

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

FIRST QUARTER OF 1988

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 January 14, 1988 at 5.30p.m.

A G E N D A

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last A.G.M.
2. Business arising out of the Minutes
3. Honorary Secretary's Report for 1987
4. Honorary Treasurer's Report for 1987
5. Election of officers for 1988
- * 6. Confirmation of Proposed Increase in Annual Subscription
7. Other Business Arising.

* In accordance with Rules 21 and 23 the Management Committee proposes increases in the Entrance Fees and Annual Subscription, effective immediately, and hereby request confirmation. The proposed increases are - Ordinary Members \$15.00 Entrance Fee and \$30.00 annual subscription: Junior Members pay no Entrance fee, Annual subscription \$15.00. This has become necessary so that we could meet our normal recurrent expenses.

You are also invited to attend the monthly meetings to be held on Thursdays February 11th and March 10th 1988 at the same time and place as above stated:-

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

LECTURES: Feb. 11th - "A Visit to the Islands of the South Pacific"
by Dr. Michael Camps

Mar. 10th - "The Placid Crapaud" by Dr. Victor Quesnel

FIELD TRIPS: Jan. 31st - LA LAJA WATERFALL (leave POS 7.00 a.m.)
Feb. 28th - MORUGA BOUFFE (Leave POS 6.00 A.M.)
Mar. 27th - CHAGUARAMAL (Leave POS 6.00 a.m.)

ESPECIALLY FOR NEW MEMBERS

What to expect from the Club and what the Club expects of you

1. The Club has monthly lectures/meetings and outings which you are invited to attend. When on outings members are required to observe the objectives of the Club, especially in the conservation of Nature and natural resources which of course demands that the surroundings be left as intact and as clean as possible. All garbage should be taken back with you to be disposed of and not left for other members to have to collect. No musical instruments should be brought on field trips to the forests - on these trips we want to listen to the music of nature. Young children will be allowed only if accompanied by parents or guardians. Every member should bring along his or her basic requirements for the day i.e. water and food.
2. Quarterly bulletins are sent to all financial members. The annual subscription becomes due and payable in January.
3. Biennially you will receive a copy of the Club's Journal 'Living World'.

VISIT TO TOBAGO 26th to 28th JUNE 1987 by Glenn Wilkes

(With the Secretary's apologies to Glenn for the late recording of his account)

A total of 20 members (plus one spouse) made the trip with two travelling by air and the remainder by boat. Five vehicles and two kayaks accompanied those travelling by boat. After a calm crossing on the M.V. "TOBAGO", we arrived at Scarborough and headed to Grafton Estate. Apart from two bedrooms, we had the use of the entire house and its facilities, and for this we are extremely grateful to the owners. After a brief discussion on Friday night, the decision was made to go to the Castara - Mt. Dillon area on Saturday. We left Grafton promptly at 7.00 am after enjoying the dawn feeding of the numerous birds, and took the scenic but rough Les Coteaux - Golden Lane road. We parked at the highest point on the Northside road overlooking Castara, and set off along the ridge, soon joining the bridle track that leads east and later north to Castara. The entire area is a hikers dream, with scenic views and is rich in flora and fauna. Unfortunately the visit to Tobago suffered from a shortage of knowledgeable members, and on this walk Sylvia Kacal was an early casualty of the "stiff" Tobago hills. After a short pause at the junction with the Hillsborough track (8¹/₂ m.p.) the group split up with some members (mostly car drivers) returning to the cars, some continuing downhill to Castara, and three continuing on to Mt. Dillon. Fortunately for the persevering three, the trail to Mt. Dillon had been recently cleared and blazed by Lands and Surveys and we had no difficulty in reaching the peak, about 35 minutes after leaving the junction. Fortunately there was no evidence of the bush fires that David Rooks had described in the Hillsborough area to the South. We were all later reunited at Castara for a sea bath, after which members returned via various routes, including the sea (who else?) to Grafton.

Sunday's activities were not as organized and suffered from a late start (due to non-naturalist nocturnal activities of some members at the Crown Reef Disco!) Eventually we drove down to Bon Accord Lagoon and then split up, some visiting Fort James and the Franklyn water wheel, three kayaking out to snorkel on the reef and others going to Pigeon Point. From our observations on the reef, I believe that to some extent, the impression of destruction on the reef may be partly due to the tendency of the tour operators to deposit visitors in areas where the coral is broken and easier to walk on. We were able to dive in a relatively unspoilt area quite close to a tour group. At Pigeon Point there was a "live" demonstration of Shiatsu massage by Wayne Yee Mon, though I'm not certain if members weren't more interested in the two "patients" than the techniques. Later members visited the museum at Mt. Irvine. The group returned to Trinidad at about 4.00 a.m. on Monday.

I think it would be well worth repeating a visit to the Castara - Mt. Dillon area, which apparently is unfamiliar to the knowledgeable members, including our two Tobago residents. I suspect they would all find that ALL the action is NOT at Charlotteville.

