

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

Dear Member

THIRD QUARTER 1988

You are invited to attend the monthly meetings of the club to be held on Thursday July 14th, August 11th, and September 8th 1988 at 5.30 p.m. at the Audio Visual Room of St. Mary's College. Also the field trips as listed.

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

July 14th - Marine and Coastal Pollution by Dr. A. Siung Chang
Aug. 11th - Members Evening
Sept. 8th - Cloning by Dr. Julian Duncan

F I E L D T R I P S

July 31st - Hololo to Santa Cruz - (On the strenuous side)
Aug. 28th - Mount Harris - (Also on the strenuous side)
*Sept. 24/25th - Camp at Tacarib - Travel by sea or land

*PLEASE NOTE: Children would normally not be allowed on this camp unless old enough to walk both ways and accompanied by their parents who are to be fully responsible for them.

As mentioned by our President at the last meeting we list the various active groups in the club and their leaders where applicable. We also give the names of members involved in other activities on behalf of the club and ask that you come to the Members Evening on August 11th to discuss these activities in order to find out whether they are serving the purposes for which they were created or whether there are changes which should be made, and whether we should be involved in other activities.

BIRDS - Sylvia Kacal
BUTTERFLY - Scott Alston-Smith
EXPLORERS - Glen Wilkes and
Dave Ramnarine

HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS - Colin Agostini
HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE STAMP - Noel Vaucrossen

JOURNAL EDITOR - Victor Quesnel
REPTILES - Hans Boos

BOTANY - Victor Quesnel
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE - Charles de Gannes
FINANCE - Neville Acham

PHOTOGRAPHY - Muriel Pierre
TURTLES - Molly Gaskin & John Seyjagat

Council of Institute of Marine Affairs
Member - Neville Acham

Alternate - Nicole Johnson

Board of Institute of Marine Affairs
Member - Hans Boos

Alternate - Lana Campbell

Board of the National Museum - Hans Boos & T. Frankie Farrell

Wildlife Conservation Committee: - Roger Edghill

National Man and the Biosphere Committee - Prof. J. Kenny

National Clean-up Effort - Robert Sturge

Tourist Board/Natural History Festival -

T. F. Farrell, Caroline Chaboo and Jim Milne

A note on two butterflies (V. C. Quesnel)

On 9th June last I came across a couple of beautiful butterflies apparently drinking water from a puddle and squirting it out from their rear ends. I easily identified them from Barcant's book as Graphium pausanias, called the Pausanias by local butterfly collectors. In the afternoon I again saw about a dozen drinking from another pool. I timed the number of squirts from one butterfly and got ten in 30 seconds. I was too much in a hurry to try to measure the amount of water coming out of the butterfly but a reasonable estimate might be 0.05 ml per squirt. This would mean that the butterfly was passing water through its body at the rate of 1 ml per minute. Considering the size of the proboscis and the size of the mouth available for applying suction this is, in my view, a remarkably high rate. I think it quite clear that these butterflies were not drinking water but probably filtering out minute organisms such as algae and protozoa for food.

On 25th June I saw another member of the same family, Papilionidae, Papilio androgeus androgeus (Queen Page), drinking in a similar manner but passing the water through at a seemingly slower rate even though this is a bigger butterfly. A question immediately arises: If I am right about the purpose of the "drinking", do these butterflies live longer than those that feed on nectar which is mainly a source of carbohydrate? Is this a good project for our butterfly group?

Report on the field trip to Chaguaramal on 27th March 1988 (V.C. Quesnel)

For me this was a fascinating trip. The terrain reminded me of Gasparee with its craggy limestone outcrops although the vegetation is quite different. In fact I was so taken with the ground vegetation that I forgot to pay attention to the trees. There seemed nothing unusual as far as I can remember except for Toporite (Hernandia sonora) which was common near the start of the trail. This tall tree has unusual fruit. The calyx enlarges and becomes fleshy as the fruit grows, completely surrounding the ripe fruit in a goblet-shaped structure. In full fruit the tree seems covered with Christmas decorations. The ground vegetation consisted of Ishmosiphon aruma, Stromanthe tonckat, and Calathea trinitensis, all of the Marantaceae and lots of other monocots such as Renealmia silvicola, balisier, Anthurium spp., Diffenbachia seguine and bromeliads of which the most spectacular was Vriesia glutinosa with its huge, spreading, bright red inflorescence and purple-banded leaves. The two small palms, Geonoma vaga (Anari) and Presoea pubigera were also very common and the larger palm, Bactris cuesa, less common. There were also ferns and Selagenilla in abundance.

The area seems to be a good example of seasonal montane forest which Beard describes in part as follows: "There is a single, large-tree stratum reaching about 70 ft in height. The canopy is, however, rather more open / than in montane rain forest or semi-evergreen seasonal forest / showing abundant gaps due to winds. There is, further, a very marked lack of smaller trees below the canopy, giving the effect of a single-storied forest."

Ground vegetation is predominantly herbaceous and exceedingly dense and luxuriant. Several species of Heliconia are among the most abundant, with Calathea and Carludovica. Beard also says "Both lianes and epiphytes here attain a greater luxuriance than anywhere else in Trinidad" and I certainly noticed the large number of lianes and Aroids.

I did not pay too much attention to birds but did notice, by call, the typical forest-dwelling white-bellied Antbird, Buff-throated woodcreeper and a dove that was almost certainly the Grey-fronted Dove. I did see outside the forest proper some Bay-headed Tanagers and there was a report from Roger Neckles of three Scissors-tailed Kites. All in all a good trip.

Trip to Mt. Tamana on 29th November 1987 - Frankie Farrell

What could be described as a medium sized group was present at this outing. To many of these the main attraction was the Tamana Caves and quite a few members of the group went down into them. There they could observe an ecosystem depending on the manure deposited by a dense population of bats occupying the caves. This, however, has been described in great detail in previous publications and as a consequence a report on what was observed will not be given here.

The soil on Mt. Tamana is a shallow layer of clay with little or no humus overlying a bedrock of limestone with frequent outcropping. Drainage is rapid

because of the porosity of the limestone and the steepness of the slope. Added to the fact that the rainfall in the area is not heavy the plant community exists under somewhat xerophytic conditions. The question arises whether the forest is in any way similar to the Seasonal Montane Forest found in the Northern Range in areas such as the Aripo massif, the upper Quare Valley and Platanal at heights of 1,500 ft. and upwards. However as Mt. Tamana has an elevation of only 1005 ft. the condition of height is not comparable.

The trees observed in the area were: FIGUIER SPP., CASTILLA ELASTICA and COUROUPITA GUIANENSIS. BROWNEA LATIFOLIA, SWARTZIA SIMPLEX and BACTRIS SPP. were found in the lower storey. Ground vegetation was as follows: HELICONIA BIHAI (alias WAGNERIANA), H. HIRSUTA, DUGGENA SPP., APHELANDRA TETRAGONA, XANTHOSOMA SPP., DRYMONIA SPP., TETRAPTERIS SPP. (a vine), MOLLINEDIA SPP. and MARANTA GIBBA.

There was apparently no sign of the dominant trees of the Seasonal Montane Forest, namely, INGA, GUAREA and CHIMARRHIS. Again Bactris does not appear as a component of the lower storey trees in the above forest but is fairly common on Mt. Tamana.

In a map showing the forest types of Trinidad prepared by the Forestry Division, Mt. Tamana is shown to have a MOUSSARA-FIGUIER type of vegetation. Unfortunately I have not yet learnt to recognise MOUSSARA, but it may very well have been present. This would accord well with the somewhat xerophytic conditions of the area. Apparently no significant similarity with the Seasonal Montane Forest exists.

Trip to Fig Walk on 24th April 1988 - Frankie Farrell

What was meant to be a trip to Fig Walk turned out to be a trip to Rio Seco only as the connection between the Rio Seco and the Salibia Rivers was not found. However this area of untouched forest, much of it Mora Forest, is always very interesting and beautiful, and the rather large party enjoyed themselves, especially as on the return journey they were able to take a bath in the Rio Seco Pool. There was a little difficulty in crossing over the ridge that fits into a rather large bend in the Rio Seco as the path at one point was not clear. Quite a considerable length of the river was quite dry as the very long dry season was still continuing.

As this area has been explored before on a few occasions no specimens worthy of collection were found by me, but Caroline Chaboo, who is specializing on orchids, had great success. Here is what she collected:-

EPIDENDRUM: FRAGRANS, NOCTURNUM and HOMBERSLEYI
 HEXISEA REFLEXA
 PLEUROTHALLIS: ACUTISSIMA and 3 other species
 MAXILLARIA SPECIES
 JAQUINIELLA: GLOBOSA
 CORYANTHES: MACRANTHA
 GONGORA: MACULATA
 ONCIDIUM: PAPILIO
 SCAPHYLOTTIS: CUNEATATA and MODESTA

Luisa Zuniaga
 Honorary Secretary
 1 Errol Park Road, St. Ann's.
 June 30, 1988.