

Wild Statia!

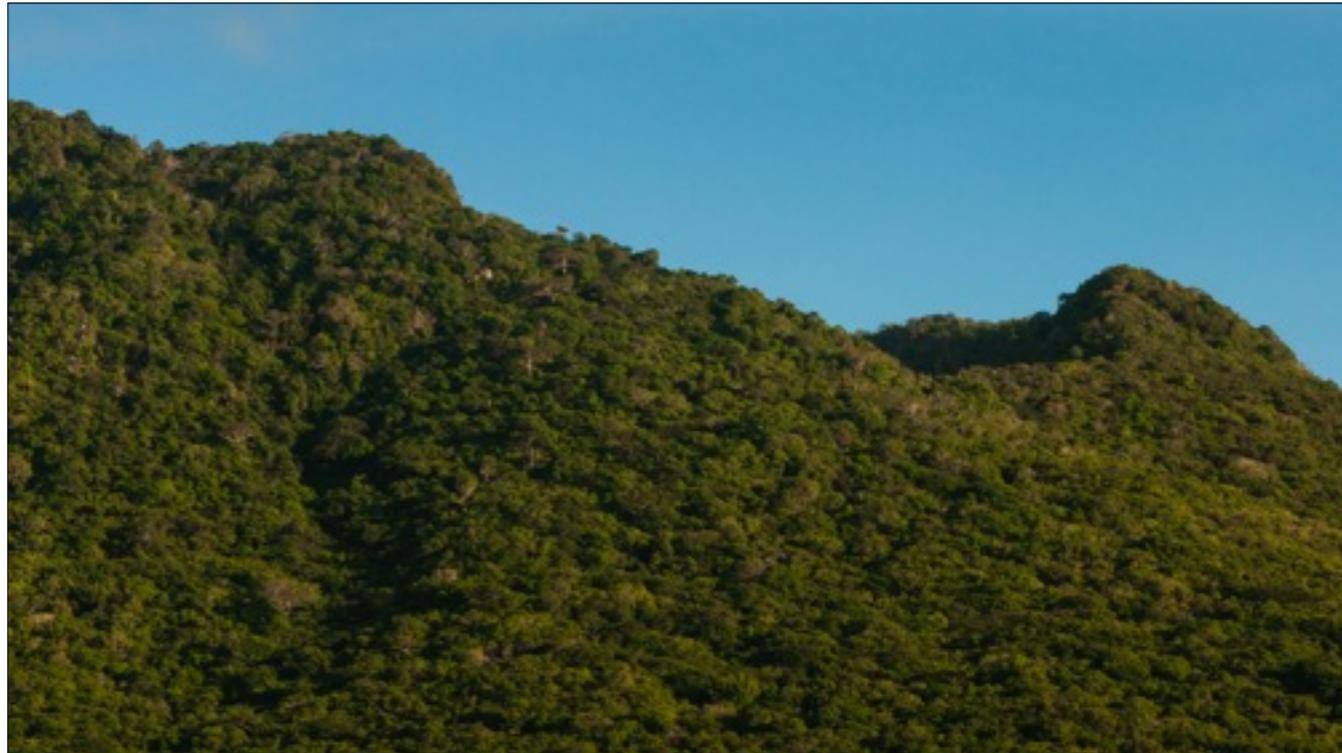
**Discovering the wildlife of St. Eustatius
Learn something interesting in 3 minutes!**



This week we are presenting about the wildlife of St. Eustatius, also known as Statia, where we are currently researching and writing a book about the wildlife. Similar to our book about SXM wildlife, we hope our work increases scientific knowledge and also serves as a tool for education and the development of sustainable tourism.



Statia is an island about 1/4 the size of SXM, located about 65 km to the south, between St. Kitts and Saba. It is a Dutch island, like Saba, but geologically is more closely related to St. Kitts and Nevis. This photo is taken from one of the eroded remains of extinct volcanos in the north of the island. To the south is the large, dormant volcano called The Quill and the low-lying area in between.



The Quill is 602 meters tall, about halfway between Pic Paradis on SXM and Mt. Scenery on Saba. It is tall enough to have evergreen seasonal forest and even a small area of elfin forest on its rim. Inside the crater, huge trees have grown, protected from storms, the crater is about 300 meters deep.



The forest of the Quill supports animals that we don't see on St. Martin, like these caterpillars...



...that grown into the Zebra Longwing butterfly.



The forest also supports the Panther Anole (*Anolis bimaculatus*), which is found in the forests of St. Kitts and Nevis as well.



The Orange-faced Ground Lizard, *Ameiva erythrocephala*, is also found on those three islands because they were connected, or at least very close, during ice ages when the sea was 180 meters lower.



Statia also shares some animals with Saba because they are close, despite being separated by deep water. One is the Saban Dwarf Gecko (*Sphaerodactylus sabanus*)...



...another is the Red-bellied Racer, *Alsophis rufiventris*, which lives only on Saba and Statia. A similar snake lived on SXM, but because the mongoose was introduced here, ours is gone.



Many birds are the same on St. Martin and Statia, like the Antillean Crested Hummingbird.



Sometimes, though, they need to adapt. Statia doesn't have salt ponds like SXM, so birds like the Great Egret need to forage differently there. Here they mostly spear fish with their bill, on Statia, they have to hunt insects and lizards.



Statia doesn't have a lot of beaches, but at Zeelandia we did find some very interesting animals.



One was a giant pseudoscorpion. They are harmless and not closely related to scorpions. This one was ten times bigger than any I had seen, but was still less than 1cm long.



As we work on the book, we hope to find new animals, like these soapberry bugs. Scientists are evaluating specimens we collected to determine if they are a new species.



We may be able to uncover useful ecological knowledge. This weevil, for example, eats Coralita, an invasive vine. It's the one you see here with the pink flowers. On Statia it is out of control and covers about 30% of the island, so it is important to find out what animals might keep it under control.



We will document key animals like the Red-billed Tropicbird. Statia is one of the two most important nesting sites for this bird in the Caribbean.



We can also document work that is being done to monitor and protect the population.



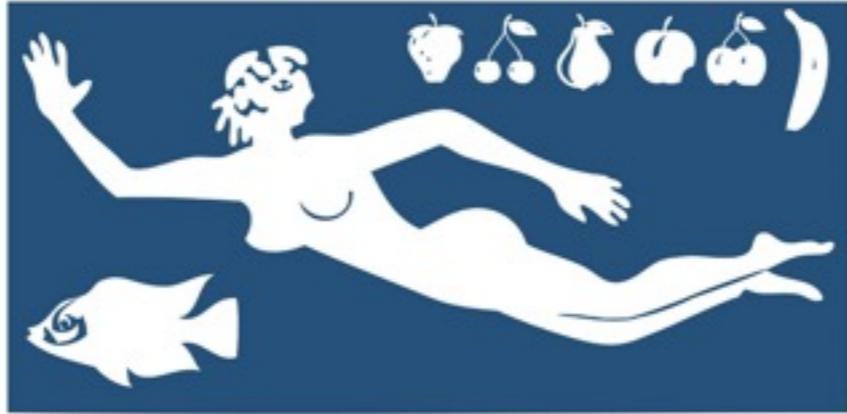
As part of our book project, we are also participating in youth and community activities with groups like the Junior Rangers.



Hopefully our book will also help develop interest in sustainable tourism on Statia. Although the island has fascinating wildlife and a rich history, it is still almost unknown as a tourism destination.



Follow along at www.statiawildlife.com where you can read more about Statia's wildlife, see images and get free extras like desktop wallpapers and screensavers for your computer.



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