



Mangrove area directly on Sorobon Road near entry to Troca Suelto Photo by Julie Morgan

Ramsar reserve laws challenged

On November 24, 2021, the Government published a notice in the Antiliaans Dagblad that it had received an application for a permit to build a wooden house in the Sorobon Ramsar site. The notice advised the public that if anyone wanted to object to this application it could write to the postenarchief@bonairegov.com.

Wilma Nijland saw the newspaper notice and went to the Ruimte and Ontwikkeling (“R &O”) office to review the application. She found that the application requested a permit to build, among other things, a wooden house on stilts with a concrete floor, and a bathroom. The application also showed that a swimming pool would be built. The permit application did not include an environmental impact statement (“EIS”). Nijland then went to the Office of the Kadaster. There she learned more. According to the Kadaster records, it showed that the land on which the structure was intended to be built was property and not erfpacht. She further learned that the parcel, designated 5G33, was one of six parcels comprising a larger tract of land. The Kadaster Map showed that the parcel was entirely within the Sorobon Ramsar site.

In 1975, The Ramsar Resolution was enacted. The Resolution was designed to protect wetlands and the biodiversity found there. The Resolution strongly recommended that there be no building

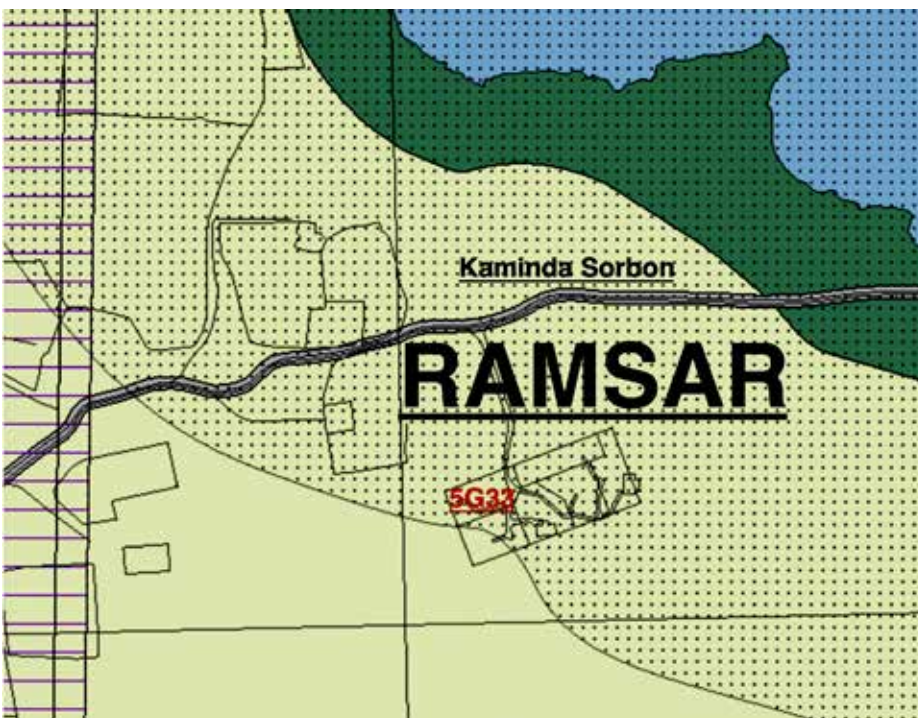
of any structure that would interfere with the area’s biodiversity. The Resolution further stated that in the event any structure were proposed to be built in the protected area, an EIS would first have to be written by people or a person who had strong expertise about environmental wetlands.

On Sept. 23, 1980 The Netherlands, including Bonaire, became a Party to the Resolution. In years following, Bonaire adopted several ordinances and policies

to carry out its responsibilities under the Resolution. The Foundation of Nature Management and Protection Ordinance was one such ordinance. The provisions of the Nature Ordinance called for the Executive Council, to the extent possible, to establish “nature parks.” The Bonaire Nature Policy Plan 1999-2004 elaborated on the Nature Ordinance. The Nature Plan designated the entire area of Lac as a protected “Ramsar area.” This designation included Cai, Sorobon and

a 500m buffer zone from the highest water level around the water area. The Structure Plan of Bonaire is yet another law which is relevant to the oversight of the Ramsar site. The Structure Plan, adopted in 1991, provides that the area which is designated as the Ramsar Area is a conservation area and as such was “intended to preserve the environment in its present stage.” The Structure Plan stressed that “any physical changes to the environment, including roads, electrical/ water lines, dams, watering holes, etc. must pass an environmental impact study assessing the impact of the proposed changes.”

The provisions, which are above-quoted, are taken from the written opinion of the Court in a 2007 case. The 2007 court case involved an appeal from Bonaire’s Executive Council of the Governor’s decision to veto a permit application for an ecolodge in an area adjacent to the Sorobon Ramsar site. The Court found the Executive Council’s appeal lacking merit and affirmed the Governor’s decision to veto the permit request. In making its determinations, the Court found, among other things, that the document which the company had submitted as an EIS was woefully inadequate to meet the legal



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OLB temporarily freezes some building permits

In a Preparatory Decree effective immediately, the Executive Council of the Public Entity Bonaire has declared that building permits will be temporarily withheld for projects that are contrary to policies stated in the present Spatial Development Plan Bonaire (ROB). The decree applies to all residential recreation projects (that is, resorts) and residential housing projects. The decree is intended to pause some types of developments until the ROB is irrevocable. Afterwards building permits will not be approved unless they conform to the ROB.

The pause in permits for residential development will help restore balance to the housing market. Too many new homes are being built as second homes or as holiday homes. Priority will be given to the construction of more affordable houses and apartments for the local population.

As to permits for construction of residential recreation projects—that is, re-

sorts—the OLB wants to focus on building four and five star accommodation facilities that offer their guests high levels of service. The intention is to attract more affluent visitors and provide more employment opportunities.

The OLB wants to have a draft Spatial Development Plan for Bonaire ready in six months. Once it is approved, the pause in approving some types of building permits will end. Thereafter only projects that confirm to the ROB growth policies will be considered.

The government announcement says the pause on selective kinds of residential development applies “everywhere on the island (except Klein Bonaire, which is already a protected area).” Questions have been raised about the government’s intentions regarding other areas on the island, such as Washington and Slagbaai National Park and Lac, that are already protected. *DMR*

Rijna in hot water. Stay tuned

At press time a meeting is underway where Lieutenant Governor Edison Rijna is explaining why he gave the developer of Chogogo Beach & Resort verbal approval to continue work and open as scheduled on December 1. The Democratic Party (PDB) and acting Kingdom Representative for the BES islands, Jan Helmond, have both demanded to know why he gave that permission, considering that the developer has ignored a stop-work order. The Supervision and Enforcement Department, in collaboration with Stinapa, halted the construction of the artificial beach at Chogogo Beach & Resort and imposed a penalty when it found that the resort did not have the required nature permit.

The results of the meeting will appear in the online edition of The Reporter as soon as we hear them. *DMR*

Covid-19 round-up

Bonaire’s recent covid outbreak seems to have peaked. Between December 2 and December 6, the number of people testing positive fell from 27 to 17. The number of active cases dropped by more than 100, from 286 to 173.

The Health Department can no longer conduct extensive source and contact investigations, given the high number of infections recently. People should take more responsibility for informing each other when someone tests positive for COVID-19 and for warning their close contacts and housemates to go into quarantine immediately and be tested later.

New restrictions have been announced by Lieutenant Governor Edison Rijna. Until Monday, January 3: Face masks are mandatory in public indoor areas and social distancing is recommended. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated people must go into quarantine if they have been in contact with an infected person or an infected housemate. Employees should be allowed to work from home if possible. Visitors should be received outside. No more than 10 people should gather at home or, for example, on the beach or kunuku, including roommates. Public events are limited to 100 people, must take place outdoors, and dancing and singing by the public is no longer allowed. At all events, including in the catering industry, everyone must have a permanent seat. Sporting events are allowed to continue, but no spectators may attend indoors events. Fifty percent of the capacity is allowed outdoors.

School games have been canceled until next year.

Princess Beatrix tested positive following a trip to Curaçao to attend a convention of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance. She is fully vaccinated, including a booster shot.

Curaçao has closed its borders to travelers from countries in southern Africa, where the Omicron variant of Covid19 is widespread. Other countries will be added to the list if necessary. *DMR*

Here comes Sinterklaas, and here comes the annual Black Peter controversy



Even in the U.S., where short fuses burn at both ends of discrimination issues, nobody speaks up for Santa’s elves. But in the Netherlands objections continue to grow regarding Zwarte Piet, who many consider a racist caricature.

During a light moment in The House, Martin Bosma (PVV), long an adamant defender of the beloved Zwarte Piet tradition, proposed Parliament should ensure that Dutch TV begins broadcasting from Bonaire the official Netherlands arrival of Sinterklaas. He said that on Bo-

naire only a small minority oppose the tradition, and Sinterklaas is attended by real Zwarte Pieters.

On Bonaire all Black Pieters wear black face, regardless of their complexion under the makeup. Black face is part of the traditional Black Peter costume, sort of like the long ears on the elves. And since “people of color” is not a distinguishing term used among Bonaireans, few on the island are uncomfortable calling Santa’s helpers Zwarte Pieters. *DMR (Dossier Koninkrijksrelaties)*

WEB covid subsidy ends

When WEB customers receive their January bill, most will find they are again paying a fixed usage rate for December in addition to their charge for consumption that month. The covid subsidy that has been covering everyone’s fixed usage rate for 20 months ended on November 30. *DMR*

Flotsam & Jetsam, continued on page 12

Covid-19 on Bonaire

totals as of DECEMBER 7, 2021

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 173 active | 6 hospitalized |
| 3031 total | 22 deceased |
| 85.1% have had 1st vaccination | |
| Bonaire is at risk level 2. | |

For up to date covid news go to the online Reporter <https://bonairereporter.com> or FB Government site is <https://www.bonairecrisis.com/en/>

Oscar Lighthouse navigates to good food and drink



Owner Jasmine van Dijk-Clifton

naire restaurateurs, it just happened.

