



# Friends of the Environment

## Abaco, Bahamas



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Environmental Activities Since 1988

Summer 2009

## Alien invasion: The Lionfish dilemma

The invasion of lionfish into marine ecosystems of The Bahamas has emerged as one of the most pressing conservation issues in the country. Starting this July, a team from Florida International University and the University of North Carolina, in collaboration with FRIENDS, will be studying, among other things, their diet and digestion rate to assess their impact, now and in the future, on these islands.

Lionfish (*Pterois volitans*), native to the Indo-Pacific region, were first documented off the Florida coast in 1992. They spread rapidly both northward as far as Rhode Island, USA, and southward into the Caribbean. Anecdotal reports suggest that they reached The Bahamas in the early 2000's with the first confirmed sighting in 2004.

Numbers increased rapidly to the point that lionfish are commonly seen in a diverse suite of marine habitats, ranging from coral reefs to the shallows of mangrove-lined tidal creeks. In 2008, off the southwest coast of New Providence, densities were documented to be as high as 400 lionfish per hectare.

Lionfish are voracious predators, preying on small fishes and invertebrates. They employ a

unique feeding strategy, often using their elaborate fins to "herd" fishes into confined areas where they can be quickly consumed whole.

Of special concern now are the potential effects on newly settled juvenile coral reef fish. An experimental study in The Bahamas suggested they could reduce densities of new recruits by as much as 79% on nearshore patch reef habitats.

Likewise, lionfish are common in the shallow waters of mangrove-dominated tidal creeks, habitats that are especially important for juvenile Nassau grouper and lobster.

The apparent lack of natural predators, and thus low mortality of adults, likely has contributed to their rapid population growth and spread throughout the country.

Although some lionfish have been found in the stomachs of large grouper, most large predators have been shown to actively avoid lionfish. Further, because large predators have been substantially overfished throughout much of The Bahamas, the number of potential lionfish predators may be significantly reduced from historical levels.

The rapid invasion of lionfish has galvanized a number of local and national responses. An example is the joint initiatives between the College of the Bahamas, the Bahamian Department of Marine



Over 1,400 lionfish were caught in one day at The Lionfish Derby, held this June in Green Turtle Cay.

Resources and The Bahamas Reef Environmental Education Foundation that was initiated in 2006.

Many of these were broad-reaching educational programs intended to teach citizens about basic lionfish biology, explain why they are bad for the marine environment, and how they can be removed safely when sighted in local marine ecosystems. Community events, such as the recent Green Turtle Lionfish Derby, teaching people to safely prepare and eat lionfish, are one creative approach to the invasion issue. National "Eat Lionfish" campaigns seek to ensure citizens that lionfish are a safe alternative to more traditional target fish species.

Because of the rapid spread of lionfish, and the scope of the problem, integrated national strategies are essential before the invasion leads to irreversible impacts on Bahamas coastal ecosystems.

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### Upcoming Events:

- FRIENDS Environmental Camps: Cooper's Town, Marsh Harbour and Sandy Point
- **September** is International Coastal Awareness Month. Join us for clean-ups!
- **October**—Grand Opening of FRIENDS Nature Trail

## FRIENDS Tightens Belt for 2009/10

The economic slow down has made everyone take stock of their spending and look more closely at budgets, including FRIENDS. Our income comes from three main sources: grants, program donations and membership dues and we were feeling the impact of the downturn in 2008 just as many of you are.

Membership and program donations (monies that are directed to a specific program) went down from 2007 to 2008 and have continued to decrease. FRIENDS is addressing this challenge in several ways.

First, we're tightening our financial belt, eliminating travel to conferences and training activities that aren't funded by outside groups. Also we are consolidating staff, the Education Program will be run solely by d'Shan Maycock who will be executing a very extensive and effective campaign on sustainable fishing practices that will make a tremendous difference in long term conservation efforts in Abaco.

We are also putting our environmental money where are mouth is, making sure lights are turned off, heat and air conditioning settings

stay low and re-using as many products as we can. Much of the art materials for Discovery Club and Summer Camp are coming from recycled materials.

We know that it is difficult to give in tough times. But be assured that every dollar you give is appreciated. Together, lots of small amounts combine to make a huge difference to FRIENDS and Abaco's environment.

We hope you will use the membership envelope to renew your membership or join FRIENDS for the first time. Your contributions

have been a large part of the organizations success and we need you now more than ever. We know that you love this place as much as we do and we want to do everything possible to keep it that way!

We thank you for your continued support- we truly could not do it without you!

