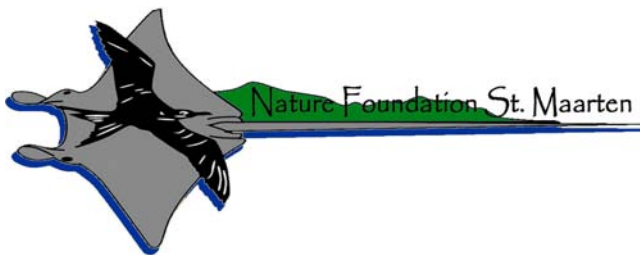


# ANNUAL REPORT 2008 Nature Foundation St Maarten





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*Front and rear cover photo: Yellow Flamboyant Tree in full bloom courtesy B.M. Nisbeth  
Inside photos on pages 13 - 16 courtesy NFS*

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# THE DUTCH CARIBBEAN

## DUTCH CARIBBEAN

With their population of less than 300,000 and land area of 800 km<sup>2</sup>, the Dutch Caribbean islands are remote, tiny and as a consequence easily overlooked. But their natural heritage is rich and diverse making them the 'hot spot' for biodiversity. The Dutch Caribbean boasts a range of unique, threatened and endangered habitats and species ranging from primary rain forest to magnificent coral reefs. The islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao alone are home to over two hundred endemic species and subspecies, which live nowhere else in the world.

The islands form two distinct groups which are not only separated by more than 900 km of open water, but are also linguistically, culturally, geologically and ecologically divided.



Location of the Dutch Caribbean Islands

The Windward Islands of St Maarten, Saba and St Eustatius are volcanic in origin with lush vegetation ranging from dry loving cactus, seagrapes and aloe in the coastal areas to ferns and mountain mahogany trees at altitude. There are coral reefs, pinnacles, patch reefs and fringing reefs around the islands and St Maarten also has numerous salt ponds and mangrove stands.

By contrast the vegetation of the Leeward Islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao consists almost exclusively of cactus, acacia and other dry loving trees and plants. Bonaire and Curaçao are unique in being true oceanic islands as they are separated from mainland South America by a deep-water trench. Aruba on the other hand was formerly part of the South American mainland. Bonaire's reefs are considered some of the very best and healthiest in the Caribbean. All three islands have fringing coral reefs, seagrass and mangrove stands as well as extensive bays and salinas (salt ponds).







## CONSERVATION

Nature conservation is nothing new to the Dutch Caribbean. The first land park was established forty years ago on Bonaire in 9th May 1969 and was followed in 1978 with the Christoffel Park on Curaçao and in 1979 by the creation of the very first marine protected area in the Dutch Caribbean, the now famous Bonaire National Marine Park. Other islands quickly followed suit and have tried to create at least one land and one marine park on each island with the goal of protecting and preserving the island's natural heritage whilst allowing wise and sustainable use of these resources, particularly by tourism.

Common constraints on the parks include limited and at times unreliable government support, lack of funding and lack of spatial planning on the islands. The main threats include development pressure, particularly in the coastal zone, invasive species such as overgrazing by free roaming goats, sheep, cattle and donkeys and overgrowth of native plants by species such as Corallita and The Rubber Vine. There are entrenched local issues over land tenure and persistent over harvesting of marine resources such as grouper, lobster and conch.

## PARK MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS

Each of the protected areas of the Dutch Caribbean is managed by a not for profit non governmental organization or foundation which has a co-management arrangement with local stakeholders. The following table gives a comparative overview of the established parks within the Dutch Caribbean.

Island	Mgmt. Body	Protected area	Area and special features
Aruba	Fundacion Parke Nacional Arikok 	Parke Nacional Arikok	This terrestrial park was established in 2003. It is 3400 hectares and covers approximately 17% of the land area of Aruba. It includes the island's highest hill, Jamanota and protects various exotic cacti, around 50 species of tree and is the last refuge of the island's endemic rattlesnake, the 'cascabel'.
		Bonaire National Marine Park	The marine park extends from the high water mark to the 60m depth contour around Bonaire and Klein Bonaire encompassing an area of approximately 2,700 hectares. It includes continuous fringing coral reefs, seagrass and mangroves. It was established in 1979.
Bonaire	STINAPA Bonaire 	Klein Bonaire	An uninhabited satellite island off Bonaire's western shore the island includes some of the most undisturbed vegetation on Bonaire and is an important stop over point for migrating birds and nesting grounds for endangered hawksbill and loggerhead turtles. It was declared a protected area in 2000.
		Washington Slagbaai National Park	Established in 1969, it encompasses almost 17% (13,500 hectares) of the land area of Bonaire and includes Mount Brandaris, the island's highest point. A wide diversity of habitats can be found in the Park which provides a safe haven for the endemic lora, flamingos and iguana.
Curaçao	CARMABI Foundation 	Curaçao Underwater Park	The Curaçao Underwater Park was established in 1983. The seaward boundary is the 60m depth contour and on the shore side the boundary is the high-water mark. The park covers a total surface area of 600 hectares on the leeward shore and includes pristine fringing reef.
		Christoffel Park	A protected wildlife reserve and garden covering 1,820 hectares. Mt. Christoffel is in the centre of the park, and is the island's highest point. The park contains rare and endemic flora and fauna.
		Shete Boca	Established in 1994 the Shete Boca covers approximately 470 hectares of coastline
Saba	Saba Conservation Foundation 	Saba National Marine Park	The Saba National Marine Park was established in 1987. It surrounds the island stretching from the high-water mark to a depth of 60m and includes coral pinnacles, the seabed and overlying waters. It covers 820 hectares.
		Saba's Hiking Trail system and Muriel Thissel Nature Park	Saba's terrestrial park is comprised of 35 Ha of land donated to the SCF by the Thissel family in 1999. This area is locally referred to as the sulphur mine. Other protected areas include the portion of Mt. Scenery above 550m (no dwellings can be constructed) and the 14 trails (public easements on private property).
St Eustatius	St Eustatius National Parks Foundation (STENAPA) 	Statia National Marine Park	The St. Eustatius National Marine Park includes the waters around the island from the high water mark to the 30m depth contour. It was designated in 1996 and is approximately 4,700 hectares including two actively managed no fishing zones.
		Quill and Boven National Park	Comprises a dormant volcano, the Quill, and Boven, an area of hills on the northern tip of St. Eustatius. The trails to, in and around the Quill have been open since 2000. It was established in 1997 and covers 540 hectares including lush secondary rain forest and almost all of the 482 wild plant species found on the island.
		Botanical Gardens	The Botanical Gardens cover an area of 5.3 hectares
St Maarten	Nature Foundation St Maarten 	St Maarten Marine Park	The Marine Park surrounds the entire Dutch side of the island from the coastal waters and beaches to the 60m depth contour. The Park covers approximately 5,200 hectares and includes mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs. The park is a major breeding area for marine birds such as the frigate and home to fish, turtles and conch.

## THE ISLAND OF ST. MAARTEN

Since 1648 St. Maarten has been divided into two distinct countries, with "Sint Maarten", the smaller southern side being part of the Netherlands Antilles (41.4 km<sup>2</sup>), and "Saint-Martin", the larger Northern side being a French Overseas Territory (54.3 km<sup>2</sup>). The island is situated on a submarine plateau called the Anguilla bank with a maximum depth of 36m, which it shares with the islands of Anguilla and St. Barthélemy. The island is an irregular shape, having many bays and lagoons along its coast. Several small, uninhabited islands surround St Maarten; Pelican Key (also called Guana Key), Molly Beday, Cow and Calf and Hen and Chickens to the east as well as Little Key in Simpson Bay Lagoon which all belong to the Netherlands Antilles (Dutch) side of St. Maarten.

Coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove and salt pond habitats occur around the coastline of St. Maarten. The coral reefs have spur and groove formations (coral ridges divided by sand channels). Boulders at the dive sites 'The Maze' and 'Hen and Chicks' are encrusted with numerous species of corals, sponges and anemones. Seagrasses are found mainly along the southern and south-western shores, although they are on the brink of destruction due to damage caused by coastal development and conch fisherfolk. Mangroves can be found around Simpson Bay Lagoon, and around the salt ponds, which provide a perfect habitat for roosting, nesting and migrating birds as well as a wealth of other species. The salt ponds provide important foraging areas for many birds and the brackish, sometimes hypersaline conditions, give rise to a unique wildlife community that includes several fish species, snails and insects.

The highest points and the geologically oldest parts of the island are in the centre, including Fort Hill (220m), Cole Bay Hill (215m), Sentry Hill (344m), Saint Peter's Hill (317m), Flagstaff (386m), Pic Paradis (400m) and Naked Boy Hill (300m). Flagstaff is the highest hill on the Dutch side. Founded in 1763, Philipsburg, the capital of Dutch St. Maarten, fills a narrow stretch of land between Great Bay and the Great Salt Pond. With its numerous shops, restaurants, cafes and casinos the waterfront forms the focal point of tourist activities and has become a popular stop for visiting cruise ships.



Key features of St. Maarten

## THE PROTECTED AREAS OF ST. MAARTEN

### St. Maarten Marine Park

Established in 1997, covering 5128ha, The St. Maarten Marine Park surrounds the entire Dutch side of the Island from Oyster Pond to Cupecoy Bay, from the shore line out to the 60m depth contour.

The St. Maarten Marine Park is a voluntary protected area, since the Marine Park Ordinance, presented to the Island Council for ratification in 2006, has yet to be passed.

Tourist activities are concentrated on the eastern side of the island, where the dive sites Molley Beday, Pelican Rock, Hen and Chicks, and Cow and Calf as well as the Proselyte area are located. These areas embody some of the last pristine marine locations on the island, with excellent diving; they are also important breeding grounds for marine birds, fish, sea turtles, queen conch and other marine life. The St. Maarten Marine Park has established five zones which are outlined in the Marine Park Ordinance (which is still to be adopted). The activities which are allowed in each zone are outlined in the table and map below.

Activity	Conservation zone	Anchoring zone	Traffic zone	Shipping/industry zone	Multiple use zone
Swimming	✓				✓
Beach Recreation	✓	✓			✓
Snorkelling, diving	✓				✓
Jet-ski/power boats		✓			✓
Fishing			✓		✓
Anchoring		✓		✓	
Commercial shipping			✓	✓	

Details of the Zones of St. Maarten Marine Park

The marine environment of St Maarten includes more than 15km<sup>2</sup> of globally threatened coral reef as well as seagrass and mangrove ecosystems. St Maarten's marine environment is a home, migratory stop over or breeding site for 3 IUCN Red List Species, 10 CITES Appendix I species and 89 Appendix II species. The beaches and waters attract in the region of 2 million visitors a year, creating employment for 85% of the island's population. Tourism and the marine industry contribute \$500 million and \$30 million to the economy respectively and both depend on the well being of St Maarten's marine resources.

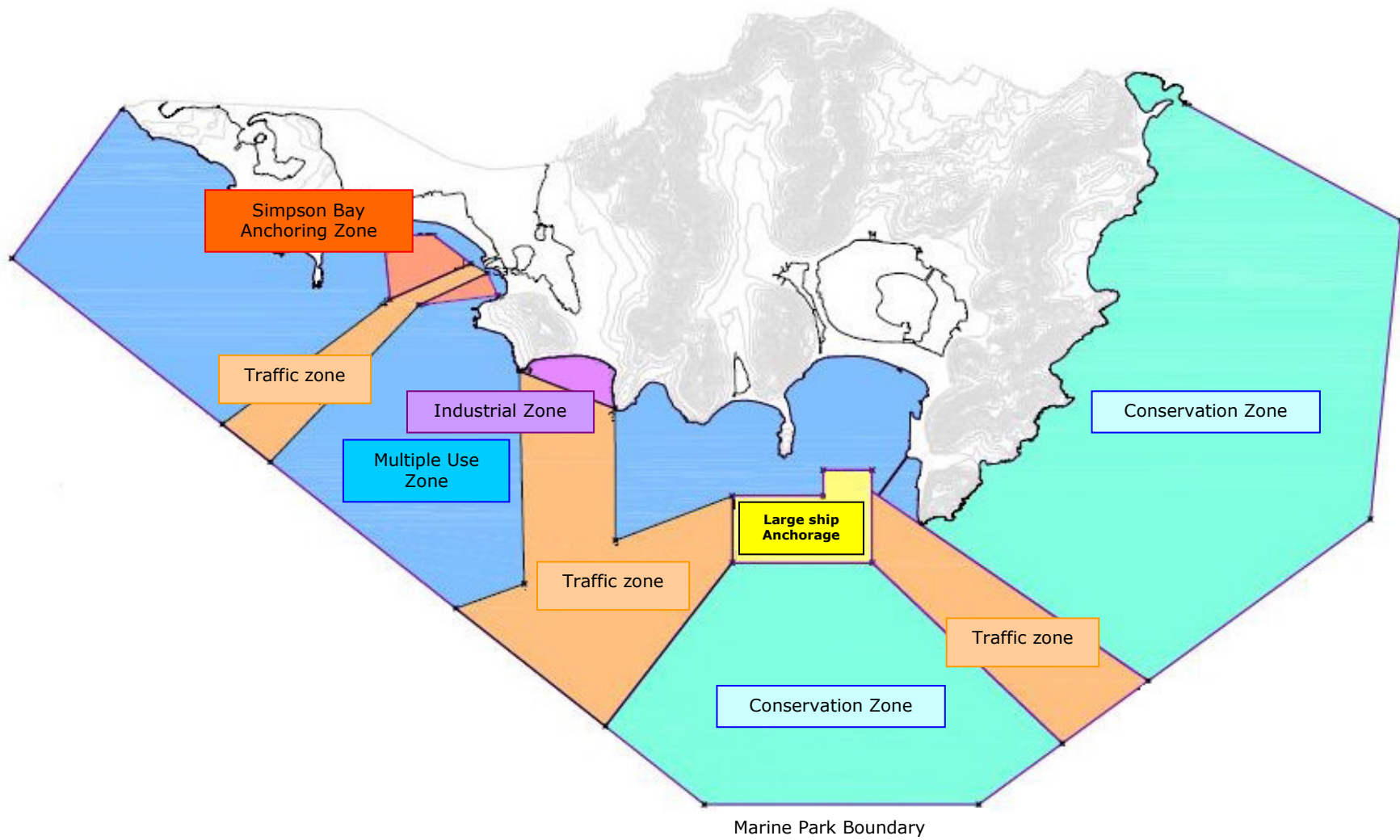
### Terrestrial Parks

There are no terrestrial protected areas on St. Maarten at this time.



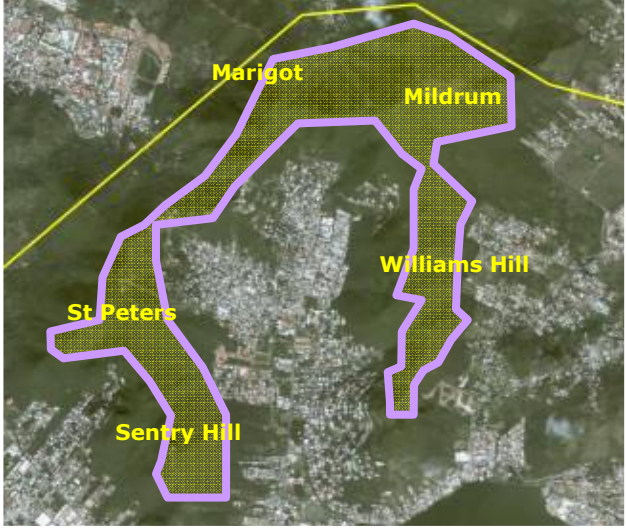
Three areas have been identified as having special conservation value on St. Maarten (outlined on the following pages). For the management planning process that was carried out in 2008 for the Proposed 2009 St. Maarten Land Parks Management Plan they have been given the collective name of 'St. Maarten Land Parks'.

