

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

MEETINGS - 1st QUARTER 1984

You are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the club to be held in the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College on Thursday 12th January 1984 at 5.30 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. Confirmation of Minutes of last A. G. M.
2. Business arising out of the Minutes
3. Hon. Secretary's report for 1983
4. Hon. Treasurer's report for 1983
5. Election of officers for 1984
6. Adoption of Proposed Amendment to the Rules
7. Other Business

We quote Rules 7 and 9 and the proposed amendments:-

Rule No. 7 PRESIDENT - "The President shall preside at all meetings of the Club, enforce the rules, and regulate discussions on matters of interest to the Club. He shall give the casting vote when required, and call Special Meetings of the Club at such times as he may deem it necessary, or at the written request of any three members. He shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and sub-committees and shall have a casting vote in such committees."

Rule No. 9 HONORARY SECRETARY - "The Honorary Secretary shall conduct and preserve the correspondence of the Club, take and preserve correct minutes of proceedings at meetings of the Club, preserve in regular files all documents belonging thereto that may come into his possession, keep a correct list of the members of the Club with the dates of their election, resignation or death, notify all members of forthcoming 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."

Amendments

Rule No. 7. President

The President shall preside at all meetings of the Club, enforce the rules, and regulate discussions on matters of interest to the Club. He shall give the casting vote when required, and call Special Meetings of the Club at such times as he may deem it necessary, or at the written request of any three members.

Rule No. 9. Honorary Secretary

The Honorary Secretary shall conduct and preserve the correspondence of the Club (except that of sub-committees), take and preserve correct minutes of proceedings at meetings of the Club and its Management Committee, preserve in regular files all documents belonging thereto, keep a correct list of the members of the Club with the dates of their election, resignation or death, notify all members of forthcoming meetings and lay before the Club at the Annual General Meeting a written report of the Club's activities during the preceding year.

The purpose of these amendments is to relieve the burden placed on the President and the Honorary Secretary by the fact that they are members of every sub-committee. This will enable the business of the Club to be carried out more efficiently and expeditiously. A lot will depend, however, on finding members who are both qualified to do the work and are willing to help.

You are also invited to attend the monthly meetings to be held on Thursdays February 9th and March 8th 1984 at the same time and place.

A G E N D A

1. Confirmation of Minutes
2. Business arising out of the Minutes
3. Lecture
4. Announcements
5. Exhibits and Miscellaneous notes
6. Other Business

MONTHLY LECTURE-MEETINGS

As in the past Lecture/Meetings will be held on the second Thursday of every month (except when that day is a Public Holiday).

This year the lectures will focus on the Flora and Fauna of Trinidad and Tobago.

FIELD TRIPS

- January 29, 1984 - La Laja to Brasso Seco (Leave POS at 6.00 a.m.)
- February 26 1984 - Rincon Trace (Leave POS at 7.00 a.m.)
- March 25, 1984 - Caurita (Leave POS at 7.00 a.m.)

PROPOSED LECTURES

- February 9, 1984 - WASPS by Dr. Fred Bennett
- March 8, 1984 - MOLLUSCS by Mr. Peter Percharde

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Christmas Party this year again was a success. However the Organising Committee had lots of problems in planning it as very few members communicated their desire to attend early enough while others did so at the very last minute. What saved the Committee was the fact that lots of those who paid early did not turn up hence the food went around. Members will appreciate that not always will something like this happen and in future we would have to adhere to deadlines in order to avoid any embarrassment.

MORE ON PLANNERS AND PLANNING (V. C. Quesnel)

During the panel discussion at our November meeting certain thoughts were very much in my mind but time did not allow me to share them fully with you then. They stem from the book "The Arrogance of Humanism" by David Ehrenfeld (Oxford University Press, New York, 1978) which should be read by everyone interested in conservation. At the risk of being prosecuted for breach of copyright I quote some paragraphs that should make everyone wonder just how useful planners are.

"Before the second World War, the eminent geographer Sir Dudley Stamp completed a sweeping Land Utilization Survey of Britain, in which he and his staff mapped the way -in which the British landscape was partitioned among various categories of urban, suburban, and rural use. What the survey revealed was a sorry record of land misuse and disuse: there were enormous quantities of derelict land in both the cities and the country, plus a pattern of urban-suburban growth that tended to destroy the usefulness of adjacent rural land while simultaneously creating terrible problems for the more densely settled areas that were expanding. In consequence of these findings, Stamp helped prepare a corrective mechanism, a system of national land use planning that was embodied in the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. As a result of this act, no land use is permitted to change without the permission of the planners; all construction and demolition requires permits, which has put the planners in an extraordinarily powerful position for the past thirty years. And what changes in the way the land is used has happened as a result of planning?"

"The Second Land Utilization Survey of Britain, directed by Dr. Alice Coleman, was largely completed in the 1960's, after two decades of land-use planning had already occurred. Resurveys of selected areas extended the available information into the 1970's. Not surprisingly, the changes that have taken place in British land utilization since 1947 are mostly for the worse. A resurvey of the Thames Estuary area found that 'derelict land' (unvegetated, unused urban land) had increased almost threefold between 1962 and 1972. 'Wasteland' and 'scrub' (abandoned land covered with weedy vegetation that has neither value to man nor wilderness value) accounted for one-twentieth of the total Thames Estuary region in 1962; by 1972 this amount had nearly doubled. During this same period, with derelict land and wasteland readily available, one-ninth of the region's agricultural land was taken for residential and other building purposes, but two-thirds of this land taken from farming was then allowed to degenerate to wasteland. In all, during this brief span of time, wasteland gained sixty-one times as much acreage as residential land, while most other valuable categories of land use diminished."

Two paragraphs later there is this: "After the end product analysis has been performed, there may well be debate about its implications for the future. Some will prefer to try to modify and improve planning in the light of what we have learned from the analysis. Others, myself included, are tired of the endless promises and excuses forthcoming from the humanist camp. They always sound so plausible and reasonable - indeed they are reasonable: "Just give us a little more time; we have figured out what we were doing wrong." What they haven't figured out, of course, is what they will do wrong the next time. With respect to planning, I fear that no amount or quality of it can ever compensate for the inevitable damage wrought by a self-destructive society and a diseased way of life. Any society that can value Class 1 agricultural land more highly if converted to a housing development or a dam and reservoir site is only using planning as a way of pretending to be in control of its future".

Now, is there any reason to believe that our planners here in Trinidad and Tobago are any better? Of course they are; much better - at losing money. Think of ISCOTT losing \$262 million a year, think of the Caroni Racing Complex, think of the Oropouche Lagoon reclamation scheme, think of.... Oh Gord, I don't think; it hurts too much. You think.

TREATMENT OF SNAKEBITE (V. C. Quesnel)

In a book entitled "What to do about bites and stings of venomous animals" (Collier Books, New York, 1973) the author, Robert E. Arnold, M.D., advises against some of the traditional first aid treatments. He says: (1) Do not cut across the fang marks; you may do permanent damage if underlying nerves are cut. (2) Apply suction to the wound yes, but do it with a suction cup, not by mouth. (3) Do not use tourniquets. They can cause extensive necrosis. (4) Do not use ice treatment. (5) Do not waste time looking for the snake. Instead, keep the victim as quiet as possible and get him to hospital as quickly as possible. The book also gives details of the recommended treatment once the victim is in hospital but this need not concern us here. However, there is one thing more that can be done: give the victim ascorbic acid (vitamin C). In his book "The healing factor - Vitamin C against disease" (Perigee Books, The Putnam Publishing Group, New York, 1982) the author, Irwin Stone, cites several reports on the efficacy of ascorbic acid: 1. In 1938 Nitzesco reported that guinea pigs injected with cobra venom died within two to three hours whereas those injected with the same dose of venom mixed with 25 mg ascorbic acid all lived. 2. In 1947 Dr. Perdomo in Colombia treated three cases of snakebite by injecting 2g of ascorbic acid intravenously every three hours. "There was a complete elimination of all symptoms". 3. In 1953 Dr. F. R. Klenner also treated snakebite successfully with ascorbic acid. This same Dr. Klenner has injected as much as 100g of ascorbic acid in treating cases of poliomyelitis, viral pneumonia and viral hepatitis (with success) without any side effects, so we can take it that ascorbic acid is safe in huge doses. Scorpion stings and the bites of the black widow spider also respond to ascorbic acid. In the light of all this, I would suggest that everyone take along 10g of ascorbic acid on every field trip or camp and take it by mouth if required. It was these reports that triggered my interest in combatting plant poisons with ascorbic acid. See the report on the camp at Monos.

THE CAMP AT MONOS ON 26 - 27 NOVEMBER 1983 (V. C. Quesnel)

Others are reporting on specific aspects of the camp so I will confine myself to just a few remarks. The birds that I saw have all been already recorded for Monos by Richard French in our 1965 journal. He reported owls and nightjars. I specifically listened for them but heard neither. I wondered what the hummingbirds I saw were

feeding on because November is the month with fewest plants in flower. I eventually found flowering specimens of three species known to be used by them: Morinda citrifolia, Calliandra creugeri, and Combretum fruticosum.

The main interest of my work at Monos, however, was my test of ascorbic acid as an antidote to the toxic effects of Manchineel latex. In previous testing during the camp at Chacachacare two years ago I discovered that I am fairly resistant to the toxin. I would have preferred more susceptible people but there were no volunteers. I picked a leaf from one of the few trees near the camp and rubbed the latex on to two spots on the back of my left hand allowing the latex to dry. Ten minutes or so after putting on the latex I applied to one spot a little water in which I had soaked a tablet of ascorbic acid most of which had remained undissolved. On the following day both sites were barely visible. The spot treated with ascorbic acid thereafter disappeared completely but the other developed three red spots, each centred on a hair follicle. By November 30 these were about 2mm across. By December 2 two were waning but the third was larger and had a whitish necrotic centre. Thereafter, this too waned and at the time of writing (December 7) only a tiny dark scab, visible under a magnifying glass, was left at each follicle. At no time was there any pain or itching at the spots.

This test does not prove the efficacy of ascorbic acid but I intend to carry out more elaborate tests using both manchineel and other Euphorbs such as Pringamosa (Cnidocolus urens).

REAPPEARANCE OF THE SCALED DOVE (Scardafella squammata) in Trinidad (V. C. Quesnel)

For the past 4 or 5 months my sister Jehanne Baylis and her neighbour Barbara Pinheiro in Valsayn Park have been seeing a dove they could not identify from the illustrations in French's book. I was asked about it but could not be of immediate help. Recently, however, Jehanne has recorded its voice and played it back to me. On consulting my copy of French at home I decided that the bird had to be the Scaled Dove (Scardafella squammata) which is not illustrated in French. However, it is illustrated in Dunning's South America's Land Birds so I took this book to Jehanne and Barbara, showed them the page with illustrations of 10 doves, including the Scaled Dove and, without telling them of my conclusions from the voice recording, asked if they could identify their bird. After two or three minutes examination of the pictures and consultation between them they decided that their bird was the Scaled Dove. French says of this species "One record only of 2 birds seen by G.D. Smooker at Toco in October 1929. These may be identical with 2 specimens from Trinidad at the British Museum." Recently a second bird has appeared and courtship has been observed.

TRIP TO TOBAGO AND BIRD OF PARADISE ISLAND 29/30th OCTOBER 1983 (Hans Boos)

On 29/30th October the Club went to Tobago and stayed at the Turpins in Charlotteville. I was on the look out for reptiles as usual and the large anole of Tobago was present in great numbers around the Turpins' Bungalows. This anolis, Anolis richardii is not found in Trinidad and is common in Tobago.

The trip to Bird of Paradise island on the Saturday was new to me, and I was eager to verify some of the records of reptiles on this island established by James Dinsmore in 1969. Though he listed seven species of lizards and one snake, in the short time we were there I saw only the following:

LIZARDS - Gonatodes ocellatus, Thecadactylus rapicauda, Ameiva ameiva atrigularis.

SNAKES - Mastigodryas boddaerti.

TRIP TO MONOS ISLAND 26/27th NOVEMBER 1983 (Hans Boos)

Camp was set up in the usual place on the northern shore of Grand Fond Bay. John Seyjagat and I had set up camp from Friday 25th and that night I heard the night-call of Thecadactylus rapicauda, and this record was confirmed when John captured a large specimen in a bromeliad the following night. Ameiva ameiva atrigularis were common in the area. Victor Quesnel the following day besides recording Gonatodes vittatus discovered a new record for Monos. This was the iguanid lizard, Polychrus marmoratus. It was caught, photographed and released. John Seyjagat brought back from a trip up into the heavily forested hillside, the exciting find of the broken eggs of a tortoise, which until we find the adult that layed them can only be described as a species of Geochelone. Very large specimens of Iguana iguana were also observed and the egg shells of this species were found on the old roadbed near the remnants of the pier. Gonatodes vittatus and Plica plica were also seen near the Villafana's house.

TRIP TO MONOS (Hans Boos) CONTINUED

A trip to Huevos Island to check on the survival of the Barbadian anolis, Anolis extremus introduced there in 1976 proved fruitless as none of these lizards were spotted. However the following reptiles were seen during our short visit:

LIZARDS - Gonatodes vittatus, Plica Plica, and a dead snake, Mastigodryas boddaerti.

Iguana iguana was sighted on the rocks off Chacachare Island as well.

Luisa Zuniaga
Honorary Secretary