

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

20
24

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ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION IN
THE CARIBBEAN

SEAS - SCIENCE | EDUCATION | ADVOCACY | STEWARDSHIP



WE ARE EPIC

EPIC is proud to work across the Caribbean region on a variety of impactful projects. Whether through our long-running Flagship Programs in Sint Maarten, the Grenadines, and Haiti, our wide-reaching Regional Projects, or our locally focused independent projects, our work is rooted in our mission of “Protecting the Caribbean environment through research and community-based action.” The consistent results are win-win solutions for both people and nature.

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As we move toward a more sustainable future, I am thrilled to share the progress EPIC has achieved across the Caribbean region. Through unwavering conservation efforts and applying the tools of education, research, advocacy, and community engagement, we continue to fulfill our mission of safeguarding the region's unique and beautiful biodiversity. This work is made possible year after year by dedicated volunteers, staff and contractors, generous donors, and strategic

partners. Our work continues to be critically important, as we strive to address pressing challenges such as climate change and habitat loss. Thank you! Together we are making a difference.

This Annual Impact Report highlights the achievements of the past year and also provides a glimpse into the future projects that EPIC is pursuing. Our work includes islands such as Sint Maarten, the Grenadines, Haiti, the Virgin Islands, and beyond, where EPIC's efforts are building capacity and resilience that improve people's lives while achieving strategic conservation goals.

My hope is that these success stories will inspire you to have hope for the future, and to recognize that being a part of EPIC is an important action that you are taking towards realizing our shared vision of a healthier, more sustainable Caribbean.

Please reach out to me if you would like to become more involved.

With Gratitude,

Tabitha Stadler

TABITHA STADLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FLAGSHIP PROGRAMS

DONATE

We are grateful for your ongoing support. Please make a contribution to support EPIC's positive mission impact and protect the Caribbean region for current and future generations. Visit [EPICISLANDS.ORG](https://www.epicislands.org).

EPIC SINT MAARTEN CONSERVATION | Page 6

EPIC has been a leader for environmental conservation on Dutch Sint Maarten/French Saint Martin since our founding in 2000 but was formalized in 2007 with the establishment of the locally incorporated EPIC Sint Maarten Foundation. This team of activists has implemented a wide range of programs that enhance understanding of the local environment, restore fragile ecosystems, and educated both leaders and children about the ecology of their island. These efforts have empowered communities, inspired action, and driven legislation to protect and improve the natural world while fostering community prosperity.

BLACK-CAPPED PETREL CONSERVATION | Page 8

An endangered seabird in the Caribbean, Black-capped Petrels spend their lives at sea, returning to land to nest on only one known island, Hispaniola. EPIC joined an expedition to Haiti in 2012 to find nest sites and then took the lead on a comprehensive conservation strategy including sustainable farming, youth education, and Black-capped Petrel monitoring, working to secure a future for the Petrels and the people who share its habitat.

GRENADINES SEABIRD CONSERVATION | Page 10

The nearly 100 islands of the transboundary Grenadines include the nations of Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This area has a rare concentration of globally and regionally important seabird nesting sites, crucial to rebuilding populations that have declined by ~70% worldwide in the past 70 years. Since 2009, EPIC has implemented a multi-disciplinary approach including the Grenadines Seabird Guardians, a citizen science program, youth education in schools, seabird research and monitoring, and habitat restoration, to protect native species and secure maritime livelihoods.

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Visit our website to explore an interactive map with 24 years of EPIC projects in the Caribbean.



REGIONAL PROJECTS



PHOTO: JULIANA COFFEY

CARIBBEAN CLIMATE JUSTICE CAMP

EMPOWERING 120 COMMUNITY LEADERS FROM 25 NATIONS TO CO-CREATE STRATEGIES FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The first-ever Caribbean Climate Justice Camp for 120 community leaders from more than 25 Caribbean nations was hosted by EPIC, EPIC Sint Maarten, Roots, and many collaborators during a four-day event in March on Sint Maarten. The successful camp built knowledge and networks, included the sharing of stories and skills, and the co-creation of strategies to address conservation challenges faced by the region.

