

August 2003

▶ **Newsletter 2/2003**

STENAPA Update

Welcome to New Manager

Nicole Esteban arrived in Statia in early May with her husband Pete to take over the position as Manager of the National and Marine Parks. She took over from Kay Lynn Plummer who had been working as Manager for the past 2 years.

Nicole is British with a Dutch mother (and speaking basic Dutch) and has a degree in Marine Biology and MSc in Tropical Coastal Management. She has been working in coastal management and marine parks since 1994 and brings a range of experience from a number of countries, in particular Egypt, Fiji, Sri Lanka and Caribbean coun-

tries of St Lucia, Jamaica, Belize and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Since arriving in early May, Nicole has focused on getting to know people on Statia and, in particular, the stakeholders involved in the marine and natural parks, and a number of meetings have already been set up to better understand the needs of people using the parks.

STENAPA currently has a very busy programme with the parks and the botanical gardens. Since the beginning of 2003, STENAPA has welcomed groups of volunteers coming from around the world to assist on different



Nicole with rescued green turtle hatchling on Zeelandia Beach

projects, and so life has been very busy. One of the main areas that Nicole wishes to focus on is increasing awareness of STENAPA activities, and we hope that everyone will soon be seeing more newspaper articles and hearing radio interviews to understand more about STENAPA.

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Special points of interest:

- The Botanical Gardens are open from 8am–1pm every weekday. Contact the office if you want to visit outside of these hours.
- The Charles Brown is at its final resting place and all divers need to go with a dive centre for safety reasons.
- You are invited to join patrols for the turtle programme on Zeelandia. Contact the office to let us know when you wish to come.
- The Plant Sale will continue until mid September at the Marine Park Office. We have plants from fl.5–fl.50.

New wreck on Statia—the Charles L Brown

In March of this year, Statia's newest reef arrived: *the Charles L Brown*. The *Charles Brown* is a 100-metre long (320 ft) vessel constructed in 1954 and previously used by US company AT&T for cable laying. After having crossed many oceans, the vessel was retired and arrived in Statia in March 2003. From this point, the Charles Brown Committee was set up to oversee the preparation and sinking of the ship. The Committee is

comprised of the three dive centres (Dive Statia, Goldenrock and Scubaqua), Marine Park and the Tourism Office. Since March, teams of volunteers from STENAPA and the dive centres and wider community have prepared the boat for sinking (cleaning, removal of oils and fuel, removal of hazardous waste), and it was sunk on 25th July. Sinking of the vessel had commenced on 21st when ballast, cable and fuel tanks

were filled with sea water. The final sinking operation commenced at 4.20pm and finished at 5.41pm on the 25th, although the plan was to sink the vessel on Sunday 26th July. The reason for the early sinking of the ship was due to a pipe breakage in the generator room early on Friday; the ship then began taking water in rapidly and could have sunk upside down. Everyone celebrated with a party two nights later.

Volunteers at STENAPA

Ever since we started our volunteer program in 2001 - with Rozenn Le Scao as one of the first group - we have had more than 50 volunteers from all over the world coming to STATIA. Their aim is to give a little back to Nature (to mother earth). Our first type of volunteers are now called interns due to the fact they stay longer, have more responsibility for programs and often gain practical experience after finishing university. Interns work in areas such as the Marine Park, Botanical Garden and Trails and often do a specific project, may it be an important study like the Conch (*Strombus gigas*) study that was done by STENAPA staff and Julie Davis (from Canada), development of the junior ranger program or repairs to the crater trails. Currently, Kath Selkirk and Jim Taggart (from the UK) are working as interns at the Botanical Gar-

dens (from July 2003 - January 2004).

The group that repaired the crater trails were from the first group of a new type of volunteers whose headquarters are in England, the *Working Abroad* volunteers. Each group comes for 8 weeks and the 3rd group has only just left Statia. Projects that *Working Abroad* volunteers have been helping out with include our *Turtle Monitoring and Tagging Program* at Zeelandia beach and the cleaning of the Charles Brown. These volunteers have done a great job and we will go so far as to say STENAPA would not be able to function or even survive without the volunteer programs. We would like to thank them for their continual support of our project and programs.

We would also like to have more local volunteers to assist with our programs.

There are lots of opportunities to assist, including helping clean mooring lines, coming on turtle patrol, watering and weeding at the botanical gardens, and more. Contact us if you are interested.



