

feeding habits to one of scavenger and garbage feeder and adaptation to eating insects, snails, and marine animals, especially hard-shelled and hermit crabs. At present, the land and hermit crabs are the mongoose's principal scavenger competitor. There are many reports of the mongoose feeding on ground birds, their eggs and young, but we have watched these animals feeding among chickens and other native ground birds but we have never seen any mongoose become too concerned with the presence of the birds. As a scavenger, however, they will take most anything edible. At Haulover Bay, two mongooses regularly fed on our refuse pile. The larger animal controlled the feeding order which the smaller animal respected but not without an occasional fight ate the entire paper wrappers of candy bars, remains of meat from cans, bread, carcasses of animals, cheese, and drank evaporated milk. Mongooses will not, however, touch live turtles which are immobilized on land or molest live pigs, sheep, or goats which are tied and bound. Dead rats and mice caught in snap traps are readily taken and eaten.

In a canyon bottom below the Carib petroglyphs at Reef Bay, we watched (30 feet away) a mongoose feed leisurely on the ground among trees. It inspected all small rocks and dead limbs on the ground. One rock, 6" in diameter and 3" thick, sheltered six gastropods. The mongoose attempted to dig the dirt away from around the rock, first on one side of the rock and then on the other side, reaching adeptly as far back as possible. After four minutes of effort, the mongoose left the mollusks unclaimed and continued on to another rock. The mongoose has been most effective in eliminating the snakes on St. John Island, although not without the aid of man and his livestock, especially the swine. The mongoose also has reduced some birds but certainly not seriously. It is not known but it is suspected that rats and mice have been kept in check by the mongooses. The cause of the increase or decrease of animals and birds such as doves on St. John is to be looked for in the basic changing habitat due