

January 2014



▶ Newsletter 1/2014

STENAPA Extra

New Endemic Species on Statia

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Don't forget...

Guided Hikes: Are available

Botanical Garden: Check out the view from the Lookout Garden Open from sunrise to sunset. Great for picnics.

Find us on Facebook:

Keep up to date with all the latest happenings—Like our 'Stenapa St. Eustatius' and 'Stenapa Youth Nature' pages!

In the last edition of STENAPA Extra, we highlighted the work of Dr. Frank Axelrod from the University of Puerto Rico, who has been collecting and documenting Statia's flora since 2009. Recent collections from St. Eustatius, undertaken by the New York Botanical Garden, and by Axelrod and National Park Ranger Hannah Madden, as part of an ongoing study of the vascular plant flora of St. Eustatius, have resulted in the discovery of a new species, herein described as *Gonolobus aloiensis* (Apocynaceae, Asclepiadoideae, Gonolobinae). This species has recently been described and illustrated by Axelrod and Dr. Alexander Krings in the Journal of Systematic Botany. *G. aloiensis* is a vine in the milkweed family, named after the Arawak name 'Aloi' for Statia meaning cashew tree, and is endemic to St. Eustatius. It represents the first record of the genus for the island (Statia Morning Glory being the first).

of *Gonolobus* from St. Eustatius.



(Above: The fruit and seeds of *G. aloiensis*)

Gonolobus aloiensis can be found in humid to wet, evergreen forests from ca. 273–400 metres elevation. The species occurs only on the inner slopes of the Quill volcano. It grows over and among the large boulders formed from the collapse of the walls of the crater. The plant has thus far been found only in the area of a maintained route down from the low point of crater rim to the base of the crater. Since its habitat is difficult to access, it is not at present possible to estimate the extent of the population of a species that has been collected only three times.

The only palpable threats to the plants are: first, the goats that roam about the crater, which, however, may not find the taste of a member of the Gonolobinae to their liking and, second, the eruption of the volcano. The volcano has not erupted since 400 AD and is considered to be in a state of dormancy. If it were to erupt, then the population of *G. aloiensis* would be certainly wiped out. Therefore STENAPA will attempt to grow it in the Botanical Garden to ensure its preservation.

Photos by H. Madden



(Above: The flower of *Gonolobus aloiensis*)

Gonolobus is a New World genus comprising an estimated 100–150 species. In the West Indies, ten species of *Gonolobus* were recognized by Krings, all endemic to the region. Eight of these species are single island endemics, whereas only two species are known from two or more islands. *Gonolobus aloiensis* represents the first record of the genus for St. Eustatius. In the course of revising *Gonolobus* in the West Indies, Krings studied all specimens available through loan requests from, and visits to various, herbaria. However, prior to the collections of Boom, Axelrod, and Madden, no record had yet been found of any collection



REMINDER

Humpback whale season is between January and April.

A great place to look for whales is from the lookout area at the Botanical Garden.

Marine Activities

Five young marine enthusiasts have successfully completed twelve weeks of snorkeling skills and marine ecology lessons that make up STENAPA's Snorkel Club course. Receiving their certificates on Monday, December 16, 2013 and giving the OK sign are Jonell Courtar, Coedy and Tatum Butler, Fabian Junior and Tom Piontek. Also pictured are Snorkel Club leaders Heleen Visser and Annelies van Osch.

The children learned about the beautiful natural world found **beneath the waters of Statia's** National Marine Park along with an appreciation for the job STENAPA does to safeguard the island's most precious resource. Snorkel Club begins new courses this month; interested parents can contact STENAPA at the National Parks Office to sign up. Our special thanks goes out to Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds for sponsoring STENAPA's after school activities.



(Above: Snorkel Club graduates with their certificates)

Marine Mammal Survey

Marine mammal experts went on a five-day expedition in December to study and catalogue the diversity of marine species through visual sightings and the use of acoustic equipment. The objective of the project is to study the diversity and abundance of marine species, their geographical distribution, as well as the ecological parameters that influence their distribution. In addition, the project will develop cooperation between the islands to harmonize protocols, share resources and reinforce the capacity of marine protected area managers to use the scientific protocols to better survey and protect marine mammals.

