

Editorial

The 2023 Living World is a bumper edition, with six research papers, ten nature notes and the regular Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Bird Status and Distribution Committee (TTBSDC).

We open the issue with Matthew Cock's comprehensive treatments of Trinidad and Tobago's elf moths and wasp moths respectively, the latter is coauthored by Michel Laguerre. These are followed by an update on new moth and butterfly records for Tobago. For this update Matthew teamed up with several TTFNC members and other citizen scientists to incorporate their observations and, importantly, include them in the process of publishing these records, which together add 67 species to Tobago's known list for Lepidoptera which now stands at 683.

We also have contributions on Zoantharia off Trinidad's north coast; author Stanton Belford applied genetic techniques alongside differences in morphological traits to better characterize the zoanthid biodiversity around Toco, confirming previous identifications while also revealing a species not previously known from the area. This represents the first genetics-focused paper published by the journal, and is unlikely to be the last. Using a more traditional yet equally insightful approach, Chris Starr and Ishmael Samad describe some compass-savvy termites from Kernahan along Trinidad's east coast. The final research paper is a biography-style piece celebrating the considerable contributions of the Jamaican Naturalist William Thomas March. Author Olivia Beavers details his life and describes some of the important specimens he collected, which are now held in museum collections across the world.

These research articles are complemented by a nice collection of nature notes. Three document chance observations of predation behaviour, adding to our knowledge of who eats what. Perhaps the most surprising are Matt Kelly's two instances of birds eating birds in Tobago, alongside two predation events by snakes from Shaquille George and Floyd Hayes, respectively. Two more notes document new records - a new orchid reported for Tobago by Matt Kelly, and a new anole lizard recorded for Trinidad by Shaquille George. Shaquille also teams up with Danniella Sherwood to document additional records for a rarely seen tarantula.

The remaining three nature notes concern Lepidoptera-based observations: two from John Morrall on butterflies, and one led by Matthew Cock, once again bringing together multiple citizen science observations from iNaturalist to piece together the life history of a common yet little-known moth, *Napata terminalis*; a reminder of how much there is still to learn about the biodiversity seen in our backyards, and that all of us can contribute to shared scientific knowledge.

Finally we present the 2022 report of the TTBSDC, in which Martyn Kenefick reports on 103 records comprising 59 species. As a result of these observations two additional species were recorded for Tobago and two species were added to the official National List of birds, bringing it up to 494 species.

The Editorial Committee was saddened by the passing of Dr Elisha Tikasingh in August 2023. Elisha was the Editor of Living World between 1997 and 2013 and was well known to our regular contributors. In his pre-editor days Elisha lobbied for TTFNC members to write-up and publish their novel observations, and led the way in preparing the 1973 issue which reported on the Club expedition to Bush Bush. It was Elisha who instituted many of the initiatives to establish Living World as a peer reviewed Journal and maintain its function as a major repository of knowledge of the Natural History of T&T. Elisha remained a strong supporter and friend of the journal and the club even after he had officially stepped down as Editor, generously sharing his time and experience; he continued as an active member of the club well beyond his 90th birthday, and was a familiar face at club meetings on zoom during the pandemic, despite worsening health. A wider account of Elisha's work was published in Living World in 2014.

In line with Elisha's vision for the journal, Living World continues to encourage and support both professional biologists and amateur naturalists in publishing their observations. This has been made easier with the rise in popularity of platforms such as e-Bird and iNaturalist which not only offer opportunities for citizens to share their observations, but also allow experts to recognise observations of significance and to involve the observers in subsequent publications, where appropriate. We are grateful to regular

author Matthew Cock for setting an excellent example in this respect.

Alongside encouraging a broad range of authors to contribute, we are increasingly aware of our responsibility to ensure that our authors observe best practice with respect to animals or plants that need to be collected to conduct the studies or observations presented. While most nature notes tend to involve fortuitous observations, in cases where specimens need to be collected to confirm ID or to extract DNA, it is important that the necessary permissions are sought. In Trinidad this can be done via the Wildlife Section of the Forestry Division, and in Tobago via the Division of Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainable Development, at the Tobago House of Assembly. In cases where the national regulations are unclear, we nevertheless expect authors to contact the authorities and

let them know of the work being conducted. Similarly, where a specimen is collected, the expected best practice would be for it to be deposited and accessioned within a recognised museum or herbarium collection, and the accession number included in the manuscript.

As always, your friendly editorial team are on hand to answer any queries, and guide prospective authors through the submission and editorial process. We are always happy to hear from anyone who has an idea for a contribution, and we hope this current issue, which is brim full of knowledge and insights from a wide range of authors from school-age naturalists to professional scientists, will inspire others to share their natural history observations through Living World.

A.E. Deacon and G. White

Cover Photograph

Our cover photograph shows a colony of *Zoanthus sociatus*, photographed by Stanton G. Belford at Saline “Salybia” Bay in May 2022. It was found at low tide at less than 0.3 metres depth on a clear day with low turbidity. Belford initially thought that it was *Zoanthus pulchellus* based on the colour, however mitochondrial COI and 16S revealed it to be *Z. sociatus*. This demonstrates the value of molecular analyses for species identification. See page 126 for a full account of this study.