THE FIELD NATURALIST

Quarterly Bulletin of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

April - June 2009 **Issue No: 2/2009**

Botany Trip to Morne L'Enfer Forest Reserve - October 20, 2007

Lester W. Doodnath

This sunny day found twenty persons of the Botany Group at the southern part of the Morne L'Enfer Forest Reserve in Southern Trinidad. We went southeast on the oil field road, to Los Bajos from the Point Fortin roundabout entrance. We stopped east of Grande Ravine, a few kilometres after the Four Corners Junction. We had come to look for *Aristolochia boosi*, a new plant described to science in 1981 by Julius Boos.

Botany Group, Morne L'Enfer Forest Reserve, Oct 20 2007
Photo courtesy LW Doodnath

Victor Quesnel had suggested that the group look for this plant in Grande Ravine, where Boos first found it. However, we did not get permission to go into Grande Ravine itself, so Hans Boos (the brother of Julius) directed us to a place in the general vicinity where the plant could be found.

This species was originally collected while following a female butterfly, Southern Cattle Heart (*Parides sesostris*), at Palo Seco and Grande Ravine in the south of Trinidad. The plant is a large vine that grows over bushes and up trees. Their unusual flowers may be possibly found in tree canopies (10–15 m above the ground). The flowers of *A. boosii* are smaller than the more common *A. grandiflora*. Each flower has a distinctive sinus that surrounds the petiole, moreover, the ratio of the length of the leaf to its width of the leaf is different.

This plant is eaten by larvae of Southern Cattle Heart (and the Belus Varus (*Battus belus varus*), as well as possibly Lycidas (*Battus lycidas*) butterflies. It occurs only in the southwest peninsula of Trinidad and is the larval food plant of both butterfly species. Its limited distribution may account for the local, limited distribution of these butterflies.

The vegetation that we were going to observe was the Evergreen Seasonal Forest Blackheart - Cocorite (*Clathrotropis brachypetala-Attalea maripa* faciation) (Beard 1946). Approximately 75% of the Grande Ravine area is occupied by natural forest in various stages of degradation; the vegetation along roadsides was mainly short herbaceous vegetation that is maintained by regular mowing or grazing (Petrotrin 2004).

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Morne L'Enfer Forest Reserve Trip - October 20 2007

Lester W. Doodnath

Botany Trip

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We stopped along a road with many oil pipelines. Hans described the plant and showed us associated photographs. We saw several Cocorite palms and then started to search on the right hand side of the road for *A. boosii*. The first plants observed were *Heliconia spathocircinata* and *Piper marginata.*

Then someone spotted *A. boosii*! It grew on both sides of the road, but was more common on the right. As the plant's leaves get older they become hard and waxy, and because it is a climber its flowers are high in the canopy. Hans has only seen the flower at Erin Savanna. We saw caterpillars and butterfly eggs on the leaves, as well as numerous butterflies laying eggs and flying around the plants.

We saw a swallow tailed Papilionid butterfly laying her eggs on a thorny plant from the Piperaceae family. We also saw larvae, disguised as bird faeces**,** from another Papilionid species. We were told that some butterflies, such as the Southern Cattle Heart, may be attracted to carrion, not nectar, and that other butterfly species are attracted to the scent of philodendrons (family Araceae) when they are ready to lay eggs. We also saw the liana, Hunterman's nut, which provides food for a species of *Uranea* sp. butterfly.

We saw our national flower, the Chaconia, fairly common on both sides of the road. On the right side of the road grew *Hyptis* sp. (of the mint family Labiatae). Also seen was *Rudgea hostmanniana*, with apical flowers that grow just beyond a perfect pair of leaves. When fertilised, these flowers turn into the berries observed that hang out from under the leaves. Mahoe saplings were seen in the understorey.

We found remnants of the original forest: young saplings of Blackheart grew amidst *Psychotria biensis* and the common *Costus* sp of Costaceae family. *Gonzalagunia dicocca* was seen in flower: it does not grow in the Northern Range. *Paulina* sp., *Sabicea* sp. (a slender vine) and the weed *Spermacoce latifolia* also grew in the understorey.

The Colombian student Danny Velez collected Sweat bees (family Halictidae) from the low disturbed vegetation amongst the oil pipelines. They are commonly referred to as sweat bees as they are often attracted to perspiration. Other insects seen included the *Morpho pleiade* butterfly and a large spider that found its way to Dan's head.

There was a discussion on *Aristolochia* vs *Uncaria* in terms of thorns, tendrils and venation. The former has no thorns (*Uncaria* has spines that are not opposite), no tendrils and a different venation that starts by the sinus. We saw two unidentified species from the family Rhamnadeaceae the stems were used as toothbrushes (datwaans) in earlier times.

