

FEATURES

Forests on the Edge

JAHSON ALEMU

IF TREES are the lungs of the earth, mangroves must be the kidneys. Like botanical amphibians, mangroves live life on the edge. Uniquely positioned at the dynamic interface between land and sea, they are highly productive tropical coastal ecosystems comprised mainly of trees and shrubs capable of thriving in the humid heat, amid choking mud and at salt levels which only a few plant species can survive. If you've never seen a mangrove, picture a lattice of tangled tree legs rising up from brackish water. At one point in our history, mangrove forests were treated as wasteland considered only useful as dumps, and haven to bad spirits, jumbies, runaways and criminals.

The mangrove swamp was avoided and condemned as breeding ground for disease, mosquitoes, frogs, snakes and other beasts the mind could imagine. At the same time, however, they were important sources of building material, firewood, medicine, food security (agriculture), homes for the poor, recreation



Mangrove forests, like this one at Rousillac, are highly productive tropical coastal ecosystems.

and harbours for small boats. Today, mangroves have taken on additional meanings in our lives, where as well as the traditional roles, they now act as sources of revenue through ecotourism;

major agents of soil stabilisation, coastal expansion and erosion control where interlocking roots stop land-based sediments from coursing out to sea. They build land, and their trunks and

branches serve as barriers that diminish the erosive power of waves; and a climate regulators they store vast amounts of carbon that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere.



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

But, probably one of the most well-known roles of mangroves is as a home to wildlife (such as the scarlet ibis) and nursery to fish and shellfish (including spiny lobsters, snappers, tarpon and grouper). Altogether, these ecosystem goods and services have been valued globally at approximately US\$32 billion annually. Despite their importance, our mangrove forests continue to be threatened and are rapidly declining. Significant alterations to mangrove forests in Trinidad and Tobago since the early 1970s have already resulted in an estimated 20 per cent loss of mangrove forests due mainly to population growth and increasing development in coastal areas.

EDGE Continues on page 6B



Get everything you want from a mortgage. Even, money back!

Apply for a Scotiabank Mortgage to buy a new home, switch or refinance your existing Mortgage and get 2% Mortgage Money Back!

Loan Amount	Money Back
\$ 500,000	\$10,000
\$1,300,000	\$26,000
\$1,800,000	\$36,000



Special Mortgage offer valid from April 3 - July 31, 2017

Visit your nearest branch or call 62-SCOTIA (627-2684) to find out more about our special rates and how to get your Mortgage Money Back.

#MortgageThatPays



† This Money Mortgage Back promotional program and promotional rate is being offered from April 3, 2017 up to and including July 31, 2017 and is for mortgage purchases, switches and refinances (over \$25,000 US or local equivalent) only. *Trademark of The Bank of Nova Scotia, used under licence.

FEATURES



Many animals depend on mangrove swamps, including the national bird of Trinidad - the Scarlet Ibis.

Existing laws, institutional arrangements inadequate

EDGE from page 4B
Several examples illustrate these threats, including decades of continued modification, built development encroachment: squatting and agriculture in the Caroni Swamp; the phenomenal shrink-

age of the Friendship and Kilgwyn Swamps following necessary mangrove clearing for the Crown Point Airport runway expansion (IMA 1990); and development of the Canoe Bay Resort in 1980. Similarly, proposed resort and

housing developments threaten the integrity of the Buccoo Bay mangrove forest. While there is growing recognition of the importance of mangrove forests, to date we have only managed to offer limited protection to three mangroves systems: Caroni Swamp, Nariva Swamp and Bon Accord Lagoon.

Coastal flooding and increased coastal erosion are but two of the major impacts we expect over the next 50-100 years if mangroves continue to shrink.

In a recent review, the Institute of Marine Affairs described the state of mangrove conservation in Trinidad and Tobago as greatly challenged because of inadequacies in existing laws and institutional arrangements. If there is to be any meaningful slowing of the current rate of mangrove degradation and loss, an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) approach is recommended as a means to promote co-ordination and clear distribution of responsibilities among the various authorities with jurisdiction over mangrove management.

In spite of all these challenges, our environmental consciousness

has increased tremendously over the last decade, and so too has our understanding of the role of mangroves in an uncertain future. Mangroves represent real opportunities for livelihood development (such as ecotourism, education, management); food security through the maintenance of juvenile fisheries stocks, biodiversity conservation especially of endangered species (e.g. Goliath grouper). In small islands such as ours, we are extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts, as such mangroves also represent important ecosystems for climate regulation and coastal resilience. Any development in or around these ecosystems should strive to have minimal impact on the mangrove forests, allowing them to thrive in their special relationship between the shore and sea.

This feature was first published in the Tobago Newsday on December 15, 2016. For more information on our natural environment, you can contact the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club at admin@tfnjnc.org or visit our website at www.tfnjnc.org and our Facebook or YouTube pages.

MASSIVE MARKDOWNS!

HURRY IN TODAY FOR UNBEATABLE PRICES!

THERAPEDIC
BRONZE EXTRA FIRM MATTRESSES TWIN, FULL, QUEEN - ANY SIZE, EACH **ONLY \$799!**

WKLK \$9

PLUS 2 FREE SERTA LUXURY PILLOWS!

WKLK \$18

WKLK \$55

WKLK \$12

FUTONS **NOW \$999**

WKLK \$30

VERTEX 30" GAS COOKERS AVAILABLE IN WHITE AND BLACK **NOW \$1499**

WKLK \$15

FRIGIDAIRE 15KG TWIN TUB WASHERS **NOW \$2599**

WKLK \$14

FRIGIDAIRE 14 CU FT WHITE REFRIGERATORS **ONLY \$4699**

WKLK \$15

ENTERTAINMENT UNITS **NOW \$1299**

SOLID WOOD!

5 DRAWER CHEST OF DRAWER **NOW \$1199**

SOLID WOOD!

2 DRAWER BEDSIDE TABLES **NOW \$499**

HOT DEAL

SOLID WOOD!

COFFEE TABLES **NOW \$899**

3 MONTHS FOR CASH, ZERO % INTEREST

WITH OUR EASY HIRE PURCHASE PLAN AVAILABLE AT ALL LOCATIONS

FURNITURE PLUS
Nobody undersells us, Nobody!

- Arima 643-6700 St James 622-2647
- Chaguanas 665-5678 Tobago 631-1544
- San Juan 675-3373 Tunapuna 645-0396
- 674-7755 Henry St, POS 624-1026
- San Fernando 652-2777 Head Office 285-9051



Trinidad Pest Control Limited

Tel: 624-5377

Email us at info@ttpc.com or

 Find us on: **facebook.**