

# THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

## SECOND QUARTER OF 1990

Dear Member

You are invited to attend the monthly meetings to be held on Thursdays, April 12th, May 10th and June 7th 1990 at 5.30 p.m. at the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College, Port of Spain. PLEASE NOTE that June 7th is the first Thursday - the second Thursday is Corpus Christi, a Public Holiday. You are also invited to attend the field trips listed hereunder:-

### 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

April 12th Why Save The Timber Rattle Snakes by Dr. Douglas Fraser  
May 10th The Moruga Grasshopper by Ms. Lillory Mc Commie  
June 7th Geological Events Influencing Natural  
Vegetation in Trinidad by Dr. Paul Commeau

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

April 28/29th - Matelot/Blanchisseuse (Camp)  
(Arrangements to be discussed at April meeting)  
May 27th - Guanapo Gorge  
June 23/24th - TOBAGO

EARTH DAY - APRIL 22nd - Forestry Division is arranging an All Day programme of activities to which we are all invited. The morning will commence with an ecumenical service at one of the Cathedrals. The theme of the service would be "Creation of the Earth". All religious groups are being asked to have their sermon for the day on "The Creation of the Earth". From the afternoon a Cultural Extravaganza at Cleaver Woods is planned. Our representative on the organising committee is Anselma Mohammed and she is asking that members come forward with assistance, especially in getting entertainers, etc. You may contact Anselma at 625-3311/9. Ext. 243.

### FIELD TRIP TO THE CENTRAL RANGE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY - August 27, 1990 - T. Farrell

I was looking forward to this trip as the Club has rather neglected the Central Range except for Mount Tamana and Brigand Hill. We were in fact breaking new ground. Unfortunately it was a big disappointment..

I expected that this sanctuary would have been an area of untouched forest where the wildlife would be able to live a normal life without any human interference. The forest in the situation it is should be a Crappo-Guatecare Forest with either a Fineleaf-Cocorite or a Fineleaf-Sabal faciation.

We actually found that it was intersected by roadways along which motor cars could be driven. Stopping at an arbitrarily chosen spot we got out of the cars, walked along the road and penetrated the forest at various points. To our surprise at every point we entered we found a thin veneer of forest lining the road and further in a severely altered or destroyed forest either by fire or by squatters. I did not see a single Crappo or a Guatecare tree. In one spot a lonely Silk-cotton tree loaded with epiphytes and looking rather bedraggled, remained standing. A few food plants were growing in the places altered by squatters. Otherwise there were herbs, vines and shrubs budding up into that impenetrable growth of small plants locally called "lastro".

One member of the party was looking for plants from which dyes could be extracted and in particular the indigo plant (*Indigofera anil* var. *Polyphylla*) AND SHE ASKED ME IF I knew it. I was unable to help as this was a plant I had never seen. I do know, however, that at some time in the past the plant was grown for its commercial value and it is quite likely that remnants of these old plantations are still to be found.

I am reasonably sure that there are areas of this Sanctuary that are untouched and are well worth visiting. Unfortunately we seem to have gone to the wrong area as perhaps we may have even emerged from the Sanctuary into the circumambient territory?

#### BIRDING NEWS by Roger Neckles (Tel. 633-5614)

Sunday 25th and Monday 26th March 1990 were by far the most exuberating bird watching days I have ever spent in Trinidad. My field carries me out into the wilderness every weekend and some weekdays too. I am an amateur photographer and professional artist. I sculpt birds in wood, sketch in charcoal and pencil, but mainly etch birds on glass. On Sunday Geoffrey Gomes (another very keen birder who accompanies me every weekend) and I went on a birding trip to the Moruga River where we saw scores of different species of birds including a pair of Plumbeous Kites (*ICTINIA PLUMBEA*) building a nest, four Swallow-tailed kites (*ELANOIDES FORFICATUS*), Little Hermit (*PHAETHORNIS LONGUEMAREUS*) building its nest. On our return from this successful trip we came upon a wonderland of migrating and breeding swamp birds. The birds I suspect that were breeding were Gallinules or more likely Wattled Jacanas because we walked among the cinder of burnt reeds and lilies and found several remains of birds caught in the fires. On the brighter side we came upon a cluster of small shallow marshy ponds where we saw to our surprise and delight, scores of swamp birds and the incredible list is as follows:-

