

Theodore Roosevelt slept on the table

By Peter R. Bacon (Zoology Department, U.W.I., Trinidad)

THE 1977-78 volume of the Journal contained a short article which left several unanswered questions. Entitled *Theodore Roosevelt's Visit to Oropouche Cave*, the article exhibited a photograph showing the one-time president of the United States of America standing in the mouth of the cave on Leotaud's estate, Cumaca. With Roosevelt in this 1911 snapshot were two unidentified persons, one of whom it was thought might be "a Mr. Carr". It was surmised that this trio travelled to Valencia "by train" and thence "over the hills by horse, mule or by walking".

Further information has now come to light, which I am pleased to present in this note.

While checking references in the British Museum last year I came across a book by W.T. Hornaday called *A Wild Animal Round-up*, published 1925. This included a chapter on *Hunting the Cavebird in Trinidad* (1900) which described entering the Huevos Cave by boat and seeing about 200 birds. Incidentally, a number of other early writings were located dealing with oil-birds and these contained some ambiguity about the number of oil-bird caves in Trinidad and their geographical location. For example, an article by Ridgeway (1884) gave the only locality as "Mona Island", presumably what is now called Monos, and Carricker in 1931 lists "Monos, Shagramal, three small ones on an adjacent ridge and a large one on the heights of Oropouche" all with colonies.

Readers may be interested that to date there is no complete listing of all the localities where *Steatornis caripensis* is found in Trinidad although eight colonies were mentioned by Snow (1962) and French (1973). It is possible that some cave or grotto sites are occupied only on a temporary basis as the island's oil-bird population fluctuates in size.

However, to return to Hornaday's book. Reference was made in this book to an article written by Theodore Roosevelt in *Scribner's Magazine*, dated 1917. It took me several days to locate this publication which was not held by the British Museum Libraries, but, thanks to kind assistance received at the Guildhall Library, London, and the City of Manchester Public Library, I obtained a copy finally. This xerox copy has been deposited in the University Library at St. Augustine for those who might wish to read the whole of Roosevelt's interesting account.

The same "mystery" photograph appears on page 56, plus another full length one of the cave entrance with two people standing in it, although they are too small for recognition. Other photographs show the interior of the cave and aspects of oil-bird biology.

Some sections of this article are worth quoting in full. In *A Naturalist's Tropical Laboratory* Roosevelt writes "I made an interesting trip with three friends — F.W. Urich, the entomologist, G.B. Rorer, the mycologist, and the solicitor-general, Archer Warner — into northern mountains of Trinidad to see a guacharo cave".

That partly answers our questions. We know now who the four people were in that party, but we don't know which one of them took the photograph! Possibly some one can locate pictures of Messrs. Urich, Rorer and Warner in time to settle this problem for the next issue!

THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S VISIT TO OROPOUCHE



J.F. Snow, Dept. of Biological Sciences, U.W.I., St. Augustine
 1917 members of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists Club with the Guacharo Cave at Oropouche. The man on the left is Theodore Roosevelt, the man on the right is Mr. Leotaud, and the man in the center is Mr. Carr. The photograph is of interest partly because it is probably the first photograph taken at the cave and partly because it was taken by Theodore Roosevelt. The photograph is in his own collection and is one of the few photographs of the cave which I have seen. It is a very good photograph and shows the cave entrance and the state of the cave.

As far as their journey goes, T.R. continues "We motored out some thirty miles, to a point where the governor had most kindly arranged to have horses meet us. Then we rode four hours back among the mountains to a plantation belonging to Mr. Francis Leotaud, who had courteously arranged that we should sleep in a room of the overseer's house."

Having described his visit inside the cave and the birds and other animals in detail, Roosevelt concludes his account with the following memorable paragraph.

"It was late in the afternoon and we returned to the house. We dried our

clothes as well as we could, but it was moist and rainy and they were still wet when we put them on next morning. We dined well on what we had brought with us. My companions had hammocks, I slept soundly on the table. Next morning the sunrise was glorious, the day was clear and bright and the ride homeward was pure pleasure."

Spoken like a true field naturalist — it is "pure pleasure" to write about such a man in our journal.

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