



# THE FIELD NATURALIST

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

July - September 2010

Issue No: 3/2010

## **The journey that is Chacachacare - part 3/3**

*A personal account by Hans E. A. Boos*

### **MY CONNECTION TO THE ISLAND.**

I will draw heavily from an account of the Boos family written by Mrs. Olga Mavrogordato (nee Boos)(1972) that was privately circulated to members of my family several years ago. She researched the Boos family and their ancestors in great detail and gave enough source material to back up her historical record, something many other modern historians fail to do and thus leave other enquiring souls in a quandary to work out if the supposed "facts" are true and not figments of the imagination, or conclusions drawn by them from mere suppositions.

It seems to have all begun with a man known as Geraldine Carige (AKA Geraldo Carry) who fled Ireland, the land of his birth and patrimony, after the persecutions of the Catholics by the conquering and invading Protestant British. Being Catholic he fled to Catholic Spain and found employment in the Spanish army and was duly sent to the new world to serve in the Spanish dominion of New Granada (Venezuela).

Here for unspecified reasons he ended up in Margarita for his health and there he married in 1771 Maria Rosa de Ortega. With his family, Carige came to Trinidad and according to a document published by the Historical Society of Trinidad, the island of Chacachacare was granted to Don Gerald Carry, in 1791, by the King of Spain (THS 534).

Carige built a hacienda on the crest of "Monte Botella" (I have not been able to locate any such mount on any of the maps I have) and brought water to cisterns under his house from small catchments and dams up in the ravines on both sides of this ridge. I have found the ruined walls of this house and the water catchments having searched for them on two occasions with my brother Julius and on the second occasion with a Trinidad and Tobago Coastguard expedition arranged by the then Commander, the late Jack Williams. Accompanied by John Corriea we found the walls and foundations of the Carige House and I photographed them. On that trip I collected a large specimen of the giant centipede *Scolopendra* sp for which the



**Hans E. A. Boos**

on a recent trip to Chacachare

*Photo: Eddison Baptiste*

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### Editor's note

Many thanks to all who contributed and assisted with articles and photographs.

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

## July - September 2010

### Editors

Eddison Baptiste, Elisha Tikasingh (assistant editor)

### Editorial Committee

Palaash Narase, Reginald Potter

### Contributing writers

Bonnie Tyler, Christopher K. Starr,  
Hans E. A. Boos, Mike Rutherford, Stevland P. Charles

### Photographs

Bonnie Tyler, Eddison Baptiste,  
Fearn Rutherford, Hans E. A. Boos, Mike Rutherford,

### Design and Layout

Eddison Baptiste

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## Management Committee 2010 - 2011

President .....	Shane T. Ballah	796-3335
Vice-President .....	Palaash Narase	751-3672
Secretary .....	Eddison Baptiste	695 -2264
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Committee members ...	Dan Jaggernauth	659-2795
	Reginald Potter	694-1160
	Francis Castillo	638-9137

## Contact us!

Website: <http://www.ttfnc.org>

Postal: The Secretary, TTFNC, c/o P.O. Box 642,  
Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

Email: [admin@ttfnc.org](mailto:admin@ttfnc.org)

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## The Journey that is Chacachacare

A personal account by Hans E. A. Boos

Feature



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island is notorious.

Don Geraldo's daughter Atanacia when she lived in Margarita, in 1787, married Santiago Marino de Acuna, a Spaniard from Spain.

In 1797 this couple with their two children Santiago and Maria Conception, took up residence on Chacachacare, first on a headland north of what is now Rust's Bay and after a few years moved to Sanda Bay, where, by 1803, there was a small Venezuelan colony.

Maria Conception married one of these settlers, Jose Maria Pedro Sanda.

But it was brother Santiago who as a committed patriot for independence of Venezuela from the rule of Spain, who arranged for a boat load of hot-heads to row from Chacachacare to capture Guiria on the Venezuelan mainland and to restart the revolution that had been going badly for their leader Simon Bolivar. Marino is second only to Bolivar in the pantheon of heroes of Venezuela.

This band of patriots, known historically as "The Immortal 45" issued the famous proclamation (THS 539. Acosta 1913) which named Santiago Marino a General, and "with full plenary powers" for the expedition to retake Venezuela.

The husband of Atanacia, Jose Sanda, (originally Sanders) was of Irish origins, similar to his father in law, Carige. They settled in the area now known as Sanders Bay

Diego Meany, a Spanish born son of another Irishman James Meany, was sent to Trinidad by the King of Spain in 1784 to serve under the first Spanish Governor Don Jose Maria Chaco, as Chief Magistrate and Interpreter for the Police. In 1796 he had become Chacon's secretary and was the interpreter at the surrender of Trinidad to the British in 1797.

Married to a Spaniard he had fourteen children. It was in 1829 that one of his sons, James Nicholas Meany married Atanacia Sanda one of the children

of Jose Sanda of Chacachacare.

Living in Port of Spain, one of their children, a girl called Cecile Meany married Maurice Rostant in 1850.

With the Cedula of Population of 1783, the Rostants were one of the French immigrant families attracted to Trinidad from Marseilles in France. Once known as "de Rostang", Maurice's father had several children and Maurice seems to have had some medical knowledge and was known as "Dr. Rostang".

Maurice's eldest son Leon Toussaint Rostant born in 1794, (by now they had dropped the "de" and used Rostant instead of Rostang), was the first to be born in Trinidad, and he became very wealthy as a sugar planter of fourteen of the largest sugar estates in Trinidad.

It was his son Maurice who married, as his second wife, Cecile Meany, referred to above.

One of their children, a daughter Mariquite, in 1888, married Charles Henry Davidson Hobson, who was born in Trinidad in 1865. He was the eldest son of Henry Peterson Hobson, a Principal Magistrate in Trinidad, who was also born in Trinidad and he died in 1909.

Their eldest daughter Audrey was my grandmother and she married my Grandfather Julius Edward Boos in 1908.

Thus I have traced my direct descent from some of the movers and shakers, who settled, were born and who died in my native Trinidad.

