



# THE FIELD NATURALIST

*Quarterly Bulletin of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club*

January – March 2007

No. 1/2007

## Secretary's Report To AGM. 11<sup>th</sup> January 2007

Shane T. Ballah

The following were the members of the Management Committee for the year 2006

<b>President</b>	<b>Reginald Potter</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Carrall Alexander</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Selwyn Gomes</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Shane T. Ballah</b>
<b>Assistant Secretary</b>	<b>Richard Wallace</b>
<b>Committee Members</b>	<b>Dan Jaggernaut, Paula Smith and Stephen Smith</b>

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period January 01 to December 31 2006.

### 2. ACTIVITIES

#### 2.1 Lecture Series 2006

Consistent with the approach of previous years the lectures for 2006 adhered to no specific theme. An attempt was made to made balance the need for information on national and regional concerns with traditional scientific presentations covering various aspects of local ecology. In an effort to foster local studies especially amongst young graduates, two lecture sessions were reserved

for research students attached to the University of the West Indies. It is hoped that this will become an annual feature and will be broadened to include students from other institutions.

Despite the best of intentions the effort to compile brief abstracts of all the lectures presented throughout the year has been unsuccessful.

On behalf of the Management Committee I thank all the presenters for their contribution and we wish them all the best in their respective fields.

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### 2.1.1 Panel Discussion

The Club hosted one panel discussion in October of 2006 at the Sir Frank Stockdale Building, University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine. This year's discussion focused on the National Physical Development Plan and was specifically chosen in light of the accelerated developments occurring throughout the country. Panelists included: Prof. Julien Kenny, Dr. John Agard, Dr Asad Mohammed and Ms. Sheryl-Anne Haynes. The session was moderated by Dr. Carol James. The session was well attended by over seventy persons including members and non-members

### 2.2 Field Trips

The Club undertook Twenty-two (21) field trips in 2006. These included eleven (11) regular monthly trips, eight (8) trips of the Birding Group and two (2) trips of Botany Group. Despite its formation the Bug Group was unable to undertake any trips during the year.

The experienced team of Dan Jaggernauth, John Lum Young and Reg Potter continue to be the cornerstone for the successful trips of the Club. A need continues for fresh volunteers to assist in the planning and arrangements of trips.

#### The Quarterly Bulletin of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

January – March 2007

Editor..... Reg Potter  
Assistant Editor.....  
Field Trip reports ..... Alyssa Gomes, Brendan Melvor  
Contributors..... Ian Lambie, Chris Starr  
Photographs..... Reg Potter, Paul Budgen  
Design & Layout..... Reg Potter

The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation.

#### Management Committee, 2007-2008

President... Reginald Potter (694-1160); Vice-President... Carrall Alexander (633-3373); Secretary... Shane Ballah (796-3335); Assistant Secretary... Paul Budgen (484-0373); Treasurer..... Selwyn Gomes (624-8017); Committee Members... Dan Jaggernauth (659-2795); Alyssa Gomes 799-4087); Paula Smith (633-0697).

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this bulletin do not necessarily reflect the opinion and views of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

#### MISSION STATEMENT

To foster education and knowledge on natural history and to encourage and promote activities that lead to the appreciation, preservation and conservation of our natural heritage.

Whilst all the trips for 2006 were successful and incident free concerns over poor coordination has arisen and this needs to be addressed in the coming year. General attendance levels remain consistent with previous years. Special thanks are extended to those individuals who continued to submit interesting reports to the Quarterly Bulletin covering these trips. These include: Jo-Anne Sewlal, John Lum-Young, Reg Potter and Paula Smith.

### 2.3 Membership

The Club welcomed twenty-one (21) new ordinary members and six (6) junior members during the period. Overall membership includes one hundred and fifty-eight (158) financial members at close of the year.

### 2.4 Publications

#### 2.4.1 Quarterly Bulletins

Three issues of the Quarterly Bulletin were published for the past year without major delays. The third quarter saw the loss of the editor Ms. Jo-Anne Sewlal. We thank her for her past contribution to the success of the Bulletin. Callista Pierre has kindly agreed to

resume the post of editor temporarily until a replacement is found.