Group 2 from Working Abroad celebrate the completion of the crater trail, June 2003 (Photo: Nicole Esteban)

School presentations: STENAPA certificates awarded

We carry out presentations in each of the 4 island schools about the marine park, national park or botanical gardens every month. Subjects covered so far in 2003 include Coral Reefs, The Deep Sea, the Life Cycle of Lucy the Leatherback Turtle and the Needs of Plants at the Botanical Gardens. At the end of each presenta-

tion, we ask a quiz question and answers are collected from the classes. Certificates and prizes for last year's winners (tshirt and pens) and runners up (pens) who had only one question wrong were presented at the end of August. Next month's presentation will be on the Snorkel club and Junior Ranger Program.

Winners of last school year's quiz:

Golden Rock School

Joanna Cheng, Eric Henriquez,
Shinoussa Redan

Governor de Graaf School

Antoinette Schmidt

Seventh Day Adventist School

Chantal Busby

Botanical Gardens: completion of first arbor in Sensory Garden

The botanical garden is still in its infancy. Because of its large scale, the overall pro-



Celebration of completion of Touch Arbor by Morning Glory Foundation & 3rd Working Abroad volunteer group, August 2003 (Photo: Jerry Kennedy).

ject consists of 5 phases, of which Phase One is now mostly complete. Visitors to the gardens can see the start of the Sensory Garden, with arbors displaying plants that appeal to the 5 senses. The first arbor was completed last month (see photo). Each of the arbors contains activities (for children and adults) to explore each sense. The shady pavilion provides picnic tables and barbeques, and a panorama of the southern slopes of the Quill and St Kitts and Nevis. The lookout garden now has benches and will soon have easels for artists. One of the next phases is the construction of a trail to the back of the gardens and to link with the Quill trail system.

All work in the garden is carried out by

teams of volunteers. Members of the Morning Glory Foundation provide cuttings and valuable knowledge of native plants, and manage the shade house. In addition to assistance from these Statia residents, work is undertaken by groups of enthusiastic international volunteers who come to the island for periods of between 2-6 months.

Visitors are welcome to come and enjoy the fledging gardens, or perhaps assist with the conservation efforts. Donations of cuttings, equipment, skills or funds will be gratefully received.

The Gardens are open every weekday morning or contact the Parks Office in Gallows Bay to arrange a group visit.

Trails in the Quill National Park: completion of the Crater Trail

On 28th May, STENAPA was very pleased to announce the reopening of the trail into the crater of the Quill volcano. Following a rockslide in May 2002, parts of the trail became unsafe and the trail was eventually closed. Since then, two teams of volunteers provided by the UK organization *Working Abroad* have been making significant improvements to the trail. Last week, work was completed and the resulting trail is both safe and pleasing to the eye. Volunteers have come from around the world, including Belgium, Canada, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, UK and USA. Particular thanks go to the interns Chris Blood and Rose Strickland Constable, as well as the trails coordinator, Curt Coker and the former parks manager, Kay Lynn Plummer who brought the volunteers to the island for this work. Materials for construction of this trail have been partly purchased using funds generated by the \$3 annual trail tags sold to hikers at the STENAPA office.

Many hikers visit the Quill specifically so that they can go into the crater. The rea-

son why the crater holds so much interest is because the "evergreen seasonal forest" in the crater contains many large, beautiful trees and some unusual species of birds. It has been said that the forest in the crater is very similar in appearance to the Amazon rainforest. It is hoped that, given safe access, more people will see the crater and develop an appreciation for the fragile natural resources of Sint Eustatius.

The new trail into the Quill crater has been constructed in a way that is as natural as possible, so that the hiker has the experience of walking through an undisturbed wilderness. In most places, large rocks and boulders were moved into place to form steps. Where necessary for safety, some treated lumber and non-natural materials were also used.

Although the new trail is much safer than the old trail, the Parks would like to caution hikers that this is still a trail for intermediate to advanced hikers. It is steep, and there are areas where the hiker must scramble over boulders.

Since June 2003, we have been focusing on maintaining steps that had been washed away on the lower Quill trail and also clearing the pathway and putting more signs to make the Round the Mountain trail more clear to visitors. The next trail intern arrives from Canada at the beginning of October and will be responsible for construction of the trail at the back of the botanical gardens and for maintaining all other trails. He will also be leading hikes every weekend.

At the same time, we are also reviewing the Quill National Park brochure and a new brochure will be printed in the next months. The last intern, Rose Strickland-Constable plotted out the trail system and we will shortly be producing an up-to-date map.

