DCNA Junior Ranger Exchange Annual Event 2019
Evaluation Report
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Dear Nature Lover,

If you feel inspired to support nature conservation in the Dutch Caribbean, we invite you to join us and be apart of this exciting initiative! There are many ways to help and we would love to explore with you how you would like to see your contribution take shape.

As a donor of DCNA, one way to contribute is to support the Junior Ranger Exchange Annual Event, which fosters future environmental stewards of our six Dutch Caribbean islands. By supporting this major annual event, the youth are able to have a once in a lifetime experience while also cultivating interpersonal skills crucial for their development. Nature education is a vital part of our island’s informal education and the opportunity to receiving funding through this annual event is important for our education program, our future, and our ability to serve the islands’ communities.

In 2019, deep in the wilderness of the STINAPA managed Washington Slagbaai National Park on Bonaire; the island’s nature was showcased to our islands’ youth while simultaneously creating a serene atmosphere for hosting the event. The ‘camp’ ended with a ‘high profile’ presentation which conferred the youth’s acquired knowledge, discussed lessons learnt as well as how they wanted to initiate further action together with the respective local organizations on their home islands. Through this event, nature education in the Dutch Caribbean has been put in the spotlight and along with the new dedicated staffer at the DCNA Secretariat, we look forward to strengthening the impact of nature education program a few steps further.

The program will be developing different aspects that relates to nature education such as a new digital educational platform for the nature education officers to connect with one another and share resources. Another development will be the Youth Nature Ambassador Traineeship, which will be used to create a smoother transition from formal education to the labor market for young Dutch Caribbean students. Naturally, we were unable to host the event this year due to the Corona virus however in 2021 we look forward to hosting the Junior Ranger Exchange Annual Event once more on one of the islands.

Nature education officers, our DCNA Secretariat team, and the young participants would appreciate your support of nature education in the Dutch Caribbean. With your support, we are able to achieve our goals in safeguarding nature.

Thank you once again.

Sincerely,

H.A. (Hellen) van der Wal, Ph.D., LL.M, BA
Chairperson
Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance
Overview

The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance initiated its first Junior Ranger Exchange on 25-29 October 2019, as part of the new approach for the cooperation between the park management organizations in the six islands of the Dutch Caribbean. This was first and foremost a pilot program, as the time span between the idea and execution was short (four months). This was a challenge for both the organization and the funding. On behalf of the DCNA team, we would also like to extend our sincere thanks to those who coordinated the event. This event was a success due to the tremendous efforts made by Sietske van der Wal and Natasha Silva (FPNA), Roxanne Liana Francisca, Xenah Cicilia, and Maria-Guanela Sluis (Stinapa), and Emeray Neuman-Martha (DCNA). Thank you for all that you do for the youth in nature education.

For the 2019 DCNA annual convention, 12-13 year old youth participants from the six Dutch Caribbean islands were invited to join the Junior Ranger Exchange with the special theme: Marine and Coastal Conservation. To represent Fundacion Parke Nacional Aruba (FPNA), STINAPA Bonaire, CARMABI on Curacao, Saba Conservation Foundation, Curacao Sea Aquarium, Saba Nature Education and St. Maarten Nature Foundation, four teenagers were selected per island and brought together at the convention. Thanks to co-financing of the Rabobank, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF-NL), support from Warehouse supermarket and STINAPA Bonaire, the program was organized with two overnight stays, field excursions and workshops in the Washington Slagbaai National Park. In total, 20 Youth Nature Ambassadors and 5 adult leaders (and 3 coordinators) were part of the exchange event as well as three more experienced STINAPA Junior Rangers – whom at a slightly older age of 15-18 years functioned as peer leaders during certain activities.

The 2019 Junior Ranger Exchange proved to be a unique experience in which the youth participants had the opportunity to learn about each other’s nature and conservation challenges, as well as create memorable experiences together. The ‘camp’ ended with a ‘high profile’ presentation which conferred the youth’s acquired knowledge, discussed lessons learnt as well as how they wanted to initiate further action together with the respective local organizations on their home islands.

