



THE FIELD NATURALIST

Quarterly Bulletin of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

April – June 2018

Issue No: 2/2018



Marine Group Report, 2 June 2018 DOWN THE ISLANDS EXPEDITION by Marianna Rampaul



With a forecast for sunny skies and calm seas, a mixed group of snorkelers and divers set off early to explore the biodiversity of the islands off Chaguaramas (**Down de Islands**). Later however, we would be reminded of just how unpredictable the seas could be. After a quick safety briefing and securing of gear on this packed boat of ten, we headed for our first of two

sites; Doc's Residence at Chacachacare and Church Cove at Gaspar Grande.

After finding a sandy patch to drop anchor, the six snorkelers jumped into the water to make room for the divers to kit up. Just as the divers back rolled into the water, we were alerted to the calls

(Continued on page 3)



Queen Angelfish (*Holacanthus ciliaris*) Photo by Marianna Rampaul

Inside This Issue

- 1** Marine Group Report
DOWN THE ISLANDS (DDI) EXPEDITION
- Marianna Rampaul
- 3** **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**
- 5** Marine Group Report
SNORKELLERS' PERSPECTIVE: A QUICK CHANGE OF EVENTS
- Stephanie Warren-Gittens
- 6** June 2018
HERPETOLOGY GROUP TRIP TO FREEPORT
- Renoir Auguste
- 8** Club Trip Report
FIELD TRIP TO LOS IROS MUD VOLCANO
- Nicholas See Wai
- 10** **MANGROVE REPLANTING INITIATIVE**
- Justine Deonarine
- 11** **YOUR IDEAS AND OBSERVATIONS**
- 12** **PRESIDENT VISITS CLUB'S BOOTH AT THE HORTICULTURAL SHOW**
- Selwyn Gomes
- 13** A Naturalist In...
HOME IS WHERE THE HEART SINGS
- Christopher Starr
- 15** **NATURE IN THE NEWS**
Compiled by Kris Sookdeo
- 16** Conference Report
LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN CONGRESS FOR CONSERVATION BIOLOGY 2018
- Keshan Mahabir
- 18** **CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. DIVA AMON (FOR WINNING THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DEEP SEA RESEARCH)**
- 19** **INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF 2018**
- Farahnaz Solomon & Amy Deacon
- 23** **Management Notices**

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 opinion and views of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

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Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club

April - June 2018

Editors

Laura Baboolal, Stephanie Warren-Gittens
Associate Editor: Rupert Mendis

Contributing writers

Kris Sookdeo, Renoir Auguste, Marianna Rampaul, Christopher Starr, Nicholas See Wai, Jerome E. Foster, Keshan Mahabir, Stephanie Warren-Gittens, Farahnaz Solomon, Amy Deacon, Selwyn Gomes, Justine Deonarine.

Photographs

Marianna Rampaul, Stephanie Warren-Gittens, Rainer Deo, Jerome E. Foster, Renoir Auguste, Selwyn Gomes, Alexis Marianes, Jahson Alemu I, Jaime Lee Loy, SpeSeas, Laura Baboolal, Diego Noguera, Nicholas See Wai.

Design and Layout

Eddison Baptiste and Amy Deacon

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Management Committee 2018/2019

President	Renoir Auguste	761-9197
Vice-President	Palaash Narase	751-3672
Treasurer.....	Selwyn Gomes	624-8017
Secretary	Amy Deacon	390-0826
Assist-Secretary	Danielle Morong	768-7666
Committee members ...	Dan Jaggernauth	659-2795
	Kris Sookdeo	647-5556
	Laura Baboolal	705-8716

Contact us!

Email: admin@ttfnc.org

Website: www.ttfnc.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ttfieldnaturalistsclub

YouTube: www.tinyurl.com/ttfnc

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



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



The club warmly welcomes the following new members:

Celeste Herbert
Avinash Jackree
Bunty O'Connor
Patrick Brown
Omar Seetahal

Mark Hulme
Leonard Chan Chow
Nicholas Farah
Vijai Ramdhan
Christenthia Lake

DOWN THE ISLANDS (DDI) EXPEDITION

(Continued from page 1)

of the snorkel group who were now beyond view past the eastern point of the bay. Assuming they were caught in a current, the divers huddled at the surface as Captain Paul left to retrieve the snorkelers. We chose not to begin our dive until the snorkelers were safely returned just in case there was some other incident that would have required us to return to the mainland. The boat eventually rounded the point, returning all snorkelers to the shelter of the bay.

After ensuring all was well, the four divers descended. Visibility was moderate to poor in some areas and certainly tested our navigational skills. Nevertheless, there was a wide array of marine life for us to enjoy. As expected, the main species of coral which colonize our turbid local waters were present here; massive starlet coral (*Siderastrea siderea*), finger coral (*Porities sp.*), solitary disc coral (*Scolymia wellsii*) and even one hidden cup coral (*Phyllangia americana americana*).

