

FREE

THE REPORTER

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Photo by Julie Morgan

What happened in 2023?

As tradition dictates, Bonaire's colorfully costumed Maskarada players sang and danced their way across the island to close out the old year, and welcome in the new. In earlier times the players commented on the past year's events, but today they perform fun skits about catching a shark and taming bull. In this first issue of 2024, The Reporter neither sings nor dances, but offers only the news highpoints of 2023.

January. • Minimum wage, child benefits and old age pension (AOV) went up in the Caribbean Netherlands. • The new KPCN (Korps Politie Caribisch Nederland) Chief of Police Alwyn Braaf took his oath of office on January 13. • For the first time in history, three species of boulder coral were outplanted back to Bonaire's reef by Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire. • The Hague announced the Equal Treatment Act for the BES islands giving people the same protections against discrimination as in the Netherlands. Structural funding of 300,000 euros and another 200,000 for a Human Rights Board were named. The \$300,000 euros is earmarked annually until 2026. • King Willem-Alexander, Queen Maxima and Princess of Orange Catharina-Amalia visited Bonaire during their two-week tour of the Caribbean Netherlands January 27 – February 9. • Ride for the Roses Run, Swim Walk for cancer drew 800 participants.

February. • Return of Marine scientists Erik Meesters, Callum Roberts and Julie Hawkins who have been studying Bonaire's reef for 30 years agreed Bonaire's coral cover of 40% was okay and far better than other Caribbean Islands. But it was going down the drain due to the doubled population and sewage problem.

March. • Karnaval returned giving the island the biggest party since 2020. • Online Scammers resold the new tourism tax to cheat tourists who thought they were paying the government. • Bonaire's Recompression Chamber closed when Dr. Dick van der Vaart retired. A search began for a new 'diving doc.' • STINAPA appealed to the Public Prosecutor's Office to rule on the OLB's failure to act against Chogogo Resort for continuing to violate environmental regulations. • The lethal SCTLD (Stony Coral Tissue Loss) disease that had infected every other Caribbean island was found by STINAPA's biologists on Bonaire's reefs. Gear decontamination regimens were put in place for divers and snorkelers to prevent the spread. • Pakus di Pruga, Animal Shelter Bonaire's fundraising weekly thrift store began looking for a new home as their location they occupied for years rent free was sold. • Elections on March 15 yielded a new coalition. • The 2023 Walkathon supporting Special Olympics exceeded their previous numbers in support.

April. • Indebon held the first International Sports Week featuring events in pickleball, softball, freediving, swimming, walking, running, soccer, bolas, beach tennis, windsurfing, cycling. • Lieut. Governor Edison Rijna was appointed special envoy for the Caribbean Netherlands by Secretary of State Van Huffelen of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. He stepped down as Lieut Governor. • Nolly Oleana replaced outgoing Lieut Gov Edison Rijna. • STINAPA Bonaire held the first of four platform meetings for some 60+ stakeholders including dive shop owners, managers,

instructors and nature companies. • Dia di Rincon returned better than ever with a month long celebration. • STINAPA Bonaire held an update meeting and announced the closure of 10 northern dive sites and Washington Slagbaai National Park to diving and snorkeling as a strategy to curtail the spread of SCTLD. • Greenpeace visits Bonaire on their ship Artic Sunrise and files legal action against the Hague for failure to protect Bonaire against climate change.

June. • Caribbean Journal held their second Rum Week. • Fundashon Mariadal announced they are on the shortlist for what might be the first hybrid electric air ambulance in the world. • Bonaire Special Olympics athletes bring home the gold and silver from the World Special Olympics in Germany. • Seacology representatives support two projects in Bonaire: repopulation of Bonaire's conch and the Bonaire Sabal Palm. • Pride Month is celebrated for the first time on Bonaire. • A 25m ocean swimming pool enclosed with a floating pier is installed just steps from Parke Tului. • 160 years after the abolition of slavery, King Willem-Alexander apologized for the Dutch role in the world slave trade.

July. • Bonaire Recompression Chamber is back in business with new director Dr. Lucia Enelda Rodrigues. • Yearlong Abolition of slavery exhibit, WE ARE opens at Terramar Museum. • The first phase of the new solar park, that will be the largest in the Caribbean, connects to the WEB grid supplying one megawatt of electricity. • Bonaire International Airport (BIA) gets Ambulift for reduced mobility passengers.

October. • Fontein Plantation with its natural freshwater spring is returned to the island of Bonaire for \$3.4 million. • More than 150 tourism stakeholders both local and international attend the third annual Tourism Summit held by Tourism Corporation Bonaire. • Bonaire's 56th Annual Sailing Regatta is held with windsurfing, Sunfish, Optimist, micro-boats and yachts. • Bonaire's governing coalition was unseated by a non-confidence vote during a contentious Island Council meeting. • Social minimum wage amendment passes giving earners an increase beginning July 1, 2024. • Eighty mountain bikers competed in the challenging 14th Annual Bonaire Duo Xtreme.

November. • First ever Special Olympics Kingdom Games were held in Bonaire with neighboring islands Aruba, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten. • The new Executive Council decides to dump Spatial Development plan 2023-2027 and start over. • WEB Bonaire threw a party for their employees to celebrate their 60th anniversary. • Reef Renewal Bonaire teamed up with FUNDEMAR and SECORE for a 3-year restoration project in the Caribbean receiving \$1.38 million in funding from Coral Research & Development Accelerator Platform.

December. • Scuba Diving magazine recognized Bonaire in 10 categories in their 2024 Reader's Choice Awards. • Previously planned location of a container port in Hato re-examined in the Hague due to prevailing opinion on Bonaire. A new analysis is being prepared that is supported by Environmental Impact Assessments.

Julie Morgan
For more photos visit
The Reporter's Facebook page.

Ansary stole the money, the public will pay it back



Hushang Ansary

Photo via Antilliaans Dagblad

The pensions of approximately 30,000 ENNIA customers, and the insurance policies of thousands more, were threatened when Hushang Ansary bought, then looted, the insurance company. The governments of Curaçao and Sint Maarten, and the Central Bank, have reached a tentative agreement that would put the company back on its feet. Total cost to the taxpayers: 1.7 billion Curaçao guilders. That's roughly \$65 million. It will be paid over 30 to 50 years.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) tried, with only partial success, to track the embezzled funds through a tangle of international shell companies owned by shell companies and managed by other shell companies. Ansary said he didn't recognize any of their names, and those companies were formed just for "tax planning" purposes anyway.

Several million dollars were traced to large campaign donations of U.S. political candidates, mostly Republican. (Yes, Donald Trump was on the list.)

ICIJ found that many of the shell companies had been created by, and in some cases were directed by, PwC, formerly known as PricewaterhouseCoopers. PwC assured ICIJ that it operates to the highest ethical standards and would never do a thing like that.

Several former mid-level financial managers in Ennia told ICIJ they had tried to blow the whistle but couldn't find anyone in the Curaçao government who cared.

In 2017 Ansary, 95, an American of Iranian descent, was named by The Carnegie Corporation as one of the Great Immigrant/Great Americans honorees. It called him a "Statesman, Philanthropist, and Entrepreneur."

DMR (International Consortium of Investigative Journalists)

Last March a court ruled that Ansary, his daughter, and several former board members must pay more than a billion guilders in damages to Ennia, his own insurance company. Initially Ansary announced he would comply with the judgment, but his lawyer subsequently filed an appeal.

Ansary claims that Ennia was a perfectly sound company until the Central Bank took it over—that is, stole it from him, a dastardly act that should warn other goodhearted international corporations to avoid doing business on small, unappreciative islands, he said.

Expanded air ambulance service makes Bonaire safer place to live

Bonaire-based Medicaire, part of the EZ Air operation, has teamed with Ambulancias Aéreas de Colombia. The two companies will operate ambulance flights in the wider Caribbean region. They will use each other's aircraft, while the Colombian company will provide medical personnel for Medicaire's flights. Medicaire's two Learjet aircraft will expand the partner's fleet to more than 20 aircraft of different sizes and specifications, including planes with intensive care units, state-of-the-art medical equipment, and highly trained flight and medical personnel. "Our focus is saving lives when others cannot," said says

Viviana Ortiz, who as medical director is responsible for the medical side of the operation. "We provide access to healthcare to patients in difficult-to-reach geographical areas or areas without high-quality facilities." Since its inception, Ambulancias Aéreas has flown more than 75,000 hours, traveled more than 20 million kilometers, and saved a total of more than 30,000 lives.

The two medical airlines will also provide flight nurses for patients who can travel commercial flights but need medical guidance. *DMR (Bonaire.nu)."*

214 cruise ships coming plus more Miami flights



Photo Julie Morgan

As reported in *The Reporter's* Tourism Quarterly Report, Dec. 20, TCB announced that 214 cruising ships are expected to dock on Bonaire during 2024. That's up from 175 in the year just ended, and from the previous record, 186, set in 2019. American Airlines is adding three more weekly high season flights from Miami as well.

Remember when, if you told someone from Curaçao that you lived on Bonaire, they always said, "Bonaire? It's quiet on Bonaire, isn't it?" *DMR*

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Pasku Briante - Bright Christmas



The party, held at the sport center on December 23, was attended by 100 of the youngsters who were bussed in for the event. They played volunteer led games, ate their snacks and, of course, collected the amazing gift bags.

