



THE FIELD NATURALIST

BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

FOURTH QUARTER OF 1995

CLUB EVENTS FOR THIS QUARTER

Field Trips

Sunday 29 October 1995 Guanapo Gorge and Cave

Trail Guide #18

26 November 1995 Morne Bleu from the West

Trail Guide #15a

(No December Field Trip)

Tobago

Field trips will be determined at the monthly meeting preceding the field trip.

Lectures For This Quarter

12 October 1995

Tyrone Kalpee (Environment Manager, Petrotrin)
Howard John (Managing Director, National Quarries)
Jude Allaby (President, Quarry Association)
PANEL DISCUSSION ON QUARRY REHABILITATION

9 November 1995

Derek Hudson (The Trinidad and Tobago Geological Society)
GEOLOGICAL PROCESSES SHAPING OUR WORLD
(postponed from September)

(No meeting in December)

REPORT ON CCA 1995 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

By: Haroon Husain

The Caribbean Conservation Association's Congress and 29th Annual General Meeting was held at the Rendezvous Bay Hotel in Anguilla from 28th August to 2nd September 1995. The theme of this year's Congress was "Conservation: Balances and Conflicts."

The General Meeting commenced on 29th August with the key items on the agenda being a review of the Association's 1995 Accounts and current financial status, adoption of the proposed amendments to the Association's By-law and a discussion of the Association's Draft Strategic Agenda 1995-1998. It was deemed necessary to adjourn the AGM twice in order to have certain clauses of the By-law re-drafted before finally gaining approval. Time constraints did not allow a detailed discussion and consideration of the implications of the Draft Strategic Agenda. As such it was agreed that interested individuals and member organisations would be allowed to submit their responses to the Draft Strategic Agenda not later than 31st October 1995. The Board would then review and finalise the DSA for presentation and adoption at a later date.

An extension of time was granted for voting to fill the vacancies arising on CCA's Board. After a count of the ballots, the three organisational members elected to the Board were Pointe-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust, St Lucia National Trust and Anguilla National Trust.

On 30th August delegates were taken on a tour of St. Martin courtesy the St. Martin Tourism Association. Famous historic sites in both the French and Dutch side of this island were visited. A short stop at the recently opened Marigot Museum and the Philipsburg Museum was also included.

Over the next two days eight presentations were made by specially invited guests relating to the conference theme. These lectures focussed on the necessity to strike a balance between exploiting and conserving the natural resources in the various Caribbean islands particularly in view of the substantial contribution tourism makes to the economy of these islands.

This Annual General Meeting and Congress had lots of activities and discussion items included in the agenda over a four day period. At the end it could be considered a success based on what was achieved.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

