THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

C E N T E N A R Y Y E A R

SECOND QUARTER 1991

Dear Member

You are invited to attend the monthly meetings of the club to be held on Thursdays April 11th, May 9th and June 13th 1991 at 5.30 p.m. at the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College, Port of Spain. 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 11th - ENFORCEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS - THE ROLE OF THE NGOs by Mrs. Christine Allahar

May 9th - EDIBLE WILD FRUIT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO by Mr. Francis Morean

June 13th - MUD VOLCANOES OF TRINIDAD by Dr. Paul L. Comeau

F I E L D T R I P S

April 28th - MATURA BAY via Sangre Grande & Oropouche

May 26th - EL TUCUCHE (Leave 6.00 a.m.)

June 30th - TOCO TRAILS (Leave 6.00 a.m.)

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS - 1991

Here are some activities planned for our Anniversary Year:-

1. 15th June to 15th July - Exhibition of books on Natural History of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, by the U.W.I. Library, St. Augustine.
2. Sunday 7th July - Interfaith Service at the St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church followed by a tree-planting ceremony in the Botanic Gardens. (times to be announced later)
3. Monday 8th July - Opening of the Museum Exhibit (at the National Museum or elsewhere)
4. Tuesday 9th July - Public Lecture "LEAD IN OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN POPULATION - PRESENT AND FUTURE CONCERNS" by Dr. Ivan Chang Yen .
5. Wednesday 10th July - (Anniversary day) - Launching of special issue of stamps and Dinner (time and venue to be announced)
6. Thursday 11the July - "The Past as Members See It" (open to the Public)
7. Friday 12th July - Activity to be announced
8. Saturday/Sunday 13/14th July - Overnight Trip to Tobago.
9. Labelling of trees in the Botanic Gardens. Brochure on trees of the Gardens to be produced.
10. Publication of the Nature Trails Guide.
11. Publication of a special issue of the Journal "Living World"

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS Continued:

We are appealing for funds from various firms. Members of the club who can assist in this aspect, please get in touch with the Secretary or Chairman of Centenary Planning Committee.

A P P E A L from Member, Johanna Darlington, I.I.B.C., Gordon Street, Curepe.

"I am trying to trace a newspaper article, author unknown, entitled "Crusoe's Cave, neglected site of our romantic past". It was published in 1976 in The Tobago News (Scarborough) Vol 1 (16) p 4 (no connection with the newspaper of the same name currently being published.) The Scarborough Public Library has most issues up to Vol. 1 (14) but nothing later. Does anyone happen to have, or have access to, a copy of this article? I would like to include it in an annotated bibliography of Trinidad and Tobago caves that I am (still!) compiling."

FIELD TRIP TO "SOHO" CAVE ON THE 25th NOVEMBER 1990 (Paul L. Comeau)

This field trip was originally scheduled for October on the Club's agenda but, because of the state of emergency still in effect at that time, was put forwward to November replacing the more arduous El Cerro del Aripo trip.

Before giving an account of the "Soho" Cave trip, I would like to shed some light on how the cave was "discovered" and how the tentative name "Soho" came to be adopted.

Early in 1989, Johanna Darlington, then still at U.W.I., asked me if I could take her to Aripo Cave, having never been there herself. Being busy at the time, I could not accompany her when she decided to go to the cave with Maureen Cain, a professor at U.W.I. Armed with my verbal instructions, they set off to find Aripo Caveon the 28th May 1989. Due to some felled trees blocking the trail, Johanna and Maureen got side-tracked and headed along a trail to the east of the one leading to Aripo Cave. It turned out under subsequent discussions and hindsight that they progressed to within 3 minutes of the "new" cave although they didn't know this at the time of their initial trip. Needless to say, they returned to St. Augustine a little disappointed at not finding Aripo Cave but pleased with the forest they had passed through during their hike.

Following this first attempt, I was able to take Johanna and a few others, including Graham White, to Aripo Cave on the 18th June 1989. On our way to the cave I saw firsthand where Johanna and Maureen had got side-tracked on the previous trip, and based on our natural curiosity about the trail they had taken in May, we decided to explore it further at some later date. That opportunity came on the 26th February 1990 when Johanna, together with Graham, Zenobia Baksh, Alison White, Roger Barnes, Bob Brown, Yasmin Comeau and myself set off to see where this other trail might lead. This time no one was disappointed. It was Alison White who first heard the distinct sounds of the Oil Birds, and we all got a whiff of the guano. What we first discovered was a deep well-like hole in the ground with the sound of Oil Birds squawking below. I remember at the time Johanna speculating whether this might not be what Dr. David Snow describes as Well Cave in his published works on Trinidad's Oil Birds. Anyhow, it didn't take long for Graham to locate the main entrance to this cave, and we were able to explore a bit inside, Graham finding some evidence of fossils.