They had lived in a busy city in Holland for 15 years and were looking for some place quieter. A move back to Curaçao and a vacation on Bonaire resulted in the idea of Oscar Restaurant.

With their previous experience of owning and running two restaurants they decided to give it a try on Bonaire as both Jasmine and Tony had family ties on the island.

While Tony worked in Holland, Jasmine moved to Bonaire and got to work in creating the Oscar. The idea for the name came from the "The Oscars," the prestigious Academy Awards for excellence. Initially she hoped to decorate the restaurant with movie posters and even a red carpet. Due to covid, the decor plans were never realized but Jasmine hopes she can make the changes in the near future.

Though not yet displayed in the décor, the menu evokes the excellence of the 'Oscars' with international, French and local dishes.

Diners can find dishes like bouillabaisse, lobster bisque, Coq au Vin, surf and turf, lasagna, lobster thermador, karoko and stoba karni kabritu.

Jasmine said, "We only serve fresh local fish and the meat comes from the U.S. We're hoping to have escargot at some time. As for the lobster bisque, when we don't have local, we don't serve it until they can catch the lobster."

The two chefs are from Holland with a 15 member staff in total.

Oscar Restaurant is moderately priced with a casual atmosphere. Diners are a mix of residents and tourist at about a 60-40% ratio.

Oscar recently opened a gathering room overlooking the marina with seating for 20 guests at a large table that is perfect for meetings or a party.

Jasmine said, "The big plan is to open up the lighthouse itself for dining in the near future."

Oscar will be serving a Christmas six course dinner with wine pairing on Dec. 24 - 26.

The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner everyday from 8am - 12pm. Breakfast is seven days a week from 8 to 11:30 am; lunch is 11:30am to 3pm with dinner from 5 to 9:30 pm. The bar is open from 12 pm to 12am. Guests can enjoy happy hour from 5 - 6pm. A Sunday brunch is served from 11:30am - 3pm.

For more information about Oscar Lighthouse or to make a reservation visit their website at <https://www.oscarlighthouse.com> or call 599-7172009. For a direct link to the restaurant online visit the Reporter Foodies Guide, page 11.

Story and photos Julie Morgan



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Communication is the key

Dr Jan van der Ploeg is a scientist, diver, self proclaimed barefoot conservationist and director of STINAPA Bonaire. Jan came on board at STINAPA in October 2020 after a lengthy search by interim director Peter Jaeger.

“What made this exciting was this [Bonaire] is part of the Netherlands and is still regarded as an environmental model,” said Jan, “I was being given the chance to be responsible for one of the largest protected areas of the Netherlands.”

STINAPA was first established in 1962 to protect and manage nature in the Netherlands Antilles. Its primary function is to manage Bonaire’s parks: the Bonaire Marine Park (BNP) and Washington Slagbaai National Park (WSNP).

The job as director is not a small task as Bonaire’s entire coastline (127km/ 78.9 m) plus Klein Bonaire (6km / 3.7m) are marine sanctuaries. Add in the WSNP (13,500 acre / 5463 ha) and that is a significant responsibility. In addition there are 38 people working at the two parks.

Jan came to Bonaire armed with the credentials necessary for the job. He attended Leiden University in environmental science and then traveled to west Africa for field work studying nomadic herders for his masters degree. The university asked him to head up the field station in the Philippines researching the endangered crocodile. From those experiences he wrote his dissertation for his PhD on environmental anthropology and spent 12 years in environmental education there. But that’s not all, he spent three years in the Solomon Islands with WorldFish conducting aquatic agricultural research and two years with Australian National Center for Ocean Resources and Security.

Jan said, “First and foremost I’m here to motivate, guide and ensure communication with the government and the [STINAPA] board.

Bonaire, like all nature environments, has its own specific problems to address. Jan says he doesn’t like to look at what’s wrong but tries to address the positive, to look at what’s right. In other words, he is a glass three quarter full kind of guy.

Jan does think that a lot of changes are important for the island. Bonaire’s colonial times have left their mark and need to be addressed: the goats, reforestation, water quality, coastal development, sargassum and protecting our mangroves and seagrass.

“We are trying to prepare for the changes coming our way. From a conservation perspective, we have huge challenges,” said Jan.

A major threat is water quality with the flow of chemicals and sewage. Important steps are necessary because in the past the easiest steps were taken.

In regard to the moorings and proposed pump out boat for the yachts on the waterfront, strict law enforcement will be required.



Dr Jan van der Ploeg, director of STINAPA Bonaire.
Photo Julie Morgan

Jan said, “The nutrients on the reef, more algae, bacteria ... coral diseases, you don’t need to be a scientist to see what is happening there.”

Part of STINAPA are the BMP rangers. They are special agents BavPol, of the police mandated to enforce rules and regulation of the marine park. Their job is to police from the water’s edge and below. There are many environmental laws that need to be respected to maintain Bonaire’s beautiful ocean reefs.

As per the proposed increase on mooring fees, Jan has recommended to the island council and executive council, \$45 per day. He wants to keep the fee the same for the mooring fee and the marine park tag to make it easier for everyone.

No decision has been made whether on the actual fee or if it will include a boat pumpout, proposed water delivery and sewage pickup from the boats. This is a decision for the executive council.

STINAPA is 100 percent dependent on the \$45 nature fee. During the pandemic with very few divers, the organization felt the crunch like everyone else. There is no allotted compensation for building expenses, boats, salaries, etc. from the Netherlands. This all comes from the fees for the nature tag. The OLB provides 60 k per year for the education program and DCNA has provided a trust fund of 75 k.

Jan explained that the majority of tourists who pay want to because they feel they are giving back or are doing their part to help our coral reefs. Then there are others who feel it’s not their responsibility to pay and abide the laws.

“We want to regain the trust of the people that live here and visit,” said Jan, “We represent the island but what is very clear is we can’t do it alone. People need to take responsibility. We need OLB, the dive industry, nature organizations – it only works if everyone works together.” *Story and photos by Julie Morgan*



This year BYOF (Bonaire Youth Outreach Foundation) will organize its yearly charity project, Pasku Briante (Bright Christmas).

The Pasku Briante team will fill decorated gift boxes with toys, school and hygiene items. The gifts will be distributed to the less fortunate children of Bonaire.

The idea is to make sure every child on Bonaire receives something special for Christmas. Just like last year, due to the Covid-19 regulations, a team of Santa hat-wearing volunteers will pass through every neighborhood on Bonaire to hand out the gifts.

In addition the kids will receive a drink and a snack.

The gift boxes are only possible with your generous giving spirit of Christmas.

You can help by either buying a toy, school or hygiene item for kids ages 2 to 12. Once you have your gift, contact Angelo Alberto at +599 787 3407 to drop off your gift.

If you would like to make a financial donation, you can do so by making a deposit to our bank account:

Banknumber: 01.0608.909

Bank: MCB (Bonaire) N.V.

Address: Kaya Gob. N. Debrot 64

Name: Bonaire Youth Outreach Foundation

SWIFT: MCBKBQBN

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Letters & Opinions

The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various authors and forum participants do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of The Bonaire Reporter.

Retraction

In a strongly worded opinion piece that occupied this space in the current Bonaire Reporter (December 8 – December 22, 2021) I made several statements regarding the laws and rules governing kunukus on Bonaire. I hereby retract everything I said about kunukus in that opinion piece. I have been informed that my basic premise—that all kunukus are parcels of public land that are leased from the government short term strictly for agricultural use—is no longer accurate. My wife and I held a kunuku short term lease for 20 years, dating from the mid 1990s. Apparently major changes have been made since then that I was unaware of. I'm now in the process of learning what they are.
Don M. Ricks

Pumping out yacht wastewater

Good morning,

I am writing this email on behalf of the entire cruisers community who are involved in the moorings in response to the latest articles in the Reporter 22.

We have read in the newspaper about the wastewater and the associated complex proposed solutions, we would like to enter into an open discussion with all parties to check our points with the points made in the newspaper.

Could you agree a date and time for us so that we can sit around the table with everyone?

With best regards,

Sven Vranken

in the name of Cruisers Community Bonaire

Editors note:

A meeting has been organized between representatives of the Cruisers Community Bonaire and the Water Circles team of STINAPA, WWF, OLB and WEB.

Harbour Village Resort and Marina will continue to do free pumpouts for yachts until the end of 2021 and possibly beyond until it becomes a requirement on the island in March.

Frank Gonzalez of Harbour Village said, "We think it is important to stop the dumping to protect the reefs and natural resources of Bonaire and we want to do our part by offering this free service."

International Day of People with Disabilities

On Bonaire the Executive Council marked December 3, World Disability Day, by ensuring that people with disabilities have the opportunity to exercise and to participate in recreational activities.

In 2022, the OLB has planned recreational activities for people with disabilities and the elderly. Where necessary skilled professionals are adapting the activities by using special materials and resources. For example, adjustments can be made to make it easier to enter the sea. There will be more communication about this initiative early next year when individuals, family members and carers will be encouraged to sign up.

When the United Nations adopted the 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' in December 2006, it proclaimed December 3 as World Disability Day. The aim: to encourage discussion of human rights and equal opportunities for people with disabilities within the society in which they live.



CRUISE SHIP RATINGS

On December 1, Carnival Horizon (4716 capacity) and Marella Discovery a TUI ship (capacity 2074) landed in Bonaire bringing 3200 passengers and 1195 passengers respectively. The ships' crew totaled 1,450 and 761.

The Friends of the Earth Report card for the Carnival Horizon is a 'F' for sewage treatment, water quality com-

pliance, transparency and a 'D' for air pollution reduction.

The Marella Discovery is not rated on the environmental report card. But it has been reported to have visible black smoke rising from the funnel when docked in several ports which is presumably marine gasoil.

POLICE REPORT

Property crime

Dec. 4. Between 12:30 and 5 am, a tourist accommodation on E.E.G. Bulevar was burgled. Thieves stole a wallet and handbag with various cards, cash and passports. They also stole a Dell and Apple laptop, a Samsung and Amazon tablet, a Nikon and GoPro camera, and a Google mobile phone.

