STENAPA Update

STENAPA 2006 Review — Highlights

2006 has been a busy and productive year for STENAPA. Here are some of the highlights:

Headquarters: STENAPA’s new visitor centre was completed in August, thanks to the hard work of Marlon Murray and his team. The new facilities include a meeting room, souvenir sales, Internet access, information centre, two offices, a public area with picnic tables, a workshop and equipment storage area, as well as newly constructed toilets and showers.

We look forward to welcoming all visitors to the new centre!

STENAPA has been doing more about what residents interested in learning more about what STENAPA has been doing over the past 18 months. Manager Nicole Esteban gave an overview of 2005 highlights and objectives for 2006. Dominique Vissenberg gave a presentation on educational activities, and Dr. Emma Harrison gave a talk about the ongoing turtle monitoring and protection programme. The meeting was presided over by Irving Brown and all Board members were present. STENAPA plans to hold a public meeting each year.

Special Agents of Police and First Aid Training: In October 2005, STENAPA staff members successfully completed training to become special agents of police. They were sworn in in September 2006. As special agents of police, staff may intervene if they notice Marine Park, National Park or international environmental regulations being broken. Driving on Zelandia beach, which is protected year-round. In April 2006, all staff members completed their first aid training at Golden Rock Diving Centre.

Marine Park Study: A study showing the beneficial effects of the Marine Park to fish populations was recently published. Whereas less than ten species were observed in 1992 surveys, some 20—30 species were seen at sites in 2004; over 50 species were noted in the south reserve.

Artificial Reef Benefits Local Fishermen: An artificial reef was created in the southern reserve of the Marine Park in Dec 05/Jan 06. A pipe, concrete mix barrel and the tugboat 'Miss Cathy' were sunk. Stan Williams used his boat 'Miss Cathy' to survey the reef and reported that the reef was thriving.

New Website: The existing website, www.statiapark.org, has been revamped and was launched at the end of December. The new site was created by RJ van Oosten, a former STENAPA intern and freelance graphic designer who liked Statia so much he has returned each year to assist STENAPA. This year, on his third visit, he spent two months working on the new website which is now online. The new-look website still maintains a ‘historic’ feel but is easier to read and contains in-depth information about the organization and its activities. STENAPA wishes to thank RJ for his many hours spent behind a computer in the office instead of enjoying the sunshine!

Mini Guides: Four more mini guides have been created, giving information about the Marine Park (Diving and Yachting), Quill National Park, and a Nature Map. The guides are for sale for $1 each, or are given free with the sale of annual national or marine park tags. The guides are colourful and informative, with many photos of Statia’s natural beauty, and are similar in style to the website.

Public Meeting: STENAPA held an annual public meeting in August. The meeting was well attended by Statia residents interested in learning more about STENAPA. STENAPA’s new headquarters was completed in August, thanks to the hard work of Marlon Murray and his team. The new facilities include a meeting room, souvenir sales, Internet access, information centre, two offices, a public area with picnic tables, a workshop and equipment storage area, as well as newly constructed toilets and showers.

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Special points of interest:

Check out our New Sign at FD Roosevelt airport!
Coralita Researchers Pieter and Joris came to Statia in January '07 to report on their findings at a series of public meetings.
Botanical Garden Guided tours available for school or church groups
Eco-bags: How often do you use yours? See below.
Statia Morning Glory - update

In May 2006, during a visit to Statia Terminal, a Statia Morning Glory (*Ipomoea sphenophylla*) vine was found by National Park Ranger, John de Bruin. In October 2006, a second visit to the Terminal was carried out, during which ten more vines were found.

(Above: early stage of flowering)

It would appear that the Terminal area supports a large number of Statia Morning Glory vines, which is very good news as the plant is endemic to the island (only existing on Statia) and only recorded at a small number of locations. The habitat within the Terminal property is clearly suitable for the vine, and hopefully it will continue to grow there. Statia Terminals is taking care to ensure that the plant is protected and invited STENAPA to survey the development area. The location of the vines is not within the current development site and should not be disturbed during the construction work.

Following the discovery of such a concentration of vines within this area, it was suggested that a more extensive search in the same valley might be appropriate, using binoculars to scan the vegetation for the vines. Photographs of the plant were also made available to Terminal personnel to ensure that they have knowledge of the vines and do not destroy them.

As the vine appears to have a very restricted range on the island, STENAPA is trying to propagate more plants (with assistance from Ishmael Berkel who succeeded at Lynch Plantation) that could ultimately be planted out at suitable sites; this is currently being initiated at the Botanical Garden.

Recently, six more Statia Morning Glory vines were unexpectedly discovered in a location outside the Terminal boundaries, although they are located in the same area of the island.

STENAPA will continue to keep a close eye on all Statia Morning Glory vines and will be sure to keep you updated.

(Above: Flowers in full bloom)

New Staff Member — Arturo Herrera

STENAPA is pleased to welcome Arturo Herrera, who came to Statia in late October as Turtle Programme Coordinator. We took some time out to ask Arturo some questions:

**What is your background?** I have a degree in computer information systems and used to do contract work for Enron. I decided to go traveling and volunteered in the central mountain range of Costa Rica. Then I saw a flyer for turtle conservation so I signed up and stayed for four months. After 9/11 there were no jobs so I took biology classes. I worked as a Research Assistant for nesting turtles in Costa Rica for six months in 2004. Then I took graduate level courses at Exeter University (UK), did my thesis in Costa Rica and finally ended up here.

