THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LFIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

FOURTH QUARTER 1987

You are invited to attend the Monthly meetings of the club to be hald on Thursdays October 8th and November 12th 1987 at 5.30 p.m. at the Audio Visual Room of St. Mary's College. Also the field trips listed and the Christmas Party.

A G E N D A

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

L E C T U R E S

Oct. 8th - MARINE ALGAE BY Dr. Julian Duncan
(Please note that this lecture has been combined with
(the Tourist Board's Natural History Festival programme
(of lectures)

Nov. 12th - DOES CHAGAS'S DISEASE EXIST IN TRINIDAD by Miss I. Omah-Maharaj

F I E L D T R I P S

Oct. 25th - TRINITY HILLS (Leave 6.00 a.m.)

Nov. 29th - MT. TAMANA (Leave 7.00 a.m.)

Christmas Party: It has been decided to make this a day by the beach so that members could get to know each other better. A venue has not yet been arranged but volunteers are welcome to assist with the plans, etc. Please contact the Honorary Secretary.

FIELD TRIP ALONG LA LAJA ROAD TO THE GORGE IN THE HEIGHTS OF GUANAPO VALLEY ON June 28, 1987 - - Frankie Farrell

According to the yearly programme two trips were fixed for this weekend; on to Tobago and alternatively one from Bagatelle Road to Macqueripe Bay. To the small group that collected at the usual starting point on Pembroke Street at St. Mary's College there were many uncertainties about the latter trip and so it was decided to go to the Heights of Guanapo Valley instead and actually this proved to be a fortunate choice.

The cars drove along the La Laja Road as far as it seemed safe to go. Although they could have gone further it did not seem wise to drive along the road into which deep ruts had been dug possibly by jeeps and with pools of water and muddy patches here and there. Walking was easy as the gradients were very gentle except at the end when approaching the gorge where there was a medium steep descent. The road led through abandoned cocoa estates and in some places virgin forest. The many bearing mango trees kept the party supplied with fresh fruit. Along the roadside a few interesting Calladiums with different variegated leaves were seen.

Inevitably in the abandoned estates besides the cacao trees (THEOBROMA CACAO) many Immortelle trees (ERYTHRINA MICROPTERYX) were seen. In the forested areas many of the more common forest trees were identified such as Sandbox (HURA CREPITANS), Wild Chataigne (PACHIRA INSIGNIS), Cajuca (VIROLA SURINAMENSIS), Olivier (TERMINALIA OBOVATA), Tapana (HIERONYMA CARIBAEA) and Mahoe (STERCULIA CARIBAEA). Here and there the two common secondary growth trees, Bois Canon (CECROPIA PELTATA) and Bois Flot (OCHROMA PYRAMIDALE) were seen. Other sub-canopy trees seen were Chaconia ((WARSZEWICZIA COCCINEA) in full flower and clumps of Bactris palms (species not identified). Noticeable among the many specimens of ground vegetation were PSYCHOTRIA ULIGINOSA, PALICOUREA Spp and Roi de Mapepire (TABERNAEMONTANA UNDULATA). The root of the latter is believed locally to possess qualities that would serve as an anti-dote to the venom of the mapepire.

Two things were noticeable wbout the forest. The first was the large number of olivier trees present. With a slightly larger percentage of these trees the forest could have been called an olivier forest. The other was the marked lack of peiphytes on the trees. This region of the Northern Range has probably the highest rainfall in the country, enough to encourage vigorous and plentiful epiphyte growth and yet there was scarcity.

The area did not escape the effects of the extraordinary dry season that the country experienced earliet in the year. There were a few burnt out patches of the forest. It could be observed, however, that the quantity of damage was not as great as was observed in the more populated areas of the Northern Range extending from the Arima Valley westward to the Western Peninsula.

Unfortunately no experienced bird watchers were in the party, but the following birds were heard and sometimes eeen: Bell Birds, Pepper Shrikes, Manakins (probably in a lek) and Doves of more than one kind. I do not presume to give the precise identifications of these birds.