There was however significantly more algae present than on our last trip to both sites in June, 2017. This may be due to several factors, such as higher nutrient levels or temperatures, reduced grazing activity or some other factor which favoured algae growth. The most common algae observed at Chacachacare was green turf algae. Algal diversity was greater at Church Cove and included Y-branched algae (*Dictyota spp.*), red algae (*Holocanthus ciliaris*), red finger algae (*Halymenia elongata*), green feather alga (*Caulerpa sertularioides*), white scroll alga (*Padina*

sanctae-crucis) and sargassum (*Sargassum spp.*). These species are all part of a healthy reef community when kept in balance.

Another species which must be kept in check is the invasive red lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) one of which was spotted lurking under some rocks at Chacachacare. Despite the lionfish's presence, there was an abundance of fish life, which included schools of tomtate grunts (*Haemulon aurolineatum*), french angelfish (*Pomacanthus paru*), gobies, harlequin bass (*Serranus baldwini*), porkfish (*Anisotremus virginicus*), queen angelfish (*Holocanthus ciliaris*), and an eyed flounder (*Bothys ocellatus*). Also, very common at this site were the curious and curious-looking yellowline arrow crabs (*Stenorhynchus seticornis*) which seemed as interested in us as we were in them.



Yellowline arrow crab Photo by Marianna Rampaul

Our second site, Church Cove provided more shelter from the currents and improved visibility, at least at shallower depths. We divers still had to use our noise makers to keep tabs on one another in the poorer visibility of deeper water.

Marine life encountered included numerous harlequin bass (*Serranus baldwini*), whose black and yellow colouration helped them blend in with the finger coral and rubble substrate. Also present were bigeye scad (*Selar crumenophthalm*), a web burrfish (*Chilomycterus antillarum*) spotted by the snorkelers and numerous colourful sponges. Some creatures were more cryptic than others, requiring a keen eye to spot them such as an inquisitive yellowhead jawfish (*Opistognathus aurifrons*) peeking out from its burrow or the well camouflaged toadfish (*Opsanus sp.*) sharing similar colouration and texture as the rubble and algae around it.

While exploring each site, both snorkelling and the dive teams collected garbage to help reduce the amount of pollution on the reefs and commemorate International Year of the Reef 2018. Church Cove was significantly more polluted, due to its greater accessibility and popularity among visitors. It was however shocking to find many car tyres strewn about the sea floor, at least sixteen were counted but there were many more. We were able to recover 37 pieces of garbage (approximately 6.83lb) which was logged under the TTFNC Marine Group's profile on Nature Conservancy's Clean Swell clean up app. It is intended to continue logging clean-up efforts on future trips.



While there was still significant garbage

While there was still significant garbage

Glass bottles colonized by bryozoans and worms and massive starlet coral, *Siderastrea siderea*

Photos: S. Warren-Gittens and M. Rampaul.

left behind, we were delighted to observe marine life actually colonizing trash (mainly glass bottles), turning pollution into foundations for new growth and integrating them into the reef structure. 



Mat zoanthids, *Zoanthus pulchellus* among finger coral, *Porites sp.* Photo by Stephanie Warren-Gittens

Details of clean-up effort for Doc's Residence and Church Cove (2nd June 2018)

Group: TTFNC-International Year of the Reef T&T (IYORTT)

Duration: 2 hours

Number of people: 8

Approximate weight of trash: 6.83 pounds

Actual weight (with encrusting material): 14 pounds

Items collected	Totals
Fishing gear	1
Food wrappers	3
Beverage cans	2
Bottles (plastic)	7
Bottles (glass)	10
Utensils	1
Plastic/foam pieces	4
Other packaging	2
Other trash	4
Total pieces	34



Marine Group Trip, 2 June 2018

SNORKELLERS' PERSPECTIVE: A QUICK CHANGE OF EVENTS



by Stephanie Warren-Gittens

This marine group trip, was again divided into divers and snorkelers. The snorkelers quickly donned their masks and fins, on arriving at Doc's Residence, to make way for the divers to gear up. And so, the five snorkelers splashed in to the water heading to the west of the bay, as the current at that time, was moving in a west to east direction. As such, it would bring us back to the boat, when our energy levels would be lower after some time in the sea. After a couple fin kicks, however, we quickly discerned that our current predictions were a bit off and that there was a current coming in from the east taking us further along land. We hadn't realized at the time how strong it was until we attempted to head back closer to the boat; we then became aware that we were further out than we'd like to be.

After some futile attempts at fighting the current towards the boat, one of the snorkelers, signalled to the boat captain with a blow of the whistle (good thinking on Marianna's part ensuring that at least one of us had one). The boat captain came to our rescue and all five snorkelers, made it safely back on the boat. We returned to our previous position, where the divers were awaiting us to ensure that everyone was safe, before diving into the depths. Some of the snorkelers braved re-entry into the water immediately; they did so however towards the east of the boat and closer to land. This time we continued incident free.

While I collected some bottles and cans from the seafloor, in keeping with this year's World Oceans' theme #beatplasticpollution, some of the others were busy chasing a sting ray, with the hope of catching it on video. We returned to the boat upon surfacing of the divers and then we were off to the other site, Church Cove at Gaspar Grande. On the boat ride there, Richard quickly pointed out the rock he clung to, briefly recapping his own adventures with currents a couple years ago on Huevos Island.

