



TRUST NOTES

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“Caribbean Challenge” Launched at UN Biodiversity Conference

Caribbean nations commit to protect 10% of their terrestrial resources by 2010 and marine resources by 2012.

In May leaders from island nations and nations with islands around the world joined together for a special event during the UN Conference on Biodiversity in Bonn, Germany.

They announced significant conservation commitments to protect the future of islands, backed by pledges of more than \$20 million in support. The Global Island Partnership, sponsored by the Bahamas, with the support of leaders from across the Caribbean, announced the Caribbean Challenge, a historic commitment to protect 10% of their land and sea resources by 2010 and 2012 respectively. Attending the event for the Bahamas National Trust was executive director, Eric Carey.

Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham launched the initiative via video feed from Nassau. He noted that the initiative would be financed by private and public resources committed by regional governments, international environmental organizations (such as The Nature Conservancy) and other international agencies.

“We will contribute \$2 million over the next four years for the establishment of The Bahamas National Protected Area Trust Fund. Similar action is being taken by other regional governments,” Mr Ingraham said. “This will permit the region to benefit from economies of scale for sustainable finance, assure transparency and strengthen local capacities.”

According to BNT Executive Director Eric Carey, “The Caribbean Challenge is a culmination of the declaration we made in The Bahamas to protect 20% of our marine resources by
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Government Continues to Support Our Parks

Prime Minister and Minister of Finance the Rt. Hon. Hubert Ingraham announced the allocations during his presentation of the government’s 2008/2009 budget communication to the House of Assembly.

“The Government places the highest priority on the effective management and protection of our natural resources, Mr. Ingraham said.

“In this regard, this Budget provides, in addition to the annual subvention of \$1 million to the Bahamas National Trust instituted by us in the last Budget period, a further sum of \$250,000 for the expressed purpose of covering salary and other costs associated with the engagement of park wardens deployed in BNT managed parks around our country.”

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From left: Eleanor Phillips, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy, Hon. Earl Deveau, then Minister of Public Works now Minister for the Environment; and Eric Carey, Executive Director of the BNT.



It was a day of fun and environmental education for the entire family at The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) neighbourhood celebration at Harrold and Wilson Ponds National Park.

The BNT Family Fun Day, held on Saturday, July 12, 2008 as a part of the Bahamas' 35th Independence celebrations, for members of the public to visit the park and familiarize what is happening in the park. There was much to see and enjoy: strolling along boardwalk encircling the ponds that give the park its name or by taking a moment to peer through binoculars to spot a bird that has made the protected acreage its haven. The event allowed the BNT to showcase the new boardwalk additions and to speak to guests about the importance of Harrold and Wilson Ponds and to inform people

Independence Celebrations at Harrold & Wilson Ponds National Park

about why we need to protect wetlands in The Bahamas.

The Trust entered discussions with the National Independence Committee earlier in the year, as the latter were looking for partners to broaden this year's independence celebrations. It was decided that Harrold and Wilson Ponds National Park was the ideal place to mix fun and environmental education.

The new Minister of the Environment, the Hon. Earl Deveaux, opened the event and commented that the single biggest difference he proposes to make in the life of Bahamians is to increase their

awareness of their personal responsibility to help in preserving the environment.

"We are not like Saudi Arabia, Alaska, Ukraine, or Tanzania; we have a different natural resource than these places. Ours is not gold, silver, mineral or oil our natural resource

is our environment," he said.

Other speakers included Sidney Collier, MP for the Blue Hills Constituency and Peter Deveaux-Isaacs, Chairman of the Independence Celebrations Committee.

The BNT is grateful to a number of corporate sponsors who made the event possible: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Aquapure, BEC, The D'Albenas Agency, Fun Foods, Home Fabrics, Island Gases, Prime Bahamas and The Rotary Club of East Nassau.



Work begins on LNP Bridge

As part of our efforts to continue to create accessibility and provide a positive experience to patrons visiting our national parks, the Bahamas National Trust with tremendous support from the BNT's Grand Bahama Regional Branch began work on the Lucayan National Park, in the East End of the island.

