

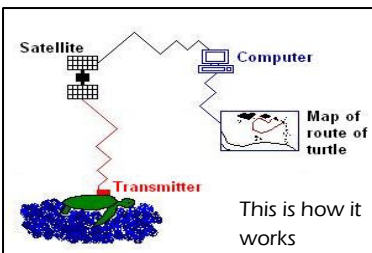
September 2005

Newsletter 3/2005

STENAPA Update

Turtle Satellite Tracking Project

This year we are hoping to finally solve the mystery of where turtles go, once they leave Statia's nesting sites. With funding from the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA), STENAPA and the Nature Foundation of St Maarten have started a satellite tracking study of Green and Hawksbill Turtles. The aim of this project is to track these animals on the way to their foraging grounds, once they leave the island's waters towards the end of October. Getting to know the turtle's movement pattern will give us a much clearer picture of their geographical range. This will allow us to improve protection and conservation efforts, not only on the nesting beaches, but also in other essential habitats. Satellite tracking will indicate the migration pathways turtles use, enabling us to determine any potential threats, such as fisheries interaction these animals may encounter on their way between nesting and feeding grounds.



Under the supervision of Dr Robert Van Dam, a sea turtle biologist with many years experience using satellite telemetry to track turtles in the Caribbean,

transmitters will be attached to three adult females on Statia and to two on St. Maarten.

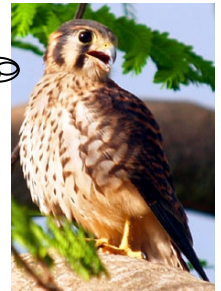


The transmitter is a 12cm by 5cm by 3cm box, and weighs 200 grams with an antenna attached at one end. There is no danger of it hurting the turtle as its design is streamlined and therefore will not interfere with any normal behaviour and movements. Attachment procedure of the transmitter poses no risk to the animal. To limit movement during tagging, she is put in a holding box where her carapace is cleaned of any algae or barnacles before attaching the transmitter, plus a soft cushioning layer to her shell. It sits towards her head which will be out of water when she surfaces for air, enabling signals to be sent to satellites. Layers of hardened protective fiberglass encases the transmitter, protecting it from damage during the journey through the ocean, reefs and other obstacles the animal might encounter. All this is done after she is

finished with nesting.

A very important aspect of this project has been the opportunity to increase public awareness of turtle conservation issues. Programme Coordinator Dr Emma Harrison visited Statia's schools in September to give presentations on satellite telemetry. At the same time a "Name the Turtle" competition was organised. Students were given the task of drawing turtles, projecting where their migratory path might lead them, writing an essay about a turtles journey or making a model of a turtle using only recycled materials. Over a hundred entries were received and judging was no easy task. All winners were allowed to choose names for the tagged turtles, one of them being Miss Shellie. She and the other turtles can be followed on STENAPA's website www.statiapark.org

Good Luck to all turtles and a safe return to Statia !!



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Special points of interest:

Wednesday Oct. 19 at 3.00 PM
Join Beach Clean-up at Zeelandia

Saturday Oct. 29 and Sunday Oct. 30 at 8.00 AM

Hike on the Quill Trail with Author of Reptiles and Amphibians of Dutch Caribbean. Meet at the top of Rosemary Lane.

Saturday Nov. 05 and Sunday 06 at 9.00 AM

Help clear our large trees from Mexican Creeper Corallita (see flyers for detail)

- Guided tours at the Botanical Gardens are available from 8am—1pm every weekday. Contact the office if you want to have a guided tour outside of these hours. The Garden is open from sunrise to sunset everyday.

- Turtle nesting season is nearly over. Contact the office if you want to join a patrol.

Plastic Bags Campaign Update

STENAPA with the aid of the Island Government is addressing the problems associated with plastic waste. This type of pollution poses a serious threat to all wildlife, particularly to the marine environment. Statia has no recycling facilities therefore all waste is deposited at Smith's Gut, the land fill very close to Zeelandia Beach. Plastic bags constitute a major proportion of the waste and the aim of the campaign is to reduce the quantity of plastic bags entering Smith's gut.

STENAPA is producing re-usable cloth bags which will be distributed to every house hold, free of charge. Each house hold will be given 2 bags and in addition every school child will receive one bag as well. By using these bags instead of the traditional plastic variety given away by the stores, the unsightly and dangerous plastic pollution will be reduced.

Over the last few months STENAPA organized various activities to raise public awareness of the negative impact of plastic wastes. These included:

Presentations at all local schools to educate children on the dangers of plastic waste.

Radio Programmes in June and August to

inform everyone about the campaign and to encourage the public to adopt other waste reduction measures.

A school contest to design a logo for the Eco-bags (a picture of the winning design was published in the last Newsletter).

A radio "jingle" contest with the slogan **Re-use, recycle, refuse** which is aired twice daily on PJR 91.5 FM.

