



THE FIELD NATURALIST

Quarterly Bulletin of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

July/Sept & Oct/Dec 2003

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How to Identify Birds

Richard ffrench

A reprint

It has occurred to me that it might interest members to have before them some detailed notes on how to go about observing birds in the field and identifying them. Hopefully, by combining these notes with the use of a pair of binoculars and an adequate field guide to the birds of the area, people may succeed in their objective of identifying the correct species. Of course, a comprehensive knowledge of the birds is gradually built up over a long period, but you have got to start somewhere.

When observing an unfamiliar species:

1. Note the size. Try to establish a comparison with a known species, e.g. Kiskadee; but remember that your distance from the bird may distort your estimate of its size.
2. Note the plumage colours. Look out for especially diagnostic features. Such as eye-strips, wing-bars, rump patch, white outer tail feathers, collar or breast-band, spots or streaks on the underparts.
3. Note the shape and length of bill (beak) and legs. The bill often helps to indicate a family characteristic, e.g. long and thin for herons or sandpipers, short and stubby for seed-eating finches. Also the colour of the bill and/or legs may be significant.
4. Note the habitat. Since birds are usually found in their normal habitat, this will eliminate many species from the list of possibilities.
5. Note any habits or behaviour characteristics, e.g. what is it eating, is it on the ground, in a tree, in a flock, associating with others of its own or different species? Such factors often point to an individual species or family.
6. Note any call-note or song uttered by the bird. Decide if it is musical or not, if it has a distinct or a repeated rhythm. It sometimes helps to note down a phonetic rendition of the sound, but this is not as

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helpful as an appreciation

7. Try first to identify the correct family from factors 3 to 5 above. Then work through the species within that family, looking for the characters which differentiate the various species.
8. Ideally, write or dictate notes while the bird is still in view, to avoid errors of memory or mis-judgement. After writing the note, try to recheck it against the bird if it is still in view.

In all this, you must beware of the following problems:

- (a) Females and males often differ considerably in colour and size, though not always. Usually the female is less colourful than the male. However, if the pair are seen together, this may help identification.
- (b) Immature birds are often different from

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adults, in some cases resembling adult females. In some species, the immature plumage or phase may not even be properly described yet, so may not figure in a field guide. They are rarely illustrated, because of their great variety and for space considerations.

- (c) Avoid jumping to conclusions on insufficient evidence based on a poor view. If a bird cannot be identified at first try, it is probably better to shelve the problem pending another sighting or wider experience. Things have a way of working themselves out in time. Hasty guesses just confuse the issue.
- (d) Remember the light conditions, or conversely bright early morning or late evening light, may well affect your ability to appreciate the true plumage colours. I have known white Cattle Egrets thought to be flamingoes in brilliant twilight conditions.
- (e) If you find that your identification indicates an extremely rare species, it is probably worth double checking for alternatives. After all, it is not very likely that you will encounter an extreme rarity. Still you never know!

**The Quarterly Bulletin of the
Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club**

Jul-Sept. & Oct-Dec. 2003

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The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club is a non-
profit, non-governmental organisation.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this bulletin do not necessarily re-
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Club.

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MISSION STATEMENT

To foster education and knowledge on natural
history and to encourage and promote activities that would
lead to the appreciation, preservation and conservation of
our natural heritage.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We apologise to members for the delay in publishing
the July-Sept. 2003 and Oct.-Dec. 2003 issues of the
Quarterly Bulletin. Time was just not on our side.

AGM 2004

The Annual General Meeting of the TTFNC
for 2004, will be held on January 08, 2004.

Please make every effort to attend. Formal no-
tification will be sent to members.

TTFNC CELEBRATES 112th YEAR WITH DONATIONS OF ITS JOURNALS

Speech delivered by Mr Reginald Potter, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club on 112th Anniversary ceremony.

The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club (TTFNC) celebrated its 112th anniversary on July 10 and presented three national institutions involved in disseminating knowledge and in keeping historical records with copies of the Club's Journals covering 22 years of its publication. Through these libraries and archives, the country's natural history and the need for conservation can be made available to students and the wider public.

Its Living World Journals, covering the years from 1981 up to the present, were presented to the National Library and Information Systems (NALIS), the National Archives and the Main Library of the UWI in one of the conference rooms of the National Library.

Between 1977 and 2000, the Living World Journal was published biennially by the Club. However, since 2001 the Journal has been published annually.

The Club first began publishing a journal, then called the Journal of the Field Naturalist Club, in 1892 and continued publishing until 1896. After an absence of 40 years, the Journal was re-started in 1956. In 1977 the Club renamed it, The Living World Journal.

The Journals are produced to explore, collect and disseminate information on the biodiversity of Trinidad and Tobago. They consist of specialist articles on the results of research projects that are undertaken by the Club's members, as well as by visiting field naturalists and other specialists who visit Trinidad and Tobago.

The Club also publishes quarterly bulletins, reporting on members' field trips and on other environmental matters.