The first project for the rejuvenation is completely rebuilding the Gold Rock Creek Bridge which was built by Operation Raleigh Volunteers many years ago. Local contractors, Hartley Lowe of Bahamas Engineering and Docks Ltd, began construction on the bridge in May and hope to finish in three to four months.

The bridge project is being funded by the BNT and proceeds from Festival Noel. "These funds will give us half of what we need to build a new bridge, so we're launching a fundraising campaign called 'Help Build a Bridge' to assist us with the balance needed," says Karin Sanchez, Chairman of the GB Regional Branch. "We're hoping that people will support the Trust by buying a plank of

the bridge they can call their own. Supporters or sponsors can have their family or company's name engraved on a plank on the new bridge. It is a unique chance to leave their mark here on Grand Bahama."

Rebuilding the bridge is just the first step in the complete rejuvenation of the Park, which will also feature a welcome center for guests, improved parking, and other amenities worthy of a National Park. "I think the Lucayan National Park has incredible potential", says Executive Director of the Bahamas National Trust Eric Carey. "These are national parks that belong to the Bahamian people and to members of the Trust so we want to make sure that we have in place facilities to enhance a wonderful experience for all who visit."

If you are interested in supporting the "Help Build a Bridge Effort" you can visit the BNT's website www.bnt.bs and in the News Section download a Donation Form or call the Rand Nature Centre at 242- xxx-xxxx or the Main Office at 242-393-1317.



New bridge construction contract signed. From left: Eric Carey, Executive director of the Bahamas National Trust, xx



Pictured from left: Godfrey Waugh, Cecilia Bodie, RNC Administrator and Sonny Waugh.

Sonny Waugh, one of Grand Bahama's most well known businessmen, has donated \$5,000 to the "Help Build the Bridge" fund for the Lucayan National Park.

Sonny, a long time supporter of The Bahamas National Trust, generously donated \$5,000 in support of the "Help Build the Bridge" fund, which means he will have his family name stamped on eight planks. Karin Sanchez, BNT's GB Regional Committee Chair commented "This bridge campaign is just the first step in the complete renovation of the Park, which once fully completed will feature not only a new bridge but a welcome center for guests, improved parking, and other amenities worthy of a National Park."

Mr. Waugh challenges all businesses in The Bahamas to make a donation or match his donation. He believes strongly that if the community works together, good things happen.

Cecilia Bodie, Administrator and Educational liaison at the Rand Nature Centre stated, "This very generous donation by Mr. Waugh is greatly appreciated. We are so very thankful for his generosity. The total cost of the bridge is \$250,000 and the Bahamas National Trust has committed \$100,000 towards the project."



Sea Turtle Researcher Lends Expertise to Educational Programme

BNT Volunteers Steve Connett and Barbara Crouchley provided the BNT with a wonderful opportunity to educate students living in the southern Bahamas about National Parks and Sea Turtles. Steve who has travelled extensively in the Bahamas while working on the research vessel *Geronimo* has worked with the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research for many years, tagging turtles and taking skin samples to support sea turtle research in The Bahamas. Now retired, Steve came to the BNT with his educational proposal for the Southern and Central Bahamas and with cooperation from the Ministry of Education, students and teachers on Eleuthera, Long Island, Crooked and Acklins Island, San Salvador and Exuma not only learned about national parks but had an opportunity to participate in turtle tagging exercises and to learn about these amazing marine animals. Portia Sweeting, Director of Education travelled to Cat Island and Exuma to participate in the programme and is enthusiastically planning the programme for next year. According to Lynn Gape, Deputy Executive Director “This was a wonderful opportunity for the BNT to take advantage of a volunteer who would be visiting areas which are not easily reached by our educational programmes. We are very grateful to Barbara and Steve for working with us to provide such a wonderful educational opportunity for the young people of those islands and we are looking forward to next year’s programme.”



ECLSP 50th B'day

Crowds join in the celebration to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Exuma Cays Land & Sea Park.