Over the years I have heard many claims by other Trinidadians that they were descendants of the original owners of Chacachacare, but I am yet to see any documentary proof of these claims. Perhaps they are, for there were many families that settled, lived and farmed on Chacachacare.

Two members of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club have voiced that claim during the years of my membership.

One was Urban Cross and the other was the fabled "Captain" Mendez.

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## The Journey that is Chacachacare

A personal account by Hans E. A. Boos

Feature



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I had been going to Chacachacare for years since I was a boy spending school holidays in an island house on the nearby island of Monos. My Father was a keen fisherman and when I was old enough he would take the family fishing around the islands in his wooden pirogue. In those days it was quite an adventure as the power for these boats was a 9.5 hp Johnson outboard motor, and it took hours to get down and back from Chacachacare, and a breakdown could be disastrous. But fish we did around all three islands and great adventures were had battling rain squalls and the treacherous remous currents. In those years, just after World War II one could not get too close to some of the American- held lands on the Islands, so landing there was out of the question.

So when I joined the Club in early 1960, and one of the planned trips was to camp overnight on this island I was eager to be included.

I believe it was due to the good graces of our president, the late Mr. George La Forest, that the Coast Guard transported us to the jetty on the eastern side of La Tinta bay and dropped us, and there one of the amusing episodes began with Captain Mendez claiming the island as his ancestral fief. He mustered us together and then as he was holding forth, an excursion steamer arrived with the usual boisterous and noisy day trippers already fuelled with whatever they could consume between the mainland and the island.

They swarmed onto the apron around the jetty where a land rover from the lighthouse had arrived to take the Captain up to the lighthouse with his lady friend, where he was to be housed for the night. The excursioners immediately began to set up an impromptu cricket game and running races, ignoring the Captain's orders that they should proceed to the beach to the west.

As he ranted and waved a cutlass about, shouting orders, a well hit cricket ball whacked him on the elbow, putting an end to his diatribe and encour-

aging us to look for a camping spot for the night. That night we walked up to the lighthouse, the nightjars calling eerily all around us in the darkness and fluttering up from the road like blown pieces of multi coloured paper.

Mr. La Forest knocked on the door of the Lighthouse, and after a few bangs, the upper half of a Dutch door flew open and the captain greeted him with a poke in the chest with the same cutlass, and began to shout something about repelling boarders. He seems to have been having something a little stronger than late night coffee and we soon left him for safer and less noisy climes.

It was that first trip that encouraged the Club to begin a scientific survey of the islands west of Trinidad and out of subsequent trips many papers were published recording the flora and fauna of the islands.

These studies continue to this day as new finds are recorded almost with every visit either with the Club or on separate expeditions to look for specific specimens.

Several unique finds in my special interest have been recorded, the most important were the findings on the lizard *Gymnophthalmus speciosus*, which so far has not been recorded on Trinidad, *Hemidactylus palaichthus*, for years recorded as if it were found on Trinidad due to some specimens collected over a century ago by a man called Cazabon, (perhaps a brother to the painter), and the very different colour variant of the snake *Mastigodryas boddaerti*. Several new finds have been made since I did the first list of reptiles for the island (Boos 1984) and have been recorded.

I have walked over nearly all the available roads and visited nearly all the sites and bays of the island. I have fished the waters around it, and gleaned boulders to decorate cages in the Emperor Valley Zoo. I have seen Hawksbill Turtles nesting on La Tinta beach and Manta Rays sailing like underwater tarpaulins in the green waters near the Bolo Rocks. I have camped to search for

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## The Journey that is Chacachacare

A personal account by Hans E. A. Boos

Feature



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lizards with scientists who were there to determine what was their true taxonomic designation. I have trolled the treacherous currents that swirl around La Cabresse Rock on the north and have lost my brother's pirogue, the "Jolle Rouge" on the north east point of the island, when it sank in a squall under two old fisher friends who had borrowed it. I have rescued paintings done and abandoned by lepers when they left, caught snakes in deserted churches and secured hospital records from the clinics to be lodged and preserved in the archives.

The memories are too many to include them all here, but maybe one day I will set them down, memories of an unique island that we can all feel part of, once we have walked its historic trails and experienced its unique flora, fauna, and history.

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Hans E. A. Boos

April 7<sup>th</sup> 2010



## Cachipa Beach Camp (28-29 August, 2010)

Bonnie Tyler

Annual Camp/Field Trip



Fourteen club members joined August's overnight outing to Cachipa Beach along the north coast. On Saturday morning, we departed from Blanchisseuse by boat in two groups. The first group of seven set out at 8:00 am. I was in the second group, scheduled to meet the boatman in Blanchisseuse at 11:00 am. Things got off to a rough start. As our boat pulled out of the bay, we were hit almost immediately by a torrential downpour. Since we were in an open boat and all our gear was carefully stowed, we had no way to get shelter from the rain and were soaking wet within only a few minutes. Needless to say, soaked to the skin is not the ideal way to begin a weekend camp and this was not the end of our troubles. After what seemed like a very long wet boat ride, our boatman steered into Cacphipa Bay where we could see our seven compatriots waiting dejectedly on a narrow band of rocky shoreline.

Cachipa Bay is roughly two thirds of the way to Matelot from Blanchisseuse and a bit less than a kilometer east of Madamas Beach. The surf makes it impossible to land a boat at Madamas Beach so if your goal is a short hike into Madamas, Cachipa is the perfect place to be dropped. Unfortunately, it is not the perfect place to camp. The beach, if it can be called that, is no more than a narrow rocky strip that is entirely below the high tide line. From the beach, there is a very steep muddy path leading through the rain forest and connecting to the main Blanchisseuse to Matelot trail.

After unloading the boat, which raced off giving us no chance to reconsider, we stowed the gear as far up the rocky beach as possible. Dan Jagger-nauth, Selwyn Gomes and Bobby Oumvath then went on a reconnaissance trip up the trail while the rest of us waited anxiously on the rocks as the tide rose. After what seemed like an interminable wait, the reconnaissance team returned to report that they had cleared tent sites for us in the jungle.