At Church Cove, the snorkelers again entered the water before the divers. This time however, there were only four, as one of the group abandoned us for the divers. Here, we kept to the rocky coastline, with nothing too exciting happening except for some blennies and a burrfish, who didn't want to be photographed, but to his



Web burrfish, *Chilomycterus antillarum* Photo by annoyance I stole a War of Gittens

After a bit, the snorkelers returned to the boat and awaited the bubbles of the divers signalling their return. Unfortunately for us, a turtle quickly made an appearance with a few brief moments surfacing for air on the divers return in the boat. We missed a chance to have a little swim with him. 



16 June 2018

HERPETOLOGY GROUP TRIP TO FREEPORT

by Renoir Auguste



Phyllomedusa trinitatis Photo by Rainer Deo

On Saturday 16th June 2018 the herpetology group had its first trip for the year. The location was at Freeport on an estate shared with the El Socorro Wildlife Centre. Club member Rainer Deo works with them and negotiated access to the estate. It was a small group and the members got there at about 4:30 pm. After a brief walk during daylight, we set out just after 6pm to look for nocturnal species. The estate has various trails with trees, shrubs, ponds and streams which provide ideal habitat for a variety of wildlife. After walking along the trails and just off them, we observed 14 frog species, 3 lizard species, one snake species and a spectacled caiman. (A list of species seen can be found on page 7).

At around 9pm we paused for dinner as Rainer's aunt invited us over for some curry for the religious celebrations occurring that weekend. We were

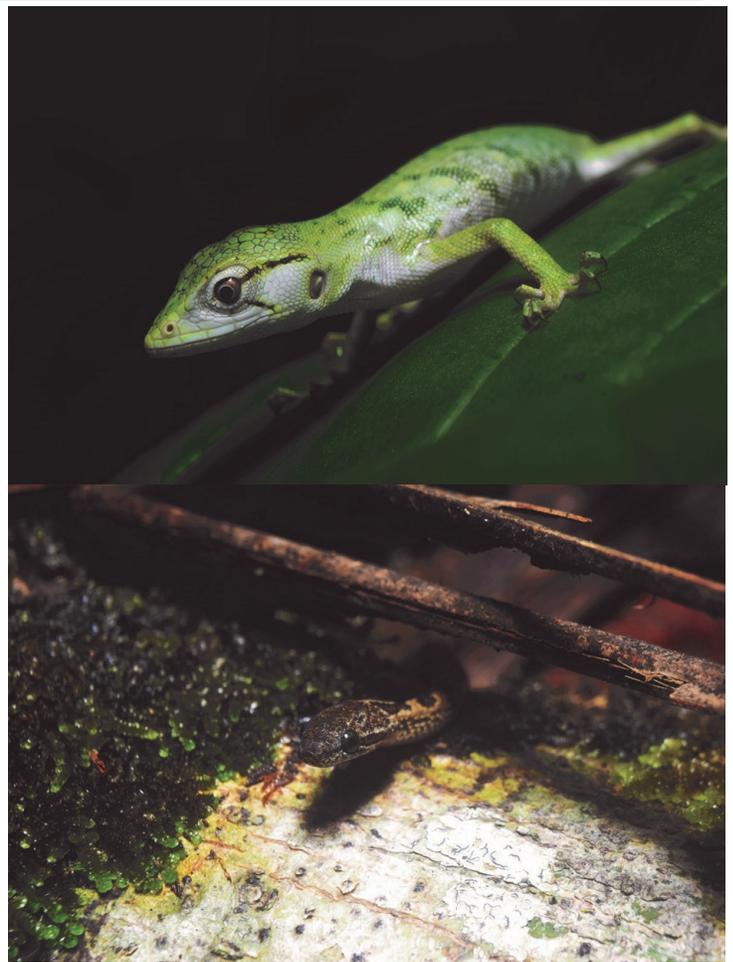
grateful she lived nearby. The good food made the night that much more fantastic and we were fuelled up to go out again. However, we first had to relocate a milky tree frog from her house to a nearby pond where we heard other frogs calling.

We then decided after seeing a variety of species in the area to stay there and have a look around instead of going back to the estate. The area consisted mainly of open fields with ponds and shrub/grass. We were rewarded for having a look around in the area as we managed to spot a cat-eyed snake predating on a whistling frog! Two consecutive herpetology trips, two observations of predation. Can we keep it up for future trips?

You can learn more about the amphibians and reptiles we spotted by getting a copy of the club's new publication, *A Field Guide to the Amphibians & Reptiles of Trinidad and Tobago!* 

LISTING OF SPECIES SEEN ON THE TRIP

Scientific name	Common name
Amphibians	
<i>Rhinella beebei</i>	Beebe's toad
<i>Rhinella marina</i>	Marine toad
<i>Dendropsophus microcephalus</i>	Small-headed treefrog
<i>Dendropsophus goughi</i>	Gough's treefrog
<i>Boana punctatus</i>	Polka-dot treefrog
<i>Scarthyia vigilans</i>	Maracaibo basin treefrog
<i>Scinax ruber</i>	Lesser brown treefrog
<i>Sphaenorhynchus lacteus</i>	Lime treefrog
<i>Trachycephalus typhonius</i>	Milky treefrog
<i>Phyllomedusa trinitatis</i>	Leaf-nesting frog
<i>Adenomera</i> sp	Lesser dark-spotted thin-toed frog
<i>Engystomops pustulosus</i>	Tungara frog
<i>Leptodactylus fuscus</i>	Whistling frog
<i>Leptodactylus validus</i>	Garman's thin-toed frog
Lizards	
<i>Polychrus audoboni</i>	Multi-coloured lizard
<i>Anolis planiceps</i>	Jungle anole
<i>Gonatodes humeralis</i>	Spot-nosed gecko
Snake	
<i>Leptodeira annulata</i> ashmeadi	Cat-eyed snake
Crocodilian	
<i>Caiman crocodilus</i>	Spectacled caiman



(Top) *Polychrus audoboni* ; (Bottom) *Leptodeira annulata ashmeadi* Photos by Rainer Deo.



