



## The 28th Annual International Sea Turtle Symposium 2008

**E**very year an international crowd gathers to share work in Sea Turtle Conservation in a collective effort to reverse declines in sea turtle populations. This year, the 28th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation was held from 19 to 26 January 2008 in Loreto, Mexico. Scientists, conservationists, resource managers and users, policy-makers, industry groups, educators and other stakeholders from around the world attend this annual meeting. For three consecutive years, Nature Foundation was invited to present its educational program at this international event.

Before the symposium started, the four day traditional leatherback ceremony took place performed by the local Seri Indians, who are amongst the leaders of sea turtle conservation in Mexico. Nature Foundation took part in the annual Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECASST) meeting. More than 100 participants from nearly 30 nations in the Caribbean attended the WIDECASST meeting, which featured two full days of sharing, networking and strategizing. Next to short country reports in which coordinators gave updates on their current situation, also specific working groups took place. During these mini-gatherings people brainstormed on

several items (f.e. *Regional Network of Index Beaches; Ecotourism; International Trade: Hawksbill Turtles*, etc) and presented their recommendations on how the WIDECASST network can make a contribution to individuals in the regions working on these topics. Nature Foundation chaired the "Education and Outreach: how can we measure outcomes?" workshop. The main important recommendation to WIDECASST is to install shared expertise. Software and data-analytical skills to measure educational campaigns by survey is often lacking in small NGOs (as well the finances to hire a professional), making it helpful if a graduate intern of Duke University (WIDECASST home base) help with the set up and analyses of surveys.

During the second day of the WIDECASST meeting, Nature Foundation presented a "Special Interactive presentation on the Development of Conservation Media for youth". It generated much interest in the use of interactive tools for environmental education.

After those two days of regional work, the international symposium started. The emphasis of the 2008 Symposium in Baja California was on Native Oceans, or indigenous conservation. their project.

(Continued on page 3)



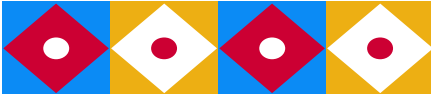
Dominique presenting at the Symposium

### Coming up...

**First 2008 DCNA Board meeting on St. Eustatius: 20—22nd May**

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*Dear Reader,*

*Welcome to this year's first issue of Foundation News.*

*Though we remain understaffed, we are still here ever trucking onward and trying to meet our goals one tiny bit at a time.*

*One major achievement during this first quarter is our participation in the Extra-Ordinary Police Training Programme, the importance of which will be tantamount to the successful management of the Marine Park.*

*As the year unfolds, we hope to be able to realize some of the plans we have in the making, including re-building and launching our website and placing marine turtle informative signs on the nesting beaches.*

*We will keep you informed of our successes and challenges but in the meantime we trust you will enjoy this edition.*

*Sincerely,*

*Beverly Mae Nisbeth*  
Manager



## Heineken Regatta and nature conservation



**F**or 3 consecutive years Heineken has teamed up with Nature Foundation St. Maarten and Reserve Naturelle of St. Martin to raise funds for the protection of the island's marine life during the Regatta, which took place from March 6-9, 2008. The black "St. Maarten Heineken Regatta bracelets" were sold during the Regatta at Heineken, St. Maarten Yacht Club, both Marine Parks and the Shipwreck Shops. The bracelets are still available for \$2.

Money collected from the sale of the bracelets will go towards the Dutch and French marine parks. This particular fund-raiser is becoming a Regatta tradition. In 2006 and 2007 the Heineken Regatta bracelet sale totalled some \$8,000.

## The 28th Annual International Sea Turtle Symposium 2008 cont'd

Nature Foundation’s contribution to the symposium was a poster presentation on the topic of “The Story of Scout of the Black Turtle”, or: “The effects of featuring a sea turtle mascot on general environmental education and outreach programmes”.