Angelo Alberto of BYOF explained that there was some confusion about the party vs. gift delivery to homes as in covid times. To make sure all the gift bags were delivered to those youngsters who couldn't attend the party, BYOF members once again donned their Santa hats and went house to house to ensure all the kids received a gift.



BYOF thanks everyone who contributed to Pasku Briante to ensure every child has a bright Christmas.

(L top) Each youngster received a huge goodie filled bag that also contained an age appropriate gift.

(Center) A Santa's helper waves from the bench where he is hanging out with some of the younger party goers.

(R top) Everyone had a good time - the kids, the volunteers, the parents.

Story / Photos Julie Morgan

FOR SALE Affordable Buildings Lots Vista Royal Village

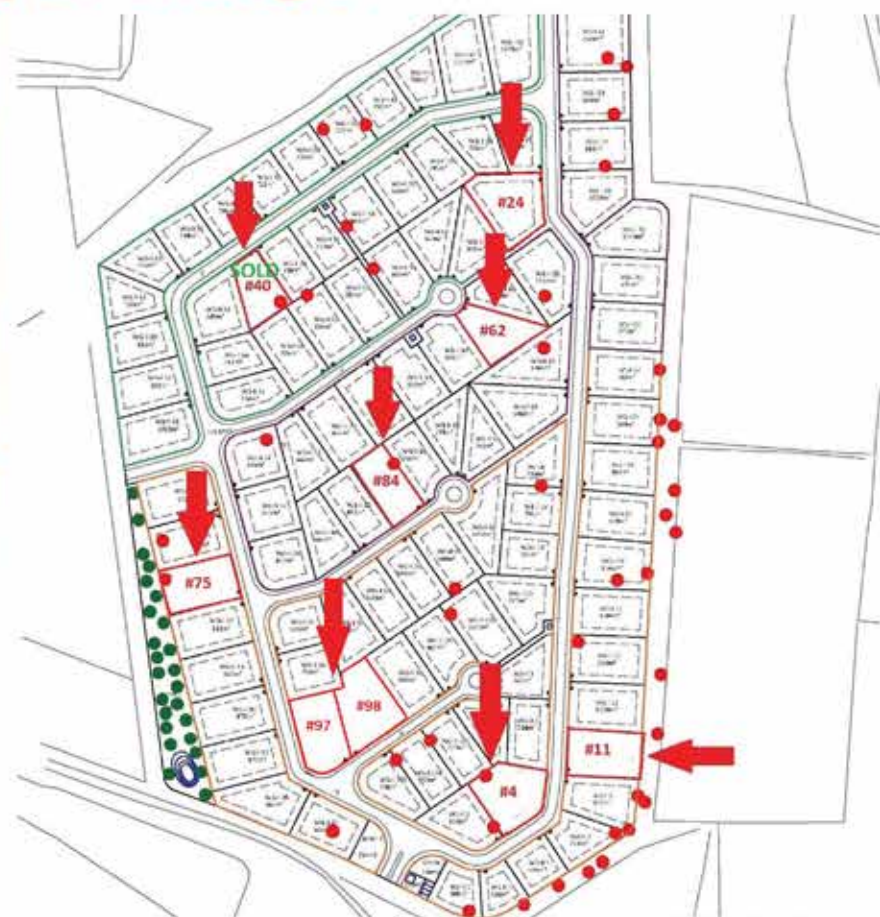


- Location: Nikiboko
- Sizes vary: 805 m2 - 1050 m2
- Owned land, zoning Woongebied II

Prices starts at \$ 164,000 US Dollar



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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.

Concern that STINAPA is not using an evidence based approach to Lac Baai rezoning

Dear Mr Abraham,

I am a resident of Bonaire and wish to express my concern that a specific topic in the rezoning of Lac Baai by STINAPA is not being managed in an evidence based consultative way that is appropriate to the good governance of this important island resource.

I am writing to you given your area of accountability of Sport and Environment.

STINAPA appears to have pre-decided that foiling will no longer be allowed on Lac.

They appear to have decided this and are now seeking input by the end of 2023 on the implementation.

This is unacceptable.

First the process is lacking in transparency, they have not defined the problem they are trying to solve.

Secondly they do not understand what foiling is.

Foiling is an evolution of windsurfing which leads to many benefits

1) It is slower and there are fewer accidents

2) It is less tough on the body and hence many older people and women enjoy foiling

3) The foiler rides higher over the water than original windsurfer and hence can better see and avoid any marine life

4) The equipment is simpler and less expensive than windsurfing

5) Foiling is at the heart of a recently emerging local business developed at Lac by two local Bonairian's creating 5 jobs.

6) Foiling was highlighted at the recent visit of the King and Queen to Lac

As we know windsurfing has been declining over the last years, now with the evolution of foiling the number of surfing guests coming to Bonaire has grown, we should not kill this environmentally friendly safe sport.

I have responded to the STINAPA questionnaire a few days ago, however they have not contacted me for input as they promised.

Since their deadline for consultation on implementation is year end I want to urgently reach out to you.

Please urgently review what STINAPA is doing.

Philip Blake

Cc Lieutenant Governor Reynolds 'Nolly' Oleana; Judith Raming-Van Moll-Manager Bonaire Nationaal Marine Park; Alexandra van Huffelen, the State Secretary for Kingdom Relations

Emailing King Alexander

Sat, Dec 30, 2023

An open Letter to King Alexander and all it concerns:

Dear King Alexander:

It has been almost a year since I last wrote you (text below) and although E. Rijna is no longer 'leading' Bonaire the corruption still exists and plagues Bonaireans.

You have had investigations that have resulted in 'hardly illegal' findings after the Bonairean people have been virtually raped and, by their findings, would be considered hardly pregnant with the results. NOT a pretty scenario.

Beaches are still illegally built, the roundabout has not been resolved and worst of all, the island secretary has been appointed as a special criminal judge AND is

now the gate keeper for all spatial planning and building issues. This is NOT only unethical, but also criminally suspect and truly unconscionable by any standard!!!

Please intervene and help eliminate the corruption that is pervasive on the island as removing E. Rijna has not solved the problems.

Bonaire has the potential to be a paradise but if it continues as it is, it has more potential to be an international embarrassment.

Your helpful attention would be appreciated by all.

Respectfully, Charles M. Baltayan

See Baltayan's January 26, 2023 email in *The Reporter's* online update pages, <https://bonairereporter.com>

ISLAND NEWS in BRIEF continued

Soon "slave names" can be changed easily and for free

In the colonial past, enslaved people often did not have a free choice of name. They were given a name associated with a former slave owner or the plantation on which they worked. This year descendants of enslaved people will be able to change their name free of charge and easily. That is the intention of legislation currently wending its way through parliament.

Under the new law, a name change will be free and will need to be supported only by a statement that the applicant is a descendant of an enslaved person. Under the current law, a name change costs 835 euros and must be supported by a psychological statement stating that the surname is causing nuisance for the bearer.

The change is another step in the government's ongoing campaign to create knowledge and awareness of the history of slavery and a better understanding of its impact. *DMR (Satelliet Curaçao)*

Bonlab fired, sort of

Care and Youth Caribbean Netherlands (ZJCN) terminated its medical insurance contract with Bonlab as of January 1. It will continue to pay bills submitted by the lab, however, while negotiations with the OLB continue. ZJCN believes Bonlab's charges for lab care are too high and says the island can get by without the lab, that Mariadal can meet the island's medical testing needs. The Executive Council, the Island Council and the trade union involved are of a different opinion.

A Laboratory Care Working Group has recommended "possibilities for further cooperation and specialization" regarding "the definitive organization of laboratory care on Bonaire." Negotiations are ongoing, although rehiring Bonlab does not seem to be one of the recommendation on the table. *DMR*

Some taxes changed on January 1, 2024

On January 1 the income tax threshold was increased from USD 17,352 to USD 20,424. Income up to the threshold will be exempt from income tax and social security contributions. Several other tax changes went into effect too. To see other changes go on line to *The Reporter's* update pages, <https://bonairereporter.com>

Ask Bob

Bonaire real estate advice



Hi Bob –

I am considering buying a house on Bonaire. While interviewing a real estate agent to assist me with the transaction, one asked me to pay their fee directly to their personal bank account instead of through the Notaris office. Is this common practice on the island? Trish in TN

Dear Trish

Using a buyer's agent to represent you can be a smart decision in some situations. Since the agent is representing you, it is normal for you to pay their fee.

The standard operating procedure on Bonaire is for all real estate agents and brokers to be paid through the Notaris office after the deed is successfully transferred. It is not normal or customary for buyers to send payment directly to the agent's personal account. Agents are required to charge ABB/Sales Tax on their fee and submit that amount to the government. Handling payments through the Notaris ensures a paper trail for tax purposes.

If your real estate agent asks you to be paid directly, you should consider it a red flag. Quite often this request is part of a strategy to avoid paying taxes to the government. If a real estate agent is willing to cheat on their taxes, it raises questions about their integrity and honesty.

Before you make a final decision, ask yourself if that is the type of agent you want representing you in a transaction worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Bob Bartikoski, Re/Max Bonaire Broker/Owner

If you are looking to buy or sell a home on Bonaire, or if you have a real estate question for Bob, email him at info@bonairehomes.com. Bonaire: +599-717-7362. Toll free from US: 1-866-611-7362

The OLB to provide stopgap funding for childcare centers

The OLB is stepping in to assure that funding for childcare centers continues while the new government gets organized. Childcare funding got bypassed during the flurry of legislation the outgoing Dutch government enacted in its final months. *DMR*
The column, Piss and Vinegar, page 10, discusses the likelihood of the incoming Dutch government funding Childcare.