#### *2.4.2 Living World Journal*

The 2006 issue of the Living World was published in November of 2006. The process of improving quality of the final product continues. The availability of past issues of the Journal online was finally realized in the third quarter of 2006. The Management Committee wishes to thank Dr. Elisha Tikasingh, the editorial committee and all those who contributed to the production of the Journal. The Committees Report is attached (Appendix I)

#### *2.4.3 Trail Guide*

The much-anticipated publication of the second edition of the Trail Guide was finally realized after a two year delay. This was largely due to the efforts of the editors – Reginald Potter, Paul Comeau and Prudence Roberts.

### *2.5 National Committees*

The Club, through its representatives, sits on a number of national committees. The following is a listing with brief summaries of their activities over the year.

#### *2.5.1 The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*

Delegate: - Dr. Victor Quesnel

Alternate: - Shane T. Ballah

This cabinet-appointed committee was formed in response to the country's international obligations under the relevant UN convention. The Conservator of Forests is the appointed Head of the Committee Regular meetings were held up to May, when this pattern was broken following the change of Conservator. As a result no information on the scheduling of the next meeting has been made available.

One meeting was held in November and a summary of the status of projects which includes 16 targets has been drafted.

On February 23 the proposed aluminium smelter sites were visited and a report submitted to the Minister on adverse effects on nearby forests to endemic plant species and rare animals. The Committee has also been collecting information on the "state of the environment" report showing how close we are to 2010 targets. The Committee works in coordination with several other organisations including the Darwin Project, National Herbarium and National Reforestation.

#### *2.5.2 Conservation Wildlife Committee.*

Delegate:- Yasmin Comeau.

This is a Statutory Committee established under the Wildlife Act on which the TTFNC has a place by law. The term of the members expired early in the year and all Committee members retired, and were then re-appointed in July for a three year period. A slight controversy over the representation by the hunters body was resolved with the reappointment of Buddy Miller.

A proposal to impose a moratorium on hunting, to replenish stocks, was opposed by the hunting representative due to total lack of information on animal stocks. Apparently even statutory returns of numbers of animals taken, as a part of game licensing process, have not even been analysed by Forestry. It was resolved by the Committee with a decision to undertake a research project under the UWI and Forestry Division, to investigate wildlife populations and trends. Funds have been obtained towards this project.

Wildlife Act is being re-examined and changes proposed. Relationship to Tobago is being reviewed since Wildlife Act does not cover Tobago.

### *2.5.3 Museum Committee*

Delegate: - Yasmin Comeau

A Statutory Committee established under the Museum Act on which the TTFNC has a place by law. This Committee is defunct, not having met since approximately 2001. By law it should govern the museums of Trinidad (the status of Tobago is unclear) and meet monthly. Following the expiration of the three year term of members, no attempt was made to re-appoint a Committee. As a result the curator of the National Museum - Vel Lewis now reports directly to the Minister of Culture with no reference to the Committee. Previous members included Vel Lewis, Leroy Clarke, Pearl Atilah Springer, Ravi Jai, many of whom retain a close association with the National Museum, but it is not clear in what capacity.

## **2.6 Club Groups**

### *2.6.1 Botany Group*

The Groups report is attached as Appendix II

### *2.6.2 Birding Group*

No report is available for the period.

### *2.6.3 Bug Group*

No report is available for the period.

### *2.6.4 Environmental Group*

An attempt was made to form this group in May and a meeting was scheduled but aborted due to the illness of Reg Potter. Since then no formal meeting has been convened or representatives named, although several have expressed interest.

The objectives of the Group include the need to keep abreast of developments in Trinidad and Tobago that threaten the environment and assist in preserving and regenerating the natural environment, and recommend appropriate action by the Club. Also to work together with similarly minded groups in T&T on a selective issue basis. Meanwhile the Committee handles this responsibility unaided.

Letters submitted during 2006:

1. Letter to Min Planning and Development re Chaguaramas Housing.
2. Reasons for objection to Chatham Industrial Estate sent to EMA.
3. Letter to Town and Country Planning re Chatham Estate.

## **2.7 Other Activities**

### *2.7.1 Exhibits*

The Club manned booths at the annual shows of the Orchid Society and Horticultural Society. Booths were erected under the banner of COPE (the local environmental umbrella organization).