Dec. 2. An office building on the Bulevar Gobernador Nicolaas Debrot was broken into through the toilet window. It is not yet known what was taken.

Nov. 30. Thieves broke the right rear window of a car and stole a mobile phone while a tourist couple was taking pictures at the caves at Boca Onima.

Nov. 29. Thieves entered through a window of a company on Kaya Industria and took a safe containing cash and other things.

Nov. 27 - 28. A white Giant bicycle with a striking green luggage carrier was stolen from the yard of an apartment complex on Kaya C.E.B. Hellmund. The bicycle was secured to the back of a heavy chair with a cable lock at the rear of the complex.

Nov. 27. In the early morning hours the police station received a report about a robbery at a house on Bulevar Gobernador Nicolaas Debrot. Three men with veiled faces broke into the house and tied up two victims. They were threatened with a firearm and a machete. During the robbery, lewd acts were performed on the victims.

Arrested/held in custody.

Dec. 4. At about 9:40 pm a man, 27, was arrested at Kaya Bongo for assault with a weapon when he hit another man with the butt of a pistol. The suspect's car and a cell phone were seized.

Dec. 3. A man, 44, was arrested on Kaya Inca for drunk driving.

Dec. 1. A Yamaha outboard motor mounted on a boat in the yard of a house in Barrio Den Tera was stolen between 8:15 and 10:15 pm. After investigation, a man, 63, and a man, 45, were arrested for theft and receiving. A surveillance camera, a pick-up truck, rebar, scissors and the stolen motorcycle were also seized for further investigation.

Nov. 28. Two boys aged 19 and 15 were arrested for theft. An on-duty patrol received a report that boys were riding suspected stolen bicycles on Kaya Internashonal. The patrol went looking for the boys and found them on Kaya Tambu. Three boys were on two bicycles. Upon seeing the patrol, they began to cycle recklessly, and fell. The boys then tried to get away, but were arrested. One of the bicycles was seized for further investigation.

Traffic accidents/violations

Dec. 5. In the night hours a scooter was seized during a traffic stop. The driver was stopped at the Kaya Internashonal for not wearing a helmet. He also did not have a driver's license or insurance.

Dec. 5. At about 1 am a driver fell off a moped. The driver was unable to show a driver's license or insurance, so the moped was taken to the police station until the owner could show the valid papers.

Dec. 5. At about 2:15 am, a patrol encountered a car at the roundabout near the church that was heading in the opposite direction. An attempt was made to stop the car, but the driver refused to do so. When he tried to drive away he hit a lamppost.

Dec. 4. In the early afternoon hours a patrolling officer encountered a car among the rocks on the side of the road near the white-colored slave huts. The driver lost control of the wheel and they rolled over. The KMar also came to the scene because the driver had a Dominican driver's license and an expired Bonaire ID card. The passenger did not have an ID card with him. Both occupants were then taken to hospital by ambulance.

Dec. 3. At about 7:45 am the police received a report of a pile-up between three cars on the Kaya Korona. The driver of the middle car was treated by paramedics at the scene and was able to go home.

Dec. 2. At about 9:30 am at Subi Blanku on the road to Rincon the driver of the car suddenly had to give way to a crossing donkey. She lost control and ended up in the bushes along the road. She was taken to hospital by ambulance.

Nov. 30. A car collided with a donkey at about 8:15 pm on Bulevar Miguel A. Pourier. The driver was treated at the scene by ambulance personnel. The vet, who also came to the scene, put the donkey to sleep.

Nov. 25. On E.E.G. Bulevar a driver was driving towards Belnem when she lost control of the car at the bend at Donkey Beach. The car hit the rocks along the road, flipped over and ended up between the trees on the beach. The driver was stable but was taken to hospital for a check-up.

Nov. 26. A lady was hit by a car on Kaya Industria Pariba. She was taken to hospital by ambulance.

Speed controls

In recent months, the KPCN has been working to stop speeding on Bonaire's public roads. The police are testing a speedometer which measures the speed of passing cars. Since the use of the speedometer is still new to Bonaire society, speed checks were held at various locations on November 30, where only warnings were given. In the future, this method will also be used to officially measure speed and to issue fines where necessary.

On Kaya Ir. R. Statius van Eps (maximum speed limit 60 km), 16 were stopped for driving between 70 km and 90 km per hour.

On Bulevar Gobernador Nicolaas Debrot (maximum speed limit 40 km), 10 vehicles were stopped for driving between 60 km and 85 km per hour.

On Kaminda Tras di Montaña (maximum speed limit of 60 km), 12 vehicles were stopped for driving between 70 km and 110 km per hour.

On E.E.G. Bulevar (maximum speed limit 40 km), 16 vehicles were stopped for driving between 55 and 73 km per hour.

Fire

Dec. 3. In the morning hours a fire started under the hood of a car parked on Kaya The Hague. Residents of surrounding homes and apartments were evacuated for their safety. Two fire trucks arrived on the scene and extinguished the fire. The owner of the car stated that the car had been taken to the garage for a major service just the month before. No one was injured.

Nov. 29. In the late afternoon hours the police station received a report about a fire at a kunuku in the vicinity of the Kaminda Lac. The kunuku also has a fireworks container. The fire brigade who arrived on the scene extinguished the fire.

Enforcing corona measures

Dec. 3 - 5. In the night hours police patrolled to enforce covid-19 measures.

At about 1:30 am Friday after a check at Pink Beach, police stopped a pick-up at Te Amo Beach for a check. They found a bag with boxes of laughing gas, balloons, two walkie-talkies and a cool box filled with bottles of alcohol. The driver and passenger are known to sell laughing gas and alcoholic drinks at illegal parties. The driver received a warrant because he was unable to show a driver's license. The car, the found goods and cash were seized.

In the center, a few people were approached because they caused music nuisance. On Kaya Korona, a car with six occupants was stopped for inspection. A num-

ber of bags of white powder resembling cocaine were found. These were seized and destroyed.

Nov. 26-27. During Friday and Saturday catering and sports establishments were inspected for compliance with measures regarding Covid-19.

At a softball and bolas event people were present who adhered to the rules.

The Supervision & Enforcement Department (OLB) asked for assistance at a catering facility in Punt Vierkant, as it was crowded there. About 300 people were present and dance floor was crowded. When requested to leave the location, some people complained that they had paid entrance fees. After the police cleared the crowd, the employees of the Supervision and Enforcement Department dealt with the violations.

At about 1 am on Saturday, a gathering in Lagun was reported. When police arrived on site, many people, cars and scooters were present with loud music playing from cars. Everyone was asked to move away from the site.

The patrol moved to Seru Largu where they found a small group who did not cause any nuisance.

At about 1:55 am a report came in that it was crowded at Te Amo beach and that loud music was being played. When the crowd was asked to vacate the venue, a number of people made a fuss, and did not move, but finally the police managed to remove everyone.

Search continues for missing woman

Nov. 28-Dec. 3. In the morning hours on Sunday, the police station received a report that 41-year-old Benjamina Neuman was missing. She has light brown hair, a full figure, is 1.60 meters tall. She is mentally retarded and cannot orientate herself very well. She was wearing brown shorts and a beige shirt when she was last seen. She lives in Rincon and often goes to Slagbaai. The Dutch Caribbean Police Force continues to search and requests anyone who has seen or heard from this woman to report this immediately via 911 or 715 8000. KPCN asks to be alert for this woman throughout Bonaire and not just in Rincon.

Successful conference No Mas No More



From November 30 to December 2, the No Mas No More digital conference was organized on Bonaire with the Taskforce for Children's Rights. The conference aim: to collaborate, connect and share knowledge on how to protect children from abuse, neglect or other violence.

Almost 200 professionals in the field of children's rights and domestic violence from the six islands and the European Netherlands, digitally followed an intensive program. Themes included positive parenting, the protection code, chain partners cooperation and the community school.

Commissioner Nina den Heyer opened the conference with a personal story. The theater play "Stop the beating," by Archell Thompson and Jalisah Moniz focused on the impact of child abuse for both the victims and the perpetrators who often have been victims themselves.

During the conference, various working agreements were made to shape the collaboration to domestic violence within the Kingdom. Cooperating partners at this conference were: the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Ministry of Interior Affairs and Kingdom Relations and the Public Entity of Bonaire.

(Rijksdienstcn.com)

Meet the people in charge

by Ann Joseph

Marlon Martina



Marlon Martina, Director of Ruimte and Ontwikkeling (R & O) Photo Ann Joseph

A little over a year ago, Marlon Martina came from Curaçao to take the position as Director of the Ruimte and Ontwikkeling (“R and O”) Department. At the time, Martina was a few years shy of retirement. When he accepted the position, he thought it would be perfect as the final step in his governmental career because he considered Bonaire to be a “quiet place.”

Martina laughs at himself telling this part of his story. “I came and found something totally different. The very first day on the job, people were stopping me everywhere I went asking me questions,” said Martina.

Being new to the job, Martina is clear about his limitations.

“I don’t pretend to know everything. I rely on my staff,” said Martina.

At the current time Martina’s staff works in three specific units. One unit is referred to as the “Realization Department” with separate “sub-units” for, among other things, land affairs, infrastructure, permits to build structures and establishment permits (requirements for the built structures). A second unit is referred to as the Department of Policy and Projects. This unit is responsible for ensuring that the environment as well as the economics of the island are taken into consideration when reviewing projects. The third and last unit is referred to as the Department of Agriculture, Cattle Breeding and Fisheries. The delineation of responsibility within these units is in a state of flux as R and O is currently undergoing a significant reorganization. Given the number

of projects which are currently underway and those which are anticipated, R and O finds itself with the task of keeping up with Bonaire’s growth and keeping island residents informed. “We need to do a better job,” states Martina. “We need to better do those things that the public expects from us. We have a stake in everything going on, on this island.”

Martina believes that communication is one of the keys to doing a better job. To this end, R and O has begun to publish a monthly newsletter which is designed to let the public know what the department is doing and when certain projects are likely to be completed. He stresses that communication is not one-sided. Martina says he thinks that the public should be more willing to ask questions rather than listen to the rumor mill or simply form an opinion about something without any facts whatsoever.