The terrestrial environments of St. Maarten that are still intact include biologically diverse rainforest, drought resistant habitats and lagoons. From a tourism perspective St. Maarten Land Parks can offer excellent hiking with views of the island and neighbouring Saba and St Eustatius. The proposed Protected Areas will help conserve and restore St. Maarten's natural, cultural and

historical resources for the benefit of current and future generations. Its habitats are a home, migratory stop over or breeding site for 10 IUCN Red List species, 9 CITES Appendix I species and 89 Appendix II species including the 2 endemic plants, the endemic Anguilla Bank Bush Anole (*Anolis wattsi Pogus*) and many other plants and animal species with limited distribution. St. Maarten Terrestrial Parks could attract visitors and contribute to income for many people on the island employed in restaurants, hotels and other services.



The St. Maarten Marine Park zones, proposed in the Marine Park Ordinance.

<p><b>The Emilio Wilson Estate</b> is located on the western side of the road that runs through Cul de Sac valley to St. Peter covering about 90ha from the road to the top of Sentry. The Estate covers land that had sugar plantations, including 9ha of land leased to the Emilio Wilson Estate Historical &amp; Cultural Park Foundation and 80+ha of land to the summit of Sentry Hill.</p>	
<p><b>Geneve/Back Bay</b> is on the east coast of St. Maarten and is circled by hills running from Guana Bay Point in the north to Back bay in the south. The area covers approximately 100ha and has a number of different owners. It is one of the few places on St. Maarten where no construction has taken place and is home to a number of possible historical sites and geological formations.</p>	
<p><b>The Hill Tops</b> covers the hillside areas of Cole Bay Hill, Sentry Hill, St. Peters Hill, Concordia Hill, Marigot Hill, Waymouth Hill and Williams Hill. These area's are in excess of the 200m height contour which has had some restrictions on building in the past.</p>	

The proposed terrestrial protected areas for St. Maarten.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout 2008 the staff and board of Nature Foundation St. Maarten undertook a range of activities addressing both core management of the Marine Park as well as several projects.

One new staff member joined the Nature Foundation in 2008; Etienne Lake was employed as the new Marine Park Ranger. The majority of staff capacity (53%) was used on management, office and field administration. Information-Education-Outreach accounted for 28% of staff capacity and working with stakeholders accounted for 8% of staff capacity in 2008

The most significant ongoing issue facing Nature Foundation is the lack of legislation to protect the marine environment. The Marine Environment Ordinance would not only give legal protection to the Marine Park it would also allow the Foundation to begin charging users of the marine park. Despite repeated promises the ordinance remains ungratified.

One significant improvement in 2008 was that the Nature Foundation was able to purchase much needed equipment and materials including engines, purchased in 2007 which have been mounted onto the re-furbished Marine Park Boat, a brand new work shop close to the boat launch, a new truck and dive equipment.

Two important documents were produced in 2008: 2007 Annual Report and St. Maarten Proposed Land Parks Management Plan. Office administration was carried out by all staff members to some extent – accounting for the time staff spend working with computers, filing and on other office tasks. 3 % of the total staff time spent working in the year was spent on formal patrols within the MPA, and 6 % was spent by staff on maintenance tasks, with mooring maintenance taking a significant amount of time. Monitoring of beaches for sea turtle nesting took place with the help of volunteers.

Nature Foundation St. Maarten continues to work with 16 different stakeholder and partner groups. This includes the manager being an active member of DCNA, working with other NGO's on the island and involving school groups in environmental work.

The staff of Nature Foundation St. Maarten have been busy working on the new foundation website, press releases, radio programmes and television programmes about the activities of Nature Foundation. 'The Foundation Update' Newsletter was published 4 times in 2008.

The Manager of Nature Foundation St. Maarten, Beverly Mae Nisbeth attended both DCNA Board meetings in 2008. Staff members also travelled, taking part in staff exchanges with the other DCNA islands, as well as attending a WIDECAST meeting in St Kitts.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

### **Hired Staff: Marine Park Ranger**

In July NFS was successful in finding a suitable applicant for the Marine Park Ranger position. In keeping with our goal of professionalization, Etienne Lake earned his PADI Advanced Level SCUBA diving certification and went on a work visit to STENAPA on St Eustatius and STINAPA on Bonaire. Other certifications earned during the course of the year include: VHF radio operator; boat captain; and Personal/Boat Safety & First Aid.

## Infrastructure: workshop



While NFS re-located its office in February 2007 from Philipsburg to Cole Bay, finding space for storage and for the execution of Marine Park related tasks remained challenging throughout the most of 2008.

In September 2008 NFS was able to sign a rent contract for a steel ware house unit located next door to its office and patrol boat. The interior of the unit was partitioned and outfitted with closets and electricity and a mezzanine was erected to maximize the total area of the space.

## Law enforcement

Early in 2008 the Island Government of St Maarten commissioned for the first time the execution of the Extra-Ordinary Police Training Course for a select group of civil servants of different government sectors. NFS requested participation in the training and permission was granted for the Manager to take part. The enforcement of legislation that Extra-Ordinary Police Powers affords is an important tool that helps to ensure successful management of the park.

The manager successfully completed the 12-week training by passing the exam. The official swearing-in by the Lieutenant Governor is pending.

## Increased public presence and voice

2008 was a year of high media attention that helped to bring the profile of NFS back into the foreground. Radio and television interviews, Public Service Announcements and special articles in the newspapers throughout the year highlighted topics related to coral reef conservation, climate change, invasive species and the importance of establishing a Marine Protected Area; World Ocean & World Environment Day and unsustainable land practices that threaten coral reefs and seagrass beds.

## Education & Public Awareness & Outreach

### Media

In order to compensate for the lack of an Education Officer, the Manager used the Kids Herald, a bi-monthly news paper supplement especially for children, as an educational tool. Over 30 articles, complemented by local photographs, were written on local topics relating to sea turtle conservation and local flora and fauna.

### Website



After years of lying dormant, the former NFS website was re-designed with a grant from the Prince Bernard Culturefund Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The new site focuses heavily on education and awareness about the island's flora and fauna. Some of the topics conclude with a quiz the viewer can download and print. This will be of great educational value to students and teachers. Other features include the marine park map with underwater images at each dive site. The photos will give interested snorkelers and divers an idea of what to expect at each dive site. The website also functions as a portal thanks to hyperlinks that will give users easy

access to other sites of interest. The 'downloads page' offers visitors a host of reading material such as press archives, legislation and annual reports.

Responsible for the page layout was a contracted webdesigner, while the NFS Manager supplied all the relevant text and photographs. By the end of December the site was uploaded. The official launching is scheduled for January/February 2009. [www.naturefoundationsxm.org](http://www.naturefoundationsxm.org)

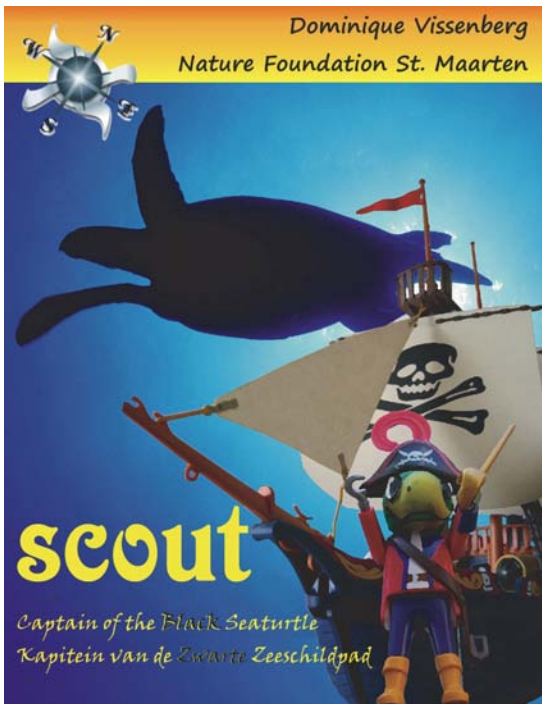
## Signage



With part funding from the Princess Juliana International Airport Enterprises, the project "Production of public information signs for turtle nesting beaches" was finally completed in December. Via this project, the community and visitors will be informed of the possible presence of nests and what they can do to avoid unintentionally destroying nests. Placement of informative signs is an important catalyst in creating public awareness and involvement. Providing information on turtle nesting activities will lead to increased consciousness and will inform people on how they can contribute to

species survival. The signs will be placed on three nesting beaches in the early part of 2009. The signs feature photos of the nesting species with a brief description on size and diet, conservation status, guidelines on nesting beach etiquette and the Sea Turtle Hotline number 9229 that people can use as a point of contact.