#### *2.7.2 Environmental Group*

Some of the challenges facing the Club include the increased need for us to respond quickly to various Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) submitted to the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) and the need for increased advocacy on national issues.

To address these challenges the Environmental Group was conceived. Although not fully constituted and still lacking in full support the group attempted to increase advocacy on a number of topical national environmental issues which arose during the year. The challenges of increase development brought with it increased threats to the environment. The Club took a strong stance on issues surrounding the proposed establishment of an industrial estate in the south-western peninsula of Trinidad and communicated this by way of responses allowed for in the CEC process. As a follow-up to the *Environmental Principles* issued in 2005 the Club wrote to the Ministry of Planning and Development and Environmental Management Authority reiterating our concerns on developments proposed for the south-western peninsula and Chaguaramas.

#### *2.7.3 Council of Presidents of the Environment (COPE)*

In March of 2006 a new President of COPE was elected. The President of the TTFNC had held this position for two-terms, which was the maximum allowed under the organisations Charter. Despite this the Club remains actively involved in the organization largely in part due to the efforts of Carrall Alexander.

#### *2.7.4 Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA)*

The Club continues to be a financial member of CCA. No representation was possible at the AGM this year. Concerns have arisen over the apparent inactivity of this organisation in recent times.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Increased participation by members in the activities of the Club remains a problem. Volunteers from within the Club are needed to ensure that current and future activities are maintained.

The Club, as one of the leading environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO) must become more vocal on major environmental issues, which affect our country. This can take the form of increased activities towards public education and awareness or increased visible showing and relevant public events. Staying silent on matters, especially those related to increase development via construction and industrialization should not be an option.

I thank the Club for affording me the opportunity to serve as Secretary during the past year. I thank the members of the Management Committee for their support.

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**Shane T Ballah**  
Secretary TTFNC

**Appendix I to Secretary's Report**

Report of the Editorial Committee  
Of Living World: Journal of the Trinidad And Tobago Field Naturalists Club  
For The Year 2006

The following members served on the Editorial Committee in 2006: Elisha Tikasingh (Editor), Paul Comeau, Graham White, and Shane Ballah representing the Publications Committee. The Committee met five times during the year. All meetings were held at the home of the Editor, 12 Newbury Hill, Glencoe.

The Journal was published towards the end of October, 2006 and consisted of 68 pages including Title, Editorial, Sponsor and Advertisement pages. Apart from the covers, four pages were in colour: two advertisements; another page with examples of some spider families found in Trinidad and Tobago; and a colour page for sponsors. The Committee decided that the sponsor page should be more attractive. Thus, the page was decorated with colour photos of hummingbirds, representing the various categories of donations: White-crested Emerald (contributions of \$2000.00 to \$4,999) and Blue-chinned Sapphire (contributions up to \$1999.00). There were no contribution in the Ruby-topaz hummingbird category (contributions of \$5000.00 or more). The photographs were provided by Graham White.

There were five Research Articles, an Identification Key to spiders, six Nature Notes and two Book Reviews. Professor John Spence was the Guest Editor writing about "Land Use in Trinidad and Tobago". Of all the articles submitted, only one was found to be not suitable for Living World, but might have been more appropriate for the Bulletin, and the author was so advised.

A new image of the Inca beetle was obtained from Dr Brett Ratcliffe and reproduced on the title page replacing Dr. Kenny's drawing. Dr. Ratcliffe, together with Julius Boos, described a new subspecies of the Inca beetle in 1985 as *Inca clathrata quesneli*. Dr. Ratcliffe has given us permission to use the image in our publications once the identification appears with the image.

Apart from the Sponsor and Title pages, the following changes were made to the 2006 issue of Living World:

1. Font size was increased from 10 to 11 points for the main text and from 9 to 10 points for abstracts and references.
2. Wider margins.

In order to ensure that each issue of the Journal is free from errors, we have been utilizing Club members to proof-read each issue before printing. The Editorial Committee is now satisfied with the work of RPL's proof-reader. In addition, RPL provided pdfs of each article and these were forwarded to authors for checking before printing. Authors were given seven days to make corrections/changes and so far, all have replied within five days. Thus, proof-reading by Club members is no longer necessary at this time. Nevertheless, we would like to thank Rupert Mends and Calista Pierre who both performed this task of proof-reading with distinction and personal sacrifice as it is a painstaking and time-consuming activity.

