

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

September 20th 1974

Dear Member,

You are invited to attend the next meeting of the Club to be held at the St. Mary's College Library on Thursday October 10th at 5.30 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Meeting
2. Business arising out of the Minutes
3. Correspondence
4. LECTURE - 'Tropical Soils' by Professor N. Ahmad
5. Exhibits and miscellaneous notes
6. Other business

CLUB LECTURE BEING REPEATED IN SAN FERNANDO Calling all members and friends in South. A meeting has been arranged at San Fernando Town Hall at 8.00 p.m. on Wednesday October 23rd with the following programme:-

LECTURE - 'Bird Display' by Mr Richard French

Short Interval

FILM - 'Birds of Eternal Darkness' made by Jan Linblad and about oilbirds.

EXCURSION SUNDAY OCTOBER 27th 1974 to TRINITY HILLS

Depart from St. Mary's College, Pembroke St. 7.00 a.m. Stops for members joining the group at the National Brewery, Princess Margaret Highway 7.20 a.m. and Rio Claro crossroads at 8.45 a.m.

With a long drive before the start of the excursion it is essential that we stick to the above timetable. If you are not prompt you will have to catch us up!! For the active Trinity Hills offers a fine, but strenuous ridge walk through the forest to the summit, so come prepared as for climbs up El Tucuche. Alternatively everyone can see a good example of Lora forest on the first part of the path, where there is a chance of seeing Cebus monkeys. There is also a mud volcano in the vicinity.

There is no beginners bird watching walk this month.

THE WINTER PROGRAMME FOR JUNIOR MEMBERS by Iqbal Mohammed

The first session on the programme, an insect workshop on Saturday 3rd August, was not very well attended - perhaps we have few budding entomologists - but those who did come to the Botanical Gardens had individual tuition. The workshop got underway at 9.15 a.m. with Dr Howard Evans and Dr Elisha Tikasingh explaining what kinds of insects could be caught and demonstrating the equipment to be used. We learnt how to use sweep nets, beating trays and aspirators and found that collecting butterflies is not the leisurely activity it's made out to be.

The insects, both large and small, were killed and stored for transportation in the appropriate way, and having collected a sufficient number we proceeded to Bishop Anstey High School. There we examined the catch and saw how insects are mounted and labelled for permanent safe-keeping. The method of pinning out butterflies and beetles was particularly interesting.

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The following Saturday about 20 members met at the Zoo to learn about reptiles. In Lambie gave a brief description of the Zoo, its founding (by TFCO in 1947), when it first opened - 1951 - and how it received its name from the Emperor butterfly which was common in the area, then Dr Victor Guene! launched into the reptiles with the Alligator. This animal is found all over Trinidad and grows to eight feet in length. It eats a variety of foods, chiefly fish and snails, but it will take meat and even unwary birds that feed in the reeds of the rivers and swamps. Nevertheless in the same pond we saw the small frog, Prostherapis trinitatis, which is only an inch long when full grown, and is common in the Northern range. The sexes may be easily separated as the skin below the jaws is black in the male and yellow in the female.

The afternoon became lively with the introduction of the snakes. The Macajual can grow to a maximum of 18 feet. They feed on rats and mice and having caught their prey kill it by wrapping it in their coils. Some members were later given the chance to hold a Macajual. The Cascabel is a bad-tempered snake. It sleeps in the day and wakes up in the late afternoon to feed on birds, rats and even squirrels. It is also a constricting snake. The Fer de Lance is nocturnal in habits and emerges only at dark to feed. It can move swiftly and strike at a moving object accurately, injecting poison with its downward pointing fangs. The Lapépire Z'ananna, is a very rare snake. It grows to about 15 feet and feeds on rats and other rodents. It is also a poisonous snake.

The last reptile we observed was the Iguana. This lizard can grow to 5 feet in length, about half being tail. Its flesh is considered a delicacy by many people. The Iguana feeds on young leaves, shoots and fruits. It has the characteristics of a prehistoric monster and is a truly fascinating creature. Our look at the reptiles at Emperor Valley Zoo ended by 5.00 p.m. but some members stayed on to make a grand tour of the rest of the collection.

August 18th, you may remember was a very wet day, and the visit to Aripo Savannah with Dr David Wood had to be cancelled owing to the very heavy rain. Three members who turned up at the appointed place despite the downpour were taken to the Carib Factory at Champs Fleur and were given a 'special' tour of the plant by Mr Ian Lambie. They seemed well satisfied with their morning! Dr Wood has kindly offered to take any Junior members on a 'special' tour of Aripo Savannah on Sunday January 26th, the first Club excursion of 1975, to make up for this cancellation.

