

## **An Update from Sandwatch Guyana**

Observational studies were conducted of some of Guyana's coastal areas to ascertain the sea defence mechanisms in place and how effective they are in protecting these areas during high tides. These studies were conducted in the light of climate change and the effects it is having on the global environment. However, these recent changes are different because they are taking place faster and are unlikely to be reversed by natural processes. Guyanese have been removing their first line of sea defences: mangroves, to build resorts and entertainment spots. In the capital city Georgetown, some of the mangroves have been destroyed to build a resort projecting out into the Atlantic Ocean. Others have cut mangroves down because they increase the influx of mosquitoes, showing a total disregard for their significance.

Hope Beach is frequented by picnickers and is a dumping ground for all types of plastic waste (bottles, bags, including tins and boxes). Visitors to the beach would dispose of their waste by throwing them into the water or leaving them on the sea shore and the water would wash them out into the Atlantic Ocean. However, every time the water washes in, garbage that had been left by the visitors and at various other locations would wash up along the beach. Mangroves, once destroyed, will not grow back unless they have been replanted and they usually grow inwardly on swampy areas. However, observations have shown the opposite at Hope Beach, the mangroves are now growing outward into the sea. One logical conclusion that could be drawn is that Hope Beach is slowly drying up and going more inwardly causing the mangroves to grow where the right swampy conditions prevail. The Government of Guyana is working in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture to develop appropriate education programmes to sensitize people about the importance of the mangroves in preserving our sea defences, and the impact of climate change on the global economy and how it can affect their own lives.

**By Paula Tulloch, Sandwatch Coordinator, Guyana**



Litter and dead crab at Hope Beach