This area is former cocoa and coffee plantation that has been reclaimed by rapid growing undergrowth. About halfway between the beach and the main trail is a somewhat level shelf where our leaders had valiantly cleared away enough *Heliconia bihia* (Balisier) and *Deffenbachia* sp. to make room for us to pitch our 9 tents. We all set to work hauling gear up the steep hill, clearing away remaining roots, sticks and vegetation and setting up camp. Hard rain showers continued throughout the day and night turning our camping site into a morass of mud. We tried laying out the leaves of the slain Balisier to make paths through the mud, which ultimately failed.

Doing his best to redeem a miserable situation, Dan gathered wood to start a campfire. I was highly skeptical that anyone could start a fire with such wet wood but Dan demonstrated how using dry inside pieces of bamboo he could start a fire large enough for Bobby to cook up an enormous and delicious pot of seasoned rice even in the wettest of conditions. Dan and Bobby had rigged up a tarp and arranged rocks, buckets and balisier leaves for us all to gather and enjoy the evening, one another's company and the meal Bobby had cooked.

After dinner and a bit of socializing, a small group headed off for a night hike while the rest of us turned in. Unfortunately, although the ground was technically level enough for us to pitch our tents, it wasn't even close to level enough for a comfortable night's sleep. I'm afraid that between tossing and turning to find a comfortable position between the rocks and roots, and bracing to keep from sliding downhill into either the end of the tent or my husband, I got very little sleep. To make things yet worse, we had several hard rain storms during the night and before dawn almost all the tents had begun to leak. Possible exceptions included Lester Doodnath, who had cleverly

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**Cachipa Beach Camp** (28-29 August, 2010)

Bonnie Tyler

*Annual Camp/Field Trip**(Continued from page 6)*

covered his entire tent with a waterproof tarp, and Dan, with a hammock and waterproof tarp. The hammock seemed better suited for the jungle than our tent.

to hike to Madamas. We saw many many species of butterflies and moths including the Owl Butterfly, Blue Morpho, Green Banded Urania (White Page), White Peacock, Monarch, Postman, Swallow Tail, Common Yellow and many other species

**Dinner at camp***Photo: Bonnie Tyler*

Fortunately, with the dawn, things started to improve. The rain stopped and the sun came out. I enjoyed watching bats in the early morning light and socializing with friends over breakfast. We were able to arrange our gear to dry a little and then several of us hiked to Madamas beach while others went birding. From our camp, it took us less than 30 minutes along the wet but good trail

whose names I don't know. This seems to be an unusually good season for migrant butterflies and both the number and variety were excellent. Vegetation along the trail is typical of abandoned plantation. Trees include cacao, coffee, sandbox, immortelle, hogplum and plentiful and producing mango. We saw *Chaconia* (*Warszewiczia coc-*

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**Cachipa Beach Camp** (28-29 August, 2010)

Bonnie Tyler

*Annual Camp/Field Trip**(Continued from page 7)*

cinea), Deer Meat (*Centropogon cornutus*), Copper leaf (*Chrysothemis pulchella*), Star flower (*Hippobroma longiflora*), firecracker, several varieties of Heliconia and an Anthurium in bloom.

Madamas has a beautiful white sand beach with almond trees, palms and firecracker flowers. The surf was high and the bay punctuated with rocky outcrops. Because of the hard rains, the river was swollen, red with mud and was filling the bay with silt. From the beach we listened to the mesmerizing surf while watching a Sandpiper comb the beach and Brown Pelicans soaring out to sea. We found a dozen or so leatherback turtle eggs scattered along the beach and got a close look at a pair of Cicadas that were sitting on a tree next to us. Throughout the trip, we had been hearing their characteristic buzz, which reminds me of the windup noisemakers you see at New Years, so it was interesting to finally get a good look at the local "musicians".

On our return to Cachipa, Dan lead us to a massive tractor that had been used in a part legal, part illegal logging operation some years ago and abandoned in the forest. I had difficulty imagining how such a large tractor could have been brought to that point or what kind of profits would have to be made to make it worth not only the effort but ultimately the loss of such a valuable piece of capital equipment.

While we were hiking, the various birding groups saw both the Golden-headed and White-bearded Manakins, the Rufous-breasted Hermit, and the Golden-headed Warbler and heard a Pepper-shrike, a Barred Antshrike, a Motmot, a House Wren, and an Olivaceous Woodcreeper.

Around midday we packed up the camp and hauled all the gear back to the beach where luckily the tide was heading out rather than in. We were

able to wash up in a lovely fresh water cascade on the western end of the beach. A few people tried bathing in the sea while the rest of us socialized. While we waited for the boatman, a hard thunderstorm moved in, so we hauled out tarps and huddled under them as the rain poured down. The boatman arrived shortly after the rain started and loaded up the first group, while the rest of us hunkered down under the tarp waiting for his return. After what seemed like forever, the rain stopped, the sun came out and the boatman returned, so our return trip was in clear skies and fair seas. We hurled our gear into the boat as the boatman implored us to hurry faster, as the waves buffeted the boat against the rocks. The boatman gave us the grand tour on our return, weaving between haystacks (at very close quarters, especially without life jackets) and coming in close to show us caves and sea arches. It was a thrilling ride, exceeding the best Disneyland has to offer so despite the difficulties of the camp, we arrived back at Blanchisseuse in high spirits, and with none of us actually flung from the boat into the sea. Although I have been camping since my childhood, this was my first experience camping in tropical rain forest during the rainy season. While it's not an experience I wish to repeat any time soon, my husband Richard Tyler and I did enjoy the beauty of the north coast and company of our TTFNC friends.



## Erin Savannah (Sunday 27th June, 2010)

Stevland P. Charles

Monthly Field Trip Reports



On Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2010, 19 members of the Club embarked upon a field trip to the Erin Savannas in the southwestern peninsular of Trinidad. After meeting at the appointed locations in Port of Spain, Valsayn and San Fernando, we drove using the route described on page 227 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club Trail Guide* (Comeau et al., 2006), until 9:20 a.m. when we arrived at the start point of the walk, just a bit over three kilometres from the Erin Road and Spring Trace junction in Buenos Ayres.

estry Division. It appeared that no efforts at restoring the savannas by removal of the pine trees have been made, even after recommendations made in the past by the Club to the Forestry Division. Indeed, it seems that there are plans to install more pine trees, as a number of small bagged sapling pine trees were observed along the roadway near the trail head.

