

# THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

Dear Member

FOURTH QUARTER 1988

You are invited to attend the monthly meetings of the club to be held on Thursdays October 13, and November 10, 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

- Oct. 13th - The Trawling Industry and the Future - by Prof. J. Kenny  
Nov. 10th - Mosquito vs Mosquito; A Study of Biological Control  
by Dr. E. S. Tikasingh

## F I E L D T R I P S

- Oct. 30th - El Tucuche (Very strenuous) Leave POS 6.00 a.m.  
Nov. 27th - Mt. St. Benedict (semi strenuous)

DECEMBER 1988 - Are we having a Christmas Party - Please come prepared to say and assist with what we should have or do.

B I R D I N G - David Rooks reports the presence of a Jabiru stork for the last few months in the swamp area in Buccoo Point, Tobago. This is the first reported sighting for Trinidad + Tobago. One of the largest birds of South America, the Jabiru (*Jabiru mycteria*) is over 4ft. tall, of white plumage, heavy black bill, black featherless head and neck and a red ring at the base of the neck. It is found in swamps and river basins feeding on snakes, insects, fishes and frogs. It is common in the Llanos of Venezuela where it is called GARZON SOLDADO.

## REPORT ON FIELD TRIP-CAMP AT BLOODY BAY, TOBAGO 27-29th MAY 1988 - R/ Wallace

We left Scarborough after having a meal and refreing ourselves from the seven hour boat trip on the M/V/ TOBAGO originating in Port of Spain. We travelled East along the main road passing through several towns and villages on to Roxborough. At Roxborough we took the main road North West into the mountains of the Tobago Forest Reserve 1,650 feet up as the road wound its way through the dark rainforests of Tobago.

As the road sped towards the small village of Parlatuvier, we stopped at the designated camp, a rest house provided by the Forestry Division in Tobago, which coincidentally is the oldest one in the entire Western Hemisphere having been established there in 1765. This Forestry outpost was established on a 750 foot ridge overlooking the southern flanks of the Bloody Bay River, the rest house though tiny, was quite a relief for the twelve of us on that dark and rainy evening. The desolate resthouse had few conveniences, there was a new tank serving two toilets perched on a lower level and some metres to the left was a fire pit. That was it. We distributed ourselves around the three foot wide concrete gallery, some slept in cars and the lucky ones packed inside the one room enclosure used probably for storing tools. Those who slept in the gallery were soaking wet on the outside of their sleeping bags by morning. As daylight began to appear the rain abated and we started a fire in the pit to break our fast. Beyond the clearing of the rest house there was a wide variety of well kept trees including several pomme granate, many domesticated fruit and vegetables such as breadfruit. Needless to say the birds were up and around such as the noisy parrots and energetic tanagers. Unfortunately our avid birdwatchers were not at this camp so a list and description and identification was not possible. There was a nature trail for hikers at the foot of the clearing near the outpost. I thought that as a group we would have used this trail and manoeuvre our way down the slopes towards the wide and winding Bloody Bay River, 750 ft below and eventually on to Bloody Bay itself. We decided not to do this but instead to use our

Trip to Tobago continued

automobiles and drive back through Roxborough to Charlotteville. We then used Ralph Bennett's sturdy 4 wheel drive pickup and crossed the rough unpaved terrain of Tobago's last remaining, shall I say virgin coastline, attaining the same objective, this time on the other side of the valley to Bloody Bay. This was all achieved on Saturday, passing some of the most fantastically beautiful coastline right onto L'Anse Fourmi. That coast was inhabited by many Frigate birds. From L'Anse Fourmi we drove on paved road into Bloody Bay where we had a swim. There Wayne Yee Mon chatted with some villagers about the turtle situation, they informed him that they caught on an average four turtles per night as they came up to lay their eggs and they sold the meat in order to survive. The evidence was there on the beach. Earlier at Kings Bay a group of fishermen caught a small green turtle in their seine. With conversation we were able to convince them to return it to the Ocean. He assured us that it will be caught again the following day. Another fisherman became hostile when he realised that a member had photographed him. With persuasion we got him to accept the fact that photos were taken of the seine pulling.

