D-ECO

the ECO MAGAZINE of DOMINICA-NATURE ISLE

#2
Jan - Jun 2006

Dominica's newest
Eco-Attractions

the new
chinese contribution to
Our Culture

a quarter centry of
Creole Tradition

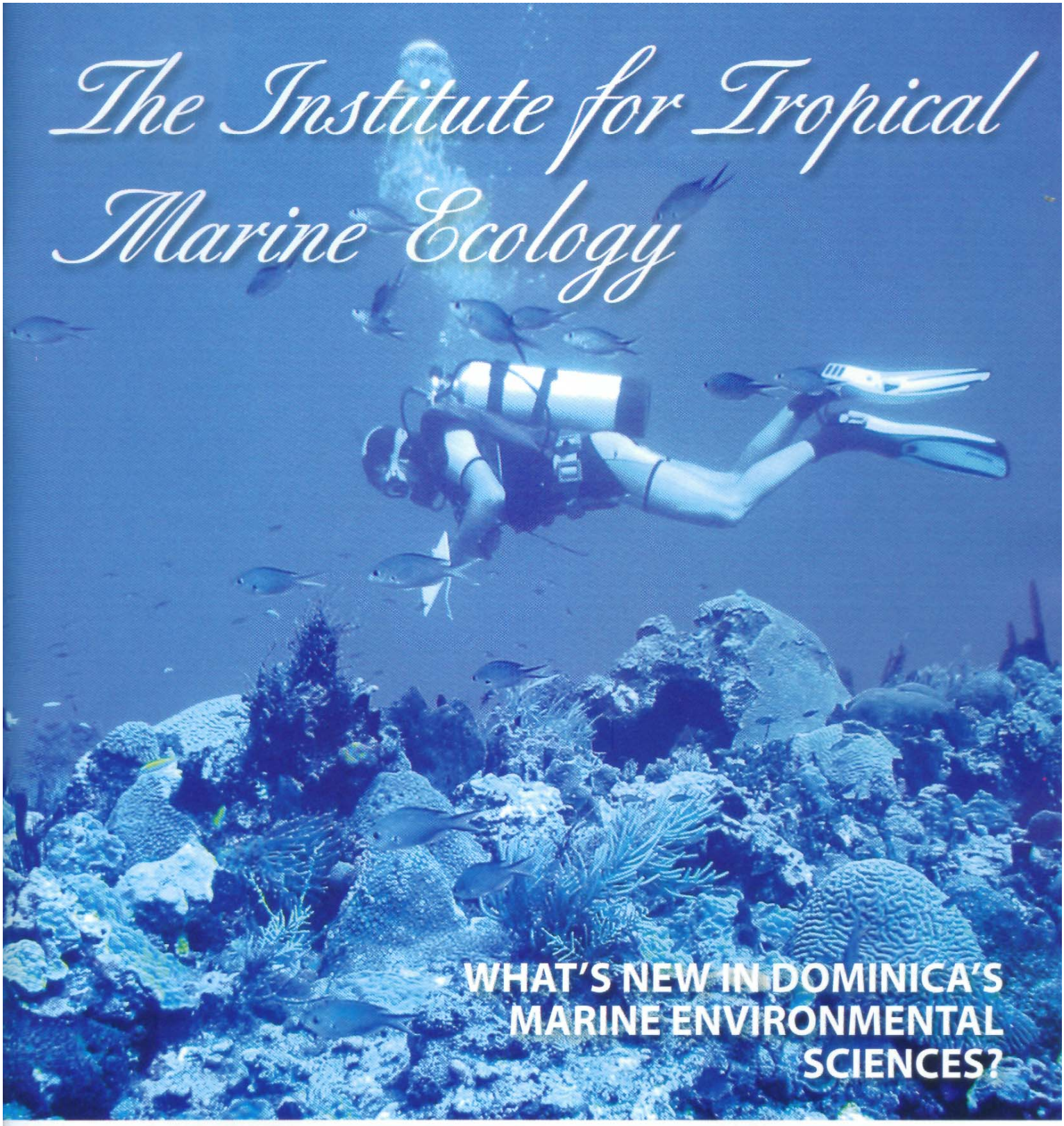
the giraudel
Flower Show

history
A French Plantation Estate

by Lennox Honychurch

and MUCH MORE for your reading and researching pleasure...

The Institute for Tropical Marine Ecology



WHAT'S NEW IN DOMINICA'S MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES?

With the establishment of the Institute for Tropical Marine Ecology (ITME), Dominica has received growing attention within the scientific community of the Caribbean and Western Atlantic.

ITME was founded by marine biologist Dr. Sascha Steiner in 1999, and its year-round operations commenced in 2000. Since then, the Institute has engaged in numerous research projects and launched its university programs in 2001 which have attracted students from eleven countries so far. University groups and research teams are also regularly hosted at ITME which has become a sought after research facility in the Eastern Caribbean. International recognition came with the induction of ITME to the Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean (ALMC) in January 2005.

Research activities to date have focused on the quantitative assessment of Dominica's coral reef resources, their condition, and species-specific monitoring programs. Dominica's reef systems can now clearly be defined as being comprised of distinct reef types, based on their structural genesis and species composition. "True reefs", built of layer upon layer of calcium carbonate deposited by stony corals and other calcareous organisms, characterize the island's North East and East coast reef systems, as well as the West coast reefs of the Grande Savane area. Most other West coast areas harboring coral growth feature "reef-like" coral assemblages which have not formed true reefs, due to storm related disturbances exacerbated by the steeper island shelf of these locations.

Considering the size of Dominica, each of these distinct reef systems is marginal in size and thus very vulnerable to degradation. This scenario has been highlighted by the studies of coral diseases and bleaching events, both of which seem to be affecting our reefs almost chronically. While diseases are caused by pathogens, many of which have not yet been isolated, bleaching events are caused be unusually elevated sea surface temperatures. In that regard Dominica's resources are not "off the beaten path".

What do we learn from this? We learn that there are no justifiable reasons not to drastically mitigate local factors of reef degradation (e.g. sedimentation, pollution, overfishing) which can indeed be managed, whereas global phenomena like global warming and the surge of pathogens can not be managed by a single island nation.

With ITME, Dominica now has an independent research/education institution which can provide key environmental data in addressing environmental mitigation. The institute is also engaged in various Caribbean-wide collaborations which has put Dominica "on the map" as a research producer rather than consumer.

ITME is located on Begonia Drive in Belfast. Visitors are welcome! ITME Inc. P.O. Box 944, Roseau. To inquire about the 2006 academic programs please contact admi@itme.org or visit the us at www.itme.org