Currently activities include the designing of a poster for schools and shops. The Eco-bags have been ordered and will arrive in November/December.

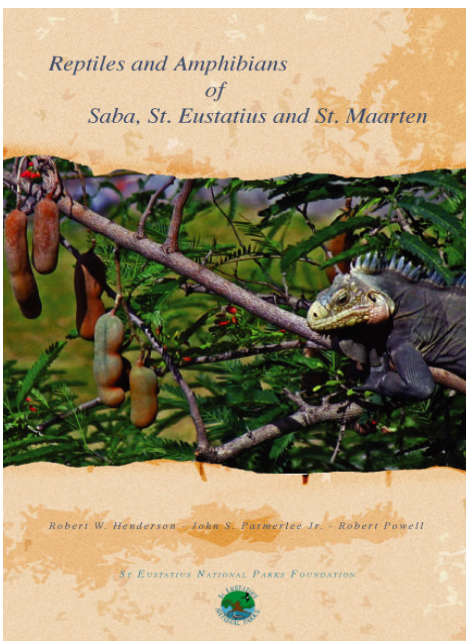
A two hour shop tour to visit 14 store owners was carried out by Governor Mr. Hyden Gittens and Nicole Esteban, Manager of STENAPA with the aim to brief shop owners about the ongoing plastic bags campaign managed by the government and STENAPA. They were shown a large re-usable cotton Eco bag which is ideal for grocery shopping.

STENAPA is delighted at the response of the shop owners,

they are unanimous in their support of the campaign and all have agreed to display the posters and also to stock the Eco-bags for sale to customers who might have forgotten to bring their own. Governor Gittens reiterated the importance of reducing plastic waste, not only for environmental reasons, but also for the enhancement of Statia's beauty. In future, an import tax will be levied on plastic bags to further encourage shops to charge for such bags and also to entice the public to use their Eco-bags.



Launch of new Book on Reptiles and Amphibians



Statia was fortunate to be selected by a team of fourteen scientists to conduct a month long study of our reptiles and amphibians during June of 2004. This study, organised by Bob Powell and Bob Henderson, led to publication of several scientific papers. Dr. Powell was inspired by Statia's population of Antillean Iguana (*Iguana delicatissima*) and organised for the "Protect Iguana" signs, which are posted in town and in the Quill and Boven National Parks. Dr Powell also suggested that he organise production of a colourful guide to Reptiles and Amphibians with copyright to STENAPA. Proceeds from the sale of these books would be donated to conservation. Fortunately STENAPA was able to find funding for the printing of 3000 copies through World Wildlife Fund Netherlands and Prince Bernard Nature Fund, and the book covers the three Dutch Caribbean

Windward Islands. Copies of the book will be distributed to schools and youth groups. The three nature conservation organisations of St. Eustatius, Saba and Sint Maarten will offer the books for sale.

STENAPA is happy to welcome Dr Powell back to Statia on the 28-30 of October for the launch of the 200 page publication Reptiles and Amphibians of the Dutch Caribbean, St. Eustatius, Saba and St. Maarten.

While in Statia, Dr Powell will be hosting two nature walks to use the guide book for the identification of lizards, snakes and frogs. The public is invited to join Dr Powell at the top of Rosemary Lane on Saturday the 29th and Sunday the 30th of October at 8AM for a leisurely stroll along the Quill trail, lasting about an hour.

Corallita Research



Photo by Heidi Duncan

Whether we call it Corallita or by its fancy botanical name *Antigonon leptopus*, Mexican Creeper, Coral Vine, Mountain Rose, Confederate Vine, Chain of Love, Heart on a Chain, Love Vine, Coral Bells, Queen's Jewels, Kadena de Amor, Queens Wreath or Cemetery Vine, we are talking about the very beautiful but deadly invader that threatens Statia's indigenous flora and fauna.

This very aggressive pest hides its tubers, which can weigh 7 kilo, in 2 meter deep soil. It shoots out vines up to 10 meters long and kills even big trees with its choking embrace. It covers entire areas of vegetation, depriving it of sunlight and so killing all undergrowth. It breaks down farm fences and interferes with telephone lines.

This alien plant employs bees, wasps, flies and butterflies to spread its pollen and domestic as well as wild animals, including birds, eat its fruit seeds, thus spreading it further as they drop their pellets. The seeds of this vine are even carried on water.

It is assumed that many years ago, Corallita was introduced to Statia as an ornamental plant and possibly to combat soil erosion. The indigenous home of *Antigonon leptopus* is South America and Mexico.

STENAPA has received funding from AMFO to launch a one year pilot project to provide an insight into the ecology of the Corallita Vine and also finding ways to controlling the species.

Dr Pieter Ketner and Joris Ernst of Twente University in the Netherlands will visit Statia from 25th October to 11th November for their first research trip.