Kristin Williams, Executive



## President's Message

Summer has certainly brought the rain, and the island is once again green. The trees are producing fruit, the turtles are nesting, and the office is a flurry of activity getting ready for summer camps. It is encouraging that every week it seems I see more people in Abaco shopping with green bags, recycling their cans and planting native tree species. Our message is certainly getting out. While Abaco grows and our lives get busier each day, it is amazing to see how many locals and second home-owners are taking an active interest in the environment.



It is so important that we remember to all do our own part. In our day to day lives the simple changes we make not only improve our island, but make Abaco a great place to live. I urge you this summer to get out and see Abaco- swim in a blue hole, hike in the Abaco National Park, kayak the creeks of Snake Cay. Take advantage of why we love where we live. The more time you spend enjoying Abaco's environment, the more you will realize the need to protect it for your children and grandchildren.

Thank you for your support of FRIENDS over the years. We understand that we are in the midst of tough economic times, yet we know that our programs and educational outreach opportunities must continue. FRIENDS understands that when we come out of these troubling times, we will have to live with the choices we have made. As an organization we have decided to forge ahead with our programs, in some cases cutting spending and relying more on volunteer labor. Our goals remain unchanging, and we urge you to continue your support, for Abaco's future is indeed in all of our hands.

Jim Richard, President

## Who's Who on the Board of Directors at FRIENDS

### Jim Richard, President

Jim is the Principal of Forest Heights Academy, and has been involved in education in the Bahamas for 10 years. He has served on the FRIENDS board since Jan 2005. He lives in Central Abaco with his wife and two children.

### Cha Boyce, Vice President, Marine Committee Chair

Cha was born in Marsh Harbour and has lived in Abaco for over 30 years. During this time, she became involved with Friends of the Environment, where she served as president in the early years of the organization.

### Charlotte Dunn, Treasurer, Sustainable Development Chair

Charlotte was born in Nassau, Bahamas in 1971 and has grown up in Hong Kong and the UK. She completed her Master of Science degree in Environmental Biology and is currently working on her PHD in Biology. Charlotte has been living and working in Sandy Point with the Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation since 2004.

### Diane Claridge, Marine and Sustainable Development Committees

Diane was born and raised in Nassau. She has a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and a Master's degree in Zoology. Diane is presently working on her PHD in Biology. In 1991, Diane began the Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation where she currently serves as Project Director and principle investigator.

### Laura-lee Davis, Co-Chair Education Committee

Laura lives and works as a social studies teacher in Cooper's Town, a settlement in North Abaco. She has spent the last thirteen years in the education field, eight in Andros and the remaining here in Abaco. She is presently a member of the teaching staff at SC Bootle High School.

### Bernadette Hall, Waste Reduction Committee Chair

Bernadette was raised and schooled in Hope Town as a young child. She returned to the Abacos in 1999 after graduating from Padworth College, in England. She is currently employed with the Ministry of Tourism.

### David Knowles, Terrestrial, Marine and Sustainable Development Committees

David is originally from Nassau and has lived in Abaco for the past 7 years. David was recently hired as the first Abaco Park Warden for The Bahamas National Trust in Abaco. He previously worked as director of the Department of

Agriculture and has extensive knowledge of the terrestrial environment in The Bahamas. He and his wife and three children live in Marsh Harbour.

### Ann Pleydell-Bouverie, Terrestrial and Recycling Committees

Ann is originally from Nassau. Currently she lives in Man-O-War with her husband, James, and their son Jeremy. She has her Master Gardener Certification and her Master Waste Educator Certification.

### Justin Higgs, Co-Chair Education Committee

Justin Higgs currently works as the Grade 5 & 6 teacher at Hope Town Primary School. He and his wife Amanda live in Hope Town, with their daughter Journey. In addition to serving on FRIENDS' Education committee for the last two years, Justin has also shown a commitment to the environment by working to start a new eco-tourism company, Abaco Eco. The company is doing kayak rentals and tours around Hope Town.

### Della Kelly, Recycling Committee

Della Kelly is originally from Sandy Point but currently lives in Murphy Town. She holds the position of financial controller at Bakers Bay. Della has been involved with the Sandy Point Beautification Committee in organizing clean ups and various other community activities. She is also the president of The Sandy Point Development Association that organizes annual and social community events including fundraisers.