A dozen or so members went to Blanchisseuse on September 1st to look at the ecology of a rocky shore, and many of them met Professor Julian Kenny in St. Augustine and were transported in style by landrover. We arrived at the shore at about 9.00 a.m. and making the most of the low tide spent the first part of the morning collecting and observing specimens. We found sea cucumbers, sea anemones, starfish, sea lettuce, different kinds of crabs, animals in shells, burrowing animals to give an idea of the range of things collected, a number of which most of the group had never seen before. Professor Kenny gave a very informative talk on the life of the sea shore and inter-tidal zone, then the latter part of the morning was spent bathing.

The members who came along on these very varied excursions enjoyed themselves and we would like to take this opportunity of thanking again the people who led them. Plans are afoot for a weekend camp in early January; other suggestions for the Christmas (or Easter) vacations should be made to Iqbal Mohammed as soon as possible.

EXCURSION TO GUYANA 10th - 15th April 1974

Kate Gibbs' brother Nick Nichell has sent an interesting report on the Club's Easter trip to Guyana, attended by the President and nine members. He takes up his account as they reach the West Bank of the Demerara River.

"A narrow gauge railway with hard seats and open windows took us slowly to Parika. The line ran beside a ditch the whole

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way and we were never out of sight of the water hyacinths, which choked these channels, and showy white lilies. Occasionally we would disturb the dainty jacanas and sometimes a pied water-tyrant. Flocks of grackles and the gregarious lesser ani were familiar to Trinidadians, but many had their best views of the showy male red-breasted marsh bird and in the rice paddies the yellow headed blackbird.

After crossing the wide Essequibo by ferry we reached Suddie, a small township on the riverbank supporting a hospital and the Essequibo district courtrooms whose jury quarters were to be our dormitory for the next three nights. Some of the party had a swim in the 'sea' which because of the Essequibo just around the corner was in fact freshwater. As dusk approached hundreds of cattle egrets flew past to roost and fork-tailed flycatchers chased insects high into the air over the beach.

By 7.30 a.m. on Friday morning we were on our way again with packed lunches ready and soon cut inland on a deeply rutted track to the Tapakuma Water Conservancy. At the central lake we came to an Amerindian settlement and were lucky to see cassava bread being made. We had spotted the plants but now saw the roots being grated and sieved and then strained in the special elongate baskets. No part of it seems was wasted; the juice (casareep) was used as a base for pepperpot and by a separate treatment could make the local liquor (cassiri). We sheltered from the rain in one of the huts and were treated to the freshly baked cassava bread. The village clearing afforded us good views of tree-top birds and we saw orang-winged parrots, lilac-tailed parakeets and some unidentified macaws some distance away. The yellow-headed caracara, a Trinidadian rarity, was a common scavenger here and over the lake white-winged swallows were plentiful.

By Saturday we were used to early starts as we drove to Charity on the Pomeroon river. Here river transport takes over and we boarded large canoes with powerful outboards for the 20 mile trip upstream. First of all though, Mr Poonai took us half a mile downstream to a good place for sloths and it was not long before we spotted some in riverside trees. They were totally motionless and some of the party were not convinced that they were animate until at the start of a torrential rainstorm they moved slowly off. We all got soaked through - even Willie Mitchell with his Aberdonian umbrella - but when the rain finally abated it was replaced by the equally relentless forest. Many birds flew over the river, of the larger or more identifiable we saw caracaras, plumbeous kites and a bat falcon. The familiar yellowtails were abundant but we also had excellent views of yellow and red rumped caciques, Moriche orioles and little blue herons.

The commonest sight though on the river were the two-man dugouts which became more plentiful as we approached Santa Monica. Here the village captain showed us around his longhouse and spoke to us about the Arawak tribe. The village was holding a market and after lunch we went on to see the older established mission at Kabakabouri. Here the clearings were grassed over and the fruit trees and crops were clearly long established. After another tour and a few more drenchings we returned to Charity for the drive back. Along the coast road we saw magnificent frigatebirds and in the fields a black caracara, a long-tailed hawk and on a roadside telegraph pole a laughing falcon. We talked long into the night about our experiences that day and sampled Demerara rum; it was nearly Easter day and Eric led a party to the local church.