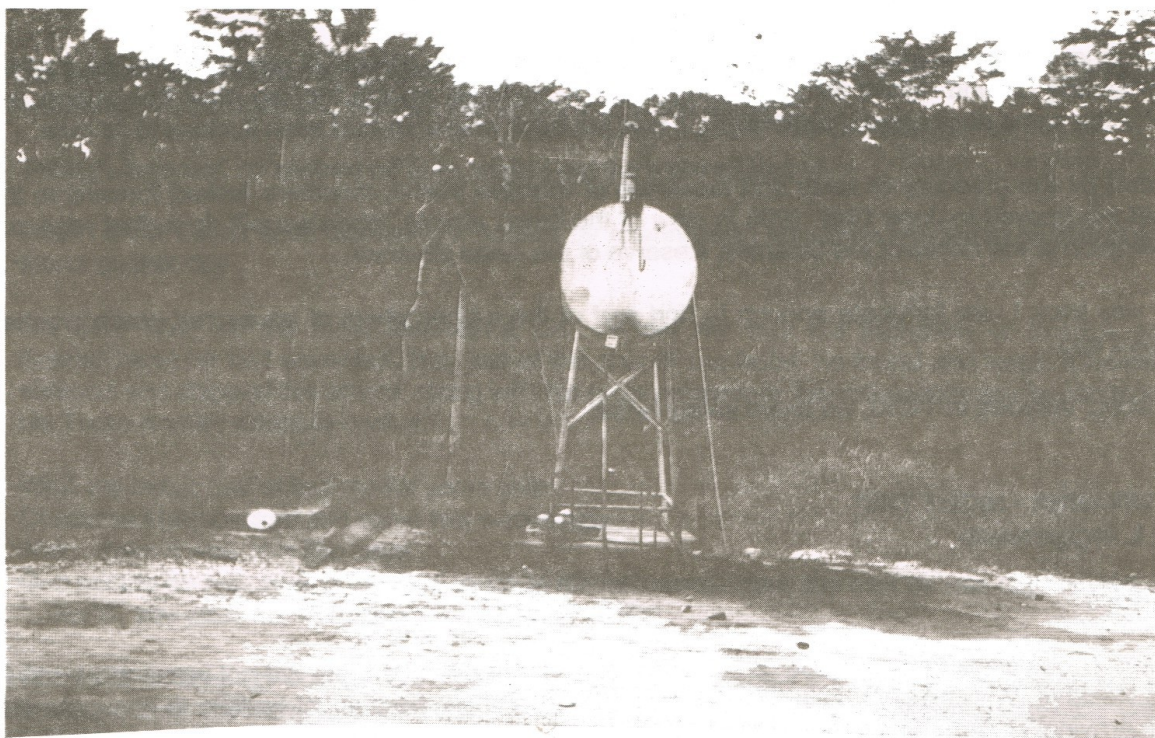
ARIPO SAVANNA

By: Dan L Jaggernauth

26 February 1995

Many foreigners who came to experience Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago found time to join us on our field trip to the Aripo savanna. Our first stop was at K.P.'s Transport and Quarrying site. We parked our vehicles after a silver bridge, along the main roadway. As Dr. Victor Quesnel and I sought permission from the watchman to enter the premises, audacious environmental journalist Anne Hilton had already walked onto the State property, with her camera lens all set. Permission was given with restrictions on photography of concrete structures and quarrying machinery. The large group of fifty-one field naturalists who had waited patiently behind the barrier then started walking around it heading for the quarry site.

Reaching the site, we saw the permanent buildings and an overhead tank leaking diesel fuel onto the ground. The quarry did not seem operational at that time, as there were neither wheel tractors nor bulldozers in sight. With members gathered around, Anne Hilton gave details of the machinery used in washing the gravel and other quarrying processes.



Proceeding, we crossed a bridge and Paul Comeau identified a beautiful plant, *Cassia alata* (Leguminosae). The watchman remained behind and one of our Club members from Canada, Raymond Manuel, did extensive videotaping. Remnants of tall moriche palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*) stood upright, close to the river, beckoning us for protection. Further inside the quarry, we saw a large pond.

Large heaps of sand about five metres high covered some areas. There seemed to be no restoration plan implemented anywhere. Members of the group were alarmed at the scale of destruction in the Scientific Reserve and wondered if the quarry operators had got a permit to destroy the fragile ecosystem of the Aripó savanna. The magnitude of the devastation here tells a sad story that the operations in the past were done "freely and without fear"

Anne Hilton, being truly disturbed at the progressive degeneration, said that the same destructive element, K.P.'s Transport, was recently awarded a contract to construct a visitor centre in the Caroni Swamp, under a new name - Construction Services Limited. This could very well mean a resumption of the quarrying operations.

On our way back we saw a beautiful plant, *Mandavila hirsuta* (Apocynaceae).

Returning to our vehicles, we drove to the Forestry Pine Nursery in Cumuto. Victor Quesnel led the way, taking the trail on the left. After crossing two delapidated bridges, we parked the vehicles opposite the pine trees. Starting off on the bushy trail we came across many branches of the moriche palm with the outer layer removed. At present, this is being used for weaving baskets. Some said it could be the beginning of the the destruction of the moriche palm. Close to the savanna in the forested area, Dr Christopher Starr identified nests of the termite *Nasutitermes ephratae*.

