



# THE FIELD NATURALIST

*BULLETIN OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB*

## FOURTH QUARTER OF 1998

Note from the Editor: This will be my last Bulletin as editor. Having held this position for two years, I feel it is time to pass the baton on to another member of the club so that new ideas can be put forward and perhaps a new format set out. I have enjoyed my term as editor and wish to thank all the members who contributed articles and assisted in the production and distribution of the quarterly bulletin.

Paul L. Comeau

### CLUB EVENTS

#### Field Trips

30-31 January 1999

Camp at Forest Point, Toco

28 February 1999

Guanapo Gorge (Trail Guide No. 18)

28 March 1999

Valencia Wildlife Sanctuary

#### Lectures

14 January 1999

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

11 February 1999

BOTANY GROUP - HOLLIS WATERSHED PROJECT  
Mike Oatham and Laurent de Verteuil

11 March 1999

QUARRIES - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
Carrall Alexander



## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### Cats Hill Reserve: 29-30 August 1998 (Overnight Camp)

By: Graham White

This trip was planned mainly for late afternoon and early morning birdwatching. It was felt that the area was surrounded by sufficiently "good" forest that no hike or specific destination was required. On reflection, this was probably not a good idea. There was a relatively poor turnout with just twelve persons for the overnight and four for the day trip. As it happened the poor turnout was a blessing, at least for those who did not attend.

The Saturday afternoon was enjoyable. Mike had picked a very nice camping site, there were no mosquitoes, and the murmuring of howlers nearby hinted at the fun that we would have in the morning. As we spent most of the afternoon setting up camp there were relatively few birds seen. A short walk within an aging pine plantation showed several signs that the Forestry Division had been busy planting mahogany and cedar for timber and guavas, presumably for the wildlife. There may have been other trees, which we did not recognize. There seemed to be an overabundance of white-lined tanagers. We must have flushed at least 40 roosting in the shrimp bush bordering the road. No really exciting birds were seen until it became dark and the nightjars awoke. Flitting around the camp was a nightjar with a short tail and dark wings. By the method of elimination, I decided that they were probably short-tailed nighthawks (*Lurocalis semitorquatus*). There were several pauraque nightjars (*Nyctidromus albicollis*) around also. A short night drive (about 25 km) revealed many more pauraque but very little else. We saw no snakes, lizards or mammals and the amphibians on the road were limited to the crapeaud (*Bufo marinus*).

As the evening progressed I listened to the night sounds but it was relatively quiet. There was a tinamou (*Crypterellus soui*) uttering a single call at about midnight. I did hear a tropical screech-owl (*Otus choliba*) and one low hoot which I could not identify. I heard a *Phyllomedusa trinitatis* serenading me throughout the night, competing with Louis's snores. At one point a crash in the forest suggested that a tree or major branch has fallen.

The rain came down at about half past one and most of us got damp, if not soaked. Rain persisted until at least 10:30 that morning by which time even the most enthusiastic of us decided to leave. Just before departing we did see a silvered antbird (*Scelateria naevia*) which while not rare, was the best sighting for the day!

One consolation was that wherever we went, we would have been rained out. As for me, I had never recorded a short-tailed nighthawk before.

p.s. We saw a few plants.



> The Club is now renting office space at **3 Keate St.**, POS where the Management Committee's meetings are held. There is also a room to house the Club's library. **Furniture is needed**, e.g., chairs, tables, filing cabinet, shelves, computer, etc. Office expenses include telephone and electricity. Any member willing to donate equipment, please contact Selwyn Gomes at 624-8017. Note: Peter Reis has already acquired 3 tables but more are needed.



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*Strelitzia reginae*  
(Bird of paradise flower; native to South Africa)