PROTECTING A NATIONAL TREASURE

Providing sewage pumpout service for boats in the Simpson Bay Lagoon of St. Maarten has been a long-term goal for EPIC’s Love the Lagoon program. This lagoon, one of the largest in the West Indies, not only provides essential mangrove and seagrass habitat, a significant part of the island’s economy is also centered around the maritime industry of this safe harbor. By providing boaters with a reliable and economical disposal method, we can reduce the amount of sewage entering the lagoon.

Our surveys of boaters showed that the vast majority would use a pumpout service and that the boating community in general cares for these waters. A very generous donation by CA Technologies has made this pumpout goal possible. By leveraging CA’s support, the local community has made significant contributions as we work toward purchasing a vessel on which to place the pump. Your donations for this cause are welcome.

In 2010, St. Maarten became an independent nation within the Kingdom (Continued on page 2)

SEABIRD CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

While the Caribbean may be a popular tourist destination, there are still many areas that are off the beaten path, such as difficult to access offshore islands and rocks. Fortunately, many of these remote islands are a refuge for native wildlife, including nesting seabirds.

The Lesser Antillean region of the Caribbean forms an arc of several hundred miles that stretches north to south, dotted with hundreds of islands where very little or nothing was known of the seabird population. Now EPIC’s Seabird Breeding Atlas of the Lesser Antilles, expected to be completed this summer, will provide the most comprehensive picture of the region’s seabird breeding populations and the threats they face.

Despite their often remote nesting locations, seabirds have not escaped human impacts and must deal with problems such as predation by introduced mammals like rats, hunting by people, overfishing of their prey, and pollution. Researchers Katharine and David Lowrie, who generously donated their sailboat and crew time, spent two years surveying every island, islet, and rocky outcrop that could support seabird nests in the archipelago. For areas not surveyed, the French Antilles and parts of Anguilla, current data was shared by colleagues working in those locations. We recorded populations for each of the 11 seabird species, identified previously undocumented breeding colonies, and confirmed nesting by populations of Audubon’s Shearwater long thought extirpated.

In addition to research, the team conducted outreach via presentations for governments, NGOs, and schools as well as media campaigns for each nation. Over 1,300 participants (Continued on page 3)
of the Netherlands. This new status provides opportunities and challenges. It is our hope that a greater sense of pride in national treasures, such as the Simpson Bay Lagoon, will result in further protections for the natural heritage of the island.

The Love the Lagoon Program has had many successes this past year, thanks in large part to the diligence of Project Manager Rueben Thompson.

- EPIC, St. Maarten’s National Operator for Blue Flag eco-certification, continues to make strides in establishing Blue Flag Beaches and Marinas, including an additional pilot marina at Isle de Sol Yacht Club. EPIC partnered with The Ministry of Tourism to place educational signage at beaches and marinas, which provides visitors with environmental and safety information.

- Our outreach program continues to grow, assisted by intern Linden Rayton, as we reached nearly 600 students this past year through interactive presentations and field trips to nearby wetlands. Survey responses show our efforts are making a positive impact.

- Multiple trash clean-ups along coastlines helped reduce litter and empower citizens to reclaim these beautiful sites.

- Volunteers conducted a biological inventory of the mangrove seedlings planted at Simpson Bay Lagoon’s Grand Ilet by EPIC in 2004. The team found an emergent population of diverse wildlife, sponges, and plants all associated with the restoration of this mangrove stand.

- EPIC conducts bi-weekly seawater safety tests in cooperation with the American University of the Caribbean.

- We organized an oil spill response stakeholder meeting which included industry, government, and NGOs. We continue to advocate for a comprehensive oil and fuel spill response plan, training, and supplies.

- Constant campaigning from EPIC galvanized government into fining the individual who dumped 50,000 gallons of used oil in rusty, leaking barrels in the mountains. We also reported illegal building and dumping activities at wetlands and coastlines.

(Continued from page 1)

How does EPIC decide what it will do for the next five years? How do we ensure that our list of accomplishments will continue to grow? The Board of Directors gather for a retreat; we talk about our visions for the organization, the great things we plan to achieve, tempered by the realities of running a non-profit organization, synthesize it, and write it all down. The resulting document is our Strategic Plan.

After a planning session in October 2010, EPIC’s “Strategic Plan 2011-2016” was drafted, edited, and ultimately approved in March 2011. Facilitator Will Murray provided excellent guidance throughout the process.

This document, while still dynamic, will serve as EPIC’s guide for the next five years. We have identified how we will complete projects throughout the region. With milestones to reach, measurable outcomes, and financial targets, it will be an exciting period of growth and greater conservation impact.

The Board has provided a wonderful service to EPIC in leaving this roadmap for the future. And we thank our supporters for making it possible for EPIC to meet and exceed our goals.

We are currently seeking new members to join the Board of Directors. If you or someone you know would like to contribute to meeting EPIC’s mission, please contact current Board Member Adam Brown at abrown@epicislands.org.

Thank you for your support,

Natalia Collier
President

Students sorting waste by time needed to decompose.  Photo: R.J. Thompson

EPIC’s Board of Directors at a Strategic Planning session.
Seabird conservation priorities

Seabird conservation priorities were reached, surpassing our target number. A region-wide art competition was also a great success, with entries from throughout the region. Students also received Save Our Seabirds stickers and temporary tattoos as a reminder of what they had learned.