A decision was taken last year and with the approval of the Management Committee, to provide each author with pdfs of their own published articles. Graham White volunteered to perform this task and these pdfs were obtained from RPL and forwarded to each author by the end of 2006.

The Editorial Committee produced a list of 12 international institutions (with their addresses) and recommended that these institutions should receive a free copy of the Journal. The list was forwarded to the Treasurer with the recommendation that the Institutions should indicate if they wanted to receive future issues.

For the past 2-3 years the Editorial Committee had been suggesting to the Management Committee that the Journal should be available online. It was with pleasure therefore, that we noted some strides have been made recently by Shane Ballah in the development of a web page specifically for the Journal. It is an excellent start and all efforts should be made continue with its development and maintenance.

In planning for an orderly transition from the present Editor to a new one, when this takes place, the Editor produced a check-list on the work of the Editor consisting of 30 points for the Editorial Committee. The check-list also included a list of all reviewers used in the past with their mailing and e-mail addresses.

The work of the Reviewers raises the standard and quality of articles published in the Journal and the Editorial Committee thanks those listed on pg. 43 of the 2006 issue. Thanks are also due to Michael Tikasingh for the design of the Covers and the Sponsor page. The Committee also acknowledges the assistance rendered by staff of RPL(1991) Ltd.

**Respectfully submitted,  
Elisha Tikasingh, Editor  
on behalf of, and approved by the Editorial Committee.  
January 02 2007**

#### **Appendix II to Secretary's Report**

Report of the Botany Group  
Trinidad And Tobago Field Naturalists Club **For The Year 2006**

The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club (TTFNC) Botany Group has had two successful trips for the year 2006. The first trip was to Fishing Pond on Sat. 18<sup>th</sup> March 2006 with 31 persons having attended. The second trip for the year was to the Aripo Savannas on Sat. 21<sup>st</sup> October 2006 with 24 persons having attended. Special thanks must be given to Mr. Winston Johnson from the Trinidad and Tobago National Herbarium for providing his expert assistance on both trips this year, and again I would like to recommend that the TTFNC offer him free membership for 2007 as a token of our appreciation. On Sat. 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007 we plan to visit North Manzanilla and would appreciate this information being passed on to the members at the next meeting.

It is with sincerest thanks that I resign from my position as the coordinator of the TTFNC Botany Group due to my emigration. I have greatly enjoyed coordinating the activities of the TTFNC Botany Group since March 2001 to the present. I have sincerely appreciated the technical

and other support and participation of Mr. Dan Jaggernauth, Mr. Victor Quesnel and Mr. Carlyle Mc Millan, as well as Mr. Winston Johnson from the T&T National Herbarium, as well as the numerous loyal TTFNC members, friends, and guests both foreign and local.

It is with great confidence that I hand over the leadership to Mr. Lester Doodnath who will continue the work of coordinating the TTFNC Botany Group's activities for the upcoming year 2007 and onwards. It is my hope that the Club will continue to be successful in all its future activities and I pray that God will continue to bless its membership abundantly.

Sincerest regards,

**Nicholla Johnson**  
Group Leader



## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### NORTH NARIVA 28 JANUARY 2007

Alyssa Gomes

The group of forty-four (44) members and guests met outside the University of the West Indies. We departed from UW1 at 7am to begin our drive to Charuma, where we turned sharply east onto Euroze Road, and followed it into agricultural land bordering the Nariva swamp.

On Euroze Road we continued to a tee junction, turned right, then left onto a track lined on either side by cocoa (*Theobroma Cacao*), coffee (*Coffea Arabica*) and wild ginger, we arrived at our first destination not long after 9am. Reg Potter gave a brief talk mentioning our intention for this trip: to "attempt to view the vegetation bordering the Nariva Swamp".