A series of interactive tracks offered in the mornings focused on energy, gender and climate justice, marine conservation, and adaptation and resilience. The adaptation and resilience track was co-led and facilitated by EPIC Director Tabitha Stadler and EPIC Sint Maarten Associate Riddhi Samtani. Samtani attended a prior camp and was a major driver in bringing the Camp to the Caribbean and hosting it on Sint Maarten. “The Climate Justice Camp Caribbean has sparked an unparalleled sense of solidarity among movement builders and activists in our region. It’s been amazing to witness people, many of whom are new to such events, embracing the crucial need to unify in the Caribbean. Seeing these interactions unfold in the heart of my community, Sint Maarten, adds an extra layer of significance to the work. We’re not simply facing the climate crisis; we’re rewriting the narrative of our collective futures for our islands,” said Samtani.

Panel sessions entitled *Sustainable Livelihoods and Com-*

munity Involvement as Climate Adaptation Strategies and Promoting Sustainability and Resilience Through Education and Behavior Change featured EPIC’s work in Sint Maarten, Grenada, and the Virgin Islands. The afternoon sessions were participant-led on a wide range of topics including solar water heating, funding, data tools, sustainability, activism, human rights, communications, the climate economy, and more.

The first Climate Justice Camp was hosted by Roots in 2022 with the vision of convening youth living in the world’s most climate-impacted regions to work at the intersection between climate and social justice. Over the last two years, this effort has brought together more than 1,000 participants from more than 100 countries across the Global South, leading to new climate initiatives around the world.

EPIC also continues its role in the Caribbean Climate Justice Alliance, initiated by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI). EPIC Director Tabitha Stadler is the co-lead of the Adaptation and Loss and Damage Working Group, along with Kevan Kalapnath-Maharaj, Managing Director of IAMovement from Trinidad and Tobago. Discussions continue about hosting another Caribbean Climate Justice Camp in the near future. Follow us on social media for the opportunity to apply for the next Camp.

“WE HAD UNPRECEDENTED TURNOUT FROM INDIVIDUALS AROUND THE CARIBBEAN, REFLECTING THE GROWING INTEREST IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES.” –TABITHA STADLER, EPIC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



“AS A LOCAL MOVEMENT BUILDER AND ORGANIZER FROM SINT MAARTEN, I’VE LONG RECOGNIZED THE FRAGMENTATION WITHIN THE CARIBBEAN DUE TO COLONIAL LEGACIES AND POLITICAL DIVIDES.”

–RIDDHI SAMTANI, CLIMATE ACTION ADVOCATE



CARIBBEAN SEABIRD CENSUS

EPIC AND REGIONAL PARTNERS ARE ADVANCING SEABIRD RESEARCH, MONITORING, AND CONSERVATION

Avian biologist and EPIC co-founder Natalia Collier continues to advocate for a pan-Caribbean seabird census as a member of the BirdsCaribbean Seabird Working Group. This partnership program has succeeded in coordinating researchers and citizen-scientists across the region to contribute data on seabird breeding colonies, which play a critical role in the health of marine ecosystems. This is crucial for understanding the health of Caribbean

seabird populations, which have declined dramatically in recent decades. The team also delivered webinars and trainings, implemented a standardized census data sheet, and engaged local island scientists, critical to the effort.

We’re seeking researchers from every Caribbean island to participate. If you’re interested in learning more or joining the next census, please contact us at info@epicislands.org.

FLAGSHIP PROGRAM

SINT MAARTEN CONSERVATION



“OUR GOAL IS TO TURN PLASTIC WASTE INTO A RESOURCE THAT BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY WHILE REDUCING THE BURDEN ON OUR ENVIRONMENT.”

**— FLEUR HERMANIDES
PRESIDENT, EPIC SINT MAARTEN FOUNDATION**

TURNING THE TIDE ON PLASTIC WASTE IN SINT MAARTEN

EPIC PIONEERS INNOVATIVE RECYCLING AND EDUCATION EFFORTS TO TACKLE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

“Plastic pollution is everyone’s problem,” says Fleur Hermanides, President of the EPIC Sint Maarten Foundation and architect of the Perpetual Plastics Program. The Perpetual Plastics Project marks a groundbreaking effort to tackle the island’s waste crisis. A social recycling workspace in Cole Bay has been opened and this innovative facility is already transforming discarded plastics into reusable items using open-source recycling methods inspired by the Precious Plastics initiative, through collaboration and the support of more than a dozen community volunteers and donors.

