

May 2004

Newsletter 2/2004

STENAPA Update

Turtle Watch on Statia's Beaches

On Saturday the 24th of May, STENAPA began its third year of patrolling Statia's beaches. The object is to monitor the Sea Turtles nesting activities on our shores.

STENAPA's Sea Turtle Monitoring Program is sponsored by Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST), the World Turtle Trust, KNAP nature conservation fund (VOMIL, Curacao) and Idea Wild (USA).

STENAPA's patrol crew of two monitors the beach most nights. The first patrols were conducted by Program Coordinator Rozenn Le Scao and High School student Coen Cherubin. He is a pupil of the Gwendolyn van Putten High School in St. Eustatius and was on job training with STENAPA for 2 weeks.

Their first night patrol started with high excitement as they spotted a nesting Leatherback Turtle. Unfortunately, the turtle chose a nesting site susceptible to erosion by waves, which caused the patrol crew to move the eggs to a nest on safer ground. They also tagged the Leatherback Turtle on her flipper.

On patrolling the beach the following night, they noted, that the location where the clutch of eggs was first deposited, was completely flooded. Thanks to the vigilance and action of the patrol crew a number of Leatherback Turtles will now have a chance to hatch, grow and perhaps come back to Zeelandia to start the cycle over again.

For Coen the experience on the beach will surely be a memorable one. It was his first encounter with a Leatherback Turtle and though he was a bit apprehensive to start off with, he soon realised that she was a gentle creature. Coen feels privileged to be part of the patrol crew as well as having this wonderful experience from which he learned so much.



Coen Cherubin with Leatherback Turtle

(Photo by Rozenn Le Scao)

At the same time, STENAPA is grateful for Coen's help and assistance with the Turtle Monitoring Program and plans to continue working with students in the future.

The Leatherback Turtle is listed as critically endangered, and therefore the need for information and awareness is of the utmost importance. Sea Turtles nesting on Statia's shores are the Leatherback, Green and Hawksbill Turtles.

During May 2004, STENAPA has conducted two training sessions for the Sea Turtle Monitoring Program, one for volunteers working for STENAPA and one for members of the public of Statia. Both sessions were well attended.

Leatherback caught in Rope

The Daily Herald of 11-05-04 reported a Leatherback Turtle caught up in ropes, designed to hold marker buoys in place. This happened at a resort in St. Maartin, where the unfortunate animal tried to come ashore. A resident rushed to rescue the large turtle, but only managed to sever part of the entanglement. After a hard struggle, the turtle escaped, still wrapped in rope and trailing three marker buoys. A dinghy tried for some time to follow the turtle, but alas ran out of fuel. The Nature Foundation of St Maarten was alerted, after which the area was patrolled, to no avail. The fate of the Leatherback does not bear thinking about.

Keeping in mind the status of the Leatherback Turtle, as indeed all Sea Turtles, incidents like this should be avoided at all costs. Should members of the public in Statia ever notice a similar tragedy, STENAPA earnestly requests, that they are informed immediately. Because there is a risk of further injuries, rescue by the public should only be attempted, if the animal's life is in acute danger.



Inside this issue:

Environmental Week in St. Eustatius	2
Marine Environment	2
Underwater Magic	
Beach clean-ups in St. Eustatius	3
Marker buoys for Southern Reserve	3
Volunteers	
Reptiles on Statia	4

Special points of interest:

- The Botanical Gardens are open from 7am—12noon every weekday. You can visit outside these hours but there might not be a guide available. Contact the office if you want to arrange a guided tour.
- You are invited to join patrols for the turtle program on Zeelandia, either sunset patrols to look for hatchlings or night patrols to look for nesting turtles. Contact the office to let us know when you wish to come.
- The next Plant Sale will start at end June at the National and Marine Parks Office. The plants come from the Botanical Garden and are surplus to requirements. We have plants from fl.5—fl.50.

