

STENAPA Update

Corallita Pilot Project

In the September 2005 issue of STENAPA Update, our readers were introduced to Dr Pieter Ketner (retired botanist from the University of Wageningen) and Joris Ernst, (research assistant), who visited St. Eustatius in October to start the Corallita Pilot-Project. After spending some time on the island their report on the Corallita problem so far is as follows:

The first few days we surveyed the island to get a good understanding of the Corallita problem, which is much greater than we had anticipated from earlier correspondence and literature search. The greatest danger is that the plant will invade the National Parks and other areas where it does not yet occur. The rest of the time we devoted to setting up some of our studies.

What are we going to study in the forthcoming months?

- * Phenology how does the plant grow; when does it flower and for how long and when does it carry seeds. This will enable us to find out if there is a weak point in the growing cycle, where we could interfere and hinder the plant's growth.
- * Viability of seeds; how fast do seeds germinate. It appears that the majority of spreading is not by seed, but through cuttings and tubers.

* Can seeds germinate after passing through animals guts;

It is believed that Corallita is spread by animals who have ingested the plant. We want to test if this perception is correct.

* Experiments to eradicate Corallita mechanically and with chemicals; Plants will be burnt and also treated with strong herbicides. With the help of Park Ranger John de Bruin, we laid out experimental plots at the Botanical Gardens. John will also do the collecting of Data.



During our stay in Statia, we have spoken to many people and we would like to thank them for their interest and cooperation. The question, how to eliminate this Corallita Pest, was raised often. Unfortunately, there are no clear answers yet and the people of Statia should guard against setting their expectations too high at this stage. However,

there are a few simple methods which can be applied by **everyone** to start controlling the plants.

What can you do?

Clearing Corallita from trees in gardens and along roads

How?

*The best way to do this is by cutting down all plants in a circle of at least 3 meters around the tree crown.

*Pruning of trees will reduce the risk of Corallita growing back into tree.

* Most important is the upkeep of MAINTENANCE. If neglected, the plants will grow back and all the hard work will have been for nothing.

* Burn the litter you took off the trees to prevent the Corallita from spreading over the entire island.

Clear backyards and hedges/fences

How?
*Clear infected areas by cutting down the Corallita plants.

*Plough the area and remove the tubers.

*Sow grass, in this way you can mow it and thus easily maintain it.

Dr.Pieter Ketner and Joris Ernst will be back in March/ April to evaluate the research carried out by STENAPA staff. Funding was received from AMFO.

Merry Christmas !!!!!



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Special points of interests

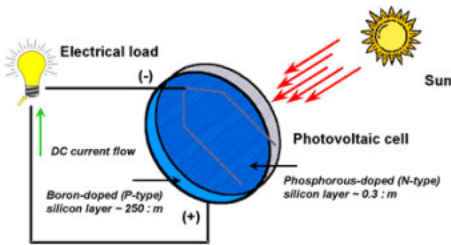
Botanical Garden: Guided tours available: 8AM—noon weekdays

Botanical Garden: Open from sunrise—sunset.

Parks Office: Closed for holidays on 25, 26, 27, 31 December, 1, 2 January.



Congress on Renewable Energy and Environment



The demand for energy worldwide is increasing but with the shrinking of our natural resources, "Keeping the wheels Turning" poses huge challenges to us all. In view of this, alternative energy spenders have to be found.



St. Eustatius hosted a Mini Congress on Renewable Energy and Environment as part of the Floating Trade Mission, "Doing Business in the Kingdom of the Netherlands". The event took place at the Golden Era Hotel on the 3rd of December.



Nicole Esteban Manager of STENAPA was invited by the St. Eustatius Business Association to join four other speakers on the Importance of Renewable Energy, Solar Energy: with particular reference to photovoltaic", Future Energy Development for Island States and Environmental Management in the Netherlands Antilles. Nicole also spoke about the link between Statia Marine Park and tourism.

At the same time a Mini Trade Fair was held at the Old Gin House where STENAPA had one of the 12 stands where around 30 interested people were welcomed.



Special Agent of Police Training



Five STENAPA staff members have been busy studying to become "Buitengewoon Agenten van Politie". Or in English, Special Agents of

Police. The four week course was presented by a training institute of retired police officers from Curacao. Members of STENAPA staff, the VKE Corps St. Eustatius and Saba Conservation Foundation attended the lectures which were given at the SENGU office in St. Eustatius.

Nine people successfully completed the course and were awarded certificates at a ceremony on the 8th of December. Lieutenant Governor Gittens presented the certificates to all graduates.



The new Special Agents of Police will be able to assist the police force in their specific fields. This means, STENAPA will be able to ensure that the rules and regulations of the Marine Park and Quill/Boven National Parks are observed.

It is hoped that the swearing in ceremony will take place in 2-3 months, when processing of ministerial papers should be completed.

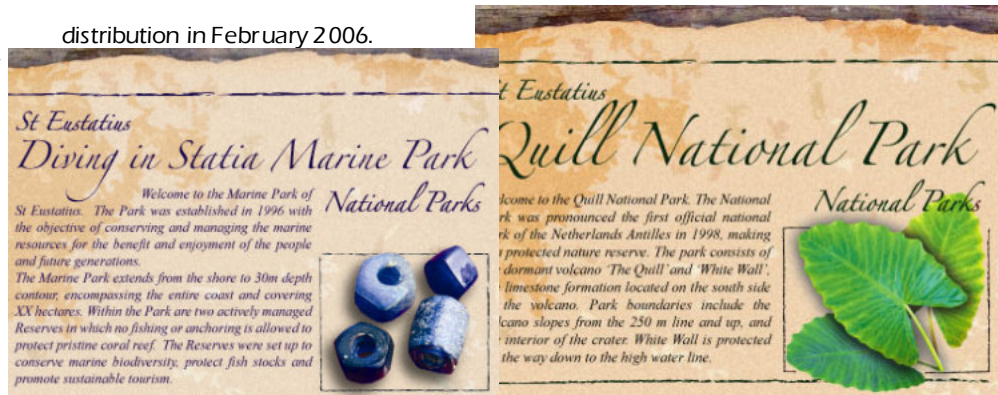


New Uniforms for STENAPA

Look out for the smart new appearance of all National Park and Marine Park staff who will soon be wearing uniforms in shades of blue. This move is the latest in a series of activities to upgrade the operations of STENAPA. Other changes include identity cards and new mini-guides.