The 2008 symposium was the largest to date. Another striking eye for detail was the attention during this symposium, to reduce waste, support the local economy, prevent pollution, and set an example for subsequent meetings, participants were asked to avoid distributing paper handouts, bring their own coffee mug, eat local food and get a room at the small local hotels. At the end of the symposium, prizes were handed out to 3 people who reduced their impact on the environment the most (by travelling over land instead of air, planting trees etc....)

Nature Foundation participation was very successful. Being part of the WIDECAST network is very valuable since it distributes not only materials but also knowledge and expertise amongst its participants. The presentations on how organizations work on other islands, sharing ideas and resources is very valuable for the continuation of Nature Foundation’s work in this field. Also it’s important for us to put our findings on the international sea turtle conservation map, displaying St. Maarten’s commitment to contribute towards sea turtle conservation.

We would like to thank SHTA and SMTA for their generous contribution without which our attendance at the symposium would have been impossible.



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## Foundation’s Manager training to be Extra-Ordinary Police Officer



**N**ature Foundation Manager Beverly Nisbeth is enrolled in the Extra-Ordinary Police training course, part of the process in acquiring the appointment. The granting of extra-ordinary police powers to managers of Protected Areas is not uncommon as rangers in parks the world over are authorized to enforce laws pertaining to the protection of that specific protected area. The enforcement of environmental legislation is an important tool that helps to ensure successful management of a Protected Area. The course has a duration of 20 weeks and covers subjects such as administrative and criminal law.

## Education and awareness via increased media presence

One of the goals of Nature Foundation is education and awareness in the form of dissemination of information to the public. The successful achievement of this goal is important for the realization of the long-term objective: nature conservation and preservation.

To help us meet this goal, we plan to be more visible in the media this year by participating as guests on television and radio programmes.

Education remains one of the most basic and cost effective methods of getting people to understand the importance of nature protection and what they can do to help.

As another way of getting our communication strategy up and running, we have also started publishing bi-monthly articles in the Kids Herald. The articles highlight St. Maarten nature and children are introduced to a variety of topics that so far included the Upside-down jellyfish in



the Simpsonbay Lagoon, the Seahorse in the Marine Park and the common Acacia or koshaw tree.



## St. Maarten nature and conservation efforts gain international exposure

Back in August 2006, a group of plant scientists from the New York Botanical Garden visited the Emilio Wilson Estate and Sentry Hill. They collected and catalogued some 36 plant species and now this list can be viewed on the website of the C. V. Starr Virtual Herbarium at <http://sciweb.nybg.org/Science2/vii2.asp> by doing a search for 'Maarten' in the 'province' field. The objective of this survey was to use the results to help to support arguments why the Sentry Hill and the Emilio Wilson Estate should be protected.

The virtual herbarium links the data that accompanies an herbarium specimen with information about the species, about the people who collected, named, and determined it, and the publication where the species was first described. Additionally, an unlimited number of multimedia attachments in the form of images, documents, video, or links to other websites can be attached to each record. The Virtual Herbarium Users guide describes in more detail how this information is organized.

St. Maarten sea turtle conservation and management have been captured in the September 2006 TRAFFIC Report, commissioned by the CITES Secretariat. TRAFFIC is a wildlife trade monitoring network that works to ensure that trade in wild animals and plants is not a threat to the conservation of nature. It is a working partner of CITES, another international trade monitoring organization.

The report, entitled Turning the Tide: Exploitation, Trade and Management of Marine Turtles in the Lesser Antilles, Central America and Venezuela, covers segments on laws and regulations for sea turtle management, enforcement issues, species research, habitat conservation and education and public awareness and the difficulties in sea turtle conservation on St. Maarten. The data for this report was captured in a survey dating back to 2002 as well as from other sources. The report illustrates the status of our sea turtle conservation and as such is a valuable resource tool. Everyone is encouraged to browse it at our offices.