With excitement still running high following the "discovery" of this cave, 13 days later on the 11th March 1990 some of us returned (Graham, Yasmin, and yours truly) together with Peter Harris, Trinidad's noted amateur archeologist, as well as two members of the Club's Botany Group, Luisa Zuniaga and Frankie Farrell. On this occasion Graham sketched out a rough map of the interior of the cave and estimated the number of Oil Birds to be 70 pairs. It was also on this trip that lively discussion took place as to what name the cave might be called with the result that imaginations ran rampant. The main entrance to the cave has a very prominent stalagmite positioned in its middle which has obvious phallic connotations. We asked Peter Harris to come up with a suitable Amerindian name for the cave, and taking his cue from the stalagmite came up with a rich variety of names that are very suggestive. I will not risk censorship by translating the Amerindian words here, but simply list them as follows: Lolotrou, Lolojab, Troujab, Chou, and Yocahu (translations will be provided upon request).

Following this second successful trip to the "new" cave, my own imagination got the better of me, and, inspired by my poetic muse, I composed a little verse about the Amerindian names Peter had suggested. The verse composed on the 22nd March 1990, is as follows:

Should we name our cave Yocahu
Or better still, call it Lolotrou
For women may get rather mad
If you call it Lolojab
Better rely on something straight
As sexist terms may irritate
We need a word they can appreciate
So why not call it something safe
Like Sofibaw's or "Soho's" Gate

In checking the Oxford dictionary to see if the word Sofibaw actually exists in the English language (it doesn't), the word Soho caught my eye, and its meaning seemed most appropriate for our "newly discovered" cave. According to the dictionary the word soho means "announcing discovery e.g. of hare or unexpected event". By simply substituting "hare" for "cave" the meaning of soho seemed to fit our cave perfectly. Thus, it has been put forward as a tentative name until such time when the original name is found. As a final footnote to the story behind the naming of the cave, Graham White informs me that Johanna Darlington eventually caught up with David Snow in the U.K. and upon describing the cave to him, Dr. Snow had no recollection of having seen our "newly discovered" cave during his extensive work in Trinidad, and the so-called Well Cave he refers to, apparently, is a different cave.

Graham White made a subsequent trip to "Soho" Cave (March 18, 1990) along with Johanna, Louis Guy and Ewoud Heesterman in order to more accurately map the interior of the cave. As far as I know this was the last trip to the cave by Club members until the Club's official trip on the 25th of November which I will now describe.

The day appointed for the Club's trip couldn't have started off worse as far as the weather was concerned. Fifteen brave people showed up at the south entrance to the St. Augustine campus at 6:30 to 7:00am but only seven of that number ventured forth to tackle the cave. I don't blame the others one bit for turning back at the start. The day was simply rotten with a heavy downpour of rain. I promised some of those who decided not to go a return trip in the Dry Season.

Those who came on the trip were Liana and Robert, American dentists working in Trinidad, another young American named Bodie, Dave Ramnarine, plus a Chinese lady whose name I've forgotten, Colin Clubbe, the new Plant Ecology lecturer at U.WI. and myself. We reached Ben Millette's place at 8.05am and with his kind permission were able to park our three vehicles near his house. By this time the rain had stopped but everything was dripping wet.

The hiking time to "Soho" Cave normally takes about one hour and 40 minutes but on this occasion it took about three hours to reach the site, the reason being that I was making detailed notes on the hike for the proposed Trail Guide that is to be published in connection with the Club's centennial celebration in July 1991. We also encountered a few fallen trees blocking the trail which delayed our progress.

During the initial part of the hike, the trail passes through secondary growth forest (old abandoned plantation), and some limestone outcrops are encountered before you enter undisturbed forest after about 50 minutes (normal hiking time). This forest was classified by Beard (1946 - The Natural Vegetation of Trinidad) as Seasonal Montane occurring on limestone outcrops above 450m. Beard noted the rich ground cover vegetation as one of the features of this forest type. There are certainly places where the ground vegetation is dense, especially with Asplundia rigida (Mammoo). A short distance into the natural forest the trail passes a very large Silk Cotton tree (Ceiba pentandra) which is one of the largest I've seen in Trinidad, probably second in size to the giant near Moruga Bouffe. The former is certainly as tall but doesn't have the massive buttress system of the latter.

