

SABA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION



The SCF is committed to the preservation and enhancement of the marine and terrestrial environment on Saba through education, scientific research, monitoring, and enforcement. — SCF mission statement

The search for a new manager for SCF is coming to a close. More than 40 applications were received, showing a great interest in working with the 22-old organization. The Board is hard at work sorting through the many qualified choices and should make an announcement soon..

It was the turn of the Saba Conservation Foundation, under the chairmanship of Johanna van't Hof, to organize and host the semi-annual meeting of the Board of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA), the umbrella organization for nature parks on the six Dutch Caribbean Islands.

Lt. Governor Jonathon Johnson opened the three-day meeting on May 12. Johnson mentioned the impact of the coming Netherlands Antilles constitutional changes on nature management, especially for the three smaller islands that will be absorbed into the Netherlands. Saba, for example, will assume the additional task of management of the entire Saba Bank.

The meeting focused on how to measure whether management efforts to protect Dutch Caribbean nature parks are successful and how to enhance communication.

On the last day, attendees met at Fort Gut for a short work session during which they transplanted some seedlings into containers and then watered them. SCF Chairperson van't Hof said that staff had calculated that 283 adult trees (at least 25 years old) were needed to off set the "carbon foot-print" of the DCNA meeting. Although all of the 14 plants that were transferred into containers were babies, the group set to work enthusiastically, saying, "We have to start somewhere!"

The group agreed to try to make the work detail a part of all coming DCNA meetings.



DCNA members (right) dig for dirt, while other members (in the protective enclosure) replant and water the seedlings.

SCIENTISTS ON SABA

● Saba endemic lizard studied

Dr. Susan Perkins and grad student Bryan Falk had no difficulty in June capturing over 50 of Saba's endemic lizard the *Anolis sabanus*. The scientists sampled over 400 lizards from various altitudes and areas on Saba's five square miles. The location of each capture area is carefully determined by Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates and noted for each specimen acquired.

Susan, who is an Associate Curator of Microbial Systematics and Genomics at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and Bryan, a PhD student at the Museum's Richard Gilder Graduate School, are continuing work begun on Saba in 1989. This new eight-day Saba study by Susan and Bryan is part of a larger Caribbean study to determine what parasites are carried by anoles and whether their parasites are the same species. Bryan will conduct comparative studies on other islands in both the Lesser and Greater Antilles. He hopes to include Cuba, but that depends on political changes that will allow him access. The final study will be presented as Bryan's PhD dissertation and will be complete in two to three years.



The lizard is caught with a loop at the end of a fishing pole. It will be released later where it was caught.

July 2009, Newsletter 7

Scientists on Saba	1
Staff Training.....	2
Community Education	2
Youth Activities	3
SCF Audit.....	3
In Memorium.....	3

The Lesser Antilles islands are home to many unique species of Anolis lizards, and now these studies will allow the scientists to see if the parasites show the same evolutionary patterns as their hosts.

This information could tell them that the lizards move between islands--accompanied by their "on board" parasites, of course.

If the lizard parasites are different, it indicates that the lizards have not traveled from island to island but have stayed long enough in one spot for the parasites to change and to "speciate," an evolutionary process by which new biological species arise. The bottom line, so to speak, is to help indicate lizard movement patterns around the islands and to help us better understand how parasites move about the environment and change (or not) as they encounter new hosts.



Scientists "fish" for lizards with this retractable fishing pole.

STAFF TRAINING

● Sue Hurrell, SCF's Education Officer, was busy in April with staff training. She attended a DCNA workshop in Bonaire, which focused on the dangers of the expected Lionfish invasion into the Lesser Antilles. Sightings have been documented in the Virgin Islands. This important issue brought staff from all six DCNA Marine Parks together.