The projects objectives will include :

What is the distribution of Corallita (where does it occur and how much)?

What are the problem areas?

What areas are vulnerable to this vine?

How deep are the tuber roots located?

Which animals eat the fruits?

Are seeds still viable after being eaten by these animals?

By what means can the species be eradicated?

The duration of the project is divided into 5 phases:

1; Mid October: Literature study, Research proposal

2; Late October: Choice of areas to set up the tests to local circumstances and to begin the mapping of vine.

3; Early November: Setting up the tests in the field, Instruction of the ranger fieldwork. Fieldwork will continue until ca. March/April 2006

4; March/April 2006 Second visit by scientists, Evaluation of results so far, Advise how to continue with the tests.

5; November 2006 Third visit, Final report

STENAPA would very much welcome volunteers to help with the clearing of large trees and also for persons interested to speak with the researchers about the Corallita problem. Statia should not be covered up by a pink blanket.

New Volunteers on Statia

STENAPA recently welcomed the 4th group of volunteers for Statia Conservation Project this year. A group of six people from Sweden and the UK are working hard to help staff and interns on conservation projects around the island. Their areas of activities are the Botanical gardens, improving trails in the Quill Na-

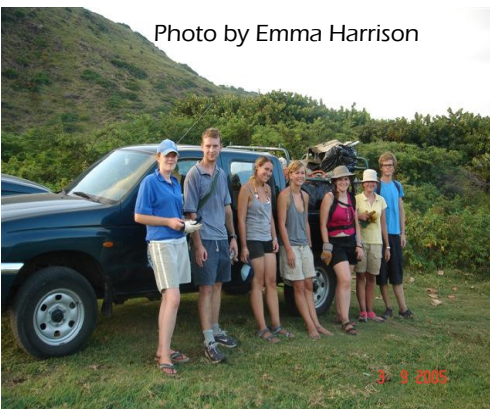


Photo by Emma Harrison

tional Park and monitoring nesting turtles at night time along Zeelandia Beach. The volunteers work hard during mornings and also during night time turtle patrols.

- Their afternoons are spent relaxing or diving. Projects undertaken by this group include concreting of the entrance road to the Botanical Garden, improving the section of Round the Mountain trail from the Quill trail to the Botanical Garden and assisting with the turtle satellite transmitter project.

This picture shows the new group during a nesting beach clean up at Zeelandia, shortly after their arrival in August.

Statia's little Raptor

Visitors to Statia and particularly Birders or "Twitchers" as they are so quaintly called in the UK, have always been fascinated with our very beautiful Killy Killy.

- This little raptor belongs to the falcon family and its proper name is American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*). It is widely distributed in the Caribbean as well as in the Americas. One finds this bird mainly in open country, but it is often observed in built up areas of Statia. It nests in tree cavities, recesses of buildings or at the base of a palm frond. The Killy Killy is a fast and fearless bird of prey who lives mostly from Lizards, larger insects and will not refuse a mouse here and there. Good spots to watch this bird are along the way to the Botanical Gardens and around English Quarter, where one often sees it hovering in the air, ready to swoop down on its next meal. (Photo by Brenda Kirby)



St Eustatius National and Marine Parks and Botanical Gardens



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Email: semp@goldenrocknet.com

www.statiapark.org

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: Irving Brown
Vice President: Ronnie Courtar
Treasurer: Jana Mason
Secretary: Kay Boyd

Election for Board of STENAPA

In accordance with the Statutes that call for elections of new officers of the Board every two years, The Board of Sint Eustatius National Parks voted last month for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Mr Irving Brown was voted as the new President and Mr Ronnie Courtar as Vice President. Ms Kay Boyd was elected to be Secretary, pending the return of former Secretary Jessica Berkel from Maternity Leave. Ms Jana Mason returns for a second term as Treasurer.

Mr Irving Brown thanked Ronnie Courtar for his leadership during his term as President. Mr Brown believes that right now STENAPA is doing well, and would like to keep it going in the right direction.

He acknowledges the importance of keeping the public involved, maintaining good contact with government and continuing to work on the educational programmes to involve children in the protection of Statia from a young age.

One of Mr Brown's interests is to encourage Stadians to come to the Botanical Gardens to help more with volunteer work.

The Board of STENAPA currently has eight members and is actively seeking to increase the numbers.

In February 2004, one representative from the government and one from the

Fisherman's Cooperative were invited onto the Board, these positions are still vacant.

The Board of STENAPA is also seeking for wider membership from people in Statia interested in nature and the environment. Persons interested should send a letter to the National Park's Office at Gallow's Bay



Photo by Nicole Esteban

In photo back left to right
Daniel Eaton, Ira Walker, middle row from left: Jana Mason and Kay Boyd, Front row Irving Brown and Michele Faires. Absent: Ronnie Courtar (off island), Jessica Berkel (maternity leave).