With frustration, Martina implores, “Ask, don’t guess. People ask me ridiculous questions with no factual foundation.”

In this vein, Martina reiterates his willingness to have people talk directly with staff to get answers to questions. Further, Martina encourages his staff to be responsive when the public does ask questions.

Better communication is not the only item that Martina has worked on improving. The manner that roadwork is performed is another. Martina acknowledges that repeatedly digging up the same section of road to place different types of underground utilities is frustrating and not cost efficient.

“No more,” happily states Martina. “A new computerized program (GISIB) has already been ordered. The program is presently working in Rotterdam with much success.”

The GISIB program will permit various governmental departments and service providing companies, like Telbo, to coordinate their installations so that the streets will only have to be opened once.

Reorganization, communication, and better procedures are plenty to keep a department busy. Yet R and O hasn’t stopped there. The department has been involved for some time in developing a new spatial plan for Bonaire. The current plan, not amended since 2010, designates what land can be used for, what purpose and what structures are permitted in each designated area. The development of the spatial plan originally was an involved and complicated process. Its revision is equally so. Not only are there significant substantive issues, but there are also intricate procedures to follow as well.

Many of the substantive issues carry controversy. For example, people are divided as to whether a zone that has been designated as wilderness should be changed to a mixed zone which would allow residential and business interests to build. Another issue that has residents at odds involve piers into the sea. Should more be permitted? These are just two of the many issues in play. Some proposed changes are even more

complex as they require environmental impact statements that set forth very specific, elaborate criteria for review. Martina did not offer to share any of the proposed changes except one; that there will be no residential development without areas set aside for recreation.

The procedural requirements to change the plan are just as daunting. R and O must ensure that people receive notice of the proposed plan. There must be public hearings. The department has relied heavily on Facebook in the past and is likely to do so again to get the word out. There will be notices in newspapers as well. Given the enormity of the project, it is likely that the proposed plan will not be ready until early 2022 and that public hearings will not be held until mid-2022. Once hearings have been held and comments considered and reviewed, the final plan will go to the Executive Council for approval. The Executive Council has the right to send the plan back to R and O for revision. Even if the Executive Council unanimously approves and adopts the plan, it may not be the end of the process. Those who object to the final plan have the right to challenge it in court.

It’s fair to say that Mr. Martina got a whole lot more than he bargained for when, little more than a year ago, he accepted the position of Director of R and O. May his second year in the job be more predictable.

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Riding the Batista Funrace through Lagun and Washikemba

Forty-two mountain road bikers entered the Batista Service Funrace on Nov. 28.

Two routes, the Elite and Fun, challenged the cyclists to race through the rough back trails of Lagun and Washikemba.

Riders in the Fun category made five laps of 4km while the Elite did four of 7.2km. They started on the beach at Lagun to the salina. Then raced on to the landfill and took a single trail at Red Hill

to the salina at Washikembo, then across to the south and finally back along the Lagun waterfront finish.

Tom Homburg took first place in the Elite, six minutes before race sponsor Virgilio Batista. Coming in third was Jerome Spuit winning a sprint with Jonas Fischer.

Fun first place went to Rommel Rivas and Rynaldo Histo took second. Woman rider, Roos Everts, finished in third place.



Ask Kate & Jean Bonaire real estate advice



Dear Friends,

This has been a very busy year in Bonaire real estate, with many homes selling before we can even get pictures on the website. When a home, condo or land comes on the market, we immediately give our clients in that price range a heads up so that they can act quickly to own a place on Bonaire. We have sold many homes within a day or two of being listed through virtual real time showings, some with multiple offers.

If you are an Owner, this is a great time to sell. If you are a Buyer, there are some great properties coming up for sale. You'll need to move quickly once

you see them, and we are here to help you through the process.

Thank you for a wonderful year, we are honored by your trust in us. We look forward to helping you in the New Year. We wish everyone the merriest of holidays, happiness and health in 2022.

*Kate and Jean, your Bonaire team
Re/Max Bonaire*

If you have a real estate question or want to buy or sell property, email us at kate@bonairehomes.com.



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Bonaire's sky park

December Meteor Shower. In Kralendijk the Geminid Meteor Shower will peak on the night between Dec 13-14 with the possibility of sighting up to 150 meteors per hour, according to Timeanddate.com.

Timeanddate.com: The Geminids are considered to be one of the most spectacular meteor showers of the year. The shower owes its name to the constellation Gemini because the meteors seem to emerge from this constellation in the sky. Unlike most other meteor showers, the Geminids are not associated with a comet but with an asteroid: the 3200 Phaethon. The asteroid takes about 1.4 years to orbit the Sun.

The website, timeanddate.com, provides star watchers with a sky map and table to help them find the radiant (shower origin) from specific locations around the world. The table is updated daily when the Geminids are active and shows the position of the radiant in the sky for the upcoming night.

Their advice to sky watchers:

- Find a secluded viewing spot, away from city lights. Your eyes may take 15 to 20 minutes to get used to the dark.
- Once you have found your viewing spot, lie down on the ground and look up in the direction of the radiant. The table will give you the azimuth (direction, based on true north) and altitude (height in degrees over horizon).

| Time | Azimuth/Direction | Altitude |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Mon 8:00 pm | 56°↗ | 1.1° |
| Mon 9:00 pm | 59°↗ | 13.1° |
| Mon 10:00 pm | 59°↗ | 25.6° |
| Mon 11:00 pm | 57°↗ | 38.1° |
| Tue 12:00 midnight | 52°↗ | 50.1° |
| Tue 1:00 am | 41°↗ | 60.9° |
| Tue 2:00 am | 16°↗ | 68.1° |
| Tue 3:00 am | 342°↖ | 68.0° |
| Tue 4:00 am | 319°↖ | 60.5° |
| Tue 5:00 am | 307°↖ | 49.7° |
| Tue 6:00 am | 303°↖ | 37.7° |
| Tue 7:00 am | 301°↖ | 25.2° |

For the complete article go to: <https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/meteor-shower/geminids.html>

Happy yule solstice. Each year, twice a year, there is a solstice where the sun seems to stop and head back across the sky. In Latin "sol" means sun, and "stice" means to stand still. The solstice, Tuesday, December 21st, will be the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and the longest day in the Southern Hemisphere.

Trace Dominguez of Stargazersonline tells us that historically the solstice marked the beginning of the Northern European pagan festival of Yule. During the 12-day festival, Yule logs were burned to keep the light going while the sun was gone. Yule 2021 will begin on Tuesday, December 21 and end on Saturday, January 1, 2022

Bonaire's athletes bring back honors



Amado Vrieswijk is congratulated on his return to Bonaire for winning PWA World Tour Windsurfing World Champion Freestyle 2021

Bonaire World Windsurf Champions.

In November three local windsurfers, Amado Vrieswijk, Taty Frans and Youp Schmit represented Bonaire in Europe at the SOMWR 10 x Marignane PWA Grand Slam. This ground-breaking multi-discipline event brought PWA athletes to the shores of Southern France. All three Bonaireans brought home prizes and ranked in the top 10:

Amado Vrieswijk: PWA World Tour Windsurfing World Champion Freestyle 2021

Youp Schmit: 5th place PWA World Tour & winner of the Tow-in Expression Session

Taty Frans: 9th place PWA World Tour Freestyle.

Delfins Swimming Club returns with gold

The Bonairean swimming club, Delfins Swimming Club, participated in a swimming tournament on Curaçao over the weekend, competing with teams from Curaçao, Panama, Aruba and Sint Maarten. The team from Bonaire returned home with three gold, two silver and three bronze medals. Swimming coach Marylou Felida has announced that Delfins has managed to break her own swimming record.



Creating optimal health

by Irene da Cunda Costa

Looking at a small history of human nutrition (2).



From the Agricultural Revolution to the Present

In the previous issue I wrote about the changes in diets from our ancestors until the agricultural revolution. Those changes are inferred through the changes observed in the found skulls.

The industrial age and the agricultural trade increasingly distanced the diet of modern humans from that of the Paleolithic man.

When the roller mill replaced the stone mill, the content of fibers, minerals and vitamins in wheat flour was reduced. When cooking with vegetable oils became popular, people increased the amount of omega 6 acids in their diet in relation to omega 3. This increase generated an imbalance. When people began feeding cattle on grains, favoring growth through a sedentary lifestyle of the animal, the omega 6/3 imbalance was also exacerbated. Many people today choose to supplement their diet with omega 3 pills when they could simply reestablish the balance by reducing their intake of omega 6.

Food processing, defined as the act of performing a series of mechanical or chemical operations on food in order to change or preserve it, has grown more and more common. Food processing aims:

- to prolong shelf life and improve certain organoleptic qualities (flavor, color, texture),
- to guarantee food safety and hygiene, and
- to increase nutritional value when the processing has deteriorated it (like enriching flour with niacin or iron).

In the early 1900s, most products were consumed fresh, some were lightly processed for consumption and others were sold as ingredients. There was not much packaging or labeling. Wholesale warehouses at the time sold mostly local products in bulk.

At the end of the last century the storage of the products was prolonged as well as the transport. This reduced the access of fresh products to the final consumers. Large supermarkets bought directly from producers and produced their own products.

The changes in the food industry introduced changes in the urban diet and in the health of the population. At the beginning of the last century, signs of malnutrition appeared in the working classes and poor hygiene conditions caused infectious diseases to increase. By introducing the enrichment of flour and methods of milk pasteurization and animal products preservation, infectious diseases fell back.

At present, in affluent nations, consumers demand

products that are easy to consume, but they are ultra-processed, attractive to the eye and palate and have a long shelf life. This has led to the prevalence of a new group of diseases called diseases of the countries of affluence. They are type 2 diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease and cancer.

Until ten years ago the nutritional pyramid approved by most of the health entities in the world favored the consumption of grains and cereals at its base. It proposed eating between six and 11 servings of cereals per day against five to nine of fruits and vegetables. In 2005 the pyramid was modified. Now it suggests that 50% of what occupies the plate are fruits and vegetables. Only 25% should be grains and cereals, of which at least half should be whole grains. The remaining 25% is made up of proteins and dairy is on the side. This recommendation is closer to the Paleolithic diet than the previous pyramid.