A *Dimerandra Stenopetalum*, an orchid with thin pen like leaves, hence the name 'steno' grew on the left. It was one of the first things we noticed, while the call of the yellow crested cornbird, the crested oropendola (*Psarcolius Decumanus*) filled the air and we began our walk in flat country. Not much further along, we stumbled across a tree with a large number of their nests swaying from its branches. Yellow crested cornbirds are yellow and black birds with bright blue eyes. They build their large, one to one and one-half metre (1-1½m) long, sturdy nests high in trees out of straw and any other dry materials they can find. A little further along a matte (*Tupinambis Tequixin*) was spotted by the shallow river we had been walking alongside. Upon closer inspection, it became apparent that the young, approximately three quarters of a metre long matte was dead. There were no obvious abnormalities, nor visible wounds, leaving the cause of death a mystery to us.



The straight track soon became waterlogged causing a diversion into the forest on the south side. Apple snail and spiral swamp snail shells littered the muddy path in some areas, flecking the earth with white in others. Shortly after crossing the river, which, although shallow enough to let us cross, was not so shallow that we could cross without soaking our sneakers, we spied a small snake curled in our path. This seemingly innocent snake was an approximately one (1) foot long, very poisonous mapepire balsain (*Bothrops Atrox*). It was tan in colour and barely moved as we admired it warily before moving on.

Cornbirds chirped merrily all around as we, with our shoes and pants heavily laden with mud, followed our path through a thicket of roseau (*Bactris Majors*). These hideously thorny trees thrive in acidic soil and are related to coconut, with a similar, albeit much smaller, (approximately 1½ inches) edible fruit, which, thanks to Dan Jaggernaut, we had the opportunity to taste. We continued in forest until standing water meant no further progress could be made (unless an attempt is made later in the dry season), and turned back towards the cars. We emerged onto the track again from what seemed to be a nightmare shortly, with some of us brushing thorns off our hair, clothes and backpacks. We spotted merle corbeau, also known as smooth-billed *ani* and colloquially as 'ugly' *ani* (*crotophaga ani*). Around half past ten, we found ourselves trekking away from the edge of the swamp, then not too long after, on the outskirts of private estates and cocoa plantations where we had left the cars.



Mapepire Balsain  
Nariva

We departed from our first destination, drove to Biche then onto a prominent turning onto a gravel road at a big chicken farm.

Passing the chicken farm and heading east we got lost at several junctions on the way to this second part of our trip but managed to find ourselves there anyway, parking beside the Jagroome River and hiking the last quarter mile, arriving at Sand Hill around quarter to one in the afternoon. A large blue-grey heron was disturbed in the road on the way. Sand Hill is a Wildlife Sanctuary; a prohibited area, requiring a permit for its access. It was a short walk and a gentle incline to its peak, but there were many sights to be seen along the way. After a brief discussion with a couple of farmers presently working the land, we began our walk. A beautiful sight met our eyes. Like in Nariva, we were met by a tree filled with cornbirds and their nests. These were the small cornbirds, known as yellow rumped caciques (*Cacicus Cela*) with the name 'cacique' coming from Amerindian and meaning king. These birds' nests differ from the crested oropendolas' although they are equally sturdy, nigh unbreakable. They are however built only about 15 inches in length, with a hooded entrance. A number of termites had also built their nests in the tree, providing a fine source of food for the cornbirds.

When we arrived at the peak of Sand Hill, we noticed that the earth was indeed primarily made up of sandy soil. We relaxed there for a while, enjoying the atmosphere and observing the flora, such as the Jamoon that populated the area, from which a very nice wine can be made. There was also caraili, a fruit most of us are familiar with. They were green with red-orange seeds and are sweet when ripe. It grows as a vine and makes a very refreshing tea. Another vine found atop Sand Hill was a legume known as kudzu. It is very high in protein and is loved by rabbits and cows. There was also Balata, a tree with leaves growing straight out of its trunk that was approximately 1¼ metres in height. A *Senna Bacillaris* (previously known as *Cassia Bacillaris*), with its bright, yellow

flowers was one of our last sights as we left Sand Hill, with an Easter vine wrapped around it like a shawl, its purple flowers radiant in the sunlight. On the way back, we pass a Bois Canot (*Cecropia Peltata*) tree and were informed by Dan that its leaves can be crushed to make a tea. On return to our starting point we notice tendrils of smoke coming from a tree. We went to discover the cause and found, in the tree with many yellow rumped caciques, a termite nest had been lit afire by a very foolish person unknown to our party. The small cornbirds flitted in and out of the tree in a panic, while smoke invaded their homes and destroyed a food source that could have supported them for a very long time. Reg and Dan cut down the smouldering nest with their cutlasses, then doused it with water in order to prevent a potential forest fire and further destruction. With the disappearance of the source of the smoke, the cornbirds began to settle down and return to their nests.