Trachycephalus typhonius Photo by Renoir Auguste



Boana punctatus Photo by Rainer Deo



Club Trip 27 May 2018

FIELD TRIP TO LOS IROS MUD VOLCANO

By Nicholas See Wai



On the morning of Sunday May 27th 2018, 23 members of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club journeyed to south Trinidad for the May 2018 field trip to the Los Iros Mud Volcano. This trip was classified as an easy one. Our trip leader for the day was Dan Jaggernaut. On the way to the volcano, members of the club made a detour to Los Iros Beach. I ventured down to the shoreline that was covered with sargassum seaweed, stretching as far as the eye could see. I had previously seen sargassum seaweed before, but not on South Trinidad's coast.

After waiting for some more members to catch up, the convoy made its way to the meeting point, which was not too far away from the mud volcano. The members parked their cars on a quiet road that was surrounded by farmers' crops. Since the area had no pipe-borne water, the farmers had to make use of ponds where the water was stored. After a briefing from Dan, the members then set off on the very short walk to the volcano. This mud volcano was actually a lot different from others I had seen in the past. It was in a hole in the ground. The walls of the volcano were about a foot deep. Mud could be seen bubbling up every few seconds.

A mud volcano is a landform that is created when mud erupts from the ground. Mud volcanos are not igneous and do not produce lava. The mud is created when hot water which has been heated below the earth's surface mixes with subterranean mineral deposits. The mud is then forced upwards through a geological fault. The area around the Los Iros mud volcano showed signs of previous eruptions. There was also no tree cover.

After spending some time around the volcano, Dan led the group down to the beach, which was not too far away. Upon reaching the cliff next to the beach, Dan tied a long yellow rope to a tree for our use, since there was no easy way to walk down to the shore. Upon reaching the shore, more sargassum seaweed was seen. There was an odour and also flies in abundance. Once again members explored the area. The wind was very strong, and the seawater was rough.

After leaving the beach and climbing back up the cliff, the members returned to Los Iros Beach.. Reg Potter had heard of a very unusual event that had happened on the beach over a period of months. Part of the shoreline had been forced upwards by geological activity, leaving a huge mound of mud. The mud was hard and dry, allowing members to climb and walk onto to it. Once on the top of the mound, members had a clear view of the windswept, seaweed-covered shoreline. Since we were on Los Iros Beach, we were just in time to see some wind-surfing. There were several people who had gathered on the beach to partake in this activity. It seemed fitting, since the wind was very strong on the beach. At this point the sun was very hot, so members decided to call it a day. This brought an end to another successful field trip! 🐜



The beach at Los Iros with heavy presence of *Sargassum* by Nicholas See Wai



23-24 October 2018
MANGROVE REPLANTING INITIATIVE
by Justine Deonarine



The Environmental Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning in collaboration with the Institute of Marine Affairs successfully undertook a mangrove replanting exercise on Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th of June 2018.

Over thirty volunteers and representatives from both agencies participated in the collection and replanting of approximately 1154 mangrove

seedlings. The seedlings were collected from the Caroni Swamp in the vicinity of the Visitor's Centre on Saturday morning and were subsequently replanted on Sunday morning at the Brickfield mudflats. The seedlings were planted to slow or prevent erosion of the man-made headlands at the Brickfield Fishing Facility and the coastline just south of the fishing facility. 



Volunteers participating in the mangrove replanting initiative *by Justine Deonarine*



Your
Ideas and Observations
A Quarterly Update

A sighting of a pair of neotropical river otters, *Lontra longicaudis*, in the Aranguz agricultural estate.

On October 2nd, 2017, I spotted a pair of neotropical river otters (*Lontra longicaudis*) near midday in the Aranguz agricultural estate, south of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway. The pair were seen near a lot of farm land that had been transformed into a large freshwater pond by recent heavy rains. One otter was keeping watch while the other frolicked in the grasses near a shed bordering the pond. Upon being sighted, both fled to the safety of the shed, and subsequently entered the water. A truly rare sight and I can only assume these were transient residents, originating from either of the adjacent Caroni or San Juan rivers, which had probably overflowed their banks during the rains. 

Jerome E. Foster



Otter frolicking in the grasses



Otter keeping watch Both photos by Jerome E. Foster.