Scotia Trust Supports the Trust

As part of their 50th Anniversary celebrations Scotia Trust has committed to an annual corporate membership to the Bahamas National Trust.

“Scotia Trust is pleased to support the Bahamas National Trust, as the organization mandated with the responsibility of managing our nation’s national park system. Our commitment of an annual corporate membership to the Bahamas National Trust is indicative of our concern for the health of our environment and the protection of island biodiversity.” said Ms Longley.



From left: Glenn Bannister, BNT President, Cheryl Bain Lightbourne Senior Accounting Officer and Sonya Longley, Operations Manager

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2020. We are proud that the various governments, NGO’s and funding agencies would come together to make this initiative a reality.”

Leading the Bahamas delegation to the Bonn conference was Environment Minister Earl Deveaux. He told the conference that “Our commitment today offers proof that island nations are ready to lead the world in achieving sustainable development and effective conservation of our natural resources.”

A representative from The Nature Conservancy noted that the political response to threats to marine biodiversity was visionary. “The Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, together with The Bahamas will work to protect nearly three million hectares of marine habitat over the next four years. We expect others to sign on to the Caribbean Challenge in coming weeks.”

The Nature Conservancy has pledged \$20 million to launch and support the Caribbean Challenge, with \$8.6 million of this pledge directed toward capitalizing protected area trust funds and leveraging additional dollars.



Travellers Discover Inagua's Secrets

As part of the BNT's continuing efforts to introduce members to the national parks of The Bahamas, 26 brave and fearless travellers journeyed to the island of Inagua to see flamingos and discover for themselves the surreal beauty of our southernmost island.

The group travelled by Bahamasair on Friday, May 30 arriving in Matthew Town midday. Part of the welcoming committee were some gregarious Bahama Parrots who appeared soon after we arrived. Once everyone had settled in to their accommodations and had a light lunch, it was time to visit the Morton Salt Facility. Participants were treated to a special tour of the facility learning how Morton Salt International still makes sea salt using the age-old solar evaporation technique. Some 30,000 acres of reservoirs and crystallizing ponds produce more than 1.3 million tons of salt annually, which is raked by tractors and loaded onto ships by conveyers. That evening, members of the Sam Nixon Bird Club gave a special presentation on the Birds of the Inagua National Park to prepare the visitors for what they would see as they toured the park the next morning.

Saturday dawned clear and breezy and the group travelled by vehicle along the dykes seeing Flamingos, Neotropic

Cormorants, Reddish Egrets, Great Egrets, White-cheeked Pintails and numerous other wetland birds. The Inagua National Park is the Bahamas Ramsar site and is tremendously important site for wetlands birds and is credited for saving the West Indian Flamingo from extinction. We were not disappointed, seeing thousands of flamingos including young birds that had hatched in March of this year. An afternoon field trip took us to the southeastern side of the island where everyone was able to experience the amazing view from the lighthouse, see the old town ponds – where the salt was hand raked and then a visit to a cave which is home to Buffy Flower bats. The area also had interesting flora and unusual cactus which is seen nowhere else on the island.

On Saturday evening, Mr. Glenn Bannister, President of the BNT and CEO of Morton Salt hosted the group to a wonderful dinner with dancing afterwards. The group overwhelmingly voted this the best meal of the trip. It was a fun evening with our visitors having an opportunity to meet Inaguans and learn about the island from its residents.

Union Creek was the destination on Sunday. On the way to the renowned sea turtle research site, the group visited St. Batholmews, the historic Anglican Church which used to service the Northwest Point Community and also saw the old Sisal Mill. At Union Creek, we were able to beachcomb, kayak, snorkel and relax under a palm tree while Henry Nixon, BNT Warden, barbecued hamburgers and hot dogs for their lunch.

Everyone agreed that Inagua's secrets were certainly worth the trip and are already planning their return trip in order to visit the flamingos when they are nesting.

The BNT would like to thank Morton Salt for their support of this Field Trip and also Mr. Colin Ingraham who assisted the BNT team with transportation and guiding for the weekend.



