

March 2008

▶ **Newsletter 1/2008**

# STENAPA Update

## Early Start for 2008 Turtle Season *Reminders for the General Public*



In the night or early morning hours of March 13-14, a leatherback turtle came up on Zeelandia beach and nested. This makes her the first female to come up for what is the earliest recorded start of a nesting season in the five years since STENAPA began their turtle program.

And as if on cue she returned to the beach early on Easter Monday evening and laid a second set of eggs. When she was done laying, she was tagged on both rear flippers and she also received a PIT tag. The tagging provided a perfect hands on training opportunity for the new Marine Park Manager (see adjacent article).

Mr. Arturo Herrera, STENAPA'S former Turtle Program coordinator, has travelled back to Statia for a week to train Mr. Munson in tagging, reporting, research and all relevant turtle related data as Mr. Munson will now be heading up the turtle program as part of his duties in the Marine Park.

The general public is hereby reminded that Zeelandia Beach falls under certain regulations during nesting season which is from April to mid-November. Bonfires, bright lights and loud noises on the beach are prohibited. Also driving on the sand is not permitted. Please abide by these regulations and encourage others to do so as these activities on the beach scare female turtles away.

Sandmining is illegal all year round. A sand miner was issued a summons already for this season. He had unknowingly come dangerously close to destroying a nest. Compounding the violation is the fact that he drove his vehicle onto the sand.



## New Marine Park Manager Arrives

On Monday, March 17th, Mr. Lee Munson arrived on St. Eustatius to take up the position of Marine Park Manager.

After a long advertising and interview process, Mr. Munson was chosen from among some 50 candidates who applied for the position.

Lee is a Marine Ecologist and master scuba diver trainer from England. He has worked all over the world, including Mexico, Australia, South East Asia and until recently, in a very remote location in



*Photo of Lee Munson*

Mozambique. He is excited to be working on Statia and after living so far from civilization for so long he has been pleasantly surprised by what he has seen so far.

The Marine Park manager is responsible for overseeing all duties and activities pertaining to the Marine Park,



### Inside this Publication

Turtle season has begun	1
New Marine Park Manager arrives	1
Island-wide plant survey	2
Staff receive training	2
Bonaire Rangers visit Statia for work exchange	3
Another Turtle lost to carelessness	3
Friends of STENAPA	4
Iguana Rescue	4
Fort Oranje Activities	4

### Don't forget....

- You can join us for our regular beach cleanups. Watch for the flyers that will be posted around town or call the office.
- Volunteers are always welcome to help out at the Botanical Gardens.



## Visiting Botanists from New York Botanical Gardens



*The group having a rest at the Quill rim.*

In the beginning of February of this year, a group of botanists from the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) spent over a week on St. Eustatius collecting specimens to create a detailed inventory of the island's plant life.

Conservation International was the funding agency for this project. Their aim is to create inventories for most of the islands in the Caribbean region because of their unique biodiversity which is becoming increasingly threatened due to development. Conservation International has

therefore launched several projects in the region to identify species and collect data so that informed decisions can be made to preserve this area's natural resources.

Stenapa staff organized the hikes and supplied transportation, guides and local knowledge in an effort to assist the botanists in their work.

Different types of specimens were collected by the experts in their own respective field, flowering plants, mosses and lichens. On a daily basis each gathered anywhere from 50-75 samples.

In addition to long days collecting, the scientists were happy to have the Junior Rangers join them on a hike where they showed them the correct ways to collect samples and cuttings from trees. Also how to preserve the collected samples by pressing and drying them overnight.

In particular Revinio Schmidt was very interested in the botanist's work and asked a lot of questions. Ranger Hannah Leslie who was in charge of taking care of the team, made sure the children received a workbook to keep their interests in botany alive.

The team was also lucky enough to see

the Statia Morning Glory vine when it was in full bloom. Photographer Carol Gracie who traveled with the group was very happy that she could take photos of the Morning Glory flowering in the wild.

All the specimens collected were transported to the New York Botanical Garden where they will be photographed again on special sheets which show up the exact size. The entire collection will be available later in the year as the St. Eustatius Virtual Herbarium on the internet.

Last year Saba had the honor of a visit by this team of botanists and their collection is available for reference online <http://sweetgum.nybg.org/saba/links.html>.

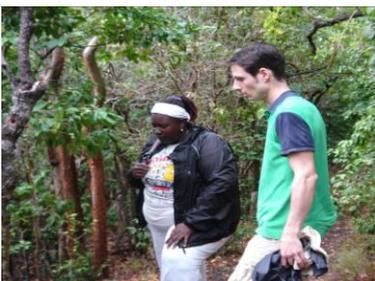
All in all the team were able to collect 100's of specimens here on Statia. Because of the wealth of material here and because not all plants flower at the same time, Conservation International has approved a follow up trip to Statia in 2008.

In the meantime National Park ranger Hannah Leslie and the NP intern Ms. Lindsay Galway continue to collect samples for the botanists to have upon their return.

## Staff Receive Plant Identification Training

In the first two weeks of March, all staff and land park interns took part in a two weeks training course on Plant identification. André Proosdij, the scientific keeper of Hortus Botanicus, the Botanical Gardens in Amsterdam, visited the island to conduct this course. His travel was funded by the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance, DCNA.

André gave very brief and interesting presentations at the Visitor Center but preferred to be in the field giving more hands on training. The staff preferred this as well and are in agreement that this



*Course leader, André, explaining how to recognize different types of plant families*

was one of the best courses that they had ever followed.