A scaled pigeon (*Columba Speciosa*), a squirrel cuckoo (*Piaya Cayana*) and a little blue heron (*Egretta Caerulea*) soared overhead as we returned to the cars and departed at 2:50pm.

We arrived at our third and final stop around half past three. Brigand Hill Lighthouse, a telecommunications tower. From the top of Brigand Hill, we had a wide and beautiful view of the surrounding areas. We lingered for little more than twenty minutes, staying only long enough to look around, enjoying the view, and the breeze. In the end, a weary, but overall satisfied group departed for home



## Erin Bouffe – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2007

### Brandon McIvor

By 9:00 am. we had reached our destination: an oil road somewhere within Erin Bouffe, with an amassment of some 23 participants with whom we had met at Saint Mary's College, Grand Bazaar and the San Fernando Fire Station. Before arriving at the oil road, we had made one stop at the Fyzabad Heritage Park; it was a quiet lake with an empty playground out front, and to the side, there was a lazy bamboo patch bordering a clearing where some horses were grazing with the audible call of corn birds (*Cacicus cela*) in the air.

Back at that oil company road, somewhere about 5 kilometres west of Siparia, a Red Howler monkey (*Alouatta seniculus insulanus*) was spotted on the ground, then some turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*) were seen to start off the sightings for the day. 15 minutes later we were parked at the end of Lorenzotte Trace South, and making our way through the forest, on a comparatively easy walk as compared to the last two lengthier hikes I had been on. In a mere 15 more minutes, the forest ended and we set foot on the cracked grey mud of the volcanoes we had come to see.



Red Howler Monkey on the ground

The mud volcanoes' "bubbles" are caused, not by heat, but by gases that leak out into the mud through a fault below. The gases, we were told, are comprised of mostly methane (86%) with a lower concentration of nitrogen and carbon dioxide. The mud itself is essentially clay saturated with salt water. The attending cosmetic expert claimed that it had redeeming effects on the skin, not to mention a number of health benefits, with preventatives of sicknesses from cancer to arthritis (And surely enough, before leaving the volcanoes, I had the mud streaked across my face courtesy my fellow field naturalists, Alyssa). The clay content of the mud meant that, when partially dried, it

could be used for sculpting. After throwing random items into the volcano, we took our leave and went down to the coast. The sun was hot in the sky and the sea foam was thick and stubborn, rolling along the sand to the breath of the wind. The beach was littered with dead and dying Portuguese Man O' Wars (*Physalia physalis*) which interestingly enough, are not actually jellyfish, but Siphonophoras, or colonies of polyps. This means that each "Man O' War" is actually a number of individual living polyps. Also at the coast, we sighted a rare palm, common only to the south coast: the Silver Thatch Palm Tree (*Coccothrinax alta*).



Cones, Erin Bouffe

After a warm, but rewarding half hour stay at the coast, we climbed back up the slopes that lead us down. After we had headed our way back through the volcanoes and bush, we got into the cars and left for yet another mud volcano. This is located down the Los Iros road and we took a left turn immediately before the village driving parallel to the coast in hilly country. We arrived on location near to 12:00 pm and parked beside the small mud volcano. This volcano too, exhibited the same surrounding of grey mud cracked by the sun, but was surrounded by a deceptively grassy pool of shallow water.

Following a relatively short stay, we left the volcano and drove back past fields of peppers and other veggies, to Los Iros village for some much needed refreshments which we drank on the shores of the beach while watching a curious baptism ceremony carried out in the eternal waves of the sea.



## CONTRIBUTIONS

### Providing Food For Birds Ian Lambie

This article is intended as a supplement to the fine article "*The Backyard Naturalist*" written by Jo-Anne Sewlal and published in "*The Field Naturalist*" No.3 of 2006.

It is also written to support some of the statements made by Geoffrey Gomes, a member of the Club, in an article "*Garden Landscaping for Hummingbirds and other birds*", which was published in the February 2001 issue of "*The Auto and Real Estate Monthly*" Magazine.