The National Library and Information Systems (NALIS) received the largest donation of these publications – 10 copies each of 12 Issues of the Living World Journal (1981 – 2002) and a set of the quarterly bulletins from its first publication in 1973 to 2003. Mrs. Joan Osborne, Director of the Heritage Library Division, represented NALIS at the presentations.

The other beneficiaries were the National Archives and the Main Library of the University of the West Indies. Mrs. Cheryl Lee Kim, Manager of the Record Centre was the National Archives' representative and Ms. Stella Sandy, Librarian, Serials and Acquisitions Unit, was the representative for the Main Library of the University of the West Indies.

The Club intends to donate copies of its Living World Journals to other leading Institutions which are involved in distributing information on environmental matters.

Picture No. 1: L-R – Mrs. Joan Osborne, Director of Heritage Library Division (NALIS) receiving donation from Dr. Victor Quesnel, Past Editor of the Living World Journal.

Picture No. 2: L-R – Mrs. Cheryl Lee Kim, Manager of Record Centre, National Archives receiving donation from Dr. Elisha S. Tickasingh, present Editor of the Living World Journal.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

Turure Waterfalls – April 27, 2003

John Lum Young

Another year another mystery trip, this time to the headwaters of the Turure River, the scene of an interesting formation. Though individual club members had visited the Turure Waterfalls in the past, it was never an official club trip and has been deliberately excluded from the Trail Guide as it was felt that this easily accessible place of beauty could be subject to abuse if the location was widely publicised. The “rules” have now changed with Hikeseekers visiting the area in early 2003 approaching from the Cumac Quarry. It was good to see a number of Club stalwarts present this fine Sunday morning including Luisa Zuniaga, Secretary of the TTFNC (1982-1992).

The area traversed was Seasonal Evergreen Forest where, though the vegetation remained green, trees generally stopped growing during the Dry Season. The first tree noted as the group made its way up the incline from the parked vehicles was the *Andira surinamensis* (not as common as *A. inermis*) with its chenette like fruit (not edible).

Next was the Niauré (*Calliandra guildingii*), a small flowering evergreen tree that seldom grows taller than 10m, with a girth of 1m. Its numerous long stamens, white at the base and crimson towards the tip, give the flower a soft effect and hence the name “powderpuff flower”. This beautiful ornamental is common among the understorey trees in the valleys and foothills of the Northern and Central Ranges, blooming in short bursts of a few days duration several times during the months of November to May. The *C. guildingii* is not native to Tobago.

Plants in the undergrowth included the aptly named Hot Lips (*Cephaelis tomentosa*) and tirite (*Ischnosiphon sp.*). We crossed a pool in a tributary as we followed the extremely loud, single note call of the male Bearded Bellbird (*Procnias averano*). Sheldon took the first swim that morning as it was the easiest way to pass. Others avoided the early dip by clinging precariously to the smooth rocks on the steep banks.

The 11-inch long Bellbird, a fairly common resident in forests at elevations under 2,000 feet, is often heard but seldom seen. The name “bearded” aptly describes the numerous black, string-like wattles hanging down from the bird’s throat. The polygamous male does not share in the nest building and rearing of nestlings but spends most of the day in the canopy attracting other females to its permanent calling territory which is only vacated during moult. The male is generally whitish with coffee brown head and black wings (French 1992).

A steep ascent to the ridge led to a handful of White-bearded Manakins (*Manacus manacus*) in courtship display, then downhill to another pool where the group enjoyed a welcomed rest, some on the bank and some in the cold water. We then continued on through Mora (*Mora excelsa*) forest and to Turure Falls, a series of waterfalls in step-like formation. (Incidentally the Falls are on a tributary of the Turure River.) The water flow was considerably reduced from the customary level, probably a combination of the intense Dry Season and the removal of vegetation in the higher reaches. The surfaces that the water flowed over, including rocks and debris, were coated in a greyish, tan coloured material making the riverbed smooth and uniform. A sight to behold!

Somewhere upriver there was exposed limestone subject to natural weathering. (Not unusual in this section of the Northern Range with numerous limestone features. The main soil type here was Platanal clay - 382/L, a limestone derived soil.) The water-eroded calcium carbonate particles ended up in the stream and were pushed along by the current, the calcite material finally being deposited along this strip of river that included the Falls.

As we climbed up to the second falls, one of the tall trees on the left bank had loads of “saw dust”

at its base. Some wondered if loggers had been cutting planks on this spot but the culprit was found hiding among the "dust" on the ground. The Harlequin Beetle (*Acrocinus longimanus*), belonging to the Longhorn Beetle (CERAMBYCIDAE) family, had a bright, elaborate red pattern on its back, its antennae and front legs were longer than its 4-inch body. This large beetle was responsible for gnawing high up on the trunk of the tree.

At the base of the next falls was a small deep pool that some enjoyed while others climb to the next tier. The comment was made that the mystery of these falls is that around every corner there was another 15 to 20 foot drop which the water spilled over. How many falls are there? Who knows?

Reference:

French R. A GUIDE TO THE Birds of Trinidad & Tobago. SECOND EDITION. Christopher Helm (Publishers) Ltd. 1992. 426p.



