

# JOURNAL OF THE TRINIDAD FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB 1956

## EDITORIAL

The Trinidad Field Naturalists' Club was founded in July 1891. Soon afterwards, full of energy and enthusiasm, the new members decided to publish a journal, and the first number appeared in April 1892. Thereafter, the journal appeared every two months for four years, running to two volumes of just over 300 pages each. Publication ceased in February 1896 but the club continued to flourish until 1907 "when through the dispersion of most of its active members to other parts of the island and elsewhere, it lapsed into a state of inactivity, became languid, and eventually lay dormant" \*until July 1924 when it was revived and entered upon its second phase.

With many of the original members still alive at that time, it was natural that attempts should be made to re-issue the journal, but these came to nought. However, in 1938 material for publication had been collected and plans were well advanced when unexpected developments once more prevented publication.

The club has now entered upon its third phase, and although none of the foundation members is still alive their achievements continue to be a source of inspiration and encouragement. Plans for the continuation of the journal crystallized with the appointment of an editorial committee and an advisory committee at a meeting of the club on 14th October 1955.

Conditions have changed greatly since the early days, and we cannot now contemplate publishing the journal bimonthly as was done when it first appeared. We plan an annual publication, provided that finances permit and that a sufficient volume of publishable material is forthcoming.

The club is composed of nature lovers and serious amateur and professional scientists. We believe that the journal should reflect this varied composition and should appeal to all members. We hope to stimulate an interest in and a love for the natural history of Trinidad, and, at the same time, to publish observations of scientific value. We foresee that the journal will become an important and easily accessible source of information on the local flora and fauna which is so sorely needed by biology teachers in the island.

In this number we offer you six articles, several short notes and miscellaneous information. We regret the complete lack of botanical material, but this was unavoidable. Some of the articles call for editorial comment.

\*From the address of welcome presented to H.E. the Governor by Mr. H. Caracciolo at a meeting on 13th February 1925,

Dr. Chenery's paper is reprinted unchanged from the script of a lecture delivered at a meeting of the club in 1942. The original negatives of the photographs referred to were lost when the Simon Bolivar was sunk in 1939. The photograph we print is a copy of one of the original prints. Dr. Chenery's note on the King Vulture is from the same lecture and appears in slightly altered form.

As is well known, Prof. F. W. Urich was a mine of information on the zoology of the island, but committed to paper only a small fraction of his vast store of knowledge. His notes on Trinidad bats which we now publish were never intended for publication; it is obvious that they were compiled for his own private use and that he has relied on the observations of others as well as his own. It is clear, too, that the notes were written before 1934 since in that year they were proved incorrect in at least one respect by observations in which he himself participated—yet the notes were not corrected. After Prof. Urich's death in 1937, the notes came into the possession of Mr. Wehekind who was associated with Prof. Urich in the investigations into the role played by bats in the spread of paralytic rabies. Many of the additional observations which he provides were made during these investigations in 1934. Through the generosity of Mr. Wehekind, several subsequent workers in this field have had access to these notes. This, together with the fact that there is much of value in them, justifies their publication. We thank Mr. A. M. Greenhall for bringing the nomenclature up to date; the current names have been placed in brackets after the names which Urich used.

The article by Mr. A. T. Carr on the boa that laid eggs is a revised and condensed version of one which appeared in the Trinidad Guardian on 19th June 1938 at the culmination of a controversy on the question Do boas lay eggs? A photograph of some dissected eggs, which accompanied the article, clearly showed the young snakes within the eggs. Here too, we have been unfortunate in that the original negative cannot be found and there is no print from which a satisfactory block can be made. Perforce we have had to do without the picture.

In this the sixty-fifth year of the club's existence, a memorial has been erected at the Royal Victoria Institute Museum to commemorate six distinguished past members, all of whom attended the meeting at which the club was inaugurated on 10th July 1891. Mr. Carr's sketches of the men and their work formed part of the speech which he delivered at the ceremony at which the memorial was unveiled. Trinidad owes much to these men for their vision and courage in founding the club and its journal which is a work of reference valuable to scientist and naturalist alike even to this day. It is fitting, therefore, that we dedicate this number, the first of a new series, to the memories of H. Caracciolo, W. E. Broadway, F. W. Urich, R. R. Mole, T. I. Potter and P. L. Guppy.

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**Acknowledgements:** Thanks are due to the authorities of the Commonwealth Institute of Entomology and the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) for the loan of a specimen of the Inca Beetle from which the drawing on the cover was made, to Mr. G. Stell for arranging for the loan, and to the Caribbean Commission for permission to use the blocks of the pictures which illustrate Mr. Carr's article on distinguished members.