

Sea & Learn 2018

This year Sea & Learn celebrated their 16th annual event on Saba. A total of 16 experts provided dynamic hands-on field projects and powerful presentations that engaged community awareness and discussions.

Each year Sea & Learn strives to improve the content, accessibility, and breadth of their program, and 2018 was no exception. International experts were able to interact with the entire Saba community: primary and secondary schools, adults, the elderly home, as well as tourists. The event ran throughout the month of October with a variety of activities from hands-on learning both on land and at sea as well as interactive multimedia presentations to reinforce the importance of environmental awareness on Saba.

Sea & Learn began on October 1st with the event officially opened by Governor Johnson's address, followed by musical performances by Jen Porter, DJ Jansesn, Ayan Farah, and Joost de Jong. They proudly preformed for the Opening Night at the local venue, Queen's Gardens Resort. Saba Bank Officer, Ayumi Kuramae Izioka, enlightened the audience of over 100 people about the research conducted on the Saba Bank and the value of that research as it relates to future economic strategies and the protection of this resource. Queen's Gardens Resort, in partnership with Freegan Food Café, served a delicious vegan meal, with proceeds supporting those in need within the Saba community.

In 2018, Sea & Learn was taken to another level by partnering with Benevolent Foundation Saba and the Saba LIFE Center to bring the Sea & Learn program to the elderly. Five of their experts (Craig Berg, Angela Collins, Stacey Williams, Jetske Vaas, and Elizabeth Haber) had the pleasure of interacting with participants of the Saba LIFE Center. Presentations which were

enhanced with live specimens and hands-on activities, took place at the local community building, the Eugenius Johnson Center. While the participants learned a great deal from the experts, the experts also gained local knowledge from Saba's older generation. Both parties were very happy with the new partnership and look forward to further collaboration in the future.

The growing networking with the Saba Government and local community is one of many accomplishments fulfilled in 2018. Maud Kok and Jordy van der Beek, current master students at Leiden University, previously traveled to Saba in April 2017 to work with local vector control to assess local mosquito populations and their distribution patterns between urban and natural areas. During Jordy & Maud's stay, they were able to collect many mosquito species to further their knowledge of Saba's mosquito populations. They helpfully shared all findings with local vector control.

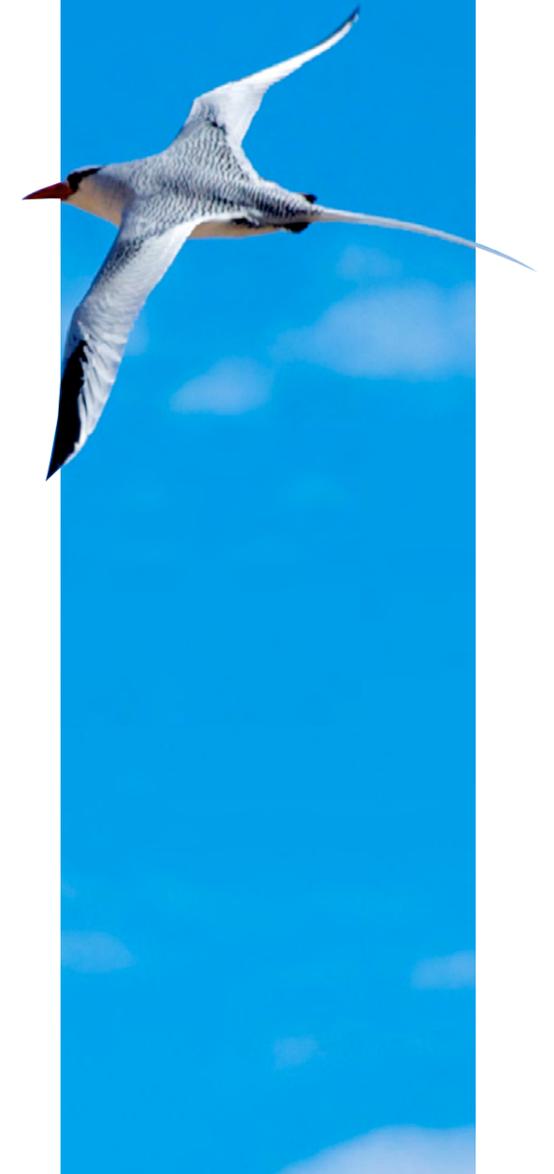
Josè Vargas, an invasive species control expert from Puerto Rico, used his platform facilitated by Sea & Learn to create a dialog between community members about priorities and strategies that work best for rat control in Saba. Josè used discussions with local vector control and placed tracking tunnels with students from local schools to assess which areas of Saba have large rat populations. He felt strongly that the rattraps, which do not use poison, could be an ideal solution to protecting the nests of Saba's Tropicbirds. Nearly 80% of the world's breeding population of Tropicbirds exists on the islands of Saba and Statia; therefore, controlling the rat population is vital to the success of this signature, beautiful bird.