This is a summary of how the human being has been modifying his eating habits. If we look to the future we see that the trend is to increase food processing, moving more and more away from raw materials and natural products. Is this good or bad? Experience indicates that the consequences of dietary changes are evident only 20, 30 or 50 years later.

Irene is passionate about health, neurosciences and personal growth. Originally from Uruguay, she is an Integrative Psychotherapist (PNIE), Life Coach (ICF), Master in Nutrition(IUSC) and Yoga Instructor.



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Cruise ships did not strip shelves, Harbor Master says

Empty shelves are becoming more common in the stores on the island. Some people have blamed the return of the cruise ships. They say that cruise ships tied to the docks block the unloading of container ships. Harbor master Günter Flannegin, however, denies that the many cruise ships are the cause of shortages of imported goods. He says that following the refurbishment of the 'middle pier', the roll-on, roll-off ships used for inter-island container transport have ready access to the docks. He also says the ships arriving with the sand and cement that supply the island's building boom unload at night, after the cruise ships have left. Everyone is staying in close and flexible consultation. *DMR (Bonaire.nu)*

The Nature Plan delayed by OLB, Minister says

The Nature and Environmental Policy Plan for the Caribbean Netherlands, adopted last year, is being only partially implemented. The matter came up in Parliament when Member of Parliament Tjeerd de Groot (D66) asked Minister Carola Schouten (Agriculture, Livestock and Food Quality) about the delays. The minister replied that although the overall Nature Plan has been agreed to, various parts of it cannot become active until the relevant implementation agendas have been approved. The minister said the implementation agendas have been prepared but will not be in force until they are approved by the Island Council. *DMR (Dossier Koninkrijksrelaties)*

Netherlands minimum wage to increase January 1

Despite reluctance in the Cabinet, a large parliamentary majority voted to increase the minimum wage by 10%, effective January 1. The statutory minimum wage not only determines the wages employees are paid, it sets the benchmark (70% of minimum wage) that determines the amount people receive in social assistance.

The increase in benefits will cost the government 1.79 million euros in 2022. The largest part (1.44 million) goes to the AOV (old age pensions); 270,000 euros is intended for social assistance; and 80,000 euros for the AWW (basic income for surviving widows, widowers, and orphans). The increase in the minimum wage itself will be borne by the employers.

State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment Dennis Wiersma is reluctant to increase social assistance in the Caribbean Netherlands to 70% of the minimum wage. He believes that would remove the incentive to seek employment. He also points out that people in the islands already receive special benefits that can bring them to 70% of the statutory minimum wage, or even more.

The House will soon vote on an amendment submitted by Laura Bromet (GroenLinks) and Attje Kuiken (PvdA) to calculate social assistance in the Caribbean Netherlands the same as in the rest of the Netherlands. *DMR (Dossier Koninkrijksrelaties)*

Inspectors praise Bonaire's MBO

A group from the Education Inspectorate visited the various units of the SGB in mid November to look at the quality of education, the school climate, and student care, and other things.

According to SGB, the Inspectorate showed themselves delighted with the developments within the vocational education program (MBO). The Inspectorate

complimented the entire team praised them for creating a fully-fledged MBO with a lot of entrepreneurship: "We see a team that is looking forward to it. Lecturers feel part of a professional whole and have an eye for the students. There is calm and positive energy in the classroom."

During the visit, the inspectors met with management, the teaching team, and students. They also attended classes. They said they saw involvement, safety and satisfaction among students: "a big difference from a few years ago." The Education Inspectorate determined that MBO Bonaire meets all the quality requirements to join the ranks of MBO schools in the Netherlands.

After the visit, Liset de Keijzer, unit director MBO Bonaire, addressed the entire team: "I am very pleased that the Inspectorate compliments us on the developments we are going through. Every day I see how hard people work to train students for the business community on Bonaire. We are growing and thriving." *DMR*

Mosquito season warning is issued

The rainy season has multiplied the *Aedes aegypti* (yellow fever mosquito) population and increased people's risk of contracting Dengue, Chikungunya and Zika. The Public Health Department reports that there are currently no signs of any of these serious diseases circulating on Bonaire. But people should take precautions anyway.

Everyone should remove or cover all containers and other objects where mosquitoes could breed. The mosquito lays its eggs in still water, in places such as plastic containers, car tires, bottles, cans and buckets that hold rainwater.

People should wear protective clothing, use a strong mosquito repellent (such as DEET), and keep their houses free of mosquitoes by using screens and possibly by spraying indoors. The mosquito that spreads these diseases is active during the day and especially in the early morning and in the afternoon.

People can ignore the male mosquitoes. They need be concerned only if they are bitten by a female mosquito.

Should you need advice or help with managing your cisterns or barrels, please contact the Vector Control Section at 715-5324. *DMR*

Those 60 and over can now get third covid vaccination

People aged 60 or older are now eligible for the covid booster shot. They must make an appointment. When they arrive at the sports center they will find two separate lineups have been designated, one for the over 60s and one for those who have come for the first or second vaccination without an appointment. Extra tents and chairs have been placed outside for those waiting, and additional staff have been assigned to guide people through the process. An appointment for the booster shot can be made by calling 0800 0900 during office hours. *DMR*

OLB appeals for good manners in Malecon dispute

The short version: A resident complained to the OLB that a peddler who sold food on the Malecon (the sea boulevard) was causing a nuisance. The Supervision & Enforcement Department investigated and found the peddler, who had a permit, DID begin operating in the morning earlier than his permit allowed and was occupying a permanent location on public land without paying the required fee. The peddler himself then proposed

to take up a permanent position in front of the SKAL building. The Spatial Planning & Development Department (R&D) approved the proposal; the Legal Affairs Department issued the new permit; the pedlar relocated promptly.

Unfortunately a few people had taken offense. They began honking their horns when passing the home of the person who complained. The OLB issued a statement. It said the situation had been handled promptly and to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. The OLB also pointed out that Bonaire is enriched by diverse population groups. We should all get along together and treat each other with respect. *DMR*

City in the Netherlands to help Bonaire digitize

The municipality of Krimpen aan den IJssel has agreed to help Bonaire create a digital Customer Contact Center as the OLB's massive digitalization program continues. Already the public can make appointments, apply for many permits, and access many government forms and services at the website created by the Post & Archive, ICT and communication departments. *DMR*

Saba and Statia Ferry service launched

The promised Makana ferry service between Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten was inaugurated on November 28. Commissioners from the Public Entities St. Eustatius and Saba and ferry operator Blues and Blues signed the Public Service Obligation (PSO) that created the new ferry service, which will greatly increase the connectivity between the islands. The vessel that being used was tied to the dock nearby.

In related news: New Seafarers' Regulations governing commercial vessels will take effect in the BES Islands on January 1, 2022. followed by a three-year transition period. Beginning January 2025, ships will be required to have at least one person on board who has a Boat Master Grade 3 license. *DMR (BES Reporter, Bonaire.nu)*

Student financing office to open temporarily this month

Students (and their parents) who want to study in the Netherlands or have studied there will be able to get information about student financing and school costs at a temporary office that DUO will open on Bonaire in mid-December. DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, aka The Education Executive Agency) implements the laws and regulations pertaining to the funding of educational institutions, the provision of student financing and school costs.

The office will be located in the Belastingdienst (Tax office) building at Kaya L.D. Gerharts 12. People can stop by without an appointment to ask all their questions about Dutch student finance and the repayment of their student debt. Former students with payment arrears can discuss a tailor-made payment arrangement. DUO can take someone's income into account when calculating the monthly amount to be paid back.

The former student must apply for the reduction in person.. *DMR*

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Reef Glimpses

by Dee Scarr

It's Frogfish Time!

For one reason or another, I haven't seen many frogfish over the past few years. The last one I found was months ago, when I spotted a piece of silty cardboard on the reef. As I slid the cardboard out from under the gunk, I glimpsed a small gray frogfish -- barely as long as my little finger -- as it relocated.

And then, yesterday, before I even reached the reef slope, I saw a frogfish.

Frogfish aren't exactly common on Bonaire, although, of course, their amazing mimicry suggests there are more of them than we see. The froggies that we do see are most likely to be longlure frogfish (*Antennarius multiocellatus*). Most female frogfish grow larger than the males; this one, at over 4" (10 cm), was probably female. She was as glorious a color as any frogfish I've ever seen, a chartreuse, a sort of neon yellow mixed with a little neon green, almost marbled. Her bright color, the relatively shallow depth, and her position on a sponge with many short, widely-spaced tubes, all combined to make her REALLY STAND OUT! One minute I was looking around, the next minute my focus was grabbed, captured, fixated on this glorious spot of color. Like a sunset. I actually focused on the amazing color first, then realized it was a frogfish. She fulfills the sunset name "Green Flash" (but not the superhero name relating to speed!); we'll call her "Flash".

I looked carefully around Flash, but couldn't find any other frogfish. As a lady frogfish's eggs develop, she emits a scent that attracts gentlemen frogfish. Up to a few days before spawning, there will often be more than one hopeful suitor in the neighborhood. Then, one evening, the two fish ascend in the water column.



"This pink frogfish resided beneath the Fredericksted Pier in the USVI. The color photo was taken with strobe light I softened with white fabric. The black and white copy substitutes for taking away artificial light."

The noticeably-swollen female, sometimes helped by the male, releases an egg raft; he deposits sperm on the eggs, and the parent fish return to the bottom. Once the egg raft is fertilized, the attraction between the sexes disappears and each fish moves on, independent of the other.

Flash wasn't swollen, so maybe that's why she was alone.

As I continued my dive, I fanned silt from the sponges. (You know about dusting sponges, right? Sponge cells

pump water through the colony's internal canals to distribute oxygen and food. Silt stifles water movement into the canals, so fanning the silt away -- without touching the sponge, of course! -- is very helpful to the sponge.)