Under a somewhat cloudy sky and relatively cool conditions, we started the walk through the forest



**Group shot** Photo: Eddison Baptiste

Dan Jaggernaut and John Lum Young reported seeing an adult White Hawk (*Leucopternis albicollis*) feeding at the roadside a few hundred metres from where we had parked to start the trip. Dan and John both gave a short briefing to the group explaining that much of the original savanna areas have been unfortunately planted with the non-native Caribbean Pine (*Pinus caribaea*) by the For-

at 9:27 a.m. and proceeded along the route described as "Leg 2" on pages 228 and 229 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. of the TTFNC Trail Guide (Comeau et al., 2006). The trail was generally intact, though slightly over grown at some points. At many points along the trail, we observed evidence of some bush fires that must have occurred at least within the last year. Fortunately, these fires were

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**Erin Savannah** (Sunday 27th June, 2010)

Stevland P. Charles

*Monthly Field Trip Reports**(Continued from page 9)*

apparently not particularly devastating, as much of the vegetation seemed well on the way to recovery after the start of the present rainy season.

As we walked along, the noisy calls of cicadas (Hemiptera) filled the forest and at 9:50 a.m. we came upon a very large nest of bachacs or leaf-cutter ants (*Atta* sp.) where several thousand of the little creatures were hard at work securing leaf mulch for their subterranean fungal gardens. At 9:53 a.m. a few Orange-winged Parrots (*Amazona amazonica*) we heard calling as they flew above the forest canopy. At 9:57 a.m., as we passed the small remnant of Savanna VIII, we observed evidence of a massive quarrying operation a few hundred meters to the east.

At 10:00 a.m. we emerged from the forest onto Savanna IX. The area is a very fine example of tropical grassland, featuring a relatively large expanse of open land covered by short grasses and sedges and dotted by small trees on rolling hills. The group rested on a ridge that bisects Savanna IX. From the ridge, we observed the terrible scar on the landscape in the quarry east of the savanna, where the land lay barren of all vegetation and stripped down to the hard bedrock.

I hardly hazard to speak for the group to say that we were thankful that the sky remained a bit cloudy and thus the temperature fairly cool while we were at the savanna. From the ridge, Dan pointed out the Manac Palms (*Euterpe* sp.), Moriche Palms (*Mauritia flexuosa*) and Cocorite Palms (*Attalea maripa*) at the forest edge that skirts the savanna. Dan also noted that the small trees dotting the savanna were Rough Leaf (*Curatella americana*) and stunted Cuchape (*Coccoloba latifolia*). Two Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*) were seen circling above the western side of the savanna, while two unidentified hawks (one fairly large, the other small) were

seen over the eastern side of the savanna near the forest edge. Members also took note of the great abundance of dragonflies (Ephemeroptera) in the area, which Eddison Baptiste concluded was a sign of nearby sources of surface water, given the aquatic habitat requirements of the larval stage of those insects.

Several members of the group noted large hoof prints in the soil as well as a few large piles of dried dung that were presumed to belong to the feral Cattle (*Bos taurus*) that have been noted on previous visits to the area (Comeau et al., 2006). In the exposed soil on the ridge I also noted a few small tracks of a small cloven-hoofed animal, which I suspected to be that of the Red Brocket Deer (*Mazama americana*).

At about 10:20 a.m., the group proceeded to a small hill in the savanna about 200 metres to the west of the ridge where the majority of our party rested. I continued down the hill and a few hundred meters to the edge of the forest, where I saw a Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*) and an unidentified small darkly-coloured finch (Fringillidae). Just two metres into the forest away from the savanna's edge, I had further confirmation of the presence of Red Brocket Deer (*Mazama americana*), when I noted a fresh small pile of somewhat granular dung on the forest floor.

At 10:50 a.m., the group left the savanna and retraced the route taken before. By that time, it was quite sunny and our return journey was quite hot. I noted scores of small bats of an unidentified species roosting in large concrete drainage culverts placed in small depressions along the trail. Dan noted Razor Grass (*Scleria bracteata*) and the Heliconia (*Heliconia psittacorum*) along the trail. At 11:20 a.m. we emerged from the forest to the spot where we had parked the cars and having ensured that all members had safely exited the forest, our brief trip came to an end.

## Biological Recording in Trinidad and Tobago

Mike Rutherford



**What is biological recording? At its most basic it is asking four simple questions about any plant or animal you come across - What is it? Where was it found? When was it found? Who found it?**

Beyond that there are many more pieces of information that can be added to a record – the weather at the time, what other species were found associated with the target species, who was the determiner, how was the specimen collected, how abundant was it, was a photograph taken, what was the substrate like, what stage in its life cycle was it at and so on.

All this information can prove to be extremely valuable when answering questions about a site you may be visiting or a species in which you are interested. Such questions as what grows or lives in a site? What has been found here in the past? How common or rare is this species? What is important in a certain area? What other species am I likely to find in association with this species? These can all be answered using the process of biological recording.

There is a wealth of information hiding in the Living World, Quarterly Bulletins, books, short notes and other material produced by the TTFNC. I say hiding because in order to find the desired information you would have to either know the specific article or search painstakingly through the journals. Wouldn't it be much easier to have a computer database where you could go and type in the name of a plant or animal and instantly be shown when and where those organisms have been recorded in Trinidad and Tobago? These sorts of databases can already be found for popular groups like birds but wouldn't it be much more useful to have all Trinidad and Tobago plants and animals accessible through one portal?