1 See resolution Board Meeting October 28, 2019. The Board approves the establishment of the Committees and assigned Chairs as stated keeping with the aim of promoting Youth Participation. A clearly defined mandate for each assigned committee, as well as nomination for additional members shall be proposed to the Board soonest. Chairs of the different committees keep the Executive Committee informed and present the Treasurer with a proposal of expenditures. Parks staff as well as external stakeholders can opt for membership in Committees and Work Groups.

New Committees and Work Groups

New Committees / Work Groups

Youth Participation Work group, Research & Monitoring Work Group, Bird Conservation Group, Fundraising Committee

Overview of newly established Committees and Working Groups

2 Due to logistical challenges, STENAPA (St. Eustatius) had to unfortunately opt out of the 2019 event.
The Importance Of Youth Participation

The principle of participation of the youth begins with the notion that children are not passive or helpless and without capacity. Rather, this principle recognizes children as capable and active communicators who participate and are involved in (the selection and design of) activities that affect the improvement of their general welfare, including their environment. This type of participation occurs vertically between children and the organization/institution and horizontally between the children themselves through processes focused on child-to-child interaction.

Junior Ranger activities provide an excellent opportunity for entertainment and learning for all children of different age categories. For children in need in particular, Junior Ranger camps offer a unique opportunity to temporarily break away from their difficult life circumstances and to be able to briefly enjoy their childhood. At the same time, Junior Ranger activities enable the youth to develop important social skills essential in creating positive and healthy relationships with their peers and reliable adults, within a safe and supportive environment. By being part of the DCNA Junior Ranger Exchange, the youth also have the opportunity to be involved in many entertaining activities such as social games, drawing, singing, outdoor excursions, visits to museums, theatrical activities and historical and archaeological site seeing.
Objectives

The main objectives of a DCNA Junior Ranger Exchange are centered on knowledge and skill development and an exchange hereof, while facilitating team spirit and efforts. In general, youth exchanges have educational, personal and future/long term benefits.

The main objectives of the DCNA Junior Ranger Exchange are:

• To raise awareness about nature and protected areas and their role in conservation.

• To build familiarity with the protected areas of the Dutch Caribbean Islands.

• To build knowledge and understanding of endangered, legally protected, endemic and keystone species in the Dutch Caribbean islands.

• To enhance interest in regional and global issues as well as a broader general knowledge.

• To develop skills and good practices for observing, identifying and appreciating local flora and fauna, as well as field skills for exploring habitats and participating in conservation and monitoring activities.

• To develop the analytical and problem-solving skills of the participating youth.

• To engage and inspire youth participants to become nature ambassadors.

• To provide youth participants with a memorable learning experience, where they learn about the value of nature and the importance of nature conservation.

• To create a network of youth participants and coordinators between the islands.

• Make new friends.

• To encourage the youth to stimulate and partake in further conservation initiatives (with the support of the local park management organizations) when they return to their home islands.

• Showcasing of DCNA Youth Nature Ambassadors as role models for the community.

• To illustrate the high value of youth participation in nature conservation to stakeholders, investors, fellow NGOs, the governments and the community at large.
Evaluation

The program’s network of the islands’ leaders and youth was instrumental to its success. Interactions daily in the same building created team spirit between the different island groups. Youth that age tends to be shy and stick to their own group but this setting and program style encouraged cross-island interaction and collaboration.

Offering many different activities throughout the day and using thematic experts such as for the birding workshop and the scavenger hunt from STINAPA was considered a success; these were considered among the highlights, together with snorkeling and presentation day. The children were never bored, even though they were not able to use their cell phones most of the time due to low connectivity; the youth actually confessed that this was a good thing. While the program was jam-packed with educational activities, there was still enough time in between for the children to relax or interact with each other – and do some cliff jumping into the blue and refreshing ocean (which was a big hit indeed!).

The 2019 Junior Ranger Exchange and fundraising was realized in just over 4 months, which proved to be a very tight deadline and challenging for the event organizers and hosting park. Most of the challenges and setbacks faced with this first ever exchange event could have been avoided with better planning and communication amongst the coordinators and hosting park. To this avail, a preparation time of 6-8 months is preferable. A comprehensive handbook will be developed for the organizing and hosting parties of future Junior Ranger Exchange events. Important for future events is that the themes and activities selected need to reflect participators’ needs above funders’ wishes.