FROM THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

NOTICES

The Annual Year end function is on 14 December at Simla House. Dead line for payment is 30 November,. Contact the Treasurer—Mr. Selwyn Gomes for further information.

The overseas trip for next year is to Suriname .Please indicate if you are interested. itinerary is being developed. We have booked the period Wednesday 7th April 2004 to Saturday 17 April 2004 and we will be visiting the Central Suriname Nature Reserve. We plan to visit the Raleightallen/Voltzberg and theTafelberg area.

PUBLICATIONS

- ◆ Members are asked to note that copies of the *Native Trees of Trinidad and Tobago* are still available for purchase at TT\$80.00 per copy.
- ◆ Issues of the *Living World Journal* from 1892—1896 are now available on two CD volumes.

THERE IS A NEW PUBLICATION that deals with Environmental issues - Samaan Magazine. After a period of 15 years of no Environmental magazine on the market it a welcome breeze. The Trinidad Naturalist Magazine was the last one of similar vein to be published.

Welcome New Members

Paul & Sybil Margaritis	Gary Aboud	David Dedier	Huguette Demers
Robert Martinez	Sayaad H Ali	Lisa-Gail Ali	Nalini Rampersad
Chris Frederickson	Feroze Omardeen	Elena Gilliatt	Marcus Manuel Junior
Janice E Potter	Martyn Kenefick	Adrian Hailey	James K. Wetterer

Visit to Aripo Caves

March 30, 2003

Matt Kelly

I was ready for my rendezvous with Selwyn Gomes by 6 a.m. at his home in Port of Spain. The first rally point was St. Joseph's Convent on Pembroke Street. My day's first significant sighting happened here when a pair of Yellow-crowned Parrots (*Amazona ochrocephala*) flew overhead, noisily greeting an overcast day. About 8-10 people joined us, and we convoyed our way down the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway to St. Augustine, and the University of West Indies, which was the next meeting point. Here, a much larger contingency joined us, including Dan Jaggernauth and Reginald Potter, TTFNC's President, whom I had the pleasure to meet.

The convoy was significant now, as we hit the highway eastbound again. The final rally point was at Eastern Main Road and the Heights of Aripo Road. Here we added our final numbers, which brought our total to 39 outdoor enthusiasts.

Also, at this intersection, hangs a stately, old, hand-painted and colorful sign, depicting the Common Piping Guan (*Aburria pipile*) [ffrench] and a message telling passers-by that this bird is up in these hills, is rare, and should not be harmed. Even back in 1961, Herklots notes this bird's rarity and refuses to reveal its exact range. He states it is the only bird endemic to Trinidad. He lists it as "Paui or Paoui or White-headed Guan or White-headed Currasaw" (*Pipile pipile*). Whatever you call it, I really hoped for a sighting.

As our convoy snaked its way uphill slowly, the road conditions went downhill quickly. Most people I know would not travel up the Heights of Aripo Road, and would have turned back before we passed through Aripo Village. We passed a road test that any North American 4-wheel aficionado would have gloated about. We did this in passenger cars. Selwyn has the foresight to keep a "bush car", instead of mashing up his regular "good" wheels.

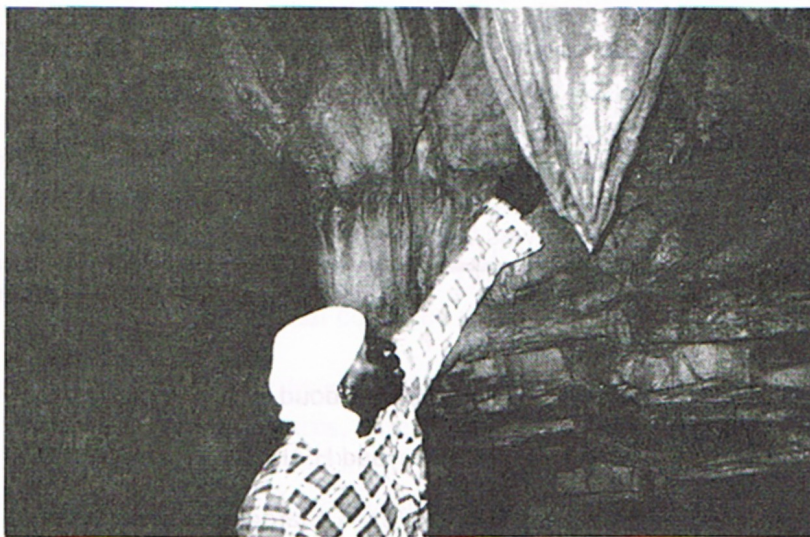
After the village, we jockeyed for a place to park at the trailhead. We met with another group here entering at the same trailhead. About 25 youths from Flag Hill Church were hiking to the Heights of Aripo. It was heartening to see a large group of young people out and enjoying natural history. It bodes well for the future of T&T's environment.

