

March 2005

▶ Newsletter 1/2005

# STENAPA Update

## Sea Turtle Conservation Programme

The plight of the Sea Turtles world wide has been of concern to scientists, conservationists and nature lovers. Despite their protection under international treaties and local regulations, Sea Turtles have become an endangered species. Their decline is due to human exploitation as well as the pollution of the seas and coastal areas. In days gone past millions of turtles inhabited the seas and seven species lived around these islands. Today a few hundred thousand survive globally and only four species remain in our waters.

Three organizations (Nature Foundation St Maarten, Saba Conservation Foundation and STENAPA) recently launched a structured education and conservation program, focusing on the Sea Turtles. The project, entitled **"HELP OUT OR SEA TURTLES MISS OUT"** is funded by the Truus and Gerrit van Riemsdijk Foundation through the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance. The Education Officer is Dominique Vissenberg, a behavioral biologist

from Holland.

Ground work included compiling and distributing questionnaires on all three islands, in order to establish the differing levels of "Turtle Awareness" among children and young people as well as the general public. Analysis of the survey will serve as a benchmark for the construction of activities aimed at the various groups and in identifying concrete ways in which the entire community can help to save Sea Turtles from extinction.

Initial response to this project is most encouraging, as schools, service clubs and churches, among others, have already asked for guest speakers to come to their venues. During February, Dominique gave talks to all grade 5,6,7 and 8 classes on Statia.

The friendly little turtle named Scout, used as the project logo, is of great help in pro-



moting the cause of the Sea Turtles. He appears in the press, namely the "Kids Herald" on a regular basis and will grace posters, pamphlets and educational stationery as well as T-shirts in future.

A Turtle Song has been composed and produced as a CD and it is hoped that the lovely lyrics and catchy Reggae tune will become the "Song of Joy" for our remaining Sea Turtles.

### STATIONS ATTEND TURTLE SYMPOSIUM IN SAVANNAH, USA

In January, a teacher (Mr Etienne de Vries) and student (Genilio Hassell) of Gwendolyn van Putten school accompanied STENAPA's turtle coordinator (Rozenn le Scao) to the Annual Sea Turtle Symposium in Savannah, USA. Look out for Genilio's report in the next edition of this newsletter. Their trip was funded by AMFO.

### Inside this Publication

Sea Turtle Conservation Program	1
Turtle Song	
Interns and Volunteers	2
Sea Turtle Report 2004	
Humpback Whales	3
Junior Rangers	
New Appointments	4

### Special points of interests

Botanical Garden Guided Tours: 7AM – Noon every weekday



### Turtle Song

King Turtle of the sea,  
A million years of history,  
Under our sand you're born  
in soft eggs,  
To the sea you go with little  
paddle legs.

To lay your eggs you always  
come back,  
The Loggerhead and the  
Leatherback,  
King Turtle my dreams you  
fill,  
The Green Turtle and the  
Hawksbill.

King Turtle so pretty in  
our bay,  
I won't catch or disturb  
you no way,  
King Turtle don't you  
doubt,  
I'll care for you so we  
don't miss out.

### Chorus:

King Turtle my friend in the sea  
To see you makes me happy  
KingTurtle we named you Scout  
I love you with no doubt

Lyrics by Keith Rhea  
Music by Connis Vanterpool  
Singer/Co-producer Percy Rankin  
Producer Connis Vanterpool

## Volunteers and Interns at STENAPA

Once again STENAPA wishes to welcome and introduce new Volunteers and Interns to St. Eustatius. This time we have a small group, in fact, one Volunteer from Germany, one Intern from England and one Intern from Germany arrived in February and March. A group of 7 volunteers will arrive in April.

Emily Richardson will take over from RJ van Oosten, when he leaves us in April, after his six months tenure as an Intern for the Quill National Park. Daniel von Drach will be with us for the usual 8 weeks as a Volunteer. Corine Berger takes over from Adam Levy as Botanical Garden Intern. STENAPA hosts 6 Interns and 1 Volunteer at present.

Their tasks, as always are diverse, including work in all sections of the Quill National Park, Botanical Gardens and the Marine Park.

The Trails to the Quill and inside the crater are maintained on a regular basis. Due to long periods of rain, the crater trail has eroded in places and needs to be repaired. For safer use, sections of the trail have been completely overhauled and even redirected to more suitable spots on the route. Only materials found on site are used, e.g. wood and stone slabs.

Gradually all existing signs in the Park have been replaced with new ones. The Interns and volunteer are busy with pre-

paring boards and with sign writing. Brown lettering on natural varnished wood will guide the visitor and blend in well with the surrounding environment.

The Botanical Garden needs constant attention. With good rains these past months not only have the cultivated plants grown well, the weeds and especially our old foe, the Corallita, are thriving. Weeding and clearing the gardens and also the Bird Observation Trail are ongoing jobs. The Bird trail is now linked to the Round the Mountain Trail, the access gate is now in place. The Bird Trail is a very easy route to follow and is recommended, as the vegetation along the way is lush and diverse due to the fact that no goats have been able to browse in that area.