Curaçao and Aruba lose same-sex marriage challenge

A judge has ruled that the Civil Codes of both Curaçao and Aruba can no longer ban same sex marriages because three constitutions (those of the Netherlands and both islands) protect people from discrimination based on sexual orientation. *DMR*

POLICE REPORT

Arrests

Dec. 29. Around 2:30 a.m., a man, 34, was arrested for not complying with police demands after he caused a nuisance at a casino on the J.A. Abraham Blvd.

Dec. 28. Around 4 p.m. at the E.E.G. Boulevard a person was hit by a vehicle. After a brief investigation, it turned out that the victim got out of the vehicle without putting the gear lever into park, causing the vehicle to move forward. The victim attempted to stop the vehicle, but was unable to do so. As a result, he ended up between the vehicle and a wall. The victim was taken to hospital by ambulance for medical treatment.

Dec. 26. Around 1:30 a.m. the central control room received a report of a fight near an entertainment venue on Kaya Nikiboko North between a group of people. When the patrol arrived they found that the victim, who was stabbed several times, had been taken to the hospital by bystanders in a private vehicle. Both the suspect and a witness who tried to mediate were also injured and had left the crime scene for the hospital.

After arriving at the hospital, one of the victims unfortunately died due to the injuries sustained. The man, 29, with initials J.B.V.B. was born on December 7, 1994 in Colombia. Around 8 a.m. on the same day, a man, 42, was arrested.

Do you have images that could help the police?

The police are calling on anyone who has footage (photos and/or videos) of the incident to send it to police@politiectn.com. All images sent are treated so your anonymity is guaranteed.

Dec. 23. Around 6:30 p.m., officers of the Dutch Caribbean Police Force (KPCN) conducted a check at the entrance to the Amboina district in the context of the Opium Act BES. During the check, suspected narcotics were found. As a result, a man, 27, was arrested and the vehicle was seized. During a thorough search of the car, several items relevant to the investigation were seized. In connection with this case, the police conducted two house searches but unusual was found.

Dec. 21. Around 1:45 a.m. a man, 33, was arrested at a home for violation of the BES Opium Act. During a patrol on Kaya Dr. Jose G. Hernandez, two men were spotted outside in the yard of the house. When the men saw the patrol, one of the men put his hand in his pocket and threw something away. The officers checked and found a number of bags containing suspected narcotics..

Dec. 20. Police searched a house on Kaya Macario (Cai) Sint Jago after packages containing opium were intercepted by Customs at Bonaire's post office. The opium was intended to be shipped abroad from Bonaire as freight.

During the search, a man, 35, was arrested for violation of the BES Opium Act. Investigation into this case is ongoing.

Dec. 19. Several reports were made of a number of people running behind each other with a machete in the Antril district. A search took place at a home on Kaya Berlin in Sabana. During the search, a man, 35, and a woman, 51 were arrested for threatening with a weapon. A machete was also seized.

Dec. 15. 1) A man, 21, was arrested after a plainclothes police officer at an exit on Kaya Grandi saw a man holding something near his jeans that turned out to be a machete. The machete was confiscated, the man arrested. **2)** A man, 29, was arrested on the Kaya Caribe for serious assault. The man had assaulted a woman with his clenched fist and destroyed several items, including a car. The victim was taken to hospital by ambulance. The suspect resisted violently and appropriate force had to be used to arrest him.

Dec. 14. 1) Around 9:50 p.m. a man, 20, was arrested for violation of the BES Opium Act. The suspect was in a car stopped by a patrol in the city center area. The passenger possessed several bags of suspected narcotics and was arrested. The suspected narcotics and the suspect's telephone were seized for further investigation. The vehicle was also searched but nothing unusual was found. **2)** Around 11:30 a.m., a man, 54, was arrested for destruction after spraying the wall of a company on Kaya J.N.E. Crane with a spray can.

Driving under the influence

Dec. 17. A man, 60, was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol. His car collided with a scooter on Kaminda Sorobon. The driver of the scooter was taken to hospital by ambulance.

Traffic accidents

Dec. 23. Around 8 p.m., the driver of a scooter was spotted without a helmet doing wheelies on public roads in Amboina. When asked to stop, he continued driving. The patrol chased the driver and asked him to stop several times. After he stopped in the yard of a house in Amboina he was unable to produce a driver's license or insurance document. He received a fine and the scooter was confiscated.

Dec. 18. 1) The driver of the scooter was injured in a single vehicle collision on Kaminda Sorobon and was taken to hospital by ambulance. **2)** A family car and a pick-up collided and ended up in the mondi along the road on Kaminda Tra'i Montaña near Tanki Maraka. The driver and passenger in the car needed medical treatment. The car's

driver could not produce a driver's license. Because oil had spilled onto the road, the fire brigade arrived on the scene to throw sand over it.

Dec. 17. Around 10:45 p.m. the central control room received a report of a one-sided collision on the Kaya Maria C. Hellmund-Boom. The driver stated that he had just purchased the car. When he was driving home, he drove into the yard of a childcare center. The driver was cited for driving without a license and without insurance. The car was taken to the police station for safekeeping.

Dec. 16. Around 11:20 a.m. a car and a scooter collided on Bulevar Gobernador N. Debrot near Kaya Herman J. Pop.

Traffic checks

Between Dec. 19 and Dec. 22, police issued fines during a planned traffic check on Kaya Korona and during routine traffic checks. Fines were issued for driving without: a valid driver's license 6x; valid insurance 8x; a seat belt on 16x, a license plate 4x, a helmet 7x. Tickets were also issued for holding a phone while driving 15x; for parking incorrectly 6x; for direction indicator 1x).

The fines for the above violations varies between \$30 and \$225.

Public order

Dec 27. In recent days, the central control room received several reports of nuisance caused by young people lighting fireworks in the neighborhoods throwing fireworks at cars, homes and possibly animals. Around 7:40 p.m., a report was received that a group of children were throwing fireworks at vehicles driving on Kaya Macario (Cai) Sint Jago near Parke Lanlan Clarinda. When the patrol arrived, they found the group and took away the fireworks. A day earlier there had already been reports about the same group causing a nuisance with fireworks.

KPCN would like to emphasize that this behavior will be dealt with strictly and that, if necessary, appropriate measures will be taken. Damage to third parties (material and physical) is punishable and can have financial consequences. Also that the safety of others and the child itself is at stake. It is therefore strictly advised to allow underage children to light fireworks under the supervision of their parents. If you causing a nuisance with fireworks, then the police can take away the fireworks.

Dec. 16. A person who showed no signs of life was found in a house in a village near Lagun. The medical examiner arrived on the scene and found a natural death of a 61-year-old man with initials G.B. born on October 8, 1962 in Curaçao.

Drug arrests at BIA

On December 25, Customs Caribbean Netherlands arrested a man and a woman on suspicion of smuggling narcotics, probably cocaine. A 35-year-old male and 30-year-old woman wanted to travel to the Netherlands via Bonaire with their 3-year-old daughter. The toddler was placed with family in consultation with Zorg en Jeugd Caribisch Nederland (ZJCN, Care and Youth Caribbean Netherlands).

On December 29, a male passenger coming from the Netherlands on a TUI flight was arrested when customs found two bags containing a total of 200 grams of Hashish hidden in two cans of shaving powder.

On December 30, a female passenger from Curaçao on a Divi Divi flight was arrested when customs found a plastic bag containing a pill resembling XTC and a plastic bag containing a milk-colored substance that, after testing, reacted positively for Crystal Methamphetamine. The woman also had a 'bolita' in her body. The contents of the 'bolita' tested positive for cocaine.

The suspects have been transferred to The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, which conducts criminal investigations on behalf of the Public Prosecutor's Office on Bonaire.

RCN Press Release

The Fire Department received 'dog resuscitation' training



The Fire Department is there for humans and animals. In the event of a fire, not only the residents, but also a dog may have inhaled too much smoke. If necessary, the Fire Department can then also try to resuscitate the dog. The Caribbean Netherlands Fire Department (BKCN) - Bonaire branch - received a special introductory training from trainer Norbert Tadema Damman of DogPartner Bonaire.

Why resuscitate dogs?

Norbert says: "In the Caribbean Netherlands, there are many dogs. In a (house) fire, there is therefore a good chance that there are also animals in the house. Especially dogs. They often hide when there is a fire. To people, a pet can be like a member of the family, so they want to do everything possible to save the animal. The Fire Department can play an important role in this and can resuscitate these animals if necessary. Hence also this introductory training".

RCN Press Release

BNMP manager Judith Raming gives update

The mission of the Bonaire National Marine Park (BNMP) is to protect and manage the island's natural, cultural and historical resources, while allowing ecologically sustainable use for the benefit of future generations.

The past year proved to be a critical time for Bonaire's coral reefs with the invasion of SCTLD (Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease). To address this lethal disease, BNMP held quarterly updates regarding the disease, state of the reefs, policy, current and future projects and held question and answer sessions with stakeholders. The BNMP listened and moved forward on many of the ideas.

We checked in with BNMP manager of 3.5 years Judith Raming for an early 2024 update.

A few changes in management for STINAPA and BNMP have occurred. Two directors, Kalli de Meyer and Kerenza Rannou will work together to take the place of former STINAPA director Jan van der Pleug. De Meyer, founding manager of the BNMP and former executive director of DCNA, was appointed conservation director last September. Rannou has worked for STINAPA since 1996 and currently serves as the financial director.