At the trailhead, I had many introductions, including with the legendary Victor Quesnel. I met Graham White, reputed to be one of the best ornithologists on the island. I asked him about the possibility of sighting a Piping Guan. He said they were to be found up in the forest here, and had arboreal habits similar to the Cocrico or Rufus-vented Chachalaca (*Ortalis ruficauda*), of which I am more familiar. Even though the morning sky was overcast, and threatened the possibility of light rain, everyone's mood was totally upbeat. It was 8:35 when we started in.

Our single file line quickly spread out and I stayed in the front with Louis Guy, Graham White, and Simone Bucher. Louis and Graham knew this area and watched the path for the Fer-de-lance (*Bothrops atrox*) [Boos] or (*Bothrops asper*) [O'Shea], which they said were quite abundant here, and had a fondness for sleeping in the middle of paths. These potentially deadly snakes can be very difficult to see (as I can attest), and are found on this very path [O'Shea].

The first part of our trail went through a secondary forest growth above a reddish clay-type soil, which was quite slippery. The pace was too quick for me to use my binoculars for birding. We only stopped a few times to listen to bird calls. We heard the calls of two male Bearded Bellbirds (*Procnias averano*) blasting out through their dreadlock chins their, "Bonk!" "Bonk!" Their local names are also "Companiero" or "Anvil Bird."

Up a steep incline we went, and as we left the younger growths we emerged into more mature forest with larger trees, more lianas, and much more epiphytic growth abounding. The geology changed along our path to a type of limestone

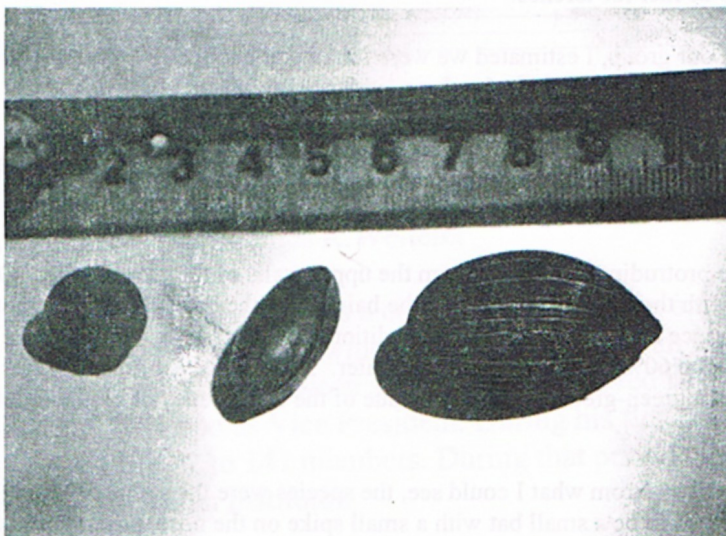


Examining stalactite formations in the Aripo Cave

showing on the exposed stone much water action upon it. All along, there was evidence of sink holes, cave shafts, and possibly cave entrances. I have a knack for feeling the presence of a cave, and I could sense a lot of underground open space around here.

We reached the crest of a ridge and found a small citrus tree, about 7" or 8" diameter at chest height. We waited here in the rain for more group members to reach us. This could be the citrus mentioned by British naturalist, Ivan T. Sanderson in 1940, which was planted to mark the way to an elusive cave he discovered and described. I stayed perfectly dry under a giant epiphytic anthurium (*Anthurium spp.*) leaf. [Dan Jaggernaut said there is still a debate going as to whether this should be called *Anthurium gemani* or *Anthurium hookeri*.] Here our group split and some of the more intrepid regulars went off in search of "Sanderson's Cave" which has never been discovered by the TTFNC?

Our speleologic crew moved on downhill to a small stream in the lush forest. We took a rest here for the tail of the group to move up. Here I saw a strange rock formation, which I would normally call "sheep's tripe" (which it resembles), if it were underground. The characterizing effect over a sloping water slowly washes, and de-calcite buildup that creates mineral that can be leached water action; and is often makes up rock formations in and long-term accumulation formations, such as stalac-



The 3 predominant seed types I recovered under the oil bird roosts

Upon closer look, it appeared the water (or whatever mineral was being used by some seemed to be using the mineral itself to the rock surface, calcified mineral protective of these tiny calcified worm face in the stream the appearance of the "sheep's tripe" rock formation. Also, of some small twigs in the stream, they too appeared to have the same mineral deposits on them. Some more research needs to be done here.

It is a usually a cascading stone surface, where water deposits calcite. It is the effect. Calcite is a mineral that comes from limestone through the material which caves. It is by steady deposition of the minerals that rock formations result.

It appeared that the calcite in the stream was in the form of a type of tiny worm that uses mineral deposition to adhere and to cover itself with a coating. A huge colony of tubes gave the stone surface the appearance of the "sheep's tripe" upon close examination of the stream, they too appeared to have mineral deposits accumulated on them.

As we disturbed some branches which had fallen into the stream, a small mammal, probably a Trinidad Spiny Rat (*Proechimys trinitatus*) [Eisenberg, Emmons], carefully retreated.

