



THE FIELD NATURALIST

Quarterly Bulletin of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

July– September 2024

Issue No: 3/2024



General Club Trip, 23-24 August 2024 OVERNIGHT CAMP AT PARIA, BLANCHISSEUSE By Bryan Ramdeen



Camping Set Up
By Bryan Ramdeen

On the 23rd of August 2024, the club met at the Blanchisseuse Fishing Depot at 8:30am. We were offered parking spaces at the Blanchisseuse Police Station and at the Blanchisseuse Fishing Depot. Seven members attended this trip, a smaller group than expected, possibly due to inclement weather forecasts for the weekend. We packed our bags into 2 pirogues and made our way to Paria Bay. The boat ride was eighteen minutes of smooth sailing. We arrived at Paria at 9:03am. We unpacked the boats and located a cleared area suitable for camping. We swept the ground with coconut branches, and set up our tents, hammocks

and cooking area.

Our camping area was surrounded by wild cane (*Gynerium sagittatum*), coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*) and sea almond (*Terminalia catappa*), which offered shelter.

Once we were settled into our camping spot, Dan Jaggernaut and Sheldon Edwards wasted no time and began cooking lunch.

After lunch, I did some snorkeling in a rocky area on the right side of the bay. The area was full of marine life such as Haemulon species and night sergeants (*Abudefduf taurus*) as well as various

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Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

July—September 2024

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Contact us!

Editors' note :

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

Disclaimer :

The views expressed in this bulletin are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club
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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



The club warmly welcomes the following new members:

Anani Pooran
Bynoe Williams

Andre Jaikaransingh
Shenelle Ramkhelawan

Josanne Leid

(Continued from page 1)

mollusk species, such as the widemouth rocksnail (*Plicopurpura patula*) and the rusty rocksnail (*Stramonita rustica*).

Ivan Hinkson had an inflatable kayak which he used to set various mollusk traps in the ocean for his research.

Later in the evening, dinner was prepared by Chrisalene Dedier. We had pita bread filled with rotisserie chicken which was cooked in tomatoes and various vegetables.

At nighttime, while most members were relaxing at camp, I decided to survey the surrounding area for any organisms, mainly terrestrial invertebrates, to photograph. My first observation happened to be the greatest observation of the night. I found the rare two-



Wild Cane (*Gynerium sagittatum*)

By Bryan Ramdeen



Left: Ochro-Rice for lunch, Right: Dan enjoying his Ochro-rice, using leaves from Sea Almond (*Terminalia catappa*) as a plate and a Coconut Palm (*Cocos nucifera*) leaf as a spoon.

By Bryan Ramdeen



Left: Photo of myself snorkeling By Shenelle Ramkhelawan

Right: Rusty Rocksnail (*Stramonita rustica*) By Bryan Ramdeen

tailed spider, whose existence in Trinidad was only recently discovered in the 2012 Bioblitz in Tucker Valley. I do not believe that any photographs were taken of the specimen in 2012, which makes the photos from this trip the first photos taken of this species in Trinidad and Tobago.

On Saturday 24th, we had fourteen members arriving on the day trip. Once they arrived, a briefing was given, and we prepared to hike to the Paria waterfall. It was a scenic trail, filled with our

national flower, the *Chaconia* (*Warszewiczia coccinea*). We took about 30 minutes to reach the waterfall, which was rather powerful due to rain earlier in the morning. The members enjoyed the cool and refreshing water in the pool. We only spent 20 minutes at the waterfall, as rain began to fall again, causing the waterfall and river to become even stronger. Once we made our way out of the trail and back onto the coastline, we ventured to the Cathedral Rock, also called the Paria Arch.



Two-tailed Spider (*Neotama Mexicana*)

By Bryan Ramdeen



Left & Right: Day trip members at the Paria River

By Steven Griffith

We then made our way back to camp, while some members went to the beach and river to bathe until 2:30pm, when the day trip members departed. Later in the evening, Sheldon Edwards cooked a fantastic fish broth while Ivan Hinkson

prepared a delightful coo-coo.

Later at night, I prepared to survey for terrestrial invertebrates once again, this time along the waterfall trail. I observed several spiders, moths, millipedes, and a large scorpion.



Left: Orbweaver (*Micrathena evansi*), Right: Scorpion (*Tityus tenuicauda*) under UV light

By Bryan Ramdeen



Left: Large caterpillar, *Periphoba* sp. Right: Shenelle Ramkhelawan observed this Tropical Carpenter Ant (*Camponotus atriceps*) which was infected by *Ophiocordyceps lloydii* fungus
By Bryan Ramdeen

On Sunday morning, Dan and Chrisalene prepared wraps, made with pita bread, rotisserie chicken, lettuce, cucumbers, corn, sweet peppers, tomatoes, onions and pineapples.

Soon after breakfast we had heavy showers of rain. We proceeded to disassemble our tents and cleared out our camping area, as we needed to be ready for the boats at 2:30pm. After we were done packing up, Dan and Ivan cooked even more food!

They prepared quinoa with red beans, avocado, cucumbers, and potatoes. This was our last activity as the boats arrived and we headed back to the Blanchisseuse Fishing Depot.

Overall, the trip was fun and relaxing for the members. Everyone enjoyed the serenity, and beauty of Paria. 🐜



Left: Wraps with an assortment of fillings, Right: Dan about to eat his wrap
By Bryan Ramdeen



Left & Right: Members enjoying Sunday lunch
By Bryan Ramdeen



General Club Trip, 29 September 2024 HOMAD WATERFALL, GRAND RIVIERE FOREST TRAIL



By Bryan Ramdeen



Group photo before we began the hike
All photos by Bryan Ramdeen

At 6:15am on Sunday 29th of September, members gathered at UWI for the monthly club trip, this time to Homad Waterfall. The weather was sunny, and the skies were clear, indicating good weather for the rest of the day. Fourteen members attended this trip. We departed UWI around 6:30am and began the long drive to Grande Riviere. We arrived at the beginning of the Homad Waterfall trail just after 9:00am, where we saw the first interesting plant of the day, *Chrysothemis pulchella* (sunset bells).

Soon after 9:20am we began the trek to Homad Waterfall, led by Dan Jaggernaut. Dan demonstrated the “tattoo” properties of *Pityrogramma calomelanos* (silver fern or print fern).

Along the way, we saw many species of



Photo of *Chrysothemis pulchella* (Sunset Bells)



Dan demonstrating the “tattoo” properties of the silver fern

plants and animals, especially the golden orbweaver, *Trichonephila clavipes*, which was very abundant along the trail. Plant species such as *Miconia* sp, *Abrus precatorius* (jumbie bead) and *Palicourea* sp were observed along the trail.

After hiking for an hour and a half, we arrived at the Homad Waterfall at 11:00am. The plunge pool was fairly shallow, only around 3 feet in depth.

One member, Steven Griffith had crayfish



Left: One of the many Golden Orbweaver, *Trichonephila clavipes*, we observed along the way, Right: Fat Pork, *Chrysobalanus icaco* seen at the beginning of the trail

**Homad Waterfall**

traps which he used to survey the freshwater species of the Homad Pool. Using chicken bait in his traps, he managed to capture many individuals of two species of crayfish, *Macrobrachium crenulatum* and *Macrobrachium carinus* and one species of fish, *Anablepsoides hartii* (jumping guabine).

While Steven was surveying the freshwater

**Steven Griffith with his crayfish traps*****Anablepsoides hartii* (Jumping Guabine)**



**Top: *Macrobrachium carinus*,
Bottom: *Macrobrachium crenulatum***

pool, I surveyed the environment around the waterfall. There were two morpho butterflies, *Morpho helenor* ssp. *insularis*, neither of which stayed still for a photograph. I observed multiple individuals of the endemic *Mannophryne trinitatis* (yellow-throated frog).

I also saw a moth, *Syngria druidaria*, resting



***Mannophryne trinitatis* (Yellow-throated Frog)**

on a leaf.

I then saw the peculiar looking, Amazon




Syngria druidaria

thorn Spider, *Micrathena schreibersi*, which has hardened spines to protect itself against predators.

We enjoyed the cool and refreshing water



Amazon Thorn Spider, *Micrathena schreibersi*

before it was time to make our way back out of the forest at around 12:30 pm. We all had a lovely day at Homad Waterfall, filled with both leisure and research. 



Bird Group trip, September 15, 2024
WEST COAST SHOREBIRDS (WATERLOO)
By Brandon Woo



The bird group— Elizabeth Seebaran, Jerome Foster, Brian D’Abreau, Dennis De La Rosa, Brandon Woo, Brain Woo, Sean James, Kay Hinkson, Averil Ramchand, Chrisalene Dedier, Merryl See Tai, Avinash Jackree, Davini Oumade Singh, Xavier Ragbir, Garth Ragbir,

All photos by Brandon Woo

Our field trip to the west coast provided us with an excellent opportunity to observe shorebirds in their natural habitat. The timing of our visit during the migration season highlighted the critical role these mudflats play. These intertidal zones serve as feeding stations for migratory birds, enabling them to build up the energy reserves necessary for their long journeys. We observed both resident and migratory species, showcasing the ecological importance of this unique coastal environment.


Shorebirds and Habitat Conservation

Shorebirds play a vital role in maintaining ecosystem balance and are often seen as indicators of environmental health. They depend on a range of habitats, specifically wetlands, mudflats, and coastlines, which need protection across regions for their survival, particularly during migration. These habitats are crucial for feeding and nesting but are increasingly threatened by human activities such as development, pollution, and climate change. Because shorebirds migrate across great distances, their survival requires international collaboration to conserve key stopover sites and migratory corridors.

Importance of the West Coast Mudflats

The mudflats on Trinidad's west coast are among the most crucial stopover points for migratory birds in the Caribbean region. These habitats teem with invertebrates and small organisms, providing the ideal food sources for shorebirds. During the fall migration, species such as plovers, dowitchers, and terns gather here to replenish their energy. The diversity of species we observed on this trip underscores the importance of protecting these habitats, which support both resident and migratory bird populations.

Conclusion

Our birding field trip highlighted the critical importance of conserving the mudflats along Trinidad's west coast, especially during migration. These habitats are essential for the survival of a wide range of species, including both local and migratory birds. Protecting these areas ensures that birds have the resources they need to thrive. This trip was not just a chance to observe these remarkable creatures but also a reminder of the ongoing need for habitat conservation efforts. 



Left top: Common Tern, Right top: Snowy Egret
Left bottom: Black Skimmer, Right bottom: Crested Caracara



Top: Sanderling, Middle: Short-billed Dowitcher, Bottom: Gull-billed Tern

Temple by the Sea, Couva-Tabaquite-Talparo, TT

Sep 15, 2024 6:28 AM - 10:45 AM

Protocol: Traveling

1.79 mile(s)

50 species

American Flamingo 8
 Ruddy Ground Dove 2
 Smooth-billed Ani 1
 Fork-tailed Palm Swift 3
 Black-throated Mango 1
 Copper-rumped Hummingbird 1
 Black-bellied Plover 1
 Semipalmated Plover 3
 Southern Lapwing 5
 Collared Plover 13
 Whimbrel 2
 Short-billed Dowitcher 3
 Willet 20
 Ruddy Turnstone 10
 Sanderling 3
 Least Sandpiper 1
 Laughing Gull 10
 Black Skimmer 15
 Large-billed Tern 15
 Gull-billed Tern 4
 Common Tern 18
 Magnificent Frigatebird 8
 Brown Pelican 8
 Black-crowned Night Heron 2
 Little Blue Heron 2
 Tricolored Heron 1
 Snowy Egret 1
 Great Egret 1
 Scarlet Ibis 40
 Osprey 1
 Gray-lined Hawk 1
 Ringed Kingfisher 1
 Yellow-headed Caracara 2
 Black-crested Antshrike 2
 Yellow-bellied Elaenia 1
 Great Kiskadee 1
 Rufous-browed Peppershrike 1
 White-winged Swallow 14
 Gray-breasted Martin 1
 House Wren 1

Tropical Mockingbird 1
 Spectacled Thrush 1
 Yellow Oriole 1
 Northern Waterthrush 1
 American Redstart 2
 Yellow Warbler 1
 Palm Tanager 2
 Bicolored Conebill 1
 Saffron Finch 10
 Bananaquit 1



NATURE IN THE NEWS

Compiled by Kris Sookdeo



July

Officers from the Multi-Agency Task Force (MATF) and other state agencies are reviewing quarrying sites in an attempt to distinguish legitimate operations from illegal actors. The MATF was formed in 2018 to tackle counterfeit operations, prostitution and gambling. Officers from the Financial Investigations Bureau (FIB) are also working on tracing the movements of money between accounts to determine how many people are benefiting from illegal quarrying under the Proceeds of Crime Act, and officers from the Anti-Corruption Investigations Bureau (ACIB) have been called on to assist in tracing possible connections between public office holders and illegal quarries. According to the MATF, it usually takes between eight to ten months to complete investigations into a single quarry and a recent batch of arrests was the result of a probe which began last December.

August

Energy Minister Stuart Young has indicated that a Request For Proposal will soon be issued to invite interested parties to submit proposals to build solar panels on all illegally quarried lands in northeast Trinidad.


Police officers of the Praedial Larceny Squad (PLS) and Game Wardens from the Forestry Division rescued a wild hog being kept captive in East Grove, Valsayn, and a white faced capuchin in Munroe Road Cunupia.

The Marine Resilience Initiative (MARIN) Tobago initiative has issued a warning that Stoney

Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) is expected to arrive within the region “within a matter of time.” The disease has been described as a “lethal, virulent, highly transmissible disease plaguing hard corals on reefs in the Caribbean region.” It is caused by bacteria and spreads via ocean currents, direct contact and ballast water from ships.