Please come to the STENAPA office if you have any questions about the trails, or want to report an area of the trails requiring maintenance. We ask all visitors and short-term residents to purchase their trail tags (\$3/year) at the office before going to the National Park

Junior Ranger Program starts soon

The aim of the Junior Ranger Program is to educate Stata's youth about the marine and terrestrial environments so that they are better prepared to conserve and protect them in the future. The concept for this Program was designed by former Manager, Kay Lynn Plummer and Assistant Manager Gershon Lopes early in 2003. With this concept, a grant from the Prins Bernhard personal fund was acquired to develop the program and purchase equipment. During July-August, STENAPA was very fortunate to have the help of a science teacher from the UK, Fran Miller who came to develop a scheme of work and 24 lessons for the Junior Ranger Program.

The Junior Ranger program has been designed to give children over the age of 12 (and having completed the STENAPA snorkel club) a lot of information about the marine and terrestrial environment in Stata. Junior Rangers will be taught the skills which are currently used to conserve and protect the environment of

Stata by the staff of STENAPA. There will be lectures to listen to, videos to watch and lots of practical activities including snorkeling, making trails and growing plants.

Different lessons are planned for each week of the first 2 terms of the school year. The summer term will be used for catching up on missed lessons and more practical work. Lesson areas include:

- Botanical Gardens (tour of garden, garden tasks, understanding needs of plants),
- Coral Reef (fish and corals),
- Marine Park (buoy preparation, knots, snorkeling, boat understanding, turtles)
- Rainforest (plants and trees, animals)
- National Park trail skills (hiking, making stone walls, benching and drainage channels),

- Animal welfare (visiting the vet, animals on Stata)
- Volcanoes (crater hike)
- Hurricanes (preparing for a hurricane)
- Protected Areas (marine reserves, conservation).

Booklets are being prepared for each junior ranger with all the activities in order to complete the Junior Ranger stage 1. Activities start at the end of September so come to the office to sign up now!



New logo for junior ranger program

St Eustatius: National and Marine Parks and Botanical Gardens



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STENAPA is an environmental not-for-profit foundation on St Eustatius and was established in 1988. The objectives of STENAPA are to upkeep the natural environment, to preserve and protect endangered or endemic species (flora and fauna) and to educate the community about the importance of the protection of the natural environment.

Areas of responsibility include management of the marine park, the national parks and the Miriam C Schmidt Botanical Gardens. STENAPA is legally delegated by the Island Council to manage these protected areas.

President: Ronnie Courtar
Vice President: Irving Brown
Treasurer: Jana Mason
Secretary: Jessica Berkel

Turtle Programme at Zeelandia Beach: Leatherback Turtles nesting

Turtle monitoring at Zeelandia started in 2002 with some night patrols which were limited by the number of volunteers able to go out at night. During 2002, green and hawksbill turtles were seen nesting on Zeelandia, by Lynch Beach and Corrie-Corrie.

The 2003 nesting season started with a bang in April when leatherback turtle tracks were seen on Zeelandia Beach. This was very surprising since it was the first time that we have known that Leatherbacks come to nest in Zeelandia and particularly exciting since Leatherbacks are the most endangered species of sea turtle in the world.

The sighting of these leatherback tracks kick-started the 2003 turtle program to monitor nesting turtles, tag turtles, mark nests, relocate nests in the erosion zone and to monitor hatchlings coming out from nests. Nicole Esteban and Rozenn Le Scao (who is the turtle program coordinator) went to St Croix in May to learn from their turtle monitoring program.

Additionally, STENAPA now has the groups of volunteers from Working Abroad and training sessions have taken place to teach volunteers about turtle biology and the activities of turtle patrols.

Since the start of night patrols in April, we have tried to schedule night-time patrols 5 days per week. We have had help from the Working Abroad groups, Stata residents (including dive center staff) and visiting tourists. In the past 4 months, we have seen leatherback, green and hawksbill turtles nesting on the beach. We have also been able to monitor the nests (it takes about 60 days for eggs to mature although we are finding that it takes less time than usual which might be due to the dark colour of sand which heats up more than white sand) and make sure that emerging hatchlings make it safely to the sea (see photo). We also dig up nests 24 hours after emergence and, by doing this, have saved over 100 turtles.

We have arranged talks about turtle con-

servation on Stata, and have recently finished a series of talks at the Terminal. Let us know if you would like us to give a talk at your club or group meeting. We are also organizing clean ups to try to make the beach a safer place for nesting turtles and also for hatchlings as they get easily trapped by objects such as plastic bags and wood debris. The next clean up is at 4pm on Saturday 13th September so please come along (parking near the Maison sur la Plage hotel buildings) to help out turtles on Stata.



Leatherback hatchlings emerging from nest on Zeelandia Beach, July 2003 (Photo: Nicole Esteban)