

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

20th June, 1975.

ACTIVITIES - JULY 1975

THURSDAY 10TH JULY

Monthly Meeting of the Club will be held at the St. Mary's College Library at 5.30 p.m.

LECTURE "Coastal Currents Around Trinidad" by Mr Compton Deane.

This title does not adequately describe the range of topics this lecture will cover e.g. WHERE DOES THE OIL ON THE EAST COAST BEACHES COME FROM? HOW WILL MORE INDUSTRIALIZATION AFFECT THE GULF OF PARIA? Anyone who heard Dr Millette in April should hear Mr Deane too.

THURSDAY 17TH JULY

Special Meeting at the Forestry Division, Long Circular Rd., at 8.00 p.m. to discuss the proposed Chaguramas National Park and to Celebrate the Club's 84th anniversary. All members who are interested in the Club's participation in planning for the Park are urged to attend.

SUNDAY 27TH JULY

Excursion to Cedros. A chance to see the Forest, Swamps and shoreline of the S.W. peninsula with a member of the Forestry Division as our guide.

Dept. P.O.S. from St. Mary's College, Pembroke St. at 7.30 a.m.
Brief stops at the National Brewery, Princess Margaret Highway at 8.00a.m. and at the San Fernando roundabout opposite the fire station at 8.45 a.m. PLEASE BE PROMPT.

News from the Management Committee

The Committee is preparing an information sheet about the Club's activities, which will be issued to all new members on joining. In connection with excursions the Committee would like to remind existing members that the Club does not attempt to cater for children and that members bringing children with them on excursions must be responsible for their behaviour and safety.

An appeal is also made to members who come on excursions to make more effort to keep together as a group and refrain from rushing on ahead of the main party. Someone familiar with the interesting features of the place being visited is usually invited to act as guide or leader of each excursion. We will only learn from them if we stop to listen and find out what to look out for during the walk. (For a members view on this subject see 'May Excursion to the Mora Forest').

Dr Tikasingh of the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre reminds members that they should have a Yellow Fever vaccination if they go into the forest areas regularly. This can be done free of charge at the Caribbean Medical Centre in Wrightson Road; it lasts for 10 years and has no side effects.

Membership, Address List and Addressing Bulletins

If your name or address are incorrect in the enclosed list or if your copy of the Bulletin does not always arrive, please notify the Secretary. This list should help members without cars to find someone nearby who could provide transport to meetings and excursions. Membership now stands at 210, of which 72 are Junior members. This means sending out about 200 Bulletins a month (husband and wife members get one between them) and we could do with some new volunteers to help with the addressing, particularly from Woodbrook or Maraval or nearby.

If you could spare a couple of hours every two or three months please tell the Secretary or Miss Hannah Pavlik, who is taking over as editor of the quarterly Bulletins. My retiring helpers in the St. Augustine area say it takes less than 2 hours to fold, staple, address and stamp 50-60 newsletters, less if you persuade some of your family to help too. It is a chore left to too few, so please give Ian and Hannah a hand, and many thanks again to my helpers - Kate Gibbs.

The Club's Turtle Tagging Project by Ian Lambie

The 1975 nesting season has been a very successful one for Leatherback turtles in Trinidad. More than 100 nesting females have been observed at Matura Bay and at other nesting locations on the North coast. There have been several "returns"

including T16 which was tagged at Matura in 1970 and nested at Tacarib on 26th April, and three turtles which nested at Tacarib this season, and re-nested later at Matura.

On the night of the 7th June, David Lee-a-Ping, Colin Lambie and I witnessed the emergence of more than 200 hatchlings from four nests, including one which was being "tug up" by a nesting female. It is unlikely that the hatchlings in this nest would have emerged on that night, had they not been disturbed by the female. Many of these hatchlings had been flung clear of the nest chamber by her powerful flippers, while others remained lodged in the sand 30" - 36" below the surface. Some of these had not yet hatched, while recent hatchlings were still attached to their yolk sacs.

We came upon this female while she was still digging her egg chamber and while removing the eggs and hatchlings, still embedded in the sand, we found that the temperature in the nest was much greater than the surrounding sand, probably due to the incubating eggs. In the absence of a thermometer we estimated the temperature in the hole to be 105° - 110°F.