Some 20 marine biologists and experts from neighbouring islands, including Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Eustatius and St. Kitts & Nevis, scanned the waters for marine mammals using cameras and expensive hi-tech binoculars on board two large catamarans, and transposed the data onto laptops. They covered the waters of French and Dutch St. Martin/St. Maarten, St. Barths, St. Eustatius, Saba and Anguilla. This was the second survey of 2013, with the first being conducted in March.

Marine biologist and team leader Sophie Bedel explained how the sophisticated binoculars record the distance of sighted marine mammals with various angles and measurements that are later used to determine its exact position. That information can then be linked to depth, water temperature, habitat information and so on. They also used a hydrophone in the water, stopping every two miles to listen with it. If something interesting was heard, it was recorded and analyzed later.

St. Barths Reserve Naturelle Director Nicolas Maslach noted that noise pollution from boats is a concern, particularly around Statia, which is an area of particular interest for data collection. He noted that noise from sea traffic affects reproduction among sperm whales, for example. Marine Park Manager Jessica Berkel agreed, stating that there is much tanker traffic around the island, as well as line boats and barges that go back and forth all day. She emphasized that it is a busy area and whales often pass close to shore. STENAPA will now do its own marine mammal abundance counts from 2014. The data collected at the end of the study enables participants to revise the maps indicating the diversity and distribution of species.



(Above: An Atlantic Spotted Dolphin, photo courtesy of Danny Moussa)

Donation

Recognizing how important nature is on St. Eustatius and wanting to help protect it was the basis for a project to support STENAPA in its management of the valuable underwater resources of the St. Eustatius National Marine Park. Through the efforts of Ellen Kop, Ben Stiefelhagen and Klaudie Bartelink, residents of the European Netherlands and enthusiastic divers, and Gregory Pieters of Statia, a donation of SCUBA gear was delivered to the National Parks office last December. Following a dive trip to Statia in 2012 by Stiefelhagen and Bartelink, Kop wrote an article in Dutch dive magazine *Onderwatersport* titled "Hulp Aan Caribisch Nederland", in which she described the beautiful diving found in the Statia Marine Park and STENAPA's efforts to safeguard this wonderful but threatened



environment.

(Above: Donated items for the MP)

Part of the article described how STENAPA was limited in its ability to conduct operations due to a lack of functional SCUBA equipment. The article asked divers throughout the Netherlands and Belgium to donate dive gear to support the management efforts of STENAPA. Kop, Stiefelhagen and Bartelink, together with their organization, Get Wet Maritiem, were able to collect almost three cubic meters of dive gear which will now be used by STENAPA staff and volunteers to perform maintenance, surveillance, research and monitoring activities in the Marine Park.

Gulf Coast Fisheries Institute Annual Conference

On 5 November 2013, a group of managers and representatives of the 18 protected areas listed under the SPAW (Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife) Protocol of the Cartagena Convention gathered at the GCFI for the first time to define the vision, goals, benefits and activities of a regional cooperation program aiming at strengthening the sites that are listed under the SPAW Protocol and using their expertise to improve the management capacity and SPAW-listing process of other Caribbean PAs. The meeting was organized by the UNEP-CEP SPAW Secretariat, its [SPAW-RAC](#) and the Caribbean MPA management Network and Forum ([CaMPAM](#)), and was attended by protected area managers of Colombia, Cuba, French West Indies, Dutch Caribbean, Belize, Grenada, Mexico and the USA, as well as members of the UNEP-CEP SPAW program and its collaborators. **Stenapa's Director, Steve Piontek**, represented the SPAW listed Quill/Boven National Park.

UNEP-CEP SPAW Program Officer Alessandra Vanzella-Khoury provided background and context with information on the SPAW Protocol, the protected areas listing process and the cooperation program for the SPAW-listed sites, highlighting the benefits of being part of this special group. The participants contributed with excellent ideas to better define the proposed mission, goals, specific objectives and potential activities of the program and network. They also expressed the weakness and strengths of their sites and their commitment to assist other PAs to improve their management capacity to be able to submit their nomination to be SPAW-listed.

