

February 2004

Newsletter 1/2004

STENAPA Update



Fishermen's Meeting 10th of February

A meeting was held at the office of STENAPA between a delegation of Statia' fishermen and STENAPA, as well as environmental policy advisor Paul Hoetjes and Fisheries expert Faisal Dilrosun. Whilst some grievances were aired by the Fishermen regarding certain restrictions to their activities and potential hazards from large vessels in the vicinity of Statia Terminal, STENAPA was encouraged by the level of understanding and cooperation exhibited by the Fishermen.

Items on the agenda included a fish catch survey; the creation of an artificial reef; additional demarcation buoys; provisional results of Conch survey and the co-opting of a fishermen's representative to the board of STENAPA.

It was decided that the artificial reef will be located 75-100 feet off the Southern Reserve. Items from the "Farm" will be used for its construction and transported to the harbour from where the Statia Responder will take it to the site. As always, STENAPA extends appreciation and thanks to the management of Statia Terminal and the staff involved, for their help. The artificial reef

will be completed in March. The Fish Survey at the artificial reef site was carried out at a depths of 24m or 75 feet. It was found that the sea bottom is sandy, covered with coralline rubble. This rubble cover is between 50% - 60%. During 3 surveys 180 fish were counted, they were mostly small reef fish.

After obtaining a permit from the Shipping Department, STENAPA is now able to place two more demarcation buoys in the Southern Reserve, making it a total of four markers. The Statia Responder will take the buoys and the chains to the sites. This project should also be concluded in March.

During the Conch survey which ended in Sept, six sites were explored, four of them surveyed in detail. The results so far show that most conch

are found in the outer harbour and off White Wall. From the available data it is established, that the density of conch is three times greater in Statia than in Turks and Caicos islands, but lower than in the Bahamas and Dominican Republic. The depths of conch is much greater than elsewhere in the Caribbean. The study did not find enough conch (86) to have sufficient information for decision making. The results at hand will be used for a more detailed seasonal study.



(Photos by Richard Prysock)

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Special points of interest:

- The Botanical Gardens are open from 7am—Noon every weekday. Contact the office to arrange a guided visit if you want to visit outside of these hours.
- Turtle Monitoring Season starts in April. We welcome all volunteers to come for morning or night patrols, and we provide a short training as well. Please contact the office.
- The next snorkeling course for children (aged 8 and over) starts Thursday 27th May.

Volunteers at STENAPA

Thursday the 5th of February saw the departure of another group of volunteers. The evening before leaving Statia, a party was given in their honour at the home of Nicole Esteban, Manager of St. Eustatius National Parks Foundation. Although some volunteers stay longer than the usual two months and function as Interns on various projects, all present were duly thanked for their hard work while on this island. STENAPA once again pointed out, that without the volunteers the planned tasks and projects just could not come to fruition. Over the last few months ambitious undertakings have been tackled and completed. The restoration of the Quill Trail System as well as the repair of Tompi Hill

Head Trail are examples. This work was done besides the ongoing projects for the Miriam C. Schmidt Botanical Garden. The volunteers are involved with all the jobs that present themselves in the Parks, either on land or on the water.

While Statia was still waving off the group, the new batch of volunteers was already preparing to get here. The first arrivals were greeted on the 17th of Feb and the rest came soon after. At present they are building retaining walls in the Gardens, but again it is hands on for them where ever the need arises. Natasha Euler, an Intern who has been here for several months is working along with them. Canada, England, Scotland and the US are short of a few very

nice young people at the moment !



*(Photo taken by Heidi Duncan)
From left: Dawn, Helen, Lucy, Jaime, Natasha Euler, Foxi, Dave and Natasha.*

Botanical Gardens: completion of two more arbors

STENAPA is pleased to announce the completion of two more Sensory Arbors. November saw the opening of the Sense of Taste Arbor and on Tuesday the 3rd of February the Sense of Smell Arbor was completed. This brings the total of arbors to three as the Sense of Touch Arbor has been established since August. Work on two more arbors is in process, eventually completing an arbor for all five senses.