We saw *Ficus guianensis*, a tree with a bristle at the edge of its leaf. The ground orchid, *Spiranthes*

Aristolochia
Photo courtesy LW Doodnath

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Negmawah Beach - May 25 2008

John Lum Young

Club Trip

Once again the mystery trip was to a location never featured on the Club's annual field trip schedule. These "unknown" outings added to the Club's knowledge base. This year's destination, Negmawah Beach, was one of the small isolated beaches of La Vache Bay on Trinidad's north coast.

In response to a question at the trail briefing, Dr. Camacho suggested that Negmawah was probably a Patois/African derivative of Negre Maron or Black Maroon. (Maroon was the name given to slaves who escaped the plantation system and resided in hard to reach areas.)

The first section of trail had been graded and covered with asphalt but road works came to a stop somewhere along the line. Grasses and shrubs have started to reclaim the bulldozed area. A very conspicuous and dominant shrub was *Phytolacca icosandra* with its white flowers. The green spot at the centre of the flower developed into black fruit when ripe. The stems of the plant were green with pink tinges.

Stevland Charles spotted a Trinidad skink or bronze skink (*Mabuya bistriata*) a forest and forest-edge species which preyed on anthropods including grasshoppers, spiders, beetles, roaches, caterpillars and termites. *M. bistriata* was widespread in Trinidad despite having the mongoose as its predator. The dry season was still in full swing and the group discovered a number of intact "skeletons" of beetle and zandolee. A complete snake skin, from eyes to tail, was also observed on the descent to the beach bordered by rows of bare cedar (*Cedrala odorata*) which had shed all their leaves.

La Vache, North Coast Trinidad
courtesy iwcam.org

Charles also spotted the spiny tree lizard *Tropidurus plica* while D. Jaggernauth found a fruit resembling a sea urchin and identified the frog hopper (with the yellow and black stripe) belonging to the order Homoptera.

The barred antshriek or jailbird (so called because of its striped plumage) was spotted. On an open ground a crab eating bird left the remains of its meal. The surrounding forest once housed Negmawah Village. This village was said to be established by ex-slaves following the abolition of slavery in 1834. It was said that former slaves from estates on the outskirts of Port of Spain headed into this wild, inaccessible region and built their homes (Ramanarine 2007).

The tide was out, the water calm so members enjoyed the beach. John Lum Young collected some pacro and showed them to the group before returning to the cars.

Reference:

Ramnarine, Kristy Negmawah – The village that disappeared – *Daily Express July 14th 2007*.

Talisman Road - March 29 2009

John Lum Young

Club Trip

Talisman Energy Inc of Canada secured the concession to explore for oil in the Ecclesville Forest Reserve. In order to access the proposed well site, Talisman constructed a private road along a ridge north of Union Village deep into the Reserve. By 2005 with no oil or gas discovered, Talisman cut their losses. Presumably a condition of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) called for the restoration of the natural habitat. Accordingly Talisman scrapped off the road surface mettle, allowing nature to take its course.

As expected the road eventually became over grown with plants. Though we followed a path created by hunters and others on the former road surface, the width of the road was clearly visible. The packed foundation created a hardpan that made it impossible for roots to penetrate. So grasses, sedges, shrubs and vines prevailed. In footprints and other depressions, the solidly packed earth even held water all year round.

The road was interrupted by a stream; Talisman had removed the bridge and cylinders. At this point the road profile was visible. The foundation was solidly packed with Guaracara limestone explaining why the forest could not reclaim the road, at least not for a few more years.

Off the road, once past the thick vegetation along the verge, the forest was intact with tall branch less trunks shooting for the sky and scanty vegetation on the poorly lit forest floor.
This was seasonal evergreen forest; seasonal because tree growth is restricted in the Dry Season (as opposed to the tropical rain forest where the daily rainfall facilitates continuous growth).

Trees identified included Crappo (*Carapa guianensis*), Mountain Rose (*Brownea coccinea*), Immortelle (*Erythrina poeppigiana*), Hogplum (*Spondias mombin*), Bois mulatre (*Pentaclethra macroloba*), Wild chataigne (*Pachira insignis*), Bois flot (*Ochroma pyramidale*) Pois doux (*Inga sp.*), Sandbox (*Hura crepitans*) and Cuchape (*Coccoloba latifolia*).

Various palms also dotted the forest: Cocorite (*Attalea maripa*), Carat (*Sabal mauritiiformis*), Manac (*Euterpe precatoria*), Roseau (*Bactris major*), Palmiste (*Roystonea oleracea*) and Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*).

