



# The Buzz

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

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Issue #6

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**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.

## Welcome Back

Dear readers, we are happy to share another issue of **The Buzz** newsletter, and hope that you are ready to dive in to follow our updates!

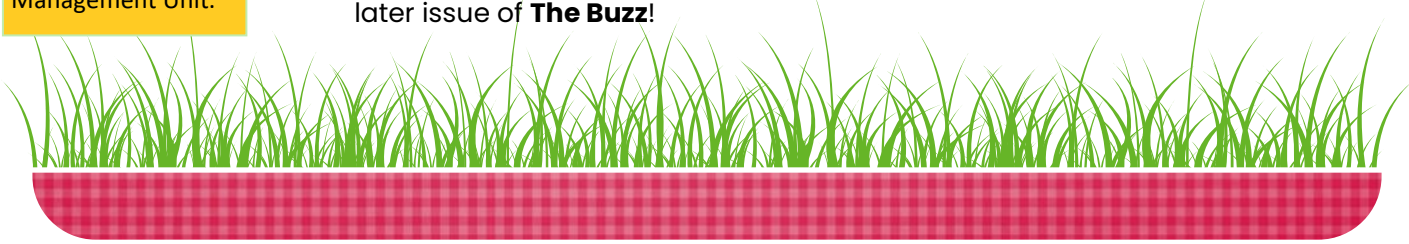
In this issue, learn about our activities in Tobago, hive splitting and colony transfer of stingless bees and our plans to develop a document on stingless bee management in Trinidad and Tobago. We've also completed the field work on our stingless bee survey and facilitated workshops on the seagrass research and insect identification.

There is much to read about in this issue of **The Buzz**, so get started now!

## The BIOSCAN Initiative

The BES-Net TT team's field work featured the use of malaise traps for field sampling of pollinator fauna. This piece of equipment was useful in conducting preliminary pollinator surveys mainly capturing flying insects. Through our work with a laboratory which is assisting with identification of pollinators that were captured in these surveys, the project was linked with the BIOSCAN initiative.

BIOSCAN is spearheaded by the International Barcode of Life Consortium (IBOL) and seeks to map out flying insect across the globe, using malaise traps as the main sampling tool. The BES-Net team facilitated linkages between four institutions in Trinidad and Tobago and IBOL through the Ministry of Planning and Development's Environmental Policy and Planning Division so that TnT can participate in this global exercise. Stay tuned for more details on this initiative in a later issue of **The Buzz**!



## Activities in Tobago

The BES-Net project has been active in Tobago since 2022. Over the past three months, project visibility was stepped up, as activities in research and outreach took place with local stakeholders. Here are some short, snapshot stories on these activities!

① In January–March, a bee survey was undertaken in farms on the outside of the Main Ridge Forest, led by the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club and farmers.. This activity took place with funding support of the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP).



② In late February, Dr. Kelly Kingon led a field workshop at the Nylon Pool to demonstrate research investigating seagrass pollination. Thirteen (13) persons attended the workshop.



③ In late March, the BES-Net TT team met with Secretary Nathisha Charles-Pantin of the Division of Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainable Development to discuss some of the local activities in Tobago. The team also mounted a public education booth at the finish line of the Tobago Main Ridge Forest Fitness Challenge at Bloody Bay.



④ In mid-April, the project team co-facilitated the Tobago leg of a workshop series on pollinator management, following that which was previously offered in Trinidad in 2022. Twenty (20) persons took part in the workshops which were all held at the Milshirv Administrative Complex partnering with the Dept. of Natural Resources and Forestry.



## Workshop round-up

*The BES-Net TT project's practice component builds knowledge and improves the practice of pollinator management among stakeholders. This is offered mainly through the hosting of workshops and hands-on training in research techniques. Read about some of these activities which took place in the last quarter.*

In early February, the BES-Net TT team, in conjunction with the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club (TFNC) hosted a workshop on insect identification. This was undertaken with the support of the Research and the Extension Training and Information Services Divisions of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) at Centeno in East Trinidad. The workshop was a specific activity for the BES-Net TT project bee survey, assisted by the TTFNC and funded by the Global Environment Facility Small Grant Programme (GEF SGP).