We ascended now up a very steep, wet, slippery track for about 1/2 hour. We reached another peak by 10:35, evidently not far from El Cerro del Aripo (941 m.). We waited for the tail end of the group, which Selwyn was patiently attending to. As I watched a small type of Walking Stick insect, clouds wafted past us as the rain lifted. We made no formal lunch stop. Lunch was taken on the move.

We now descended still in a Northerly direction, as we had been travelling all along. The trail was steep with greasy muck. We continued down to another stream. I could feel the cave's presence before I saw it. It was 10:45 when we reached the mouth of the cave. We had about 25 people still with us. About 15-20 went in, with Dan leading the way. I had expected to wade through cold water [Worth] but the earth was only damp, and the stream was dry here.

The cave mouth is about 12 metres (40 feet) across, with the initial ceiling about 7 metres (21 feet) high [Darlington '95]. The initial floor slopes at roughly 30 degrees down through green vegetation into a truly awe-inspiring scene, as if from Dante's *Inferno*. There was already a din from inside, which turned to a cacophony as we entered. Oilbirds (*Steatornis caripensis*) were roosting along a huge dome in the ceiling. At our sight, they flew noisily back and forth, and in circles (but never outside) around the ceiling. They produced a combination of constant shrieks and constant clicks, which is their unique avian form of echolocation. Upon closer examination there were a myriad of bats in flight with the birds. Seeing this magnificent sight for the first time is quite exciting. Our group stood and watched in awe for some time.

The Amerindians called them Guacharo, which means, "the one that wails and mourns". The French called them Diablotin, or

Diablotique, meaning "little devil" because they are nocturnal. [According to Price...]

"The Oilbird is the only nocturnal fruit-eating bird in the world. It is found in Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Trinidad. It is a large bird, measuring 18 inches from beak to tail, and has a wing span of 36 to 42 inches. It navigates in the dark by echolocation and uses its eyes when there is adequate light. Evidently, they can detect an object up to eight inches in diameter in total darkness in their cave.

"Oilbirds eat the fruit of various trees. Palms, laurels, incenses and camphor...all fruits having a relatively large seed surrounded by a firm pericarp. They swallow the fruit whole, digest the pericarp and then regurgitate the seed. They can travel up to 70 miles from their cave to feed, which they do by hovering...(pretty large humming bird!!!) Their nests are made of mostly regurgitated matter, about 15 inches in diameter with a raised rim, and stuck to ledges in the cave. Two to four eggs are laid and both parents incubate for about 33 days. The young develop very slowly and do not leave the nest for 95 to 120 days after hatching. At about 70 days the weight of the young is about 50% more than the adults. They have a tremendous oil content (hence the name) and the Amerindians would collect them from their nests and render them down for their oil. This was used for cooking and also as fuel for torches."

After discussion with some of our group, I estimated we were looking at about 300 Oilbirds. It is hard to imagine these birds are still persecuted by man [Herrera]. Thankfully, I saw no evidence of Oilbird poaching here.

As we descended into the cave, we walked over large piles of generations of bird and bat guano. There were also piles of numberless regurgitated seeds. Some even had futilely sprouted, only to achieve a spindly stalk, and wither. I selected three representative seeds, and took them to Tobago to sprout.

I could see the nests above me protruding like bowls from the upper walls of the cave's dome. On three occasions, the frantic birds overhead showered me with their blessings, once in the hair! Like the birds, I became frantic, with no water to wash it off. But I changed my mind (since this was a scientific expedition) and it hit upon me to make a study of this guano. The guano had a mostly liquid (maybe 60%) content, like warm water. As it hit the fabric of my shirt, I watched as most of the liquid drained through, leaving a green-greenish-brown residue of the consistency of old, soft coffee grinds, with not much smell (thank goodness).

Also in attendance were many bats. From what I could see, the species were the same. We really did not have time for minute observations. They all seemed to be a small bat with a small spike on the nose, possibly the Common long-tongued bat (*Glossophaga soricina*). The bats were hanging alone, or in large clusters. In one cluster we estimated about 300 densely-packed bats.

The nutrient-rich guano provided sustenance to a host of insects and other life. I saw many Cave Crickets (*Aclodes cavicola*) with huge antennae. I also saw a large specie of earwig. Under ledges were many spiders. I found a large amblypygid which is "...an arachnid known as an Amblypygida, an order of arachnids related to spiders." The fellow I was looking at was "probably of the family Phrynidae and possibly *Phrynos gervaisii* (Pocock 1894) which is known to occur on these islands." [Larcher]

I was searching hard to find the Luminescent Lizard (*Protoporus shrevei*), which was first described by Sanderson in his 1939 *Caribbean Adventure*. These lizards are apparently so rare, people are willing to camp out at the cave, and even come with night vision to find one [Clarke]. Although [Kenny] says this lizard, "...is not luminous, is a mountain-dwelling teiid lizard found in damp rocky areas at high elevations." Victor Quesnel and Mark O'Shea found a specimen on their previous trek.