ENVIRONMENTAL WEEK IN ST. EUSTATIUS

A well deserved rest after a long walk



Activities

(Photo by Carrie Simon)

May 3rd the Island Government of St. Eustatius launched its Environmental Week Program with a Health Walk and Treasure Hunt for all government employees. The walk started at Government Guest House on Oranjestraat and ended at the Miriam C. Schmidt Botanical Gardens.

The Employees were placed in nine groups and everyone was issued with questionnaires which had to be answered on their way to the Treasure Hunt. After a rest and refreshments at the Botanical Garden, the party proceeded to Zeelandia Beach for "Fun and Games" e.g. Tug of War (men against women).

May 4th Field trip in the morning with the object to collect and remove tires and old batteries from locations such as Brown's Garage, White Wall, Union Farm and Zeelandia. 10 AM Radio Program highlighting the aim and purpose of Environmental Week. At 7.30 PM a meeting at the Christine Flanders Community Center had been called by the Island Government, where, along with representatives of Government and other interested bodies, Dr. Lee Harris of the Coral Reef Foundation and Nicole Esteban of STENAPA, were present.

May 5th Inventory of car wrecks on the island.

May 6th Collection of "Groot Vuil" (large items of rubbish) in Oranjestad.

May 7th Planting of trees, Coconut Palms, Aloe and Lilies along Gallows Bay.

Employees and Volunteers of STENAPA were actively involved in helping and assisting with Environment Week.

As part of Environment Week STENAPA conducted a Goat Survey in the Quill National Park. The result shows, that the number of goats within the Protected Area will certainly cause long term damage. At the end of Environment Week, STENAPA arranged a beach clean up at Zeelandia.

STENAPA received the gift of a very beautiful pastel painting. Depicted is an underwater scene with the accent on turtles. The generous donor is a French artist by the name of Martine Cotten. Ms Cotten's connection to STENAPA is through Rozenn Le Scao, a STENAPA employee who also hails from France.

To enable the public to share in this painting, STENAPA has decided to have posters printed as well as getting T-shirts made. For this reason a slogan is needed for the picture. STENAPA invites the people of Statia, as well as friends and supporters elsewhere, to don their thinking caps, so that we can get as many suggestions as possible. The aim of the poster and T-shirt is to promote awareness, on how important it is to protect all Marine Turtles.

All contact numbers are listed on page 4 of this publication.

STENAPA extends sincerest thanks to Martine Cotten.

Marine Environment

As part of St. Eustatius Environment Week the Island Government hosted a meeting at the C. Flanders Community Centre. Attending the occasion were members of government, Mr. Ronald Rouse, Mrs Carol Jack representing GGD, Professor Lee Harris and STENAPA Manager Nicole Esteban. The meeting was broadcast live on local radio.

Professor Harris, Ph.D., P.E. of the Reef Ball Foundation visited Statia on invitation of the Island Government. Professor Harris gave a presentation on how the beaches of Statia could be re-established, with no adverse effect to the environment. He gave examples of similar problems elsewhere in the Caribbean, which were addressed by building submerged reefs, constructed of reef balls. For more information on this subject visit this website : www.reefball.org.

Nicole Esteban, Manager of STENAPA, highlighted the activities of the Marine Park and marine issues on St. Eustatius.

Underwater Magic



Some interesting and disturbing facts:

Coastal Communities around the world are losing millions on eco-tourism, due to the destruction of rare turtles.

The Leatherback turtle has declined by **90 %** In the last 20 years

BEACH CLEAN-UPS IN ST. EUSTATIUS

Zeelandia

STENAPA sponsored a beach clean up on Zeelandia Beach on Wednesday 14th of April. The exercise was part of the Snorkel Club and Junior Rangers Club activities for children and youth. STENAPA staff members, five volunteers and six youngsters from their respective clubs participated.

Nicole Esteban, Manager of STENAPA said, although a clean up took place six weeks previously, Zeelandia Beach was again covered in litter. Much of the debris was plastic bottles for outboard oil, motor oil, water and sun screen, as well as glass bottles, Styrofoam cups and fishing nets. These items were found mostly downwind from Smith's Gut entrance, in the vicinity of Statia's landfill. Nicole Esteban stressed, that beach cleaning is particularly important because of the Sea Turtle nesting season. Earlier in April the first Hawksbill Turtle's nesting activity this season, had been observed.