We arrived at the savanna at 10:50 with a light breeze blowing over the vast, open area. This was Dr. Victor Quesnel's 120th trip to the Aripó savanna. Victor, Paul Comeau and Yasmin Comeau, Curator of the National Herbarium, gave the group detailed information about the Scientific Reserve.

Oral Roberts identified a very rare type of moss called Sphagnum, found only in the Aripó savanna. Other plants seen were *Drosera capillaris* (Droseraceae) and *Cassythia filiformis* (Lauraceae).

Walking further into the unique savanna, we saw an iguana on the ground. It remained still for a while, but soon sprang up and darted off into the distance. A zoologist on the trip ran after the iguana and caught it. After some photographs were taken, it was put back where we had seen it, close to its hole.

Surrounded by the greenery of trees and hundreds of moriche palms, members looked forward to the night field trip (moved to June 10th, 1995 in view of the moon phase), when we will do further research and exploration of the riches of the Scientific Reserve of the Aripo savanna.

On our way back I was fortunate enough to find part of the rubber wheel of an aircraft which crashed many years ago.

Arriving at our vehicles at 14:50, we drove safely home.

ARIPO SAVANNA - NIGHT TRIP

By: Dan L Jaggernauth

10 June 1995

Rainy weather one week before forced us to cancel our plan to overnight, but did not prevent our trip to the Aripo Reserve. With news of bush fires weeks before, we knew there might be little to see but much to learn. Arriving at the Cumuto Pine Nursery at 17:50, botanist and all-round naturalist Dr. Victor Quesnel awaited us. Our hard-working treasurer Selwyn Gomes took the wrong road and ended up in San Raphael. He arrived 20 minutes late, which tells us that no obstacle stands in the way of a true and dedicated field naturalist.

As we drove inside there was evidence of the bush fire being extinguished one metre away from the wooden fence of the Forestry Division. A little distance away, hundreds of logs of *Pinus caribaea* had recently been cut. The blackened bark of the logs was evidence of the dreadful bush fire, similar to that of 1987. One of the logs I measured was 18 metres long. Several of us were of the opinion that the bush fires had forced the cutting of the *Pinus caribaea*.



Aripo savanna - bush fire

Dan J

We parked our vehicles and started off on the trip. Sooner than we expected, we heard the musical voice of the Common Potoo, *Nyctibius griseus*. This bird is also known as the "Poor-me-one", and knowing it still existed after a bush fire lifted our spirits. We passed around the remains of a wooden bridge which had been reduced to ashes. Then we came upon a *Bufo marinus* frog, and Dr. Quesnel said it was four months old. How could Dr. Quesnel tell the age of a frog? Actually, at present, he is doing research on frogs at home, and it was easy for him to determine.

Due to the bush fires, it was difficult to recognise the turn-off on the left, and having gone too far we had to retrace our steps. Upon finding the trail we headed into the savanna. Walking on the scorched land tells of the grim and wanton disregard of mankind toward saving the environment.

Arriving at the savanna we were happy to hear the voices of frogs. Dr. Quesnel identified one of the calls as that of *Leptodactylus fuscus*. Inside the savanna, one of the trees which withstood the bush fires well was the Savanna Serrette, *Brysonima crassifolia* (Malpighiaceae). The savanna showed survival potential with some greenery, but all areas under the palms were devastated. It's a sad tale that something like this could take place right under the nose of the Forestry Division. This clearly indicates that the Forestry Division needs help from NGO's and other environmental organisations to protect the hundreds of organisms in the Scientific Reserve.

With limited resources available in the Forestry Division, they should start mobilizing their personnel to cut fire traces in the dry season. If people in authority do not act now to prevent unabated environmental destruction and a bush fire occurs in the future, there may be a catastrophe in terms of species lost.