Soon after the stream, an overhead rope bridge was spotted - a monkey crossing. Likely another requirement of the EIA, so that canopy dwellers, particularly monkeys, would not take life threatening risks dodging vehicles. Monkeys are extremely quick learners and no doubt they would have used the rope shortly after the aerial bridge was constructed.

In fact a troop of Red Howlers were heard to the west and on our return we heard the band in the east. The shrubbery did not appear disturbed so perhaps the troop used the rope crossing.

Nicholas See Wai and Kay Hinkson identified a number of birds: the Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinia plumbea*) a migratory bird that that could fly from as far south as Argentina, the Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*) a Trinidad resident present over a large swath of territory stretching from southern Mexico to Argentina, the Green Honeycreeper (*Chlorophanes spiza*) another local bird inhabiting from southern Mexico to Brazil and Bolivia and the Blue Dacnis (*Dacnis cayana*) another resident that could be found from southern Nicaragua to northern Argentina.

Many of the shrubs and woody plants were in flower: the whites of Black Sage (*Cordia curassavica*) and Coco Shat (*Solanum torvum*), the pink of the Ti-marie (*Mimosa pudica*), the purple of Vervain (*Strachytarpheta sp.*), the green of Wild Hops,

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Talisman Road - March 29 2009

John Lum Young

Club Trip

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the pale yellow of *Sida acuta* and the brighter yellow of Wild Ochro.

Wild Ochro was by far the dominant shrub. However covering the shrubs were vines. There was a vine belonging to the Potato family but the dominant vine was the legume Kudzu, which thickly populated all open spaces. Quesnel indicated that this vine has a chemical that is extracted and used to wean alcoholics.

Dan Jaggernauth pointed out the bitter tasting Zeb a Pique (*Nuerolaena lobata*) leaf which was an effective fever remedy. He also graphically portrayed that the pinkish purple, hairy fruit of a strange, itchy vine was edible.

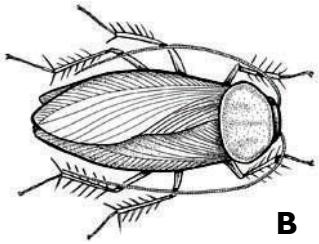
Victor Quesnel crushed the leaf of the *Piper aduncum* to reveal a sweet scent. He also pointed out *Sida acuta* which can be pounded into a poultice for strains and sprains.

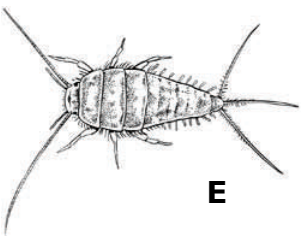
We retraced our steps to end another educational outing.

BG

Can you identify these creatures? Which one is not an insect?
Answers on Page 16

Insect Guide





Mermaid Pool - May 24 2009

John Lum Young

Club Trip

The Club's annual mystery trip normally include the following characteristics – a water feature, a relatively short walk that is not too strenuous and a location never featured on the Club's annual schedule. This year's mystery trip was to Mermaid Pools on the Matura River.

At the trail briefing it was indeed a pleasure to welcome some old stalwarts; Tony James, Eurico Jardim and Luisa Zuniaga. The walk initially passed through cultivated acreage and secondary vegetation. Almost immediately four (4) Channel-billed Toucans (*Ramphastos vitellinus*) were spotted either flying over the open area or perched noisily in the canopy at the edge of the clearing. The Toucan was among the few legally protected birds in Trinidad and Tobago.

Trees identified included Kiskidee (*Vismia laxiflora*) which frequently grows on poor soils, Acacia (*Acacia mangium*) – another poor soil thriver, introduced to restore tree cover on Trinidad's abandoned quarry lands, Pois Doux (*Inga sp.*), Jereton (*Didymopanax morototoni*), Wild Ixora (*Isertia parviflora*), Cuchape (*Coccoloba latifolia*) and Wild Senna (*Senna alata*). On the return, dozens of Cicada were spotted on the *S. alata*. Dan Jaggernauth demonstrated that the pale berry of Soap Vine was edible. Though the fruit was pleasant and mildly sweet, it soon left a "tie-up" after taste in the mouth.

Soon the road entered pine forests with the acreage planted in 1980 clearly sign posted. Among the Caribbean Pine (*Pinus caribaea*) planted in 1981, a side trail that descended to the Matura River, was followed. From pine forest, the vegetation changed to seasonal evergreen and eventually to Mora forest. A White-bearded Manakin (*Manacus manacus*) was spotted. The agitated chirping from more than one bird indicated a nearby manakin lek.

Stephen Smith captured a well camouflaged Dos Cocorite (*Pseustes poecilonotus polylepsis*), about 1m in length, among the Mora saplings above the river's high water mark. This snake was very aggressive and bit Stephen a few times but he secured it and took it home for further study. According to Boos (2001) "Dos Cocorite" meant "cocorite back" and aptly described the leaf-green, high-ridged dorsum of this snake, very much like a single leaflet of the Cocorite Palm (*Attalea Maripa*).