Upcoming Events

Wednesday,
10 September – Sea
Turtle Public Meeting

October 24 –
Members evening
Wine and Art Silent
Auction

October 25 –
Wine & Art Festival

November 21-23 –
Christmas Jollification

Inagua Warden selected as a Conservation Hero

The Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund (DWCF) has recognized Henry Nixon, Senior Warden at the Inagua National Park as one of their 2008 Conservation Heroes.

The Heroes are selected from applications submitted by environmental organizations working in partnership with communities around the world. The award was created to bring attention to the fact that conservation programmes are successful because of the people involved with the initiative. The DWCF Heroes programme rewards the dedication of individuals, who, often, at the risk of personal safety work tirelessly to save animals, protect habitat and educate the people in surrounding communities. To reward each recipient the DWCF presents the nominee with a cash award of \$1000 to be used at their discretion.

Henry was nominated by the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research at the University of Florida. He has worked with scientists Karen Bjorndal and Alan Bolten for over 30 years assisting in the banding and monitoring of juvenile sea turtles who forage and live in Union Creek Reserve. He is also responsible for monitoring the flamingos and other birdlife in the Inagua



Henry Nixon

National Park which has been designated a Wetland of International Importance and an Important Bird Area. Karen Bjorndal opened her nomination of Henry with these words, “I have known Henry since he was 15 years old, and I have had the pleasure of watching him mature into a fine man. Thus, I have a strong foundation

on which to base my opinion. Henry exhibits great personal integrity, and he leads by example. Henry has accomplished much for wildlife conservation in his community by being a great role model.”

“Henry Nixon is a true conservation hero” said Lynn Gape, Deputy Executive Director. “Many employees who serve in remote areas would slack off, but not Henry. He is ever-vigilant in driving the rough and remote tracks of his territory and protecting the tremendous diversity of wildlife on Inagua from poachers. We are all tremendously proud of Henry and overjoyed that he has been recognized for his hard work and dedication. Thanks to Henry’s efforts, the diverse flocks of flamingos, spoonbills, herons, egrets, ducks, and many more species are still abundant and thriving on Inagua.”

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The Prime Minister re-iterated the government’s belief that the country’s need for economic development must be kept in proper balance with the need to secure the protection of its environment including the biological diversity of its islands.

“Therefore, we are requiring all developers, national and international, to observe environmental best practices in the construction and operation of their projects,” he added.

The Prime Minister meantime pledged that the government will continue to support environmentally sustainable activities including the imple-

mentation of environmentally sensitive policies, conservation education, habitat rehabilitation and the modernization of related legislation and regulation needed to support effective management of functioning protected areas.

A new environmental allocation included in this year’s budget is The Bahamas’ first contribution of \$500,000 toward the establishment of a permanent Bahamas National Protected Area Trust Fund under the auspices of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative.

The new Minister for the Environment, Dr Earl Deveaux, assumed office on July 1.

Wine & ART
18th Annual
FESTIVAL

Saturday, 25
October '08
12noon to 6pm

Friday, 24
October '08
6pm to 8pm
Light snacks available throughout the evening.
Admission is FREE for all members and friends

The Retreat, Village Road
Parking at Queen's College
Light lunches available throughout the afternoon.

Admission
BNT Members: \$15
General Public: \$20
Children under 12: Free

Christmas Jollification
Arts & Crafts Festival
THE RETREAT, VILLAGE ROAD

Members Evening
Friday, 21 November at 5pm

Saturday, 22 November
11am to 5pm

Sunday, 23 November
12 noon to 5pm

Featuring:
Plants, books, gifts, children's crafts, decorations for the holiday season and food from around the world!

General Admission \$10
BNT Members \$5
Children 2 - 12 \$2
Infants (under 2) FREE

Bahamas National Trust • 393-1317 • bnt@bntbs



BNT Hosts *Treasures in the Sea* Workshop

Twenty-two Primary Science Curriculum Coordinators gathered at the BNT's Retreat Garden last week to participate in a special workshop developed to integrate *Treasures in the Sea*, a new teacher's resource, developed by the Bahamas National Trust, The American Museum of Natural History and Ministry of Education, into the revised primary science curriculum.

