

FEATURES

A Naturalist's view of Mt Chaguaramal



A small fer de lance

IN JUNE 2015, the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club visited Mt Chaguaramal, a towering peak located high above the Aripo Valley. The summit is estimated to be 859 metres above sea level which makes it the fourth highest point in TT.

As can be expected at such an elevation, rain and mist are frequent companions on this winding forest trail. Patches of cloud forest exist nearer the peak and the moisture allows thick mats of moss to grow on tree branches and rocks (cloud forests tend to be found around 900

m). Plants such as the high elevation anare palms and tank bromeliad can be found here as well.

In some sections of the trail we found lovely clumps of the mountain cashibo (Calathea casupito) — a beautiful member of the ginger family. As its name suggests, it is found mostly at higher altitudes. The flowers are small and easy to overlook, but they are located in the spectacular flower bracts which are bright orange yellow in colour.

Massive forest trees, festooned with countless bromeliads, anthuriums and orchids flank the trail. Some trees, like a particularly massive ficus tree, sported impressive buttress roots at its base.

A small fer-de-lance (Bothrops cf asper/atrox) was eventually found basking on the leaf of a small plant, held aloft about one foot off of the ground. The fer-de-lance is one of four snakes found in our country whose venom poses a danger to human health. It is also one of the most

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frequently seen snakes in our forests. However, reports of deaths from bites are rare and most encounters are uneventful.

In addition to the tank bromeliads, two other spectacular bromeliads can be seen here — *Vriesea splendens*, with a flame red inflorescence and which grew on the forest floor and on trees and *Vriesea glutinosa*, beautifully banded cream and brown and which grows mainly on the limestone outcrops.

For more information on our natural environment contact the T&T Field Naturalists' Club at admin@ttfnc.org, our website at www.ttfnc.org, Facebook and YouTube pages.

see photos on page 8B



Mountain cashibo

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FEATURES

Spectacular view



Beautiful trail on Mt Chaguaramal.



Spectacular bromeliads

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