Five to six of us continued on down into the depths. There was an initial concern about "*Histoplasma capsulatum*, a fungus that can cause fever and respiratory disease if spores are inhaled." [Darlington '96] There was also concern about the possibility of poison gasses emanating from the decaying guano. But as the cave narrowed, there was a comforting occasional rush of cool fresh air coming up out of the depths. It was actually quite quiet down around the 100-metre mark, where the cave makes a 9 metre dive, which ended our tour. This cave adventure was really awesome.

As we made our way out, we passed, and disturbed the Oilbirds again. I noticed they look like a large type of Nightjar, and the Oilbird's eyes glowed in our flashlight beams just as do the eyes of the White-tailed Nightjar (*Caprimulgus cayennensis*) glow in your headlights on Tobago roads at night.

On the trek back to Aripo, I felt lucky to be along with Dan and his constant and extensive knowledge of the rainforest. He showed us a "musical fruit (no, not baked beans!) from the Toporite tree, which is used for lumber. The fruit has a round hollow shape, and a hole in the bottom, which when blown across, like the top of a bottle, pro-

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LETTERS

Errata

In the Quarterly Bulletin, No. 1 2003, I reported on the visit to the Caroni Swamp. I listed the scientific name of the cascabel seen as *Trigonocephalus tararaca*. This was incorrect. The cascabel seen was Cook's Tree Boa and the scientific name is *Corallus ruschenbergerii*. The name cascabel refers to more than one snake. The error is regretted and my thanks to Raymond Mauel of Canada (TTFNC member) for pointing out the oversight.

John Lum Young

Library Accessions List

- ♦ Amphibians and Reptiles of Trinidad & Tobago by John C. Murphy
- ♦ Growing Orchids in the Caribbean by Marilyn Light
- ♦ Caribbean Marine Studies IMA. James K. Wetterer

The Club received from The National Archives a copy of an audio tape on the National Commercial Bank's Series "**Conversing With History**" which has a recording of an interview with Andrew Thomas Carr. Mr Carr joined the Club between 1926/1928 and served as Honorary Secretary/Treasurer for 18 years from 1930 and as Vice President. During his first year as Secretary of the Club the membership grew from 22 to 141 members. During that period club members assisted in the rebuilding of the Royal Victorian Institute's.

Occasional Papers of the Department of Life Sciences, University of the West Indies - Issue Number 12, July 2003. The two topics are:-

C.K. Starr and A.W.Hook

THE ACULEATE HYMENOPTERA OF TRINIDAD, WEST INDIES

R.H. Scheffrahn, J. Krecek, B. Maharajh, J.A. Chase, J.R. Mangold and C.K. Starr

TERMITE FAUNA (ISOPTERA) OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

MISSING ISSUES OF THE TRINIDAD NATURALIST MAGAZINE

Thanks to Patricia Milne and Glenn Wilkes who donated some of the missing copies of the Trinidad Naturalist Magazine. The Missing issues are:

Vol 1 No. 1 to 5, 8, 10 to 11;

Vol 2 No. 1

Vol 3: Nos 5 to 7 and 9

Vol 4; Nos 4 to 6, 8 and 12

Vol 5 No 1, 6, 8 10 and 11

Vol 6 No 4, 5, 9 and 11

Vol 7 No. 4 to 12

Rapsey's Estate June 29, 2003

John Lum Young

The June field trip was a visit to the El Naranjo Estate and its environs. The El Naranjo Estate more commonly known as Rapsey's Estate, L'Orange Trace Aripo Valley, comprising 329 acres, was purchased by The Asa Wright Nature Centre (Asa Wright) in 1999 primarily for conservation, watershed and wildlife habitat protection. Similar to its work in the Arima Valley, Asa Wright intends to preserve the Aripo Valley in as natural a state as possible for future generations. (The San Francisco Estate – 196 acres – further north in the valley and straddling the Gunapo divide was purchased in 2002 by Asa Wright for the same reasons).

The estate was formerly a cocoa, coffee and citrus plantation but about 35 years ago part of the acreage was utilised for horticulture. Among the flowers grown then were Anthuriums (*Anthurium andraeanum*), Red Ginger (*Alpinia purpurata*) and Hawaian Torch (*Etlingera elatior*). Flowers continue to be planted by Asa Wright to attract humming birds and other nectar feeders and to decorate the premises at Arima.

Joy and Kay identified a number of humming birds that included the Blue-chinned Sapphire (*Chlorestes notatus*), White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*), Black-throated Mango (*Anthracothorax nigricollis*), Rufous-breasted Hermit (*Glaucis hirsuta*), Green Hermit (*Phaethornis guy*), White-chested Emerald (*Amazilia chionopectus*), Tufted Coquette (*Lophornis ornata*), Copper-rumped Hummingbird (*Amazilia tobaci*) and Long-billed Starthroat (*Heliomaster longirostris*).