As our field trip continued under a beautiful sky, a bird began flying over our heads uttering a strange call, "aah, aah, aah..." We did not pay much attention to it, not knowing that that very same bird would leave us with a mystery yet to be solved. Not far off, Sheldon Edwards collected a large piece of an aircraft which came down many years ago. He gave it to me for safekeeping. About this time, Selwyn Gomes saw the Southern Lapwing, *Vanellus chilensis*. Close to an asphalted area we saw a communication pole which had fallen to the ground, burnt by the bush fires.

A high-pitched call in the distance was identified by Dr. Quesnel as the voice of the White-tailed Nightjar, *Caprimulgus cayenensis*.

As we decided to leave the savanna, the voice of the "mysterious bird" came again just over our heads. We all shone our flashlights upwards, trying to catch a glimpse of it. As the voice continued, "aah, aah, aah, ...", we searched the sky with greater vigilance. We were dumbfounded, hearing the voice and not seeing the bird. One person became very superstitious and said, "It's a good thing I am not here alone." Another person was scared it could be some "voodoo" put on us, or some extra-terrestrial "call" from another planet, telling us we were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Whatever may be your interpretation, the truth remains that further research must be done to solve this "ornithological mystery" in the Scientific Reserve of the Aripo savanna.

Leaving the savanna and the mystery bird, we regretted that the overnight camp had been cancelled. Closer to the roadway Dr. Quesnel identified the call of the Paraque Nightjar, *Nyctidromus albicollis*. Some candleflies illuminated our way to the vehicles. Arriving at 23:30 we enjoyed a large, sweet watermelon. Some members of the party were astonished when Dr. Quesnel said he didn't like sweet watermelons.

Pondering on the mystery bird, we drove safely home.



Dan J



Aripo savanna reserve - KP's Quarry site

GUANAPO GORGE

By: Savitri Mohammed (nee Mahabir)

29 October 1995

"Nature never did betray the heart that loved her. Through all the years of this our life, to lead from joy to joy."

What pleasure we derived from this spectacular and challenging field trip. Never was there a dull moment, although a few hikers were at first a bit sceptical on entering this beautiful gorge. I swam into the overpowering chasm and the first thought which struck me was that Nature was leading me to the treasure of its secrets held inside here.

While the crystal clear water gurgled at my feet, I listened to its pleasant tune and watched the steady flow go merrily by. I continued swimming, winding my way in and out of its narrow channels, looking up in awe at the bright omnipresence of the sun's image flowing through the cavern.

Further and further, I kept on wading and swimming through the spectacular rock formations. Higher and deeper I kept on persevering until finally I encountered a powerful mini-waterfall. With some difficulty I overcame this hurdle and was faced with a gentle stream whose water was clear and sweet, like the air above, filling the cavern with magical sounds. I soon became oblivious under its spell, forgetting all my pain and suffering.

I stopped again in the icy, cold surroundings and with agonizing pleasure I looked in awe at the beautiful shapes, the magnificent colours, the dancing beams, the over-arching ferns and wished that time could have stood still.

Unfortunately, because of the inclement weather, we had to turn back because of the possibility of a rapid rise in the water level. It was a pity, because our destination was within easy reach. Raindrops started falling on the soft, mossy carpet covering the already damp rocks and the tempering light gave way to a speedier return down the stream.

We all came out safely, tired and happy. Nature is surely "capable of satisfying the most intense cravings for the tranquil, the lovely and the perfect, to which man, the noblest of her creatures, is subject".

LOOKING FOR MUSHROOMS

By: J C Williams, Arad, Romania

November, 1995

One of the pleasures I have discovered in this exceptionally beautiful land is mushroom-hunting.

Mushrooms have typically carried an aura of danger for the uninitiated, as well they might. Recently in Moldova province 65 persons, long accustomed to the fungi, were hospitalised. They certainly thought they were dining on "Ciuperca Comestibilă", but it turns out they had ingested instead "Ciuperca Otrăvitoare". These were lucky; in the summer, we heard of a family from Siria, not far from our town Arad, who had all died after consuming poisonous mushrooms.