September

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is experimenting with a biological control agent for the control of the Moruga grasshopper (*Cosineuta virens*). Research commenced in 2022 on this biological control agent, *Metarhizium acridum*, an entomopathogenic fungus, which is being manufactured in other countries to control locusts, specifically desert locusts. Laboratory trials began at the Research Division in Centeno in 2022 and 2023, testing NOVACRID, an active ingredient from *M. acridum*, against adults and first stages with 100 per cent mortality within eight days of the laboratory trial. Mortality is specific to locusts and grasshoppers. At the beginning of 2024, the Ministry of Agriculture conducted a field trial using NOVACRID between January and March in Princes Town and Penal.

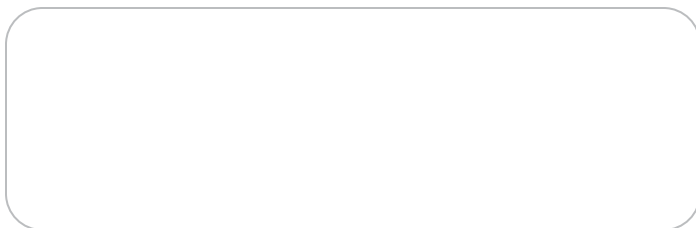
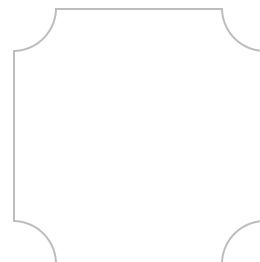
Turtle nests at Courland Beach (aka Turtle Beach) were inadvertently destroyed by a gardener who lit a fire at the beachfront. It is reported that 3 to 5 turtle nests were impacted. 

MANAGEMENT NOTICES

TTFNC COMMUNITY PAGE: A place for members of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club to share their passion for the natural environment <https://community.ttfnc.org/>

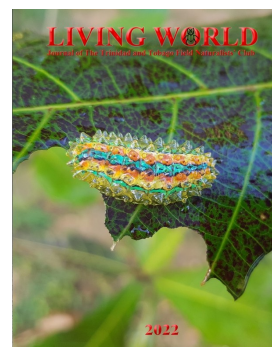
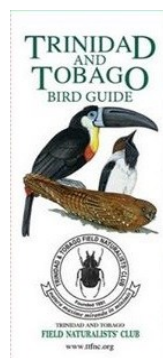
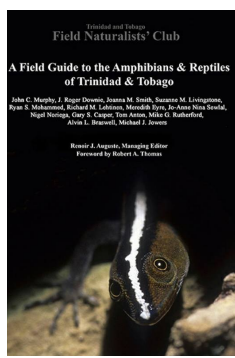
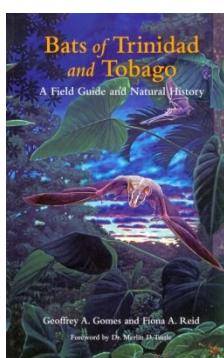
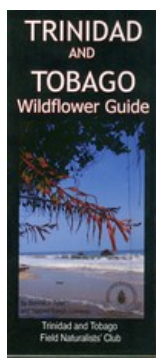
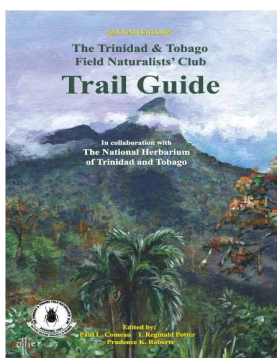
Please send us your ideas and observations to admin@ttfnc.org for inclusion in the next Bulletin!

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PUBLICATIONS

The following Club publications are available to members and non-members (*prices shown are those paid when purchasing directly from the Club*):



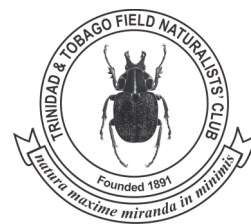
TTFNC Trail Guide (\$150); T&T Wildflower Guide (\$50); Bats of T&T (\$200); Field Guide to Amphibians & Reptiles (\$180); 2022 Living World Journal (\$60); TTFNC Bird Guide (\$50).

MISCELLANEOUS

Your 2024 Annual Membership Fees Are Due:

Please view bottom right of the mailing label to check if your subscription has been paid.

Did you know? It is now possible to renew your membership online? See www.ttfnc.org/funding for details. You can join the club this way, too!



Do you have an article to submit for the next QB?

Submission of articles and field trip reports:

1. All articles must reach the editors by the eighth week of each quarter.
2. Electronic copies can be submitted to the editors at: admin@ttfnc.org or directly to the editors or any member of Management. Please include 'QB2023' in the email subject label.