INTRODUCTION.

There have been several works dealing with the Brachyura of the Americas or Caribbean as a whole, including that by Dana (1852), Ordway (1863), Rathbun (1896a, 1901, 1918, 1925, 1930, 1937), Young (1900), and Chace and Hobbs (1969). Papers dealing with smaller geographical areas or with individual groups include those by Benedict (1892), Verrill (1908), Rathbun (1898, 1901,1924, 1933, 1936), Crane (1943), Holthuis (1958, 1959), Bright (1966), Rodriguez (1966) and Filho (1967).

Since the inception of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad, considerable advancement has been made in the study of arthropods in the general area, especially those with economic importance as crop pests or insect vectors. However, the crustacea, crabs in particular, have been neglected. There are few references dealing with crabs in the island. Papers by Tashien (1955), Crane (1958) and von Hagen (1967, 1968, 1970a,b,c,d), deal with aspects of the behaviour, ecology or physiology of individual genera, but apart from a brief list of crustacea collected in the Gulf of Paria (Guppy,1895), and a single paper dealing in part with a collection of Pseudothelphusa (=Kingsleya) from Trinidad (Rodriguez, 1966), there has been no attempt to study the systematics of the crabs, or even to produce a comprehensive species list. A search of the literature reveals that the extremely sparse references to Brachyura in Trinidad usually deal with only a

single species in one of the monographs of wider geographical range mentioned above.

Trinidad exemplifies the faunistic variety that occurs on the boundary of two major zoogeographical zones. In this case, representatives of both Antillean and South American faunal types are present in a relatively small area, as the island posesses some of the attributes of both regions. With particular reference to the littoral environment, habitats are extremely diverse, due to the island being situated on the point of overlap of continental and oceanic waters, so the usual littoral diversity that can be expected in the tropics is doubly exaggerated.

In view of this multiformity, together with the lack of literature, it was thought that a study of the crabs of Trinidad would prove to be a worthwhile contribution to a knowledge of the crustacea of the Caribbean as a whole, as well as providing a reference work for the increasing quantity of naturalists and professional zoologists in the island and adjacent regions.

The work is based on a collection of crabs made in the island during the period 1969-1971. This has been supplemented by additional study of species from other collections which were not assembled during this time but which have been previously recorded from the island. The information is presented as a brief resume of the environmental background followed by a more thorough analysis of ecological conditions affecting the distribution of crabs throughout the island. More detailed information on individual species has been included, firstly as a key to identification and secondly as an illustrated and annotated list comprising morphological and colour descriptions, notes on locality, known

geographical ranges and any additional observations that were assembled during the course of the study.

It should be noted that no attempt has been made to include a complete synonomy. Instead the original author has been listed, along with any later adjustments of nomenclature by Rathbun, who can be considered the most important worker on Caribbean crustacea to this date. In addition any changes of name subsequent to Rathbun have also been noted.

The original report was intended only to cover the Brachyura in Trinidad. During the sampling period several species of Hippidea and Porcellanidae were also collected, and the scope of the project was enlarged to encompass these. As such the term "Crab" is used loosely in reference to any of these above groups.