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



28-29 APRIL 2018 PRESIDENT VISITS CLUB'S BOOTH AT THE HORTICULTURAL SHOW



Dan Jaggernaut makes a presentation to Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago *Photos by Selwyn Gomes.*



'Naturalist in' Series
HOME IS WHERE THE HEART SINGS
A Review by Christopher K. Starr



Photo by
Rishi Bajpai

Review of S. Theodore Baskaran 1999. *The Dance of the Sarus*. New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press 240 pp. [45th in a series on "naturalist-in" books; see www.ckstarr.net/reviews_of_naturalist.htm]

Theodore Baskaran was born in 1940 in the village of Dharapuram, Tamil Nadu state in southern India, where he spent a happy childhood outdoors in what was mostly an arid scrubland. As a career civil servant, he traveled on assignment to various parts of India. In addition to being a noted amateur naturalist and conservationist, he is a leading historian of Tamil-language film and writes extensively in both Tamil and English.

The book's primary pole is Tamil Nadu, and its geographic focus is unavoidably the Western Ghats. This 1600 km mountain range running up the western edge of India was visible in the distance during his childhood. The Western Ghats, with the famed Nilgiri Hills – an important tea-growing area - - at their southern end, are recognized worldwide as a biodiversity hotspot.

The book's secondary pole is Gujarat state, where Baskaran worked for three years. There is no

major tradition of hunting birds in Gujarat, and it is the state best provided with natural wetlands, so that the birdlife is rich and relatively tame. There is particular interest in courtship displays, as one expects from a true bird watcher.

Most of the 53 chapters originated as articles in *The Hindu*, an English-language national newspaper headquartered in South India. As such, each chapter is self-contained and usually just 2-4 pages long. It characteristically opens with a personal scene or



Photo of the Nilgiri Forest– Photo by Enchant Me (Flickr)

observation and commonly goes on to a more general question. In writing for a general readership, Baskaran is skillful in introducing scientific terms, such as "protective colouration" and "sexual dimorphism". At the same time, I regret that there is no index of vernacular and scientific names to direct the more-than-casual reader to comments on particular species.

The title species, the Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*), is a very large bird whose populations serve as an index of the health of wetlands. Its spectacular courtship dance that gives the book its title is characteristically followed by lifelong monogamy. It bears mention that in a chapter about ibises -- of which India has three species -- Baskaran mentions in passing that our own scarlet ibis is the prettiest in the world.

Without saying so explicitly, Baskaran's emphasis is on the kinds of observations that anyone could make. His newspaper articles and then this book, have probably served as a

recruiting medium for young naturalists. The wonderful enthusiasm of the amateur naturalist is in evidence throughout, and the author is skilled at conveying the enchantment of seeing some new bird or mammal on a misty early morning. Reading *The Dance of the Sarus*, those of us who have been naturalists for decades are likely to experience a real blast from the past. Here, let me give you a taste.

"A pair of Purple-Rumped Sunbirds began appearing frequently around our house in Sastri Nagar, Chennai. The male is metallic purple above and yellow below; the female is ashy grey and yellow. Perched on the telephone wire one morning, the male was putting up a grand courtship display, turning its iridescent head, opening and closing its wings and chirruping with great gusto. The female looked duly impressed. We wondered where the nest was to be."

The two birds did, indeed, reach an understanding and built a nest very near the house, where they reared two chicks. But then, when the nestlings were fully fledged, the nest was suddenly attacked by a small hawk, the Shikra, which killed one of them. The other nestling survived and was later seen with its parents.

In one important respect, *The Dance of the Sarus* stands apart from the great mass of naturalist-in books set in the tropics. As you may have noticed, every such work reviewed in this series up to now was written by someone who can be regarded as an expatriate. Even if the author was a long-term resident (e.g. Alexander Skutch in Costa Rica) or born in the country (e.g. W.H. Hudson in Argentina), he did not see himself as a native and wrote mainly for an overseas readership. In welcome contrast, Baskaran is very much a son of southern India, writing mainly for Indians. At the same time, he is ungrudging in his appreciation of the several British amateur naturalists from colonial times -- "empire builders with a penchant for natural history" he calls them - - who brought the tradition to South Asia, even as he regrets the horde of British hunters and their Indian imitators who blasted away at any wild creature they encountered.

Fittingly for a nature writer whose aims are partly polemical, Baskaran shows a keen sense of



© Ansar Khan-2009

conservation and threats to species. He is well known in southern India as a campaigner for the establishment and maintenance of effective wildlife sanctuaries.

The Dance of the Sarus ends with several chapters on such policy questions as the uses of animals in experiments, the economics of conservation, and the introduction of trout for sport fishing, and three chapters on what we might call "tamelife", distinctively Indian breeds of domestic animals.



Photo of the Korakundah Waterfall in the Nilgiri Forest Photo by Indianature SG (Flickr)



NATURE IN THE NEWS

A quarterly summary of local environmental news

by Kris Sookdeo



MAY

Scarlet Ibis now an ESS

The country's national bird, the Scarlet Ibis [*Eudocimus ruber*], has been designated an Environmentally Sensitive Species (ESS). The designation, based on scientific research and observation of the species' population trend was proposed by the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) which sought to enhance the Scarlet Ibis' legal status to ensure their continued protection.