Geographically, Romania is in the south-east of Central Europe, at a threefold crossroads between Eastern Europe, Central Europe and Southern Europe. This location ensures a temperate continental climate.

The particularity of the Romanian land ensues from the magnificent Carpathian mountains, which snake their way north-south, horseshoe-like, in this country of 237,000 sq. km. The Carpathians ensure great relief variety, an essential to mushroom proliferation.

Definition:

Mushrooms are fungi - members of a kingdom of living organisms that grow and fruit much the same way plants do, but which lack roots, stems, leaves, flowers and seeds. The simple-bodied organisms in this kingdom also lack chlorophyll, which enables plants to manufacture a basic food - simple sugar - from water and carbon dioxide, using the energy of sunlight.

Among these simple-bodied organisms that lack chlorophyll, the larger and more complex ones are known as "fungi".

Fungi include crusts and molds (such as the one from which penicillin is derived) as well as large fruiting bodies with a cap and stalk. Since ancient times the large, edible fungi have been called mushrooms. The term "mushroom" is used also to include the great majority of related species, whose edibility and toxicity are not known.

Lacking chlorophyll, mushrooms must obtain their food by absorption from the surrounding medium (usually soil or decaying wood) in which they grow.

**Mushrooms, Kent H. McKnight & Vera B. McKnight
Peterson Field Guides: Houghton Mifflin Company: 1987**

My adventure started one rainy Sunday in late June, when my better half (!) announced that we were going "mushroom-hunting". Always game (like any true Field Naturalist), we quickly packed an airy raffia sack, our regular 2L bottle of watered-down juice, fresh bread, sausage and cheese, and the baby-back sack for Juanita.

Heading east from Arad, our home of one and a half years, we drove towards Lipova, a little town best known for its "apa minerală" (mineral water) and the tourist resort which has been built up around this marvel of nature.

Chancing upon a promising dirt road in a place called Sistoravati, we parked and started walking. The air was fresh and invigorating after the night's rain, and we tramped expectantly in the wet grass.

We had not gone more than 10 minutes when K. stopped and declared triumphantly, "Smell?" Straining my admittedly small Chinese nose skyward, I exclaimed, somewhat in surprise, "Mushrooms!" The distinct and unmistakable scent of forest mushrooms filled the air. Pushing our way through high grass and bush, we soon beheld our first specimens..

To make a nice story short, it was a most successful hunt, and we returned home, tired but happy with our sack full, plus a small rucksack, of exquisite, fresh field mushrooms. That first day, our "find" was one massive, purest white "Wiesenchampion" (German), a common field mushroom, known as "meadow mushroom" in North America, *Agaricus campestris*.

Our *Agaricus campestris* was double its normal size (I'm told) and spotted by me, in the shade of a pine tree, one of a small pine stand, surrounded by low grass.

The other three types we found were "Taubling", green and red, and "Maronenpilz".

TAUBLING Green	Green Brittlegill	<i>Russula virescens</i>
TAUBLING Red	Shellfish Brittlegill	<i>Russula xerampelina</i>
MARONENPILZ	Stubby Stalk	<i>Suillus brevipes</i>

The cleaning and preparation of mushrooms has become quite an event in our home!

That June evening, K. sat at our kitchen table, which he'd covered with newspaper, and proceeded to scrape and clean the mushrooms, cutting them all into small pieces and into a large bowl. Accompanying him in the task was a fine glass of Romanian red wine, and ever-enthusiastic Juanita, who got a commentary on "Pilze" from her father.

Mushroom-hunting was a way of life for K's family, growing up in Bad Tolz, Bavaria, Germany. Then, yet a babe of 4-5 years, his father would take him out to the mountains in search of mushrooms. Being the period after World War II, with food especially scarce, his mother not only prepared the mushrooms in a variety of ways, but also preserved some for the winter months.

Having gone mushroom-hunting since boyhood, on our trips K. would taste the ones he was uncertain of, something some guidebooks warn against!

It is a fact that the healthiest and most attractive specimens are sometimes deadly, a phenomenon not confined to the mushroom kingdom!