## Publications



Education is one of the goals NFS pursues in order to meet its objective of nature conservation. When the formal education programme started in 2004, the sea turtle was chosen for its charisma to help introduce sea turtle conservation awareness. Scout, the sea turtle and NFS mascot, is present in all the lessons appearing as a different character each time. As the Captain Scout of the Black Turtle story was already used in the form of lesson plans, the story book project complemented the education programme. The project fit within the frame work of existing education programme lesson materials, namely the lesson plans with the theme on water that focuses on the marine environment and pollution.

The project produced a children's adventure story book called "Scout - Captain of the Black Sea Turtle" aimed at children ages 7 through 9 (upper cycle 1 and lower cycle 2). The book is written in English and Dutch and has coloured illustrations. The book can be used by teachers and parents. It will teach

children in a fun way about: 1) the marine environment; 2) the animals that live there; 3) how they each interact within their habitat; and 4) pollution as well as help enhance reading skills. The books are scheduled to arrive in March 2009. Copies will be distributed to the local public library and sent to Saba and St. Eustatius as well.

## OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The mission of Nature Foundation is the conservation and enhancement of St. Maarten's natural and cultural/historical resources. We aim to meet this mission through four goals: 1) Professionalization of the Foundation 2) Education & Public awareness 3) Research and Monitoring and 4) Law enforcement & Policy issues. Annual work and action plans outline proposed programmes, projects and actions that fit within the scope of these goals.

In terms of professionalization, we were successful in finding a suitable candidate for the post of Marine Park Ranger, thereby increasing full-time staffing from two to three. The ranger received PADI dive training, the STCW95 license that included Personal Safety & First Aid training, the boat captain's license, the VHF radio operator's license and did a work exchange at Stenapa on St. Eustatius and Stinapa on Bonaire. After expanding the staff with a full-time marine Park Ranger, NFS presence and patrols increased in the marine park.

Because of the ability to invest in infrastructure, the workshop allowed work in the mooring programme to resume. Capacity building of park staff resulted in immediate improvement to the Marine Park as closed dive sites could be re-opened.

Despite not having a full-time Education Coordinator, we were still able to meet our education and public awareness goal. By using the bi-monthly Kids Herald as an educational tool and publishing 21 children's articles, teachers of many primary schools were able to use our articles in their lessons thereby adding value to environmental education. To further enhance the value of environmental education, particularly in the area of sea turtle conservation, we organized a successful sea turtle exhibition at the public library to which were visited by elementary schools.

Capacity building in the form of project management training made it possible for the Manager to successfully plan, design and oversee the execution of the all the phases involved in the book project "Captain Scout of the Black Turtle". This production that is based on in-house designed educational material will have a significant impact on environmental education in terms of being a learning- as well as reading enhancement tool.

We produced and distributed four quarterly e-newsletters and gave a number of presentations some of which were for the general public, teachers and government. High profiling by television, radio appearances and news articles in the written press helped to increase public knowledge not only about the foundation but also raised more awareness within the general populace about environmental issues.



Group image 1. School children visiting the sea turtle exhibition at the public library; NFS staff giving a presentation on sea turtle conservation; winners of NFS sea turtle quiz; NFS staff giving a presentation to primary school teachers on the marine environment.



Group image 2. Poor terrestrial excavation practices as an earth mover shoves piles of soil over the cliff into the sea below; staff drilling seafloor to install mooring pin as part of the mooring maintenance programme; excavation in the marine environment without a permit and lack of sedimentation control measures.

Patrolling/Law enforcement and Policy: Having a ranger on staff, we were able to execute patrols in the marine park. These patrols resulted in at least two instances of illegal and other damaging activities such as marine dredging and near shore excavation, which were documented and the relevant government authorities notified. The Public Prosecutor’s Office meted out fines for the environmental infractions. This resulted in raised general awareness within the community and some individuals are more mindful of the environment.

NFS has been a member of the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle network (WIDECASST) since 1998 and is the sea turtle country coordinator. Since 1999 NFS has been monitoring and documenting nesting activity on nesting beaches. In 2003 NFS formed the volunteer-based group, Sea Turtle Watch Group, which assists with beach monitoring during the April to November nesting season. The 2008 nesting season was a low one; eleven nests were documented from Leatherback and Hawksbill sea turtles. Every year nesting data is sent to the global sea turtle database of WIDECASST.



Group figure 3. Hawksbill hatchlings on Great Bay Beach making their way to the sea. NFS staff rescued them from an individual who was attempting to sell them; daybreak shows evidence of a visiting turtle with an emerging crawl of a female Hawksbill on Guana Bay; and at Simpsonbay a Leatherback “bodypitting” in preparation for nesting.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

Partnership with other organizations is an aspect of conservation work because of the opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing and capacity-building. NFS liaises with local organizations as well as is associated with international conservation organizations.

Domestic and international partnerships include close association with DCNA as Board member and membership with WIDECAS as country coordinator in the area of sea turtle conservation work.

Local environmental and cultural/heritage groups include St Maarten Pride Foundation, Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC), Ocean Care, Caribbean Sustainability Foundation (CFS), St Maarten Heritage Foundation and Emilio Wilson Heritage Foundation (EWEF). Collaborative efforts have focussed on educational and awareness objectives as well as on government lobbying. Actions in 2008 included:

- The Mullet Pond Coalition – with the ongoing online and paper signature drive in support of the protection of the mangroves and seagrass beds of Mullet Pond in the Simpson Lagoon of St. Maarten
- Formal written request for the introduction of a plastic bag ban
- Collaboration during the data gathering process for the Proposed St Maarten Land parks Management Plan
- Lobbying for government funding compensation for a mangrove re-planting project to replace destroyed mangroves at the breakwater channel in Great Bay
- Participation in the annual International Coastal Cleanup held in October and hosted by St Maarten Pride Foundation
- Assistance with EPIC's annual bird population count on Pelican Rock, one of four islets in the conservation zone of the St Maarten Marine Park and Important Bird Area (IBA)

Throughout 2008 NFS along with other organizations worked with local businesses in a plastic bag reduction campaign to help promote the use of re-usable bags.

NFS together with other groups also held mini workshops for elementary school teachers that focussed on local environmental and ecological topics including (solid) waste and littering and reduce-reuse-recycle; wetlands and mangroves; and coral reefs and sea turtles.

NFS also maintains a working relationship with the following groups of stakeholders:

### **Island level**

- VROM Department
- Island Government
- Prosecutors Office
- French Side Marine Reserve
- Dive operators
- Fishermen's Association
- Coast Guard
- Customs Department
- Ports Authorities
- St. Maarten Tourist Office
- St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (SHTA)

## MANAGEMENT BODY

Nature Foundation is the body charged with the management of the St Maarten Marine Park. It is a foundation registered locally on St Maarten and governed by a volunteer Board of seven local people. The former manager of Nature Foundation, Andy Caballero, now sits on the Board. The day to day management of the Foundation is carried out by a full time staff of two along with various part time consultants and volunteers. The Marine Park Manager, Beverly Nisbeth, is also the Nature Foundation representative on the Board of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance.