Sunday morning was fine and the early risers were rewarded on a beach walk by an osprey, six scarlet ibis and a spotted sandpiper. It took most of the afternoon to cross back over the Essequibo and it was dusk as we took the train back to Georgetown. Candleflies were numerous over the rice fields and we saw one night hawk near the train.

We spent our last morning at the Botanical Gardens in Georgetown seeing the animals we had failed to see in the wild, such as manatee, anaconda, caiman and it was amusing for an Englishman to find Queen Victoria's statue hidden behind the bushes since Independence, whilst all about were the local pride and joy the "Victoria regina" giant water lilies.

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It had been a remarkable if breathtaking trip. The sheer scale of the forest, extending so far inland from the coastal strip we saw, really had to be seen to be appreciated and in our good humoured travels we saw a good deal of the fauna. Neville Chutai deserves our special thanks since his organisation enabled us to use our limited time to full advantage. Perhaps one day a reciprocal trip can be organised to Trinidad. It does after all have a lot to offer and though we were all happy to have gone we were also happy to be back - even if only to dry out!!

REPORT ON A VISIT TO TACARIB, JULY 5th - 6th. Information supplied by Yves Guillaume, David Rock and Derek Simons.

A party of 24 set out from Blanchisseuse in three fishing boats on the Saturday morning. One group saw a pair of Hawksbill turtles mating about 200 yds off-shore from the point of departure. A daylight patrol at Grand Tacarib revealed numerous nests, some fresh, along the entire length of the beach. There were also a number of troughs, very likely indicating recent hatches or theft of eggs. A dead hatchling leatherback turtle was found, and the identification later confirmed by Peter Bacon.

During the night three groups patrolled the entire beach from 8.00 p.m. to midnight and a hatch of about 15 leatherbacks was observed at 9.00 p.m. at the North-western end of the beach. A further daylight patrol on Sunday morning confirmed that no turtles had nested the previous night. The group had a look at Petit Tacarib on the Saturday afternoon and saw no recent evidence of nesting there. This visit has made a useful contribution to our rather sparse information on turtle nesting on the N. coast, and every record counts. (Peter Bacon has just left Trinidad for Reading University, England, where he is exchanging duties with a lecturer from the Zoology dept. for one year. His replacement at U.W.I. is Dr George Warner, who also has an interest in marine biology, and will keep turtle records on Peter's behalf. A green turtle hatchling was found dead on the tide at Forest Point, Toco in August by David Wood's daughter Janet. Has anyone else found any? - Ed.)

SHORT NEWS ITEMS

CARRIBBEAN CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION 8th ANNUAL MEETING This is being held in Barbados from September 27th to 29th and the Club is being represented by Mr T. F. Farrell. The meeting includes the Association's A.G.M. and there is also time in the programme for reports from member countries and the opportunity to raise matters of regional importance. A report on the meeting from Mr Farrell will be included in the next long Bulletin.

TURTLE LEGISLATION On July 2nd, the same day that the Club held a Public Meeting about turtle conservation at Port of Spain Public Library, Mr Ian Lambie put the Club's views on the subject to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr Lionel Robinson. The Minister said that he would instruct the legal draftsmen to prepare an amendment to the turtle legislation stating that turtles could not be killed on beaches at any time of year. However enquiries in August did not reveal any progress.

CONGRATULATIONS To Hans Boos, a Club member and Curator of the Emperor Valley Zoo on the publication of articles in two recent issues of Wildlife (formerly Animals) Magazine. In one he describes the ocellated gecko, Gonatodes ocellatus, as one of the most beautiful lizards in the world found only in Tobago, and in the second three distinct colour phases found in the eyelash viper, Bothrops schlegelii, a South and Central American snake in the same Genus as our Fer de Lance. Both articles are beautifully illustrated with colour photographs; let's hope there will be more.

Also to Robyn Cross, Phyllis Hoyte and Iqbal Mohammed for keeping the TFNC flag flying on a recent edition of TTT's Youth Talks Out!!

SEISMIC SURVEY IN NARIVA SWAMP In reply to a question this survey was first announced by the Prime Minister in his address to the nation on May 9th this year. He stated that a U.N. had been asked to make a seismic/aeromagnetic survey of four areas, including Nariva and Laventille swamps, which would give information on mineral resources other than hydrocarbons, as well as potential oil resources.

CHRISTMAS CARDS Will be sold at the November meeting of the Club (and October if I have them in time) on behalf of various T & T. charities, and as in past years one of the designs is by Mrs Margaret French, this year a Ruby Topaz hummingbird.