The process starts with collecting and sorting high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and polypropylene (PP) plastics from schools. These materials are then shredded, melted, and molded into new products.

“Our goal is to turn plastic waste into a resource that benefits the community while reducing the burden on our environment,” Hermanides says.

The project also addresses social challenges by creating job opportunities for individuals who face barriers to traditional employment. The workspace provides a supportive environment where community members can develop skills while contributing to sustainability efforts.

SPECIAL THANKS

Heartfelt gratitude for the many donors, supporters, sponsors, and grantors who made this a banner year for the EPIC Sint Maarten Foundation. View the recognition list [here](#).



WELCOME BACK: HOTEL AND MARINA ECO-CERTIFICATIONS

Sint Maarten’s Green Key and Blue Flag internationally recognized eco-label programs have started back up again through the initiative of the EPIC Sint Maarten Foundation. Officially serving as the National Operator through the program administered by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), the goal is to promote sustainable tourism and protect the island’s natural environments, including beaches, coasts, and waterways. Having previously held this position from 2008 to 2017, when the program was forced to stop due to the devastation of Hurricane Irma, EPIC will once again collaborate with the local tourism industry to uphold high environmental standards. The Green Key

program promotes sustainable practices within hotels, restaurants, and tourism facilities, while the Blue Flag program focuses on water quality, safety, and environmental management at beaches and marinas. This renewed partnership with FEE, and with support from the Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (VROMI), reflects a strong commitment to environmental responsibility in tourism, helping to preserve Sint Maarten’s ecological integrity for future generations. If you want to participate in this program on Sint Maarten, contact ddelain@epicislands.org.



CORENA BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

FIELD SURVEYS AND TRAINING ILLUMINATE OVER 300 SPECIES, ADVANCING CONSERVATION GOALS AMID CLIMATE CHALLENGES

Gathering scientific data to support sustainable management of Sint Maarten’s diverse habitats was accomplished this year through the completion of field surveys and training for the terrestrial baseline biodiversity assessment, which was part of the Coastal Resilience and Needs Assessments (CORENA) project. Over 12 days, ecologists Mark Yokoyama of Saint Martin and Kevel Lindsay of Antigua conducted biodiversity assessments across key sites on Sint Maarten and Saint Martin. The team documented and photographed a variety of plant and animals species, including plants, insects, mammals, birds, and amphibians. Their work extended from sunrise to dusk, with additional nighttime surveys. In total, they observed more than 300 species!

Yokoyama noted the island’s surprising biodiversity,

stating, “Sint Maarten offers a diversity of species, many unknown to the general public, from small insects to larger birds like Ospreys. Even areas impacted by development hosted pockets of wildlife, including native species such as the yellow sage and St. Martin anole lizard.” The team noted conservation issues such as declining bat colonies and the limited range of endemic plant species.

The CORENA project, funded by the European Union through the RESEMBID grant program, was initiated by the Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (VROMI) in partnership with the Nature Foundation. The project aims to enhance the protection of critical biodiversity areas on Sint Maarten particularly in light of increasing climate risks. EPIC was selected to lead the terrestrial biodiversity assessment in December 2023.

FLAGSHIP PROGRAM

BLACK-CAPPED PETREL

COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT LEADS TO LONG-TERM CONSERVATION GAINS IN HAITI

Considering the numerous environmental issues and impacts in the Caribbean, it might seem like nearly a decade of work focused on an endangered seabird, the Black-capped Petrel, could have limited scope. But Adam Brown, Black-capped Petrel Program Manager at EPIC, has seen it transform an entire community. Brown's team efforts to protect the Black-capped Petrel—one of the rarest seabirds that nests high in Haiti's mountains—sparked a movement that has bridged conservation, education, and sustainable farming, showing how environmental work can benefit communities far beyond its ecological impact.