### Anne Albury, Terrestrial, Waste Reduction and Sustainable Development Committees

Anne Albury recently retired from Treasure Cay Ltd. where she worked as a senior Broker for 28 years. She has an extensive background in management as well as local government, having served on many committees including Town Planning and as Chief Councilor for North Abaco. She has three children and five grandchildren and lives in Treasure Cay.

### Reg Patterson, Terrestrial Committee

Reg is a long time Abaco resident and is the proprietor of Lucayan Surveying in Marsh Harbour. He is an avid birder and leads many of FRIENDS bird walks. Reg possesses extensive terrestrial knowledge, as his father, Jack Patterson, was the author of the book Native Trees of The Bahamas, which many consider to be the premier book on native plants in The Bahamas. He currently lives in Marsh Harbour with his wife Donna and has 2 children in college in the U.S.



On your next visit to Hope Town, take a glance at the new sign at the harbour's entrance! Encouraging boaters to use their holding tank, the sign was the brain child of a group of FRIENDS members on North End. This is an effort to help educate the public in ways to help improve the health of the harbours in Abaco. Contact FRIENDS for information about how to get your boat pumped out. The Sea of Abaco thanks you!!!

## Support Research & Conservation of Marine Mammals in The Bahamas. Adopt A Dolphin!



### Adoption Package (\$49/yr):

Adoption certificate  
Dolphin Biography  
Cool dolphin photo  
DVD: Marine Mammals of The Bahamas  
FRIENDS sticker

**Makes a perfect gift!**  
**Available online!**

*Proceeds go directly to wild dolphin conservation & research in Abaco!*

Researchers use unique marks and scars to tell individual dolphins apart.





# What's New with the Education Program?

It's been a busy Spring for the Education program! We held our annual Earth Day Science Fair, built Artificial Reef Balls, launched the Race to the Reef competition, earned another badge in Discovery Club, did walkabouts through Mangrove and Pine Forest ecosystems on field trips, planted trees on Earth Day to support the Million Tree Campaign and competed to see which school could collect the most aluminum cans for recycling. Kudos to all the schools in Abaco for your participation!



Students of SC Bootle High School pitch in to make an artificial reef ball.



The finished product! The reef ball now has to cure for at least a month before it is placed in the water.



Students complete a mangrove scavenger hunt while on a field trip for Race to the Reef.



A Discovery Clubber inspects a bee. This term the badge to earn was "Bugs"!

**FRIENDS' Earth Day Science Fair** was held on April 24th, 2009 at New Vision Ministries in Marsh Harbour. The theme was *Marine Resources*. Approximately 270 students and 20 teachers attended! Our guest speaker was Dr. Craig Layman, Associate Professor at Florida International University.



Mrs. Bailey's class from Abaco Central High proudly pose in front of their project that earned them 2nd place at Earth Day!



Students from Forest Heights Academy complete a quiz on the traveling coral reef exhibit that was displayed in Marsh Harbour for a week. The exhibit was created by The Smithsonian!



Hope Town School's Earth Day project focused on the importance of conservation to various species in Abaco.



Dante Richard, Miller Albury and their lionfish Dolores received 1st place in the upper primary division at The Earth Day Science Fair.



## Update on Pride Campaign to Conserve Crawfish

Abaco's Pride Campaign is well on its way to making an impact on marine conservation in Abaco. The campaign is currently in its planning phase where the project is developed by the input of the community, stakeholders and our national partners.

Throughout the months of April and May a series of meetings, workshops and individual consultations took place to help construct a thorough and realistic social marketing campaign that will be officially launched in October 2009. The campaign will focus on the ever-dwindling crawfish (spiny lobster), a species that is extremely important to The Bahamas both economically and culturally. Input was gathered from a wide variety of stakeholders such as commercial and cultural fishermen, The Department of Marine Resources, The Ministry of Tourism, The Nature Conservancy, The Bahamas National Trust, restaurant owners, teachers and other members of the community.

During these meetings stakeholders identified threats as they see them and subsequently helped develop a concept model for the campaign. Experts were then brought in to complete a threat ranking assessment which identified illegal fishing of juvenile lobsters as the main threat to be targeted by this campaign. The Pride Campaign focuses on behaviour changes so we will be looking towards strategies that reduce illegal fishing of juvenile crawfish.

After establishing the campaign goal, FRIENDS had several one on one meetings and more focused group meetings regarding possible strategies to reduce the threat of illegal fishing of juvenile lobsters in Abaco.



*One of many undersized crawfish tails that was seized by The Department of Marine Resources.*

Fishermen and others have suggested a voluntary certification program in which lobster is taken off the menu during the closed season. Other suggestions include a certification program for fishermen and a community watch initiative. Each of these options is being assessed in detail for their viability through an extensive process designed by RARE.

