



The Buzz

Newsletter of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network
Trinidad and Tobago (BES-Net TT) project

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Welcome back

Hello readers of **The Buzz**! Welcome back to this new issue with compliments of the New Year 2024! We are marking two years of **The Buzz** in this issue, as we approach the BES-Net TT project's end in March.

We thank you for being loyal readers and in this issue we offer you a recap of our research study outcomes, progress on the development of pollinator gardens, a brief report on the Vietnam Triologue and a reminder of our project resources that can be found online.

Enjoy reading **The Buzz** and do share this issue with all your networks!

The Buzz is the quarterly produced newsletter of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network Trinidad and Tobago project (BES-Net TT).

This newsletter reports on progress made in the implementation of the BES-Net TT project over the period, 2021-2023.

The Buzz is produced by the BES-Net TT Project Management Unit.



Photo credit: Celeste Chariandy

Stingless bees: *Melipona trinitatis* at honey pot



Research wrap-up

The Science component of the BES-Net TT project was marked by research activities both on land and in the sea! In wrapping up the outcomes of the studies undertaken, we thank principal researcher Dr. Kelly Kingon (seagrass research), Mr. Darshan Narang and his team (bat research) Dr. Laurence Packer, the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club, farmers in north east Trinidad and in Tobago, and the GEF Small Grants Programme (local bee survey). Here are some highlights:

Seagrass Research:

- Flowering patterns for four (4) species of seagrasses in Trinidad and three (3) species of seagrasses in Tobago were observed and documented.
- One species of seagrass – *Halophilia baillonis*, clover grass – was recorded for the first time in Tobago.
- Forty-nine (49) species belonging to 12 animal classes which may be possible pollinators of seagrasses were collected in light traps at Williams Bay; six (6) species belonging to 2 animal classes were collected in Bon Accord Lagoon.



Photo credit: Kelly Kingon

Halophilia baillonis (Shoal Grass).

Bat Survey:

- 103 individual bats spread over 13 species were recorded in the Melajo Forest Reserve as compared to 65 individuals from 16 species at the nearby disturbed, former quarry site.
- 6 and 4 insectivorous individuals respectively were found in the sampling effort at the reserve and at the former quarry site.
- Fruit-eating bats were most numerous in the survey, making up over 90% of the sample at both study sites.

Bee Survey:

- Representatives of 3 of 4 families of bees previously recorded for Trinidad and Tobago were found, and 31 of 60 previously recorded genera.
- Potentially, 2 new bee genera and 2 species of previously unrecorded stingless bees were captured in the survey. (The BES-Net TT team is awaiting the conclusion of the identification process for these specimens)



Photo credit: Laurence Packer

Melitoma segmentria a ground-nesting turret bee - most common bee found in the survey samples.

Update on pollinator gardens

To encourage the development of pollinator-friendly habitats, the BES-Net TT project promoted the creation of pollinator gardens in Trinidad and Tobago. This promotion was done through several means, including the hosting of a webinar on the topic of pollinator garden design and maintenance, hosting of workshop sessions on garden design in Trinidad and Tobago, and the development of pollinator gardens at various sites.

The first garden developed was a feature of the project’s workshop series in Trinidad; this was created at Wa Samaki Ecosystems in Freeport. Participants in the workshop on design of pollinator gardens were able to visit the site and learn about the selection of plants for sun-soaked as well as shaded areas, areas near to ponds and in less moist areas. At this site, they also were able to view a composting site and a small nursery of mainly native plant species suitable for attracting a range of pollinators.



Photo credit: Celeste Chariandy

Pollinator garden at Wa Samaki Ecosystems, Freeport.

The next garden launched under the project is located at the Botanic Garden in Scarborough, Tobago.

It’s development and upkeep is spearheaded by the Department of Natural Resources and Forestry, Tobago House of Assembly. At the launch, two *Lantana camara* plants were introduced to the site and native plants are being gathered at a nursery area currently, before planting can commence.



Photo credit: Darren Henry

Nursery plants maintained for Scarborough garden.

The third garden was launched at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. This garden will be developed and maintained by the Department of Life Sciences and it complements the Department’s butterfly habitat which is located next to the garden.



Photo credit: Celeste Chariandy

Butterfly habitat at UWI St. Augustine.



Vietnam triologue

In the month of October 2023, the BES-Net TT project accepted an invitation extended by the BES-Net global team and the Government of Vietnam to participate in a Triologue that was hosted as an in-person event in Hanoi, Vietnam. The meeting provided an opportunity for various country teams to report on project experiences gained as recipients of funding from the BES Solutions Fund. At the Triologue, through these exchanges, participants brainstormed on ways in which their project outcomes can be sustained and as well, spearhead future actions in biodiversity and ecosystem assessment. This article gives a brief synopsis of the Triologue experience.