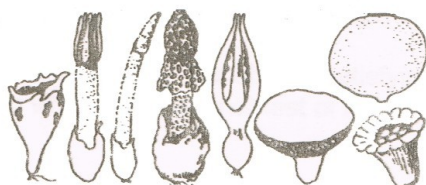
Certainly, mushroom-hunting is no lark; those who know nothing about them should stick to those produced in greenhouses and sold at Hi-Lo!

Since that first day, our favourite pastime, after rains, is mushroom-hunting; the most recent occasion being on our car tour of Romania in late September to early October.

Between Sibiu and the old German town of Brasov, children were selling mushrooms by the basketful along the highways. Most of the baskets had a type the Germans call "Halimash". North Americans call it "Bleeding Fairy Helmet" and its scientific name is *Mycena haematopus*.

The children pleaded with me to buy "ciuperca", this being in some cases the parents' income for the week, but knowing they would be spoilt as we were travelling, I took a few photos and promised to mail some copies (which I did).

In Moldova province, the frontier Romanian territory with the Ukraine, we stopped a few days in Ceahlau, a mountain resort. This was October 1st, and here we were surrounded by snow-capped mountains!



On arrival that morning, K. spotted a man with what he swore was a sackful of "Steinpilz", a most prized mushroom for its taste and the fact that all parts of it can be used.

Though overcast, he slipped off solo, while I got the baby settled in.

I don't think I shall spoil our family's honour by sharing with you what happened to the mushrooms he found on that day...

His hunt was not the most successful, i.e., he did not find the profusion of *Boletus edulis* (King Bolete/Cepe) he had expected. But, just at the rear of our hotel, he found one large "Steinpilz". Having scraped and chipped the others, along with his prize mushroom, he enthusiastically began to cook it atop his Tante Annie's portable cooker.

Well, my better half asked me for some salt.

Of course I had packed salt some two weeks ago...

Aha... there it was, in a film case.

One minute he was adding the final touch to his mushroom stew, the next he was cussing like mad!!!

"...%+*&, you gave me soap powder instead of salt!!!"

Ooh la la, no apology could erase how rotten I felt to have spoilt K's stew. He had no choice but to flush it where other (human) rubbish goes. He was a sport, and crawled under the blankets with sleeping Juanita while I went for some fresh air.

It was already after 5:00 PM, but I'd already made up my mind to find a "Steinpilz" to replace the one I'd spoilt. In the darkening cold, I searched carefully along the banks of the river which ran alongside the Hotel Durau. I saw all types of mushrooms, but no "Steinpilz".

I even entered private property, past a sign which said "Access Interzis" all forest, looking, looking. It had rained heavily that day, surely there must be something?

Suddenly, in a clump near some trees, I spotted two large white beauties. I collected them carefully, and gleefully made my way back to our hotel.

Going straight to the hotel's restaurant, I asked the woman in charge for the nicest porcelain dish she had. So, back upstairs in our room, I found K. and Juanita monkeying around, and I made my offering of *Boletus edulis*.

It was very much appreciated, the gesture, but it turns out they were *Agaricus campestris*...

They duly ended their lives in a second stew, this time with salt!

Apart from those already mentioned, we have collected and cooked the following varieties of mushrooms:

TAUBLING Blue	Variegated Brittlegill	Russula variata
MILCHBRATLING	Tawny Milkcap	Lactarius volemus
PFIFFERLING or REHERL	Small Chanterelle	Cantharellus minor
(called GALBENORA in Romanian for its distinctive yellow colour)		
REITZKER	Orange Ring Milkcap	Lactarius thyinos
PARASOL	Parasol mushroom	Leucocoprinus procera
SHAFTSPILZ	Stubby Brittlegill	Russula brevipes
HABICHTSPILZ	Scaly Hydnum	Sarcodon imbricatus
BIRKENPILZ	Birch Bolete	Austroboletus betula



In ending, I must tell you that a secondary, but by no means smaller pleasure comes with the preparation and eating of mushrooms! The country folk of Europe are known lovers of mushrooms, in all stages connected to man.