Raming said, "Only one [director] isn't enough because they get overworked. We think that having two is a better solution."

STINAPA biologist Roxanne-Liana



Map credit: Hopibonaire.com

Francisco is the new senior conservation manager and together with the directors will oversee management. Her focus will be Washington Park.

Albert Crestian, Washington Slagbaai National Park (WSNP) manager since 2017 is taking on a new role as manager of Rooi Lamoenchi plantation that was assigned to STINAPA's care in 2022.

With Crestian moving to Rooi Lamunchi, this opened up the position at WSNP.

"Roxanne is going to be the lead and

senior consultation officer, but she is also a scientist and will be working with Kalli, and we need a scientist in a high level role," said Raming.

BNMP biologist Caren Eckrich will assist Francisca at WSNP. The marine park is focusing on SCTLD in the north part of the island including the King Willem Alexander Reserve from Karpata to Bopec and Queen Maxima Reserve from Playa Frans to Slagbaai.

Raming said, "We keep focusing on the north because we always hope that we can

take it [SCTLD] out... we have the best chance for success there. With two biologists leading that park they can oversee it and manage."

Raming explained that it has been difficult to manage in the east, south and especially the west parts of Bonaire. The difficulty has come because of lack of support.

"Our team has been very busy making sure that companies are performing the way they should for their business. And on Klein Bonaire we did our best; we slowed down the spread but at the end of the day there is a lot of SCTLD," said Raming.

The disease travels by the currents, linearly to the north and linearly to the south. It was initially thought it could be contained in the south at Delphin's but that idea was slashed when it showed up at Helma Hooker. This discovery confirmed the disease was spread by people and it was not a linear spread.

Raming said, "To this day we are still in the outbreak stage, and we can see it still has a chance to rapidly spread over the reef... At some point the disease will have run its course. The outbreak stage takes a year or a little bit longer. It can come back popcorn style and it can get a grip on the reef that is already infected... It could infect other types of hard coral. We are one of the last islands to have the disease and that

Raming interview to page 7

It's the end-of-the-year Oliebollen

For all mountain bike enthusiasts on Bonaire, de Freewieler's Oliebollen Funrace is the perfect end to a year of mountain biking. Held on the afternoon of New Year's Eve, cyclists can enjoy a quick 40 or 25k route and be welcomed at the finish with the season's oliebolle, appelflappen and drinks.

This year's race was joined by 54 cyclists and, as usual, Wilma Bohm of de Freewieler started the race that began and ended at Te Amo beach. With this 2023 Funrace, Wilma is retiring from her duties at all the funraces. The Bonaire bike club presented her with a gift certificate to Capriccio restaurant in thanks for her many years of service.



Buckley's Books

by George Buckley

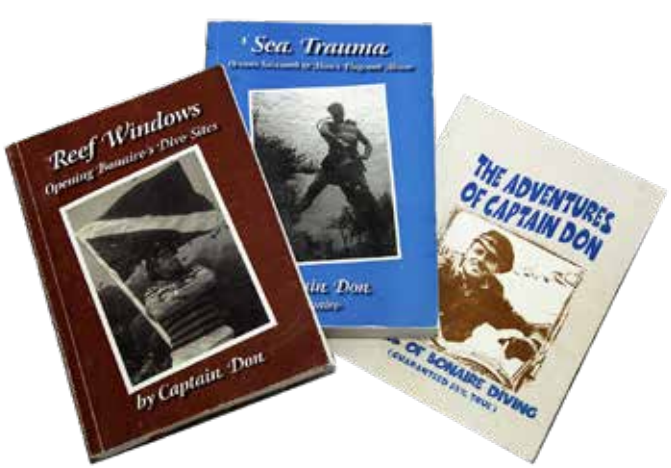
Something special for the New Year! CAPTAIN DON - THE WRITER

Captain Donal A. Stewart, of the Scottish Stewart clan, founder of Captain Don's Habitat, the Accolade Foundation and other ocean groups, was a 'Legend of the Sea,' a 'Diver of the Year' and awarded the title of 'Knight of the Dutch Order of Orange-Nassau' amongst other numerous and well earned honors. He served in the US Navy in World War 2, was a self taught horticulturalist extraordinaire, a constant tinkerer, an engineering wizard, a dynamic story teller and a dedicated writer. He had a writing area at his Kunuku, surrounded by his library. From the 'Wicked Mind's Eye of Captain Don' came several books and dozens of short stories, often with the dedicated assistance of his Lady Janet/Janni Thibault and diver friend and editor Linda Cober. The spark had been lit with a push and support from Jane Townsend and Alan Gross. Some editions are still available on Bonaire at Vista Blue shops and Captain Don's Habitat, and his partner Janet, Nancy Louth and I have endeavored to keep copies in stock.

Our Captain took great pride in signing copies for Habitat guests and they revered the attention that he gave to each and every one.

His first work, published in 1996, was "The Adventures of Captain Don-Tales of Bonaire Diving." It was a collection of short, mostly true stories, at least 85% according to Don and wonderful old black and white images from the 60's, 70's and 80's in Bonaire with many local people and visitors and even the comic strip character DONDI! A few older readers may still have a well worn copy.

Captain Don soon followed up in 2003 with the very excellent "Reef Windows-Opening Bonaire's Dive sites." The cover shot is Andy Martinez's now famous picture of Don, with no dive gear, standing at thirty feet depth, arms crossed, by the underwater dive flag at the Diver's Memorial plaque that I had brought to Bonaire. Getting the shot was quite a production as we would swim over to him so that he could sip air from our regulator! The book itself begins with a fine overview of reef ecology. Don



provides a dynamic series of illustrated stories from the 1960' - 80's, spanning some 250 pages, about the naming of over 36 of Bonaire's reefs. They include vignettes of local people, Habitat staff, dive guides and guests as well as friends, divers and assorted visitors. Most of the reefs were named by Don himself and most of them are shore dives. A used copy appears now and then on the Internet and we are working on a reprint.

In 2011, Don followed up with his long worked on ecological novel, "Sea Trauma" - The oceans succumb to man's flagrant abuse." When he gave me a copy, he said, "You know CLAM, I've been working on this for 32 years!"

The book is a novel about an extended family fighting the onslaught of a polluted and dying ocean. It was shockingl prescient. From the mutant blue green algae, that he credited to my discovery, to the possibility of creating a 'sea immunization' vaccine with the seas facing certain death as photosynthesis failed and the seas could no longer produce oxygen and fragile ecosystems broke, he weaves a complicated story about ecology, science, pollution and the multilayered roles that ordinary and not so ordinary people play in the fate of the oceans. He created a cast of characters and scenarios that could only come from the 'Wicked Minds Eye of Captain Don'! The plot twists and turns like a spinning top. When the book's concepts and ideas began to percolate way back in 1980 and when it finally hatched, the ocean's situation could only be described as inconceivable, impossible, unimaginable , yet.....look what has happened in those intervening decades. 'Sea Trauma' is aided by an introductory story line, a descriptive list of characters and a carefully vetted chronological index; it is still available.

Raming interview from page 6

is what happened there so there is no reason to think that it won't happen here as well... it is just a nightmare."

Raming does not think cruise ships were the carriers of SCTL D due to the strict Dutch regulations regarding ship ballast. She says the Bonaire harbour master is making sure the cruise ships are conforming to the rules of the Netherlands. But with smaller visiting boats there is less control regarding ballast water.

Prosecution of illegal building along the coast in the marine park is a misdemeanor and violators when charged must go to the court. Once ruled a violation, every day that the owner does not adhere to the court's order of removing a structure they are fined daily.

"The beach at Ocean Oasis is illegal. They did not have the necessary permits. As it is in the BNMP, this is not allowed making it very difficult to obtain the necessary permits. Ocean Oasis has gone to court to see if they can keep the beach. said Raming.

As for Chogogo's illegal beach, the rangers made a charge. Former Lieut Rijna signed off on an administrative fine of \$1.2 million but this has since been lowered to \$180.000. The court determined the beach was illegal and

did not adhere to the rules of the Island Decree Underwater Park Bonaire. Chogogo has taken the case to a higher court. It is unknown whether or not they have paid the fine.

Overnight moorings have been a major topic and dispute between cruisers and STINAPA regarding the cost per day of \$35, time limit and residency policy. Several law cases are currently in court.

Raming said, "We aren't going to make a policy until we can ask the judge as to how we can move forward. The plan was to provide better mooring blocks, accommodations, good toilets, running water and old oil removal...but then the daily rate was announced [by the government]. Thing is if we are going to do this we need to work together and that should be constructive and move us forward, not keep us in a place of negative debate. The disgruntled people mostly want to tell us what we are doing wrong."

Sometime next year Rangers will be posted on Klein Bonaire.


The plan to charge a nature park user fee to cruise passengers has been postponed indefinitely due to the new coalition taking over in October.. (See page 13.)

Raming said, "We knew we had a short time to inform and educate. This nature fee means that money is not coming in and SCTL D is costing us a lot of money and sargassum is costing us a lot of money. We don't know what the vision of the new government is in helping us especially

Don's health was failing in 2013 as he pushed forward with his last publication, "My passage to the Last Shangri-la." Like 'Sea Trauma,' the storyline had been percolating for some decades. It is told in brief vignettes, ultimately ending in Bonaire, his last Shangri-la. The story tells of his life in California, the military, then when creating a pioneering screen window that Sears and Roebucks sold. It tells of a young writer and a Hollywood brush with a movie career, his many friendships made along the way, his early SCUBA diving, first boat, Donnie, and then onward to a life of adventure with the purchase of the 70 foot sail vessel, Alrean. The Alrean, soon to be renamed the Valerie Queen, after his first wife who he had sent with children Gwen and Kevin to Wales to await his call to join him where ever his quest landed him. Many grainy images related to the stories are included as well as of some of the schooner and assorted crew members.