Among activities proposed are the creation of a dedicated section of the [SPAW Newsletter](#) for news from the SPAW-listed sites, the production of a brochure, the potential establishment of sister sites, the use of CaMPAM network and training tools to support the current listed sites, the expertise of the SPAW-listed MPAs to disseminate knowledge and best practices to other MPAs, and the GCFI conferences and other fora for the annual face-to face meetings of managers. All PA managers from the SPAW listed sites who requested financial support to attend this first meeting were sponsored by the UNEP-CEP in cooperation with the SPAW RAC.



(Above: Delegates of the GCFI conference)

MPA managers of the European Territories in the Caribbean gather in St. Martin to exchange ideas on how better address climate change issues

In November 2013, 18 marine environmental managers of the French, Dutch and U.K Overseas Territories, and collaborators from other Caribbean islands and international organizations, gathered in St. Martin to exchange information on their MPA strengths and weaknesses and the challenges they face to address climate change. Director of National Parks Steve Piontek represented

St Eustatius. The two-day workshop was funded by the French Aid Agency and convened by the IUCN EU Overseas Program in collaboration with the UNEP-CEP SPAW Regional Activity Center and with support of CaMPAM. All agreed that improving management effectiveness to support environmental resilience, assisting policy makers at island level for better integrated planning and fostering regional **activities will help all islands' societies** to develop sustainable and effective adaptation strategies and better cope with the consequences of climate change.

In all cases, increasing coastal development is the common and most evident issue, with fisheries management another major concern for most MPAs. The importance of identifying needs at the site, national and regional levels to better assist MPA managers, practitioners and decision-makers to raise awareness on the key role of coastal and marine ecosystem resilience for climate change adaptation was stressed. MPA managers emphasized the need to use roving teams to conduct biophysical monitoring in all islands, the importance of exchanging information, and the involvement of local stakeholders to improve MPA management. The tasks of **MPA managers' include climate change** adaptation and the need to engage local fishermen in MPA management, reduce parrotfish fishing and grant fishing exclusive rights to local fishers which, in combination with no-take **areas, will help to restore the islands'** coral reef resilience and fisheries, so deteriorated after decades of overfishing. The need for sharing lessons and expertise on coral reef, mangrove and beach restoration was emphasized.

Ms. Helen Souan, director of SPAW-RAC, expressed the commitment of the SPAW program Regional Activity Center of the UNEP-CEP to partner with IUCN in developing a program in support of facing climate change for all the Caribbean islands.

Concrete actions were recommended to support MPA managers and government agencies in developing suitable adaptation strategies.

The plight of the iguana

Caribbean nature conservation staff, herpetologists, researchers, policy-makers and representatives from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) met in San Juan, Puerto Rico, last December in order to discuss the plight of the region's iguanas, many of which are (critically) endangered. A three-day workshop was organized by the Islands Conservation Foundation (ICF) which brought together over 60 delegates from across the Caribbean. St. Eustatius National Parks (STENAPA) National Park Ranger Hannah Madden was one of the attendees, whose costs were sponsored by ICF/USFWS.

The Caribbean is home to 5% of the world's islands but 21% of all species threatened. The region also contains 245 key biodiversity areas and is the site of 45 animal extinctions to date (IUCN data). Together, the Caribbean islands house 231 Critically Endangered or Endangered species, of which one is **Statia's Lesser Antillean Iguana** (*Iguana delicatissima*). Iguanas are the most endangered taxa in the region and are also the largest remaining native vertebrate on our islands. This species is now found on just ten Caribbean islands. Historically, it is believed to have existed throughout the northern Lesser Antilles, from Anguilla to Martinique. Its range included Anguilla; Saint-Martin (French and Dutch); St. Barthélemy, St. Eustatius, St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Guadeloupe, Dominica, and Martinique. It has since been extirpated from Saint-Martin, Antigua, Barbuda, St. Kitts, Nevis, and Marie-Galante.



(Above: Juvenile Iguana delicatissima)

The aim of the workshop was to discuss the threats faced by native iguanas on Caribbean islands. These threats include invasive alien species (IAS) such as cats, mongooses, dogs, feral pigs, green iguanas, invasive plants and roaming

grazers, as well as development, habitat loss and hunting. The workshop began with a presentation from the Cayman Islands whose endemic Blue Iguana teetered on the brink of extinction, with just 15-25 individuals known to exist in the wild some ten years ago. The Cayman Islands National Trust implemented an action plan to save the species, including a 'headstarting' program where iguana eggs are taken from the wild and incubated. The hatchlings are kept in captivity until they are big enough to fend for themselves, thus giving them a headstart in life. The Trust also carried out an island-wide awareness raising campaign which resulted in the iguana becoming a beloved symbol of the island. There are now over 850 blue iguanas in Grand Cayman and the species was downlisted from Critically Endangered to Endangered by IUCN, however threats such as IAS still exist.



(Above: Presentation on the Blue Iguana Recovery Plan, by Fred Burton)

The workshop delegates then split into smaller groups where they discussed threats and brainstormed ideas to conserve iguanas on their own islands or as a regional body. Critical issues were identified, including public education/awareness, IAS, lack of nesting habitat, development, lack of funds and low numbers. One suggestion discussed was the formation of a Caribbean Iguana Steering Committee to serve a one-year interim term, consisting of seven representatives from across the region, two from iguana-focused NGOs, two USFWS representatives, and one from the Caribbean Landscape Conservation Cooperative (holding a non-voting seat on the steering body).

In order to raise public awareness a region-wide campaign will be organized, including an art competition, a folklore book about iguanas, and the

use of audio visual materials and social media. Assigned delegates created a "Caribbean Iguanas" Facebook page and Instagram account that anyone interested is welcome to join.

Iguana delicatissima is native to St. Eustatius and there were once thought to be over 20,000 individuals living on the island. However, since Statia was colonized numbers have plummeted and have continued to drop. There are now estimated to be less than 200 individuals in the wild, and while Statia is free from mongooses and the green iguana, other threats exist such as predation by pet cats, dogs and feral pigs. Lack of suitable nesting habitat is also an issue.



(Above: A juvenile *I. delicatissima* being swallowed by one of its natural predators, a Red-bellied Racer snake)

Iguanas are natural seed dispersers and play a crucial role in the terrestrial ecosystem. A healthy iguana population is also a draw for ecotourism, therefore the importance of this animal should not be underestimated. Stenapa will begin an awareness-raising campaign on Statia over the coming months in order to promote the island's last biggest native vertebrate and ensure that it will still be around for future generations to enjoy.



(Above: Delegates of the workshop), photo courtesy of B. Naqqi Manco

Botanical Garden happenings

Renovation of Garden House

Work is progressing on the refurbishment of the former intern house at the garden. The space is being converted into a new visitor centre that will house an office, information and displays for the public, as well as space for teaching. The interior walls have been removed to open up the building and allow more natural light and breeze to enter. Roof rafters have been erected to support the roof. Work on the electrical systems will begin in the next few weeks with a new and upgraded solar system to provide more power.

In addition to the renovated house, work on a new and larger tool shed behind the current tool shed has been started. Once this is up and functional, the old tool shed will be converted into a large kitchen that will have facilities for catered events and allow the Botanical Garden to offer refreshments to visitors.

This is a very exciting project and will take the Miriam C. Schmidt Botanical Garden to the next level.



(Above: House in progress)

Permanaut in Residence

Leo Bakx has moved into the Botanical Garden as the new 'Permanaut in residence'. The project will run for at least the next three years and is designed to introduce more permacultural elements into the Botanical Garden and increase sustainability by introducing some new revenue opportunities.

Since its conception the garden has adopted a green ethos of maintaining the space using organic methods and environmentally friendly practices. Permaculture's aims and principals are simi-

lar: the three ethics of Earth care, People care and Fair share tie in well with **the mission of the garden: 'preservation, conservation, education'**.

Leo is currently working on the renovation of the house, working to improve the infrastructure and overhaul the solar system. He is also working to install a food forest on the hill above the house where the tent areas used to be. This will contain fruiting trees and edible understory planting that will complement one another and produce food.