As this is the last long newsletter of the year I would like to thank everyone who has helped with the typing and addressing particularly Cleo Cooper, Catherine Field, Patricia Gouveia, Susan Phelps and Judy Solomon. The next long Bulletin will be in January 1975 and the deadline for contributions is December 15th. Please send to Kate Gibbs, c/o Chemistry Dept., U.N.I., St. Augustine or Tel. 662 - 3597

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AMENDMENTS TO RULES

ACTIVITIES - NOVEMBER, 1974

THURSDAY 14th NOVEMBER. *****

Monthly Meeting to be held at the St. Mary's College Library at 5.30 p.m. At this meeting the proposed amendments to the Rules of the Club, will be discussed. Please study the attached amendments as proposed by the Management Committee.

This is an important meeting. PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND.

SUNDAY 10th NOVEMBER. *****

BIRD WATCHING FOR BEGINNERS . Meet at the Curepe Round-about, Churchill

^ Roosevelt Highway, at 3.30 p.m. for drive to Aripo Savannah.

Members without cars will be given lifts from meeting place. Bring tea and be prepared for wet feet.

WEDNESDAY 20th NOVEMBER. *****

Illustrated Lecture at the San Fernando Town Hall at 8.00 p.m.

TOPIC : "Coral Reef Formations -The Buccoo Reef ". by Ian Lambie

SUNDAY 24th NOVEMBER. *****

Field Excursion to Southern Watershed Reserve. Leaving St. Mary's College, Pembroke Street, at 7.00 a.m. Stop--- Outside National Brewery at 7.20 a.m. Stop 2.---- Allum's Supermarket Car Park, Marabella at 8.30

m. THIS IS A LONG DRIVE . PLEASE BE EARLY

CLUB LIBRARY

The Club has now been loaned a cupboard in the St. Mary's College Library and we hope to have our books on the shelves there before the end of the year. Arrangements for borrowing will be announced in January. Anyone who would be willing to help with the Library should contact Derek Simons at a Club Meeting. He has agreed to act as the Club's Librarian.

1975 PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

Members are invited to submit suggestions for possible inclusion in the 1975 Programme of Activities. Your suggestions for Lectures and Field Excursions will be received by the Honorary Secretary at the next Monthly Meeting. Junior Members may also submit suggestions for the 1975 Vacation Workshops.

AMENDMENT TO THE RULES OF THE TRINIDAD FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

(These proposals will be discussed and hopefully adopted at the November meeting. All rules in which a change is proposed are given in full, with the new sections underlined. The significance of the changes is explained where necessary in the notes added in brackets; these notes do not form part of the suggested changes).

1. That this Club be called "The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club".
2. The object of this Club is as follows:
 - a) to bring together persons interested in the study of natural history,
 - b) to assist in the dissemination of knowledge on natural history, and
 - c) to create an awareness of the need for conservation and the wise use of natural resources.
3. The Management Committee of the Club may elect a Patron.
4. The officers of the Club shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Honorary Secretary, Assistant Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and two (2) Honorary Auditors all to be elected at the Annual General Meeting. A Junior Member may not hold any office except that of Honorary Assistant Secretary.
8. The Honorary Secretary shall conduct and preserve the correspondence of the Club, preserve in regular files all documents belonging thereto that may come into his possession, keep a correct list of members of the Club with the dates of their elections, resignation or death, and notify all members of forthcoming meetings of the Club. He shall also take and preserve minutes of the proceedings of the Management Committee, of Annual General and Special Meetings, and of points of substance which arise and decisions taken at the Monthly Meetings of the Club. He shall lay before the Club at the Annual General Meeting a written report of the Club's activities during the preceding year. He shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and sub-committees. (Deleted: Secretary must take and preserve correct minutes of proceedings at meetings of the Club).
12. No one member shall be permitted to hold more than one office at the same time. (Note: this rule should be placed after rule 5). (The word "office" replaces "executive post").
13. The affairs of the Club shall be vested in and conducted by the Management Committee which shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting. The Committee shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Honorary Assistant Secretary and three other members, at least one of whom shall be a Junior Member. Five members shall form a quorum at meetings of the Management Committee. The Management Committee shall appoint sub-committees from its members and co-opt on these committees any other members it sees fit. All such sub-committees and committees shall present an annual report on their activities to the Honorary Secretary one month before the Annual General Meeting. (The Committee is thus expanded by including one Junior Member). N.B. One para. of this rule omitted; only change needed is to delete 1st word of last line.
14. The Club shall consist of Honorary, Ordinary and Junior members. (Resident and Associate members have been renamed Ordinary and Junior members respectively, and Corresponding members have been abolished).
15. An Honorary member is a person elected as such at an Annual General Meeting of the Club. Honorary membership shall be reserved for persons who have made some outstanding contribution in the field of natural history or conservation. Temporary honorary membership may be conferred at the discretion of the Management Committee.
18. and 19. Corresponding members - both rules to be deleted. (N.B. If these deletions are approved the following rules will have to be re-numbered but the old numbers are used below).
20. An Ordinary member is one paying subscriptions to the funds of the Club and entitled to all its privileges. An Ordinary member may become a Life Member on payment of a sum to be fixed by the Management Committee