When a movie script that Don had authored about an adventure on the high seas was not picked up by a studio, a producer said 'Live your story,' and he did! My passage to the last Shangri-la' tells the story well, as Captain Don sets sail from San Francisco with his ever changing crew of Bohemian men, women and cats. As they make their way to the Caribbean via Panama, well outfitted with an assortment of maritime running and navigating gear, food and alcohol and guns to defend against pirates, the incidents and stories pour forth. After many stops, starts, landings, groundings and crew changes he and Percy setout for a small Dutch island. Finally, an isle loomed in the distance. 'We didn't know it then, but our search was over,'...Captain Don had landed on Bonaire...his last Shangri-la.

A chronological story index is provided as is a list that Janet found of the numerous nautical terms used in this still in print adventure.

 George Buckley has been coming to Bonaire since 1976, working with Captain Don (who called him CLAM for his work with mollusks), Hendrik Wuyts and others on environmental and educational projects and films. He has led over 100 study groups to Bonaire with many of his students returning often. Semiretired from decades of teaching Environmental Management and leading an active graduate program in Sustainability, he now works with many environmental groups and as an environmental consultant.

around SCTL D. The cruise ships, always go into the marine park. They should at least contribute to the conservation and protection of nature present in the BNMP."

Currently the only real financial backing to fight SCTL D is coming from Mike Bloomberg's Bloomberg Philanthropies. The former New York City mayor is a global leader fighting against climate change.

Dive shops are concerned about the state of the reefs due to disease, bleaching, runoff and the consequences to the dive industry. But another major impact is the wear and tear on the reefs from negative diver behavior: poor diver buoyancy and touching the reef. Raming encourages dive staff to take the Reef Ranger course giving them the authority to address these problems legally.

Raming said, "One of the biggest threats for the reefs is the illegal and poor operating by watersport companies in the BNMP. If dive staff wants to help out, they must do their best to change the poor use of the nature values in the BNMP and volunteer to help with the [SCTL D] treatment program of STINAPA. If we all go on the way we do with the use of the BNMP this might in the long term have the effect that there isn't enough reef/dive life left to accommodate all companies currently operating. This makes their concern very valid.

For more information about the BNMP visit: <https://stinapabonaire.org> or their Facebook page for the new Marine Park Informs. Julie Morgan

DECEMBER'S NOS ZJILEA

New Year's Traditions

Nos Zjilea, the monthly cultural event at Mangazina di Rei in Rincon, closed out the year to a full crowd on December 30. Host and event organizer Izain Mercera presented Bonaire's New Year's Traditions. Several of the previously announced guests were not available but equally impressive presenters filled the bill.

Head ranger of Washington Slagbaai National Park (WSNP) George 'Cultura' Thode discussed climate change and weather. Cultura began by saying we all have to learn from climate change. Here on Bonaire it's no different than in other places around the world. Every year he keeps a log documenting storms, rainfall and winds from his post at WSNP. From this information he is able to predict weather possibilities for the coming year and how to prepare. Cultura gave advice saying, with strong winds, a lot of salt comes on land and it's important to check your house for rusty nails

and damaged electrical wiring. This could mean no electricity for the refrigerator and fish and meat should be salted to preserve it.

One of the more knowledgeable elders on traditional cuisine is Gatcha Coffee. She prepared an end of year Bonairean dish 'piska den pekele' or pickled fish. Gatcha explained how she prepared the fish with hot spicy peppers and onions and invited guests to enjoy a sample.

In slavery times, Bonaireans would relate past events of the year in song with the 'Bari,' a handmade drum made on Bonaire. Rignald "Yonchi" Dortalina explained the story of his 'Bari' song and then gave a performance accompanied by fellow musicians.



Robert Sances of Yom Gaiteros Photo Julie Morgan

The rousing and totally entertaining music of Yom Gaiteros played through the day with energetic and entertaining guitarist and vocalist Robert Sances.

As always drinks and fresh local food were available including the traditional wood fired oven baked rolls made while you wait. Local artisans craft work, locally grown veggies and fruits and homemade fruit drinks are for sale. And then there is the museum with artifacts, photos and videos to teach you even more about Bonaire.

Admission to Nos Zjilea is free and The Reporter believes that this is truly the only event on Bonaire where you can 'see, feel and taste' the culture of Bonaire.

Next year, Mangazina di Rei will observe it's 400th anniversary. We will be telling you of some of the amazing plans that are in the works for the celebration. For more information visit Mangazina di Rei on Facebook or visit the website <https://mangazinadirei.org>. Julie Morgan



Gatcha shares her piska den pekele with Roy Photo Julie Morgan

Wishing you the best for an amazing 2024

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Piss and Vinegar

by Gijs Borsten

Don't back the wrong horse

The new Bonaire government is in office for two months now, after the sad demise of the UPB/MPB coalition mid-October. And we see things changing. Already.

Of all noticeable facts, the most remarkable is, that of the three new members of the Executive Council, Clark Abraham is the only deputy affiliated to a political party. The other two, Anjelica Cicilia and Nina den Heyer are both independent members. They are experts in their respective fields, the former a 46-year-old real estate ‘power woman’ freshly flown in from Motherland, the latter the knowledgeable chased-away MPB-deputy, authentic, and popular with her electorate.

Although the task the new crew faces won't be easy because of the thoroughly corrupt culture embedded in the administration, the future looks a bit brighter, thanks to the expertise the new deputies accumulated during their respective careers.

Anjelica ‘La Portuguesa’ Cicilia is a real estate professional (receiving the prestigious ‘Building Passion Woman of the Year Award’ at the age of 32 in 2009), working as a Director for Syntus Achmea Development & Finance in Amsterdam. Clark Abraham enlisted her in person, dragging her away from her old job to take a position on the Bonaire Executive Council on the shortest possible notice.

I think Abraham made an excellent choice.

The island yearns for her expertise in the field, encompassing not just urban planning and spatial development: infrastructural planning and heritage preservation is part of her portfolio as well. We need that knowledge dearly.

In her role as a ‘structurer’ she has to deal with the flock of vultures, ‘entrepreneurs’ (I prefer to call them ‘merchants’, or

‘hustlers’, describing the essence of their activities on Bonaire more accurately). The Judases who are determined to deprive the island of the last of its authentic beauty spending a handful of silver pieces.

Another one of the challenges Cicilia faces, is the fact that Bonaire's administration, specifically in contracting, lacks intrinsic knowledge in virtually every field. The officials responsible naively rely on their contract partners (and subsequently create a mess; consider the Kaya Amsterdam traffic circle, consider – might they exist - the foolhardy cruise ship contracts), or have to lean heavily on short term contracts using external advisors. It results in enormous expenses.

The former Executive Council used the services of over forty external parties to get the work done. A number of those parties were, BTW, closely related to Hennyson Thielman and other MPB-affiliates, as rumor goes (Bonaire.nu, 11-3-23).

The side effect of the army of advisors is, that nobody ever learns a single thing of the field he or she works in. A great way to keep your administration stupid at the highest possible price.

Let's hope Cicilia can, by revising and enforcing a bunch of rules, and getting rid of a number of ill performing key figures, alleviate the lack of vision and expertise that have been plaguing the former Councils. And, on the side, halt the money-laundering building spree that has been tormenting Bonaire during the UPB-dominated decades, covering the island with concrete.

Nina den Heyer (45) is the other expert, and although the field she has to control is pretty immense (she's got everything in her portfolio that has to do with well-being, welfare, culture and education) she still appears to be in control.

The only thing she should work on, however, is her credibility. During a press conference held in early December, organized by the Council to comment on its actions, she – correctly – stated, that her work combating poverty on Bonaire needed serious financial support from Motherland.

“We take into account all coalitions that may arise”, she said, specifically naming Wilders' PVV. “That is a party that wants to work with the elderly. (...) I look ahead with a positive feeling to what will happen in the Netherlands”.

Please, Nina. Wake up. There's nothing to be found in The Hague that can generate any positive feeling regarding Bonaire as long as Geert Wilders and his cronies have a say in where and how the budget is to be spent. The fact that there wasn't a word wasted on the ‘other’ countries of the Kingdom or the BES-Islands in the PVV election program, wasn't for nothing. All his actions concerning the Antilles will probably only involve wiping his shiny white ass behind with them. Have you forgotten about his plan to sell them on the internet? “The highest bidder can have them...” (AD, 23-10-2007). He doesn't care.

In Wilders's eyes the islands simply don't exist, other than as a costly expense on Motherland's budget. (Except when he can spend his vacation at Harbour Village; the only place in the world where he can bring his security army at taxpayer's expense is Bonaire). Don't rely on him as a source for funding ANYTHING on Bonaire.

Wilders's crocodile tears over any disadvantaged group are only shed for electoral purposes. He's a populist. His compassion isn't real. And might he be intending to help a senior citizen or two: it won't be the Bonaireans that will get his support. Their skin is too colored, remember? They shouldn't exist in the first place. So: understand Motherland's political landscape. Draw your own plan.