The project plan will continue to be developed through the summer in order to have a final document by August. D'Shan Maycock, the Pride Campaign Manager, will then complete her second university phase in September in Washington DC. During this time she will look at the overall campaign plan and prepare to begin executing it in October. Throughout this process the feedback from the community has been extremely positive and we know that this campaign is going to make a lasting difference on Abaco's marine environment!

**To follow along with Abaco's Pride Campaign, sign up for updates at [rareplanet.org](http://rareplanet.org)**

## Sustainable Development Workshop Held to Learn and Discuss Concerns

On April 15, 2009 a workshop was held by Friends of the Environment to help educate key Abaco stakeholders in sustainable development.

The workshop was an effort of the FRIENDS Sustainable Development Committee, which was formed to address rising concerns about rapid growth and un-sustainable development in Abaco and to help facilitate information sharing and public awareness.

The committee has adopted the Bruntland Commissions' definition of sustainable development: "Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

A variety of stakeholders were present to give a comprehensive view of the community's concerns. Attending were representatives from various developments in Abaco, The Bahamas Real Estate Association, The Ministry of Tourism, other national NGO's, heavy equipment operators and general business owners from throughout Abaco.

Attendees were presented with a series of informative talks designed to address aspects of development such as laws and policies, innovation, planning, and conservation. Following the presentations, strategic discussions were held to assess developmental concerns for Abaco and to prioritize those concerns. A list of nineteen issues was compiled and then reduced by vote to a list of the top four developmental concerns for Abaco, deemed so by those attending the workshop. They are:

- Need for a Comprehensive Vision for Abaco's Development
- Apparent Lack of Transparency in Government Activities
- Lack of Enforcement of Existing Regulations, and Resulting Consequences
- Need for Land Use Planning, Zoning, and Conservation Planning

A copy of the workshop report will be sent to relevant local and central Government agencies. If you would like to view a copy of the report, contact FRIENDS. Also, reports will soon be available for download on our website [www.friendsoftheenvironment.org](http://www.friendsoftheenvironment.org).

## New Nest Sites for Abaco's Parrots

By Caroline Stahala

The Abaco parrot is known for using underground limestone cavities for nesting. Why the Abaco parrot chooses to nest in these cavities as opposed to the more traditional tree cavities is not clear.

A few speculations are that limestone cavities are more available and more permanent than tree cavities. Also, since most of South Abaco's forests are relatively young due to the recent (in tree years) logging, parrot sized cavities have not had time to form or be created by Woodpeckers.

Although the limestone cavities are more permanent and provide better protection from fires than tree cavities might, ground level cavities also make parrots and their nests more susceptible to attacks by mammalian predators, particularly

feral cats that live in the forest.

Eleven to 25 percent of nests are impacted by feral cat predation. Since this type of predation is the primary threat to the parrot's survival at this time, ways to reduce the number of parrot deaths during the breeding season are needed.

One of these ways is to provide parrots with cavities that are farther off the ground and make it harder for cats to sneak up on the nests. This is precisely what we are trying to do at this time. A number of parrot nest boxes have been placed in trees around Abaco National Park and other areas parrots frequent.

The idea is to monitor these nest boxes to see, first of all, if parrots find them a suitable nesting alternative to the underground cavities. Secondly, if they do

accept the tree cavities, are the parrots as successful or more successful breeding in them.

Lastly, can tree cavities reduce the number of breeding females that die each year nesting season due to feral cat attacks. Nest boxes are certainly not a solution to the predator problem in South Abaco. Feral cats impact other bird and reptile species in the area but hopefully the nest boxes can help us manage a primary threat to the persistence of parrots.

If you have any questions regarding the Abaco parrot or are interested in helping with conservation activities of the parrot, please contact Friends of the Environment or Caroline Stahala ([carolinestahala@hotmail.com](mailto:carolinestahala@hotmail.com)) for more information.



*A nest box that has been placed in Abaco National Park in the hopes of providing the parrots an alternative to ground nesting.*

## Financial Report

	2008 Actual	2009 Budget
Membership	\$49,380.00	\$45,000.00
Donations	\$41,110.25	\$35,000.00
Events		
Reef Ball	\$56,004.50	\$40,000.00
RARE		\$35,000.00
ASAC	\$6,650.00	
Other Events	\$7,044.25	\$5,000.00
Merchandise	\$16,469.00	\$15,000.00
Admin. