THE FIELD NATURALIST

Quarterly Bulletin of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

April – June 2014 **Issue No: 2/2014**

Saturday 22nd - Sunday 23rd February

HUEVOS EXPEDITION 2014

- From Dolphins to Damselfish -

A Marine Biologist's Perspective

by Amy Deacon

In terms of natural history sightings, the Huevos trip got off to a spectacular start. Minutes after leaving Chaguaramas, we found ourselves surrounded by a pod of bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus*.

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An impressive leap performed by one of the bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus*.

Photo sequence captured by: Jeffrey Wong Sang

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Editor's note :
Many thanks to all who contributed and assisted with articles and photographs. We would also like to thank Robert Boos for his permission to conduct this expedition,

- From Dolphins to Damselfish -

(Continued from page 1)

Many appeared to be 'bow-riding' with others travelling alongside the boat. We estimated that there were around 35 individuals; our boat driver informed us that although it is common to see dolphins in this area, it was quite rare to see a group that large. Interestingly, we observed tail slapping behaviour in two individuals, where the dolphin repeatedly hits the surface of the water with its tail. This is thought to be a means of communication in this species, although can also be associated with aggression or feeding. The highlight of the encounter was when one dolphin performed an impressive leap ahead of the boat, which Jeffrey Wong Sang managed to capture on camera while the rest of us watched in awe. We also noticed one very distinctive individual, who was much paler than the others yet had evidently successfully reached adulthood in spite of this.

On arrival on the island, we continued to watch the dolphins in the distance from the jetty. Here, I ended up donning my mask and snorkel earlier than planned, when my (thankfully waterproof) camera fell off the edge of the jetty, followed shortly by Graham's hat, necessitating a double recovery mission. This was successfully undertaken, and it was not long before the other keen snorkelers among us had also taken to the water.

Learning lessons from the rather eventful 2012 TTFNC trip to the island (see QB2 2012), we were careful to stay close to shore and not to risk venturing close to the Bocas channel. The visibility for snorkelling was not excellent, but the areas around the jetty and surrounding shallows were sufficiently clear for some enjoyable snorkelling. Here, Selwyn, Hameeda and Sheldon identified around 20 species of fish, including queen, grey and French angelfish, *Holacanthus ciliaris, Pomacanthus arcuatus, Pomacanthus paru,* stoplight parrotfish, *Sparisoma viride*, bluehead wrasse, *Thalassoma bifasciatum,* white-spotted filefish, *Cantherhines macrocerus*, French and blue-striped grunt, *Haemulon flavolineatum* and *H. sciurus*, porkfish, *Anisotremus virginicus*, Spanish hogfish, *Bodianus rufus*, spotfin butterflyfish, *Chaetodon ocellatus*, as well as the usual mixed shoals of blue tang, *Acanthurus coeruleus*, doctorfish, *A. chirurgus* and ocean surgeonfish, *A. bahianus*. Closer to the edges of the bay were congregations of sergeant majors, *Abudefduf saxatilis* and territorial dusky and biocolour damselfish, *Stegastes adustus* and *S. partitus*. These sightings match well with Bonnie Tyler's list made during the last TTFNC visit to the island in March 2012, although we were not lucky enough to spot an eagle ray or barracuda as they did on that trip.

The island's caretaker kept bait fishes in traps hanging from the jetty, and immediately underneath one of these was an enormous, seemingly fearless, green moray, *Gymnothorax funebris*, presumably preying upon fish that were attracted to the filled traps. Selwyn also spotted a green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) on the opposite side of the bay.

Having spent a few hours exploring the inland part of the island with the others, I decided to investigate the rocky shore. Both ends of the main beach consisted of rocky outcrops, with large boulders on top of cobble. The rocks closer to the water were covered in green algae making them extremely slippery underfoot. I very carefully explored the rocky sections at both ends of the beach, turning (and replacing) those rocks that were light enough to lift as I went. My knowledge of Caribbean intertidal fauna was not good enough to identify any species on the spot, but rather than collecting specimens I recorded my finds photographically.

Later, back in the UWI Zoology museum Mike Rutherford and I used museum specimens and an array of dusty keys and guide books to identify as many of the intertidal species as possible from my photographs.

In the splash zone, there were the pretty zebra periwinkles, *Echinolittorina ziczac* huddled within crevices (Fig. E) and bright orange 'sally lightfoot' crab, *Grapsus grapsus,* shed exoskeletons drying in the sun (Fig. K). Closer to the sea *E. ziczac* was replaced by another, darker periwinkle, probably *Littorina nebulusa*. Venturing yet further into the intertidal, two species of chiton were identified, the West Indian fuzzy chiton, *Acanthopleura granulata* and the marbled chiton, *Chiton marmoratus*. Gastropod molluscs were also well represented in this zone. *Cerithium* sp., the tiny but beautiful white-spotted dove shell, *Nitidella ocellata* (Fig. D), the much larger wide-mouthed purpura, *Purpura patella*

(Fig. C) and chequered nerite, *Nerita tessellata*, as well as several limpets (one of which we identified as *Lottia antillarium*) and *Gemophus* sp (Fig. F).

The decapod community included a wide variety of taxa. It seemed that nearly every boulder I overturned revealed the surprisingly well-camouflaged pink *Ozius reticulatus* crab (Fig. L); interestingly, I never saw two crabs of this species underneath the same boulder. In contrast, hermit crabs, *Clibanarius* sp. (Fig. M) were found less frequently, but when they were, they were present in aggregrations of 10 -20 individuals. Close to the water's edge, turning rocks frequently revealed the bizarre but beautiful porcelain crabs, *Petrolisthes quadratus*, with their flattened claws and small round bodies, clinging to the underside of stones and shuffling backwards to escape. The sally lightfoot crabs were scampering everywhere, too fast to photograph – until I discovered one tucked neatly in a crevice peering out with its blue stalked eyes (Fig. J).

One of my favourite finds was a tiny goby (~4cm), which I found out of the water on top of a rock in the splash zone, near the house. On closer examination it had a rasping sucker on its belly, and was clearly using this to stay put on the rock despite the waves. After dark I returned to the shore with my torch, and was amazed to find what I suspect was the very same individual, still sitting on the damp rock! I took some photos (Figs A and B), and consulted some local fish experts once back on the mainland, but the taxonomy of this group is apparently notoriously difficult, partly due to the huge number of species it encompasses.

All in all, our trip to Huevos offered fantastic opportunities for getting a broad snapshot of the marine fauna – from the unmissable dolphin acrobatics to the hidden secrets of the rocky shoreline. On the next trip it would be of value to make a more systematic study of the marine and intertidal habitats, perhaps in the form of transect or quadrat surveys. It would be interesting to get an idea of the relative abundances of the marine fish, as well as to extend our (no doubt incomplete) species list.

Footnote:
On our return we were excited to report all details of our dolphin encounter, including our photos and footage, to Alësha Naranjit of CCARO. By accumulating anecdotes and information such as ours, they hope to build a better picture of T&T's cetacean populations – including finding out more about abundance, distribution and habitat use which can then help in conservation management. They are always happy to receive information about sightings, no matter how small or 'ordinary' and may be able to tell you more about what species you saw and its behaviour. Visit www.ccaro.org for more information.

A - Unidentified goby on a rock in the splash zone

B - Unidentified goby [underside, showing sucker]

Photos A - M taken by Amy Deacon

C - Wide-mouthed purpura, *Purpura patella*

D White-spotted dove shell, *Nitidella ocellata*

E - A cluster of pretty zebra periwinkles, *Echinolittorina ziczac*

F - A gastropod mollusc, *Gemorphus sp*.

G - Barnacles (unidentified).

H - A rocky shore algae, commonly known as 'sea grapes' (*Caleurpa* sp.)

I - An unidentified chiton

J - Sally Lightfoot, *Grapsus grapsus*

K - Shed exoskeleton of Sally Lightfoot

L - A small crab (*Ozius reticulatus*) found under rocks

M - A hermit crab (*Clibanarius sp.*)


J


K


H


L


I


M

HUEVOS EXPEDITION 2014

- A Birder's Perspective -

Report by Matt Kelly

I was up with my alarm by around 4:30 am. Selwyn and I had the car packed the night before. We moved out around 5:00 am. We drove around the Queen's Park Oval, to pick up Stephen Smith, who is on the Huevos Trip with us. The city was still alive with revelers all over the place from all of the carnival fetes (many still going strong) from the night before. We drove out to Chaguaramas, and arrived at the Island Home Property Owners water taxi area by around 6:15. The cost for each person was $100TT for the boatman, and there was an additional $40TT to park the car in the fenced in lot there overnight.

While we were waiting for our boatman, I noticed very many black vultures rising up from the north of the end of Chaguaramas peninsula, coming from the directions of Scotland Bay, and Monos Island, and heading towards the main landmass of Trinidad, towards the East/West Corridor. They were all coming from the same direction, and all going off in the same direction, without exception. I counted 813 of them pass by before we departed. We left around 6:45, with our boatman, Jeff Rodri-

Tortue Bay - looking east from on top of the western ridge of Huevos

guez at the helm. Mr. Rodriguez had previously indicated his concerns about rough sea conditions so, for safety reasons, our trip was limited to 24 hours.

There are 14 of us on the trip. They are: Mike Rutherford (of UWI), Amy Deacon (UWI), Mark Greener (UWI), Eddison Baptiste (Eddy), Glenn Wilkes, Graham White, Hameeda Ali, Sheldon Ramsundar, Jeffrey Wong Sang, Kris Sookdeo, Dan Jaggernauth, Stephen Smith, Selwyn Gomes and myself.

About 10 minutes out into the water, we encountered a pod of dolphins. There must have been about 30 of them, as best we could determine. Our boatman brought us alongside and slowed down in the midst of them. They actually swam alongside us for a while. As the dolphins swam, they did not put their heads out of the water, but just came up enough for a breath of air through their blowhole and went down again. There was also a large white one swimming with them (Fig. B). The white one, much larger than the rest, was covered with many scars and looked much older than the others. I did get a few photos. Dan got some great video. Later, at least one of the dolphins starting breaching water a few times, leaping high in the air, and doing a flip, before splashing back into the sea. Jeffrey got a photo of a dolphin leaping in mid-air.

After a while, we decided to move on, and our boatman cranked up the motor, and with increased speed, we soon outpaced them. It was quite a show, and quite a way to start the trip. Being with the dolphins had everyone in very good spirits. As soon as we left the pod of dolphins, I witnessed another boat whizzing right though the same pod, at high speed, without any regard for the dolphins.

As we approached Huevos, we came upon dolphins-- at least 25, as best as we could make out. They may have been part of the first group seen, or another pod entirely and seemed to be playing out in the water. We did not follow them, or spend time with them, as our day was moving on, and we had a lot of exploring to do. It is interesting to note that in 1498, Columbus, on his trip through the bocas, first named Huevos Island "*El Delfin*" or "The Dolphin", possibly due to the island's shape.

As we arrived on the jetty, we were greeted by Mervyn, the new caretaker of the buildings (and island) hired by Robert Boos. He is a rasta guy, in his early 50s. He had the buildings, and the area around them newly painted and looking pretty spiffy. He had a few new cultivated plants and a small garden going as well, since I was here two years ago.

Just after we had finished unloading the boat, which did not take very long at all, I saw more dolphins playing out in Tortue Bay, which is the south bay on Huevos. Tortue Bay is the only place to land a boat on the island. Someone in our group thought we should show some deference to Mervyn, so Glen, Graham, Stephen, Kris, Selwyn and I carted our stuff to the other end of the beach and set up camp there. The UWI people (Mike, Amy and Mark) set up camp along the far other end, on the deck of the housing rooms. Dan, Jeffrey, Sheldon and Hameeda set up in between. No one was allowed to sleep inside the rooms. Near the beach, where I slung my borrowed hammock, there were numerous ant lions in the sand. I don't ever recall seeing so many in one place. I also do not recall ever seeing ant lions on Tobago either.

I had heard how infested Huevos was with bête rouge, so I took the precaution of spraying my shoes, socks and lower pant legs with citronella oil. This seemed to be effective, but it may also have been the case that there were fewer bête rouge on this occasion, as none of the expedition members seemed to experience problems.

By 8:00 am, I headed out with Graham, Kris, and Eddy. We hiked up and out to the Northeast Ridge, to the highest point on the island, above the 'Umbrella Rocks'. The forest was very dry. There were very few large trees, and nothing as large as you'd see in the Northern Range. There were many more dead branches and much more dry dead wood on the forest floor than I was accustomed to seeing in a wetter rainforest. Much of the dead wood was occupied by a very aggressive ant, which had a dark head, honey-coloured thorax and abdomen, and raced out to vigorously defend their home whenever the dead branch or dead tree was even slightly disturbed (Fig. D). I attribute the fact that termites had left this dead wood alone to the presence of these ants. The forest was home to many giant anthuriums.

Around the ridge top, there were large cactus

trees here and there. Along the way, Graham freed a juvenile vulture who was hanging by his leg, upside down, hopelessly tangled in a vine. We were afraid the vulture would vomit, but luckily, he did not. Vomiting is the strategy of young vultures to discourage predators, and their vomit is infamous for its stench. We heard a woodpecker calling and drumming, which Kris later identified as a crimson crested woodpecker.

Just as I remembered from my last trip here in March 2012, we encountered many wide and well -worn pathways all over the ridge tops, made by feet of the black vultures, which evidently use this island as a breeding ground and nursery. It appears that the vultures do not use caves, crevices, how trees or hollow logs, as they do in other locations for a nest site. They must not have predators here, as they seem to raise their young in the meager protection of the underbrush, out in the open.

We saw at least 5 *Morpho* butterflies, *Morpho peleides insularis*, which was a surprise. The interesting thing was that all of us have ever recalled seeing "The Emperor" butterfly, as it is locally known, only near streams, or water in the forest. Huevos was dry as a bone here. So why were there so many *Morphos*, and how did they stay alive? In a few instances, I saw of these magnificent blue creatures at the bottom of the hill, near sea level, unfurl their proboscis into the dry soil, and flutter their wings in a strange way; They would slowly lower their wings, exposing the brilliant fluorescent blue, then quickly jerk the wings up. They did this repeatedly while keeping the proboscis in the soil. I had several opportunities to witness this behavior.

We surprised at least two large iguanas, which went tearing through the brush. One of them could have been the largest iguana I have ever seen. It was a male, well over a meter in length, with very large spikes on his head, a massively thick body, which was a bluish-green hue. I found a different type of skink, that I have never seen before, up on the side of a tree, but he was too fast for me to get a photo. We were back to our base camp about 4 hours and 20 minutes from our start.

Black vultures, *Coragyps atratus*, on top of the north eastern ridge of the island

Birds identified on Northeast Ridge walk were:

Number	Common Name	Scientific Name	Comments
3	Magnificent Frigatebird	*Fregata magnificens*	
1	Brown Pelican	*Pelecanus occidentalis*	Flying back and forth over the ridge.
	Black Vulture	*Coragyps atratus*	Hundreds, with nests and juveniles all over the ridge tops. I counted an average of about 145 soaring overhead at any given time, not counting those resting in tree branches, on the ground, or flightless juveniles.
1	Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*	Soaring.
1	Short-tailed Hawk	*Buteo brachyurus*	
3	Copper-rumped Hummingbird	*Amazilia tobaci*	
1	Crimson-crested Woodpecker	*Campephilus melanoleucos*	Heard call and drumming. Saw several nest cavities in a silk cotton tree, apparently by the same bird.
1	Yellow-headed Caracara	*Milvago chimachima*	Very noisy.
6	Orange-winged Parrot	*Amazona amazonica*	
2	Brown-crested Flycatcher	*Myiarchus tyrannulus*	
1	Boat-billed Flycatcher	*Megarynchus pitangua*	
1	Red-eyed Vireo	*Vireo olivaceus*	
2	House Wren	*Troglodytes aedon*	
1	Spectacled Thrush	*Turdus fumigatus*	
2	Tropical Parula	*Parula pitiayumi*	
2	Golden-crowned Warbler	*Basileuterus culicivorus*	
2	White-lined Tanager	*Tachyphonus rufus*	Male and female.
3	Blue-gray Tanager	*Thraupis episcopus*	
1	Red-legged Honeycreeper	*Cyanerpes cyaneus*	
4	Bananaquit	*Coereba flaveola*	
1	Streaked Saltator	*Saltator striatipectus perstriatus*	
1	Grayish Saltator	*Saltator coerulescens brewsteri*	
1	Yellow Oriole	*Icterus nigrogularis*	

We were back to the base around 12:30 pm. I ate my Subway sandwich, which I bought in POS yesterday. Selwyn had brought a box of large trash bags, and had a mission for our group to pick up trash off the beach. I picked up trash after I had my lunch. The group did have at least 10 big bags full by the end of our stay. Glen and Stephen had walked the South Ridge earlier. After speaking to them about it, I decided to go there. I could not rouse anyone to go out again, as they were tired and too hot, so I went alone.

At 1:20 pm, I went up to the top, and went west near the point called 'Raya del Carib' then south, in the direction of the southern tip of the island, which is known as 'Point de Cabras', which means 'Point of Goats' in English. This island must have had a lot of Spanish influence, as the names denote. At the ridge on top, I found a *plica* lizard, *Tropidurus plica* (Fig. G) and a gecko on the same tree. The gecko was later identified by Stephen as the same species that occupies houses all over T&T, *Thecadactylus rapicauda* (Fig. J). I saw 3 large, white butterflies which were similar in shape to the cab-

bage butterfly I am accustomed to back in the Northeast U.S.

There were some excellent views from this side of the North Island, and the Western coastline. I could see where the islands joined, and took photos of what appeared to be more sea caves. On top of the South Ridge, there were many low and prickly bromeliads growing on the ground, which I did not see on the northeast ridge. These spiky plants were difficult to pass through, and many times the only way to get by was through large patches of them. When I came out about halfway out of the south ridge/peninsula, an excellent view of Tortue Bay came into view. I whistled loud, and people came out on the beach down below to wave.

The south ridge/peninsula is very steep on the West side, and drops off quite precipitously most of the time. Much of the vegetation here is much more xerophytic, as compared with the other side of the island. I a fleeting glance at some sparrow-like birds which I could not identify in the scrub and cactus. I also found a pair of 'hand-waving' lizards, *Cnemidophorus lemniscatus*, and got some decent photos (Fig. I). I saw many of the small brown lizards (at least 5 or 6), of which I didn't get the name, but did get photos, which quickly scurry into cracks and crevices as you pass them. Three more very large iguanas suddenly and abruptly crashed through the bush ahead of me. I saw no sign of snakes or giant centipedes. I saw seven more *Morpho* butterflies, one even on the very ridge top. I don't know what they survive on, as there is no moisture anywhere here. I was out for about 4 hours before I returned to our base camp.

In speaking to Mervyn, the island's caretaker, he said he loves it here. He has stayed months at a time, without leaving the island. Surprisingly, he has never gone into the bush, up the hills, not even a little way! He has never seen the forest or any of the ridges. He says he has seen the turtles nesting here. Hawksbills come during the laying season in such numbers, that they often dig up each other's nest, while making their own new one. When the little ones hatch, he says they run all over the place, and up around the buildings. He puts them in a pale, and carries them back to the sea. He said that the vultures will swoop down and get them, if it is light. Also, large fish seem to know when the turtles are hatching, and come in just in time to catch several, as they struggle to get out to sea. He says we are here too early for the turtle's laying season.

What Mervyn told me was good news, as I had read that the hawksbill turtle was nearly extirpated on Huevos due to over-collecting of eggs. It was because of the hawksbill's egg collecting in historical times, that the name 'Huevos', meaning 'egg' in Spanish was given to the island.

For dinner, I ate my standard bush fare; Crix and beans. I had strung my hammock between two trees, and was quite on the beach edge. I was so close, I worried that high tide may wash under me, but it did not. I turned in early. All of us, in our little group, were too far apart to have any conversations.

Since I was not falling right to sleep, I took a walk up the hill to an area of activity by some of our group. Mike, Mark and Amy had spread 3 mist nets near a ravine, and were trapping bats. I believe they trapped about 12 or 13, of which, all but one were the same species. The one other bat was evidently the first record of this bat species for Huevos. The UWI team was measuring and weighing the bats, and making a record. Dan was helping them. Stephen Smith was there, skulking around in a search for reptiles and using a black light to look for scorpions. He found no reptiles, but found a few scorpions (Fig. C). Kris had brought a white sheet, and lights to illuminate the sheet, in a search for moths. He had brought a 12-volt battery for his compact fluorescent and black light. Since it was so windy, the moths were not easily able to land on the sheet. There were few moths to begin with and, as a result, I don't think Kris was getting many. I stayed a while, and went back to my hammock. I later learned that Kris saw a neotropical screech owl (Fig. A).

I guess I am just not accustomed to sleeping in a hammock, as I got very little sleep. The wind was very gusty and incessant all through the very cool night. The wind constantly blew into my ears, and blew sand on me all the while.

Sunday, February 23, 2014

Our boat arrived just around 6:30 am. I was packed and ready, and had all my gear on the jetty.

Almost everyone else did as well. We shoved off about 6:45 am. We landed back at the Island Home Property Owners area around 7:20 am. I got a group photo, and everyone quickly scattered.

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Birds Identified on walk to South Ridge:

Number	Common Name	Scientific Name	Comments
5	Magnificent Frigatebird	*Fregata magnificens*	
1	Brown Pelican	*Pelecanus occidentalis*	One crazy guy soaring over the ridge tops, and soaring up high with the black vultures. Could be the same individual I saw flying over the other ridge.
	Black Vulture	*Coragyps atratus*	Hundreds. When not flying, usually perched on the edge of ridges in trees or on the ground. Seemed to be around 165 in the air on average, not counting those perched or on the ground.
3	Turkey Vulture	*Cathartes aura*	
1	Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*	
2	Common Black-Hawk	*Buteogallus anthracinus*	Two juveniles soaring with about 165 Black Vultures.
1	Short-tailed Hawk	*Buteo brachyurus*	Soaring with black vultures.
1	Blue-tailed Emerald Hummingbird	*Chlorostibon mellisugus*	Back at base, near the beach.
3	Copper-rumped Hummingbird	*Amazilia tobaci*	Near beach. All the hummingbirds were feeding at gloris-deeda trees.
1	Yellow-headed Caracara	*Milvago chimachima*	
4	Orange-winged Parrot	*Amazona amazonica*	
1	Boat-billed Flycatcher	*Megarynchus pitangua*	
1	Tropical Kingbird	*Tyrannus melancholicus*	
1	House Wren	*Troglodytes aedon*	
4	Tropical Parula	*Parula pitiayumi*	
2	Golden-crowned Warbler	*Basileuterus culicivorus*	Heard.
4	White-lined Tanager	*Tachyphonus rufus*	
3	Blue-gray Tanager	*Thraupis episcopus*	
4	Bananaquit	*Coereba flaveola*	

A - Tropical screech owl,
Megascops choliba
photo: Kris Sookdeo

B - Bottlenose dolphin,
Tursiops truncatus. **This unusually pale individual was seen swimming alongside the boat during our outward journey.**

D - Scorpion, ***Tityus sp.***
Caught by Stephen Smith on Saturday evening.

E - ***Camponotus atripes.***
These aggressive ants seemed to be in almost every piece of dead wood.

All photos by Matt Kelly
unless otherwise stated

F - Flowering ground-dwelling Bromeliad
G - *Tropidurus plica* lizard on a tree trunk
H - The most common gecko on Huevos: Gonatodes vittatus or streak gecko
I - A curious hand-waving lizard, *Cnemidophorus lemniscatus*
J - This gecko, *Thecadactylus rapicauda,* blends in very well with the bark
Photos: Matt Kelly

HUEVOS EXPEDITION 2014 REPORTS

- The bats of Huevos -

Report by Mark S. Greener

Photos: Matt Kelly

During the evening of the expedition, a survey of the bat fauna was conducted by Mark Greener, Mike Rutherford, Dan Jaggernauth and Amy Deacon. This was the first bat survey since a TTFNC trip in 1965 and we were interested to see what bats we would find this time and if there would be any new records for the island.

The survey involved setting up nets and trap to catch the bats as they flew through the forest. We had three ground nets measuring 12m long x 2.5m high and a harp trap measuring about 1.5m x 1.5m set up in the dry forested gully about 100m up behind the house. The light trap set up by Kris Sookdeo was used as the bat processing station. Nets were set across the dry stream at a diagonal angle, on a flat piece of ground up the hill behind the light trap and at a fallen wall just before the edge of a cliff at the back of the house. The harp trap was set up south of a large fallen tree that crossed the gully further up from the first net.

The harp trap is a free standing structure, fitted together from several smaller parts. It is so named as it looks like a giant harp with two parallel sets of fishing line strung from top to bottom. The bats fly into the lines and then fall into a cloth collection trough at the bottom from which they are easily removed. The nets are made of very fine light weight string with holes of around 1.5 cm in diameter; the bats cannot see or sense the nets with the echolocation and fly straight into them. They get all tangled up but can be removed without harming them.

The nets were left out for approximately 2.5 hours and 12 bats were caught (all in the nets, none in the harp trap). Nine were identified and measured and three others escaped after being seen in the nets. Eight of them were Jamaican fruit-eating bats, *Artibeus jamaicensis* and one was a male common big-eared bat, *Micronycteris megalotis*.

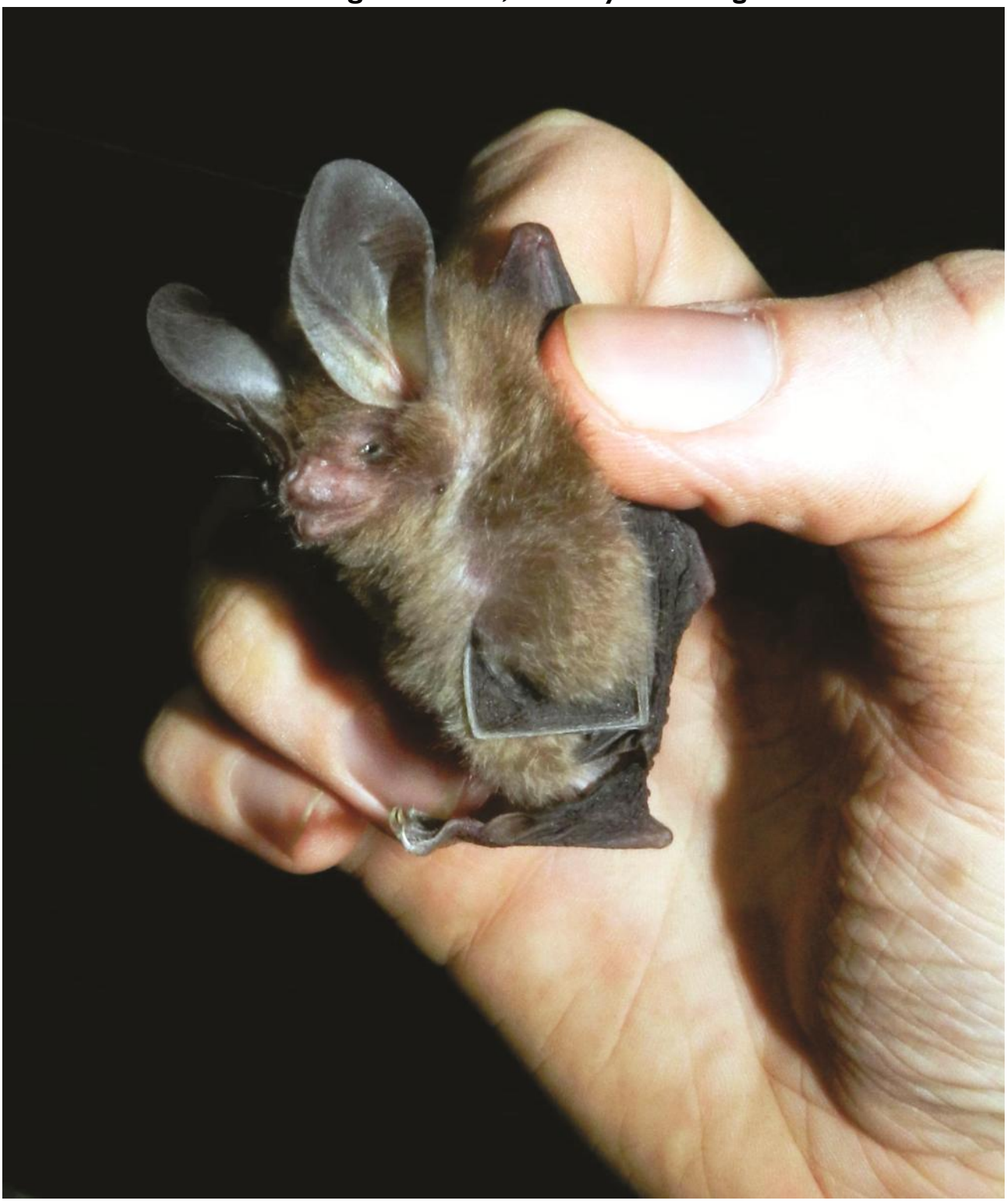
Whilst the *A. jamaicensis* had been recorded on a previous TTFNC trip to Huevos, *M. megalotis* had not been recorded on the island before, so this was an exciting result! In the last bat survey in 1965 they also found, the common long-tongued bat, *Glossophaga soricina* and the greater long-tongued bat, *G. longirostris; they also* observed the greater fishing bat, *Noctilio leporinus*.

A. jamaicensis are large fruit eating bats that feed on a variety of foods, such as fruits, pollen and nectar. They are responsible for seed dispersal around their habitat due to their practice of eating fruits. *M. megalotis* is a small insectivorous bat that weighs only 4-6 grams and uses its large ears and leaf nose to echolocate small invertebrates in flight.

Mark Greener measuring the forearm of a Jamaican fruit-eating bat, *Artibeus jamaicensis*

I feel that the bat survey was a great success, especially as we caught a new species for the island. The species found in this survey, along with the previous finds, shows that the bat population on Huevos has a nice level of diversity, with frugivores, insectivores and nectarivores. I hope that more bat surveying would be done in the future to fully establish the bat species living and feeding on the island.

Common big-eared bat, *Micronycteris megalotis*



top : **Two Jamaican fruit-eating bats, *Artibeus jamaicensis*, captured using the mist nets**

below : **Amy Deacon, Mark Greener, Mike Rutherford and Dan Jaggernauth**

HUEVOS EXPEDITION 2014 REPORTS

- The Terrestrial Invertebrates of Huevos -

Report by Mike G. Rutherford

All photos taken by Mike Rutherford unless otherwise stated

In our short time on Huevos we managed to see quite a range of little beasties scurrying, sliming and crawling round the island. After setting up near the house a group of us headed directly north up a forested gully, towards the island's highest point. The forest consisted of a good mix of low plants, scrubby trees and tall trees that all combined with the terrain to create many different microhabitats; this was perfect for supporting a wide range of invertebrates.

Molluscs

My main focus was the terrestrial molluscs or land snails. For most of the morning as we wondered the forested hilly slopes of the island, I poked around in the leaf litter and looked under logs for any shells or live snails. Despite being a dry island and it being the middle of the dry season, I managed to find nine different species ranging from the tiny *Lucidella lirata*, less than 5mm wide, to the decent sized *Orthalicus undatus* with a shell over 50mm long. However, the most abundant snail was a medium sized one called *Neocyclotus translucidus trinitensis* which we found in the hundreds all over the island .

Neocyclotus translucidus trinitensis

This was also one of the few snails of which we encountered live specimens. This could be due to the snail having an operculum, a door like closing, which allows it to close itself up tightly when conditions are too dry and wait for the rains to come again.

The other species found were *Plekocheilus glaber, Helicina dysoni, Subulina octona, Streptartemon glaber, Drymaeus vincentinus* and *Bulimulus sp.* These species and the preceding ones have all been found on neighbouring islands and on the Trinidad mainland so their presence on Huevos is not unexpected.

Other species that we recorded were found in a more haphazard way, just encountering them as we wondered around.

Arachnids

Two members of the group brought UV torches to search for scorpions during the night. As the scorpions glow bright yellowy-green when exposed to UV it makes them much easier to find. Although this technique did produce some results there were just as many "lucky" encounters with scorpions appearing next to people as they carried out other work at night. In total we found around ten specimens of both adults and juveniles. These were all from two species *Tityus trinitatis* and *Tityus melanostictus* both of which were new records for the island.

Spiders were seen all over the island and were represented by a wide range of families. The huge golden webs of *Nephila clavipes* had to be carefully avoided as we walked through the trees but we also came across species from several other spider families including another brightly coloured orb-weaver spider, *Alpaida sp.* On the ground we found a fairly

Orb-weaver spider, *Alpaida sp.*

small Theraphosidae spider and two different jumping spiders from the family Salticidae, one of which was the bright green *Lyssomanes sp.* Last was a tree trunk spider from the family Hersiliidae, identifiable by its very long spinnerets. These specimens were identified by Jo-Anne Sewlal after the trip.

A few Opiliones or harvestmen were seen at night time. These could be really numerous at times and several were collected and identified as *Cynortula sp.* from the family Cosmetidae.

Insects (not including Lepidoptera)

One group that provided some unexpected results was the Mantidae, or praying mantids as they are commonly known. Usually these predatory insects are so well camouflaged that they are hard to spot but by a combination of chance, light traps and good eyesight we managed to find four different species.

A small mantid, *Mantoida fulgidipennis,* was caught at the light trap that was set up to attract moths but ended up bringing in many other creatures. A stick mantid, *Thesprotia filum,* was found on the side of a small tree looking, not surprisingly, like a stick. Two bark mantids, *Liturgusa maya,* were also

Stick mantid, *Thesprotia filum*

found on tree trunks blending in very well with the lichens, and the large green mantid P*arastagmatoptera unipunctata* was found amongst low vegetation at the top of the island. As this group had not been studied on Huevos before, all of these were new records for the island.

The social insects were well represented, at least in terms of diversity of groups. A paper wasp nest was found under a leaf near the top of the hill and was identified later by Chris Starr as *Polybia occidentalis,* commonly known as maribunta. Leaf cutter

Paper wasps or maribunta, *Polybia occidentalis*

ants, *Atta cephalotes*, were seen at various places on the island, carrying cuttings along their well-established trails back to their huge underground nests. Several large termite nests were seen up in some of the trees and were identified as the common *Nasutitermes corniger*. All of these species have been previously recorded from the island.

Dragonflies were seen several times flying around in the sunshine near the top of the hill but the only one that landed close and allowed us to get a photograph for identification purposes was a band-

Band-winged dragonlet, *Erythrodiplax umbrata*
Photo: Mark Greener

winged dragonlet, *Erythrodiplax umbrata*. This is a common species found throughout Trinidad and from the southern USA down to Bolivia.

A click beetle, *Chalcolepidius porcatus*

A large click beetle, *Chalcolepidius porcatus*, was spotted on a fallen tree trunk and a large unidentified grasshopper was seen amongst long grass at the top of the hill during the day and a cockroach, *Leucophaea sp.*, was photographed in the forest at night.

There is a need for more detailed studies on the invertebrates found on Huevos. Along with Chacachacare, Monos and the smaller islands in the north-west of Trinidad it provides a fantastic place for the study of island biogeography, offering an opportunity to make interesting comparisons with the invertebrate communities found on mainland Trinidad.

Mike Rutherford and Mark Greener on a walk along the ridge. *Photo: Amy Deacon*

HUEVOS EXPEDITION 2014 REPORTS

The Lepidoptera report - working the night shift -

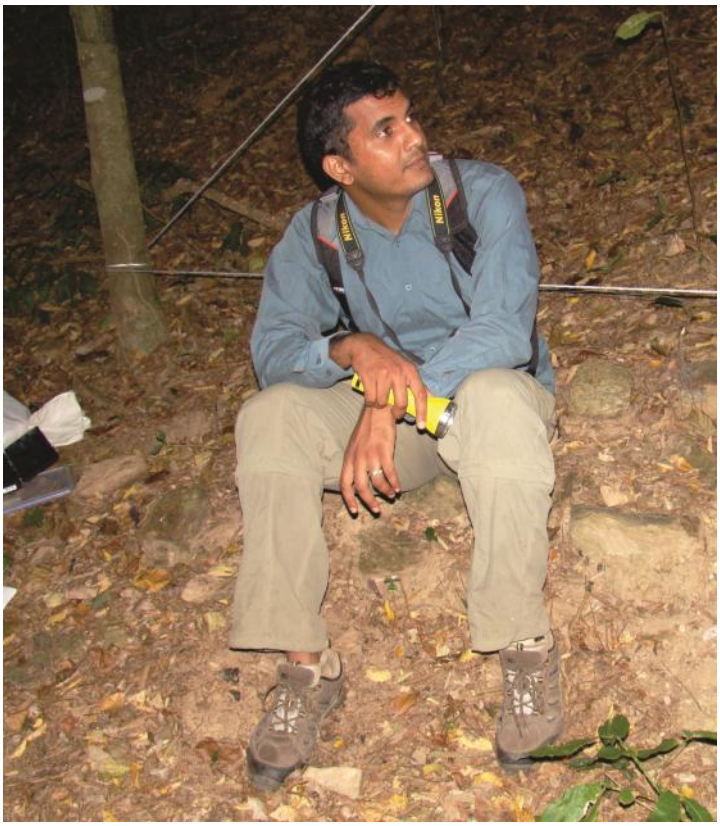
Report by Kris Sookdeo

I had been anticipating the Huevos trip since it was planned in 2013. This was not merely because I had not been to the island before, but because not many people have had a chance to really explore the island in the past. Who knew what birds or butterflies might drop by from the nearby Paria peninsula in Venezuela? Even if there were no new Trinidad and Tobago record, given the spotty history of collecting on the island, there was a high possibility that any record might be new for Huevos.

I will not recount the dolphin encounter that, while memorable, will no doubt be told by the other writers. My account, therefore, begins on our landing. While we were drawing alongside the jetty, a pair of orange-winged parrots, *Amazona amazonica,* screeched loudly and flew out of a seaside almond growing along the beach. Although I was warned, I was still surprised by how small the beach was. Equally surprising was how clean the sand was as we had come expecting garbage (the removal of any garbage that might hamper sea-turtles being one of the aims of the trip). Apparently the caretaker had cleaned much of the beach ahead of us.

We quickly got about the task of unloading and staking out the various sections of whatever free space we could secure for pitching our tents and hammocks. Occupying the sand was prohibited as we did not wish to inconvenience any turtle that might come ashore that night, so I pitched my tent behind a large rusting metal tank which could offer some protection from the near constant wind. With the trivial but important tasks out of the way we could finally begin exploring and Graham, Eddison, Matt and I set off.

Immediately behind the house is the only trail to leave the beach and head inland from the bay. From then on the journey is uphill along a rocky gulley and then, as the gulley peters out, against the steep slope of the island. Needless to say the going was tough but there was lots to take interest in. For one, we were never out of sight of at least one emperor morpho butterfly, *Morpho helenor insularis*. As a fruit and sap feeder I thought it odd that they would be so common on an island with no obvious fruit source. Perhaps there is enough of the food plant growing on the island to ensure that caterpillars can survive but, after pupation, the adults may have greatly shortened lives, just enough time to mate and lay their eggs. (Note: *Paragonia pyramidata* is recorded by Barcant as a food plant but I cannot identify this plant so I cannot say if it was present). Another common butterfly in the gulley was the underleaf, *Melanis electron*. In terms of birds,



Kris Sookdeo waits patiently for moths at his light trap on Huevos.

Photo: Matt Kelly

the streaked saltator, *Saltator striatipectus* was the most interesting sighting here.

Eventually we arrived at the ridgeline and here could be found open scrubby patches of what seemed to be a type of plumbago. These patches were also frequented by black vultures, *Coragyps atratus* and I suspect it was these birds that were responsible for the curious paths that crisscrossed the low vegetation. They probably utilized these spots as a nesting site and scraped the ground clean. This was supported by the fact that we found a juvenile vulture entangled in some bushes nearby (which Graham set free).

I saw several butterflies in these patches but could not identify them as I was unable to catch or photograph them, however they included several Pieridae, small Lycaenidae and Hesperiidae. It was in one of these patches that I came across *Anteros carausius,* an attractive member of the Riodinidae which is found on the NW peninsula and Bocas islands. Future butterfly collecting efforts should probably focus on these open patches.

Here, too, I briefly saw a crimson-crested woodpecker, *Campephilus melanoleucos,* on a silk cotton tree. We could see the other side of the island from that ridge. More significantly, we could see a few sea caves on the "second" island to the north. These, we hypothesized, may or may not have been the elusive Huevos Island oilbird cave. Verifying whether this population still exists certainly should be a Club project at some point in the future.

Eventually we could go no further and decided to head back until we encountered Mike, Amy and Mark. I opted to join Mike and Mark in the hope that I could find a few more butterflies but in short order we were also heading back to camp.

The rest of the day was spent resting and scrounging whatever scraps of garbage remained – the blazing sun not being conducive to exploring.

At about 4:00 pm I headed back up the rocky gulley to set up my light trap. Finding a suitable spot was a bit challenging as it was difficult to get out of the wind. Setting up the trap was the next challenge as electrical problems had me searching for an unseen fault. Additionally, numerous mosquitoes had come out in the cool evening and were obviously thrilled to find a blood filled human being standing in the forest. Frustrated, I decided to take a break and set up a trail camera that I had brought along. I set the camera at the head of the first side trail in the gulley. After finding a good spot and spreading some bait (a rotten banana) I switched the camera on and...nothing. The camera refused to fire. It was working but evidently the ambient temperature was so high that the camera had trouble operating properly. I could do nothing but hope as the temperature dropped that the camera would be able to function. I was rather disappointed at the prospect that both my light trap and camera trap could fail but back at the light trap I finally figured out the electrical problem and happily returned to camp.

At about 7:00 pm I returned to the trap and switched on the lights. The mosquitoes, mercifully, had disappeared but the wind would prove to be the major annoyance that night. Progress was slow. To begin with there were likely to be few moths about as it was the dry season. Most moths that did show up were either blown away before they could settle or, having settled, were promptly blown off by the next gust. Thankfully I had the company of Mike, Amy, Mark and Dan who were trapping bats nearby but eventually they too would leave. Determined to make the most of it I ended up staying out at the light until 2:30 am on Sunday.

I doubt I will forget the feeling of sitting out there that night. A strange island. The sound of insects, the wind and occasional rustlings in the leaf litter. Geckos rattled from hiding spaces unseen, and more than once my mind conjured a ghostly shape in the shadows that I had to shine my light on to dispel. But it turns out I was not entirely alone. At some point a tropical screech-owl, *Megascops choliba* had settled nearby and had been observing the insects at the light. Eventually it dropped down and captured a large fluttering moth. Returning to his perch, it ate the moth and promptly fell asleep. So unconcerned was this bird that I was able to walk directly under it within arm's reach. It only opened its eyes when I took a picture and then it went back to sleep.

You know it's late when even the owls have gone to sleep so I decided to call it a night (morning?). In the end I managed to rack up 23 species of moths. The full list of species will be presented in the Living World.

Back on the beach I was surprised to see that the caretaker was awake and on the pier, fishing. How magical it must be to reside on these islands for your whole life. No turtles were on the beach and I contemplated taking a dip before settling in but the cold drove me back. Finally I was able lie in my tent to get some rest. And then it started. A rustling caused me to open my eyes. In the gloom I could see that a rat had started to scale my tent. More annoyed than curious I punched the beast clear off the tent. These beach rats must be a tenacious bunch because it, or its relative, was soon back and attempting to scale Mt. Tent. I sat up, squared it up nicely and let it have it, sending the rodent flying. This repeated itself at least two more times until the rat(s) had had enough and left me to sleep in peace.

The rest of the trip was uneventful. I rose early to bring down the remaining gear which I had left in the gulley and retrieve the trail camera. Surprisingly, the camera did in fact work and had photographed a spectacled thrush, *Turdus nudigenis,* in the late evening and several unidentified rats that night. The boatman arrived when I was still packing and, after a bit of hustle, I was the last to board, so ending a very memorable trip.

A - *Dislisioprocta stellata*

B - *Idaea incanata*

C - *Anteros carausius*

D - Light trap on Huevos

HUEVOS EXPEDITION 2014 REPORTS

- Physical Geography of Huevos -

Report by Glenn Wilkes

Huevos is the least known of the islands off the western peninsula of Trinidad, and well suited for a field trip by the Field Naturalist's Club. However, since our visit last year the owner had refurbished the buildings, and was now reluctant to give the same *carte blanche* permission as he had done previously. His reasons were understandable. Many of the people who own or have access to boats, have little regard for property or the rights of others, and are always looking for a venue for weekend "limes".

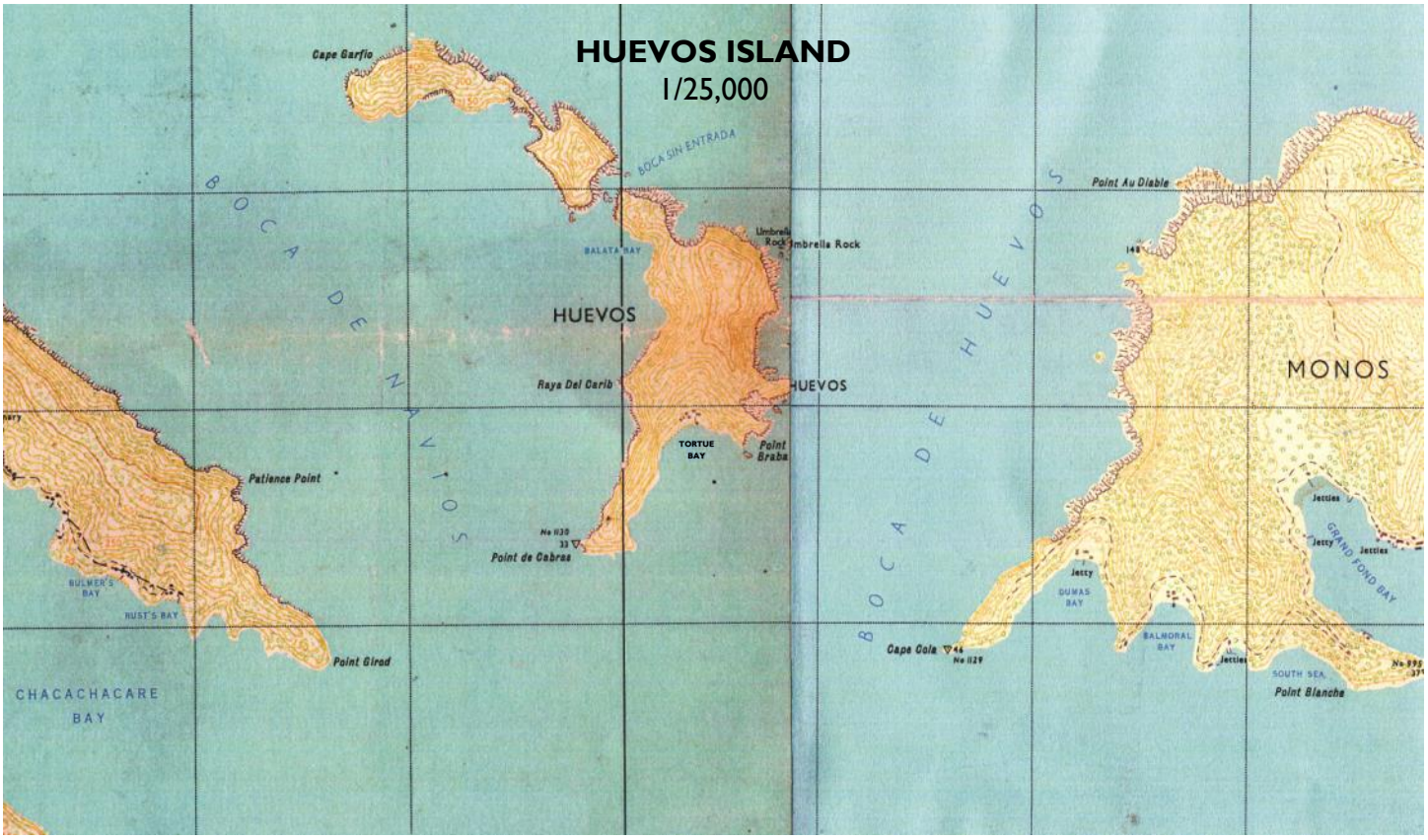
After a lot of reassurances, RB agreed to a limited number of people visiting, for scientific purposes only, and insisted that we use Jeffrey for our transport. Jeffrey, in turn, was concerned about the sea conditions and said that we would have to travel early in the morning, both coming and going. Much to the disappointment of some members of the Club, it was therefore a small group that made the trip. It was disappointing even for those who *were* going, as we had hoped for a full weekend. In the end, however, all agreed that it had been a great success, and it is my hope that what we achieved in such a short time will so impress RB, that a symbiotic relationship will result in regular visits of this kind.