**What does your job at STENAPA entail?** It consists of writing reports for funders (USONA, World Turtle Trust), I have to write grant applications and carry out research eg. surveys. I also do habitat mapping, turtle surveys (abundance, population trends) and of course day/night patrols for nesting turtles.

**What threats do sea turtles in this area face?** One threat is a lack of understanding of the biology of turtles. Another is that working to short-term goals neglects long-term benefits (sand from Zeelandia beach is cheaper, garbage in Smith’s Gut is away from the town). It takes 15—20 years for sea turtles to reach sexual maturity, and garbage pollution is a major threat to all species. Recycling would create jobs, reduce waste and make Statia look much nicer.

**What is the future of sea turtles?** It’s too early to tell. It will take around 15 years to see trends and is dependent on how Statia, Saba and the other islands manage their marine ecology.

**How does tourism affect turtles?** Tourism is double-edged: it brings in revenues but often people don’t realise the impact it has on turtles eg. littering or disturbing nests. Awareness is key.

**How can we increase awareness?** By informing people through the media and youth (Snorkel/Junior Rangers Clubs) what STENAPA is and does.

**Do you face any challenges in your new job?** Yes, but they're good. We aim for an increase in the population of hatchlings (in 20 years) and increased awareness within the community, especially with regard to garbage, sand-mining and beach erosion. In the long term Statia can benefit from protecting sea turtles through increased eco-tourism.
Miriam Schmidt Botanical Garden — Completion of Phase I

Previous volunteers who came to Statia and lived and worked in the Botanical Garden will be interested to learn that Phase I is finally complete! Over the course of the past year many objectives have been met. These include:

- The extension and maintenance of an irrigation system (guttering, piping, solar & wind energy system). Two additional solar panels were purchased and installed. The wind energy system was disconnected due to the fact that sufficient energy is being generated by the solar panels.
- Finishing the pathways to the sensory garden (making path, laying woodchips).
- Continued planting and upkeep of plants within the sensory garden (weeding, watering).
- The creation and upkeep of rock walls and windbreaks. Due to the fact that the Botanical Garden is on the southern slope of the Quill volcano, and the fact that it faces prevailing trade winds, it is important to build stone walls to control erosion, and to create windbreaks to protect more fragile plants.
- Propagating plants and plant inventory
- Fundraising (selling surplus of plants and grant writing)
- Developing and continuing educational activities. Classes from each primary school visited the Botanical Garden and enjoyed staff/intern managed activities.

Members of two Junior Rangers Clubs spent 4 sessions at the Botanical Garden in 2005 and 2006. Activities included tour, learning about plants, weeding, stone wall building, planting, cutting and propagating.

Eight school children from Gwendolyn van Putten school carried out community service in 2005, and five in November 2006 at the Botanical Garden.

We also arrange activities for the after-school programme Kidzway each Friday afternoon – for a group of 8 children every week (started September 2006).

In addition to the development of two new gardens, we are pleased to announce that the funding of phase II (2007-8) enables National Park Ranger for the Botanical Garden, Carlton van Putten to work full time from January 2007. We look forward to welcoming all visitors to the Garden!

Contact the Visitor Centre to arrange activities or guided visits.

The final part of Phase I of the Botanical Garden was funded by the Prins Bernhard Culture Fund of the N.A. & Aruba.

Phase II has been funded by the Prins Bernhard Nature Fund and will entail the development of two new gardens above the current buildings totaling three acres; one garden will be for children and the other a fruit orchard.
Lisa and Grace reach their Holiday Destinations in the Eastern Caribbean

The two turtles that were tracked from St. Eustatius have made their way to holiday foraging grounds, and one may have been busier than originally thought.

In September, two sea turtles were outfitted with satellite tracking transmitters as part of a migration behaviour study. A hawksbill named Lisa was fitted with a satellite transmitter on Zeelandia beach on September 8th and Grace, the green turtle, on September 18th.

Since the last update, Lisa has been busier than first thought. Lisa departed from Statia, going north to St. Barth’s and to Scrub Island, east of Anguilla. Lisa remained around Scrub Island for several days and, based on the signal strengths, may have nested on the ample sandy beach on the night of 24-25 September, 16 days after nesting on Statia. This is normal of the typical inter-nesting behaviour shown by Caribbean hawksbills. The hawksbill moved west through deeper waters, onto St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Lisa then stayed just off the northwestern tip of St. Croix and may have nested, perhaps on the night of October 8-9. After this possible nesting, Lisa swam eastwards, towards Anguilla and St Maarten, eventually settling around Ile Fourchue as her destination, transmitting from what seems to be her foraging habitat. These are areas of shallow seagrass beds with some sediment flows from rivers on Nevis. Green turtles are herbivores and often associated with such seagrass beds. As of late December, Grace has traveled over 1800 km.

The two turtles are part of an inter-island project funded by the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance. The aim of this study is to have a more comprehensive understanding of where sea turtles travel to when they leave our waters. The migration habits of these species are not entirely known and these studies are needed to help recognize hazards turtles may face by providing more information about their migration routes between nesting and foraging habitats.

Grace, on the other hand, has taken quite a different approach to her holiday destinations! She initially started moving towards St Kitts, but reappeared on September 29th on Zeelandia. Grace started moving towards the southeast and west coast of St Kitts, moving around to the southeastern point of that island, along the coast facing Nevis island — roughly 50km from Zeelandia. She has since been

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

Next edition of STENAPA Update available soon with articles on:

• Find out about our Objectives for 2007
• Visit by botanists to finish the Corallita pilot research project
• Snorkel Club graduation
• Outcome of our Willingness to Pay survey about park fees

Check our web site for previous editions of this quarterly newsletter!