FIELD TRIP TO ERIN SAVANNA on 25th to 26th July 1987 - Frankie Farrell

This was a two day trip and as a consequence arrangements were made with the Forestry Division for us to occupy the Forestry Rest House at Quarry Road which branches off from the Siparia-Erin Road a few miles from Siparia. The party comprising between ten and twenty members arrived late at the rest house because of amny delays, the chief being a traffic hold up at the junction of the Churchill Roosevelt and Buttler Highways due to a serious accident and a traffic jam in Penal at the Penal -market. However we found three Forest Rangers patiently waiting for us at the rest house. The party soon settled down and were grateful to find all the amenities of a rest house, including furniture, beds, regrigerator, gas stove, kitchen utensils and cutlery.

Arrangements were soon made for the Forest Rangers to take us in the afternoon of the first day to a place of botanical interest. The Rangers - two of them - chose the Erin Forest which was not too far away. Just before entering the forest there was evidence of recent fires; burnt vegetation nearby gave evidence that one more area was affected by forest fires during probably the worst dry season of the century.

A number of weeds and other plants were growing at an open patch by the roadside and the opportunity was taken to identify as many of them as possible and to collect those that were not -known. Those identified were: Sida Spp., Shadou bene (ERYNGIUM FOETIDUM), Worm bush (SPIGELIA ANTHELMIA), Sweet Potato (IPOMAEA BATATAS), Yam (DIOSCOREA SPP), SOLANUM SPP and Wild Ginger (HELICONIA PSITTACORUM). Those collected have not as yet been identified.

The forest itself was remarkable in that the undergrowth was vigorous and plentiful so much so that, had there not been a rather ill-defined path, progress would have been quite slow. This was probably due to the forest canopy being fairly open. The most plentiful of the undergrowth plants were: Balisier (HELICONIA BIHAI), another HELICONIA (Species not identified), Tirete (ISCHNOSIPHON SPP), Hunterman's Nut (OMPHALEA MEGACARPA), Cane Reed (COSTUS SPECIOSUS) and MONOTAGMA SPP.

The Forest Rangers identified the trees for us, most of which, however, we already knew. They were: L'Epinet (ZANTHOXYLUM MARTINICENSE), Hog Plum (SPONDIAS MONBIN), Jereton (DIDYMOPANAX MOROTOTONI), Bois mulatre (PENTACLETHRE MACROLOBA), Bois D'Orme (GUAZUMA ULMIFOLIA), Crappo (CARAPA GUIANENSIS), Wild Chataigne (PACHIRA INSIGNIS), Mahoe (STERCULIA CARIBAEA), Blackhears (CLATHROTROPIS BRACHYPETALA), Chaconia (in flowr) (WARSZEWICZEA COCCINEA), Sardine (LAETIA PROCERA) and Bois Canon (CECROPIA PELTATA). A number of palms were also seen, among which were Cocorite (MAXIMILIANA CARIBAEA), Timite (MANICARIA SACCIFERA), and Roseau (BACTRIS MAJOR). A fourth palm was observed which had some resemblance to Palma Real but in the absence of positive identifying features it was not possible to be precise.

July 26th 1987
The Following day the Erin Savannas were visited. Some difficulty was experienced in finding the savannas as new roads have been cut in the area. After a certain amount of searching, however, one of the savannas was found. Surprisingly the aland was found not to be flat, but undulating. The ground was covered mainly by a number of grasses and sedges interspersed between which was a number of herbs, some of which were flowering, and a fern. Specimens of these were collected for identification as most of them were unknown to me, but unfortunatly the results have not as yet been received. As was expected the two shrubs, BYRSONIMA and CURATELLA were found. The Byrsonimas appeared to be larger in size and more healthy than those found on the Aripo Savannas. By comparison also Curatella is not found at Aripo. It was obvious from the underlayer of blackened remains of grasses, sedges and herbs, that fire had ravaged the savannas. What had grown up was mostly new growth when the rains came.

Luisa Zuniaga/Honorary Secretary
September 30, 1987.