Gijs, originally from Leiden (NL), has been living on and off on Bonaire for about twenty years. He has no clear focus, and loves to be surprised by actors in politics and administration. Originally into The Fine Arts, then a career in (forensic) accounting, then a PhD in German Philology. Currently retired.

FSPB: ‘What does the Executive Council want with Plantation Bolivia’ Clark Abraham [AD Dec 30, 2023]: ‘Development is only possible in a different area.’

On December 22nd, the recently established Executive Council (BC), represented by Clark Abraham in its weekly press conference, announced its intention to sign a new letter of intent (LOI) regarding Plantation Bolivia with one of the companies owned by the Breemhaar couple. The current agreement is set to expire on December 31st. As known, the Breemhaars plan to build around two thousand homes on the plantation. However, their motivation is not to address the housing shortage for those with the lowest incomes, but rather to profit around 150 million from the project.

Currently, construction is not allowed on Plantation Bolivia as the area is designated as “Open Landscape.” This designation is a source of concern for the Breemhaars, who aim to change it. The entities capable of influencing this change are the Executive Council and the Island Council. Hence, the Breemhaars have a vested interest in a new LOI, enabling them to commence construction and capitalize on the venture.

The announcement made by Abraham on behalf of the Executive Council on December 22nd surprises and confounds us. As the leader of the opposition party PDB, Abraham responded with a resounding “no” in the program ‘Op De Klippen’ just four days before the island council elections in March of this year when asked about building on Bolivia. Daisy Coffie, now a key supporter of the Executive Council, also opposes the project.

Our surprise and confusion deepen on December 27th when we come across the following message on *Bonaire.nu*:

“According to Abraham, the Executive Council believes that a certain development in the area is possible. ‘However, we must ensure that the nature and the



cultural or historical heritage of the area suffer as little damage as possible.”

The Foundation Save Plantation Bolivia (FSPB) has repeatedly argued and demonstrated over the past years that the construction on Bolivia is not in the interest of the landscape and nature in the area. Our stance is based on numerous studies, including reports from Wageningen University. The suggestion that ‘a certain development’ (whatever that may mean) causes no harm to the area denies the fact that any fragmentation of the region will spoil the landscape and irreparably damage the fauna and flora. This conclusion is unequivocally supported by numerous research reports dating back to the Second World War.

The question arising from the woolly positions of Clark Abraham and the Executive Council, posed by FSPB, is: *FSPB wants to know from Abraham what happened between March 11 and December 22 this year with his position on Plantation Bolivia and what the BC's interest is in signing the LOI?*

[AD December 30, 2023] The deputy responds immediately, and his response paints a completely different picture than previously sketched in the article in *Bonaire.nu*. According to Abraham, selective use was made of what he said and *Bonaire.nu* has given its own interpretation. “As the plans currently stand, they are not in line with the vision and ambition of the BC. I said that we will talk to the owners of Bolivia and if they indicate that they want to develop on the island, then that may be possible, but in a different area,” Abraham told the *Antilliaans Dagblad*.

Foundation Save Plantation Bolivia

Reef Glimpses - Tootsie's Future

by Dee Scarr

In the early 1980's, when I first came to Bonaire, I was fortunate to work with Tom van't Hof on the very first Guide to the Bonaire Marine Park. Tom's background as a biologist and his fascination with stony corals was very clear in that initial manuscript, because descriptions of every dive site were filled with information about the corals that grew there. I liked the corals okay, but was much more interested in the fish.

Then I found Tootsie and fell in love.

Back in November of 1999 Bonaire experienced a sudden and unexpected wind reversal as a result of Hurricane Lenny. I had a dive scheduled for that day; it was the only Touch the Sea dive in 43 years that was postponed because of weather. Dive operations were invaded by high waves all along our "lee" coastline. A few days later, after the seas calmed down, divers began rescuing everything they could find that had been washed into the sea by Wrong Way Lenny.

Not removed, however, was whatever was left of the plastic chair whose three remaining legs stick vertically out of the bottom at Lamachaca Reef, off Captain Don's Habitat. The chair's seat is probably intact, since the legs remain in position, but whether the back is buried under the sand is not known. Removing the chair would have disturbed the reef, so it 's Futurewas left alone.

In a healthy reef environment, those legs wouldn't stay naked for long. Bonaire has a healthy reef environment, so the legs didn't stay naked. In fact, at least one larval coral settled on the middle leg. After a few years, one brain coral colony was visible on the leg. In the Oct 21 - Nov 04, 2020, issue of the Reporter, I suggested that divers on Bonaire select a coral colony they could find again, and keep an eye on it over the years; I selected the colony on the chair leg, and named it Tootsie because it reminded me of a Tootsie Roll Pop.

Over the years, Tootsie has bleached and recovered several times. "She" was the first coral colony that I knew for sure had recovered from bleaching, and I knew that only because I was watching her, specifically.

It turns out that at least five other divers were watching Tootsie also, because of her position on the chair leg and her beauty and her health. Last June, one of the other Tootsie watchers called me with bad news: Tootsie had Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD). Luckily, she was allowed to have treatment with the antibiotic paste. Unluckily, Tootsie was one of the coral colonies the paste did not save; her colony got SCTLD in several other places after the antibiotic halted the original infection.

Over the course of twenty years, Tootsie had grown from a larval coral too small to see, to a coral colony over 20" (51 cm) in diameter. Then, in fewer than twenty days, SCTLD killed every one of the thousands of coral polyps who had built the Tootsie colony.

Although Tootsie's builders are gone, their colony's skeleton remains. What happens to that skeleton will be the future of many of our other coral formations which were emptied by SCTLD.

If you'd selected a coral to watch, how is it doing? If not, you can still choose one to watch. Thriving or SCTLD'd, it will give us a different perspective on the changing reef habitat.



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*; in *Dive Training Magazine* from 1990 to 2000, with "Coral Glimpses" in *The Bonaire Reporter*, and now with "Reef Glimpses."through touchthesea.com.

Bottom three photos Julie Morgan



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What's Happening

Animal Shelter: Mon-Fri 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; 2-3:30 p.m. Sat. 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. phone/whatsapp: 701 4989 or 717 4989. Email: animalshelterbonaire@gmail.com

Arts & Crafts Market in Wilhelmina Plaza. Weekly schedule can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/BonaireArtsandCraftsCruiseMarket/>

Cultural Park Mangazina di Rei in Rincon: Tues.-Thurs. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat. 8-noon

Library: Mon. 12-5; Tues. to Thurs. 8-5; Fri. 8-4:30; Sat. 8-12. Kaya Gramel 715 5344. Anyone can become a member. Free for residents between 0 and 18 years. Adults \$6 a year. Members can borrow ebooks online. www.onlinebibliotheek.nl

Marshe di Playa Local market Sat. 9-1. Kaya Industria, by Warehouse Supermarket.

Pakus di Pruga (Animal Shelter flea market.): Pakus is closed until we build.

Terramar Museum Mon-Fri 9-2. Kaya J.N.E. Isla Riba 3. Admission \$10. Residents \$5. Tours \$20. Children under 12 free. +599 701 4700

<https://www.facebook.com/terrarmuseumbonaire/>

STINAPA headquarters: Mon-Fri 8-4. +599 717 8444. After hours: +599 777 8444.

Washington Slagbaai Park: Open Tues. - Sun.. 8-5 (entry to 2:30 p.m.) \$40 (Free with Nature tag)

Open now July 2023 - July 2024	Terramar Slavery Exhibition: WE ARE Monday - Saturday 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Open now Dec. 16, 2023 - Jan. 7, 2024	Renske Herder Exhibition "Poco Poco" At Sobremesa, Kas di Arte, Abraham Boulevard. See Below
Saturday, January 20	Pop-Up Artist – Gabrielle Wilson at MoltenWolf Glass – In the store 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 27	Annual Parrot Roost Count from 6 - 8 a.m. Volunteers are always welcome to help count Bonaire's parrots. Nos Zjilea Cultural Event 10 a.m.- 3 p.m. Cultural Park Mangazina di Rei, Rincon. Enjoy the music, dancing, crafts, amazing food and drink.
Sunday, January 28	Ride for the Roses January 28. Ride, Walk, Swim or Sail to support the fight against cancer. See page 6.
Monday, January 31	Open Bonaire Bridge Championship 2024. Participants can register via the email address bridgeclubbonaire@gmail.com .

Help in the fight against cancer by joining the eighth edition of Ride for the Roses. Ride for the Roses is not just a ride. You can choose to walk, swim or boat for the Roses. (See our online update pages for the schedule.)

Tickets are just \$20. Registration is either online www.ridefortheroses.org or purchase a ticket at the Rincon gas station, de Freewieler, Yogarriba, Bon Bida or from a board member. T-shirt and bag pick-up Jan. 25, 26, 5 – 7 p.m. and Jan. 27 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. at Orco Bank, the main sponsor. Volunteers for the event can sign up at: signup@ridefortheroses.org.



Ride for the Roses 2023, Photo Julie Morgan

You can help keep Bonaire clean	
Saturdays	One Hour Clean up Power. Weekly coastal clean up every Saturday, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. Location given on FB page: https://www.facebook.com/OneHourCleanUpPower/
Sunday, Jan. 14	Clean Coast Bonaire. 4-6 p.m. Boka Onima. Donate your time. Work as a citizen scientist to collect marine litter & data. https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=clean%20coast%20bonaire
Sunday, Jan. 21	STCB fishing line cleanup. North pier.