"Conservation without engagement isn't sustainable, and the support of local people has proven essential to preserving this species and its habitat" says Brown. "Community acceptance was crucial."

Initially focused on protecting the petrel's habitat and monitoring the species, EPIC's efforts quickly shifted to the key strategy of engaging the community. In collaboration with Plant With Purpose, a nonprofit focused on sustainable farming, EPIC encouraged local

farmers to adopt eco-friendly agricultural practices. This reduced pressure on the forests and provided farmers with more stable income streams, fostering a deeper respect for environmental protection.

Brown has observed that sustainable farming "changes lives by providing resources for an entire village to thrive while safeguarding the mountain forests where the petrels nest." EPIC also extended its efforts to children's education, delivering environmental watershed education in schools. Brown recalls the enthusiasm of young students who eagerly learned about sustainability and the petrel's precarious future, emphasizing that "engaging young minds was a key step for lasting change."

An additional community engagement effort was the Black-capped Petrel Festival, which brings the village together to celebrate its role in protecting the seabird, with events ranging from educational activities to a soccer match against a nearby village. Over time, the festival's impact grew so much that EPIC's presence became unnecessary—locals now organize the event themselves. "The community took full ownership," Brown says. "They wanted to be in charge of the festival and all its programs, and they were more than capable." This independence was further tested during the pandemic when travel restrictions limited EPIC's in-person involvement. A local soccer coach took over as educator, proving that the community's commitment had deepened. "We've reached the

PETREL CHICKS FLEDGED

100+

point where the Boukan Chat community no longer needs EPIC's outside funds or staff; they are now implementing these programs independently," says Brown.

Boukan Chat, Haiti has become a model of environmental stewardship, echoing EPIC's values. What began as an attempt to save a seabird now demonstrates the power of community-driven change. Sustainable farming is now embedded in local practices, and environmental education is a permanent part of the curriculum. The initial support from EPIC has fostered a self-sufficient system where conservation aligns with community goals.

Today, the Black-capped Petrel is more secure, and its prospects for survival have improved. Although Brown is cautious about the bird's future, he is optimistic as local stewardship ultimately bolsters habitat protection over the long-term.

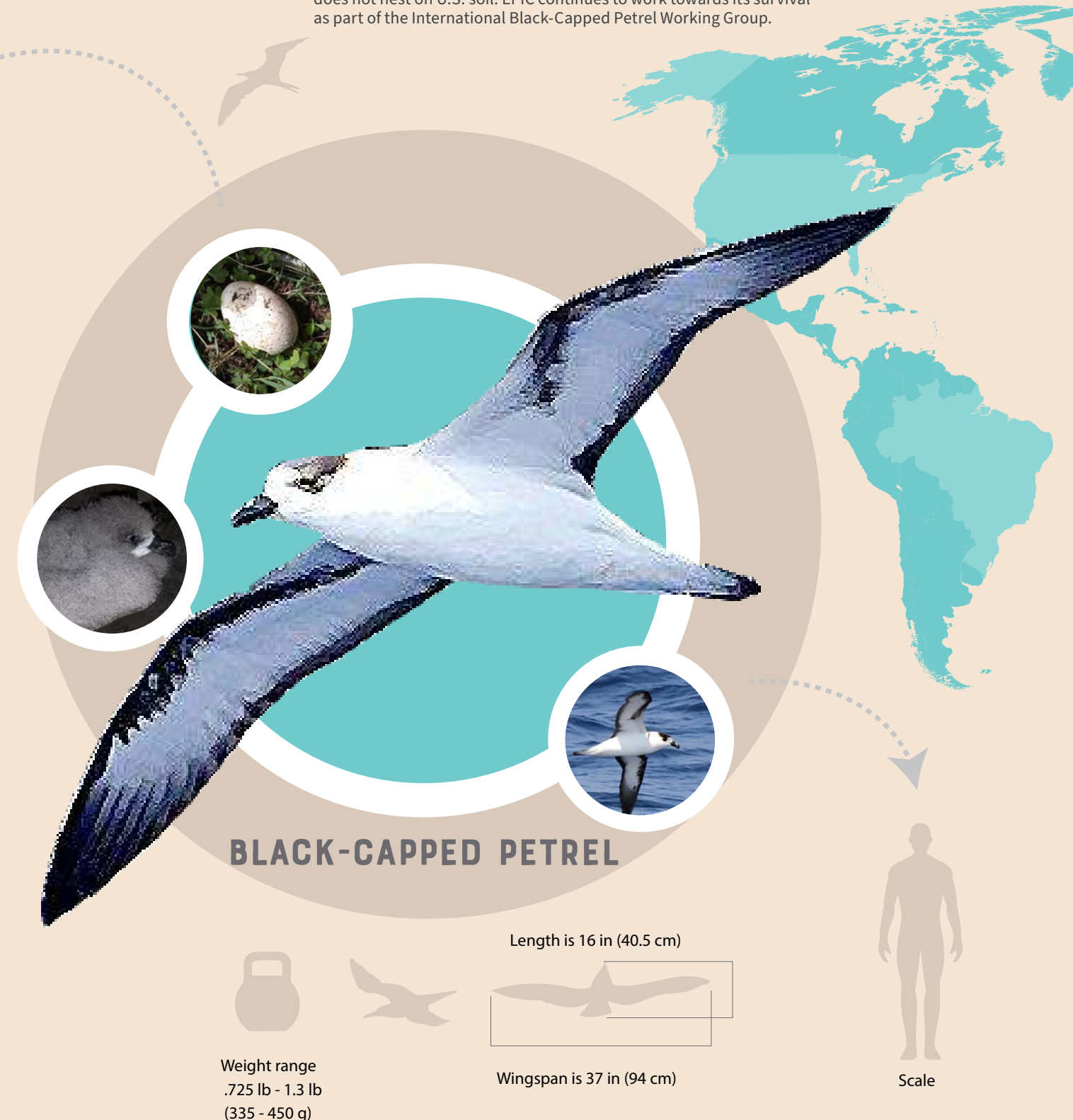
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Learn more about EPIC's work with the Black-capped Petrel.