Mermaid Pools consisted of three (3) pools - Lower, Middle and Upper. Lower Pool was approximately 10m long by 5m wide and 2m deep. Middle Pool was longer, wider and deeper. Upper Pool was immaculate with the deep shade adding to its mystical appearance. Some stayed at the Lower Pool while others went on to experience Upper Pool, the deepest and largest of the three. They were not disappointed. Upper Pool was on a bend of the river hemmed in by a downstream point, upstream rapids and a shear wall on the inside of the bend. It was estimated to be 5m deep in the darkest corner, about 12m at its greatest width and roughly 30m long between rapids and point.

After relaxing and enjoying the idyllic settings, the group retraced their steps to the parked vehicles, ending another successful field trip.

References:

Boos, Hans E. A. The Snakes of Trinidad & Tobago *1st Edition, 2001* Texas A&M University Press.

My Trip to La Guyane (Part IV - Final)

Hans E. A. Boos

Feature - serial

Part IV

Day 8: Friday, 26th May 2000

Today was the day set aside for us all to go into the city of Cayenne to do some shopping and see the civilized side of this wild and wonderful country. We also had an appointment to go to see a certain Botanist's private garden where he was cultivating many strange and rare plants.

Getting into the city we changed some money into the local currency, francs, and set off to the local market to see what there was in the way of souvenirs and fruits and vegetables. I wanted to get a leather cutlass case that Joep said should be available. They were made of pure cowhide and came from Brazil. I also hoped to get a good British-made, steel machete.

Cayenne is a bustling, fairly clean little city, and we found ourselves around quite easily, buying what we needed and at times impulse purchasing what we saw. One disturbing aspect that we witnessed was the sale, as a tourist artifact, of a quantity of dried and mounted Spiders in small wooden and glass cases. This species of Theraphosid spider, or as it is popularly called "Tarantula," is *Theraphosa leblondi*. It is the largest species in the world, and unrestrained or uncontrolled collecting, for sale to tourists, will certainly put this species in danger of extinction. I don't expect it will be easy to generate any enthusiasm on the part of the French authorities to pass legislation for the protection of this species of, generally feared, creature. We bought some Rambutan, and joined the throngs of people who were cracking them open as they walked along, and like most people elsewhere in the Caribbean and South America, discarding the inedible outer skins into the gutters.

We met Joep at midday, and we drove to the Doctor's house where we were to have a tour of his garden, but unfortunately he did not keep the appointment and we had to proceed without him. His man-of-business let us in and we had a thorough look around, my interest being sparked mainly by a very strange species of Heliconia plant, and a tiny anole lizard with a pale dorsal stripe that we saw on one of the plants.

Then it was on to a section of the beach that fronts the Atlantic Ocean, to collect a peculiar species of Bromeliad that is found only in that area. Along the sandy beach, much like Matura Beach in Trinidad, there were many of the swift Whiptail lizards, *Cnemidophorus lenmiscatus*, waving their forelimbs in the characteristic way of that species. Joep told me that this population might have consisted of females only, reproduction being accomplished parthenogenetically. This fact is known for several species of this lizard over its range in both North and South America.

The Bromeliads and several specimens of a strange *Diffenbachia* plant were collected. We started back, and I walked along the lower, hard sand of the beach where I saw, above the high-water mark, what I believe to have been the nest of a Leatherback Turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*.

We then drove along a beach road where several large specimens of wild Tannia, *Xanthosoma*, plants were collected. During this collecting, there were stinging ants everywhere, and several bites were added to the ones I already had. These bites were to cause me no end of discomfort, as I seem to be allergic to the toxin that the ants inject with their stings. Past an old Historic Dutch Fort we continued, noting the largest specimens of the Silk-cotton Trees, *Cebia pentandra*, that I can remember seeing, and making a long roundabout return to the house.

That night Julius and I cooked dinner for us all,

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My Trip to La Guyane (Part IV - Final)

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using the vegetables that we had got in the market, and to give Maryka a break from the job she had done admirably to keep us all fed when we returned every day hungry from the field.

Day 9: Saturday, 27th May 2000

We drove up into the Mountains of Caw again, this time going beyond Tresor Reserve. The road wound upward, quite narrow but well paved, and a light drizzle foretold what the day would be. Coming around a sharp bent, our eyes peeled on the road ahead, for we had seen little wildlife crossing the road, except for a brief sighting of what could have been an Agouti, *Dasyprocta leporina*, Julius suddenly cried out, "Tortoise!" I had had a brief glimpse of a small lump in the road, but Joep could not stop immediately, as the road had little or no shoulder at that point. When he could do so safely, he pulled to the side into the roadside bush and Julius and I ran back down the road to confirm what he had seen.