These programmes exist and have been in use for

a long time in places like the UK where biological recording is very popular. The most popular programme currently used is called Recorder 6 and although it is set up with British species and localities already loaded into the database it is possible to remove these and input new information suitable for Trinidad and Tobago. There are several other database programmes available as well, some for free, some for a small fee and all of which have their pros and cons. Using an existing database would be simpler than starting to build a database from scratch but if there are any database experts in the club then it is always an option.

Any database could be hosted on a single computer but would need to have a dedicated manager to input the records as they come in, it might be better to have this computer in an organization or institution rather than a private home for accessibility and security reasons but early on it could even be contained on a TTFNC laptop.

There is also the option of having an online database that people can enter data into themselves this would allow greater accessibility for most members and could be hosted on the TTFNC website. It does however bring in the problem of quality control and the need to make sure that records are entered in a standardised way.

A good place to review some of the recording options is on the website for the National Biodiversity Network of the UK, there are two links in the page <http://www.nbn.org.uk/Useful-things.aspx> which list some of the recording software and online recording tools.

Of course as well as adding in all the past records it is equally important to start adding new records from every field trip, walk, camp and even just everyday observations. This can be done in a vari-

(Continued on page 15)



## Giant Land Snails in Trinidad

By Mike Rutherford



The peaceful(ish) land of Trinidad is shaping up to be the site of a battle between two slimy, armoured giants. The local champ with homefield advantage is the Giant South American Land Snail (*Megalobulimus oblongus*) weighing in at 400g and able to lay an egg bigger than many bird eggs. The foreign contender is the Giant African Land Snail (*Achatina fulica*) which weighs in at 1000g and can eat concrete. No contest you think? Well let's have a quick comparison of the two rivals:

*A. fulica* has been picking fights the world over for the last 200 years or so, but truth be told it doesn't really move in and beat up the local snails. What it does is really annoy humans by eating crops, out-competing local species and harbouring disease. Attempts to combat this mollusc have included posion, flamethrowers, hand picking and even bringing in a carnivorous snail to hunt

them down. These have met with varying success and it is generally agreed that unless an outbreak is dealt with almost as soon as it happens then there is little chance of stopping it.

Both snails have wide distributions, *A. fulica* is found all around the tropics from its home in east Africa to Asia, the Pacific islands and across the Caribbean. *M. oblongus* is found throughout South America and has itself spread to several Caribbean islands with the help of humans. Depending on where you go *M. oblongus* is a pest as well, to paraphrase that popular saying 'one man's native

species is another man's alien invader'.

There is a wealth of literature out there on the Giant African Land snail so instead of repeating it all if you want to know start with <http://www.issg.org/database/welcome/>

*A. fulica* was first reported in Trinidad in October 2008 when several specimens were found at Alyce Glen Gardens, Petit Valley in the north west of the country. It is most likely that the snails got here due to some horticultural or agricultural process as this is the commonest route of introduction (Cowie & Robinson 2003). To create a

possible scenario perhaps a local resident came back from holidaying in Barbados, Martinique, St. Lucia or Guadeloupe (the other Caribbean islands that have been invaded by *A. fulica* (Neehall 2004)) and brought with them either some live snails or some plants for their garden which had the eggs buried in the soil. After establishing themselves in this persons garden they then started to

Giant African Land Snail ( <i>Achatina fulica</i> )	VS.	Giant South American Land Snail ( <i>Megalobulimus oblongus</i> )
20	Size (shell length in cm)	11
1000	Weight (max in g)	400
1	Sexually mature (years)	3
10	Lifespan (max in years)	14
1000	Number of eggs per batch (max)	3
5	Size of eggs (mm)	30

spread out around the neighbourhood.

I am interested to see the effects on *M. oblongus* if and when *A. fulica* becomes established in Trinidad. Will there be a reduction in the range and abundance of the local species due to being outcompeted? There may be some hope though, in other countries that have experienced an invasion by *A. fulica* after 20 to 60 years the populations mysteriously collapse, possibly due to disease but the real mechanism is yet to be discovered (Simberloff &

(Continued on page 13)



## Giant Land Snails in Trinidad

By Mike Rutherford



(Continued from page 12)

Gibbons 2004). If this is the case then maybe the best option is to do nothing. An approach that I'm sure would go down well with the government and if the alternative is to have workers out there spraying pesticides and using flamethrowers then maybe we should just let nature take care of itself. We certainly don't need any more possible sources of bush fires in this country!



***Achatina fulica*** (snail salad bar)

Photo courtesy: Fearn Rutherford

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Neehall, C. 2004 <http://agri.gov.tt/home/images/pdf/copyofthegiantafricansnail2.pdf>

Simberloff, D.& L. Gibbons. 2004. Now you See them, Now you don't! – Population Crashes of Established Introduced Species, *Journal Biological Invasions* 6(2): 161-17



***Megalobulimus oblongus***

Photo: Mike Rutherford



***Achatina fulica***

Photo: Mike Rutherford

## Why do the Bachacs Flick?

Christopher K. Starr



The common bachac, *Atta cephalotes*, is one of our most conspicuous ants. Their low nest mounds can have a surface area of many square meters, and we are all familiar with the long, dense foraging columns transporting leaf fragments back to their underground fungus gardens. Bachacs are forever extending and elaborating the tunnels in their nests, which involves carrying a great mass of soil to the surface. Especially when a nest is on a hillside, the discarded soil can form quite a large mass on the downhill side.

Removal of soil to the outside goes on almost all the time. If you watch a couple of entrance/exit holes for just a few minutes, you will probably see several instances of this. Typically, a worker ant comes up to the surface, carrying a lump of soil the size of her head or larger, walks to the entrance or maybe several centimeters beyond, and simply drops it, before turning and going back inside. This operation, going on steadily day and night for many months, can move an impressive amount of soil.

Marc Seid of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama told me recently of some very surprising observations of *A. cephalotes* right here in Trinidad. At one particular nest, workers would walk up to the entrance, each holding a lump of soil in the usual way, but instead of just dropping it she then did something quite extraordinary. In Marc's account, she stood high on her mid- and hindlegs and flicked the lump very quickly away with her forelegs. It is far from plain how widespread this behaviour is or what adaptive value it might have. It certainly serves to remove soil from inside the nest, but just carrying and dropping in the usual fashion accomplishes that. I have a fair-sized bachac nest right by the entrance to my driveway, which I have watched many times, and so far I have never seen any flicking.