Through three flight changes and after two days of travel time, six local participants in the BES-Net TT project eventually arrived in Hanoi, Vietnam to take part in the Vietnam Triologue (October 4th-6th 2023). The representatives were: Mr. Shane Ballah, Project Manager, BES-Net TT; Dr. Lena Dempewolf, Biodiversity Specialist, Ministry of Planning and Development; Ms Rosemary Lall, Programme Officer, Energy, Environment and Disaster Management, United Nations Development Programme; Mr. Ameer Roopnarinesingh, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Forestry Division; Mrs. Mia Persad-Douglas, President, Tobago Apicultural Society and Mr. Darren Henry, Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club.

Triologue Opening

The opening and closing days of the Triologue were based at the Green One UN House and a field day was held on October 5th 2023. The opening session featured greetings from key partners involved in the execution of BES-Net Solution Fund including the Director, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency; UNDP Representative for Vietnam; and Ms. Yuko Kurauchi, BES-Net Coordinator, UNDP). The keynote address entitled "Opportunities for the new era for nature through the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)" was delivered by Mr. Onesimus Muhwezi, Regional Technical Specialist for Ecosystems and Biodiversity, BPPS/Regional Service Center for Africa, UNDP.

A subsequent panel discussion entitled "National approaches to GBF implementation" featured contributions from Vietnam, Colombia, Cameroon and from the Senior Adviser, Capacity Building Technical Support Unit, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

A plenary session and question and answer segment entitled "Leveraging IPBES evidence for informed policymaking and action for nature" gave a background on IPBES, and existing and upcoming assessments, with a special focus on the recently approved and released Invasive Alien Species Assessment. Trinidad and Tobago was highlighted as an example of the successful use and uptake of the Pollinators, Pollination and Food Security Assessment. Dr. Lena Dempewolf gave some brief comments on how the Assessment was used in Trinidad and Tobago and the factors that contributed to the success of the project.



Trinidad and Tobago country team at BES-Net Triologue

A key feature of the Trialogue was use of a sailing boat metaphor, representing the journey of countries that are sharing in the BES Solution Fund to achieve the vision of biodiversity conservation. Mixed groups of participants discussed the roles each were performing in the journey of the sailing boat for National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan achievement.

Field Day

On the second day of the Trialogue, participants were taken to the Van Long Wetland Reserve, one of the few intact lowland wetland reserves in Vietnam's Red River Delta. A boat tour was arranged and participants learned that a large number of the tour boat operators are women, who contribute through this activity to their household incomes and the conservation of the Reserve. The tour boat operation benefits from annual training sessions in sustainable tourism practices.



Photo credits: Lena Dempewolf



TT participants on the boat tour in Van Long Wetland Reserve.

Later on, country teams presented their "Bright Spot" posters, which were prepared with the BES-Net Global Team (<https://www.besnet.world/photos/bright-spots-bes-solution-fund-trialogue-2023/>). The Trinidad and Tobago poster, entitled "Pioneering Pollinator Prosperity" focused on the country's journey in pollinator conservation and awareness and was jointly presented by Dr. Lena Dempewolf, Mr. Shane Ballah, and Mrs. Mia Persad-Douglas.

Final Day takeaways

The last day was focused on the theme, *Future Sustainability of BES Solution Fund - Supported Actions*. Two parallel groupwork sessions discussed the topics: "Institutionalising through National Biodiversity Platforms," and "Partnerships and joining forces for impact". A third groupwork session on "Moving Forward and Keeping the Momentum Going" assisted the Trinidad and Tobago team in brainstorming on ideas for sustaining the results and building upon current actions post-project. Two key activities for pursuit are (i) the conduct of a National Ecosystem Assessment in Trinidad and Tobago and (ii) moving the draft Theory of Change document that was developed under the BES-Net TT project in September 2023 to policy recommendations.

After the busy Trialogue days, the six participants made their way back home a bit jet-lagged, but ready to action the ideas derived from this useful exchange with BES Solution Fund partners.



Project Resources

Several educational resources have been generated during the implementation of the BES-Net TT project over the past 2 years. These resources have been curated on the project's webpage and social media platforms. Be sure to access these resources at the following links:

Beekeeper resources:	http://www.biodiversity.gov.tt/index.php/bes-net/resources.html
Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices survey report:	https://biodiversity.gov.tt/images/BES-Net/KAP_Survey_Report_BES-Net_TT-min.pdf
Newspaper articles:	http://www.biodiversity.gov.tt/index.php/bes-net/resources.html?layout=edit&id=173
Newsletters:	http://www.biodiversity.gov.tt/index.php/bes-net/resources/40-uncategorised/172-newsletter-the-buzz.html
Research reports:	http://www.biodiversity.gov.tt/index.php/bes-net/resources/40-uncategorised/174-bes-net-tt-science-component-research-reports
Teacher resources:	http://www.biodiversity.gov.tt/index.php/bes-net/resources.html
Webinar recordings:	https://www.youtube.com/@bes-net_tt/videos

Upcoming activities this quarter!

- ✓ Pollinator garden visits
- ✓ Workshop with First People's Community
- ✓ Webinar on results of Bee Survey

Visit our Facebook page for updates!

The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net) TT project is jointly implemented by:



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We would love to hear from you and get your feedback on this issue of The Buzz!

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