On Sunday we investigated the terrain and coast from Parlatuvier to Plymouth via Castara. Just after Parlatuvier the road was rough, the hillsides eroded and the vegetation sparse. At Castara we paused and observed the Marine life there. Some members snorkled with Selwyn Gomes along the coastal waters of Castara Bay, taking underwater photos of the marine environment, while others investigated the turtle situation there and found that fishermen were quite enlightened about the new attitudes towards the survival of turtles. They were familiar also with the laws and were apparently quite law abiding. On the beach the Grey and white sea gulls which are larger than those of North Coast Trinidad were feeding on small marine insect. life in the sand and waters edge.

As we left the Castara Coast we unfortunately got lost on the wrong road at Moriah, which was supposed to lead us on to Plymouth. There was much evidence of Bush fires along that part of the road although that weekend was constantly raining. Those burnt out areas were probably the results of this year's intense dry season.

We finally reached the Plymouth-Courland Bay area via The Whim. By this time our hours were limited as we needed to get back to our base at Bloody Bay Ridge to pack and return to the boat in Scarborough. Knowing this we passed briefly at Mt. Irving, Store Bay and Scarborough then back through Roxborough to base.

Activities were not well organised and the group suffered by members not being familiar with the flora and fauna. Much non-naturalist activity was pursued and visits to tourist oriented places like Kings Bay Waterfall produced not a drop of water on the huge facade of beautiful Toco-stone. This due once again to the Tobago dry season. Much to all our disappointment as far as the naturalist goals were concerned, I guess, we took the little we had and made an enjoyable weekend resulting in a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the coastal road system of Tobago.

**B I R D S** Seen - FRIGATE BIRDS - Charlotteville Coast  
 TANAGERS, PARROTS, PARAKEETS, OROPENDOLA (Yellow tail)  
 and COCRICOS - Bloody Bay Ridge  
 BANANAQUITS and PELICANS (Brown) - All over  
 KISKADEE - Scarborough  
 HUMMING BIRDS and GREY + WHITE SEAGULLS - Castara  
 GROUND DOVES - Parlatuvier  
 BARE-EYED THRUSHES - Roxborough Ridge  
 MOT MOTS, JACAMARS and RAMIER PIGEONS - Kings Bay to  
 Charlotteville.

**MEMBERS** taking part were -

1 Neil Birbal	7 Selwyn Gomes
2 Linda Fernandes	8 Roshni Tewari
3 Ralph Bennett	9 Wayne Yee Mon
4 Luzia Ayoung	10 Annelma Mohammed
5 Richard Wallace	11 Ernest Boland
6 Francine Lowhar	12 Mead Jokhan

FIELD TRIP TO THE CARONI-ARENA DAM on JUNE 26, 1988 - T/ Frankie Farrell

A fairly large party of members arrived at the gates of the enclosure around the Caroni-Arena Dam and the artificial lake and were let in by the gatekeeper. We were first given instructions as to where we could go and as to where we were not allowed to go and then this gentleman (the gatekeeper) gratuitously gave us information about the fauna of the area, including the snakes and caimans. We were quite amused at his many inaccuracies, some no doubt inspired by local folklore, but we did not venture to disabuse him.

Before the dam was built the area was well forested and as a result there was considerable clearing of the forest, especially in areas where the dam was to be built and part of the way around the periphery of the lake. These areas were thus converted into parkland with a few of the forest trees left standing to provide shade. Other areas were less extensively cleared leaving a forest without a proper canopy, with the secondary vegetation not yet fully established and with the kind of vegetation locally called 'lastro', and in places fully exposed to sunlight. This would be vegetation composed of shrubs, vines and herbs so closely packed together as to form a nearly impenetrable barrier to the person attempting to walk through.