The hatchlings from this nest were very weak and their movement was very limited. However, after about 20 minutes even those with their yolk sacs attached became very mobile and headed for the sea. Those still in the shell were re-buried by us in a shallow hole dug in the sand. On the same night our observation and examination of hatchlings which had emerged normally showed that their egg sacs had been completely absorbed before their journey to the surface.

It is gratifying to note that since the introduction of beach patrols by Wildlife Wardens of the Forest Division on May 10th only one carcass has been found on the north section of Matura beach.

In conclusion I must record the valuable assistance given to Mr Laforest and to Kate and Geoff Gibbs by the numerous members who have been participating in the beach patrols, including those who have overnighted on the north coast, but got little sleep!

Extra News From Matura by Kate and Geoff Gibbs

Dr Quesnel and party tagged two Leatherbacks at N. Matura on June 10th and recorded two others re-nesting:- T106 and T109, both tagged at Matura on April 15th.* Naturally we are very pleased to obtain these valuable records. A day-time visit to the other end of the beach (between Fishing Pond and the Croupouche River) on June 19th revealed 4 old carcasses and tracks of 4 turtles that had nested the previous night. We were told of one turtle which had nested in mid-afternoon not long before.

There has been a tagging party at Matura on 32 nights this season (largely due to the enthusiasm of a few people rather than general Club involvement). Two-thirds of these visits were in May when we obtained records for two periods of 10 consecutive nights. Turtles were seen on all but four occasions. Fuller reports will appear in this year's Annual Report and eventually in the Club's Journal. However, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members and friends who came and helped, particularly those who made 3, 4 and more visits: Marguerite Chang, Brian and Cleo Cooper, John Cropper, Howard Evans, Colette John, Hannah Pavlik, Derek Simons, George Warner and David Wood. Derek certainly holds the record for having tagged the most turtles, also the only Hawksbill so far this year. He and Colette John will form the backbone of next year's team and they will be looking for new recruits come April '76.

May Outing To The Mora Forest by Cleo Cooper

Those of us who went on the May excursion were able to see and learn about Mora forest and were rewarded with the enjoyment of one of the most beautiful natural bathing pools in Trinidad. We went to an area of Mora forest north of Matura, turning off the Toco Rd. at Salybia-Matura trace. After driving in for about one mile we started walking through the forest crossing the Salybia river. Then we met the Rio Seco where we had a long rest before continuing upstream; some people walked in the water about knee-high, others scrambled up the steep bank and went through the undergrowth, before arriving at the waterfall and pool.

Before starting the walk Dr Quesnel told us that the Mora tree had spread from the South American mainland up the river valleys and could be found, wherever it had become established, in almost pure stands - a very uncommon phenomenon for a tropical forest species. Curiously in Guyana it does not occur in these pure stands. Dr Quesnel is doing a study to determine whether the large size of the seed is connected with the success of the tree and we were asked to collect seeds to help in the project.

*One has been seen nesting once in the intervening period, and the other twice.

It was unfortunate, however, that many people did not benefit as much as they might from the excursion. After leaving our cars there was no immediate general announcement about the fact that we had to wait for Dr Quesnel to arrive with some foresters, invited to assist us. Consequently the majority of the party began walking and had to be stopped along the path and asked to wait. By the time Dr Quesnel had arrived and given us a very interesting introduction to the ecology of the Mora forest it was already almost 11 o'clock; people were getting hungry and understandably anxious to get on to the pool. Because of this not many people were motivated to ask the foresters for information about the forest as we walked along.

It would be helpful if in future excursions the group could be promptly informed of what is to take place, or of any hitch in arrangements and so avoid restlessness and frustration.

HABITAT - The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements by Hannah Pavlik

(Miss Pavlik attended the Meeting addressed by Mr Penelosa on June 12th for the Club).

Trinidad and Tobago is one of the 138 countries taking part in Habitat, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, which has been planned for Vancouver next year. At a recent promotional address in Port Of Spain, Secretary-General Enrique Penelosa pointed out that the most pressing problem affecting world settlements today is people. Within the next 25 years at current population growth rates the number of settlements must double, whether they are dispersed rural villages or highly urbanised centres. In Trinidad this means that housing units will be needed for 700,000 additional people by the turn of the century.