There, exactly where he had spotted it was a small tortoise, feeding on the crushed carcass of an Ameiva lizard, delicately wrenching off small pieces of the flesh. Picking the little Tortoise up, we were amazed to find that it was the species usually found on Savanna and grassland type terrain, and not in mountainous, forested country. It was a juvenile Red-footed Tortoise, *Geochelone carbonaria*.

We walked back to the van, a little puffed from our run back to the sighting, and on the road, was another road-kill, that gave me some sadness. Pasted there, only his back legs crushed, was one of those joyous chorusers of the jungle, *Leptodactylus pentadactylus*. It was dead, but still in fresh condition, a victim of modern technology, and awaiting the ever-present scavengers that cruised the air above, for road-kills seem to be the favorite food of the Turkey Vultures.

Driving on, a speeding car whipped around a bend towards us and in the wake of air behind it we saw the tumbling form of a female *Morpho hecuba*, which seemed to have been hit by the car. It lay on the road, and when we picked it up it appeared to be undamaged, except for a small nick in the hind wing, and was still alive. It was one of the biggest butterflies I have ever seen, and we saved it for release and possible photographs.

A couple of kilometers up the road, we stopped near a saw-mill, and there was a trail going into the bush. As we prepared for the trek, and Joep checked with the saw-mill, for apparently he knew the people there. I took the Morpho and placing her gently on a bush, began to take photos. She posed elegantly, giving me views of both the open and shut wings, the patterns of which were startlingly different. She began to recover, and even flew shakily from low bush to low bush, gathering her strength, and eventually, took wing and disappeared into the jungle.

Shouldering our gear, we set off down this path which soon became a small water-carved track between massive growths of ground Bromeliads and Aroids of several sorts. Bernie scrambled onto a fallen tree trunk and, on instructions from Joep, expertly collected a specimen of some sort of Philodendron, far larger than his small frame. He will be an expert bushman to make his `pa' (as he calls him), proud.

Downwards we went, getting wetter and wetter, thinking about the climb back up, until we came to a large sink-hole in the mountain side, and here was one of the caves in the Caw Mountains, where are found several kinds of unique plants. Joep pointed them out to us, but he warned us to

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My Trip to La Guyane (Part IV - Final)

Hans E. A. Boos

Feature - serial

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be careful how we progressed about in the wet rocky and bush-choked terrain, as there were many poisonous snakes there, mainly species of *Bothrops*.

I was photographing some unique species of *Xanthosoma*, in situ, for Julius, before he collected it, when Joep called out that Bernie had caught a lizard in the cave. Upon examination it was one of the species of Caiman Lizard, *Nuesticurus rudis*. It was about fifteen centimeters long, and so roughly scaled that it deserved its common name.

It lives in the damp, rocky depressions and holes around the mouth of the cave, and I could not but compare the habitat to that of a similar lizard in Trinidad, which I had only recently caught again in the mouth of the Aripo Cave, high in the Northern Range, the fabled Luminous Lizard, the Mountain Teiid, *Proctoporus shrevei.*

Despite the constant rain, I set up my camera and flashes and managed to photograph this unique lizard, and then let it go back to its home in the dank cave.

After we had collected whatever plants were needed and still not damaged the fragile ecology of the area, we were starting to leave when another of the lizards was spotted, but it retreated into a deep water-filled hole, and we could not capture it.

Joep took a momentary detour to show us the most magnificent tree that was perched on the rocky hillside. The buttress roots curled about the towering trunk, and one could easily hide several people within their embrace. It was one of the largest rain-forest trees I had ever seen.

On the long and tiring climb back up to the main road, I saw and captured a male specimen of the little Eared Toad, *Bufo margaretiferus*, and took it back to the house for photographs later. He had no "ears" like his lady friends

.

Back at the van, lunch was a welcome break, and we rested up before we took stock of the plants that had been collected and I took some photographs of them. I examined the little tortoise, comparing it with the others in Joep's collection, and it was beautifully marked, with a much lighter carapace than is usual for the species. Hopefully the photos I took will do it justice.

Day 10: Sunday, 28th May 2000

We had heard that the road to the village of Cacao had been reopened, and we had planned to go there to experience the Sunday market, and to eat Indonesian food, which was reputed to be very good. However as we set off the ominous clouds in the east told us that we may have been in for a bad day. The road was open for sure, but as we drove in towards Cacao, the former week's landslides were very evident. The red bauxite-rich earth rose sheer, up on one side of the road, and we could see where the

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earth-moving equipment had pushed the slides off over the downside of the narrow and winding road.