The following trees were recognised - Bloodwood (PTEROCARPUS SP. - probably OFFICINALIS), Serette (BYRSONIMA SPICATA), Blackheart (CLATHROTROPIS BRACHYPETALA) in flower, Guatecare (ESCHWEILERA SUBGLANDULOSA), Puni PITHECELLOBIUM JUPUNBA), Bois mulatre (PENTACLETHRA MACROLOBA), Jereton (DIDYMOPANAX MOROTOTONI), and Pois Doux (INGA SP). Although Crappo (CARAPA GUIANENSIS) was not seen it was a reasonable assumption that the original forest was a Crappo-Guatecare forest.

Secondary growth was represented by Bois Canon (CECROPIA PELTATA) and the two Vismias - CAYENENSIS and FALCATA. These were obviously taking their place in the denuded forest but were not yet fully developed. Another plant which is often seen in the lower stories of the forest was Chaconia (WARSZEWICZIA COCCINEA), it was in full bloom.

Some other plants, not necessarily forest plants seen growing by the wayside were - MUNTINGIA CALABURA' Ficus (two different species), Black Sage (CORDIA CURASSAVICA), Bamboo (BAMBUCA VULGARIS), Xylopia (Soursop family), COMPOMANESIA (belonging to the family MYRTACEAE) and CLIBADIUM (belonging to the Sunflower family).

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TRIP TO TACARIBE ON THE 27-28TH AUGUST 1988 - Neville Achan

Nineteen members of the Club gathered together at Blanchisseuse for the overnight field trip to Tacaribe for the purpose of looking for any turtle activity. It was expected that nestings of leather-backed turtles would have ceased but it was hoped that there would be records of hatchlings even at this late stage.

The Club had always endeavoured to visit Tac-ribe earlier in the year when the weather was more certain; on this occasion the parties set out, some on foot, some in hired pirogues and one - Glen Wilkes - in his own kayak.

The two boats set out in heavy rain but the weather soon cleared and, during the scenic trip along the Northe Coast, we collected three of the hikers at Paria Bay. Shortly before reaching Petit Tacaribe, we met and passed Glen Wilkes in his kayak and later disembarked in the lee of Point Trou Bouilliriz. The seas were very calm throughout and it was very surprising to note that the beach on the Eastern side of the docking area had returned once more, hence, it was now possible to get to the main beach on Grand Tacaribe without having to climb over the rocks. It would seem that the transport of sand along the coast had led to the build up of sand so that it was possible to walk to within 10 to 12 feet of the large rock at the Western end of the beach.

Due to the fact that we were now within the rainy season, sand flies were prevalent in their numbers and only by the liberal use of insect repellent were we able to -keep them at bay.

Turtle patrols were mounted during the evening but, alas, there was no evidence of any turtles nesting nor any evidence of any hatchlings.

Trip to Tacaribe continued

On the morning of the 28th a small party made their way to Madamas Bay and their only remark on their return was the increased activity of sand flies at Madamas. The main party eventually re-embarked at about 1.00 p.m. on the return journey. Members fortunate enough to be in the second boat, captained by Reuben Mulligan were able to visit the oil bird colony at Mon Poui which is only accessible by boat and in clam seas. After beaching the boat in the entrance to the cave, the party went to the entrance to the near chamber wherein there appeared to be a thriving colony of 20 to 25 pairs of oil birds. Although it was possible to climb into the cave and get nearer to the birds, we did not do so because of an approaching rain storm and deteriorating weather. This colony of oil birds is certainly worth a repeat visit, but the timing will have to be of paramount importance in view of its inaccessibility.

All parties eventually returned to Blanchisseuse at about 3.00 p.m. to be greeted once again by a torrential downpour.

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SLEEPING BAG for Sale - Anyone interested please contact Wayne Yee Mon at 622- 1605.

Luisa Zuniaga  
Honorary Secretary  
1 Errol Park Road, St. Ann,s

October 3, 1988.