Marc is very much interested in making further

observations of this odd behaviour. When you next walk by a hillside bachac nest, stop for a min-



***Atta. cephalotes***

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

ute and watch several instances of soil removal. Most likely, all will be the familiar carry-and-drop, but if you happen to see the flicking behaviour, stay and watch for a few minutes longer and then report your observations to Marc ([seid@si.edu](mailto:seid@si.edu)) and me ([ckstarr@gmail.com](mailto:ckstarr@gmail.com)). This is your chance to be only the second person – as far as we know – ever to see bachacs performing this particular action.

Christopher K. Starr  
University of the West Indies

## Book Notice

Christopher K. Starr



**Gillespie, R.G. & D.A. Clague (eds.) 2009**  
***Encyclopedia of Islands*. Berkeley:**  
**University California Press 1074 pp.**

This attractive single-volume reference work is affordably priced, (list price about US\$100) and very acceptably comprehensive. Without attempting a critical review – disclosure: I did one of the entries. I will note that the entries by a broad international group of experts cover a range of places, (e.g. the Galapagos and Hawaiian Islands), taxa (e.g. land snails and cichlid fishes) and features or concepts (e.g. tides and adaptive radiation). Any encyclopedic treatment requires many hard choices about what to include and what to leave out; in my view, the editors have chosen well. This volume is likely to be the definitive reference treatment on the broad topic for some decades to come.

My own short entry on Trinidad & Tobago is available at:  
<http://ckstarr.net/cks/2009-ENCYCLOPEDIA.pdf>

Christopher K. Starr  
 University of the West Indies

### Biological Recording in Trinidad and Tobago

*(Continued from page 11)*

ety of ways such as recorders sending in information about a single specimen in an email, bringing in a species list from after a walk or by using purpose built recording cards. These cards can be for general recording where any species seen can be added. Having a sheet printed up and ready to use at the end of any outing would mean the data would be fresh in the mind. They can also be set up for a particular group of organisms such as the example shown here for British spiders. This has the advantage of having standardised descriptions for habitat, substrate, location, and so on and also a comprehensive listing of all species names. This makes inputting of collected data much easier as problems such as poor handwriting are overcome as it is just boxes to tick or numbers to write in.

With the wealth of knowledge and experience

within the TTFNC it is well within our capabilities to find a suitable programme and start inputting that huge reserve of information. If we do this and do it well it won't be long before all sorts of groups and individuals will come looking for the information such as environmental NGO's, government departments, surveyors and so on. At that point the monetary value of the records will start to show and the club could find itself in control of a valuable resource.

**This article is just to provide a starting point for discussion and I hope that there are others out there who would like to take it further.**

Mike Rutherford  
 University of the West Indies



## The Life of Julius O. Boos. (Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 1946 to July 11<sup>th</sup> 2010.)

Hans E. A. Boos

Special Tribute



Born into a post World War II world, my little brother, Julius Oscar Boos, named for our Grandfather Julius, and Father, Oscar, came as a surprise to my parents, struggling to find their feet after years of privation caused by events that are better told elsewhere.

There were only three children to this small family, my older sister Wanda, myself and this strange red-haired baby, who grew into a toddler rapidly and filled up the house with his demands that we, his siblings, at times thought were excessively catered to, for he was a sort of lagniappe, though, as with all lagniappes, very loved and pampered. He was very sickly at times but soon grew robust and very outgoing. I taught him to climb his first tree, a prolifically fruiting portugal tree, that grew outside the living room window, and whose fruits were tangy and sweet.

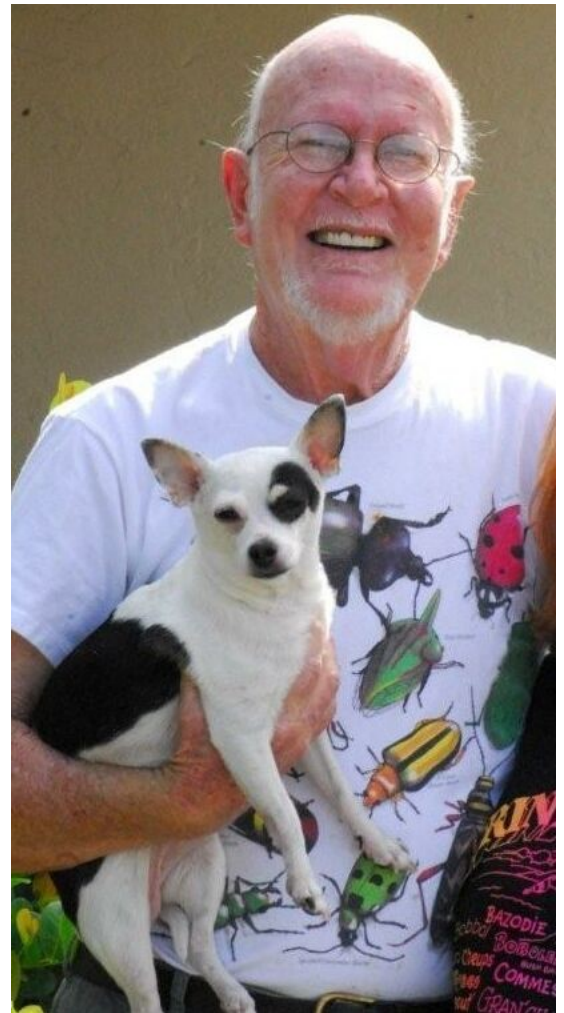
His youth, as my little brother, was an adventuresome one, for as with many of our family, our curiosity about everything often led us into strange paths and pursuits.

He accompanied my mother to the market in Mucurapo Street in eastern San Fernando where he mingled with the vendors, helping to choose the vegetables for our meager table and especially the fish from his friend, a man called Chickalee, who taught him the differences between the silver carites and kings and the red fish, pargues and sorbs that were sold from the wetted concrete slabs provided there.