As the trail climbs higher into the folds of the Northern Range you begin to see karst topography, large sink-holes visible from the trail. Eventually you reach the top of a ridge with an elevation of approximately 730m. This is the point where Johanna and Maureen reached in May 1989 and is distinguished by the presence of a large fallen Mahoe tree (Sterculia caribaea). Proceeding downhill off the ridge brought us quickly to the vicinity of "Soho" Cave.

First I took the group to see the well-hole mentioned earlier in this report, then we made our way to the main entrance of the cave. As you descend the slope towards it you pass large clumps of Xanthosoma undipes (Wild Tannia). The cave entrance is an impressive sight, being as large as the one for Aripo Cave. As mentioned earlier, it has the distinguishing feature of a tall stalagmite located just inside the entrance, beyond which echo the sounds of the disturbed Oil Birds. The front

part of the cave is easy to explore provided you have a flashlight. A few old bottles strewn about the entrance attest to earlier visitors. There are thick deposits of guano from the bats and birds that inhabit the cave. Numerous ghostly seedlings can be seen sprouting on the surface of these deposits some of the seeds being from the Jessenia palm. As you proceed deeper into the cave you encounter numerous lateral chambers but no extensive development of stalactites and stalagmites. On one of my earlier trips to the cave I came across a Peripatus on the floor of one of the cave chambers. There are certainly lots of slugs and earthworms within the life-zone of the cave. One interesting feature that should be mentioned is that the cave has a double floor which is visible wherever sections of the upper one has collapsed. Beyond the life-zone, there are narrow passages into deeper chambers but these have not yet been properly explored. The entrance of the well-hole can also be seen from the interior of the cave.

Once our group had explored the cave we returned to the surface above the main entrance where some of us had lunch. In this vicinity, in addition to the well-hole, there are at least half a dozen small cave openings.

We commenced our return trek at 12:15pm. On our way back it rained heavily for about an hour but at this stage nobody was complaining. We reached the vehicles around 3:00pm, everyone wet but satisfied that they had a worthwhile outing.

THE SOUTHERN WHITE PAGE IN TALPARO (V. C. Quesnel)

I find it easy to agree with Malcolm Barcant when he declares the Southern White Page (Graphium telesilaus)), to be one of then ten most beautiful butterflies in Trinidad. I agree also that it is a rare butterfly, as is the Northern White Page (Graphium protesilaus), but I disagree when he says that there is complete geographical separation between the two. Here is what he says on p83 of his book, Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago: "It is interesting to note that two species so alike and related can show such a sharp division in habitat as between North and South Trinidad. They never cross." An almost identical statement appears on page 179.

I live on Leotaud Trace, Talparo, just a few kilometres north of Barcant's collecting area No. 14 of North Trinidad. According to Barcant, if I find any White Page at all it should be the Northern White Page. In fact I have found both. I have records of the Northern White Page at Talparo on 6 Jan. 1985 and 13 Sept. 1985 and of the Southern White Page on 5 Feb. 1991 and 20 Feb. 1991. I find neither as unapproachable as Barcant recounts, at least while they drink from damp earth, and I can easily get close enough to distinguish the two by the strong presence (Northern) or near absence (Southern) of the fourth black line on the forewing counting outwards from the body. To clinch matters, the specimen of 5 Feb. 1991 was dead and I could compare it in detail with the illustrations in Barcant's book. It was certainly the Southern White Page (in the Northern area).

Therefore, Barcant's statement "They never cross" is clearly wrong, for these records show that they do overlap in range. However, the nearly complete separation of the two must indicate that the larval food plants of the two are different and are restricted in their ranges with one mainly or only in the north and the other mainly in the south of the island. Neither food plant is known and their discovery won't be easy because of the rarity of the butterflies and the presumed rarity of the food plants. The known food plants of other members of the family are:

Citrus sinensis (orange - Rutaceae); Papilio lycophon, Papilio androgeus Papilio anchisiades, Papilio homothoas.

Aristolochia trilobata (Aristolochiaceae); Battus polydamus, Parides neophilus parianus, Parides anchises cymocles.

Aristolochia rugosa; Parides neophilus parianus, Parides anchises cymocles.

Aristolochia boosii; Parides sesostris, Battus belus varus, Battus lycidas (?)

There are only four members of the Aristolochiaceae in Trinidad. For an account of them see Living World 1985-1986. There are three native genera in the Rutaceae: Esenbeckia with two species, Zanthoxylum (Fagara) with 6 species and Amyris with 2 species. Esenbeckia was the food plant of Papilio before the introduction of the ORANGE and it is still sometimes used by Papilio. If it served as the food plant of Graphium it is reasonable to suppose that this genus (like Papilio) would [illegible] evicted to orange and there would be no difference in the distribution [illegible]

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES ON FIG WALK (Paul L. Comeau)

A recent hike to Fig Walk (5 January 1991), always a physical challenge, proved to be botanically and culturally stimulating as well. I was accompanied on this trip by Francis Morean who has a keen eye for rare plants in the natural environment. Those Club members who have never done this hike can obtain an idea of what it's like by reading Graham White's account of the Club's field trip to Fig Walk on the 27th January 1990 (The Field Naturalist Bulletin, 1990, 3:2-3).