Dusting sponges makes me feel good, and occasionally results in a great reward. As I dusted one surprisingly silty tube sponge colony, I suddenly saw a frogfish shifting position in the unexpected current! She had been shown to me on

other dives and I was keeping an eye out for her but had not seen her. In fact, even after she repositioned, I couldn't see her with a casual glance. She's mostly yellow, a little larger than Flash but not so ... flashy. Two froggies on one dive -- yay!

Because of their colors, their lumpy-dumpy shape, their lack of obvious gill flaps, and the way they rest on the bottom, frogfish make fascinating and easy photo subjects.

But unlike the sponges they mimic, frogfish have eyes, and, like most fish they don't have eyelids. They can't blink. They can't close their eyes. And they have no instincts relating to flashes of light, because until people came along flashes of light did not exist underwater. Frogfish and seahorses are among the most vulnerable fish to being injured or even blinded by our lights.

How can we love these critters without loving them to death?

The short answer: Limit artificial light photos, especially closeups, to two or three. If the critter moves, especially if it moves away from you, back away immediately!

Creatures are rarely disturbed by the taking of available light photos, as long as the divers aren't too close. Available light photos have another advantage, too: they give you an opportunity to show non-diving friends just how brilliant you were, to find a creature so well camouflaged!

Dee has been guiding divers on Bonaire since 1982. She's written about her undersea experiences in her books, *Touch the Sea*, *The Gentle Sea*, and *Coral's Reef* (for children); in *Dive Training Magazine* from 1990 to 2000, with "Coral Glimpses" in the *Bonaire Reporter*; and now with "Reef Glimpses." The *Bonaire Reporter* is delighted to bring "Reef Glimpses" to you free of charge. Dee's books are available for purchase at the Carib Inn on Bonaire or through touchthesea.com.



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The REEF members L-R after their last snorkel survey on Bari Reef L-R: Andrew Ibarra, Summer Huber, Sierra Barkdoll, Maddie Brownfield, and David Ehlert

Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) returned to Bonaire Nov. 22 -28 to count fish. The group doesn’t actually count the fish but instead surveys all the different species from the tiniest to the largest. All that information goes into one of the largest fish databases worldwide. REEF has over 400 active surveyors with a data base of 78k.

This REEF group was extra special as the eight surveyors were REEF staff or interns who used their vacation time to visit Bonaire. The team was headed up by David Ehlert, campus coordinator of REEF Key Largo.

Since 1994 REEF has journeyed to Bonaire 12 times to add ‘our fish’ to their database that is composed of over 200,000 surveys from the Caribbean alone.

Bonaire has held the record for being the most diverse in species since the 90’s in the Caribbean. According to REEF’s records, Bonaire’s dive site ‘Something Special’ and the Blue Heron Bridge in West Palm Beach, FL. jump back and forth as to which leads the species diversity count.

On this ‘unofficial’ survey trip the REEF staff members swam 17 different sites from Willemstoren Lighthouse to NuKove performing over 200 surveys. The majority of surveys were done at Sand Dollar’s Bari Reef, which for many years led as having the most species.

David said, “We were built for the pandemic. We had a huge online presence with online field trips, Lionfish class, Grouper Moon project and a virtual 5k where



Two hamlet mating captured on Bari Reef by REEF staff member Stacey Henderson

Ramsar site, continued from page 1

requirements. The Court also rejected the Executive Council’s argument of equality; that the permit for the ecolodge should be granted because there were other structures which had been built in the area.

Bonaire has spent considerable effort in the past to ensure that the Sorobon Ramsar site is protected. Bonaire’s 2010 Spatial Plan is another enforceable document that acknowledges the area as a Ramsar site and limits the type of structures which can be erected there.

If the Executive Council approves the permit application at issue, the structure that will be built would be the second private home in the area. There is one private home in the area already. The existing structure is 320 sq m (3444 sq. ft.) several meters high and is clearly “permanent.” There are electrical lines going to this house as well. A diagram of the area suggests that electrical lines have been placed for all six parcels that are

situated on the larger plot. It is unknown if an EIS was submitted when the electrical lines went in or when the existing house was built.

What action the Executive Council will take on the permit application at issue is anyone’s guess. In any event, the applicant for the permit must provide a well developed environmental impact statement before the Government can act on the permit application at issue. By Ann Joseph.

Ref: Decision of September 11, 2007 on the appeal of the Executive Council of the Island Territory of Bonaire against the decision of the Governor of the Netherlands Antilles of January 3, 2007 annulling the decisions of the Executive Council of June 14, 2006 (26012797) granting planning permission to Crown Court Estates NV for the establishment of a so-called ecological resort on the aforementioned plot. “

teams run, walk, bike, swim and raise money for REEF.” And, of course, REEFran volunteer fish surveys where members sent in their survey information. One such person was a local REEF member since 2002, Cassandra Neal. She even joined the group on a few surveys and pointed out a few fish. Cassandra was recently acknowledged for doing 374 surveys in 2020 – more than anyone else. In addition, Cassandra is a Golden Hamlet award winner with 1000 surveys but she has now topped that number to 1400.

The REEF website features all types of learning resources: “fishinars”, Jeopardy fish ID, Zoom classes, a book club, how to survey tips and information about upcoming trips and events.

For 2022, REEF has scheduled 15 international trips including the Pacific, Red Sea, Cuba, Palau and, yes, Bonaire.

David said, “ We take care of the air and accommodations. We encourage surveys but it isn’t mandatory. Hey, it’s your vacation.”

The group was in the water snorkeling up to the last possible minute with survey clipboards in their hands prior to catching their plane back to the U.S.

“It was incredible. We had heard so much about it and had to see it. I loved Bonaire and I’ll be back for sure,” said David.

REEF’s marine conservation and citizen science programs currently operate in the coastal areas of North and Central America, the Caribbean, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, Hawaii, the South and Indo-west Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Red Sea.

For more information about REEF and see all the great programs offered go to <https://www.reef.org/>

The REEF team:

- **Amy Lee** (REEF Engagement and Communications Manager)
- **Stacey Henderson** (REEF Program Services Coordinator)
- **David Ehlert** (REEF Campus Coordinator)
- **Madalyn “Moose” Mussey** (REEF Education and Outreach Program Manager)
- **Andrew Ibarra** (NOAA Marine Stewardship and Monitoring Specialist)
- **Maddie Brownfield** (REEF Education and Outreach Lead Intern)
- **Summer Huber** (REEF Invasive Species Program Lead Intern)
- **Sierra Barkdoll** (REEF Volunteer Fish Survey Project Lead Intern)



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Parrots and People!

by Rayshantaly Coffie

It's December already, almost end of the year!

The Echo team wants to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported our efforts.

Beginning with our volunteers and interns, thank you for being there for Echo Parrots and People when we needed an extra hand. Thank you to the kind visitors who joined a tour to hear about Echo and what we do to help save the Yellow shouldered Amazon parrots. Lastly, we want to thank everyone who supported us, especially our donors for choosing this foundation.

It means a lot to us that more and more people are interested in Habitat Restoration for the well-being of our parrots and people. We appreciate all of you.

Habitat Restoration

The team monitoring reforestation efforts is now complete with a new intern, Bram, a student from Wageningen University of the Netherlands.

For his internship, Bram will take samples, measure leaves, stems and spine traits from Echo plots. In addition, he is assigned to measure growth and survival in the Echo exclusion areas in the Washington Slagbaai National Park.

This study will contribute to the general knowledge of functional traits in the dry tropics, as well as help with getting a better understanding of which traits and species are successful and why. Thusly, we will be better able to predict which species are likely to do well in future plantings.

Revealed from the field

The rest of the team has been monitoring the reforestation exclusion areas for some months now. Here is the field summary:

At Seru Largu, 14% of the originally tagged trees were not found. They may be hidden very well or they may have died and their loose tags not found. Of all the originally planted trees, 1% were found dead and 14% of the tags were found loose on the ground. Of all originally planted trees, 66% have survived.

Th Seru Largu enclosure had a high sur-



vival rate and is doing well!

We found 516 tags of the original 599. Of the tagged trees, 76% were alive and well. Only 2% of tags were found on dead trees. The trees that did not make it lost

their struggle to compete with creepers, over-exposure to sun and drought. The other 22% of tags were found as loose tags in the field. A loose tag can mean that the tree has died and only the tags are left. It can also mean that the tag was not secured properly and therefore lost. In Seru Largu the tags were well tied so there is a good chance that the missing tags are from dead trees.

Morotin. What stands out at Morotin is that 52% of the tags weren't found. Also about half of the originally planted trees were not found. In this enclosure, however, those statistics don't mean that Morotin has been unsuccessful. The enclosure is so overgrown. Before we outplanted trees in Morotin, it was full of cactus. Now there is a wide biodiversity, both due to Echo's work and natural rejuvenation of local trees and bushes, like the shimaruku. The abundance of vegetation makes it hard to find the tagged trees. It seems unlikely that all the unfound trees are dead.

About half of the found tags were on trees that are alive, with 40% lying loose on the ground and 12% on dead trees. The survival number is not bad, but there is a good chance that it is even better if we had found all the tags.

How Advanced Are You?

Consider the lives of human beings throughout the ages. Until relatively modern times, there were many fewer people and much less human garbage. Any items that were discarded were organic and quickly degraded into the environment.

Then came human ability to work metals and make glass, and items lasted longer both before and after they were discarded. And then came plastic...

We saw a micro version of this in the 1990's, when we took three liveaboard trips to Papua New Guinea. On each trip we spent at least a day and night moored in a small protected bay not far from the coral reefs; the calm waters and nearby reefs also made this area the perfect site for a small village.

A surprising variety of creatures made their homes in the bay; the bottom was mostly sand and silt, with an occasional

tree trunk, one canoe damaged beyond repair, and a few woven baskets, also not worth repairing. We took photos of the unusual residents, charmingly posed with woven or even unwoven palm fronds or bits of wood. That was our first visit.

On the next visit we found additional types of debris, mostly food cans too rusted to be useful. By the third visit, we were finding broken glass and rotting cloth in addition to the rusted cans.

People had lived in that village and thrown their trash into that bay for generations, but only in the last few years have they had non-biodegradable trash, and they didn't have the education to know the difference. (The liveaboard is working to change this.)