Fulvous Tree-Ducks (*DENDROCYGNA BICOLOR*) 150/200 birds  
 Blue-Winged Teal (*ANAS DISCORS*) 3 males & 4 females  
 Glossy Ibis (*PLEGADIS FALCINELLUS*) 9 birds  
 GREAT EGRET (*CASMERODIUS ALBUS*) 23  
 Snowy Egrets (*EGRETTA THULA*) 3  
 Blue Heron (Little) (*FLORIDA CAERULEA*) Scores  
 Striped-Backed Bittern (*IXOBRYCHUS INVOLUCRIS*) 1  
 Purple Gallinule (*PORPHYRULA MARTINICA*) 1  
 Peregrine Falcon (*FALCO PEREGRINUS*) attacking ducks  
 Wattled Jacanas (*JACANA JACANA*) Scores  
 Common Gallinule (*GALLINULA CHLOROPUS*) 3

On Monday March 26th in order to verify Sunday's sightings I took along Detta Buch to the same spot intent on getting much closer to the ducks and ibises than on Sunday, and we certainly did. We got to within 100 yards of the ducks and within 20 feet of the Glossy Ibis. Our remarkable list is as follows:-

Gret Egret (*CASMERODIUS ALBUS*) 29  
 Glossy Ibis (*PLEGADIS FALCINELLUS*) 25  
 Fulvous Tree-Duck (*DENDROCYGNA BICOLOR*) 70 or more  
 Blue-Winged Teal (*ANAS DISCORS*) 7 males, 9 females  
 Greater Yellowlegs (*TRINGA MELANOLEUCA*) 1  
 Lesser Yellowlegs (*TRINGA FLAVIPES*) 1 (together)  
 Wattled Jacanas (*JACANA JACANA*) Scores  
 Common Gallinule (*GALLINULA CHLOROPUS*) 7  
 Striped-Backed Bittern (*IXOBRYCHUS INVOLUCRIS*) 1  
 Yellow-Throated Spinetail (*CERTHIAxis CINNAMOMEA*) 3  
 Yellow-Hooded Blackbirds (*AGELAIUS ICTEROCEPHALUS*) Scores  
 Cattle Egrets (*BUBULCUS IBIS*) Scores

And to add to this thrilling experience we saw the strangest thing, a very large iguana, half submerged in the lily pond 8 feet in front of us, not a care in the world, probably after eggs and nestlings. I am going back soon armed with camera. Anyone interested in the location of this wonderland of birds contact above.

Luisa Zuniaga  
 Honorary Secretary  
 March 27, 1990.

1 Errol Park Road, St. Ann's.

ADDENDUM

THIS is an A P P E A L from your secretary - 'Financial of course'

Most of you will know Lana Campbell, our Honorary Assistant Secretary up to 1988 when she had to decline re-election because of domestic problems involving the deaths of her brother-in-law and father-in-law because of illness. Lana and Gerry had to incur large medical expenses in Caracas for her brother-in-law which they are still paying.

In August 1989 Lana gave birth to a son, her second child, who was born with some defects which were evident a few weeks after birth, and which necessitated rushing him to Caracas for surgery. The baby died at the hospital in October after the surgery and was buried in Caracas. Needless to say Lana and Gerry have an additional medical bill to repay, the equivalent of TT \$45,000. She is trying to gather this sum, hence my appeal.... Whatever you can give will be appreciated as a membership effort towards a hard working member who has done a lot for our organization. Donations could be given to me at the next meeting, or you can send me a cheque either to my home address or in care of The Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd., St. James Branch. Your contributions will be passed on by me to Lana.

Lana is still a member but because of the foregoing and other problems has not been active.

Thank You and God Bless

Luisa Zuniaga  
Honorary Secretary  
March 27, 1990

My address is:  
1 Errol Park Road  
St. Ann's