NEW ENDANGERED SPECIES LISTING

The Black-capped Petrel was officially added to the U.S. Endangered Species List in early 2024 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which cited threats such as offshore wind energy development, habitat loss, and mining. While protected internationally in other ways, one unique aspect is that the Black-capped Petrel feeds offshore in the U.S. but does not nest on U.S. soil. EPIC continues to work towards its survival as part of the International Black-Capped Petrel Working Group.



SUSTAINABLE FARMING

Farmers in Haiti standing by their crops.



FLAGSHIP PROGRAM

GRENADINES SEABIRDS

PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AS CLIMATE-DRIVEN HURRICANES THREATEN LIVES, LIVELIHOODS, AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS

EPIC has partnered with local seafarers in the Grenadines to conduct seabird research and conservation programs since 2015. These passionate volunteers have dedicated countless hours of their expertise towards protecting the region's wildlife. Unfortunately, in a dramatic and destructive display, Hurricane Beryl tore through the Grenadines on July 1, 2024 as a menacing category four storm, leaving a trail of devastation across the islands. The extent of the damage was staggering, with official estimates suggesting that over 95% of homes on some islands had been damaged or destroyed. While hurricanes are a familiar threat in the Caribbean, their increasing intensity and frequency, driven by climate change, are making life even more difficult.

EPIC supporters and partners rallied together and raised nearly \$2,000 for hurricane relief and follow-up efforts that will support members of the Grenadines Seabird Guardians, a citizen science group managed by EPIC.

One of the many people EPIC works with is Vaughn, a small-scale fisherman, tour operator, and sailor from Carriacou who had been instrumental in EPIC's efforts since 2019. Living full-time on his sailboat, Vaughn also captained a self-built speedboat that was often used for EPIC's research activities. His local knowledge, passion, and his boats enabled

numerous projects to occur including establishing the first wildlife reserve signs on offshore islands, deploying tracking devices on seabirds, and conducting beach clean-ups.