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from time to time. Last paragraph, "a resident member who leaves the Territory may on request become a Corresponding member during his absence" should be deleted.

21. A Junior member shall be one under the age of twenty-one years and not less than fifteen and shall pay half the subscription fixed for an Ordinary member. He shall have all the privileges of an Ordinary member, including the right to vote. (At present Associate members must attend an educational institution, do not have the right to vote, and their subscription is not specified in the rules but is currently \$1).
22. Every candidate for admission to the Club shall apply on the prescribed form. Applications for membership must be forwarded to the Honorary Secretary for submission to the Management Committee. The Honorary Secretary in issuing the notices convening the meeting of the Management Committee shall intimate in such notices the names of the candidates for election. The Management Committee shall have the right to refuse membership without giving a reason. The names of the elected members shall be published in the next Bulletin of the Club. (Candidates need no longer be proposed and seconded. Names of elected members to be published in the Bulletin rather than announced at a meeting.)
23. To be deleted. (This rule states "If any person shall be proposed and rejected or the name withdrawn previous to the vote, no note of such rejection or withdrawal shall be made on the minutes of the Club").
24. "There shall be an entrance fee of \$5" - to be abolished. (Not all the Committee members support this suggestion but it is included here so that it can be discussed at the meeting).
25. The annual subscription shall be fixed by the Management Committee and confirmed at the Annual General Meeting. All subscriptions shall be payable on or before March 31st of the current year. Members elected after August 31st shall pay half the annual subscription for that year. (These dates in the present rules are December 31st and June 31st respectively).
26. Any member having paid all the sums due to the Club shall be at liberty to withdraw therefrom upon giving notice in writing to the Honorary Secretary.
27. Any member whose subscription is unpaid by March 31st shall be notified by the Honorary Treasurer that his subscription is in arrears, and if no reply is received within one month from the date of writing, or if his reply is not considered satisfactory by the Management Committee at the meeting at which the reply is considered he shall forthwith cease to be a member of the Club, but may at the discretion of the Management Committee remain eligible for re-election on payment of all outstanding arrears.
28. Should any member be charged with an offence likely to bring the Club into disrepute, on a written complaint signed by at least six members and handed to the Honorary Secretary, a special meeting will be called to consider the complaint. Members shall be given at least seven days notice of such a meeting. The Honorary Secretary shall send a copy of the complaint and notice of the special meeting by registered post to the member concerned, so as to arrive not less than seven days before the date of such special meeting, together with an invitation to the member to attend or send in a written defense. Two-thirds of the members present shall determine what action be taken. (The final sentence has been added; also "financial members" are now referred to as "members").
29. Delete "financial". (The same change as above, i.e. "unfinancial" members are not members).
32. The monthly meeting of the Club shall be held on the second Thursday of each month or on such days as the Management Committee may decide. (References to the time of the meeting and the absence of a meeting in December have been deleted).

33. Members shall receive seven days notice from the Honorary Secretary of the date, hour and place at which the meetings are to be held, and of the order of business.
34. Twenty members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at Monthly, Annual General and Special Meetings of the Club. (The quorum at present is 10).
35. The order of business at the monthly meetings shall be, as far as practicable, as follows:
- a) Correspondence
 - b) Reports of Secretary and Committees
 - c) Reading of papers
 - d) Exhibits and miscellaneous notes
 - e) Any other business

(Items deleted are: Confirmation of minutes of the last meeting; Business arising; Proposals for excursions).

New Rule

A Publications Committee shall be appointed annually by the Management Committee. (New rule to be added before rule 36).

- 37.) Delete (These rules are both considered to be superfluous. 37
41.) applies to the procedures of the Publications Committee,
while 41 is enigmatic to the point of incomprehensibility).

A N D A M E R R Y C H R I S T M A S T O A L L O U R R E A D E R S .