## BOARD

Nature Foundation St Maarten has a permanent Board of 7 Directors, who oversee the St. Maarten Marine Park activities and direct overall policy and strategy. There has been one change in Board membership in the last year: Mr. Robbie Cijntje left the Board and was replaced by Delroy Pierre.

Elected Board members have additional responsibilities in accordance with respective positions. Board meetings are called monthly, with meetings between the manager and the board taking place as necessary.

Nature Foundation Board:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
<b>Chair</b>	Jan Beaujon	Finance
<b>Vice Chair</b>	-	
<b>Secretary</b>	Frank Boekhout	Education
<b>Treasurer</b>	Malou Carty	
<b>Member</b>	Delroy Pierre	Education
<b>Member</b>	Gloria Heyliger	Finance
<b>Member</b>	Robbie Lawrence	Business
<b>Member</b>	Andy Caballero	

## COMMITTEES

The Nature Foundation had no committees active in 2008;

## STAFF

Nature Foundation St Maarten has 3 full time members of staff with a total of 7 years of service. The Foundation worked for the first half of the year in 2008 with just 2 full time staff members. The new Marine Park ranger, Etienne Lake, joined the staff in July 2008 and started work on his main responsibilities in September 2008.

Position	Initial	Start year	Academic qualification	Dive qualification
Manager	BMN	2006	MSc	Advanced Diver
Office Administrator	MB	2006	BSc	None
Ranger	EL	2008	Diploma	Advanced Diver

## CONSULTANTS AND OUTSOURCING

An Outreach and Education Officer was contracted in 2008 to work with the Nature Foundation on an educational children's adventure story book.

Consultants are employed to prepare the year end accounts: the books are closed annually by the accounting firm Hassink and Roos and the annual audit is conducted by Ernst and Young on behalf of DCNA.

Nature Foundation St Maarten engaged 6 consultants and contractors carrying out work in 2008, including:

Name	Work carried out
Duncan MacRae	Terrestrial Management Plan
Hassink and Roos	Year accounts
Ernst and Young	Audit
Curtis Eduardo	Accounting support
Dominique Vissenberg	Children's story book
Wilderness graphics	Sea turtle nesting signs
Eloquent Web Designs	Website

## VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS

2 local volunteers contributed a total of 192 hours assisting with turtle nest monitoring.

## OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT: OVERVIEW

Operational management is the term chosen by DCNA to describe the day to day work of a protected area. The various aspects of operational management are:

- Administration (management)
- Administration (office)
- Administration (field)
- Research and monitoring
- Law enforcement
- Information, education and outreach
- Training – travel
- Working with stakeholders

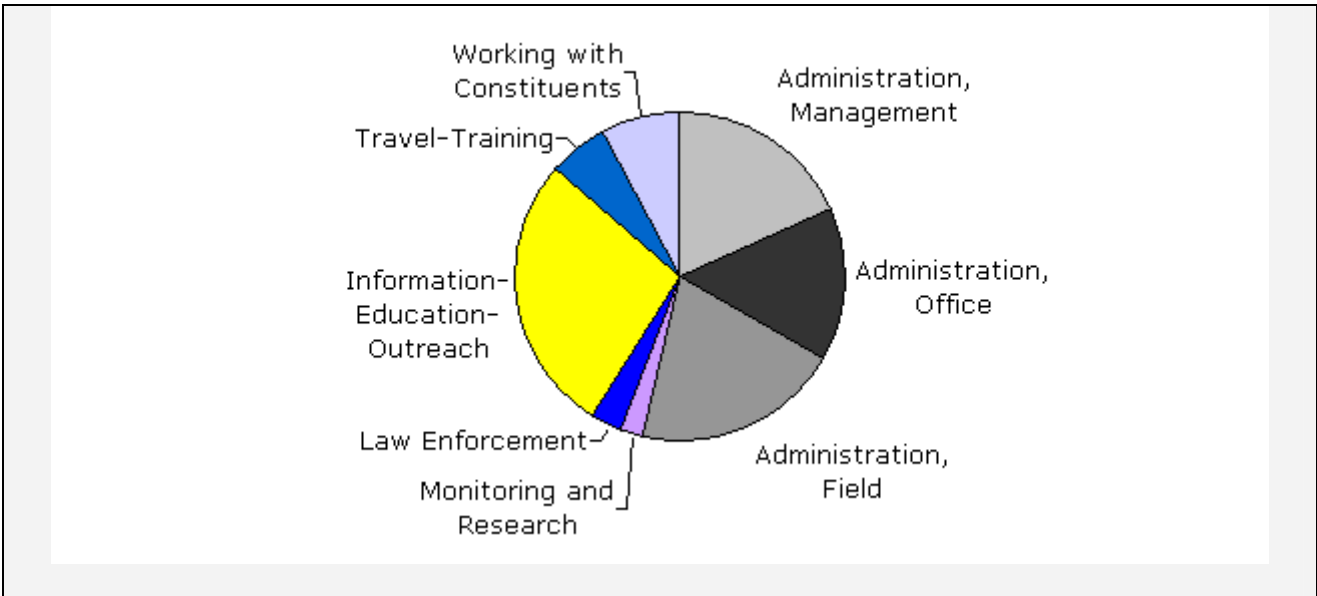
These tasks are described in more detail in an appendix to this report.

The charts below show how the staff CAPACITY to run the Protected Area (worked out from the individual staff experience and qualifications) is divided between the Operational Management tasks. In 2008 60% of Nature Foundation St Maarten's staff capacity was spent on work relating to the marine environment, with the remaining 40% spent on dealing with terrestrial issues (not all of which were related to trying to set up a terrestrial Protected Area on St. Maarten).



Division of staff capacity between work relating to terrestrial and marine issues.

For Nature Foundation St Maarten Information, Education and Outreach took 28% of staff capacity in 2008 Field Administration (maintenance of moorings and patrolling) took 20% of staff capacity. Management Administration (28%), Office Administration (15%) and Working with Constituents (8%) took the most significant remaining shares of staff capacity.



## **OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR**

The strategic statements developed for St. Maarten Marine Park are;

Vision: A thriving actively managed and sustainably used marine environment around St. Maarten

Mission: To manage, conserve and restore St. Maarten's marine natural, cultural and historical resources for education, ecological functionality and sustainable use with continued stakeholder participation, for the benefit of current and future generations.

Goals:

- 1) Manage St. Maarten's marine environment successfully as a regionally and globally significant protected area, within an effective legislative framework and with commitment from stakeholders.
- 2) Conserve and restore, through practical conservation and active management;
  - a) the natural values of the marine park, including threatened, rare and endangered species, habitats, water quality, biological diversity, ecosystem processes and aesthetic values.
  - b) the cultural and historical marine resources of St Maarten
- 3) Facilitate the use of St. Maarten's marine environment for:
  - a) Tourism, yachting and diving
  - b) education, c) research, monitoring and training.
- 4) Ensure the promotion of the marine environment as a traditionally and contemporarily valuable, sustainable, multiple use resource whilst establishing rules, guidelines, permits and enforcing legislation.
- 5) Ensure the involvement of the local community and stakeholders, to cultivate a sense of ownership and continuing support for the zoning, regulations and management practices of St. Maarten Marine Park.

There were no defined objectives for 2008.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION

Reporting: In 2008 Nature Foundation St Maarten staff produced an Annual Report. Ernst and Young carried out the audit in 2007 under contract to DCNA.

Planning: In 2008 Nature Foundation St Maarten produced The St Maarten Proposed Land Parks Management Plan 2009. Other plans produced include the annual action plan and annual budget. Nature Foundation St Maarten continues to implement the 2007 Marine Park Management Plan.