Natasha Euler, an Intern with STENAPA since December, has the overall responsibility for creating these very specialised sections of the Botanical Garden. The volunteers, as always have been of great value to all concerned with this project. Not only will the arbors offer the visitors

interesting plants to admire, they can enjoy their surroundings while sitting on benches under umbrellas woven from palm fronds. Hanging baskets are being prepared and filled with herbs, so that "smelling" them will be made easier for children and older people .

Activity boards will ultimately be placed in all the arbors, describing the plants and their uses.

Recipes for teas from herbs and bushes will also be on display.

(Photo by Rozenn le Scao)

A gathering of STENAPA personnel, volunteers and well wishers took place to celebrate the completion of the Sense of Smell Arbor.



Clean up of Zeelandia Beach by volunteers

To spruce up the beach at Zeelandia for the festive season, nine STENAPA volunteers and interns attempted the daunting task of collecting rubbish and litter deposited there. They realized, that although the beach does get cleaned so now and again, refuse strewn all along the bottom of the cliffs is an ongoing problem. They noted with concern, that a fair amount of

medical refuse was found. Whether this was washed out from Smith Gut or came from the sea or somewhere else is not clear. Another cause for concern are the bits of rope, fishing net and loads of plastic. These things are all lethal traps for marine creatures. At the end of the day they had filled around twelve big refuse bags, a notable haul.

While the volunteers and interns were toiling on Zeelandia, the Snorkel Club with their instructor Gershon Lopes and several interns cleaned up the shallow waters in the harbour area. They too came away with a sizeable harvest of tires, plastic, bottles and other rubbish. Gershon and his group found it hard to see in the murky water, as a lot of sand from recent rains had deposited there.

Tompi Hill Head Trail

One of the casualties of the heavy rains during the last months of 2003 and the early new year, was Tompi Hill Head Trail.

Already in need of repair, the massive down pours that accelerated the already severe erosion problems endemic to Statia, washing it out so badly that it could not be used anymore.

The trail is an old shortcut between Lower Town and Tompi Hill Head at the top of the sand cliffs. The beginning of the trail is situated between the offices of STENAPA and the Blue Bead Restaurant on Gallows Bay, from where it climbs up along the cliffs to Kerk Weg.

A group of eleven stalwart volunteers tackled the job of repairing the trail and making it safe again. Although Tompi Hill Head Trail is relatively short, less than half a mile, it is extremely steep. This is the reason for the need of many steps. For a

large part they were very badly damaged or gone altogether. To repair them, the volunteers had to use re-enforcing steel rods to hold the rocks in place that form the steps. Two small bridges spanning the eroded gut had to be rebuilt. The trail, as seen in the inserted photo, is edged with rocks and boulders and is reinforced with wooden palettes in several places.

On January the 13th 2004 the Tompi Hill Head Trail, after 250 man hours of work, was restored and STENAPA opened it again to the public. Hikers who want to get to the Quill, as well as residents in a hurry, can once again use Tompi Hill Trail as an initial quick access route from Lower Town.

Taking into account that volunteers are not only burly young men with enormous muscle power, but that a large proportion of the volunteer groups are slim and dainty girls who are hardly used



to lugging large boulders around, this project was no mean feat.

STENAPA thanks and salutes them.

(Photo by Jerry Kennedy)

Some of the volunteers who rebuilt Tompi Hill Head Trail.. From left: sitting, Jacqui Eales, Alex Cadle and Dave Gibson; standing, Natashia Euler, Anna Herman, Darcy Comeau and Rebecca Gidney. Not available for the picture were Michelle Simons, Sian Regan, Jeanne MacDougall and Connie Wenzel.