The Lionfish is not only poisonous (beware divers!) but this Pacific fish has no known enemies in the Caribbean. According to experts, it was released into open water when southern Florida aquarium fans turned their "pets" loose. The Lionfish can easily and quickly consume all the juvenile fish on a reef. There is great concern about



Workshop leaders demonstrate the technique to be used underwater to capture the very elusive Lionfish. The Saba Marine Park has the special nets used to harvest the predator.

the damage this predator might do to dive sites so important to regional tourism.

The workshop was held at Captain Don's Habitat and involved lectures as well as hands-on practice in how to

catch the Lionfish. It was facilitated by Lad Akins of REEF (Reef Environment Education Foundation) and Stephanie Green from Simons Frazer University who is doing genetic studies to determine how many Lionfish were released in the first place.

That's the duo in the dramatic (!) capture enactment photo above. Both are doing research in the Bahamas where the Lionfish is now prevalent and thought to be multiplying exponentially: Lionfish may spawn up to 30,000 eggs every 30 days.

Sue said that the practice added a lot of humor to the workshop as there actually was a plastic Lionfish in the water that was used as the "invading species." No one swallowed their regulator, but it came close, as divers were convulsed in laughter.



Although the plastic surrogate produced merriment, the invasion of the Lionfish is clearly no laughing matter.

Two special nets are used to catch the fish. Sue said that spear guns had been tried but were actually less successful since the Lionfish moves very quickly and also appeared to learn to get away from the diver with the weapon.

Workshop attendees also accompanied the two scientists into local dive shops to monitor how they gave public sessions and explained the problem to an audience that might not be divers, fisherman, or really acquainted with environmental concerns. Sue said this was useful to see how to vary the presentation according to the audience present.

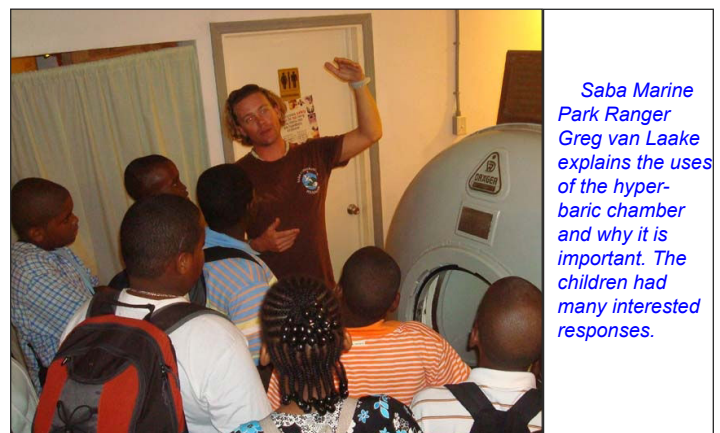
SCF is working on the expectation that Lionfish will be sighted in the Marine Park and has developed a full awareness program. SCF staff have given lectures at local schools, have posted bulletins at Fort Bay, and have spoken to local fishermen about reporting a sighting and bringing in the fish if possible. The Marine Park will also be training interested parties in the capture routines they learned in Bonaire.

● Sue also attended a Red Cross Water Safety Instructor Assistant, followed by a Red Cross Water Safety Instructor Course in Vancouver. Sue is in charge of all water activities for Saba youth and it was time for her to fill in her credentials. The SCF is hopeful that a proper public swimming pool is in Saba's future new political relationship as a Dutch entity, since many Saba youth are non- or poor swimmers.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The fifth grade class of 29 students from St. Maarten's Oranje School spent three days on Saba learning about the island.

One highlight of the June trip was a visit to the Fort Bay Harbor and the Saba Marine Park Office. The group had to divide into



Saba Marine Park Ranger Greg van Laake explains the uses of the hyperbaric chamber and why it is important. The children had many interested responses.

small groups to fit into the Hyperbaric Chamber Room, where SCF Ranger Greg van Laake explained how the chamber works and why it is important. He detailed what happens to a diver's body when gas bubbles block various parts of the body. The children had an opportunity to ask questions about the risks of diving and were particularly interested in the costs of treatment and the expense of the maintenance of the chamber itself.