No time was spent on fund raising in 2008

### OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

As well as ongoing computing, filing, and ad hoc communications with the public, Nature Foundation St Maarten staff worked on a variety of other tasks related to general administration, including;

- Quarterly Budget Comparisons
- Bookkeeping
- Boat log book
- Payroll software installation and maintenance (on the advice of consultants)
- Mooring status and location list

## FIELD ADMINISTRATION

There were 3 patrols a week each for 3 hours for the Marine Park. Formal, scheduled patrolling started within the Marine Park in September 2008 when Etienne Lake, the new ranger, was employed.

Approximately 240 hours were spent by staff members on maintenance. This includes; making moorings (which are lost at a high rate due to a lack of legislation), construction of partition wall and mezzanine in the new workshop and maintenance of bird watching cabins. The vehicles are serviced at a local garage to maintain their service history.

## RESEARCH AND MONITORING

The Marine Park manager and 3 volunteers carried out monitoring of turtle nesting beaches 3 times a week, during nesting season from April-November.

## DCNA MEASURING MANAGEMENT SUCCESS PROJECT

The management success project is an ongoing DCNA project designed to measure the management effectiveness of each of the park management organizations in the Dutch Caribbean. The management success project has developed a tool for collecting data using objective indicators to measure 'success' across a broad spectrum of protected area management tasks and activities.

Nature Foundation St. Maarten contributed significant amounts of data to the project in January 2008. Ultimately, the management success project can be used as a model for park organizations to improve accountability, transparency and professionalism.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT, POLICY AND LEGAL ISSUES

There were 4 logged incidents requiring intervention within the MPA for legal reasons in 2008. The incidents included pollution from coastal excavations and the associated runoff and illegal dredging and filling.

10 CITES permits were issued for Conch and Coral transportation.

Lobbying has taken place on 6 key issues, all of which are ongoing, and has taken the form of meetings, letters, and presentations. A total of 48 hours has been spent by staff on lobbying including 22 hours focussing on a Government subsidy for the MPA. Other lobbying issues in 2008 included:

- Passing the MPA ordinance
- Mandatory EIA for terrestrial developments
- Beach lighting policy
- Sedimentation and run off
- Plastic bag ban

Nature Foundation St. Maarten did no advisory work in 2008.

## INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

### WORKING WITH CONSTITUENTS

Nature Foundation St. Maarten works with 16 stakeholders and partners on issues relating to the marine environment. These stakeholders include: Schools, the Prosecutors office, Hoteliers and regional NGO's such as WIDECAST.

Staff from Nature Foundation St Maarten sit on the Heineken Yacht Regatta Committee.

## INFORMATION

The Manager of Nature Foundation St. Maarten spent 336 hours over 6 months developing a new website. This includes the writing of extensive background material and educational materials. The website is active and can be updated with new reports and downloads.

A total of 5 radio programmes and 4 public service announcements were made by Nature Foundation St. Maarten in 2008. The programmes were one hour long each and took 8 hours in total to make with one hour in the studio. Topics covered included; Sea Turtle conservation, Invasive species, Coral Reefs, the MPA ordinance and shark conservation.

There were 4 television programmes broadcast about Nature Foundation St. Maarten, Sea Turtle conservation and the MPA ordinance, each an hour long. 108 hours were spent producing a total of 36 press releases, including 21 articles for 'The Kids Herald'.

A considerable amount of time went into working with the consultant contracted to produce the new Website. A total of 105 hours also went into producing 7 beach signs on plexiglass and pressure treated timber, which will be erected on beaches to inform about sea turtle nesting.

The manager of Nature Foundation St. Maarten worked for 175 hours on the review and production of a children's story book focussed on the marine environment, mangroves and pollution.

## EDUCATION

A total of 20 participants took part in one teacher training course about Sea Turtle Conservation and Beaches, which took 2 hours and used specific materials. There were a total of 6 school visits to 5 schools with a focus of Sea Turtle Conservation and Marine Pollution.

## OUTREACH

There were a total of 3 presentations given in 2008 including 2 to the public where a total of 6 people attended, and one to the government with 5 participants.

An exhibition in the library was erected targeted at the public and schools that took 8 hours to set up. 'The Foundation News' Newsletter was published 4 times in 2008.

## TRAVEL AND TRAINING

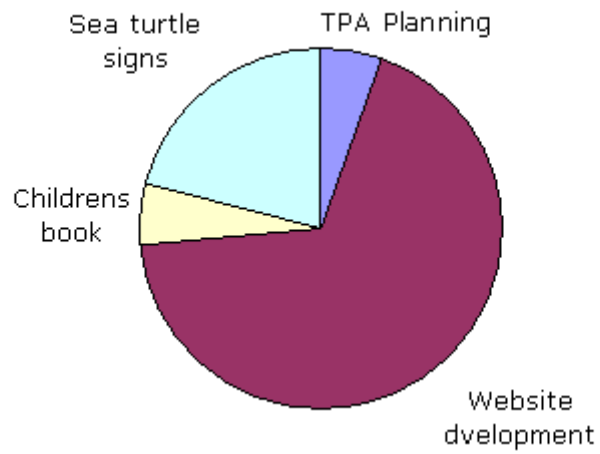
The Manager of Nature Foundation St. Maarten attended 3 meetings throughout 2008; DCNA board meetings on Aruba and Bonaire and the WIDECAST annual general meeting in December on St. Kitts for 4 days.

The staff also took part in 9 training courses and periods of work experience, with all three staff taking part in a VHF radio operator's course in November for a day. Other courses included;

- Project management, carried out by the Manager on Bonaire
- Sea turtle conservation course, taken by the Manager and Ranger
- Extra-ordinary police course, taken by the Manger
- First aid / CPR training, taken by the Office manager/Ranger
- Captains license, PADI dive training OW/AD, Work experience on Bonaire and St Eustatius all carried out by the Ranger