The course covered a wide range of topics including invasive species, endangered plant species, vegetation zones, plant collecting, plant identification, information display on trails and at the Botanical Gardens, breeding programs for endangered plant species and training in plant propagation. As well as donating his holiday time to the training course, André was also very kind to leave a huge

box of plant books valuable to us for reference at the Botanical Gardens and for preparing educational material for the various children's clubs that we have throughout the year.

The benefits of this course are that the office staff can give more information to visitors, including persons buying plants from our plant sale; and rangers that give guided hikes can now do so in more detail. The entire course has been documented to enable us to teach future volunteers, interns and staff that join our team.

All staff and interns that attended the course received a certificate in plant identification. The two weeks came to an end with a BBQ at the Botanical Gardens which was a joint thank you event for André and the three visiting rangers from Bonaire. All in all it was a very busy and very productive two weeks for the management and staff of the National Parks.

# Bonaire Rangers on Statia For Marine Park Work Exchange



*From l to r: Gregory La Croes, Edwin "Din" Domacasse (chief ranger), Karel Rosaria and Nadio Spanner, Statia Marine Park Ranger who worked with the rangers the first week.*

On Monday, March 3rd, three rangers from the Bonaire National Marine Park, BNMP, arrived on Statia as part of an exchange program funded by the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance, DCNA.

In 2006, three of our rangers, Nadio Spanner, Walter "Gadget" Blair and Gershon Lopes, then assistant manager, went to Bonaire for 10 days to experience work in that Marine Park.

While the rangers were on Statia, they took part in many different activities in the Park. Among others, mooring installation, in-water turtle monitoring dives, patrols, line cleaning, a beach cleanup and even helping to supervise Snorkel Club kids on the last Monday.

On Friday, March 7th, during STENAPA's weekly staff meeting, the rangers gave a very riveting presentation of their daily work in the BNMP. Staff was very interested and asked many questions during and after the presentation. Apparently on Bonaire they are very serious about enforcing their laws and the people know this, so violations are at a minimum.

As a thank you for all their hard work, their week ended with a barbecue at the

Botanical gardens on Wednesday, March 12th. They left the next day after saying their goodbyes at the office.

Upon their departure, the rangers said that they had learned a great deal on Statia and that they thought the people were very friendly and gentle.

The Chief Ranger, Edwin Domacasse, urged the Island Government that if they want to keep the coral in good health, they need to put down more laws, such as banning spear fishing (especially those working with tourists) and also ensuring that there was more personnel working for the Marine Park.



*The rangers, staff and volunteers enjoying a thank you barbecue at the Botanical Gardens on their last evening.*

## Another Turtle Lost to a Net

On Easter Sunday, a family walking on Lynch Beach came upon this dead Olive Ridley turtle. The Olive Ridley is seriously endangered and this is the first recorded evidence of their presence in our waters; they tend to stay closer to the Gulf of Mexico. It is quite clear from the photo that the turtle was entangled in a fishing net. Entanglement prevents a turtle from coming to the surface to take a breath and it subsequently drowns.

Fishermen are reminded to do their best to retrieve nets that are washed overboard and to pull in drifting nets that are obviously abandoned and bring them ashore. These are simple measures to prevent the death of this threatened species. When staff went to examine the turtle, someone had removed the shell making it very difficult to identify. Luckily photos were taken or this rare occurrence would have been overlooked. The shell of a dead turtle is invaluable for use in identification and education purposes. All turtle carcasses should be reported or brought to the Marine Park Office.



*Fishermen should retrieve nets that go overboard as the consequences can be deadly.*

## Plant Sale



**Pass by the Visitor Center at Gallows Bay any weekday from 7:00am - 5:00pm**

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

**St Eustatius: National and Marine Parks and Botanical Gardens**



National Parks Office  
 Gallows Bay  
 St. Eustatius, Netherlands Antilles  
 Phone/Fax 599-318-2884  
 Email: semp@goldenrocknet.com  
 info@statiapark.org



**“Friends of STENAPA”**

The Friends of STENAPA program, launched last December, 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](http://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

**Congratulations to the new officers that were voted in during bi-annual board elections on Tuesday 1st April 2008.**

**Next edition of STENAPA Update available soon with articles on:**

- National Park Management Plan
- DCNA board meeting in Statia
- Junior Ranger graduates

**Iguana Rescued By Park Ranger**

In the last week of March, Ranger Carlton van Putten was alerted by the regular gardener to the presence of a trapped iguana in the Museum gallery yard at Gallowsbay.

The iguana was taken to the Botanical Garden where an attempt was made to revive it with rest, shade, water and fruit. Unfortunately the animal died the next afternoon. It had been trapped in the fence over the long Easter weekend (5 days) and it is thought that lack of food and water and exposure caused it to succumb in the end.



**Visit our Information Booth at Fort Oranje**

On Sunday April, 6th there will be an island Health Day that begins with a walk-a-thon which will end at Fort Oranje. There are several activities that will be held at the Fort and they include Glucose and Blood pressure checks as this Health day is focusing on Diabetes.



STENAPA will have an information booth where we will be distributing eco-bags and mini-guides and answering any questions that the public might have.

Anyone who wishes to volunteer in the various parks can sign up at that time. There is always room for an extra hand at the Botanical gardens where the daily struggle with Corallita continues and on Beach Clean-ups especially now that turtle nesting season has begun..