This knowledge he put to good use when he was grown enough to go with our father, fishing either on the jetties at Mt D'Or Oil-field or in the large wooden pirogue, the "Hourelle", that he jointly owned with two of his brothers.

He caught lizards and small snakes with me as we searched surrounding yards and the bush in the old Boyack estate in Vista Bella, known to us as "Tractor Road", today the site of up-scale Sumadh Gardens, and we ran wild in the bush there playing the games that boys get up to, with a crowd of neighborhood friends. We became accurate shots with slingshot, homemade bows and arrows, and after reading an adventure tale in a book I can only remember called "Jivaro," we made our own homemade blowpipes and cocoyea darts and became proficient in their use as any South American tribesman. Little did he know that this expertise would be demonstrated to the true Jivarios he met in his work in the Amazonian Jungles of Ecuador, where he met the real Jivaro, the Shua as they are more correctly known, the real inventors of blow dart hunting.

I was there when he fell off a branch of the large Peltifera tree on the grounds of the Judges quarters opposite our house on Alexander Road, and I heard the bones of his wrist snap when he hit the ground.



**Julius O. Boos with his Chihuahua**

*Photo: Hans Boos*

As I grew into manhood I was sent off to try to study for a degree in Veterinary Science in Edinburgh University in Scotland, and he was still a boy of twelve or thirteen when we said goodbye in that city in 1959.

A year and a half later I was back in Trinidad, degreeless, to the disgust of my father. So I moved into Port of Spain to find a job and to get out of the parental nest where I felt trapped after a year on my own in one of the loveliest cities in the world.

As I worked for ESSO for eight years I watched him grow up, getting kicked out of



## The Life of Julius O. Boos. (Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 1946 to July 11<sup>th</sup> 2010.)

Special Tribute



Hans E. A. Boos

(Continued from page 16)

Presentation College for insubordination to the overbearing brutal Brothers and teachers there. Starting to work in the same company where our father had toiled from 1944 to his retirement, he sold tractors and became proficient in driving the dangerous workhorses of the farmers in the cane growing lands of Central Trinidad, and as he matured, any disagreements we had due to the age differences between us disappeared.

I had begun to collect and keep the snakes of Trinidad, with the distant idea of perhaps writing a book someday, and he seconded me on many expeditions to the remotest corners of Trinidad, inventing techniques to capture the most elusive of our reptilian fauna, whether it be an elusive lizard on the side of a coconut tree in Tobago, or caiman in Hollis Reservoir.

He joined the Field Naturalists' Club not long after me and went on several of the expeditions mounted by them on the last Sunday of each month and on many others with other groups. A memorable three days camping out in the old Majani house in Petit Tacarib, where fishing for giant groupers and stalking the trails for snakes, was a highlight of our younger life, and he and I were with the Club on that fateful day when two young men, one a member of the Club dived into the depths of the Cumaca cave and never came back. Vincent Abrams actually died with Julius' belt and jack-knife strapped to his waist. He had borrowed it from Julius only minutes before going to his death.

After eight years at ESSO I had had enough, and immigrated to Australia, and he was left behind, as he expressed it, "he was losing the only brother he had," for I fully intended not to return to a country that had treated me very shabbily for being different.

But after four and a half years, circumstances and opportunity overrode that resolve and I returned to Trinidad in 1973 to take up the post of Curator of the Emperor Valley Zoo, an institution I had helped to manage as a member of their council for many years when I was still at ESSO.

When I got back, Julius was beginning his training as an oil field driller, a job that would take him to the far reaches of our immediate world, and he was posted to the desolate north of Peru to a little town of Talara to make a living.

Here with only second- form Spanish he was put in charge of a crew of Peruvians who spoke not a word

of English, but being as adaptable as he was, by the time he made his first return visit home, he was fairly fluent in Spanish and remained so to the day he died.

To work in the environment there, as he described it to me, took a special kind of person with an iron will and he proved up to the task, working there for several years until the company that hired him pulled out their operations and he was forced to seek similar work in the field. This quest took him to Ecuador and the deep jungles of the Amazonian region of that country where just getting to the oil rig whether by air or by road was equally hazardous, but he managed it all.

Stints in Bolivia and Spain followed

His interest in natural history and the world around him never waned and he collected unique series of beetles of the family Scarabidae and butterflies of the Pappilionaceae, which were lodged in museums shortly before his passing, as had done with a smaller but select collection of butterflies to the Museum in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1959.

He was the field assistant to Jan Lindblad, author of "Journey to Red Birds," when he made the first movies of the laying of the leatherback turtles on Matura Beach; with George Gorman doing behavioral studies of Anolis lizards in San Fernando; with Fredrico Medem, author of "Los Crocodilia de Sur America," establishing the presence of a "dwarf" caiman on Tobago; with Robert Mertens the "old man" of German Herpetology, supplying him with one of the first photographed specimens of the very rare Tobago red snake, *Erythrolamprus ocellatus*; with Eric Waering, author of "The Scorpions of Trinidad and Tobago," collecting a new species of scorpion named for Eric's son Rick, *Microtitius rickii* and with Dr Victor Quesnel, known to us all by his many works and contributions, to collect and co- author a paper on the Teiid lizard *Kentropyx*.

He climbed El Tucuche twice with me and we collected the rare so-called "Luminous lizard" *Proctoporus shrevei* for photographs for a series of papers I was writing for the Trinidad Naturalist Magazine.

We collected snakes together with our friend from Australia, Terry Boylan, in Grenada in 1975 and plants with Joep Moonen in French Guiana, for Busch Gardens in 2001.