Vaughn stands out among local team members since he has completed over 75 solo surveys across more than 30 remote uninhabited islands while counting over 65,000 individual seabirds. He also trained fellow fisherfolk and generously housed visiting EPIC staff and researchers on his boat, which provided multiple benefits, serving as a field camp, office, meeting space, and lab. The research data collected, and general support offered by him and others is crucial for understanding seabird populations and conservation needs in this remote region. When not involved with EPIC, Vaughn has provided fish to his community and transported goods and services between the islands. His boat was his lifeline, as they were for many in the region, enabling work and multiple contributions to the community.

Tragically, however, Hurricane Beryl severely damaged boats of Vaughn and many other citizen-scientists. We continue to work with these dedicated seabird ambassadors in the Grenadines to ensure that their valuable work can continue.



US VIRGIN ISLANDS

WATER & WASTE SMART SCHOOLS

AN EPA-FUNDED PROGRAM EDUCATED 4,000 STUDENTS WHILE REDUCING PLASTIC WASTE

More than 4,000 students from seven public schools in the U.S. Virgin Islands participated in the interactive science curriculum called Water Heroes, and received free reusable water bottles through a grant-funded partnership between EPIC and the Virgin Islands Conservation Society's Eco-Schools program. In addition to the hands-on environmental education delivered, some schools received new filtered water bottle filling stations or had their existing stations retrofitted with high-quality water filters.

These efforts have significantly reduced the cost for families who previously purchased single-use plastic water bottles, while also better protecting children's health from plastic exposure and reducing plastic waste. Funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), this three-year \$200,000 award expanded partnerships and the recognition that water and waste education is critical to the future sustainability of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John, which are U.S. Caribbean territories.



ALLANSON CRUICKSHANK
PROJECT COORDINATOR

HABITAT RESTORATION

EPIC SECURES \$700,000 FROM THE DEEPWATER HORIZON SETTLEMENT TO PROTECT VITAL NESTING AREAS

A landmark development in EPIC's seabird conservation is the funding secured through the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Settlement. The catastrophic 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico impacted migratory seabirds that traverse the Caribbean, potentially leaving long-lasting ecological scars. Under the settlement,

EPIC will receive ~\$700,000 over five years to restore critical seabird habitats in the Grenadines. These funds will support invasive species eradication, colony monitoring, and the preservation of essential nesting areas. This project began in late 2024 with the hiring of Project Coordinator, Allanson Cruickshank, who can be reached at acruickshank@epicislands.org.

MAKING AN EPIC DIFFERENCE

THANK YOU FOR MAKING 2024 ONE OF OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL YEARS YET!

STATEMENT OF FINANCIALS

FISCAL YEAR

June 1, 2023 - May 31, 2024

Total Assets \$321,024.43

INCOME

Grants \$223,134.11

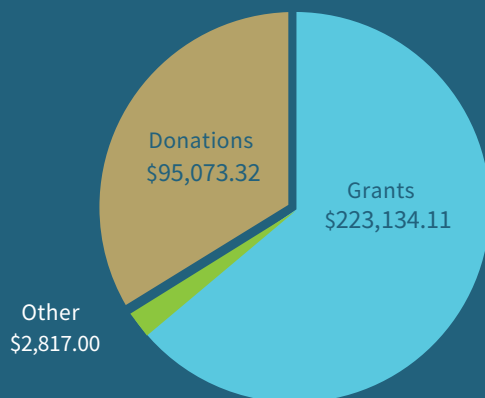
Donations \$95,073.32

Other \$2,817.00

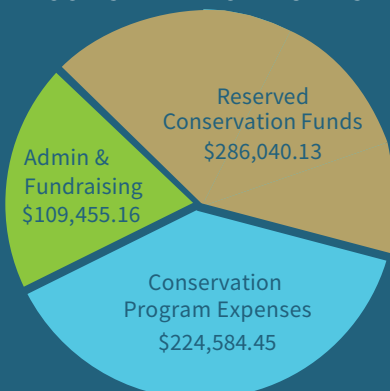
Total Income \$321,024.43

EXPENSES \$334,039.61

INCOME



EXPENSES & RESERVED CONSERVATION FUNDS



LEADERSHIP AND OPERATIONS

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Natalia Collier, Co-Founder and Program Director

Adam Brown, Co-Founder and Program Director

Kathleen Scott, Operations Manager

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