Members Taking Part in the Trip

Ralph Bennett	Linda Ahwai	Selwyn Gomes	Allison Bennett
Richard Wallace	Neil Birbal	Judy-Ann Bennett	Trevor Maundav
Anne-Marie Scott	Muriel Pierre	Robert Sturge	Peter Kowlessar
Luzia Ayoun	Shameena Gafoor-Mata	Sylvia Kacal	Maureen Graham
Hairoon Hussain	Wayne Yee Mon*	Ernest Boland*	Glenn Wilkes*

(*know all trails including Mt. Dillon) ((Spouse - Cyril Mata))

FIELD TRIP TO CHACACHACARE ISLAND 22nd to 23rd August 1987 - Frankie Farrell

There were thirty members taking part in this trip. Most of the party came on a motor-boat provided by the Institute of Marine Affairs. A few others made their way by own arrangements.

The camp was set up at the usual small bay which for want of a better name I shall call Manchineel Bay because of the numerous manchineel trees (*HELIPOMANE MANCINELLA*) that grow there. Not long after the tents were set up a shower of rain came much to the detriment of those who had unfortunately erected their tents right in the course of the water running off from a small valley further inland from the bay. Even if they had dug channels around their tents to drain the water away the volume was such that they might still have been inundated. However it was proved conclusively again, as happened on previous trips, that people who shelter under manchineel trees during rain are not blistered by the rain water dripping off from them. Members were however warned of the corrosive nature of the white latex of these trees especially in the fruit which were plentiful on the trees and on the ground.

The most conspicuous tree observed was the savonette (*LONCHOCARPUS PUNCTATUS*). Apparently this trip was timed to coincide with the flowering period of this tree which is not long and it was interesting to see how plentiful it was. It was observed not only on Chacachacare but also on the way to our destination on the Western Peninsula and the islands of Monos and Huevos.

I explored a path leading from the camp to the abandoned lever settlement. Apparently this is guarded by the Regiment and no one is allowed to go through. This is unfortunate because there are paths from there leading to the eastern part of the island which has not been visited as far as I know, by members of our Club. The area might be well worth visiting.

Along the sides of the pathway I observed the following plants: Silk Cotton (*CEIBA PENTANDRA*), Agave Spp., wild sage (*LANTANA CAMARA*), saltfish wood (*MACHAERTUM ROBINIFOLIA*), Solanum Spp., a bromeliad (probably *CRAVISIA*), langue boef (*SANSEVIERIA THYRSIFLORA*), *EUPHORBIA TIRUCALLI*, black sage (*CORDIA CURASSAVICA*), princea rosa (*CNIDOSCOLUS URENS*) and various cacti, namely rachee (*OPUNTIA* Spp.), night blooming cereus (*HYLOCEPHEUS LEMAITREI*) and an eight ridged cylindrical cactus which I have not identified.

I regret not having received a list of the birds observed and Hans Boos reported to me that he observed nothing new in the lizard population which has been well described in previous reports.

FIELD TRIP TO FIG WALK ON September 27, 1937 (V. Quesnel)

This trip to Fig Walk was the first wet-season trip to the area that we have attempted. The path was slippery and water levels in the rivers much higher than usual. In fact, no part of the Rio Seco was dry and walking up it was therefore more difficult than usual. In addition to these causes of delay one group took a wrong turn and went up a small tributary of the Rio Seco and had to return. It had been so long since our previous visit that I could not immediately find the path "over the hump" that cuts off a bend in the river where the waterfall is and though I did eventually find it we were late in getting to the "normally" dry part of the Rio Seco. Memory again played tricks on me when we got to the place where I thought we should leave the Rio Seco to cross over to the Salybia River and this resulted in another delay. In fact, when I eventually found the right crossing over point it was too late to proceed and we decided to re-schedule the trip for the next dry season when, with the present experience fresh in our minds, we would be able to do the trip more quickly and attain our objective. By this time most of the party had already turned back.

On our return to the parked cars some of us had an interesting conversation with one of the nearby residents who told us of another way to get to Fig Walk and of lots of trees along the way which from his description and his name for them seemed to be the Seaside Mahoe. To Frankie Farrell and I this seemed very strange and we decided that on the next occasion our informant should act as a guide along the new route especially as he seemed knowledgeable about the game animals in the area. So, although this outing provided nothing of any real biological interest we look forward to better rewards from the next one.

FIELD TRIP TO TRINITY HILLS ON 25th October 1937 (V. Quesnel)

A large party turned up for this trip and as on the previous month's trip to Fig Walk we had trouble. The trail from its starting point near the saman tree was overgrown and indistinct and soon disappeared completely. We explored another route along a nearby ridge which turned out to be slightly easier and eventually joined the original trail where it was reasonably well defined. By this time it was after noon and many persons had already turned back. A small group pushed on but soon came to a steep, very overgrown part of the trail where progress was so slow and difficult that we decided to abandon the attempt. It is clear that this trail has not been in use for some time (it is six years since our previous trip in February 1931) and that a lot of clearing would have to be done to make it usable again.

In spite of the date there was no rain until the very end. On the previous trip in the middle of the dry season there was rain from start to finish and we were all thoroughly soaked by the end of it.

Luisa Zuniaga
Honorary Secretary
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St. Ann's

December 29, 1987.