Maintaining a feeding table for birds

Occasionally vermin such as cockroaches, mice and rats are attracted to feeding tables especially at night. Uneaten food should not be left on the feeder overnight. It is therefore advisable to remove all uneaten bread, fruit and other food from the table before dusk.

Remember to keep the table clean by occasional scrubbing.

The sugar solution for hummingbirds (and other nectar feeders)

Many years ago when Anglia Television of the UK was preparing a 16mm. film on hummingbirds entitled "*Alladin's Garden* on the Rapsey's Estate at the Heights of Aripo, some members of the film crew were of the opinion that the dead hummingbird chicks found in their nests may have been as a result of too strong a sugar solution being prepared for the adult hummingbirds.

Of course this hypothesis was never proven but since that time some persons have been cautious and use a five to one or a six to one solution, with good results. No colouring matter is added.

For more than 25 years the staff at the Asa Wright Nature Centre has been preparing a solution of five parts of water to one part of brown sugar for use in the hummingbird feeders.

The Internet recommends four parts of water to one of sugar, brought to the boil and cooled.

When attempting to attract hummingbirds to your feeder, you must be extremely patient since it may take weeks before the first hummingbird discovers the feeder. In order to minimise wastage, begin with a small feeder and at first do not provide more than 10 ounces of the 5 to 1 sugar solution in the feeder at any one time.

The sugar solution ferments quickly and should be changed daily. The feeders should be scrubbed and sanitized regularly. A bottlebrush will be of great assistance when cleaning the interior of the feeder.

Some bat species may be attracted to the sugar solution in hummingbird feeders. Remove and empty feeders at dusk.

Hummingbird feeders may be available from Pantin's Pet Shop on Picton Street, Newtown, P.O.S.

In another issue of "*The Field Naturalist*" I will suggest the flowering plants to be used in attracting Hummingbirds and Butterflies to your garden.

## Christmas Bird Count 2006

Ian Lambie

The 2006 Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday 31st December, 2006. There were Thirty nine (39) participants some of whom are members of the TTFNC. We thank them for their participation. During the count, one hundred and seventy six (176) species were reported.

It is noticeable that only 688 Scarlet Ibises were reported. This is the lowest count reported during a Christmas Bird Count since 1969. The highs for Scarlet Ibises reported during a C.B.C. are 8400 in 1979, 8000 in 1995, and 9563 in 2003.

Two Pawi were reported. This was the first occasion on which the Trinidad Piping Guan (The Pawi) *Pipile pipile*, was reported during a Christmas Bird Count. Also recorded for the first time was the Streak-headed Woodcreeper: *Lepidocolaptes souleyeti*.

Consideration is now been given to organising an additional Christmas Bird Count in a location south of the present "center" at Arouca, and as usual members of the TTFNC are invited to participate. You are also invited to make suggestions to any one of the persons mentioned below.

Vishnu Debie is the compiler of the Trinidad Bird Count and, should you require it, you may obtain additional information from him via the telephone at 640-5433 or from Graham White at 642-0570.

Historical data on the C.B.C. may be retrieved by visiting <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>



### **Whither Tucuche? Christopher K. Starr**

On a recent ascent of Trinidad's totemic hill, Mt. Tucuche, I noticed once again how bare the peak area is. Maybe this is unavoidable or even as it should be, but I have always regretted that the very top of such an important site is in do unnatural a state. Tucuche is of course not the Club's property or even under our management, but it strikes me that we should have a viewpoint on its condition and fate. Is it desirable that the peak are should be restored to a much more natural state? Is such a restoration feasible? I raise these questions here for discussion.

### **First First Aid for Stings Christopher K. Starr**

At the Club's year-end party David Rooks regaled some of the attending worthies about how he was stung in the finger by a scorpion in my Malaise trap on Little Tobago. Always a good story, but this time it occurred to me that I never told David what to do in the field to alleviate a serious sting.

I am not a pharmacologist and certainly not a medical doctor, but there is an easy and perfectly safe thing to do in order to lessen the effect of the sting: Put some wet salt on the wound. This tactic was tested and shown effective by one of my old Georgia professors, the late A.B. Weathersby. The principle is very simple. The salt draws up the fluid from the wound, including part of the venom. It may have other effects, but I am not aware that these are definitely shown.