The workshop was facilitated by Barbara Dorsett, Education Officer (Primary Science), Portia Sweeting, BNT Director of Education, Ronique Curry, Joan Knowles, Dorothy Rolle and Vanessa Turnquest, Ministry of Education Primary Science Curriculum Coordinators.

The five day workshop was divided into themes such as Where is the Bone? (Mollusks, Sponges and Echinoderms); What are you afraid of and Where do you fit in? (Crustaceans); So you Got Bone eh- Does it matter? (Fish) and Sea For Yourself.

The teachers practiced manipulating a real conch and identifying its anatomy, developed arts and crafts projects such as the crawfish critter, and weighed and measured a real fish. On the last day of the workshop, the educators visited the Sandy and Rocky Shore Ecosystem and practiced a Fish Scavenger Hunt at the Atlantis Aquarium.

"The workshop provided a bird's eye view of how effective the resource can be in the implementation of the primary science curriculum," commented Portia Sweeting. "Not only does it provide content but teaching strategies for bringing the Bahamian marine environment into the classroom."

Treasures in the Sea, An Educators Guide to Teaching Marine Biodiversity, has been introduced to teachers on Grand Bahamas, Abaco and New Providence. This workshop is part of an ongoing programme to train educators in the use of the resource. The workshop was supported by the Ministry of Education and a grant from Colina Imperial.



Lionfish On Local Menus?

Concern over about the invasive lionfish and curiosity as how it would taste attracted large numbers of people to public meetings in Abaco and New Providence.

Lawyer, Alexander Maillis III and Lakeshia Anderson, Fisheries Officer from The Department of Marine Resources teamed up to talk about the invasive Lionfish, how they arrived in the Bahamas, what they are eating, and the impact they could have on fishery resources in The Bahamas as well as turning an invasive species into a potential fisheries resource.

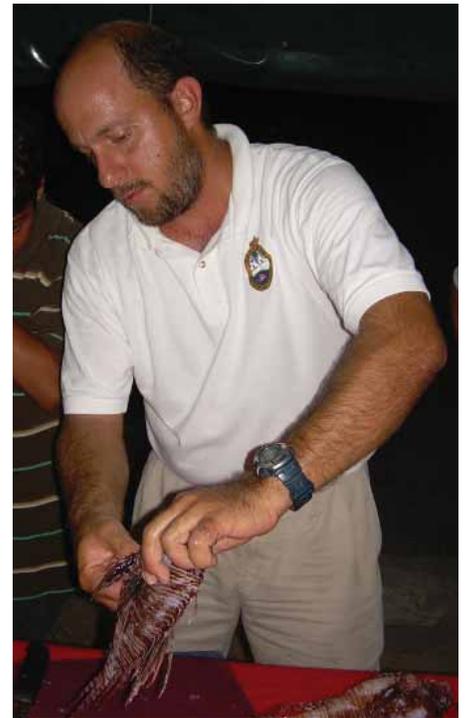
Ms. Anderson covered the documented first sighting of lionfish off the coast of North Carolina and the subsequent accidental release into Biscayne Bay as a result of Hurricane Andrew and continued by giving the range of Lionfish in The Bahamas. Lionfish have been documented in the



Lakeshia Anderson

northern and central Bahamas, but so far have not reached the southern islands. The Department of Marine Resources is actively recording lionfish sightings and fisherman seeing lionfish should report them to the Department.

Mr. Maillis an accomplished fisherman and Alexandra Lynch, well known Chef, gave a practical demonstration on how to cook and clean lionfish in the second part of the meeting. According to Rachel Lightbourn who attended the meeting "That was some of the best tasting fish I have had in a long time." Judging by the lines and the number of people who returned for "seconds" it appears that there could be a commercial market for these fish. The Trust plans to continue to work with commercial suppliers and members of the restaurant community to explore the introduction of lionfish to local menus.



Alexander Maillis, III



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