

It's 2:30 P.M. and we began walking down the river, a very long stretch and a green bamboo hanging across. Amidst the leaves lay a large "Macajuel snake" (*Boa Constrictor*). Some Naturalists took a few close-up pictures, while others preferred to view it from three (3) metres away. Continuing slowly, and also adding "beauty and brains" to our field trip, were two (2) British Zoologists, Jackie Mills and Amanda Ferguson, who said, "We really love this beautiful paradise". Reaching our vehicles at 3:45 P.M., our tour guide, Cyril, decided

to give us some oranges. We then drove higher up and parked our vehicles. In fifteen (15) minutes, a 'climber' picked eighty (80) oranges. However, most Field Naturalists had already left, with just a few people to take care of 'all these oranges'. The sweet, luscious and juicy oranges 'were dealt with' in the 'right way' by, Kay, Dianne, Vaucrossen, Ian Cross, Edmund, Eric, Jackie, Amanda and Selwyn Gomes.

This Field Trip was beautiful and also 'safe', even for "Bare-footed Jamey". We hope that in future field trips, all "Parents and Guardian " take care of their 'kids'. We love to have the youngsters around - they are the Field Naturalists of tomorrow - But, we also love to have them obeying all "Field Trip" rules and regulations laid down by the Trinidad And Tobago Field Naturalist Club. If someone gets hurt on a field trip, due to his own negligence, the entire Club will in some way or the other be affected. Please obey all Field Trip rules and prevent tarnishing the good name of the Naturalist Club.

The Grande Riviere River is one of the cleanest river in Trinidad. The people of Grande Riviere are a "special people" who take pride in keeping their rivers and beaches clean.

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May the peace and serenity that  
Christmas 1992 brings to you  
Continue to 1993, and may it last  
The whole year through.

.....*Jan. J.*.....