Quarry Rehabilitation Project

A project for the rehabilitation of quarries was launched at the National Quarries site in Turure on 20th May. The Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystem Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (IWEco) project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and is aimed at rehabilitating abandoned or exhausted quarry pits in the North-East area of Trinidad. Led by the IAMovement, volunteers planted a total of 4,000 vetiver plants and 75 trees. The groups also laid out organic material on the ground to create topsoil including grass and tree cuttings, wood chips, sawdust, Sargassum seaweed and spent grain from Carib Brewery. Over the next 4 years, members of Turure and surrounding communities will become trained and certified "Quarry Rehabilitation Champions" with opportunity for employment until 2021 to rehabilitate degraded quarry lands - targeting between 50 to 100 acres.

Waste Management

As much as 83% of the waste currently produced in T&T is recyclable according to the Environmental Management

Authority (EMA). Speaking at a media sensitisation session, the EMA also highlighted that, according to the Organisation of the American States, T&T per-capita consumption of styrofoam was 5.3 cups per person per day.

National Reforestation Programme

Speaking on the National Reforestation Programme, Agriculture Minister Clarence Rambharat said that while the programme has been in existence for the last fourteen years – providing c. 3000 jobs and costing taxpayers c. \$92 million a year, there remained a desire to create long-term, economic value out of the programme.

JUNE

In presenting the THA 2018/2019 budget statement, it was reported that the Tobago Tourism Agency's three-year Road Map for growth includes a comprehensive product audit on all tourism sites, attractions and accommodation; rehabilitation of sensitive marine areas and the pursuit of international certification such as Blue Flag; improvement of tourism-related infrastructure around Tobago: better signage; upgrades to nature trails; beautification of Scarborough and upgrade and restoration of beach facilities.

Notable budget items included infrastructural works at Pigeon Point at \$9.1 million, works at Manta Lodge at \$8.3 million, work on the Lure Wildlife Nature Park at \$7.5 million, construction of Fort King George Heritage Park at \$6.4 million and construction of beach facilities at Englishman's Bay at \$2 million.





LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN CONGRESS FOR CONSERVATION BIOLOGY 2018

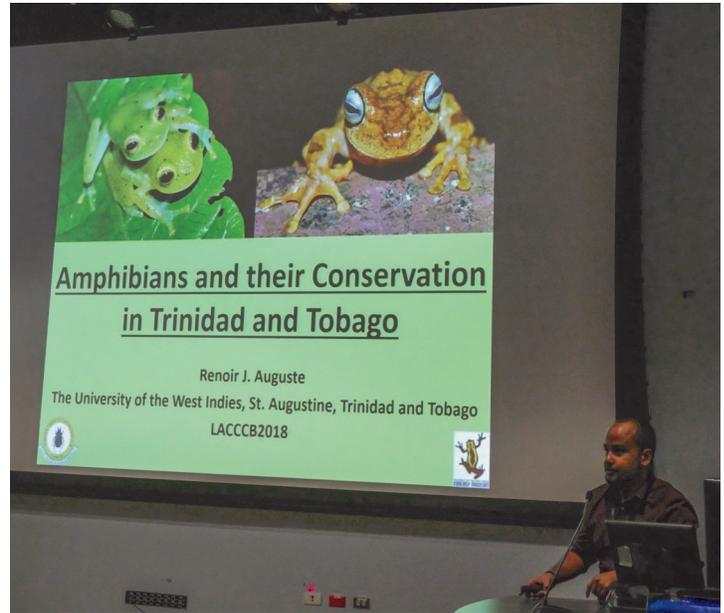


by Keshan Mahabir

I had the privilege of attending the Latin America and Caribbean Congress for Conservation Biology (LACCCB) conference which took place from the 25th-27th of July 2018 at the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine Campus. On the first day of the conference, I was met with a few familiar faces belonging to friends and colleagues and many new ones from neighbouring islands and South American nations. The conference's various workshops covered an array of topics pertaining to conservation, climate change and social issues affecting the environment.

One of my favourite workshops was organized by Aliyah Hosein (Parrot Lady) and other members of the Conservation Leadership in the Caribbean (CLiC) programme and was focused on facilitating proper care of pet parrots and macaws as well as bringing awareness to the illegal pet trade that threatens these birds in the wild. After the presentation, a group of panellists shared their wealth of experience with this family of birds through their respective points of view as a game warden, the owner of a pet shop and the director of a wildlife rehabilitation centre. The workshop was a great success and even ran over time due to the engrossing discussion.

The symposia presentations were just as intriguing and insightful, addressing the problems faced by marine and freshwater ecosystems, and terrestrial biodiversity within the Caribbean and Latin America. Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club members (TTFNC) also contributed to the talks. Luke Rostant presented on the current status of local red-rumped agouti populations (having many years of experience in camera trapping and using Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies). Herpetologist, Renoir Auguste discussed the conservation of amphibians in Trinidad and Tobago. Amy Deacon's talk highlighted the guppy as a successful invasive species outside of T&T which



(Top) TTFNC's President, Renoir Auguste presents at the conference; (Bottom) Amy Deacon interacting with a fellow conference attendee amongst the poster display Photos by Alexis

Marianes

was a prelude to my own presentation. I have attended only a few conferences thus far, so Amy was able to offer great advice and had useful

inputs with regard to my presentation (as she is also a co-author on the paper I presented). She also oversaw the smooth running of the freshwater symposium. Nicholas Mohammed presented on estimating the population size of the bat *Desmodus rotundus* and landed second place in best student presentation.