Events, Meetings, Sports

12 steps meeting: Wednesdays at Kaya Den Haag 30 in Hato. Meeting starts at 7:15 p.m till 8:30 p.m. Info: 12stepsbonaire@gmail.com

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

Art Gallery Sobremesa Bonaire View or buy art from Bonaire's local artists. Opening hours are Tue-Fri 2 - 5 p.m. and Sat 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Abraham Boulevard 10.

Beach Tennis Bonaire Kaminda Djabou (behind Budget Marine). Open daily until 10 p.m. People can play for free or register for training and tournaments for a fee.

Bridgeclub Bonaire organizes a bridge evening Wednesdays 7:30 - 10:30 p.m. All playing levels are welcome. Info: 795-0128 (only whatsapp text messages), bridgeclubbonaire@gmail.com. <https://www.facebook.com/bridgeclubbonaire>

Cyclovía Kids Street Park Wilhelminaplein 4 - 7 p.m. Free monthly event. Children of all ages can bike, scooter, skate or skateboard. Expect a bouncy castle, music and a hot dog cart. First Sunday of the month

Diver Safety. Presentations with Jason Buttenshaw held the third Sunday of the month 6:30 p.m. at Sugar Thief, 8 Kaya Inglaterra.

Noodling in the sea. Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday 9-10 a. m. across from Parke Tului on the water-front. See Facebook [Bonaire Free Noodlers](https://www.facebook.com/BonaireFreeNoodlers)

Pickleball. Wednesdays & Fridays 6 – 8 p.m. at Jong Bonaire. Come join the fun. A sport for all ages.

Racing / Fevering. The Onima fever platform is available every Tues. Thurs. Sat. and Sun. 4 - 7 p.m.

Tennis Lessons for kids age 6 - 12. Free. Every Saturday. Courts at Eddy's. Email info@bonairetennisassociation.com. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Bonairetennis/> Paul Ruijs +599 782 4569.



Echo Conservation Tours - Weekdays at 8 a.m. or 5 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. To reserve email at info@echobonaire.org



Manta Monday / Tuesday - Nicole Pelletier of the Caribbean Islands Manta Conservation. Presentations: Jan 8th will be at VIP Diving - PADI 5 Star IDC Resort. Caribbean Islands Manta Conservation Program facebook. Email: Caribbean.Islands@mantatrust.org



Reef Renewal Bonaire. Sundays 5:30 p.m. Blennies Restaurant – Buddy Dive Resort. Free. Open to everyone. Want to learn about coral reef restoration on Bonaire? Come listen to a staff member, instructor, or volunteer give an informative presentation about Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire and the importance of restoring and protecting Bonaire's coral reefs! Questions? email: info@reefrenewalbonaire.org



Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire (STCB). Free public presentations at Yellow Submarine, every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, at 8 p.m. See facebook.

Cruise Ship Schedule				
DATE:	CRUISE SHIP	TIME	PIER	CAPACITY
2024				
Wed. January 3	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	0800-1800	North	2417
	ENCHANTED PRINCESS	1200-2000	South	3660
Thurs. January 4	NORWEGIAN VIVA	0600-1300	South	3300
Sun. January 7	MARELLA DISCOVERY	0830-1900	North	2074
Mon. January 8	NORWEGIAN PEARL	0600-1400	North	3130
	AIDAPERLA	0830-1800	South	3286
Tues. January 9	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	0830-1800	North	2417
	CARNIVAL HORIZON	0900-2300	South	4683
Tues. January 10	ROTTERDAM	0730-2100	South	2668
Thurs. January 11	CELEBRITY REFLECTION	0800-1800	South	3046
Sun. January 14	COSTA FORTUNA	0800-2000	North	3470
Mon. January 15	STAR PRIDE	0730-2100	North	312
Tues. January 16	BRITANNIA	0700-1800	South	3674
	EXPLORA I	0800-1800	North	922
Wed. January 17	CARNIVAL MAGIC	0830-2200	South	3646
Thurs. January 18	CARNIVAL FREEDOM	0800-1600	North	3783
Fri. January 19	VENTURA	0615-1800	South	3597
	SILVER DAWN	0800-2300	North	623
Sat. January 20	SIRENA	0700-1700	North	824

Make Bonaire Accessible

by Ria Evers-Dokter

Another year over...

It is kind of strange how fast a year can go by. One minute ago it was January 2023 and in a jiffy it is December.

A lot of good has happened and let us hope that the things that did not go too well or not at all, will change for the best.

In the care for the elderly a lot has certainly happened. New projects started, more care has been offered and special care got more attention.

But I feel that the quick growth has shown that there is a huge need for training, coaching, specific education and more specialization. The group of elderly is growing fast, and they need all the attention possible.

There is so much needed in housing, care facilities and care at home, and all must be made possible.

The last few years the care facilities have grown, and the kind care offered has expanded. Let's not forget about the volunteers. They are needed now more than ever. And with that, schooling and education for those volunteers is also a big must. Having a big heart and loving to work with the elderly is simply not enough. The volunteers must be selected for certain jobs or guiding.

But I feel that the most important thing is for organizations and politicians to get together with the elderly. As I have stated many times before, we are not adult toddlers. We have studied, brought up families, held or are holding responsible jobs and have had all kinds of experiences. We do not want to be handled in group form only. We need a certain individuality. We know what we want, and we can teach the ones who take care of the elderly.

An excellent starting point for change and growth would be to discuss what you would want when you get older and need help and care.

Security is very important. Knowing that you can grow old and be assured you can get all the proper care needed. One does not sleep well knowing that for the next week you do not have enough diapers. One needs to be sure that there is a hot meal for the weekends as well as during the week. Being home all alone is bad for the soul. People need people, a visitor every now and then is so important.

On the other hand, I am very happy with the projects already running. Many more elderly have daycare, special care, the buddy-project and are involved in weekly gatherings.

I have always been very fond of the expression, "Grow old with me, the best is yet to come." Deep in my heart I know that this is true. Everything will be all right.

To all readers, I want to thank you for all the support and your reactions. I promise to keep you posted in the coming year as well. I wish you all a festive and safe end of 2023 and a wonderful, exciting new year 2024. Stay as healthy as possible.



Ria Dokter is living happily on Bonaire, where she also used to work as a director at 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.

Dive Friends is looking good

Dive Friends is welcoming 2024 with an all new look. They will be heading to several dive trade shows in the coming months to spread the news about their awesome shop: Travel & Adventure Show (New York), Duikvaker (Netherlands), The Outdoor Adventure Show (Toronto), Beneath the Sea (New Jersey).

Divers interested in expanding their credentials or starting the new year with a new career can participate in one of Dive Friend's upcoming IDC's. The schedule for 2024 is January 26, July 20, September 29 and November (no date yet). *Contact Dive Friends for more information or visit their Facebook page. (see ad on page 11)*

Collecting new nature fee postponed

Judith Raming, Bonaire National Marine Park Manager, has announced that collection of the new access fee, scheduled to begin on January 1, has been postponed. One-day visitors to the island, including cruise ship passengers, were to be charged \$10.00 per day for access to the Bonaire National Marine Park and the Washington Slagbaai National Park. Apparently the new Executive Council (BC) has concerns it wants to discuss. STINAPA, the Public Entity of Bonaire (OLB), and Tourism Corporation Bonaire (TCB) are working together to develop a new plan for collecting the fee. *DMR*

Venezuela will pay Curaçao—in oil

Following years of arbitration in the European Court following Venezuela's abandonment of the Isla refinery, Curaçao has withdrawn its claim of \$1 billion in exchange for Venezuela's agreement to supply it with \$450 million worth of oil over the next 10 years. PDS-VA, the Venezuelan oil company, will also pay \$21 million for the benefit primarily of pensioners and former employees of the Isla refinery. PDVSA operated the refinery from 1985 to 2019. *DMR*

Creating optimal health

by Irene da Cunda Costa

How to identify your irrational beliefs and how to defy them.

Our irrational beliefs are part of our internal dialogues, and they are the base of our emotions. Whether thoughts or emotions come first, that is a long-time debate. We are emotional beings who reason, so both thoughts and emotions are interconnected and equally important. We think in both words and images. We can slow the stream of thoughts, but we cannot stop it, just as we cannot stop our stomach from secreting chlorohydric acid. We also have a special function; we can think about our thoughts. This meta function allows us to slow down the stream of our thoughts so we can analyze what we think. It allows us to identify our irrational beliefs.

Most irrational beliefs create unnecessary suffering that limits us, preventing us from becoming our best version and living life to its fullest. They are accepted as axiomatic truths without going through a reality check. I will show you in this article specific words that will help you identify them in your stream of thoughts.

For example, overgeneralizations use words like everybody, nobody, always, never, all, none. For example: "I am always clumsy". If you detect a sentence like that in your head, stop and ask yourself, Am I really "always" clumsy? Or we think: "All men/women are the same". Ask yourself, is it really all of them, do I know them all, aren't there some exceptions? In general, the answer will show us a different situation, closer to reality.

You can have some irrational beliefs that neither creating suffering nor are limiting. For example, if you think that you are always graceful, maybe you are or maybe it's

not totally accurate, but as long as it is not creating unnecessary suffering, that belief does not need to go through scrutiny.

Irrational thoughts label persons and situations with only one aspect. For example, "I am a loser," when we do not perform well. To defy this irrational thought, just find in your life history moments that you were not a loser. For example, if you have made it to the point of reading this article, I am sure you can count many successes in your lifetime. Even if it seems hard, make the effort to recognize them.

