

Editorial

The State of the Environment

The spectacle of a woman pointing a gun to her head and threatening to kill herself in the defence of the environment made headline news in the print and electronic media. The woman was protesting the quarrying of the hillsides at the heights of Guanapo. It seemed as if she had appealed to all the relevant Government Ministries to no avail and this was a last act of frustration and desperation. She was eventually talked out of the suicide attempt and the gun was taken away from her.

Some weeks before this incident, our Club hosted a symposium on "The state of the environment." One of the points raised was that we were preaching to the converted and that it was the politicians, who were not present, that needed to be converted. There is no doubt that this is a correct assessment of the situation. Consider, the 29-member Cabinet of the last Government in which nobody was designated a Minister solely for the environment. Even a Ministry of the *Environment* and Public Utilities would have been better. To compound the situation, Professor Julian Kenny, the lone voice in the Senate crying out for the environment, was removed and not replaced by another environmentalist.

This suggests that the environment has a low prior-

ity in Government's planning activities. Some years ago, when I was a member of the Wildlife Conservation Committee we found it difficult to get an appointment with the relevant Minister to address problems of the environment. He only agreed to see us when we threatened to resign. And when we did meet with him and raised some of our concerns on the environment, he claimed he could do nothing, because the current laws did not allow him to address any of the problems we raised with him. There is no doubt that the laws on conservation and the environment need updating, but there are sufficient laws and regulations which could be effective if they were enforced. Our environment is in dire need of protection and it seems that our politicians need a little help and encouragement in order to recognise this. Educating them remains a challenge.

We should all remember that Trinidad and Tobago are two small islands and there is a great and continuing demand for space and the resources of the environment. If these are not managed properly, these resources will soon be depleted to our own detriment and that of future generations.

The 2002 Issue of Living World

The Club continues through our Journal to explore, collect and disseminate information on the biodiversity of Trinidad and Tobago and thus assist in the enjoyment and effective management of our natural heritage. In the present issue, we have introduced a new section called "Nature Notes." It is designed to encourage any member to describe unusual observations on our flora and fauna, and seven such Notes have been included in this issue.

This issue starts off with an article by Julian Kenny on the changing coastline of the Cedros peninsula. It is followed by two papers describing field observations on three species of geckos and captivity observations on one species. The papers are the result of collaboration between Victor Quesnel and Professor Yehudah Werner and co-workers from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. We welcome them to our pages.

Michael Oatham and Doreen Jodhan describe a pilot transplant project to determine if mora could invade a mixed forest type and survive.

Eco-tourism is becoming popular and lodges are being built to accommodate the tourists. One such lodge

is at Paria Springs. Michael Oatham, with the collaboration of others, describes a base-line vegetation survey in the area of the lodge and the contiguous forest.

There are three papers on butterflies. One by Matthew Cock, comments on the butterflies he collected within an hour on a two day trip to Grenada. Another paper by Chris Starr and his students reports on their experiment on brightly coloured butterfly wings. The third paper is found in the Nature Notes section.

Little is known about the jumping spiders of Trinidad and Tobago. Bruce Cutler and G.B. Edwards visited Trinidad and Tobago in June-July 1999 and made a collection of these spiders. Along with those previously found by other workers, Cutler and Edwards now list 117 species for Trinidad and Tobago. They provide an introduction to jumping spiders and include a check list. In addition, beautiful photographs of these spiders taken by Bryan Reynolds in Trinidad and Tobago, adorn our front and back covers.

Graham White and Floyd Hayes present us with the Second Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Rare Bird Committee.

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