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## NATURE NOTES

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### Observations Relating to Populations of the Giant Grasshopper *Tropidacris cristata* in Trinidad, West Indies.

*Tropidacris cristata* and the very similar *T. collaris* (Orthoptera: Romaleidae) are believed to be the largest grasshoppers in the world (Carbonell 1986). Of the two, only *T. cristata* is found in Trinidad. Earlier, I reported (Starr 1998) finding *T. collaris* in large numbers on Margarita Island, Venezuela in August 1997. In contrast, until the observations reported here I had never encountered *T. cristata* in any abundance in Trinidad. Although it is not a rare insect, I had never seen two individuals in one day and possibly not two in the same week, this despite a decade's residence in the area of the Northern Range.

The Botany Group of the Field Naturalists' Club toured the Irois Forest near the south-western corner of Trinidad on 20 October 2001. In the course of a two-hour walk, I noticed at least 20 of the grasshoppers, and others in the group also remarked on their abundance. According to our guide, local forester Wilbur Isaac, they are seasonally abundant in the area, and he believed that this was a regular occurrence about that time of year. The individuals that I noted were all mature females and males.

These observations are consistent with the working hypothesis that *T. cristata* has a regular seasonal breeding cycle in southern Trinidad, with very little or no breeding in northern Trinidad in most years. If this is the case, then the occasional individuals found in the north result from centripetal movement out of the breeding areas and are a genetic dead-end. The scarcity of individuals in the north may in itself account for the apparent absence of a breeding population, even if climatic and food conditions are suitable in some years.

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nus *Tropidacris* (Orthoptera, Acridoidea, Romaleidae, Romaleinae). *Proc. Acad. nat. Sci. Philadelphia*, 138:366-402.

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### First Record of the Spectacled Caiman *Caiman c. crocodilus* for Chacachacare, Bocas Islands, Trinidad and Tobago.

The spectacled caiman *Caiman c. crocodilus* is a common resident of Trinidad and Tobago that occasionally wanders out to sea and has been reported as a waif in the easternmost Bocas Islands of Monos and Gaspar Grande (Murphy 1997). Here we document the first record from Chacachacare, the westernmost of Trinidad's Bocas Islands, where it has not been reported previously (Lall and Hayes 2000).

On 14 February 1999, we examined a freshly dead specimen 1.7m long on the beach at La Tinta, Chacachacare. It was positioned horizontal to the water's edge, suggesting that it had washed in after dying. The only visible wound was a deep (presumably non-fatal) gash on the left rear leg. Photographs clearly revealed the presence of a bony, transverse ridge just in front of the eyes which distinguish this species from two species of crocodiles (Murphy 1997). The identification was confirmed by H. E. A. Boos (pers. comm.).

Because Chacachacare is visited frequently by biologists who have not reported the spectacled caiman on any other occasion (e.g. 34 days by Hayes), it clearly is not resident on the island. Given the occurrence of this stray individual on the west side of the island, combined with the clockwise circulation of currents within the Gulf of Paria (Kenny and Bacon 1981), we conjecture that it may have originated from Venezuela. The only previous report of a crocodylian from Chacachacare was from "Bobby, a fisherman resident of Staubles Bay", who reported a dead Orinoco crocodile *Crocodylus intermedius* found "floating out of Boca Grande, north-west coast, Chacachacare Island in 1962-1964" (Medem

in Boos 1983:20). Given the difficulty in identifying crocodylians, we concur with Murphy (1997) that this record should be considered unreliable.

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**Dry Season Spawning in the Cascadu  
*Hoplosternum littorale*.**

*Hoplosternum littorale* (Hancock 1828) is a neotropical armoured catfish belonging to the family Callichthyidae. The cascadu, as the fish is known locally, spawns in the rainy season, from June to November, with main spawning activity coinciding with the heaviest rainfall in July and August (Singh 1978). The nest ranges in size from 15 to 50cm in diameter and is about 6cm in height. Each nest can contain an egg mass with 2 000 to 22 000 eggs.

Six nests of the cascadu were observed during the period 19th to 22nd February 2002 in a pond at the Bam-

boo Grove Fish Farm, Valsayn. The nests were of mean diameter 21cm  $\pm$  2.8 S.D. Four of the six nests contained egg masses with eggs numbering 232, 365, 2 467 and 3 281 respectively. The eggs were treated with antibiotic and antifungal agents and incubated following the method described by Ramnarine (2001). None of the eggs hatched, suggesting that the eggs were infertile. The egg masses were small since Singh (1978) reported that egg masses range in size from 2 000 to 22 000 eggs with a mean of 10 500.

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**Rare Butterfly (*Helicopsis endemyon elegans*) Seen After 70 Years.**

A butterfly, seen on 21 April, 2002, was tentatively identified as six tailed helicopsis (*Helicopsis endemyon elegans*). This was confirmed when a specimen was caught on 28 April, 2002 by Colin Barcant (grandnephew of Malcolm Barcant, the author of *The Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago*). This butterfly has not been seen for about seventy years; indeed, Malcolm Barcant never saw it in the field, and the specimens in his collection were inherited from his friend Robert Dick. We were beginning to think it was either extinct or extremely localized, as we have been looking for it in its natural habitat, *Montrichardia* swamp areas, for a number of years. I caught additional specimens on 5 May, 2002 when the brood was still large and fresh.

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