All of the talks presented by the local and international delegates were insightful and really sparked inspiration for future research and the protection of biodiversity within our region. Presenters were happy to answer questions outside of the symposia and I had a great experience interacting with them. Many of them had wonderful things to say about the University campus and the country's natural beauty, including its diversity of flora and fauna. In conclusion, the LACCCB 2018 conference hosted in Trinidad and Tobago was an amazing event. 🐜



(L-R) Mark Gibson, Aliya Hosein and Kimberly Chu-Foon presenting at the Macaw Workshop

Photo by Laura Baboolal



With huge smiles TTFNC member Nicholas Mohammed (left) receiving the second place award for best student presentation from Luke Rostant (right) at the conference *Photo by Alexis Marianes*



CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. DIVA AMON FOR WINNING THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DEEP SEA RESEARCH!



Dr. Diva Amon is a Trinidadian marine biologist specialising in deep sea biology. She studies chemosynthetic habitats and human impacts on the deep ocean, including from deep-sea mining and oil and gas extraction. TTFNC members were privileged to dive into the deep-sea with Diva's presentations at the club's general meeting last year. Recently, at the Latin America and Caribbean Congress for Conservation Biology (LACCCB) 2018 conference, Diva was a plenary speaker where she shared her exciting experiences exploring the deep-sea. As well as being a member of the TTFNC, she is a co-founder of the non-profit NGO, SpeSeas, dedicated to increasing marine science, education and advocacy in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean. The TTFNC congratulates Dr. Diva Amon on being the first recipient of the Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep Sea Research. 



Diva Amon (centre) receiving her award Photos by IISD/END Diego Noguera

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE REEF 2018: Raising awareness and improving conservation of T&T's coral reefs

by Farahnaz Solomon and Amy Deacon



Fadilah Ali, Dr. Jahson Alemu I and Dr. Khan leading the discussions at the “talk back” session after the first Chasing Coral screening. *Photo by Speseas*

In Trinidad and Tobago, a core group of scientists and organizations acting voluntarily under the banner International Year of the Reef – T&T (IYORTT), formed a coalition in support of coral reefs, to implement activities at the national level. The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club is one of the partners in this coalition, whose the various activities focus on bringing awareness about the value of and threats to coral reefs both nationally and internationally.

The year 2018 has been designated 'International Year of the Reef' (IYOR2018) by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) following recent mass coral bleaching events that have accelerated the devastation of coral reefs around the world. The 1st IYOR was declared in 1997; the 2nd in 2008.

IYORTT kicked off activities with a free public screening of the Netflix documentary 'Chasing Coral' on June 5th - World Environment Day, at UWI, St Augustine. Chasing Coral highlights the impact of climate change on coral reefs. This event was well attended, and in the “talk back” session that followed, Dr. Jahson Alemu I, Coral Reef Ecologist and Dr. Ahmad Khan, Director, Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) were able to address many of the questions and issues raised by the very interactive and curious audience. Questions ranged from the resilience of corals to climate change to management for change. Since then, another screening was held during the Latin America and Caribbean Congress for Conservation Biology at

UWI in July. At that screening, IYORTT was honored to have Chasing Coral advisory scientist Mark Eakin for the session via skype.

The official launch of IYORTT was held at the Medulla Art Gallery on June 8th - World Oceans Day. Mr. Sterling Chadee, Deputy Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Planning and Development brought greetings from the Ministry and Dr. Ahmad Khan (Director, IMA) reflected on changes in the reefs of Tobago. In the feature address, Professor John Agard, Tropical Island Ecologist at UWI, revealed that recreational users in Trinidad and Tobago were willing to pay as much a USD\$72 for improved coral reef management, providing a justification for marine park fees which could be used to fund environmental protection. Other features of the night included a viewing of coral reefs using VR (Virtual Reality) goggles and the auctioning of a stunning Cocobel Coral Reef Collection: edible sculptures in dark and white

chocolate.

Not to be left out, a launch organized by IYORTT's partner, the Buccoo Reef Trust, a couple of days later was expanded to include other people who attended at Shaw Park, Tobago.

Later in June, IYORTT shifted its activities outdoors with a trip to the intertidal reefs at Salybia for a lesson in reef ecology and biodiversity. The group of 37 which comprised youths from the St. Jude's Home for Girls, Marian House, Life Centre and the 6th Trinidad Sea Scouts were amazed at what they saw. The Salybia reef is a finger coral (the scientific name is *Porites porites*) reef that is home to many interesting plants and animals. These include soft corals, hard corals, hermit crabs, marine algae, sea cucumbers, brittle stars, eels, sea urchins, rays, turtles, lobsters, octopus, fishes and conch. The participants were enthralled and very receptive of the knowledge we had to share about this reef and its inhabitants. Many had the makings of the



Members of the group in search of organisms in a tidal pool in Toco. Photos by Speseas



next generation of marine scientists with keen questions and sharp observations, in some cases spotting well-camouflaged creatures before the experts did

In July and August, IYORTT visited several vacation camps to raise coral reef awareness among the nation's youths. Kids were taught about coral reefs through arts and craft, snorkeling, lectures, videos, field trips and "talk back" sessions. Camps visited included the Buccoo Reef Trust's 'Sea Sun and Science' vacation programme, Radical Sport's Watersports Camp in Tobago, Aunty Jamie's Art Camp and Super Heroes in Tobago.