The Habitat Conference will be divided into two broad sections. First, each country will present a specific demonstration project showing how it is dealing with such problems as unemployment, congestion, inadequate public transportation and schooling facilities, pollution, slums and squatter settlements. The presentations, which are to be audio-visual in nature, will help member countries discuss common problems and hence benefit from each other's mistakes.

The second section of the conference will deal with the fact that presently used government policies and programmes do not generally provide adequate minimum standards of living for all people. Some of the more controversial issues which will be discussed are land-use conflicts, development programmes and agrarian reform in developing countries.

Penelosa feels that many world human settlement problems can be solved with existing technology if the social will had more say in politics. Habitat, he says, will provide a valuable forum to address this central issue.

NEW MEMBERS - since March 1975 (* denotes a Junior Member)

Aaron Bernstein	Leslie Jennings *	Jackie Quamina *
Philip Bellamy	Marianne Kummerloew	Bernard Rooks *
Eddison Baptiste *	David Lee a Ping	Ralph Roopchan *
Mrs Theresa Bates	Jean Lee Ghin	Joy Reid
Mr and Mrs Roy Chapin	Kirk Lumsden	Diane Roderique
Dr De Vries-Hainari	Denise Lee *	Bliss Seepersad *
Ronnie Ferreira *	Wendy Mayers *	Lindsay Sahai
Christopher Field *	Gillian Macintyre *	June Shaw
Mrs Grace Fernandez	Dianne Marchack *	Mrs Violette Soulette
Francis Fernandes	Mr and Mrs F. Morcinek	Omar Seetahal *
Daniel Guerra	Lorne Manning	Mr and Mrs A. Streetly
David Gonzales	Christian Maingot	Paul Streetly *
Dianne Gibbs	Mrs Janice McLeod	Cheryl Thomas *
Michelle Greenidge *	Janet Oliver	Pauline Williams *
Christine Henry *	Hannah Pavlik	Charmaine Yip Choy
Lynn Harris *		

SHORT NEWS ITEMS

NO MORE FELLING IN SANCTUARIES We understand that since alarm was raised about felling of matchwood trees in Bush Bush, the Minister has sent out a directive that no trees are to be felled in any Wildlife Sanctuary.

CARIBBEAN CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION The CCA has now completed its move from the U.S. Virgin Islands to its new H.Q. in Barbados, and is working to secure a regular income from the government of the region to enable it to continue and expand its role as a clearing house for information of all kinds concerned with conservation in the region.

SHORT NEWS ITEMS CONT'D

RARE BIRDBOOK If you have heard rumours that Richard ffrench's book 'A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago' is out of print and unobtainable - you are almost right. The publishers Livingstons have gone bankrupt, and a large stock of unbound copies of the book were destroyed to make warehouse space by the printer!! However, 500 copies were recently found and half of these are coming to Trinidad, secured by the Asa Wright Nature Centre and the Abercromby Bookshop. So hurry down and get a copy as there are no immediate plans for reprinting,

POLLUTION CONTROL COUNCIL This Council has been established as a permanent body to replace the Anti-Pollution Council. Its budget of \$10,000 for the remainder of this year does not appear to match up to its terms of reference, however, we can take encouragement from the presence on it of Dr Emru Millette, who spoke to the Club in April, and certainly had a clear idea of what needed to be done.

THE YEAR OF THE RAIN FOREST The World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources are running a special campaign this year to try and make people aware of the value of tropical rain forest and the rate at which it is being destroyed. They are working to encourage wiser use and to safeguard adequate, representative areas for the future. (More about this in a later Bulletin).

NEXT QUARTERLY BULLETIN This is due out at the beginning of October and the deadline for contributions is Monday 15th September. These should be sent to:-

Miss Hannah Pavlik, 7 Stephens Road, Maraval. (Tel. 62-21719)
who is taking over as editor.

STOP PRESS TTT have apparently successfully filmed a leatherback turtle nesting on an east coast beach, so watch out for it being shown soon on T.V.