### 3rd Elementary School Performance of the Arts

This year’s 3rd Elementary School Performance of the Arts focuses on Nature and the Environment. Ten participating schools in the April competition will make creative presentations on the topics wetlands, marine life, land-based nature and pollution.

To help the schools prepare, Nature Foundation and other invited guest speakers made presentations to the teachers and visited the schools to talk directly with the students about their school’s chosen topic. Good luck kids!

The chosen theme for this year’s competition is “We like to lend nature a hand”. Sound familiar?



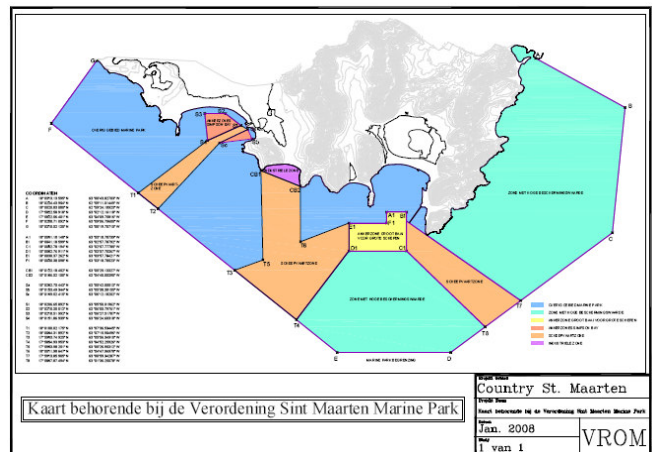
### Marine Park Ordinance update

On March 17th Nature Foundation and government officials gave a presentation to the general public on the Marine Park Ordinance and the revised Marine Park Map.

In 2006, the fishermen raised concerns about the layout of the proposed ship traffic zones claiming that ships and large pleasure craft would cut the lines of their fish pot so the map was revised accordingly.

Questions arose from the audience during the presentation. The workgroup will address the questions to prepare the ordinance for presentation to the Central Committee.

The ordinance is important for the legal protection of the Marine Park as well as for the sustainable income for Nature Foundation from dive and snorkel fees.



## Tel-Em joins the Plastic Bag Reduction Campaign bandwagon

Telephone company, Tel-Em, teamed up with Nature Foundation and St. Maarten PRIDE Foundation to increase public awareness of the need to reduce the use of plastic bags by introducing the canvas Eco-Shopper bag. The bags are available at Le Grand Marche. LU student volunteers handed out bags to shoppers and explained the dangers of plastic bags to the general environment but to sea turtles especially.

Tel-Em’s eco-bag launch follows that of Firgos Paper’s green recyclable bags that came out in 2007. More businesses are realizing they too play a part in environmental conservation with examples of used (motor) oil and battery recycling and switching from plastic bags to recyclable paper bags.

The next challenge will be eliminating the use of Styrofoam containers in fast food restaurants and snack bars.



LU student volunteers (Photo courtesy SXM Pride)



# SUPPORT NATURE FOUNDATION



## Bumper stickers

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Donations accepted



## Book

# FREE

Donations accepted



## T-Shirts

High quality Fruit of the Loom cotton T-shirts

Price: \$15.00  
Available in Sizes: S, M, L, XL, XXL



## Heineken bracelets

Limited edition Heineken bracelets are still available. Show your support for nature protection on St. Maarten. Come and get yours! Only \$2. All proceeds go to conservation on St. Maarten.



# THANK YOU!

We wish to acknowledge the following funding organizations, which have recently made donations to the Nature Foundation. We are incredibly grateful for their support.

- Stichting DOEN
- IUCN-NL
- Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA)
- Prins Bernhard Cultuur Fonds
- INNO-WWF
- MINA
- KNAP

# THANK YOU!

We wish to acknowledge the following individuals and businesses which have recently made donations to the Nature Foundation. We are incredibly grateful for their support.

- St. Maarten Harbour Holding Co.
- Bunchie's Garage
- Trakx Designs
- SHTA
- SMTA