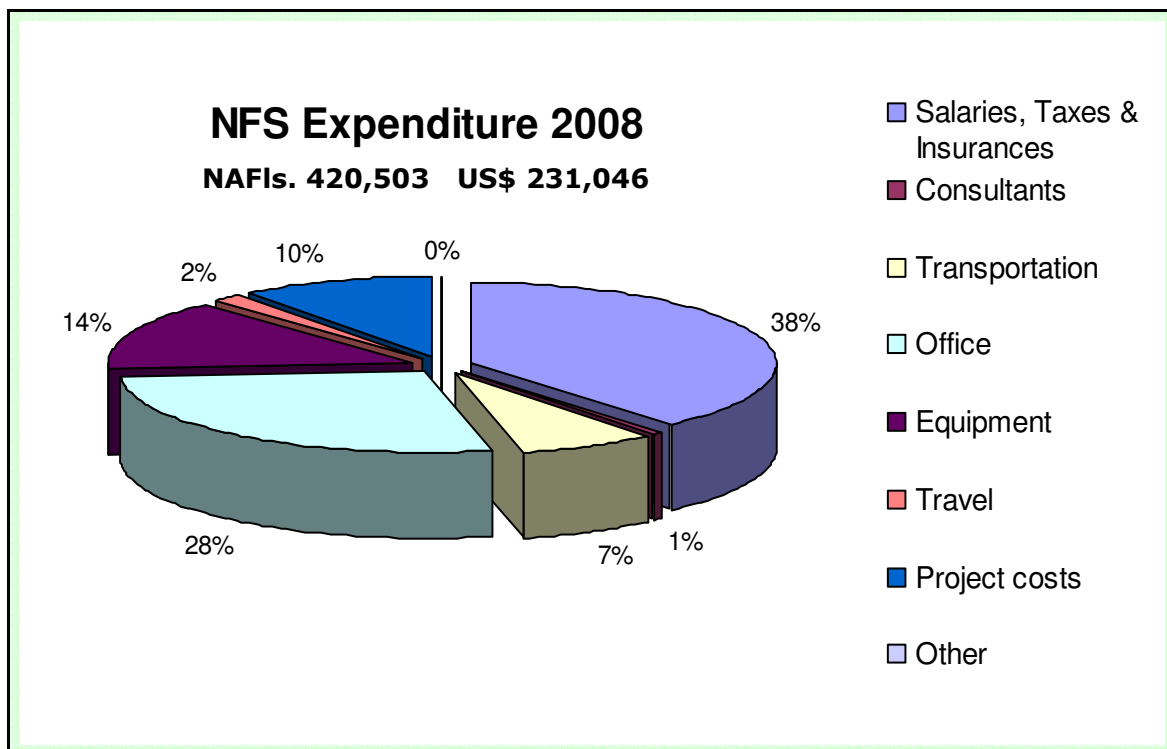
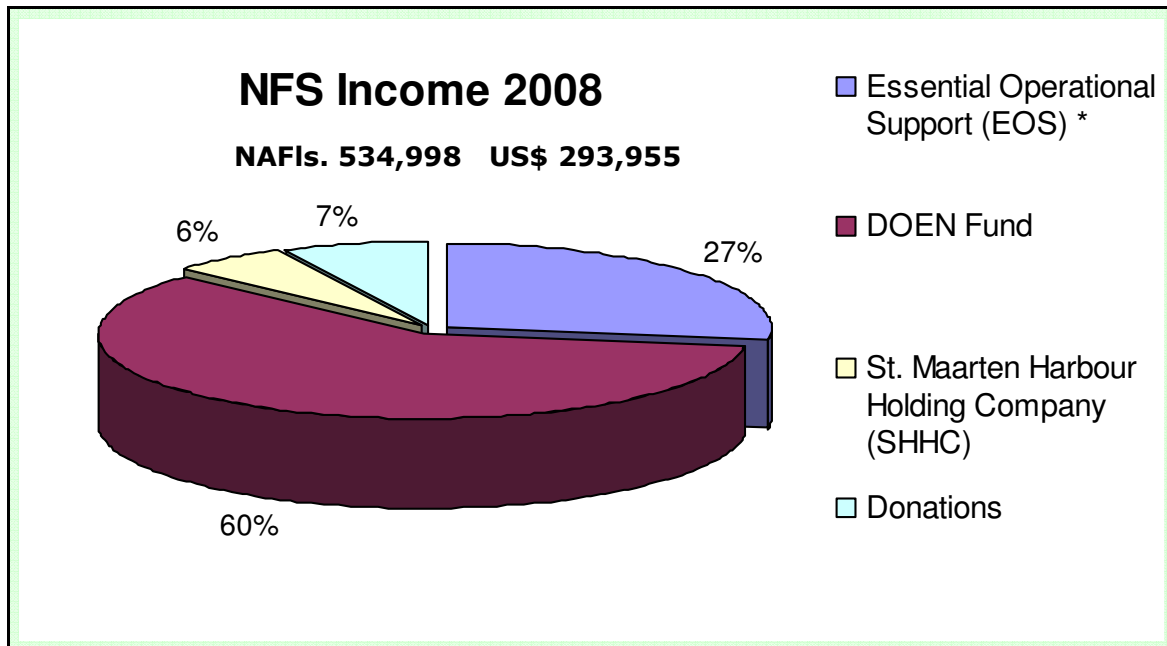
## PROJECTS

Nature Foundation St. Maarten worked on 4 projects related to the marine and terrestrial environment in 2008, taking up 497 hours of the Managers time.



Projects worked on by Nature Foundation St. Maarten in 2008.

## FINANCIAL REPORTING



\* Essential Operational Support from the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA)

## APPENDIX

### GLOSSARY

**Abiotic:** physical factors that effect an organism's environment.

**Active park management:** A protected area (park) where actions are carried out by dedicated (full or part time) staff within an organisation, which has defined goals and objectives and where staff time is organised to address core management tasks as well as proactively tackling issues and threats.

A non-actively (passively) managed protected area would lack defined objectives, staff time would not be allocated to address core tasks and would react to threats and issues in an ad-hoc fashion.

**Adaptive management:** a management system, which includes reviewing past performance and the incorporation of 'lessons learnt' and improvements into the ongoing management and planning process.

**Biotic:** biological factors that effect an organism's environment.

**Co-management:** a situation where the protected area management organisation and stakeholders share joint authority and responsibility for making decisions about resource management.

**Core management tasks:** Tasks that are essential to the operational management of an actively managed protected area, these include:

- administration (management, office administration and field administration)
- research and monitoring
- law enforcement
- education and outreach
- travel and training
- working with stakeholders

**Effective management:** Effective park management is driven by goals and objectives, which are normally captured in a management document such as a management plan. The level of effectiveness depends on how decisions are made and implemented and how the protected area's resources (financial, human, physical and information) are deployed to address core management tasks, threats and issues.

**Evaluation:** judgement or assessment of achievement against predetermined criteria.

**Goal:** a broad statement indicating what the protected area is trying to achieve through its management efforts

**Habitat:** the living space of an organism, population or community as characterised by both its physical and biotic properties.

**Issue:** A biological, chemical or physical process or entity with the potential to negatively impact on the conservation of the park's natural resources. If not addressed issues could threaten the sustainable conservation of the protected area.

**Management capacity:** A measure of a protected area's ability to fulfil its mandate in terms of the available resources (physical, human, financial and information) and their adequacy in relation to the context that the protected area operates within.

**Management effectiveness:** the degree to which management actions achieve the goals and objectives of the protected area

**Pressure:** A diffuse external impact on a protected area created by human activities, which requires a management response in order to sustainably protect the resource from harm such as shipping pressure, development pressure etc.

**Protected area:** An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and of natural and associated cultural resources, managed through legal or other effective means.

**Protected area network:** A coherent group of protected areas (preferably ecologically linked) operating co-operatively to improve their collective ability to lobby, fundraise and manage as well as to build internal capacity through the exchange of knowledge, expertise, information and or resources.

**Protected area resources:** The financial, human, physical and information resources used by a protected area in their day to day operations

**Stakeholder:** an individual, group or organisation with a vested interest in the management of a protected area

**Threat:** A biological, chemical or physical process or entity, which immediately damages, destroys or otherwise impairs or degrades the natural resource. A threat can be an entity such as an organism, which becomes a pest, or a process such as an increase in erosion, which damages habitat.

**Use:** A human activity that takes place within the protected area.

**Value:** The importance of a protected area in terms of a range of variables, including: biological, ecological, wilderness, economic, social characteristics as well as scientific, international or national significance.