This will help to support staff, volunteers and interns at STENAPA with fresh, locally grown, fruit and vegetables with any surplus being available to sell at local markets.

Look out for more information and updates on the projects on the Facebook page and future newsletters.



(Left: Leo Bakx, permanaut in residence at the Botanical Garden until March 2014)

The passing of a great man

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Mr. Ira Walker, Stenapa's long-time Vice President of the Board, who lost his battle with illness last November.

Ira held a BS in Ornamental Horticulture and worked at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for 32 years in his function as horticulturist. He was curator of conifers, taught bonsai and house plant classes to adults, and was Board Member (1985-1993) and President (1993-1996) of the Eastern Region of the American Conifer Society. He first came to St Eustatius in 1986 and was the founding member and President of the Statia Morning Glory Foundation - established in 2001 to protect endemic

species of flora and fauna on Statia.

Since joining the Board of STENAPA, Ira was active in a variety of ways. He was on the Botanical Garden Committee, attending regular meetings. As Committee member, Ira also attended significant events at the Garden, including ministerial visits, educational activities, public awareness events and volunteer awards. Ira also donated a number of plants from the Statia Morning Glory Foundation to the Botanical Garden. He was one of the most social members of the Board, often popping by the National Park office to say hello to staff, and was always willing to bring some dips to volunteer and staff gatherings.

Ira brought any social function to life with his infectious personality, keeping everyone entertained with tales of the New York party scene in the 1960s. But in private, Ira was thoughtful and quiet, content to be at home with his family and dogs. Stenapa extends its deepest sympathies to his partner Daniel and the rest of Ira's family. He will be sorely missed.



(Above: The late Ira Walker)

St Eustatius National Parks



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Dutch Caribbean

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STENAPA is an environmental not-for-profit foundation on St Eustatius and was established in 1988. The purpose of the Foundation is the acquisition, preservation, protection and administration of parcels of land/water on Sint Eustatius, worthy of preservation, due to: a. its scenic beauty and/or presence of flora and fauna important in scientific and cultural respect or valuable from a geological or historical point of view; b. its purpose to serve for the well being, the education, and the recreation of the Sint Eustatius population as well as that of visitors, all this with due observance of the primary requirement of preservation.

STENAPA is legally mandated by the Island Council to manage the St Eustatius National Marine Park, The Quill / Boven National Park and the Miriam Schmidt Botanical Gardens.

President: Irving Brown
Vice President:
Treasurer: Hilda Doek
Secretary: Gene Herbert

www.statiapark.org

Friends of STENAPA

STENAPA would like to thank the following businesses for supporting us. Their donations make it possible for us to continue our mandate of managing the protected areas of Saint Eustatius. Each of the following has made a contribution to the Friends of STENAPA. We would like to encourage all of you who receive this newsletter to support these businesses.

Individuals who join Friends of STENAPA will receive the following discounts from our supporting businesses:

Franky's Bar and Restaurant: 1 regular drink by lunch or dinner

Golden Era Hotel, Bar, Restaurant and Conference Centre: 10 % off dinner bill higher than \$60,-

Yummy Tummy Bar and Restaurant: 10 % off dinner bill

Fay Bar & Restaurant: 1 beer or soda with dinner more than \$ 10,-

I.F. Rivers Enterprises N.V.: 10 % discount on merchandise

Blue Bead Restaurant
Golden Era Hotel, Bar, Restaurant & Conference facility
The Old Gin House
Yummy Tummy Bar & Restaurant
Chamber of Commerce & Industry St. Eustatius & Saba.
Super Burger ice cream and shakes
Fay Bar & Restaurant (a.k.a. Sonny's place)

I.F. Rivers Enterprises N.V.
Original Fruit Tree bar & restaurant
Scubaqua Dive Centre
Coolcorner:

Peso's Supermarket

Golden Rock Mini Market

Brown's car rental & garage

Dutch Plumbing Services

Golden Rock Dive Center

Hai Zhu N.V. Julie Supermarket

Modentes Tandtechnisch laboratorium

All Run supermarket.

Franky's Bar en Restaurant

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