

June 2008

▶ **Newsletter 2/2008**

STENAPA Update



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Don't forget....

Green Tip:
Buy multipurpose cleaners instead of buying one for every different surface. Avoid cleaners altogether by finding natural cleaning alternatives. Such as baking soda for scrubbing and vinegar with water in a spray bottle for windows and mirrors.



Fish, Lobster and Conch Census Underway in Statia Marine Park

The National Parks Foundation is pleased to welcome fisheries biologist and postgraduate researcher, Ms Katherine McClellan, of the Nicholas School of Earth and Environmental Science, Duke University, Durham, NC. Kate is working with Marine Park staff and interns to carry out three very important surveys over the summer months.

The projects involve both field research and management. The first phase includes visual fish, lobster, and conch censuses at 17 dive sites in Statia National Marine Park. The National Parks organization is looking at abundance, diversity, and size of their fish populations.

The questions that the National

and with a literature search regarding reserve sizes in other Marine Parks.

Kate will be required to present her findings in a comprehensive report that can be used by scientists, practitioners and policy-makers. She must also present her findings to the Board of STENAPA and local policy-makers and stakeholders before leaving St Eustatius.

To date, visual surveys for fish and benthic cover have already been completed at 17 sites in the Marine Park. The surveys were conducted in the Northern and Southern Reserve as well as on artificial reefs and on reefs in the gen-

DCNA Board Meeting 2008



The board of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA), an association of all nature parks on the Dutch islands, met on St. Eustatius at the end of May to hold their semi-annual meeting.

This meeting was to finalize their five year plan which has set out five major goals for the DCNA member parks.

The goals are: Fund raising, promotion of nature conservation (particularly during constitutional change), capacity building and training, creating a central repository of information and promoting educational outreach and public awareness.

At the moment funds have been raised for bird inventories and awareness projects on the Dutch islands with the help of the Dutch Bird Protection Society.



Photographic evidence of a Nassau Grouper in Statia Marine Park. Photographed by Marine Park Intern Julia Smith, June 18, 2008.

Park is asking are: whether MPA legislation and management activities are adequately protecting the resources and if the no take areas are size sufficient to protect the fish resource populations. These are interesting management questions that will be addressed both using the data collected over the last 4 years

eral use area. So far, the surveys reveal high fish diversity in the two Reserve Areas.

In the first week of August Kate will be a guest on STENAPA's radio program and will also be hosting a town hall meeting at that time to answer any questions.

New Plant Species Found on Statia

An island wide plant inventory commenced in January this year, followed by further research in March and April when there were some amazing discoveries made.

Some of these discoveries include four new patches of our endemic plant, Statia Morning Glory (*Ipomoea sphenophylla*) on Bergje in the Boven National Park sector, a type of mistletoe (*Phoradendron trinervium*) as well as many new records of orchids.



New areas of the Dancing Doll Orchids were found in the Quill National Park.

One of the most exciting discoveries was that of the first record of a terrestrial orchid in the Boven National Park. It was almost completely hidden behind some rocks on a very inaccessible slope.

Many persons are interested in orchids and thanks to the plant training that the National Parks staff underwent this year, they are now fully trained in the documentation and sample collection of these beautiful blooms.

National Parks ranger Hannah Leslie is now working on a distribution map of all the orchids that have been located in the National Parks. She is being assisted by Lindsay Galway, National Parks intern.

From this edition of the "Stenapa Update" it is evident that increased research and exploration of our island's nature has so far this year alone produced some very remarkable finds. It is astonishing to think of the amount of natural treasures that we have on this little island and are not even aware of.

Grateful thanks to all partners in these research activities, including Conservation International, New York Botanical Garden, Hortus Botanicus (Amsterdam).

Statia's Selfish Orchid !!

Raymond Tremblay and Jim Ackerman from the University of Puerto Rico came to Statia in early June to help Stenapa biologist and Parks Manager Nicole Esteban, ranger Hannah Leslie and intern Lindsay Galway inventory the orchids of the island and establish a monitoring program to assure the conservation of Statia's orchid species.