Local government and NGO staff often assisted EPIC during field surveys, which provided partners with field training as well as formal instruction in seabird monitoring techniques.

Based upon EPIC's data, the Tobago Cays Marine Park has already designated Catholic Island as a bird reserve and the Saba Conservation Foundation is investigating options for designating Green Island as a bird reserve.

One of the primary objectives of the Atlas is to prioritize conservation focal areas, ensuring that limited financial resources have the greatest impact. As such, we noted threats to seabird colonies during the course of surveys. Invasive predators such as rats and the impacts of development and human disturbance were widely observed.

The level of hunting and harvesting of seabirds, their chicks, and eggs in certain areas, such as the Grenadines, was astonishing. Virtually every egg and chick could be removed with just one visit by poachers. While predation by introduced mammals is expected, and some harvesting by humans was foreseen in economically-stressed communities, the extent and impact of hunting practices was a shock.

As part of our mission to conduct community-based conservation, EPIC anticipates working with local and regional partners over the long-term to address these and other issues for a brighter future for seabirds. We hope to build upon relationships established with on-island colleagues, serving as a strong foundation for future work in the region.

Sharing a love for birds

Birds are charismatic mascots for the natural world. Easy to see, often colorful, and full of personality these ambassadors can be found in even the most urban environments. This is why celebrations such as International Migratory Bird Day and the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival are wonderful opportunities to encourage concern for our environment.

EPIC's team of volunteers have been instrumental in outreach efforts. Ronald Pieters has begun leading free public Bird Walks on St. Maarten as part of the festivities. Intern Linden Rayton made birds a key part of her school presentations about wetlands, including fun Migratory Birds of the West Indies coloring books and bird-themed temporary tattoos and stickers donated by the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds.

EPIC is also committed to expanding research capacity in the region, as evidenced by our ongoing field training programs. This year, two participants from Dominica, Limbert Smith and Machel Sultan, assisted with field studies involving mist-netting, banding, and assessments of migrant and resident forest species on St. Martin.

Co-founder Adam Brown has now conducted over a decade of research on the birds of St. Martin, having monitored birds in the forest, scrub, and mangrove habitats. This year, graduate student Phillip Howard of Antioch University partnered with EPIC to complete his thesis entitled “Wintering ecology of migrant songbirds in St. Martin, West Indies.”

To have a broader conservation impact, data was shared with the Coastal Conservation Action Lab, Island Conservation, and the Global Avian Invasions Atlas Project. To learn more about our long-term avian research, visit our website where you can read EPIC's reports and publications.
THANK YOU FOR MAKING EPIC’S WORK POSSIBLE

DONORS

Anonymous  
John Artim  
Adam Brown  
Andrew Brown  
Edgar Brown  
in honor of Ruth Brown  
Joelle Buffa  
Barbara Cennegieter  
CA Technologies  
Melanie Choisy  
Maria & Terry Collier  
in honor of Caroline Collier  
Natalia Collier  
J.R. Datzman  
Angela Dimmitt  
Nancy Hayward  
in honor of Paul Sikkel

Michelle Hester  
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Island Food Wholesale  
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Merchant’s Export  
Merchant’s Market St. Thomas  
Will Murray  
Port de Plaisance  
Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds  
St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association  
St. Maarten PRIDE Foundation  
Barbara Thompson  
Wired Sailor  
Mark Yokoyama

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Caribbean Kites  
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Ocean Explorers  
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Shipwreck Shops  
Paul Sikkel

Pizza Galley  
Rhino Safari  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Sea Saba Dive Center  
Shams  
Shearwater Resort  
St. Maarten Marine Trades Association  
Tequila Restaurant  
Top Carrot  
Topper’s  
Turtle Tours  
Westin Resort  
Mark Yokoyama

PUMPOUT FUND

Thank you to everybody who has contributed to the fund, especially major funders CA Technologies, Isle de Sol Yacht Club, and Port de Plaisance. We just have a little ways to go until we reach our goal. Be a part of this much needed project and donate to the fund!

$27,000

$21,095

$0

EPIC outreach intern
Linden Rayton receives a donation of a new digital projector from the St. Maarten Marine Trades Association. Photo: R.J. Thompson
The Love the Lagoon fundraiser was a great success, bringing us closer to our goal for a sewage pumpout boat in the Simpson Bay Lagoon.

Photo: B. Filson

Statement of Financial Position as of May 31, 2011

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Statement of Activities for Year Ended May 31, 2010

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<td>Research &amp; Conservation</td>
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<td>Depreciation Expense</td>
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<td>Net Assets End of Year</td>
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<td>Total In-Kind Donations</td>
<td>$76,300.00</td>
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YES, I will continue to support Caribbean conservation. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of:

- □ $25 TROPICBIRD LEVEL
- □ $100 MANGROVE LEVEL
- □ $500 CLOUDFOREST LEVEL
- □ $1000 ISLAND LEVEL
- □ $5000 OCEAN LEVEL

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
Amount Enclosed __________________________

For more information on donating contact Natalia at (707) 845-1171
MAIL your check, payable to Environmental Protection in the Caribbean, 200 Dr. M.L. King Jr. Blvd, Riviera Beach, FL 33404.

www.epicislands.org

Check out our new website at
WWW.EPICISLANDS.ORG
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- Learn more about programs
- Download reports and publications

Thanks to Ewan Lauder for pro bono web design!

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