On our latest trip, having crossed the Rio Seco downstream from the waterfall, climbed over the ridge and descended to the Rio Seco again, Francis spotted a wild Papaw (Carica sp.) growing on the opposite bank where the forest trail reaches the river. At first he thought it was something else but after the next sighting further up the river he realized it was indeed wild Papaw. From then on, until we reached our destination at Fig Walk on the Salybia River, four more sightings were made with one of the clumps having both male and female plants present. This represents the most wild Papaws I've seen, previous locations being along one of the bench trails to Tucuche, and on the slopes above the Santa Cruz Valley within the watershed of the Gasparillo River.

The other botanical feature which more than caught our eye was the large number of big trees that had recently fallen, nearly all of them across the Rio Seco, making our progress upriver difficult. We counted at least ten toppled trees, and my guess would be that they came down during the tropical storm that occurred in Trinidad last August. One large (Mora) tree, however, fell between the 18th October 1990 (my previous trip up the Rio Seco) and the 5th January 1991. This tree came down across the trail on the north side of the ridge you cross over to get back to the Rio Seco (about tow-thirds of the way downslope). Its demise, as well, was due to natural causes.

Matters of environmental concern also feature in our hike. The first was the terrible state of the logging road at the upper end of the Salybia-Matura Trace, the section of road you have to walk (about 15 minutes) before reaching the start of the forest trail. I have never seen a road chewed up so badly by logging tractors (tree-farmers or dozers) as this one was. It even surpasses the worst state in which I've seen the logging road that leads to the forest trail to Moruga Bouffe. No wonder the local farmers in the area are complaining about not being able to get their crops to market.

Another matter of environmental concern was the number of trap-gun signs we saw during our hike, a total of four in the region between the Rio Seco and Salybia River. These signs consist of a straight branch about one metre in length that is stuck in the ground (usually along a trail) with the upper end split and a large leaf or twig wedged in the split. In those having a leaf, it is the petiole end that points to the nearby location of the trap-gun, whereas those signs having a twig, it is the sharply pointed end that conveys the same message. The first sign we encountered was in the dry river bed near the limestone escarpment that occurs about 95m upriver from the point where you leave the Rio Seco to cross over to the Salybia River, the others occurred along the hunter's trail connecting these two rivers. A cautionary note should be sounded here, that trap-gun signs in other regions may not be like those just described.

One of the reasons for doing this particular hike was to carefully map out the features, distance, and compass bearings between the Rio Seco and Salybia River, a section of the trail to Fig Walk that has given Club members trouble on previous trips because there has not been a distinct trail between these two rivers. What a pleasant surprise it was then to find a hunter's trail where none seemed to exist before. Or did they? Perhaps during the six month hunting season, with more people frequenting the area, the trail becomes established, only to get overgrown again once the hunting period ends. On our trek across the divide between the Rio Seco and Salybia River we met some hunters at a bush camp who enlightened us on trap-gun signs. According to Dennis Philip, one of the hunters, trap-guns in this area are never set on the trails themselves, so we made sure we stayed on track. This hunter used the term "Fig Wharf" instead of Fig Walk when we told him our destination. The use of the word "Wharf" by some hunters was noted by Ian Lambie in a written account of the Club's field trip to Fig Walk in 1978 (Field Naturalist Bulletin, 1978, 2;3). I am curious as to why this term is used to describe the site.

Once we reached the Salybia, we stayed in the river bed as we headed upstream and arrived at Fig Walk at 1:00pm. While having our lunch beneath the shadow of the tall figs, a group of five hunters (different from the first lot) came upon us as they headed up the branch of the river we were on. These hunters had no guns and no dogs but what they did have was very interesting. One of them, David [illegible] a young [illegible] plant. [illegible]

that he is following a custom handed down to him by his father and grandfather, hunters as well, who took figs into the forest to plant whenever they were on hunting expeditions, and that the custom originated with the Caribs. How timely, to witness this practice while we sat amongst the figs! My only regret was that I didn't have my camera to visually record the event.

R E M I N D E R Have You Paid Your Subs for 1991

Do we have Your Correct Address and Telephone Number

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

March 26, 1991.