As we drove along the rain came down, heavier and heavier, the red earth washing in streams across the road, and starting to be leached out of the carved up hillsides. We all had a bad feeling about this, but we pressed on, finally passing through the agricultural fields and Rambutan plantations of the Hmong people who had been resettled there from their native Cambodia. Almost to Cacao, there was a traffic jam, the first we had seen in La Guyane, and all the cars and trucks were waiting at a bridge over the same Comte River that we had boated down a few days previously. The water was up over the bridge, and no one could get over to the village of Cacao. Discretion being the better part of valor, we all voted to turn back, for our flights out of La Guyane were the next day, and it just would not do to be stranded in Cacao by a landslide across the road so that we could not get back out.

It was a good thing we did turn back, for as we wound our way up the hillsides, we could see several landslides that had started after we had passed in, and in one case, there were small trees protruding across parts of the road where they had been carried down by the sliding, red mud. We had the feeling that we had barely made it out in time, as we turned out of the road to Cacao, and headed back to see if we could rescue the day by buying some Chinese food at a Sunday market that is held in a supermarket car-park

.

In this we were successful, and we took home steaming portions of spicy food which was our lunch. Along the way we did not miss the opportunity to collect the seeds of a strange Heliconia-like plant that seemed to grow everywhere on the edges of the swampy ground. It looked almost like a small Traveller's Palm, *Ravenala madagascarensis*. They were, however, *Phenakospermum guyannense*, and I had first seen them in Suriname many years before.

The rest of the day was spent in getting plants ready for travel, and packing for the return journey from a really incredible trip, made doubly so by the expertise of Joep, the company of Bernie, "Doctor Burns," and the hospitality and cooking of Maryke.

It appeared that our caution had paid off, for as the night fell, no traffic was seen coming from the direction of Cacao, and we speculated that the road had indeed been blocked again.

Day 11: Monday, 29th May 2000

We woke early. Julius, Lynn and Mary had a morning flight that would bring them into Miami that night, so they left for Rochambeau, Maryke going along for the ride while I stayed behind as watchman for the house

.

After lunch, I too, was taken to the airport, and I said farewell to Joep, my friend of many years, and our excellent host. I hope to see him soon in Trinidad and return the favor.

With this article we conclude the interesting documentation by Hans Boos of his trip to the French Guyana in 2000.

The Bug Group's *Polistes lanio* Project

Christopher K. Starr

Bug Group

Social-insect colonies undergo a cycle analogous to the life cycle of a multicellular animal. This "colony cycle" shows distinct stages that can be likened to infancy, maturation, maturity and old age.

In the social wasps known as Jack Spaniards (*Mischocyttarus* and *Polistes* spp.). a colony is founded by a queen or small group of queens without the aid of workers. The founding stage ends with the emergence of the first adult workers, after which the colony goes in a stage of rapid growth. It has long been supposed that the founding stage is a time of great peril, in which the risk of colony failure is especially high. This makes biological sense, but it has not been quantitatively demonstrated.

Fortunately, there is a way to test this propostion without the hard labour of frequently monitoring a great number of founding-stage colonies. A nest does not disintegrate when the colony does, and if left undisturbed it may persist for years. Furthermore, a quick examination shows whether a given nest has produced any adults, and a closer examination can even show how many have emerged from it.

We collected all accessible old nests -- 450 of them -- from four buildings at the UWI Field Station near Champs Fleurs and examined them in the laboratory. The size-frequency distribution of these amounts to a colony-level life table, analogous to those used in life insurance and population biology. As expected, this shows a great many small nests and fewer and fewer large ones. It also shows that about 43% of colonies do not make it past the founding stage.

What the data do not show is the absolute time schedule of the life table, as it is very unlikely that nest growth is uniform throughout the cycle. Accordingly, our next task is to monitor the growth and survivorship of a sample of colonies at intervals over about a year.

In addition, we are interested to know whether there is an abrupt switch between the production of workers and reproductive individuals (queens and males), as predicted by the "bang-bang" model of the colony cycle.

Photos from top: Polistes on nest, (copyright W.C. Rodriguez), Nest of P. lanio and Nest with a dead adult visible in the cell (courtesy Shane T. Ballah)

Tropical Flowers; why the poor relations?

John and Margaret Cooper

Nature Note

Many TTFNC members will have seen or read "The Letters of Margaret Mann" by Danielle Delon, published by the National Museum and Art Gallery, Port of Spain, in 2008. This book is based upon the correspondence of Margaret Mann, a young British lady from the island of Guernsey who during her time on Trinidad was taught water-colour painting by Michel Jean Cazabon.