This may sound familiar to the old folk remedy of applying honey to a honey-bee sting site. This, too, almost certainly works. Honey, salt, sugar or any other hygroscopic substance should do the trick. I prefer salt, which is readily available and does not attract those pesky flies and bees.

So add a vial of salt to your regular field-trip kit. And, David, keep telling those true, true anecdotes.

Christopher K. Starr  
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### EDITOR'S NOTE

This edition of the Quarterly Bulletin is rather short due to the lack of articles submitted by members and other interested parties. Several field trips from last year remain unreported, waiting on the appointed scribe to turn in the account. We still desperately need an editor prepared to take on the task of publishing the QB every quarter. Any volunteers?



### MANAGEMENT NOTICES

#### SPECIAL THANKS

The Library has received 2 publications:

- Status of Tropical Forest Update. Dec 2006. International Tropical Timber Organization
- Marine Turtles Newsletter. Jan 2007

#### We finally have Polo Jerseys!

Sizes: small, medium, large and extra large  
Colours: khaki and green  
Cost \$TT50.00

#### THE GREENHALL TRUST

Started in 2005, in memory of Elizabeth and Arthur Greenhall, dedicated artist and zoologist respectively, the Trust offers financial assistance to aspiring artists and biologists (in the areas of flora and fauna) in Trinidad & Tobago.

Full details about the Trust are available at their website:

<http://www235.pair.com/greenhal/home.htm>

**EACH ONE, BRING ONE**

Members are encouraged to bring a friend or two to be part of our Club – their knowledge, talents and skills would be most welcome.

**A HOME FOR THE TTFNC**



We are seeking a permanent location to conduct our business and house our historic records and materials. Please contact the Management Committee if you can be of assistance.

**Missing copies of Naturalist Magazine needed for library**

- 1976 Vol. 1 No. 5
- 1981 Vol. 3 No. 9
- 1987 Vol. 6 No. 12

**WELCOME  
NEW MEMBERS**

Robin Roopnarine  
Ezra Joseph  
Glen Davis Forcette  
Paul Shaw  
John Diaz  
Jenelle King  
Robert King  
Sharon Frazer  
Michelle Lee

**Your 2007 Annual Membership Fees are Past Due!!**

Please view bottom right of the mailing label to check if your subscription has been paid.

**TTFNC'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE NATION'S STEWARDSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

Letters issued by the Club on its position on various environmental issues can be viewed on the Club's website: [www.wow.net/ttfnc](http://www.wow.net/ttfnc) on the "ENVIRONMENT PAGE".

**Opportunity For Training**

COPE Training for analysing Environmental Impact Assessments will start in Early May. The course consists of 4 weekends away at a hotel site (Friday evening to Sunday evening) and tuition in the techniques involved in analyses. Candidates will be expected to commit to assisting COPE in analysing project applications. Interested? Call COPE at 628-0969.

**Editor needed.....** For the Quarterly Bulletin.  
Please contact any member of the committee.

**Volunteers needed...** to type index for period 1986 to 1988 – 16 issues

Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club  
P.O. Box 642, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

### NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

#### Guidelines for Articles and Field trip reports:

Font Type: Times New Roman

Font Size: 12 point

Maximum Length: 1,750 words (approx. 3 pages unformatted)

Photos: JPEG files only

Submit to any of the following: 1) [rjpotter@opus.co.tt](mailto:rjpotter@opus.co.tt); 2) [ttfnc@wow.net.tt](mailto:ttfnc@wow.net.tt);  
3) [CPierre@energy.gov.tt](mailto:CPierre@energy.gov.tt); or any member of the Management Committee.

**Deadline for submission of articles for the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2007 issue of the Bulletin is March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Please note that all field trip reports for this quarter must be in by the deadline, with the exception of the February report.**

### PUBLICATIONS



- The 2006 issue of the Living World Journal has been published. Please collect your copy at the next monthly meeting.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the Native Trees of Trinidad and Tobago is available at \$TT100.00 per copy for members
- Issues of the Living World Journal from 1892-1896 are now available on CD.
- The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists Club Trail Guide is available at \$200 per copy for members.