They identified other birds that included tanagers: Blue-Gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*), Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*), Silver-beaked Tanager (*Ramphocelus carbo*) and White-lined Tanager (*Tachyphonus rufus*). They also spotted the Blue-black Grassquit or Ci-ci-Zeb (*Volatinia jacatina*), Cornbird or Crested Oropendola (*Psarocolius decumanus*), Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*), House Wren or Cucurachelle (*Troglodytes aedon*), Tropical Mockingbird (*Mimus gilvus*), Cocoa Thrush (*Turdus fumigatus*), Barred Antshrike (*Thamnophilus doliatus*), Smooth-billed Annie or Merle Corbeau (*Crotophaga ani*), Yellow-bellied Elaenia (*Elaenia flavogaster*) and Bananaquit or Sucrier (*Coereba flaveola*).

Noted too was the Piratic Flycatcher (*Legatus leucophaeus*). Mating pairs absolutely refuse to build nests preferring to dispossess other birds that have completed theirs - genuine bandits! The aptly named Piratic Flycatchers continually provoke the inhabitants of the targeted nest until the nest builders eventually abandon shop. One of the Flycatchers may distract the object birds, enabling its mate to sneak in and take possession of the nest. The *L. leucophaeus* will even enter the nest to disturb the occupants if all else fails. Eventually, the nest is abandoned and the Piratic Flycatcher will throw away any eggs left behind before laying its own. This flycatcher likes domed or enclosed nests, and so, birds robbed include the Cornbird (*Psarocolius* sp.), Yellow Oriole (*Icterus* sp.), Keskidee (*Pitangus* sp.), Yellow-olive and Yellow-breasted Flycatchers (*Tolmomyias* sp.).

Two Asa Wright guides, Harold and Denise, took us through the bush in the immediate vicinity of the main house. Initially we passed through anthuriums (*A. andraeanum*) thriving in



Pond of Flowers

the shade of old cocoa trees and secondary vegetation. Dan picked up a small blackheaded snake from the trail to avoid its being accidentally trampled and released it away from the thoroughfare.

Trees identified included Cedar (*Cedrela odorata*), Calabash (*Crescentia cujete*), Wild Tobacco (*Acnistus arborescens*), Mahoe (*Sterculia caribaea*), Chaconia (*Warszewiczia coccinea*), Rubber (*Castilla elastica*), Bayleaf (*Pimenta racemosa*), Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*)

After circling the estate house, most continued north along L'Orange Trace. On the flat land east of the estate house Corn (*Zea mays*), Tomato (*Lycopersicon esculentum*), Dasheen (*Colocasia esculenta*), Ochro (*Hibiscus esculentus*) and Plantain (*Musa spp.*) were being grown. These fruits and vegetables are produced as organically as possible for the guests and staff of Asa Wright.

Fruit trees observed included Breadfruit (*Artocarpus communis*), Chataigne (*Artocarpus alifilis*), West Indian Cherry (*Malpighia glabra*), Five Finger (*Averrhoa carambola*), Pommecythere (*Spondias cytherea*), Pawpaw (*Carica papaya*), Mango (*Mangifera sp.*), Zaboca (*Persea americana*), Pommerac (*Eugenia malaccensis*), Cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*), Coffee (*Coffea arabica*), Orange (*Citrus sinensis*), Grapefruit (*Citrus paradisi*), Soursop (*Annona muricata*), Guava (*Psidium guajava*) and Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*).

Some of the birds the Blue-crowned Motmot Streaked Flycatcher Rufous-browed Peppersis), Rufous-breasted Wren (*rutilus*), Semp or Viola-violacea)

In the sky above, a migrant Swallow-tailed (*Elanoides forficatus*) cir-birds (24 inches from beak feet) regularly visit in

Along the trail weed (*Hippobroma* of the milky sap produced. was poisonous to cattle and for this plant is Horse Poison.

Other weeds and shrubs along the trail included Kudzu Vine (*Pueraria phaseoloides*) a high protein food for cattle, Ti Marie (*Mimosa pudica*), Watergrass (*Commelina erecta*), Jacob's Coat (*Coleus sp.*), Sweetheart (*Desmodium adscendens*), Crepe Coq (*Centropogon surinamensis*), Impatiens (*Impatiens sp.*) and Vervain (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*).

Hazra also pointed out the cuboid nest (6"x6"x12") of the wasp *Epipona tatua* hanging from a branch. This uncommon species makes a nest that is longer than it is broad. The outer nest surface is off-white and relatively smooth. The *E. tatua* is not found in Tobago. Another rare sight was the roadside vine, *Gonoloba broadwayi*, in fruit.

Back at the estate house a well camouflaged tree frog (*Hyla crepitans*) clung absolutely still to one of the white painted supporting pillars. This relatively large tree frog was 2½ inches long by 1¼ inches wide. While resting the frog's dorsal skin was milk white. It turned to pink when the frog began to move. The *H. crepitans* has a remarkable ability to change colour; normally tan or red-brown it can also appear grey-brown or light metallic green. Males attain a length of 2½ inches and females more than 2¾ inches.

Many thanks to Ian Lambie and The Asa Wright Nature Centre for the El Naranjo Estate experience.



