

# Love of nature in the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club: A legacy of 130 years and counting

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Natural history can help foster an intimate understanding of Earth's delicate life-sustaining balance, and I believe that this profound connection with nature can assist in cultural change towards a future in which humans and the rest of nature thrive in harmony. Natural history organizations and institutions thus have an important role to play in shaping society.

Immersed in the intricate dance of life on our planet, the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club (TTFNC) is built on a legacy – 130 years old and counting – of encouraging a deep respect for nature. This well-regarded natural history organization is among the world's oldest and boasts of a repository cherished by both local and global experts. The organization's publications vary widely, from pocket field guides to species monographs, which underscores a commitment to empowering both citizen scientists and specialists alike.

With the motto "Nature is most to be admired in the smallest things," the organization is dedicated to cultivating a sense of Earth care through the exploration of the world around us and the conservation of all life-forms. The TTFNC's growing legacy demonstrates how cultivating a love of nature can help shape a harmonious relationship between humanity and the Earth.

The TTFNC has contributed to a diverse range of activities, including: environmental data collection; species and habitat conservation initiatives; and campaigns to raise public awareness. Over the years, through the organization's work, detailed knowledge has been accumulated of Trinidad and Tobago's diverse species and ecosystems, enabling the formulation of effective management plans, policies and legislation.

The TTFNC champions active community engagement in data collection and analysis (e.g. in our yearly ‘bioblitzes’), as well as in the incorporation of indigenous knowledge. This collaborative approach not only enhances scientific understanding but also helps citizens develop a deeper connection with the Earth’s living systems. Educational materials produced for nature-engagement activities aim to reinforce learnings, helping ensure that the benefits, both for field naturalists and wider communities, last in the long term.

Finally, it is also significant that the practice of natural history continually yields new knowledge and enhances the skills of individuals. Such skills can help individuals pursue sustainable careers in fields such as environmental consultancy, ecological field work, community-based environmental activities and eco-tourism.



A photo of a white-lined tanager eating a balisier flower, taken by a member of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists’ Club (photo © Rishi Goordial).