Additionally, the pledged follow-up activities on each island when back home needs to be better coordinated and include the commitment of the different parks in the realization of these follow-ups.

Another point of attention is the issue of sustainability. Although some efforts were made in this direction, the
The overriding goal should be to make the exchange as sustainable as possible to reduce our carbon footprint, which includes venue choice, materials used and catering. Part of the education program should as a standard include what everybody can do at home to reduce our impact on nature and the environment (i.e. what to buy or not to buy, how to eat, how to travel, how to manage the wastes, etc.). Also desirable is to include some sort of ‘park conservation management and jobs’ aspect e.g. introduce the youth to terrestrial or marine park patrol, what does the job of ranger entail and what do other employees of the Park do in order to familiarize youth participants with our work.

For future events: suggestions have been made on extending the exchange by at least one night and day to allow for more workshops and presentations, and to also include more nature experts and expert organizations for delivering workshops on the hosting island. Extending the event also increases interactions between the youth as they get better acquainted with each other. Suggestions have also been made to introduce a kind of nature-themed speed dating as an ice breaker at the onset of the event and to have the island teams present their own island to the other teams.
Future Outcomes of the Youth Participation Program

Dedicated staffer
In February a new Project Officer, Dahlia Hassell, has been appointed to assist the Youth Participation Working Group with the planning and further development of the Environmental Youth Program. Ms. Hassell will be focusing her efforts on program development, liaising between the parks and logistical support in developing and executing the Youth Participation Program as a general theme and policy direction for the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance.

Yearly exchanges
The aim is to have yearly Junior Ranger Exchanges hosted by DCNA with the aim of supporting and strengthening Dutch Caribbean Park Management Organizations capacity to engage and encourage the youth in a structured way. Youth engagement and information exchange across all six islands is critical for fostering a more in-depth Nature Education and Youth Engagement program.

Structural Outputs
One of the concrete deliverables is to have a standard youth exchange manual, which can be used to structurally guide not only the DCNA Secretariat but also the Park Management Organizations in developing Youth Exchange, education and empowerment programs.

Another concrete and structural output would be the development of a nature education program and curriculum in close cooperation with educational institutions and organizations but centered and focused on empowering the Park Management Organizations in establishing youth Environmental Programs.

Youth Nature Ambassadors
A critical component and a measure for success with be the development of a Youth Nature Ambassadors program. Using the momentum which was created during the Youth Exchange as a part of the October 2019 Board Congress and further developing initiatives which exist in Aruba and Bonaire close focus will be given to a Youth Ambassadorship program. Young people are critical in influencing their peers in terms of nature education and environmental awareness and can be key in influencing policy and decision-making. Developing and fostering ambassadors will be key to the success of the project.

Enabling youth to have a tangible item to show their efforts is critical in enabling ownership. In order to facilitate this the Youth Participating Working Group together with the Secretariat will develop a Parks Passport, perhaps modeled on the passport used by the US National Park’s Service https://humansoutside.com/2018/04/junior-ranger-national-park-passport-stamps/.
Communications & Outreach
A digital education platform will be developed to create unity amongst the nature education officers and will be used as a resource collection tool. Similarly, a dedicated location on the new DCNA website in development as well as dedicated landing pages on Social Media. The intention is to also ask the Junior Ranger Ambassadors to assist and manage the Social Media content.

Lastly, as the patron of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance Her Royal Highness Process Beatrix will play a special role in terms. Her Royal Highness has always maintained that youth involvement is critical to the success of DCNA and the Park Management Organizations within the Network.
Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance

The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) is a regional network of protected areas organizations, which was established in 2005 to support and assist the protected area management organizations (parks) within the Dutch Caribbean. DCNA’s vision is to work for the parks and to help coordinate activities with other partners to ensure that park management organizations have the tools necessary to safeguard the islands’ biodiversity and promote the sustainable management of nature resources throughout the Dutch Caribbean.

DCNA’s Partners

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