In Memoriam Jean Gemmill

In November last year, STENAPA was shocked and saddened by the news that Jean Gemmill had passed away suddenly. Jean had been a long time resident of Statia and a friend to many people on this island in general and to STENAPA in particular. She was the founder of the Statia Morning Glory Horticultural Club and an untiring supporter and hands-on helper in the Botanical Garden. Her dream to see the Gardens as the Jewel of Statia is well on the way to becoming a reality. Alas she will not be with us when that day arrives.

Not only did Jean nurture the plants in the shade house and elsewhere in the Gardens with love and dedication, she also took so many newcomers to Statia under her wing. There will be many young people out there, Volunteers, Interns and Students who remember her kindness, hospitality and commitment.

STENAPA has undertaken to create a Bird Trail within the Botanical Garden. It will be named the **Jean Gemmill Bird Observation Trail**. The creation of this trail was Jean's idea and STENAPA will endeavour to make it a worthy legacy to Jean's memory. The trail should be completed within the next few months.

We will miss her. (Photo by Don Johnston)



Jean Gemmill

Statia Morning Glory

STENAPA on the Air

STENAPA announces with great pleasure, that a slot for a monthly Radio Program has become available on Radio Statia.

Nicole Esteban, Manager of St.Eustatius National Parks, aims to share information, matters of environmental concern and general news regarding STENAPA with the people of Statia.

The program will be aired for the first time this Thursday the 4th of February from 10:30 till 11:00 o'clock in the morning.

In future, the Radio Program will be on air every first Thursday of the month at the same time slot, 10:30 to 1100 AM

The funding for this venture is undertaken by the Representatiion of the Netherlands in St. Maarten.

St Eustatius National and Marine Parks Foundation



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St. Eustatius National Parks

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Junior Ranger Program

The aim and purpose of the Junior Rangers club was discussed in the last edition of STENAPA UPDATE.

Since the program got off the ground twelve Junior Rangers have had six sessions in the Miriam C. Schmidt Botanical Garden.

Under the tutelage of Gershon Lopes and with the help of the volunteers, the young rangers glean valuable knowledge about their natural environment and how to care for it.

During the time they have spent in the Gardens, the Junior Rangers have, with guidance from Natasha Euler created an impressive central point within the middle of the Sensory Garden. A Travelers Palm is planned to adorn the middle of the center piece

Natasha and Gershon are helping these young rangers in planting and caring for a variety of plants, including their identification. The Booklets which are given to each Junior Ranger are designed to take them step by step towards the comple-

tion of Stage 1 on the way to becoming fully fledged Junior Rangers.

Apart from learning about the Flora of Statia, the Junior Rangers have also had 6 sessions in the Quill National Park and are being taught how to construct stone walls and steps, and learning about their rare species of plants and animals there.

According to Gershon, the month of March will start off with a splash for the youngsters.

Weather permitting, in the early part of the month, he and some of the volunteers will introduce the Junior Rangers to STENAPA's activities on the water. They will be taught first of all, safety at sea; how the boats and their engines work; as well as maintenance of vessel and equipment. A trip to the buoys where the volunteers are tasked to clean the ropes and do maintenance work on the buoys, will be very informative and exciting for the aspiring Rangers.

T-shirts were specially designed for the Junior Rangers and worn by them with

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

We wish to thank Heidi Duncan for her valuable time and assistance in the production of this newsletter.

Pride. The shirts are a pleasing grey with a logo of Statia and environs, both marine and terrestrial. Matching caps should be available soon.

Snorkel Club

In January of this year, 19 Statia youngsters completed a snorkel course. Assistant Parks manager and instructor Gershon Lopes was pleased with the high number of participants. This was the largest class ever since the inception of the course and on completion, the youngsters received PADI skin-diving certificates. Congratulations to all from STENAPA .

Apart from learning new swimming skills and gaining confidence in the use of snorkeling equipment, and diving, the youngsters were introduced to a whole new world under water. Indeed a wonderful experience for them all.

It is hoped, that perhaps some of the graduates of the snorkeling course will be interested in becoming Junior Rangers in the future.