That Sunday in June, when I was presented with two large bowls of cut up mushrooms, my work for that week was cut out. As resident chef, I had to turn this into gourmet fare...

As with most delicate food, simple (but knowledgeable) preparation is called for.

Kaspar said I "had" to make mushroom soup, so a soup I made on Monday. Fresh sour cream (called "smintina" here) is available every day in the "piata" (market), so that, fresh parsley and butter made the soup a success.

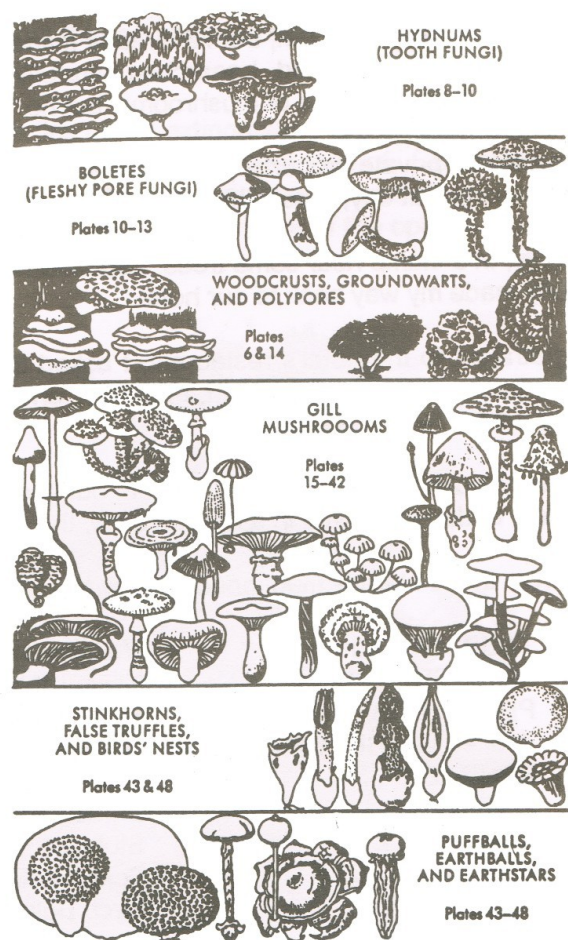
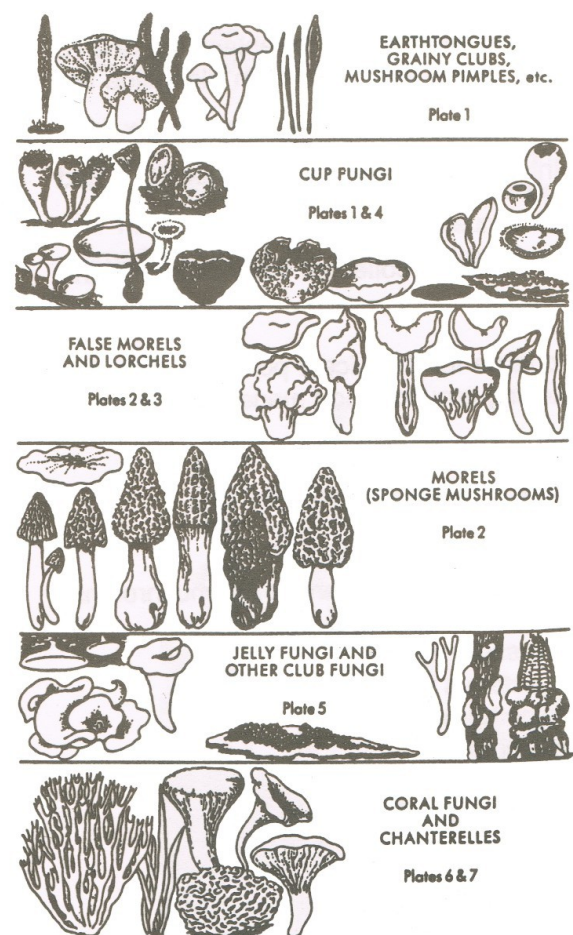
Tuesday it was mushrooms with home-made noodles.