In most cases, civilized people don't discard trash into the environment, but the history of cigarettes has one similarity to that of the little PNG bay: when people first began smoking cigarettes and cigars, discarding them into the environment

didn't cause any significant damage. Then filters were added to cigarettes. Then manufacturers began making the filters out of plastic. Although the paper and the leftover tobacco in a cigarette degrades in weeks, it takes around fifteen years for the filter to degrade -- and the entire time, the filter leaches poison into the environment.

At least poison isn't an issue with balloons, although the result is the same: the creatures who ingest balloons are likely to die. In more than 1700 dead sea birds examined in Tasmania, soft plastics -- primarily balloons -- made up 5% of the debris the birds ingested, but caused 40% of the deaths. If my math is right, soft plastic was eight times more likely to kill.

Birds aren't the only victims of plastic. Sea turtles are seen often enough on Bonaire so that it's easy for us to forget that they are endangered worldwide. One of the reasons they're endangered is from ingesting balloons and other soft plastic, which is dangerous and often fatal to

marine turtles. That's bad enough, but it turns out that sea turtles actually prefer balloons, something biologists showed almost a decade ago!

A final argument (for now) against balloon releases: eventually the balloons descend, and wherever they land, they're trash. Balloons in a tree or on someone's roof are just as unsightly as balloons in the sea, and probably just as dangerous -- we don't have enough information to know. Maybe balloon releases will become extinct and balloon dangers to terrestrial animals will never be an issue. It could happen.

It could happen if we advance from a PNG villager perspective to that of an educated person. Those who are using as little plastic as possible, reusing and recycling everything possible, and disposing of the rest appropriately -- and spreading the word to others -- are pretty far along. Well done! *Dee Scarr*



A Garden? Just Do It!

by Angliet, Nature Lover

Experiments with Cartons & Marjoram

Sometimes gardeners have cool stories. One of the latest stories came from a friend who experiments a lot in gardening.

He grows big plantains, huge pumpkins, nice green vegetables and tasty pappayas. So I asked him how he gets these results. He told me, first he digs big holes and fills the holes with a lot of cartons. Yes, you read that right; carton boxes torn in pieces which he puts in the hole. Next he adds water to soak the cartons. Then he adds a mix of black dirt, compost and manure and adds the seeds. The wet cartons keep the hole moist and cold so it is a perfect situation for the young plants to grow strong,

vital and fast growing. In fact the carton functions as a water reservoir of which the plants can make use. To prevent roaches getting in the cartons, put some neem tree leaves on top. Maybe you can also try this idea out and get all those goodies too.

What I tried out is the herb Marjoram (*origanum majorana*). You can get this here easily. I was very happy with acquiring marjoram for my herb collection. It grew very fast and now it's a nice big herb plant in a pot. I often make a cup of tea with it and it has a strong and powerful smell. Marjoram is a cold sensitive perennial herb or undershrub with sweet pine and citrus flavors.



At Christmas it is used a lot for seasoning soups, stews, salads dressings, wild poultry, sauces, herbal teas, cheese and liquors. It's cultivated for its aromatic

leaves, green or dry, and is used for culinary purposes especially in the Middle East and Mediterranean.

Tea from marjoram helps with headaches, calms the nerves and helps against the cold. It fights virus and stimulates blood circulation.

The oil of this plant is a strong antioxidant which is also used in perfumes and cosmetics.

With the recent daily showers it grows so well and spreads a nice herbal smell in the area where it grows close to my kitchen. I tried a recipe for Provencal beef strip with this herb and it turned out very well. It's easy to make - google it.

So if anyone offers you a plant of marjoram don't deny it. Add it to your garden and start to enjoy all the goodies from this herb in your kitchen. Especially with Christmas. Just do it

Activities, Events & Meetings



Free public presentations
Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire (STCB). Free public presentations are held at Yellow Submarine, every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, at 8pm. For now, STCB asks people to register by email (stcb@bonairturtles.org) because of the covid regulations.

Open meeting Alcoholics Anonymous Every Thursday, 7 - 8 pm. International Bible Church Kaya Papago 104 in Hato (Behind Bon Bida Spa and Gym and Bon Bida apartments) All welcome, regardless of primary addition or no addition at all.

Beach Tennis Bonaire can now be found at its new location, the Kaminda Djabou (direct left from Kaya Neerlandia --behind Budget Marine). It is open daily until 10 pm. People can play for free or register for training and tournaments for a fee.

Primary school football games canceled Given the increase in the number of Covid-19 infections and the fact that schools are in mandatory quarantine, the Indebon has decided to cancel primary school competitions until next year.

Clean with Clean Coast Bonaire



Sunday, December 12th - Clean Up Survey at Te Amo Beach 8am - 10am

We'll be collecting data and debris from 8-10am on Sunday, December 12th at Te Amo Beach. Don't forget your sun protection! We'll provide homemade cookies and drinking water (please bring your own re-usable bottle and may-be a friend or two).

Remember to check Facebook for the

most up to date info if anything needs to change or if we have to rain check.

Clean up survey @ Piedra Pretu At last month's clean up survey at Piedra Pretu we collected 4,337 items of marine litter. This included 3,304 pieces of plastic, 27 straws, 10 pieces of plastic cutlery, 130 plastic bottle caps, 5 toys and much more. Nice work everybody!

What's Happening

Bonaire Library: Mon. 12-5; Tues. to Thurs. 8-5; Fri. 8-4:30; Sat. 8-12. With a subscription from the library, members can also find books online outside opening hours and request information. More than 20,000 Dutch and English novels and informative books can be found on www.onlinebibliotheek.nl

Mangazina di Rei in Rincon: Tuesday - Friday 9-4

Washington Slagbaai: Wed-Sun. 8-5 (entry up to 1 pm)

STINAPA headquarters: Mon-Fri 8-2. +599 717 8444. +599 777 8444.

Animal Shelter: Open fully. Mon-Fri 10-1; 2-3:30. Sat. 10-2:30. phone/whatsapp: 7014989 or 7174989. Email: animalshelterbonaire@gmail.com

Pakus di Pruga (Shelter flea market. Central Kralendijk): Saturdays from 8 - 4. Masks required.

| | |
|--|--|
| Sunday December 12 | Clean Coast Bonaire. 8-10 am Te Amo Beach. Collect marine litter & data by donating your time working as a citizen scientist. |
| Sunday December 19 | CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19 restrictions. Christmas Book Fair and Flea Market. Animal Shelter Bonaire.. |
| Saturday the 18th Thursday the 23th | Christmas shopping nights at Dushi shoes and Dushi sportswear. Open until 9pm |
| Saturday December 25 | Christmas Day. Public Holiday. Government office and businesses are closed |
| Sunday December 26 | Boxing Day. Public Holiday. Government office and businesses are closed |

The road to Seru Largu closed for repairs.

Those who exercise at the popular viewpoint of Seru Largu will be pleased to know that the access road is being repaired. The repairs to the road's surface are expected to take a week.

Tentative cruise ship schedule from TCB & Harbour Office

| DAY & DATE:MM/DD | CRUISESHIP | TIME | PIER | CAPACITY | & LINE |
|------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Friday | 12-10 | Mein Schiff 2 | 0700-1900 | S.pier | 2894 TUI |
| Saturday | 12-11 | World Voyager | 0800-2200 | S.pier | 200 Nicko |
| Monday | 12-13 | AidaPerla | 0800-1800 | S.pier | 3286 Aida Cruises |
| Wednesday | 12-15 | Aida Sol | 0700- 2100 | N.pier | 2174 Aida Cruises |
| Wednesday | 12-15 | MS Azura | 0600-1800 | S.pier | 3597 Carnival |
| Thursday | 12-16 | Aida Luna | 0700- 1800 | N.pier | 3286 Aida Cruises |
| Friday | 12-17 | Rotterdam | 0800-2300 | N.pier | 1396 HAL |
| Tuesday | 12-21 | Celebrity Silhouette | 0700-1500 | S.pier | 2886 CEL |
| Wednesday | 12-22 | Carnival Freedom | 0900-2300 | N.pier | 2980 Carnival |
| Wednesday | 12-22 | Marella Discovery | 1300-2000 | S.pier | 1830 Marella |
| Thursday | 12-23 | Nieuw Amsterdam | 0800-2300 | N.pier | 2106 HAL |
| Friday | 12-24 | Enchanted Princess | 0700-1800 | S.pier | 3668 PCL |
| Friday | 12-24 | Seabourn Odyssey | 0800-1800 | N.pier | 450 Seabourn |
| Saturday | 12-25 | AidaPerla | 0800-1800 | S.pier | 3286 Aida Cruises |
| Saturday | 12-25 | Seven Seas Explorer | 0700- 1400 | N.pier | 750 Norwegian |
| Sunday | 12-26 | Regal Princess | 1200-2000 | N.pier | 3560 PCL |
| Monday | 12-27 | Costa Deliziosa | 0800- 1800 | S.pier | 2826 Aida Cruises |
| Monday | 12-27 | MS Riviera | 0800-1900 | N.pier | 1250 Oceania |
| Tuesday | 12-28 | Explorer of the Seas | 0800-1700 | S.pier | 3114 RCCL |
| Wednesday | 12-29 | Celebrity Silhouette | 0700-2200 | S.pier | 2886 CEL |
| Thursday | 12-30 | Mein Schiff 1 | 0730-1600 | S.pier | TUI |
| Friday | 12-31 | Norwegian Getaway | 0700-1900 | S.pier | 3961 Norwegian |

Direct flights to Bonaire

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| KLM -Amsterdam | Current to Dec. 15, 2021: Daily flights Dec. 15, 2021 to Jan. 14, 2022: Daily with 1 extra flight Mon. Wed. Fri. Dec. 26, 2021 extra flight Sunday |
| TUI -Amsterdam | Current: 4 weekly flights; Tues. Wed. Thurs. Sat. |
| Delta - Atlanta | Nov. 24 to Dec. 15, 2021: 2 weekly flights: Wed. & Sat. Dec. 18, 2021 to Jan. 4, 2022: Daily flights except Tuesday Jan. 4 to April 9, 2022: 4 weekly flights: Mon. Wed Fri. |
| American -Miami | Nov.8. to Dec 15, 2021: 3 weekly flights: Mon. Wed. Sat.. Dec 16, 2021 to Jan 3, 2022: Daily flights |
| United - Houston, & Newark | Beginning Nov. 6, 2021 Saturday flights from both Houston and Newark. Arriving at 1:30 pm and 5:30 pm. Return flight on Sunday |