SCF YOUTH GROUP ACTIVITIES

● The Junior Rangers, one of the SCF youth groups, have completed a special project where they made concrete stepping stones to be placed on the gravel walk behind the Trail Shop. The walk leads down into the gut trail and around to the museum grounds.

The Rangers imprinted flowers, hands, and other creative designs into the wet concrete that had been poured into a wooden frame. Then the designs – and the artist's name – were embellished with colorful paint. SCF Education Officer Sue Hurrell set up the project for the group. She said that the small walkway is now much brighter and invites the hiker to take the trail down into the shady gut, which is full of large Breadfruit trees.



Saba Jr. Rangers sitting by their hand-made stepping stones From left: Leah Buchanan (10), Julynes Woods (12), Shavez Robinson (9), Gisela Robinson (12), Kiana Hassell (12), and Julia Johnson (11).

Hurrell included some gardening with the Sea Scouts, who planted seeds in recycled tin cans. When these seedlings are sturdy enough, the group will come back and plant them to beautify the area. Hurrell said that some are July Trees, which eventually will go down in the Fort Bay gut.

● Parents and friends were treated recently to a full evening showcasing the talents and accomplishments of Saba youth attending Child Focus after school activities this past academic year. SCF Education Officer Sue Hurrell works in conjunction with this program.



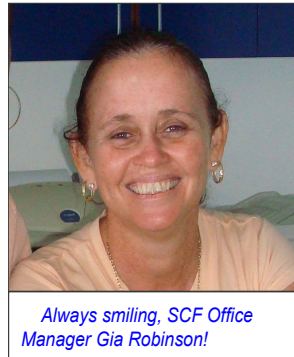
Junior Ranger, Sea Scouts, and Snorkel Club step on stage to give animated commentary to their slide show of the many activities in which they have participated the past year.

Child Focus Project Leader Wim Schutten conducted the program introducing the performing groups after the Saba Boys and Girls Drum Band opened the evening's entertainment.

The Junior Ranger, Sea Scouts, and Snorkel Club, under the direction of Saba Conservation Education Officer Sue Hurrell, all came on stage and narrated their slide show on the many activities the group enjoys.

SCF 2008 AUDIT

SCF business manager Gia Robinson is always on top of the business side of the non-governmental agency and so it was with no surprise that the SCF passed its audit with flying colors.



Always smiling, SCF Office Manager Gia Robinson!

Gia said that a yearly audit is a requirement of the DCNA Dutch Trust Fund, as well as a good business practice for any NGO. This is the third year that SCF has worked with Ernst and Young, the company that carries out the independent audit. A copy of the final report is sent to the SCF Board, to DCNA, and to the Trust Fund. Gia works with Curtis Eduarda of Winfield Financial Services based on Curaçao,

who makes sure that the proper format is maintained.

SCF LOOSES A GOOD FRIEND

The SCF Board and staff would like to express its condolences to the family of Frank Leslie "Shuggie" Hassell, who died suddenly on June 10.

For several years, Shuggie and his wife Elvera ran "Pop's Place" at Fort Bay, not far from the Marine Park Office. Shuggie would stay late at Pop's Place to make sure that hyperbaric chamber tenders and divers got something to eat and drink when they were running late treatments. One of his last jobs was building a storage room for the Marine Park with Ernest Hassell.

Shuggie, who had been a Fort Bay fisherman, was a valuable resource for historical information as well as tips about equipment, boats, and, of course, the weather. We are proud and humbled to say that Shuggie was put to his final rest wearing a SCF staff shirt.



Shuggie Hassell.

He will be sorely missed.

Saba Conservation Foundation, Box 18, The Bottom,
Saba, Netherlands Antilles
Phone: 599-416-3295, Fax: 599-416-3435
Email: sabapark.manager@gmail.com, info@sabapark.org
Web Site: www.sabapark.org