On one of my trips to the summit of El Tucuche with our friend Raymond Mendez, our collection there,

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## Our heartfelt condolences go out to the Families and Friends of Julius O. Boos



(The Life of Julius O. Boos: continued from page 17)

among other specimens, was a large scorpion from the bracts of the large Bromeliads growing in the elfin forests there. This Julius recognized as being undescribed and did me the honour of naming it after Raymond and me, *Chactus raymondhansorum*. (Francke & Boos 1986) (A Bromeliad crab collected on that trip remains unnamed to this day.) He afforded Victor Quesnel everlasting remembrance by recognizing the beetle that is the logo of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club to be a subspecies of the Inca Beetle and named it *Inca clathrata quesneli*. (Boos & Ratcliffe 1985) Others recognized his work in the field and, though I have not been able to trace the paper, he told me some small beetles found in the middens of the bachac ants, Atta, were named after him and I know that the climbing vine that is the food plant of several butterflies in the south of Trinidad is named after him, *Aristolochia boosi*, (Panter 1981) immortalizing our family name in the annals of science. His friend and coauthor Tom Croat has named a new species of Aroid after him *Anthurium booseii* (Croat 2010. in press) In the final decades of his life he lived and worked in Florida with his wife Susan with their beloved Chihuahuas, expanding his interest even further into the plant family the Araceae. He wrote several papers on this group of plants, and published two papers extending the known flora of Trinidad and Tobago. I have assembled the papers that he either wrote, co-authored or honoured him below as a lasting record of his not small contribution to the scientific world. From the outpouring of sentiment and love from his colleagues, friends and family that attended the last weeks of his busy and rich life it is a sad loss that such an unique and busy person was cut down in the golden years of his presence among us. He will be missed but always remembered. He insured that by his work he left behind, and I will commend his ashes to the Bocas between our islands where we fished many a fish and enjoyed many a day. Born on January 5<sup>th</sup> 1946, Julius Oscar Boos died on July 11<sup>th</sup> 2010. He was 64. In his heart he was a brother to us all.

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## Management Notices

### New members; Volunteers; Publications

Management Notices



### New Members

The Club warmly welcomes the following new members:

#### Ordinary members:

**Mike Rutherford, Richard Dean, Joanne Lesser,  
Rondel Bailey, Jonathan Kacal, and Joanne Dascant.**

### New Website

The Club has transferred to a new domain name and email address. The change allows us more space and greater control to reach out to the public and stay in touch with members.

**Website:** [www.ttfnc.org](http://www.ttfnc.org)

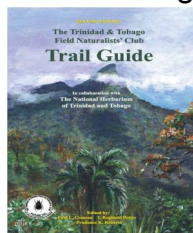
**Email:** [admin@ttfnc.org](mailto:admin@ttfnc.org)



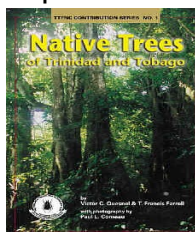
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Trinidad-Tobago-Field-Naturalists-Club/68651412196?v=info>

## PUBLICATIONS

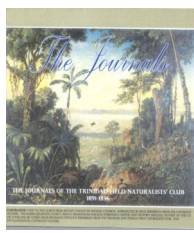
The following Club publications are available to members and non-members:



The TTFNC  
Trail Guide  
Members =  
TT\$200.00



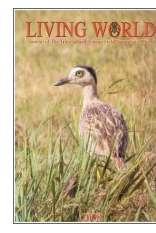
The Native  
Trees of T&T  
2nd Edition  
Members =  
TT\$100.00



Living world  
Journal 1892-  
1896 CD  
Members =  
TT\$175.00



Living World Journal 2008  
Living World Journal back issues  
Members price = free



## MISCELLANEOUS

### The Greenhall Trust

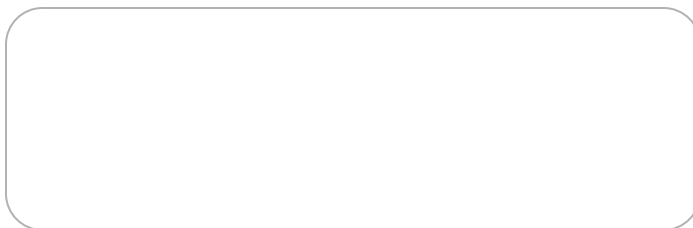
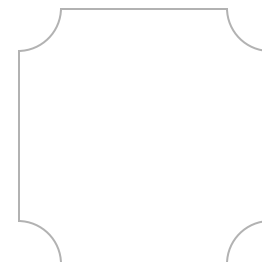
Started in 2005, in memory of Elizabeth and Arthur Greenhall, dedicated artist and zoologist respectively, the Trust offers financial assistance to aspiring artists and biologists (in areas of flora and fauna) in Trinidad and Tobago. Full details are available on their website: <http://www.greenhallstrust-wi.org/link.htm>

### Club Polo Jerseys

Available Sizes: medium

Colours: Kahki and green

Costs: TT\$50.00



## NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

### Guidelines for Articles and Field trip reports:

Contributors and authors are asked to take note of the following guidelines when submitting articles for inclusion in the newsletter

- 
- |   |                 |   |
|---|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Font Type:      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Times New Roman</li></ul>   |
| 2 | Font Size:      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 12 point</li></ul>  |
| 3 | Maximum Length: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1,750 words (approx. 3 pages unformatted)</li></ul>   |
| 4 | Content         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Field trip reports should include a separate table listing the scientific names, common names and families of plants and animals already identified within the body of the report.</li></ul>  |
| 5 | Photographs     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide images in the following format JPEG, BMP, PICT, TIFF, GIF</li><li>• Images <b><u>must not</u></b> be embedded into the word processing files.</li><li>• Information on the image content including names of individuals shown <b><u>must</u></b> be provided.</li></ul> |
| 6 | Format          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acceptable formats for electronic submissions are doc and txt.</li></ul>  |
| 7 | Deadline        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All articles <b><u>must</u></b> reach the editor by the ninth week of each quarter.</li><li>• Submission deadline for the 4nd Quarter 2010 issue: <b>November 31st 2010</b></li></ul>   |
| 8 | Email           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electronic copies can be submitted to the 'Editor' at <a href="mailto:admin@ttfnc.org">admin@ttfnc.org</a></li><li>• Include the code <b>QB2010-4</b> in the email subject label.</li></ul>   |
| 9 | Hard copies     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hard copies can be delivered to the editor or any member of the Management Committee.</li></ul>   |
-