The timing of the Sea & Learn event coincided with Saba Conservation Foundation's launching of their strategic

plan. This coincidental timing created the platform for possible future collaborations between our urchin expert, Stacey Williams, and DCNA representatives. Ongoing discussion of coralita control continues with Jetske Vaas and Elizabeth Haber.

In order to keep pace with new social media tactics and to provide the program to a broader audience, Facebook-Live was used to live stream the presentations this year. During Director of Saba Archaeology Center, Ryan Espersen's presentation, they had 900 views, 9 shares, 13 likes, and 8 comments on their live stream video. The team was able to successfully stream 14 Evening Presentations totaling to over 5,000 views. They are excited about the online participation and will continue to improve methods to create more social media presence for all Sea & Learn followers, and not only those present on Saba. They also posted short videos showing the activities experts conducted with students from Sacred Heart School and Saba Comprehensive School. Utilizing social media broadens their reach and provides another means to gauge public reaction to the event.

This year the team also expanded the program by making two field activities available to local students during their October school break. The field activities included a tide pool exploration hike with Stacey Williams and a fish dissection with Angela Collins. They had the help of local teachers, principals, and Saba Nature Education, to promote the October break activities. One student signed up for all of the activities and attended many evening presentations. His questions were insightful and added to Craig Berg's presentation on Tree Frogs. They look forward to further expanding the Sea & Learn October Break activities for 2019.



Tropic Bird by: © Kao Wulf

Closing night at Scout's Place ended on a high note with many community members involved in the festivities. In addition to the main presentation by Guido Leurs discussing sharks of the Saba Bank, Jens Odinga of Saba Nature Education spoke about Sea & Learn's vital role in the community. Four raffle prizes were donated by local artists and Sea & Learn experts. The sale of raffle tickets from these donated prizes contributed over \$1000 towards funding Sea & Learn 2018. Adding to the fun of Final Night was a trivia contest with correct answers rewarded with an eco-friendly Sea & Learn reusable water bottle. Shark expert, Guido Leurs, gave an interesting closing night presentation on the work he has done on the newly discovered Silky Shark of Saba Bank. Some lucky locals and tourists even got the chance to assist on his shark-tagging project!

Each year the Sea & Learn team seeks improved participation, not necessarily reflected in statistics but in the enthusiasm and feedback received throughout the community. By impacting both the youngest and oldest generations, they hope to continue the momentum that is created by a program like Sea & Learn where the incalculable value is promoting community engagement that can translate to awareness and involvement creating change. This concept goes beyond their goal of environmental awareness but can be used in any aspects that effect society.

Sea & Learn 2018

Watch the Sea & Learn presentations:

Guido Laura talk on silky sharks on the Saba Bank (starting at 23:09)
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/288319162013032/>

Jo e Vargas's presentation on invasive rat control
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/318647085582662/>

Tadizo Bervoet's (NFSXM) talk on coral and hurricanes
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/467734800415554/>

Elizabeth Haber's and **Jetske Vaas** talk on invasive species
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/2158288890908543/>

Angela Collins talk about the mighty hogfish
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/329649787834884/>

Stacey Williams's talk on sea urchins
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/256186561907817/>

Craig Berg's talk on tree frogs
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/1644065879031600/>

Jelle van der Velde talk on Saba's Coral health
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/290225231821228/>

Jordy van der Beek and **Maud Kok's** talk on mosquitos
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/1120356514796244/>

Dahlia M Hassell talk on Saba Sponges
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/263170097736325/>

Evan Tuoy's talk on fish spawning
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/301552050663501/>

Ryan Espersen talk about Saba's National Park
<https://www.facebook.com/seaandlearn/videos/541913766255869/>



Sea Urchins by:   Hans Leijnse

Would you like to share a news item?
Please e-mail us: research@DCNAnature.org