Although Margaret Mann was not a naturalist, she included in her letters observations on local animals and plants. One of these, on page 148, provides some insight into her feelings about local (West Indian), flowers:-

"I have a nosegay of wild flowers now on the table but they are so thoroughly un-English that though I cannot deny them admiration, I feel not the least affection for them nor would I waste a minute to preserve their lives, while I cherished my roses and *jessamine* and *mignonette* to their last hour!."

It is interesting to note the disdain with which Margaret Mann viewed the local flora on Trinidad in comparison with those with which she was familiar at home. One of us (MEC) recalls that when first living in Africa, the one thing she missed from home was the sight of delicate English spring flowers. This is so reminiscent of Robert Browning, who in the last stanza of his "Home thoughts, from Abroad" wrote "The buttercups, the little children's dower – Far brighter than this gaudy melon–flower".

Is this attitude towards tropical flowers a peculiarly British trait or have others experienced the same feelings? Have West Indian members of the TTFNC who have lived in Europe acquired any deep feelings for the local plants or, instead, have they constantly yearned for the bright, often gaudy, inflorescences along with the bright light and blue skies that are so much a part of these islands?

JEC / MEC
23 March 2009

Photos from left:

Victor Quesnel (foreground) and C. K. Starr count nest cells;

Nests laid out for further analysis in the Prof. Peter Bacon Lab, Life Sciences Department, UWI

(photos courtesy Shane T. Ballah)

Morne L'Enfer Forest Reserve Trip - October 20 2007

Lester W. Doodnath

Botany Trip

(Continued from page 3)

acaulis, was seen, and this was widespread in the area. A picturesque sight was a Cajuca tree festooned with a purple flowering vine of the Bignonaceae family, around which there were many butterflies.

Birds heard calling or seen included an unknown Trogon, the Squirrel Cuckoo, Golden-headed Manakin and the Crested Oropendola.

We stopped by an oil-polluted river where there were several fish and other aquatic organisms such as *Hoplias* sp., *Poecilia* sp., *Astynax bimaculata*, *Corydoras* sp. and *Macrobranchium* prawns.

Several palms grew in the area, including the Wait-a-while, Roseau, the Royal, Carat, Euterpe and Banga palms.

It was a successful day because we accomplished our mission of finding *A. boosii*, which was not a very difficult task after all since the plant seems to be fairly common at our location.

References;

Beard, J. S. 1946. *The Natural Vegetation of Trinidad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kew Bulletin 1981 Vol. 30 (2) (1981) 231-233

Barcant, M. 1970. *Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago.*London: Collins, 1970.

Mitigating the Health, Safety and Environmental Risks of an Enhanced Oil Recovery Project in a Tropical Forest
Francois Khan, Jens Sastoo, Vernon Ramlogan, Kelvin Ramnath
Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (2004)
http://ipec.utulsa.edu/Conf2004/Papers/khan_sastoo_ramlogan_ramnath.pdf

Larvae of the Southern Cattle Heart butterfly on leaves of *Aristolochia boosii*, (Photo courtesy K Dass),
Heliconia spathocircinata (Photo courtesy K Dass),
Hans Boos speaks to the groip before they set off. (Photo courtesy L.W Doodnath

Morne L'Enfer Forest Reserve Trip - October 20 2007

Lester W. Doodnath

Botany Trip

Species listing of plants encountered along the trail - Morne l'Enfer Forest Reserve - Botany Group trip on October 20 2007

Family	Scientific name	Common name
Apocynaceae	*Tabernaemontana sp.*	
Aristolochiaceae	*Aristolochia boosii*	Dutchman's Pipe
Boraginaceae	*Cordia panamensis*	Hairy Lay Lay
	Cordia sp.	
Costaceae	*Costus sp.*	Ginger
Euphorbiaceae	*Omphalea triandra.*	Hunterman's nut
Heliconiaceae	*Heliconia spathocircinata*	Heliconia
Labiatae	*Hyptis sp.*	
Leguminosae	*Clathrotropis brachypetala*	
Moraceae	*Ficus guianensis*	Ficus
Myristicacae	*Virola surinamensis*	Cajuca
Orchidaceae	*Spiranthes acaulis*	Orchid
Palmae	*Attalea butyracea*	Banga
	Attalea maripa	Cocorite
	Bactris major	Roseau
	Desmoncus sp.	Wait-a-while
	Euterpe sp.	Euterpe
	Roystonia olercea	Royal
	Sabal mauritiformis	Carat
Piperaceae	*Piper marginata*	
Polygonaceae	*Coccolaba latifolia*	
	Coccoloba sp.	
Rhamnadeaceae	Unidentified species	
Rubiaceae	*Hemidiodia ocymifolia*	
	Gonzalagunia dicocca	
	Psychotria bahiensis	
	Rudgea hostmanniana	
	Sabicea s.	
	Spermacoce assurgens	
	S. latifolia	
	Uncaria tomentosa	
	Warscewiczia coccinea	
Sterculiaceae	*Sterculia pruriens*	Mahoe

Lecture Series

Lecture Series

Abstract

At the meeting on March 12th, Dr. Lise Winer gave a talk to the Club titled "Historical Strategies for Fauna Names in Trinidad & Tobago." Based on over 2000 common names for almost 1200 species of fauna, she utilized data from her newly published *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* to examine naming practices after European contact. Origins range from imported names (e.g. *kingfisher*), and modification of imported language names (e.g. *Trinidad robin)*, to new inventions (e.g. *postman*), and indigenous names (e.g. *agouti*). Zoonyms were analyzed by contributing languages (English, French, English Creole, Amerindian, Spanish, Afric and Indic) – the majority being from English but a sizable number from French; and types of descriptor: a) habitat (e.g. *mangrove crab*), b) locality (e.g. *Tucuche adelpha*); c) association (e.g. *cocoa beetle*); d) sound (e.g. *kiskadee*); e) colour (e.g. *jaune d'abricot*); f) appearance (e.g. *two-headed snake*); g) resemblance (e.g. *mapepire zanana*); h) difference (e.g. *greater Trinidadian fruit bat*); i) behaviour (e.g. *calling crab*); j) namesake (e.g. *guppy*); and k) use (e.g. *fry-dry*). It was proposed that incoming colonizing populations used a "principle of similarity" to decide on the closeness of new fauna to fauna they already knew, with preference given to already known, imported names; then to modifications of existing names and inventing new names from known categories; and finally use of indigenous names for unfamiliar fauna too strange or difficult to describe. Examples of obscure derivations were also explored, such as *semp* from the French gold coin *louis d'or simple*, and *jashwaar* from Patois *zanchois* from French *les anchois* 'anchovies'.

Web sites worth checking out::

http://www.naturetrekkt.com/gallery/tabid/632/default.aspx
A good source of nature photos for Trinidad and Tobago

http://ttfnc.org/gallery/
The Club's own photo gallery is up and running

http://www.tramz.com/tt/tt.html
Everything you ever wanted to know about the history of trams and trains in Trinidad

BG Insect Guide - Answers:

A - Goliath Beetle (Coleoptera) B - Cockroach (Blattaria) C - Caterpillar of the Tetrio sphinx month (Lepidoptera) D - Centipede (Chilopoda) E - Silverfish (Thysanura)

Did you guess the centipede! That's right centipedes are not insects but are arthropods belonging to the class Chilopoda and the Subphylum Myriapoda

Management Notices

New members; Volunteers; Publications

Management Notices

New and Returning Members

The Club warmly welcomes the following new members:

Ordinary members:

Brent Proudfoot, Yves Johnson, Judy Orosco-James, Dr. Nadine Thompson, Dr. Shirene Melissa Singh, Dr. Asanna Gibbons

New Website

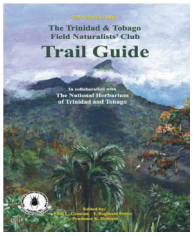
The Club has transferred to a new domain name and email address. The change allows us more space and greater control to reach out to the public and stay in touch with members.

Website: www.ttfnc.org **Email:** admin@ttfnc.org

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

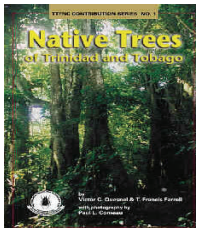
PUBLICATIONS

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



The TTFNC Trail Guide

Members = TT$200.00

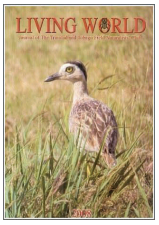


The Native Trees of T&T

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

Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club
P.O. Box 642, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

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:	• Times New Roman
2	Font Size:	• 12 point
3	Maximum Length:	• 1,750 words (approx. 3 pages unformatted)
4	Content	• 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.
5	Photographs	• Provide images in the following format JPEG, BMP, PICT, TIFF, GIF • Images **must** not be embedded into the word processing files. • Information on the image content including names of individuals shown **must** be provided.
6	Format	• Acceptable formats for electronic submissions are doc and txt.
7	Deadline	• All articles **must** reach the editor by the ninth week of each quarter. • Submission deadline for the 3rd Quarter 2009 issue: **September 14 2009.**
8	Email	• Electronic copies can be submitted to the editor at shane.ballah@gmail.com or to admin@ttfnc.org • Include the code **QB2009-3** in the email subject label.
9	Hard copies	• Hard copies can be delivered to the editor or any member of the Management Committee.