

Science Café looks at nature above, below Statia's waters

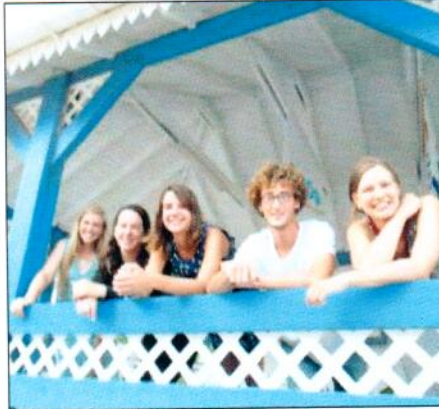
ST. EUSTATIUS--Lionfish are a predatory reef fish that were first spotted in the waters around St. Eustatius by divers from Scubaqua in 2010. They are not welcome since they eat native fish and reduce their populations.

Manon Sanguinet from the French University of La Rochelle is determined to find out if early local efforts to cull these unwanted creatures have been successful. "If they are, then maybe we can do more to control the species," she told an audience at the packed Science Café.

"Lionfish not only feed on fish that keep algae in

check on the reefs but they also compete for food with native predatory fish such as grouper and snapper. They are big breeders with females producing as many as two million eggs. The good news for Statia is that our survey identified more males than females," Sanguinet said.

With the help of volunteer divers, she has started to count these hungry visitors by mapping out sections in the Marine Park and the Marine Reserve. By reviewing earlier counts that started in 2011, she already suspects that the Marine Park is more populated by lionfish than the reserve



Scientists at Caribbean Netherlands Science Institute, from left: Elizabeth Haber, Hannah Madden, Manon Sanguinet, Adrien Lowenstein and Wendy Jesse.

where a notable decrease has been recorded.

"The lionfish population in Statia has clearly stabilized and the species could well become integrated within the present ecosystem as is the case in Venezuela," Sanguinet said.

In the meantime, she recommended these spiny fish for the dining tables. "Grilled or fried or prepared in a ceviche, they are gastronomic."

While Sanguinet is eating the fish that eat fish that eat the algae on the reefs, her colleague Adrien Lowenstein from the same university is carrying out a reef check survey. "Coral reefs deliver ecosystem services to tourism, fisheries and shoreline protection, especially during hurricanes," Sanguinet explained. "They need protection especially since they provide feeding, breeding, and spawning and nursery areas for many species."

Lowenstein commissioned a small team of divers to assess the health of these coral structures and of the many organisms, invertebrates and fish that rely on their existence.

Using data first researched in 2005 and onwards, he has discovered that some coral loss has taken place in two large areas on the seabed of Statia's shallow waters. "There has also been a decline in the density of invertebrates," he concluded.

Fascinating reptiles

Wendy Jesse from the VU University of Amsterdam is fascinated by reptiles. So much so that she has devoted a four year PhD project to taking a closer look at native and foreign reptile visitors to the Dutch Leeward and Windward Islands.

Jesse admits to being an inquisitive herpetologist. She wants to know why some species invade some islands and others do not. For the moment, Statia does not have any recent invaders.

"The only exotic foreigners arrived with early settlers on the island. They include the house gecko, the Brahimi blind snake and the Johnstones whistling frog," she pointed out.

Her first two weeks have been spent investigating 49 plots on the island to gather habitat and microhabitat data. Her first observations are interesting. "Statia reptiles prefer to be townies rather than country dwellers. But there is one exception; they turn their nose up at Coralita and creep away from this creeping vine."

Mexican Creeper

Unlike reptiles, Elizabeth Haber from the University of Utrecht is totally attracted to Coralita, sometimes called the Mexican Creeper. She is similarly drawn to Tan Tan, an invasive tree that is also a native to Mexico.

Both plants are considered by some stakeholders as a menace and a threat to the ecosystems on the island. Haber wants to know where and why these foreign flora thrive so well and if there is any way to get rid of them.

Her research has already covered 83 plots of land and uses GPS to map out the whereabouts of the weeds. Each plot is also measured for soil hardness and moisture, potential of hydrogen (pH) and litter depth.

"Results are not yet complete and recent drought conditions on the island have caused a dieback in the spread of Coralita," she noted. "Eventually I want to propose some management strategies that will yield the best result."

One of those strategies could be to harvest Coralita for tea making. The flowers of the plant are known for their anti-diabetic properties and the Science Café was recently told that islanders were three times more likely to have diabetes than their Dutch European counterparts.

Kadaster

Openbare Registers

Vacature voor Landmeetkundige

Het Kadaster is een stichting belast met het houden van de Openbare Registers en het uitvoeren van grensmetingen. De stichting bestaat uit twee afdelingen; Hypotheekbewaring en Landmeetkunde, elk met hun specifieke werkzaamheden. Op de afdeling Hypotheekbewaring worden aangeboden akten aan de wet getoetst, geregistreerd en verwerkt. Verder worden op deze afdelingen appartementsplitsingen getoetst en geregistreerd, onderzoeken gedaan naar de rechtstoestand van onroerende goederen en worden aan de balie diensten verleend aan het publiek. De afdeling Landmeetkunde is belast met het uitvoeren van de landmeetkundige werkzaamheden zoals het opmeten van percelen, het uitvoeren van perceelssplitsingen en het uitzetten van grenzen. Met de uitkomsten van de landmeetkundige werkzaamheden worden de digitale kaart bijgehouden en de meetbrieven opgemaakt.

Wie zoeken wij:

Het Kadaster is thans op zoek naar kandidaten voor de landmeetkundige afdeling waar zij als landmeter tewerk zullen worden gesteld. Kandidaten moet kennis hebben van de theoretisch en praktische toepassingen van landmeetkundige technieken. Verder moeten zij kennis hebben van moderne gegevenswinningstechnieken (GPS) en zij moeten deze in de praktijk kunnen toepassen. Ervaring met geografische informatie systemen (GIS) is een pre.

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Voor nadere informatie kunt u contact maken met mw. M. Peterson-Richardson op telefoonnr.: 1(721) 5422286 of 5422282.

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