The various arbours in the Sensory Garden are getting their roofs on. At present



Photo D. von Drach



Emily and RJ with some of the new sign boards

Intern Adam Levy and all his helpers are busy with weaving palm fronds to cover the Sense of Smell arbour. The shade house will be fitted with extra shelving and tables to provide more space for seedlings and pot plants.

Katie DiCioccio and Lucy Savage are the Interns for the Marine Park. They are currently analyzing the results of the fish population survey, comprising twelve sites. They are located in both the Northern and the Southern Reserves and also off the Caribbean and Atlantic coasts.

There has been a steady increase of tanker traffic in Statia's waters. The Marine Park, with help from Katie and Lucy, is conducting a study to determine impacts of anchoring vessels on the marine environment.

## STENAPA Sea Turtle Report 2004

The St. Eustatius Sea Turtle Conservation Programme began in 2002. Up to date, three species of Sea Turtles have been recorded nesting on Statia. Since the programme's inception, regular beach patrols and cleanups are conducted by STENAPA staff and volunteers, starting March through to November.

There are three nesting beaches on the Atlantic side, Zeelandia- Turtle- and Lynch Beach. On the Caribbean side of the island are two nesting sites, Crooks Castle and Kay Bay.

Clean-ups have to be done ahead of the nesting season, giving the turtles safer access to the beaches as well as making sure the hatchlings have a clear path on

their way to the water.

Specially trained personnel are tasked with tagging the turtles. Carapace measurements are recorded as well as those of dry runs, nests and tracks. Nest content, hatchlings and emergence data were recorded following the WIDECASST protocol.

In 2004, a total of 16 Leatherback, 12 Hawksbill and 22 Green Turtle nests were observed.

The first nest of the season was a Leatherback nest on 17 April and the last nest was a Hawksbill nest on 13 October.

Over 150 hatchlings were observed reaching the sea successfully.

STENAPA personnel observed, that the hatchlings emerge after :—

Leatherback Turtle nests: (left in situ) 50—57 days or (relocated nests) 64—66 days.

Green Turtle nests: 44—51 days.

In 2004, the Sea Turtle Programme was funded by WIDECASST, World Turtle Trust KNAP and AMFO.

STENAPA extends a heartfelt thank you to the sea turtle coordinator Rozenn le Scao who left STENAPA in December. Rozenn dedicated much time and effort in the conservation of turtles on Statia.

We welcome Emma Harrison as the new turtle coordinator from 1st April 2005.

## Humpback Whales sighted in Statia's waters

Observant Statians were in for some rare treats these last few weeks. Humpback Whales have been spotted by several people at Zeelandia Beach, Venus Bay and also at Lynch Beach. Nicole Esteban, Manager of STENAPA watched at least two Humpbacks close inshore, about 400 meters from the beach at Zeelandia. Whales were also spotted breaching near the Terminals' barges. This species, belonging to the large whales, is well known for spectacular breaching, lob tailing and flipper slapping, features that help to identify it more easily. It's long flippers and knobby head are other give-away signs.

Their food consists of Krill or other crustaceans and fish.

The adult weight of a Humpback Whale is between 25 and 30 tonnes and its length is between 11.5-15 meters. Newborns average between 4-5 meters and their weight is 1-2 tonnes.

Males at their breeding grounds are renowned for singing the longest and most complex songs in the animal kingdom.

Through noise pollution in the oceans the range of their sounds becomes steadily shorter, depriving the whales of vital communication with each other. Other threats lurking in the seas are fishing nets, general pollution and human disturbances.

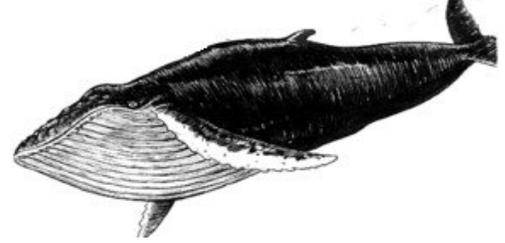
Although the Humpback is widely distributed, from both poles to the tropics, its status is "Rare". Worldwide the population is between 12,000 and 15,000 individuals.

It is estimated that over 100,000 Humpback Whales have been killed by whalers, leaving a fraction of their former numbers to survive.

In order to breed and bear their young in warmer waters, the whales have to migrate annually from their chilly feeding grounds to the tropics.

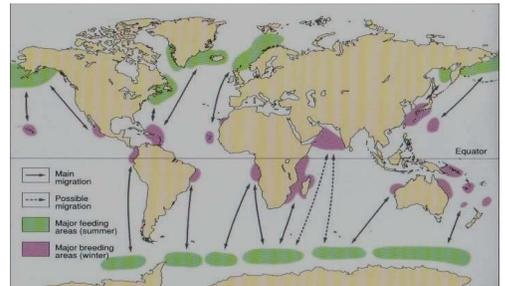
Statia and surrounding islands, as is shown on the map, are located in the middle of a major breeding area that hosts migrating Humpbacks during the winter months.