Gru Gru at Rapsey's Estate

along L'Orange Trace were (*Momotus momota*), (*Myiodynastes macalutus*), shrike (*Cyclarhis gujanen-* or Bush Wren (*Thryothorus ceous* Euphonia (*Euphonia*

flock of about one dozen Kites or Scissors-tailed. These relatively large to tail with a wingspan of 4 March to August annually. Hazra pointed out a milk-longiflora) so called because She explained that the weed that another common name

BOOK REVIEW

Coming of Age

The flourishing discipline of the history of science embraces a host of specialized sub-disciplines, each focusing on a particular time period or area of science. These develop at different rates, so that the history of quantum physics, for example, is very mature, while the history of ethology (study of animal behaviour) has hardly even begun.

Until about 20 years ago, the history of ecology barely existed as a serious scholarly inquiry. This has now changed markedly. A number of recent books explore in depth various aspects of the history of ecology. There were, in fact, several earlier treatments, including at least two general histories of ecology, but they were all decidedly superficial -- even amateurish -- in comparison with the new scholarship.

My purpose here is simply to make a few remarks on these books, in hopes that some naturalists will be stimulated to take a look inside some of them.

Donald Worster's *Nature's Economy* first appeared in 1977. It is by far the broadest-ranging of the books treated here, taking as its scope all of ecology. It is now, however, a general history of ecology but, as the subtitle indicates, of *ecological ideas*. Beginning in the 18th century Enlightenment, its greatest focus is on the 20th century and questions of environmental morality and ethics. This is a hefty tome, but I think many naturalists will find that it speaks eloquently of the history of your present concerns.

I have not seen Worster's *The Wealth of Nature*, which the publisher describes as a collection of 16 essays in which he "examines the interaction of humanity and the environment, and the history this relationship has produced."

Sharon Kingsland's *Modeling Nature*, which first appeared in 1985, is probably the best known of these books. The fact that it is now in its second edition attests to its impact. This deals with four broad controversies in ecology from about 1920-1970. This is the period in which population ecology developed as a highly mathematical discipline. This should not, however, suggest that Kingsland's treatment lacks the human touch. Far from it. She presents photographic and written portraits of the main players that shows the very human side of these intellectual struggles.

Gregg Mitman's *The State of Nature* covers a similar period and likewise focuses on the USA, but there the similarity ends. This is a history of the Chicago school of ecology, with a focus on the interplay between ecology and social questions. The only individual who figures prominently in both Kingsland's and Mitman's books is Raymond Pearl.

Peter Crowcroft likewise covers a particular institution, in this case an even narrower one. *Elton's Ecologists* is the history of Britain's Bureau of Animal Population from its foundation by Charles Elton in 1932 until it faded with his retirement in 1967. One must be careful about institutional history, as most of it is both deadly dull and quite pointless. It is legitimate, however, when the history of the institution is tightly bound up with the wider purposes that it serves. Such is the case with the Bureau of Animal Population, which had a key role in animal ecology during its formative years.

In *An Entangled Bank*, J.B. Hagen takes an approach roughly analogous to Kingsland in treating a different area within ecology. Not surprisingly, there is some interesting overlap with Frank Golley's more narrowly focused book on the history of the ecosystem concept. It is worth noting that Golley is the only practising ecologist among these authors, the others all -- as far as I am aware -- being profes-

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duces a loud whistle. Among other plants, he showed us the Soharee, a heliconia-type plant in the *Maranthaceae* family, with a beautiful yellow conical flower.

We also came upon the only snake sighting of the day. It was possibly a Yellow-tail Cribó (*Drymarchon corais corais*). The snake was blue-green on top, with a bright yellow underneath. I'd guess he was 5+ feet long. I could only see his front half before he darted off into the bush.

We passed many areas where I felt sure there were caves. I looked into a few with John Lum Young. These will have to wait till another day for more exploration. When we arrived at the parking area, many hikers had already departed. Bernice Copeland and I had each found an Oilbird feather. They were identical: olive-brown, with two white circular spots on them. Our group had also collected two full bags of trash from the trail to dispose of. We were all totally filthy from head to toe.

I loaded into Selwyn's "Bush Car", and he took us down the road, just past Aripo Village to a Hindu Mandir along the Aripo River called, Holy Sar Aripo Datta Ganga. This was a brilliant stop, and I will recommend it to all future Aripo Cave hikers. The Mandir is right alongside some beautiful swimming pools in the river, and has a picnicking area. The water was fresh and clean. We bathed and changed clothes here. This is definitely the way to end such a fantastic day!

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sional historians. This, in itself, is an indication of the sudden maturity that the history of ecology has reached, as it has now passed out of the hands of practitioners in the discipline to those whose training has been in history itself.

Neil Evernden's book is not exactly about the history of ecology, but it deals with a key underpinning of ecology, our concept of nature. In *The Social Creation of Nature*, Evernden shows that there was a time when one could not very well do ecology, because nature -- or rather Nature -- did not exist as something definable in our consciousness, and how this came to change. From there he takes up controversies about exactly what Nature is and is not.

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