Statia has about 14 species of orchids, some of which have not been seen for some time. The island has several more species than others of similar size such as St. Barths, St. Maarten, Nevis and Saba, and more than a number of much larger islands as well. Orchids on Statia and elsewhere exist due to a web of relationships with other organisms.

An orchid seed cannot germinate without being infected by a fungus (which the orchid then parasitizes!), and orchids usually cannot produce seeds without bees, birds, butterflies, wasps, or moths to pollinate the flowers.

Each species has one or few types of pollinators, and in the case of *Brassavola*



Brassavola cucullata

cucullata, the pollinator is likely to be a long-tongued moth that probes the depths of the flower searching for nectar. The flower does not produce any nectar but instead emits a heavy sweet perfume at night to attract the moth. The moth is tricked into probing into the flower for nectar that it will never find. The orchid, though, offers nothing for the services of the moth. *Brassavola's* partners for survival are not partners after all. The orchid takes advantage of the fungus and dupes the pollinator. As *Brassavola cucullata* shows, Statia should be recognized not only for its remarkable marine life, but also its fascinating plant life.

New Beetle Species Found



Dr. Michael Ivie searching for beetles in the Quill National Park.

Very little is known about the diversity and numbers of fauna (animals) and flora (plants) of St Eustatius, and much of the current information available is based on scientific work carried out before 1970.

In the past five years, St Eustatius National Parks has been working with a number of scientists to increase knowledge about nature on Statia, and particularly within the National Parks. Recently, we focused on beetles.

Existing records (dating as early as 1937) report only four families and 11 species of beetles in St Eustatius.

During a rapid inventory of beetle diversity in the Quill/Boven National Park on 26-27 May 2008, around 1000 specimens were collected by entomologist Dr Michael Ivie from Montana State University.

Dr Ivie, has since his return to the United States, contacted St Eustatius National Parks to confirm that he has added records for 13 new families of beetles.

At the species level, Dr Ivie has confirmed that the known number of species of beetles has at least quadrupled, with further examination of the specimens required to complete the documentation.

The large increase in the number of species recorded in just two days of fieldwork points toward a very much larger number of beetles in St Eustatius, and Dr Ivie is planning to return to St Eustatius for a more detailed inventory.

Whilst there is understandably very little interest in beetles, insects are undeniably critical to the terrestrial eco-system on St Eustatius.

They are a food source for animals higher up the food chain, and also speed up decomposition of dead animals and plants.

New Boven Trail System Map



Map showing the proposed trail routes for the Boven National Park which will have a total of 8 trails of varying difficulty. There is also a 3 hour trail mapped out for Signal Hill.

At the request of the Executive Council, STENAPA has prepared a map of the proposed trail system in the Boven sub-sector of the Quill/ Boven National Park.

As the court case about Venus Bay came to a close, STENAPA's work commenced in July 2007 to improve our knowledge of the Boven sub-sector of the National Park, as well as set out the trail system. As a result of over 40 hikes by National Park staff and interns, with historical advice from Grant Gilmore and Gay Soetekouw, we have now identified significant areas of biological and historical/cultural importance in the Boven sub-sector of the National Park – in particular on Gilboa, Bergeje, Boven and Signal Hills.

We have been astonished to find previously unknown areas of Statia Morning Glory, new plants to Statia (including orchid and mistletoe), Antillean Iguana and Red-bellied racer snake and sites of historical interest (including a rum distillery, sugar mill and animal enclosure, networks of stone walls, and more). Additionally, we found many areas of nesting sea birds (in particular Red-billed Tropic Bird) around the cliffs.

Amongst other things, Gilboa Hill was once home to a fruit orchard, and there remains many fruit trees including Surinam cherry, blackberries and tamarinds. Other plants include gum and caparis trees. The beautiful penguin bromeliads can also be seen along this trail. This is the only place on Statia to see this beautiful plant.