## ACRONYMS

<b>AMFO</b>	Antilliaanse MedeFinancierings Organisatie – funding source
<b>BZK</b>	Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
<b>Carmabi</b>	Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity Foundation, Curacao
<b>CI</b>	Conservation International
<b>CIEE</b>	Council of International Education and Exchange (based on Bonaire)
<b>CITES</b>	Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species
<b>CMM</b>	Commissie Marien Milieu – Bonaire’s marine environment commission
<b>CTB</b>	Curacao Tourism Board
<b>CURO</b>	Council of Underwater Resort Operators, Bonaire
<b>DCNA</b>	Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance
<b>DOEN</b>	Stichting DOEN – Dutch non profit funding linked to the Dutch Postcode Lottery
<b>DROB/DROV</b>	Island Spatial Planning Department
<b>FPNA</b>	Fundashon Parke Nacional Arikok: park management organization on Aruba
<b>IAC</b>	Inter American Convention for the Conservation of Sea Turtles
<b>IBA</b>	Important Bird Area
<b>IUCN NL</b>	International Union for Nature Conservation, Netherlands
<b>JAZ</b>	Island Legal Department
<b>KNAP</b>	Kleine Natuur Projecten Fonds Nederlandse Antillen – small grant fund for nature projects administered by MINA
<b>LNV</b>	Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
<b>LVV</b>	Island Agriculture and Fisheries Department
<b>MINA</b>	Central Government Department of Nature and the Environment
<b>MINA fonds</b>	Central Government Department of Nature and the Environment small grant fund
<b>MPA</b>	Marine Protected Area (Marine Park)
<b>NFS</b>	Nature Foundation St Maarten: park management organization on St Maarten
<b>NFWF</b>	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, USA based funding organisation
<b>NIOZ</b>	Nederlands Instituut voor Onderzoek der Zee, research institute in the Netherlands
<b>NPL</b>	Nationale Postcode Lotterie – Dutch Postcode Lottery
<b>PBCF</b>	Prince Bernhard Culture Funds
<b>PBNF</b>	Prince Bernhard Nature Funds
<b>SCF</b>	Saba Conservation Foundation: park management organization on Saba
<b>SEMP</b>	St Eustatius National Marine Park
<b>SSV</b>	Special Security Service – supports Police Department
<b>STCB</b>	Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire
<b>STENAPA</b>	St Eustatius National Parks Foundation: park management organization on St Eustatius
<b>STINAPA</b>	STINAPA Bonaire: park management organization on Bonaire
<b>TCB</b>	Tourism Corporation Bonaire
<b>TNC</b>	The Nature Conservancy USA
<b>TPA</b>	Terrestrial Protected Area
<b>UNA</b>	University of the Netherlands Antilles, based on Curacao
<b>UNEP CAR</b>	United Nations Environment Programme – Caribbean Regional Office
<b>USONA</b>	Uitvoeringsorganisatie Stichting Ontwikkeling Nederlandse Antillen - funding source
<b>VOMIL</b>	Volksgezondheid en Milieuhygiëne - Central Government Department for Public Health and Social Development
<b>VNP</b>	Dutch Representative based on St Maaarten, Curacao
<b>WIDECAST</b>	Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Network

**WTT** World Turtle Trust, Hawaai USA  
**WNF** Wereld Natuur Fonds – World Wildlife Fund, Netherlands  
**WWF** World Wildlife Fund

## UNDERSTANDING PARK OPERATIONS

The characteristics (amount, quality) of the management tasks that can take place depend on the resources available to the park. If the resources are not available or are restricted, the capacity the park has to carry out management tasks is limited. The main elements of capacity are:

- Financial resources (income)
- Human resources (staffing)
- Physical resources (equipment)
- Information resources

As described in the Trust Fund Study (Feasibility Study of a Protected Areas Trust Fund: sustainable funding for the Nature Parks of the Netherlands Antilles, February 2005 <http://www.dcnanature.org/donations/trustfund.html>) and elsewhere, the operational management of protected areas has been quite clearly defined. The elements of park operational management are:

- Administration (including management, office and field essential activities)
- Monitoring and research
- Law enforcement
- Information, education and outreach
- Travel and training

The following generic information on park capacity and operational activities is provided both to help explain the scope of the park operations as well as to provide essential background information relevant to the park's annual reporting.

### CAPACITY

#### **Financial resources**

Income for Parks can come from a variety of sources including government subsidies, admission fees, fees for service, grants and 'friends of' groups, franchises and similar. Accessing sufficient income can be problematic for parks in the Dutch Caribbean as the region is illegible for most international aid funds and ineligible for many domestic sources of funding. Sufficient income is required for a Park to cover its ongoing operational costs as well as addressing threats and issues. A key aspect of income is its sustainability; a constant flow of income is required to keep staff and maintain operations.

#### **Human resources**

A fully staffed park will typically employ a manager as well as an assistant manager or chief ranger for each park, 4 or more rangers, an administrator and an education officer. They may additionally have dedicated project staff. Where an island has the management of both terrestrial and marine protected areas they will frequently employ a director to oversee the management of both parks, carry out lobbying activities, fundraising and representation. Parks may actively or passively run volunteer programmes, have interns, trainees and consultants working for them.

#### **Physical resources**

The physical resources that a park has access to greatly effects the ability of the staff to carry out work. An adequately equipped park will typically have unrestricted access to buildings (offices, workshop), communications (including computers, telephones, internet), transport (boats, trucks), maintenance equipment, drilling equipment (to place moorings), scientific and field equipment.

### **Information resources**

In order to be able to make sound management decisions, parks need to have access to essential information related to the protected area such as maps (terrestrial and bathymetric), tide and current data, species lists and management plans.

## OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

### **Administration<sup>†</sup>**

#### *Management Administration*

Parks will typically serve as a secretariat for their Boards and will be involved in preparing and organising Board meetings, agendas and minute taking. Management will also be responsible for planning, budgeting, routine reporting, as well as all aspects of personnel management. Income related activities carried out by Park management include administering government subsidies, franchises and similar, grant funding, organising and purchasing souvenir items and similar. Additionally parks may run 'friends of ...' groups, actively soliciting donations from the public and from corporate sponsors.

#### *Office administration*

This includes organising an office, correspondence, filing, bookkeeping, accounting, invoicing and payments. It also includes work planning and developing work schedules for staff, some project management, collecting and administering admission fees and the sale of souvenir items and similar.

#### *Field Administration*

The maintenance of moorings, trails and roads accounts for a considerable amount of staff time. Other maintenance tasks include running and maintaining buildings vehicles, boats and communications equipment. Patrolling, assisting park users and similar are also core field administrative tasks that take up considerable amounts of staff time.

### **Monitoring and research**

Parks are all engaged at some level in collecting information on the state of their biological resources, use of resources as well as socio-economic data. Monitoring programmes, as well as being used to look at changes over time, are frequently run to address specific management issues. Site characterization is an important part of every parks dataset and information on the protected area and includes physical mapping, habitat maps and biological inventories. Additionally parks may run research projects to address specific issues such as the impact or control of invasive species or the impact of user groups on a resource. Damage assessment, evaluation as well as the effects of restoration work are other possible areas for research and monitoring work.

### **Law enforcement**

Local and international legislation forms the basis for the legal protection of the park and enforcement of conventions, laws, rules and regulations is a core task of every park. Parks are engaged in interpreting the legislation for all user groups, providing guidance and advice as well as actually enforcing the law by issuing verbal and written warnings, giving summary fines and writing up offences. Other legal mechanisms such as permits and exemptions are useful tools to control and regulate activities in parks and parks are frequently involved in the permitting processes not only for activities with the protected area but also in adjacent buffer areas. Additionally parks provide emergency response and will be involved in identifying and

<sup>†</sup> Defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as; 'the organization and running of a business or system.' – in this case a Protected Area.

developing appropriate response scenarios for high risk threats, emergency preparedness and on site damage assessment capabilities.

### **Information – Education and Outreach**

Parks are all engaged in multiple activities designed to provide information and to educate islanders, visitors and specific park user groups. Generally these are formulated in a communication plan and will include developing programmes for targeted audiences to increase knowledge about the park, change behaviour and/or build stewardship. Some parks have visitor centres or a museum with information on their protected area. Others provided guided tours, dives and hikes, have signage and outreach materials, including posters, brochures and leaflets (often in multiple languages). Parks actively engage their local media, write press material and hold interviews with TV and radio. In addition to snorkel programmes some parks have structured Junior Ranger programmes, school programmes, courses for local teachers. All parks have websites and most have some form of regular newsletter. Information refers to the passive supply of information to an audience, Education refers to formal training and teaching programmes run by the Park, Outreach is the active dissemination of information.

### **Travel and Training**

All parks are represented at DCNA Board meetings, additionally many attend international events and symposia. Training courses are organised for staff, these frequently include work exchange programmes with other islands as well as more formal training programmes.

### **Working with stakeholders**

Another critical area of work for every park is working with its constituents. Parks work with decision makers to integrate management priorities into island and national planning, give advice, petition government and are frequently represented on government advisory boards, Partnerships are built with other organisations such as research institutions, conservation organisations and funders both on island and abroad to strengthen the park and to gain access to resources and expertise. Parks work particularly hard to engage stakeholders through a process of collaboration. Key contacts within each user group are identified; Parks often attend stakeholder meetings and vice versa, provide training, information and advice. Some parks have structured or informal volunteer groups with whom they work on a regular basis.