Irrational thoughts are polarized tending to catastrophize. Thoughts like, "losing my job would be a disaster," "if that person does not love me, I will be miserable for the rest of my life" or "this is the last chance I have to be happy" don't consider all the different shades of reality. Considering catastrophic scenarios can be a good exercise. First check the probability that the event could happen. Check if you or somebody you know were both in that same situation. What would the outcomes be for each of you. Most likely if you check your personal life, you might find many stories of recovery, survival and resilience.

When using verbs like should, would, should have, would have, we are just not taking into account reality. We are just expressing our wishes or expectations of what "should be." Even though these verbs are included in our everyday language, analysis can show that they can lead to extremely irrational statements. "People should behave

nicely," is very desirable, but whatever we consider to be "nicely," the reality is that some people behave nicely and others don't.

One of the most widespread irrational thoughts is the fallacy of fairness. "Life should be fair." Most people could agree that this would be desirable, but there are countless everyday events that show proof of the contrary. Life is not fair. It is a fact. It is not a catastrophe. Holding to the belief that it should be fair creates more suffering than necessary. Accepting reality brings peace. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't fight for justice or for change, but we need to choose our fights favoring the ones that can produce a real meaningful change.

Reducing or modifying our irrational beliefs is not the holy grail for happiness. Wellbeing is a complex and multidimensional process. Improving our internal dialogues is one way to come closer to our best version when we choose rational and proven based beliefs that expand our awareness and create opportunities.

Buddha said that our thoughts are like drunk monkeys. Through meditation or mindfulness, we can manage to sober up these monkeys so they behave nicely and calmly, and through rational debate they can turn into active builders of our happiness.



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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Shelter News

Looking back on 2023

Animal Shelter Bonaire wishes everyone a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year 2024! Looking back on 2023, the Shelter had its share of ups and downs, and we look forward to making 2024 a year of only "ups."

Pakus di Pruga had to close in August of this year due to demolition of the premises. It took us a while to find a new home but we will reopen in late January or early February at our new location. Stay tuned for the details of the grand opening. Our gratitude to the many individual donors and businesses who contributed to help with the relocation and new construction. Their support made it possible to get this big project started. We also appreciate all the donors who helped us to keep going and continue our mission of caring for Bonaire's abandoned and unwanted animals, despite the loss of income from the Pakus.

ANOTHER ALL TIME RECORD FOR STERILIZATIONS!!! 723 dogs and cats were spayed/neutered through the Shelter's Free Sterilization Program in 2023, the highest number since we began the program in 2004. The number pets owned by individuals, pets in the Shelter's adoption pool, and animals of FKK (Fundashon Kunuku Kakelvers). This number does not include all the pets owned by guardians who responsibly sterilized their animals with their own means. It was a very good year and the Shelter aims to further stem the tide of the island's animal overpopulation problem in 2024.



In 2023, 404 animals entered the Shelter (213 dogs/puppies and 191 cats/kittens), only eight less than in 2022 and a 20% increase since 2021. Unfortunately this upward trend is continuing. Part of the problem is that so many rental homes do not allow pets, forcing people to surrender their much-loved companions in order to find living accommodations. If you are a landlord, or know some, we encourage considering implementing a "pet deposit." Landlords can also check with their tenant's previous landlord to determine if they are responsible pet "parents." Allowing pets in rental homes

keeps people united with their companions and helps reduce the number of animals that must be surrendered.

While 135 lucky Shelter residents found their "fur-ever" homes, regrettably that number is a 17% decrease in adoptions compared to 2022, and a continuing decline over the last two years. While the human population on Bonaire continues to increase, the adoptions are decreasing. Again this is likely attributable to the unavailability of living accommodations that allow pets.

The Shelter, in cooperation with the other animal welfare organizations worked hard in 2023 to do what we could to alleviate the growing problem of so many animals abandoned on the streets and in the mondi. We are hopeful that the new government will step up and lend a hand to help us all find a solution to this sad situation. In 2024, we hope to again increase the number of sterilizations to reduce the numbers of unwanted animals and to increase adoptions. If you are looking for a furry companion to bring joy to your new year, please come and choose one (or more!) of our healthy, vaccinated, and sterilized furry friends. As of 1 January, 2024, we have 238 dogs and cats just waiting for the chance of a loving home.

Last, but certainly not least, Animal Shelter Bonaire is deeply grateful to all our volunteers who carried us through 2023 with such dedication. The volunteers of our Pakus di Pruga, Cruise Market, Money Boxes, IT Support, Social Media, Shelter Animal Care, Board of Directors, Accounting Services and so many more are the lifeblood of the Shelter. We stand on the mighty shoulders of our Volunteer Army!

Again, Animal Shelter Bonaire wishes everyone a very happy and healthy New Year and gives thanks for your support in the past and future! We hope you make a New Year's "resolution" to visit us and maybe lend a hand as a volunteer in, or supporter in one of our many programs.

Jane Disko



The feeling of Christmas was in the air at Bonaire Shopping night on December 23.

Kaya Grandi shops were open from 6 – 9 p.m. for last minute shoppers and those who just wanted to soak up the festive spirit. Restaurants featured specialty foods and drinks to fuel the crowd and live music encouraged everyone to get in the spirit of the holiday. Always a highlight at Shopping Night is Santa Claus. There's something about seeing the big man in red that brings huge smiles to the faces of both little and big kids. (Phil and Brenda Shelton with Santa)

Pet of the Week

This little lady is Pixie.

Pixie is a sterilized Calico cat of 6 months old. She came in the shelter with her mum and three sisters 5 months ago and now it's time for her to find a home for herself.

When she came in she was a bit afraid of people. So she went into foster care for a short period and look at her now, she loves all attention and will come to greet you when you enter the Cat Palace.

Did you know that Calico cats are thought to bring good luck in Japan? In past years, Japanese sailors would travel with Calicos onboard their ships for protection. But Pixie doesn't want to sail around the world. A house and a warm family is good enough for her!

Pixie is tested NEG for FIV/L and had all her vaccinations. She will be chipped the moment you come to pick her up to bring her home.

Monique Degenaar



If you would like to meet our cats and dogs, please come to Animal Shelter Bonaire, Kaminda Lagun 26A. Open Monday - Friday 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 2-3:30 p.m. Saturday 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. nonstop. You can also call 701-4989 or 717-4989 to make an appointment, via whatsapp, facebook messenger, or email animalshelterbonaire@gmail.com

A Garden? Just Do It!

by Angliet, Nature Lover

Orchids

It took me a while to find what I wanted to write for the new year. Of course, it had to be something special. I took a look in my box of creative ideas and found some beautiful images of an awesome orchid in different blooming stages. Yes, this was it, I had found the inspiration in the rare aspects of an orchid plant. The special warm colors of this particular orchid match perfectly with all I look for in the new year. White for peace, red for love, purple for hope and to me, that small yellow part in the heart of the flower means let the sunshine come in.

Besides the different colors, the four stages of the plant's life in the picture have meaning to me. The beginning of new life means a new year, spring and new dreams. As the flowers open more, our dreams get more body, the future feels good and there is hope, but we are not there yet. As the string of flowers fully open, they are exotic, attractive, full of life and powerful. The fully open flowers give me the ideas that dreams can come true, summer, sunshine, love and life is good.

These inspiring thoughts in my mind in the new year are hidden in the appearance of these orchid flowers from the images of a creative friend, Elissey Kostsov.

And with this, I want to inspire you with the love for orchids. You won't believe it, but even on our dry Bonaire certain types of orchids do very well.

There are different types of orchids all over world. I'm writing about the epiphytes which grow on the surface of another plant, such as a tree. They grow best on trees that have a groovy texture, but the roots do not penetrate the



Orchids

Photo credit Elissey Kost

bark. Before you hook an orchid to a tree you need to know the type of orchid and what it prefers: full shade, partial shade or full sun. The best part of an orchid to attach is the base where the roots start. One can use a part of an old shell of a coconut. Put the orchid plant in it with the base against the inside of the shell. One can then tie the shell to the trunk with a panty hose. Make sure that the plant has firm contact with the trunk or shell. This type of orchid does not like wet

feet. Too much water is bad for them. They live from air. In the dry season spray them once a week. If possible, use rain water and only enough to let them get some moisture.

They can also be planted in pot or basket. When repotting, don't use regular potting soil, but instead use some bark, charcoal, some old leaves and small stones. Don't repot quickly; only when the pot is broken by the roots. One can plant orchids in baskets and hang them in trees, which they love because this type of orchids don't like to be exposed to full sun.

With the rain nowadays your orchid will grow quickly and will surprise you for years with its awesome blooms.

Orchids, graceful, delicate and exotic, symbolize love, beauty, refinement, many children (in some cultures), thoughtfulness and mature charm. Orchids are one of the most popular flowers on the market. As a gift it is one of the most desired plants, because of its enduring qualities.

With this writing I wish you a blessed and inspired 2024 in everything you want to grow to make your dreams come true. Remember, connection with people and nature (such as gardening) makes us better friends to ourselves, to our surroundings, our planet and leads to a happy green society.



Angliet grew up in the Surinam jungle, moved to the Netherlands as a teen, where she trained as a teacher, then in Alternative Healing. She has traveled the world - north to Russia and Alaska, south to Tierra del Fuego and Africa and all points in between. Returning to the Caribbean with her young family, she taught in St Eustatius and Bonaire. Everywhere she has lived, she has planted a garden and grown her own food.



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