Regular beach cleaning tasks will be undertaken until November, when the turtle nesting season will be over.

STENAPA appeals to the public to be mindful of the environment by cleaning up and taking their rubbish home, after a visit to the beaches.

Marine Turtles, particularly the highly threatened, soft shelled Leatherback Turtles are easily injured by debris.



Hawksbill Turtle

STENAPA beach combers



(Photo by Carrie Simon)

Oranjestad Bay

To mark World Earth Day, the Snorkel Club, sponsored by STENAPA, spent the afternoon of the 22nd of April on the shore of Oranjestad Bay. Their aim was, to pick up rubbish and all "unnatural" materials littering the shallow water, rocks and sandy beaches. Gershon Lopes, assistant manager of STENAPA and leader of the Snorkel Club was in charge of the clean up activities.

The group of "snorkelers" started at the pier, working their way towards the almond tree. Their harvest included fish pot wire, pieces of roof tin, beer bottles and other rubbish floating in the shallow water or littering the rocks and sand. The return trip was made on foot, picking up all unnatural debris scattered along the shore line.

Gershon Lopes feels that children should be made aware of their environment and its preservation.

STENAPA Intern Lucy Savage from the UK and other volunteers, Jaime Vickers and Dave Lawson assisted Gershon.

STENAPA extends thanks and appreciation to all who helped in cleaning up the beaches thus making them a safer place for the island's Marine Life.

Two more marker buoys for Southern Reserve

At the request of Statia's fishermen, STENAPA placed two more marker buoys at the edge of the southern reserve within the St. Eustatius Marine Park.

The buoys are third and fourth, defining the boundaries of the reserve.

In the past the fishermen were afraid of inadvertently placing their pots within the reserve, resulting in possible confiscation of pots and their catch.

The positioning of these buoys will aid in ascertaining exactly where the boundaries of the reserve are located.

The reserve is a section of the Marine Park in which fishing is not allowed by law. The purpose is to give fish, lobsters and conch a safe area in which to multiply and therefore improve fishing in nearby waters.

STENAPA's Rozenn Le Scao stressed that without the help of Statia Terminal's craft "STATIA RESPONDER" the buoys with their anchoring mechanisms could not have been placed.



(Photo by Rozenn Le Scao)

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

Special thanks to Heidi Duncan for her time and dedication in producing this edition of the STENAPA Update.

New Group of Volunteers at STENAPA

A new international group of volunteers has arrived on Statia. They will be with us for two months. Like the young people who were here before them, they work diligently on all STENAPA'S projects. At present, an extra task is the nightly turtle watches, which are taken in turns. The volunteers are also busy with building

retaining walls in the Botanical Garden, benches for the visitors to rest on and the ongoing job of keeping the gardens free of weeds. The Jean Gemmill Bird Trail is being extended, to meet up with the Round the Mountain Trail. All these activities would be very daunting for the faint-hearted. STENAPA, as always, salutes these young people.



(Photo by Heidi Duncan)

In the photo from left to right:

Rob from England, Steven and Floris from Holland, Matthew from Canada, Sophie from England and at extreme right Julie from Denmark, In front Foxi from Statia.

Not in the picture is Lucy, she was a volunteer with the last group, but elected to stay on as an Intern until the end of August.

Reptiles on Statia

Alert Stadians will have noticed the new sign outside the offices of STENAPA.

The sign, depicting the Lesser Antillean Iguana (*Iguana delicatissima*) was donated by the International Iguana Society, in connection with a month long population survey of all reptiles on the island. This survey will be conducted during the month of June.

The Iguana posters will be put up at the entrance to the Quill Trail, on Round the Mountain trail and at the entrance to the Botanical Garden. Statia Terminal has agreed to place two signs and hopefully more will be placed in other strategic locations.