The Northern hills are the ideal snake and iguana habitat and they are sure to be spotted as hikers walk these trails. There are great views of St. Eustatius, her neighbouring islands and of Statia's Atlantic and Caribbean coastlines.



Some of the numerous ruins that you will encounter hiking on the Boven trails.

Rare Manta Ray In Marine Park



Photo: Tim Clarke

In early June while doing a Reef Check dive at the Mushroom Garden dive site, STENAPA staff were treated to the rare and amazing sight of a giant manta ray at the reef.

Beforehand Lee Munson, the Marine Park manager had spotted quite a large free swimming remora over the reef and wondered what could be in the area that a remora of that size could attach to. We did not have long to wonder as within minutes a manta with a wing span of 2 meters, sailed out of the deep blue and came over the reef. We were awarded a good view and even a treat as it circled the reef again and actually came in quite close to inspect the group of divers.

Happily other divers have reported seeing the manta ray since then so it seems that at least for the time being he (or she) has decided to make our Marine Park home. The Manta Ray is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN list Red List.

Plant Sale



Pass by the Visitor Center at Gallows Bay any weekday from 7:00am - 4:00pm

Prices from Fls 5,- to Fls 50,-
Open during the lunchtime !!

St Eustatius: National and Marine Parks and Botanical Gardens



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 info@statiapark.org



“Friends of STENAPA”

The Friends of STENAPA program allows nature lovers in the general public to contribute to nature conservation on the island.

A number of local businesses now offer discounts to persons presenting their Friends of STENAPA membership card.

Blue Bead	5%	All food and drinks
Brown's Garage	10%	All labor
Dive Statia	2nd hour free	kayak rental
Five Pearls shop	10%	All purchases
I.F. Rivers	5-10%	General merchandise
Largo Heights	10%	Food only
Pandt Steel	10%	Gates/welding repair
Scubaqua	10%	Dive fees (rack rates)
Sonny's	10%	Food (no take-out)
SuperBurger	10%	Hot lunch
Intermezzo	10% off	Espresso Cocktails

Persons wishing to become a member or purchase a gift membership can obtain more detailed information from the National Parks Visitor Center or online on our website (www.statiapark.org).

STENAPA is an environmental non-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: Irving Brown
 Vice President: Ronnie Courtar
 Treasurer: Ruth Pandt
 Secretary: Ingrid Walther

Next edition of STENAPA Update available soon with articles on:

- STENAPA Summer Club activities
- Completion (?) of the Children's Garden
- How is the Marine Park benefiting fish, conch and lobster?
- Orchids on Statia

SOL sponsors

Summer Club 2008

SOL Antilles NV (the former Shell Oil) has donated \$1 000.00 to STENAPA's Summer Club program. Proceeds of which have gone into purchasing materials for the activities and paying towards the children's participation fee.

SOL's David Antrobus, Country Manager, cited in a recent letter that the effort made by STENAPA to organize such educational and environmentally oriented programs for Statia's youth is recognized and admired by SOL and they are very pleased and proud to be affiliated with such an endeavour.

As it was last year, this year's participation is at maximum with 35 children attending 4 programs. Hiking, Snorkeling, Botanical Gardens and Turtle Conservation program activities are on offer four half days a week.

Staff, Interns and volunteers supervise the children during the week's activities. The Summer Club runs for the entire six weeks of the school holidays and gives children an opportunity to explore in depth the various aspects of nature on their island.

Progress at the

Botanical Gardens

For those interested in a lovely family outing, the Botanical Garden is the place to be. Work on the Children's garden is in full swing (no pun intended).

The play equipment, swing sets, swing animals, climbers and playhouse are almost fully assembled. Some have already been completed and painted and are ready for the kids.

Our brand new telescope has arrived and been set up. So wildlife, neighboring islands, as well as passing boats and tankers, can be viewed in a different light.

The general public is very welcome and encouraged to come out and visit the Gardens anytime between sunrise and sunset.