Sketch of a Humpback Whale



It is indeed a wonderful sight and a privilege to observe these magnificent creatures.

While the Humpbacks feed and play on our shores, let us wish them and their calves a safe journey to the North and let us hope that we will see them again next year.



## Junior Rangers Club

February is the month when the Junior Rangers Club begins activities again and new members are enrolled. To qualify, the youngsters have to be at least twelve years old and have completed snorkel club.

Gershon Lopes, as always is in charge and will guide them through the curriculum for the next 22 weeks. Each child is issued with a STENAPA Junior Rangers T-shirt, snorkel, mask and flippers.

Photo Heidi Duncan



As part of the Junior Rangers' orientation within STENAPA, they are shown videos relevant to all sections of the National Parks. A code of conduct and introduction explaining the purpose and aim of a Junior Ranger is presented by Gershon.

Their activities will be diverse within the St. Eustatius National Parks.

Starting off in the Botanical Garden they will learn, besides basic garden upkeep, how to plant from seed, taking cuttings and making compost. They will be taught how to make and repair fences, do sign writing and how to prepare the Botanical Garden for a hurricane.

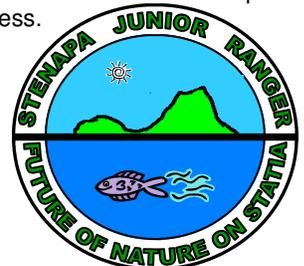
In the Marine Park they will learn about boats, moorings and buoys and how to operate and maintain them. Snorkeling will be required for some of these activities. Coral Reefs, turtles, birds are the subjects of learning about the marine environment in general.

(Photo from left : A Hook, N. Berkel, F. Dembrook, G. Lopes and R. Busby)

The Quill National Park, with its dormant volcano, the crater and rain forest offers a wide variety of projects for the youngsters. Apart from outdoor botany lessons, they will learn how to make and maintain trails, bench making and constructing drainage channels. They will do a fair amount of hiking both around the mountain and into the crater.

Not all of the Junior Rangers activities are learning and work. During the course of the year, there will be barbeques, bonfires, camping and games on the agenda.

An Activity Book, designed by Fran Miller, a former Intern with STENAPA, is used to monitor and test the aspiring JR's progress.



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



National Parks Office  
Gallows Bay  
St. Eustatius, Netherlands Antilles

Phone/Fax: +599-318-2884  
Email address: semp@goldenrocknet.com

[www.statiapark.org](http://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: Ronnie Courtar  
Vice President: Irving Brown  
Treasurer: Jana Mason  
Secretary: Jessica Berkel

## New Staff for STENAPA

Resulting from the large work load in the Marine Park, National Parks and Botanical Garden, STENAPA finds it necessary to expand the staff compliment. Applications have been invited for

- 3 National Park Rangers
- Coordinator of the Turtle Programme
- 1 Office Administrator

These appointments have been approved and are funded by outside organisations.

**National Parks Rangers:** will work for all three Parks on St. Eustatius, focusing on either the Marine Park or the National Park, but will also have to spend time training and working within other areas of the Parks. The applicant should have a general interest in Statia's environment. Physical fitness, ability to swim, a valid driving licence and team working skills are a prerequisite. Training will be provided by STENAPA.

One post is financed by AMFO and two are funded by Stichting DOEN, Holland.

**Coordinator of the Sea Turtle Programme:** has the responsibility to coordinate the entire programme, from organising patrols and data collecting, through to assisting with educational programmes on the conservation of Sea Turtles on Statia. The Coordinator needs expertise in the following:

Tagging sea turtles (Metal flipper tags and PIT tags)  
Measuring sea turtles  
Relocation of nests  
Nest inventory  
Monitoring of nests and hatchlings  
Patrolling  
Data entry and analysis.

This position is funded by the Prince Bernhard Culture Fund. Biologist Dr Emma Harrison from the UK has been selected for this position due to her extensive experience working on a sea turtle conservation programme in Costa Rica. Emma will be arriving on 1st April for the 2005 nesting season. We hope that interested Statians join the programme as volunteers so that STENAPA

can train a local individual to take the job in the coming years.

**Office Administrator:** will be in charge of daily activities in the National Parks office, as well as providing information to tourists and telephone callers, arranging guided hikes and selling trail tags, providing information to divers and collecting-diver fees.

The applicant will need good team working skills and should be able to communicate well with volunteers, both from overseas and local. This position is funded by IUCN in Holland with a grant from the Netherlands Postcode Lottery.

STENAPA wishes to welcome Violet Busby as the Office Administrator. Violet starts work on 21st March and we look forward to her joining our small team.

Violet will also be in charge of coordinating the changes to the National Park office as it will undergo extensive refurbishment in 2005 thanks to a grant from Stichting Doen. This will include a building with public shower and WC.