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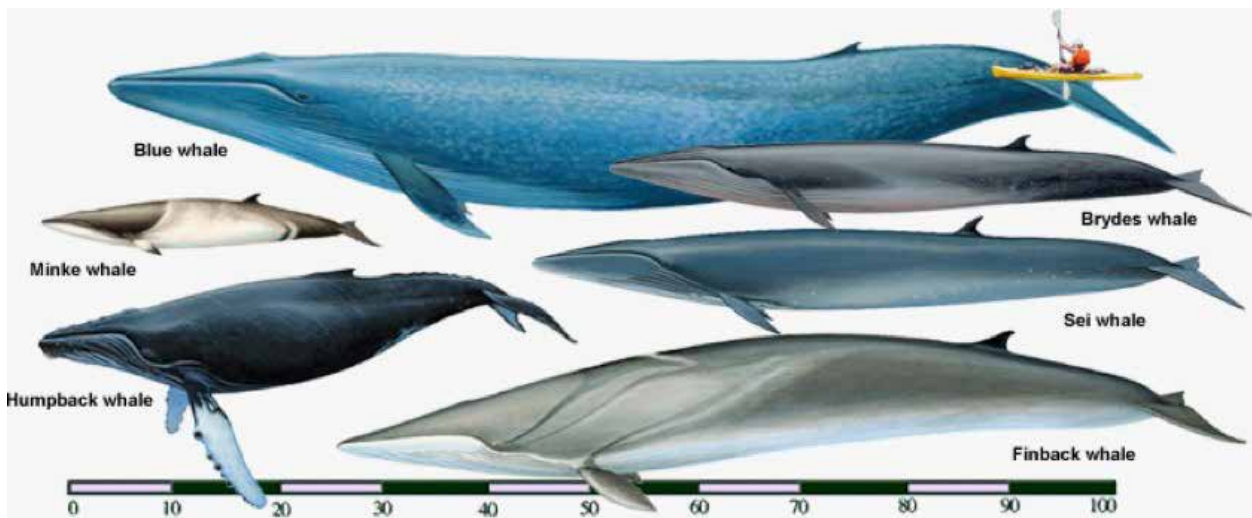


Did You Know? ... that Bryde's whales were swimming past Bonaire last week?

It's hard to believe in our busy, cluttered, built-up world that as soon as you stick your head underwater or go out on a boat, you are entering the marine wilderness and may see the most amazing creatures! Last week, some good friends of mine were kind enough to share a very rare sighting of whales just off the east coast. I grabbed my binoculars and camera and off I went. Sure enough, a few hundred meters offshore there were several writhing, frothing groups of bait-balls and spouts!!! And going through my mind was the shout from the classic Moby Dick novel, "There she blows!!!".

There were at least two groups of whales feeding non-stop all afternoon, following the schools of small fish. It was an amazing sight to see and I left the jagged shoreline with a warm, fuzzy feeling because, even though there are almost 8 billion humans on this Earth building, clearing, cutting and dumping, there are still magnificent creatures living in the wild doing what nature intended for them to do.

Bryde's whales (pronounced 'Broo-dess') are baleen whales, meaning they filter the water and feed mostly on planktonic creatures and schools of small fish. They are the only baleen whales to spend their entire lives in tropical and subtropical waters. And because they are baleen whales, they have two blowholes next to each other, instead of one blowhole, a characteristic of toothed-whales. So, whales hold their breath when they dive and then blow very forcefully when they reach the surface so they can quickly take another breath. The average human sneeze travels about 160 km/hr. A whale's blow travels three times that! What's really fascinating is that some people can identify a whale from the shape of its blow! The Bryde's blow is columnar or bushy and goes straight up about 3 to 4 meters.



If you were in Bonaire in January of 2000, you may have seen the 12 m long Bryde's whale that was impaled on the Nieuw Amsterdam's bow as the cruise ship motored into port. The captain didn't even know that they had rammed into the whale sometime during the night. Whether the whale died from the impact or was already dead was unknown. You can view the skeleton of that unfortunate whale at the entrance of Washington Slagbaai Park, thanks to the initiative of Jay Haviser and the Bonai Youth Group.

If you are lucky enough to see whales while out on a boat, please follow the whale watching guidelines: Within 300 meters of the whales, do not wait in front or approach from behind. Only motor without a wake parallel to the whales and do not get closer than 300 meters if there are young or 100 meters if there are only adults.

Happy Whale Spotting!!! If you see whales or dolphins, please report your sightings at Observation.org.

Written by STINAPA Biologist Caren Eckrich.

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CLEAN COAST

Pets of the Week



Caithlyn

Meet Caithlyn.

On a May morning this year we found this sweet, devoted mother with her two little kittens in the kouchi next to the entrance of the Shelter. We named her Caithlyn. We will never know why people wouldn't want to take care of this friendly cat and her two sons. It's definitely not her fault! Caithlyn is a sweet and beautiful cat about 1 ½ years old. She likes to sit next to you on the couch or even on your lap and is very affectionate.

Her kittens were adopted and, after six months at the Shelter, we think it's time for Caithlyn to find her own forever home. Of course Caithlyn is sterilized, has had her vaccinations, Leukemia test and worm treatment and will get a chip when she's adopted.

Story and photo: Monique Degenaar

Dear fur friends,

My name is Yadine. I'm a fluffy lady almost a year old. I really like to play with other dogs, I do like people but I can be very shy sometimes. If you give me the chance to get to know you, I will be your best friend and a real huggy bear.

My fur is shiny and long, and with my black snout I do look very different than my other shelter friends.

Story and photo: Sanne Attevelt

If you would like to meet Caithlyn or Yadine, please come to Animal Shelter Bonaire, Kaminda Lagun 26A. The Shelter is open Monday till Friday 10 am to 1 pm and 2-3:30 pm, Saturday 10 am till 3 pm nonstop. You can also call 7014989 or 7174989 to make an appointment to see me, via whatsapp, facebook messenger and email animalshelterbonaire@gmail.com



Yadine

Shelter News

TIME TO START GIVING PET STRESS REMEDY



Fireworks season is just around the corner, while humans may enjoy the dazzling displays and noise it is a terrifying time for our dogs and cats. NOW is the time to start preparing your pets for this stressful time of year.

The best way to do that is with Florence Ditlow's **PET STRESS REMEDY**. The Remedy should be started now and continued through the fireworks season. Add just a few drops every time you fill your dog or cat's water bowl or put a few drops on one paw each day. The Remedy is available now at Animal Shelter Bonaire, DA, Just for Pet and the Shelter booth at the cruise market on cruise ship

days.

Florence Ditlow, is a retired professional registered nurse, and has produced Pet Stress Remedy here on Bonaire since 2006. With her all natural calming aid for pets, she has been helping Bonaire's dogs and cats stay stress free during fireworks for 15 years. And she has been helping Animal Shelter Bonaire all those years as well! All sales of Pet Stress Remedy are donated to the Shelter. Pet Stress Remedy will not only help your pets with their anxiety during the fireworks season, it will also help all the animals at Animal Shelter Bonaire.

Jane Disko

More visitors to Bonaire in third quarter

In Q3 2021, the number of visitors arriving by air in the Caribbean Netherlands almost tripled compared to the same period in 2020. Relative to 2019, visitor arrivals by air were up by 1 percent. Over the past quarter, the number of aircraft rose by more than half year-on-year. Especially Bonaire saw an increase in visitor arrivals and aircraft over the third quarter. Statistics Netherlands (CBS).



Making Bonaire Accessible by Ria Evers-Dokter

Thankful.....

Most nights, before I fall asleep, I think about the day that passed and I like to be thankful for at least three things. That is not as easy as it seems especially because I like the things to be different.

At the Thanksgiving dinner table, families and friends do the same. Almost everybody states that they are happy to sit at that table with family and friends and that they are glad and thankful everybody is happy and healthy. Sometimes they hope that they are not the only ones who feel that way and that there aren't people unhappy and unhealthy with nothing to celebrate at all.

As I write these words I realize that today is, December 3, the International Day for People with Disabilities. And I realize not every person with disabilities is happy, nor healthy, nor do they get what they need. Organizations get their clients together and celebrate this day with them. They eat a lovely dinner or enjoy a buffet, have a band playing and eat and dance till the feast is over. And then they go on to live life as they are used to.

Did that celebration make them happy? Will they be happier afterwards? Have they been asked what would make them happy and what they really want?

Is every person with disabilities heard and acknowledged? Do we know how to achieve possibilities to cater to that? Is the housing adapted to their needs? And if not.... Why not? Do they have accessibility to all the devices they need, or do they simply not get what they need because it is too expensive?

Does every organization that caters to or works for persons with disabilities

have a client-council? Do their clients have a voice?

Did you ever notice at conferences, workshops, etc. if there are persons with disabilities present and do they have a say? I always get the feeling that the agenda is filled for others, for those that work for them, not with them.

I remember once I participated in a training workshop for activities for people with disabilities. You could "pick" a disability and join that group. I picked having a severe disability. I was told to lie down and then my hands and feet were bound. I was thrown into the swimming pool while my coaches stood at the pool's edge and did nothing. I yelled and screamed for help and the only answer I got was that I had to trust them. Of course they did not let me drown. They jumped into the pool and started having sessions with me. Afterwards I got the chance to ask them about this strange and frightening situation. The coaches told me, "That is exactly the way we as staff talk to our clients. We don't even say it out loud. We expect our clients to trust us but our behavior shows otherwise. And sometimes we do not know how to act".

I wish everyone an interesting day and hope that things will change for the better.

Ria Dokter is living happily on Bonaire, where she also used to work as a director at the FKPD and started Special Olympics Bonaire. She took care of her husband (R.I.P) for many years and feels that accessibility is the most important issue on our island.

See THE Good

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