Huevos is really a pair of islands, located in the "Bocas" or channels. First Boca is between the mainland and Monos, second between Monos and Huevos, third (or Boca de Navios) between Huevos and Chacachacare, and Grand Boca is the main channel between Chacachacare and Venezuela. (Although there is another island, Patos, in the "Grand", it doesn't seem to have been considered important enough to have names for the adjacent channels).

The north island of Monos is separated from the south by a channel appropriately named "Boca sin Entrada" or "mouth without entrance". It is so narrow there may be a shallow connection at low tide. Apart from Tortue Bay on the southern end of the south island, both islands are quite inaccessible, with most of the coastline being sheer cliffs. Because of this and the limited time available, there was no question of undertaking any studies on the north island.

From Tortue Bay the land slopes up north to the main ridge that runs in a predominantly north-south direction. There are two shallow dry ravines on this slope, and one would expect that if at any time the island had been cultivated it would have been in this area, but there are no indications of it. The dry ravines provide a reasonable access to the "interior", which is essentially the main ridge. The northern half of the ridge is not as pronounced as the southern, and on the Club's visit last year, Matt Broze and I had explored it, scrambling down the western slope, hoping to reach the shallow connection between the two islands. There used to be an oil-bird cave on the north island just across Boca sin Entrada, and we had hoped to at least see if it still existed. We did succeed in reaching the coast, but still some distance to the south, and at a point where further progress was impossible. An alternative route seems to be by kayak, but this has been ruled out until later in the year when the seas are calmer. West of Tortue Bay the ridge is narrow with precipitous slopes down to the sea on either side. These are so steep that there is constant weathering and erosion. Apart from the relatively short bit of coast at Tortue Bay, any exploration at sea level is limited. At the western end of the bay, the pile of rocks from the cliffs above are a warning that is hard to ignore. Even by boat, it would be foolhardy to attempt to explore it, except during calm seas and between the tidal change that results in a *remous.* Last year, a member who thought it was safe enough to snorkel at the extremity of the bay had a harrowing experience.

If future visits to Huevos can be longer and undertaken at more regular intervals, access routes and the locations of investigations can be properly mapped and become part of all reports.



Above: **A splice of the two adjacent maps showing the position of Huevos Island between Boca de Navios to the west and Boca de Huevos to the east**

Map source: Directorate of Overseas Surveys for Government of Trinidad and Tobago,1970

Courtesy: Glenn Wilkes

Below: **View from the northern ridge - looking north** *Photo: Matt Kelly*

Overnight Expedition to Huevos, February, 2014 (L - R)

Front: Dan Jaggernauth, Eddison Baptiste, Mike Rutherford, Amy Deacon, Matt Kelly

Back: Jeffrey Wong Sang, Sheldon Ramsundar, Mark Greener, Kris Sookdeo, Glenn Wilkes, Stephen Smith, Graham White, Hameeda Ali, Selwyn Gomes.

Above photo on jetty : Matt Kelly

Club members enjoying the boat ride to Huevos Island February, 2014

Below photo in boat : Jeffrey Wong Sang

Dear Fellow Members, on 10th July, 2016 TTFNC will be Celebrating its 125th Birthday.

We therefore invite all to help create a Special Birthday Experience with a lead up week of activities to commemorate this auspicious occasion.

We need volunteers to help plan and coordinate these upcoming activities.

Let's make our 125th Birthday one that will be remembered for the next 125 years.

E-mail **admin@ttfnc.org**

if you would like to help plan the event

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Management Notices

New members; Volunteers; Publications

New Members

The Club warmly welcomes the following new members:

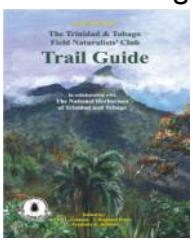
Ordinary members: **Chad Lue Choy, David Lawrie, Laura Tardieu, Lawrence James, Marianna Rampaul, Stephanie Warren-Gittens, Vijan Ramnarine, Yufei Wu**

Family members: **Graham Rostant**

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

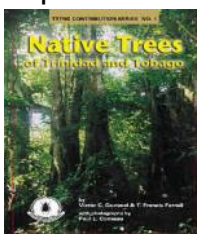
PUBLICATIONS

The following Club publications are available to members and non-members:



The TTFNC Trail Guide

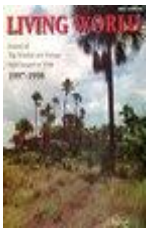
Members : TT$160.00



The Native Trees of T&T

2nd Edition
Members : TT$80.00

Living World Journal 1892-1896 CD
Members : TT$95.00



Living World Journal 2008
Living World Journal back issues
Members price : free

Living World 2012 supplement

Due to limited supply Living World 2012 supplements are $20.00 each.

MISCELLANEOUS

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 and Tobago. Full details are available on their website: http://www.greenhallstrust-wi.org/link.htm

Your 2014 Annual Membership Fees are Due:

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

Submission of articles and field trip reports:

1. **All articles must reach the editor by the eighth week of each quarter. Submission deadline for the 3rd Quarter 2014 issue is August 31, 2014.**
2. **Electronic copies can be submitted to the 'Editor' at: admin@ttfnc.org or directly to the editor or any member of Management. Please include the code QB2014-3 in the email subject label.**