

FIELD NATURALIST

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EDITORIAL

Seventy years in the life of any organisation is a very long time. But here in Trinidad, where clubs and associations are set up and knocked down like ninepins, it is something of a record. So much so, that when the Trinidad Field Naturalists Club reached that staid and stately age on July 10th. this year, members felt it was not only a cause for jubilation, but for celebration too.

Hence the idea was born of an exhibition to show what natural history means to the community at large. We felt the scope should be wide. We all knew that there was a Minister of Agriculture, but few people knew the many functions and ramifications of this important government department. The agriculture and fisheries exhibits lift a small corner of the curtain to show us something of what goes on behind the scenes.

Equally important is the Education Department. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Board of Industrial Training, who unhesitatingly loaned us this hall for our exhibition. The Education Department came into it in other ways, too. First there was the children's drawing competition in four age groups which the Art and Culture division of the department undertook to run. How successful their efforts were you may judge for yourself by looking at the winning drawings on show tonight. But that is not all, for the schoolchildren were also encouraged to prepare suitable exhibits for their own stand in the exhibition. The result augurs well for the future of this territory and its budding citizens.

One thing that amazed us was to find how many good friends we had in the territory, both among private individuals, academic and other clubs and institutions, and commercial concerns. It would be unkind to single out any one for specific mention. In another part of this issue we express our thanks to all those who have contributed to the success of this exhibition. But it is human to err

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and if, inadvertently, some have been left out, we apologise and ask them to accept our very sincere thanks.

The Trinidad Field Naturalists' Club was started by a small group of men who dedicated themselves to an ideal. Their aim was, to quote the rules by which they were guided—and by which we are guided today—"to bring together all persons interested in the study of natural history." How well they succeeded is shown by the fact that we are now celebrating seventy unbroken years of existence.

But while we may look back with pride on past achievements, it is to the future we now turn with a determination not to let our founders down. The young Associates of today will, we hope, be the driving force tomorrow towards a centenary of service to the community. Everyone of us is a naturalist at heart. Who does not admire a beautiful flower, a humming bird hovering in the air, a lovely butterfly or a tree in full bloom?

The founders intended that the main body of members should come from people who did admire these things. And while we like to have the scientifically-minded members who can contribute so much to our knowledge of Nature, our main body of members is still those people who admire what they see and leave the "How?" and "Why?" and "Wherefore?" to the scientists.

So we move forward, steadfast in our resolve to achieve the next goal—our centenary.

DID YOU KNOW . . .

. . . That there are 700 million to 800 million insects to every acre of land? The insect kingdom is the largest in all Nature. More than half a million species are known at present and it is believed that the total number of species is probably five times that figure.

. . . The highest living tree in the world is thought to be 346 feet and is found in the redwood forest of California.

. . . The oldest living tree is believed to be one known as "The Senator" in Florida. It is estimated to be three thousand years old.

. . . Trinidad has 347 known species of birds, including three that are both resident and migrant. Tobago has 144 species, making a total of 491 species for the Territory as a whole.