

THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALIST CLUB

SECOND QUARTER OF 1992

Dear Member

You are invited to attend the Monthly Meetings of the club to be held on Thursdays, April 9th, May 14th and June 11th 1992 at 5.30 p.m. at the Audio-Visual Room of St. Mary's College. Also the field trips as 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 9th - HISTORY OF HERPETOLOGY in Trinidad by Mr. Hans Boos
May 14th - BIRD CALLS by Mr. Ishmael Samad
June 11th - ASPECTS OF THE BIOLOGY OF THE CHACONIA by Mr. J. Duncan

F I E L D T R I P S

April 26th - EL TUCUCHE (Leader I. Samad) (Leave POS 6.00 a.m.)
May 31st - MORUGA BOUFFE (Leader P. Comeau) (Leave POS 6.00 a.m.)
June 26/28th - T O B A G O

PROJECTS FOR FIELD TRIPS (V. Quesnel)

Members frequently ask about field trips, "Why are we going there?" or "What is there to see?" The general answer to such questions is "We go on field trips to provide members with opportunities to assess the suitability of the different areas for following up their own specific interests". However, field trips provide opportunities for studying the distribution of plants and animals. I have used them for studying the distribution of the Rubiaceae for many years. Others may want to use them for studying other plants eg. the cannonball tree. Animals tend to run away from large ~~herds~~^{hordes} of people but some can still be studied under the normal conditions of a field trip. I suggest the following:

Forest habitats:

1. Howler monkeys. Are they really missing from the Northern Range between Maracas and Cumaca?
2. Bellbirds
3. The zandolie. How high up the Northern Range does it go?
4. Whitetailed Page. Counts might help predict migrations.
5. Hunting ants.
6. Manicou crabs
7. Bachac ants. A minor problem here. There are two species which should be distinguished.

Beach habitats

Record presence or absence of the sea tattoo and collect ten or twenty of the egg-carrying females for measurement of size. I will undertake to do all the measurements on any of them collected. Locality must be specified.

Everyone can help to make the trips more interesting and instructive by taking part in these projects.

"The Gold Drop Helicopsis" (Rhea Nadine Singh) Field Trip of January 26, 1992

I must confess that I have very little interest in stones and rock formations. As such, I was beginning to find the geological trip to the North Coast rather "ho-hum" when Ray Martinez pointed to a huge swampy area overgrown with Montrichardia arborescens (L) at the edge of the Saline River mouth at Salibea. This Montrichardia is a giant aroid with an erect, semi-woody stem ranging between 1-3 metres in length, and about 5 centimetres in diameter. What is interesting about this plant is that it's heart shaped leaves provide food for a beautiful little cream and brown butterfly called Helicopsis cupido (Linnaeus). It's common name which is so appropriate is The Gold Drop Helicopsis on account of the droplets of gold embossed on the underside of the lower wing. The forewings which span 3 1/2 cm. are cream with deep brown at the margins. In the male there is a patch of brown and orange at the base of the forewing, near the thorax, which is absent in the female sex. The lower wing which is brown and cream with a touch of orange possesses three pairs of short tails. Many variations in coloration of cupido exist. Thus, there are varieties in the forewing from a deep cream to an almost white patch; and in the tinge of brown to almost black in the sub-marginal region of the lower wing.

We searched numerous leaves of Montrichardia, and through the keen eyes of our guest for the day, Sandra, we collected 2 caterpillars of Helicopsis which were placed in jars for rearing to the adults.

Within 1 week we observed 2 cocoons, and waited in anticipation for the transformation to the adult stages. To our disappointment, one week later, the only "things" to be observed in our jars were 2 Ichneumonid wasps. It appears the caterpillars were parasitised by these wasps. Hopefully our next attempt will be more successful!!

GEOLOGY TRIP (East Coast) January 26, 1992 by Dan Jaggernaut

Our first trip for 1992 got into action and ^{at} our first stop, Matura Point, a welcome address was given by our new President (Mr. Hans Boos). Then Agard and Francis of the Geological Society introduced themselves and gave us a synopsis about rocks and their formation. One striking feature here for many, was a "twin coconut tree" in the distance. Many observers were astounded by its presence and still hoped for a good explanation. This "twin coconut" tree (COCOS NUCIFERA) seems to have been there for many years and remains unobserved by many field naturalists. Also on this stop everyone walked across the famous "Baillie" bridge. This bridge was constructed by a British engineer (Westwood Baillie). There is another "Bailey" bridge constructed by Sir O. Bailey (Different engineers). Both bridges are prefabricated and specially designed for rapid construction.