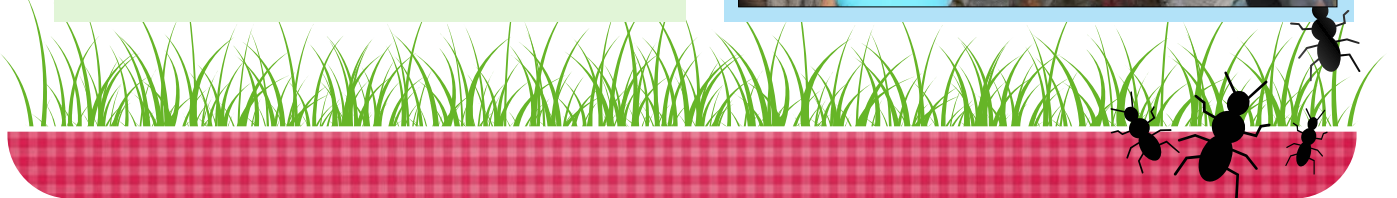


The workshop featured presentations from Professor Christopher Starr, Mr. Rishi Mohansingh, Dr. Antonio Ricarte Saberte and the BES-Net TT team. Participants were also introduced to malaise traps used to sample flying insects, and stereo microscopes and

hand lenses to observe physical features of the captured organisms, and assist in identification. The workshop was well-received and built interest for follow-up activities with the MALF Divisions.

At the end of February, Dr. Kelly Kingon, was the main facilitator for workshops held at Bon Accord, Tobago and Williams Bay, Trinidad (see page 2) which demonstrated research techniques that are being used to investigate flowering of seagrasses and organisms which may be responsible for their pollination. Twelve persons participated in the Tobago workshop and 20 took part in the Trinidad workshop.

Below: Participants in the Trinidad workshop.



## Harvesting of Hive: A Pictorial Record

The BES-Net TT project offered three interesting workshop sessions on stingless bee management last year in Trinidad and in April in Tobago, at which the process of boxing stingless bee colonies was described. The team was thus eager to accept an invitation extended by Mr. Erle Rahaman-Noronha to see the process in person, as he prepared to transfer a *Melipona* hive from the log of an immortelle tree into a hive box. The team journeyed to Freeport to witness and document the activity. Here a pictorial report on the hive-splitting exercise.



1. This is the log (above) split open to get to the hive.



2. The hive box was prepared, drilling an entrance hole and adding two layers - a wide chamber passageway and a layer with a single entry hole.

3. The brood comb was removed from the log and placed into the hive box.



4. Worker bees were sucked out of the log using a pooter. Bees were secured in the bottle pending their transfer to the hive box.

5. A thin layer of wax was smeared along the open edge of the hive box to secure the seal.



7. The lid was placed over the plastic and then voila... a new hive was in place!



6. A plastic sheet was placed over the box; it was lifted to transfer the bees.

Inside a mature boxed hive of *Melipona trinitatis*. (Photograph credit Celeste Chariandy)



**Brood colony**



**Honey pots**



**Pollen pots**



**Honey harvest**

## Roundtable Discussion on Stingless Bee Management

In gathering and sharing information on stingless bees, the project team has taken note of the various techniques being used by keepers of stingless bees for hive management. Individual keepers, through trial and error and personal research, have come up with their own “mental manuals” for colony management. Equally varied are the objectives of management - some keepers enjoying the activity as a hobby, others are focused on food production, and others the harvesting of hive products.



*Participants in the Roundtable Discussion on 26th April 2023*

Photo credit: Lena Dempewolf

In order to capture these local practices in hive management and hive product usage, the project is embarking on the development of a document on stingless bee management in Trinidad and Tobago. The project brought together key stakeholders in a roundtable discussion to flesh out the concept for this document. It provided useful feedback and enhanced material already considered for inclusion. An update on this activity will be featured in the next issue of **The Buzz**.



## World Bee Day 2023

World Bee Day is observed annually on May 20th. The day is intended to bring attention to the important ecological role played by bees, in addition to other pollinators. Last year, the BES-Net TT project staged its observance in Trinidad around educational activities with the Tabaquite RC Primary School. This year our World Bee Day observance will be held in partnership with the Tobago Apicultural Society on 17th and 18th May 2023, in the island of Tobago.

From 3–6 p.m. on May 17th, the project team will be involved in activities targeting pre-schoolers and students at the Infant level of Primary School, in a storytelling event at the Children’s Library in Scarborough. The project team has contributed a new story about pollinators and a hands-on activity. Then on May 18th from 9 a.m. to noon, Third and Fourth Form Agricultural Science students of secondary schools will benefit from an educational symposium at the Anne Mitchell-Gift Auditorium. The topic of the team’s presentation will be an introduction to stingless bees. Additionally, an interactive information booth will be mounted in the auditorium’s foyer, to impart other relevant information on pollinators. We look forward to a dynamic World Bee Day observance in Tobago!

### Upcoming activities this quarter!

More on “Stingless bees in T and T” – Webinar on Zoom (Registration details on Facebook)  
17–18 May 2023 — World Bee Day observance in partnership with Tobago Apicultural Society  
at the Scarborough Library

June: Activity to mark World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

**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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