
NATURE NOTE

Salt River Mud Volcano - An "Unrecorded" Mud Volcano

The definitive work on mud volcanoes (mv) in Trinidad was compiled by Higgins and Saunders (1974) making extensive use of the records of the oil companies in the island. However, the Salt River Mud Volcano was not among the 26 mud volcanoes identified and described by the authors. Neither for that matter was the Guayaguayare Mud Volcano noted by Herrera in 1989.

The present authors visited this Salt River mv, located in the Guayaguayare Forest, on April 6th 2003. To get there one can park 1.8 km south of the bridge over the Salt River on the Guayaguayare/Rio Claro Road. To reach the mv from this parking spot it is roughly an hour's walk in a generally southwest direction.

The forest is largely undisturbed apart from the interspersed clearings of itinerant planters. One such clearing was situated on the ridge above the mv. It was a marijuana plot that was destroyed by the Police a few weeks earlier as evidenced by marijuana seedlings that sprung up from mid dry season rains.

The dry mixed forest included *Ficus* sp., *Hura crepitans* (Sandbox) and *Ceiba pentandra* (Silk Cotton). Also present were palms like *Attalea maripa* (Cocorite), *Sabal mauritiformis* (Carat) and *Bactris major* (Roseau).

The mv, located on a wide bench at the base of the ridge referred to above, had gas and water issuing from a number of

vents to form a relatively wide "mouth". The absence of solid footing prevented an accurate measurement of the tassel which we estimated on the bench to be almost circular in shape and about 30m in diameter.

A number of coastal plants grew on the site including a coastal fern (*Acrostichum* sp.), ground bromeliad (*Aechmea aquilega*), Geretout (*Pluchea carolinensis*) and Matapal (*Clusea* sp.)

To the east of the mv and about 3m lower on the slope was an oil-filled depression. The overflow from the mv spilled downhill to the river below. We did not follow the mudflow but P. Nelson who was familiar with the area estimated the distance to the river to be about 800m. From the point where this overflow entered the river, the downstream portion tasted salty and hence the local name Salt River. The official name of the river on the topographic maps, however, is Lizard River.

REFERENCES

- Higgins, G. E. and Saunders, J. B. 1974. Mud Volcanoes in their nature and origin. *Verhandl. Naturf. Ges Basle, Bd 84 nr. p.101-152*
- Herrera, Heather-Dawn. 1989. Scenic Trinidad and Tobago. Port of Spain: Privately published. 52 p.

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Salt River Mud Volcano, Guayaguayare forest