"Diving in the Marine Park", "Yachting in the Marine Park" and "Hiking in the Quill National Park" will be ready for

distribution in February 2006.



Report on Coral Bleaching

Coral bleaching has been observed in the Windward Islands since late August 2005. Reports and observations have been received from Marine Parks and dive operators in Saba, St. Martin, St. Eustatius, St. Kitts and Nevis.

Marine Parks have been vigilant to these reports following the April 2005 warning of warmer sea surface temperatures in the Caribbean, circulated by Paul Hoetjes (Department of Environment and Nature, Ministry of Public Health and Social Development of the Netherlands Antilles).

The reason for the warming of the sea surface temperature is due to a change in the normal upwelling patterns.

The report for St. Eustatius is the following:

The first observation by a dive centre of bleached corals was on 24th August at Cliffs site at a depth of 29 meters. A visit by the Marine Park found, that there were no bleached corals above the depth of 26 meters. Between 26-44 meters depth (and beyond), only plate coral forms were bleached. All the other coral colony forms were unaffected. There was a noticeable thermocline at 25meters.

The bleaching affected shallower corals from 12th September when the dive cen-



ters reported corals bleached at 16 meters. By 16th September, the Marine Park observed bleached corals on the old city wall (3m depth). By this time, corals of all morphologies were affected. A dive to the deepest site of the wall (Drop Off West) on 7th October found that all coral colonies were affected by bleaching, some more than others with no apparent pattern. It was estimated that approximately 70-80% of all hard corals observed during a 30 minute dive along the wall were bleached, including the fire coral.

The Marine Park does not monitor temperatures with an accurate instrument. Dive computers recorded 82°F (27.8°C) in mid September and 81°F (27.2°C) on 9th October after 46.8 mm rainfall on the 8-9th October. The unsettled weather continued to bring rainfall in October-November and the water temperatures dropped and corals started to recover. In mid December, coral colonies show varying degrees of recovery and the Marine Park will carry out ReefCheck bleaching assessments in January.

These photos show corals affected by bleaching (Photos: Nicole Esteban).

Miss Shellie loves the waters of Statia

In our September Newsletter you will have read about the "Name the Turtle Competition, organized by STENAPA's Dr. Emma Harrison, coordinator of the Turtle Conservation Programme. The winners of the competition were rewarded for their hard work and serious thinking they had to do in order to name the first turtle to be fitted with a satellite transmitter. STENAPA staff took them on a boat trip around Statia, which was enjoyed by all.

Miss Shellie, the only turtle to be fitted so far with the transmitter seems to have a mind of her own. Astonishingly, we have noticed that she has remained in the waters around Statia. All other previously-tracked Green Turtles have moved away from their nesting grounds after completion of their nesting season. For all interested persons who would like to keep track of Miss Shellie, please



join her on our web site (http://www.statiapark.org/turtle_bio.html). We will write more on her in our next News Letter.

The Turtle Tracking Project was made

possible by the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance. For more information about this umbrella organization please visit their newly launched web site (<http://www.DCNAnature.org>)

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: Irving Brown

Vice President: Ronnie Courtar

Treasurer: Jana Mason

Secretary: Jessica Berkel

Closure of Crater Trail

STENAPA would like to inform all hikers, that the Crater Trail has been temporarily closed. Due to the ample rains on Statia these last months, a large landslide in November covered a considerable portion of the middle section of this trail. Work to rebuild it is underway and we ask the public for their patience. STENAPA staff and volunteers have been hard at work and it is expected that the new trail will be open in mid January.



Great Photographs

Over the last year, a husband and wife team, Duncan and Brenda Kirkby have been hauling their cameras all over Statia as well as the waters around the island. STENAPA has been fortunate to have been allowed the use of some of their magnificent photographs, not only in this publication, but other literature as well. Brenda and Duncan specialise in nature photography, especially birds, underwater creatures and coral reefs. They have produced a beautiful calendar for 2006, depicting Statia's Marine Life. The calendar is on sale at the Administration Building of the Medical School and also at the Golden Rock Dive Centre. Below are a few examples of their work.



And so this is Christmas....

another year over.... And a very good one it has been for STENAPA. Many projects have seen completion and new ones have been started. The establishment of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance between Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, St. Maarten, Saba and Statia has been a big step forward. The Sea Turtle Education Programme and the Satellite Tracking Project were started during this year. On the home front, great strides have been made in the Botanical Garden, where all the arbours have been completed, as well as the Bird Observation Trail. New signs for the National Parks have been put up and a new website has been created. STENAPA was able to increase its compliment of staff, a Reptile Book has been launched and the Corallita Problem is being tackled. All this obviously could not be achieved without our benefactors, donors, Friends of STENAPA, Volunteers and dedicated staff. Our gratitude and a very Happy Christmas to them all and may the New Year be filled with peace and happiness for everyone