Our stop at Galera Point was a very interesting one. Here many broken pieces of a retaining wall could still be seen down to the sea. A recently fallen piece could be seen half way down, suspending itself on a sea-grape tree. This sea-grape tree (COCOLOBA UVIFERA) may very well be pushed down to the sea with the constant pressure of this piece of wall. Effective measures should be taken by the relevant authorities to rebuild a "Retaining Wall" and prevent a threat to the Light House.

Also at Galera Point our friendly geologists kept us fully informed about the "Galera Grits". This scenic part of Galera Point gave many of us a much needed supply of "fresh oxygen". An amazing sight, about two metres above the Galera Grits, was an appearing and disappearing rainbow. As convulsive water from the sea came through a hole in the rock and met the sunlight, a beautiful "Rainbow" was formed (what a sight to behold). One of our photographers had a "splashing bath" from the rough waves smashing on the rocks.

Our lunch break at Grande Riviere Pt. was a special one. A very large almond tree on the sea shore could be seen. This Indian Almond (TERMINALIA CATAPPA) of spectacular beauty to me, seems to be there for many years. Many of our field naturalists enjoyed the pellucid waters at the mouth of the Grande Riviere. One striking feature on this beach was a "Female Sun Tanner" with a glass of Coca Cola. She gave one of our photographers one of the best poses he could have ever hoped for. Photography was precipitated by our Vice-President.

Our next stop on our way back, a landslide near the road which led to the discovery of a "cascade". This small waterfall attracted a few of our bathers. Many were amazed at the lush vegetation way up the mountain. This cascade should be a new one for the map (said by Mr. Carrall Alexander).

On our way to Sans Souci Pt. a "flat tyre" was easily inflated. Sans Souci depot gave us a sight of volcanic rocks not seen in very many other places. Our President said that he was there many years before but the place looked a little different. Photographers were also kept very busy here, not knowing when they would return. We came to our parked vehicles, our geologists said they had had an enjoyable, different type of experience, and would try to be on other trips. Mr. Boos then thanked everyone for coming out on this field trip and urged the Geological Society to join us on our next meetings and field trips.

FIELD TRIP "ABOVE THE MARACAS WATERFALL" on February 23, 1992 by D. Jaggernaut

Our second field trip for 1992 got on the way a little later than the previous trip, much to the delight of many. We journeyed through Maracas, St. Joseph and then Water Fall Road. All vehicles properly parked and everyone gathered together, Mr. Hans Boos (our President) welcomed everyone. He gave two choices those who wished to go to the base (bottom) of the falls and those who wished to go above the falls. However, the majority chose the more "arduous journey" above the Waterfall, even though some were not sartorially prepared for the "razor grass" ahead.

Our journey began with Edmund Charles taking the lead and clearing the bushes vines and branches along the way. We crossed a rivulet with clear water. Moving higher and higher some secondary forest could be seen and a dry tree "halfway burnt" which indicated a bush fire sometime before. As we moved further up many who came into contact with the quite simple looking razor grass experienced its sharp reality and tenacity to body parts and clothes.

As we ascended, the pace decreased and the sound of the Manakin and Channel-billed toucans could be heard. As tiring legs perambulated along the beautiful ridge, everyone was amazed at the sweet valleys and enchanting hills that lay around us. Despite hurdles like the razor grass and very steep parts, our field naturalists seem to possess a special kind of courage and determination to reach to the summit.

We could now hear the rushing and rumbling of a Waterfall. As we walked through virgin forests we could also experience the quality of oxygen from a pollution-free environment. Some of our nature lovers could be seen exercising their freedom with cameras and binoculars. On reaching the top a beautiful cascade leading to the pool and river. A rope was anchored to a tree on the steep slippery way down, which gave some help to many and much help to some.

It was lunch time and there could not have been a better place to be than by this river and pool. Many who could not resist the water did have a beautiful bath. A slippery walk a little further down the river led to a sudden drop of the waterfall. Our President and many others could be seen there looking at Nature's bounty.

As I step down a little further, it was an amazing sight for me, a natural phenomenon. Holding on to a tree and looking at the dense vegetation and breath taking sceneries around me. I said to myself 'what a beautiful country we all live in' and so many are not aware of this reality. Edmund Charles and myself waited for the last few persons to have a view of the falls.

Our return journey began but leaving this beautiful place behind will be something for me to think about. Our journey back was much less walking and more skating. Just a little sprinkle of rain (as Andre Clarke) says made it very slippery. Edmund Charles demonstrated a very responsible role by making sure that no one was left behind. Slowly but steadily all reached to their vehicles safe and sound.

?? HAVE YOU PAID YOUR SUBS ??
?? HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR ADDRESS OR TELEPHONE NUMBER ??

Luisa Zuniaga
Honorary Secretary
1 Errol Park Road
St. Ann's, P.O.S.
Trinidad

March 30, 1992.