

# Sustainable Island Management students visit Statia in a 2-week fieldtrip

By Marlou Heemstra and Alwin Hylkema

**Last November 10 students and 2 lecturers from Van Hall Larenstein, University of Applied Sciences exchanged Leeuwarden for a 2-week fieldtrip to St. Eustatius. The fieldtrip was organised in the context of their Sustainable Island Management course (also "minor").**

The 6-month during minor runs this schoolyear (2016-2017) for the first time and is part of the BSc program Coastal and Marine Management.

Lecturer Marlou Heemstra explains that in recent years, the Caribbean have become increasingly interesting for their students to carry out internships. This can be largely attributed to the fact the islands St. Eustatius, Saba and Bonaire opted as special municipalities of the Netherlands. Many questions regarding sustainable management of the islands and its surrounding waters arose and generated an increase in research. Our students have been assisting in ecological research, and productive working relations between Van Hall Larenstein and local scientists and managers have developed.

We visited St. Eustatius for the first time in 2014 and upon return the idea for this unique minor and excursion came to life. Students work intensively on small islands and their threats, challenges, opportunities and solutions that are an every day's business there.

In collaboration with local stakeholders we developed an interesting fieldtrip program. Accommodated at the CNSI, students gained experience in carrying out research, they spoke with many people on the island and visited different

organisations such as Stenapa, the Tourism Foundation and NuStar. We joined different researchers in their fieldwork such as ringing tropic birds, looking out for the invasive and native iguanas and tagging snakes on the Quill. Also underwater research was done in collaboration with the local dive shop.

Besides gaining fieldwork experience the students also carried out assignments for Stenapa to work on. One of the assignments was about the invasive green iguana. To gather as much as information as possible we have had discussions with different organisations. On the basis of all the information the students work out different scenarios with their respective pros and cons.

This first fieldtrip was a great success and we are very much looking forward visiting the island again in the end of this year.

Another icing on our cake of collaboration with local partners is a project that got approved in December. In this project, called AROSSTA (Artificial reefs on Saba and Statia), we want to build artificial reefs made of local rock, which if everything goes according to plan will be a suitable substrate for coral and in turn will form itself into a real reef.

If you are interested in our activities and / or wish further information please feel free to contact:

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