Activities continued into the month of October, with the recently concluded Chasing Coral screenings at Movietowne, Port of Spain. Also, at this year's Bioblitz (17-18 November) in Toco, IYORTT and the TTFNC Marine Group will be partnering up to highlight north-east Trinidad's often forgotten coral reef habitats. Marine biologists will document the biodiversity of the shallow reefs around Toco, while other volunteers will enthuse

(Top) Showing off a slimy sea-cucumber at the Salybia Reef *Photos by Speseas*
(Bottom) Sea, Sun and Science campers peek at shallow coral reefs of Tobago on the glass bottom boat tours. *Photo by Jahson Alemu I*



members of the public about the value of Trinidad's coral reef habitats through displays and activities.

In the background, another IYORTT partner, the Institute of Marine Affairs has been taking the lead through the Ministry of Planning and Development, to have Trinidad and Tobago become a member of ICRI. ICRI is an informal partnership between nations and organizations which strives to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems around



the world in a framework of sustainable use. Overall, membership in this partnership will help Trinidad and Tobago to build and strengthen its capacity at the regional and global level to deal with issues related to the management of our reefs, including climate change, marine protected areas, reef resilience, and sustainable use.

By the end of 2018, it is hoped that the combination of events and activities to raise awareness, alongside working to make T&T a signatory of the International Coral Reef Initiative will leave a lasting legacy and a brighter future for T&T's wonderful coral reefs.

IYORTT would like to thank all its partners (Wild Tobago, SpeSeas, TTFNC, the UWI, IMA, ERIC, UTT) and event sponsors (Excellent Stores and Atlantic LNG) for their support thus far. We would also like to thank all our volunteers at the various events, including several TTFNC members. 🐛

(Left) Art Camp with Aunty Jaime, campers learn about the coral reefs with marine biologist, Dr Anjani Ganase. Photo by Jaime Lee Loy



Some members of the IYORTT team and volunteers after the screening. Photo by Speseas



Radical kids camp. Photo by Radical Sports Tobago



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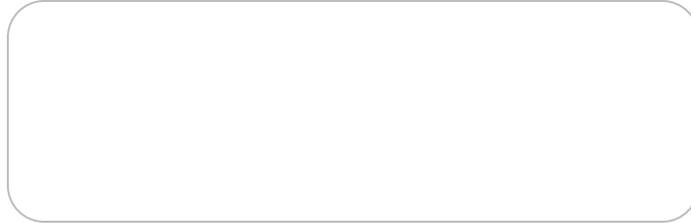
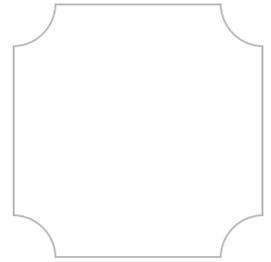
Management Notices

Amendment of the rules of the Club to meet the requirements for Charitable Status.

On request from the Inland Revenue Division, a vote was taken at the Club's Members' Evening in July to change the Club's standard dissolution clause. This change to our rules and articles reflects the fact that it is the Inland Revenue Division, and not the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the right to determine if an organization is a charitable organisation. As such, the club's dissolution clause now states the following:

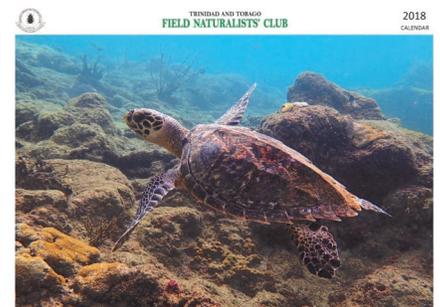
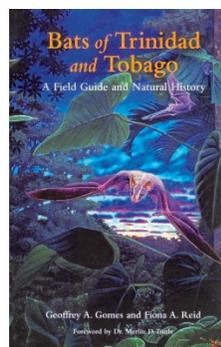
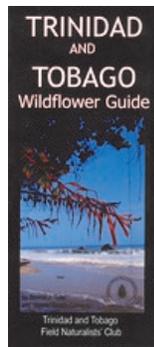
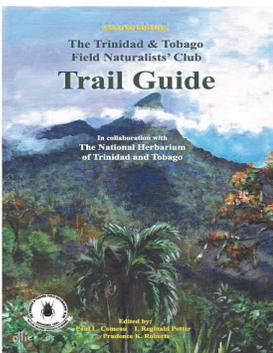
"Upon dissolution, the company shall, after satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, give or transfer any remaining property to such other non-profit company enjoying a similar exemption, as the members may, with the approval of the board of Inland Revenue, determine."

NOTICE FROM THE EDITORS: *Do you have any natural history articles, anecdotes or trip reports that could be published in The Field Naturalist? We welcome contributions from members. Please email your ideas or finished pieces to admin@ttfnc.org. We look forward to hearing from you!*



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); 2018 Calendar (\$25)

MISCELLANEOUS

Your 2018 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!



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 'QB2018' in the email subject label.