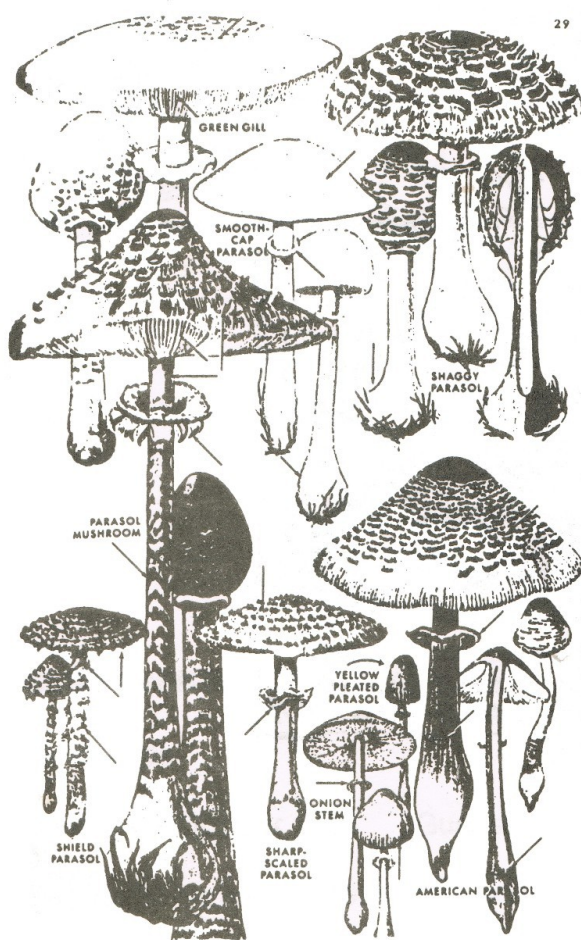
Wednesday, I took myself off to a well-known pastry shop, Cafe Riccadonna, for a lesson in Foi-etaj pastry from Felicia.

With the foi-etaj having rested well, I made a large, splendid mushroom pie with potatoes, baby carrots and chicken, and a trayful of mouth-watering half-moon smallies.

That just about used up all the mushrooms, till our next hunt. As you see, I am now an ardent "mycophile", and likely to be so wherever fresh field mushrooms are available!

J. C. Williams, Juanita and Kaspar Schmidhammer live in Arad, Romania.





Editor's note:

Doreen Jodhan of the Herbarium is currently learning of the preservation and identification of local macrofungi (mushrooms).

NOTE ON SAMAN TREES

By: A. Sylvia Kacal

Chris Starr raised a point about Saman trees in *The Field Naturalist* (Second Quarter of 1995). Many of the Saman trees evidently planted in the heyday of the plantocracy performed valuable shade around plantation houses and work yards, on the savannahs and other public open spaces, but they are now disappearing as the old estates are disappearing. Though not a native, Saman has acclimatised well, and has been adopted as a symbol of permanence and more spacious times - times when we seem to have appreciated shade more than we do today.

Many existing trees may be 100 or 150 years old, but the fallacy that it takes a Saman 100 years to grow to a graceful shade-giving size creates a tendency to lament their passing. They do not take so long; the Saman planted on the grounds of the Cipriani Labour College in 1979 are now quite large.

We should tend our trees, but not expect them to outlive their own useful life. The answer is to provide continuity by planting a new one about 5 years before the old one has to go. Ask the Forestry Division for seedlings, but remember that the tree can be expected to grow large, and so cannot be planted close to anything else.



SOONER OR LATER WE MIGHT HEAR AH KAISO
SAYIN' 'WINE LIKE AH GARBAGE DUMP'
....AT LEAS' WE HAVE PLENTY WA'SE FUH IT!!

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB
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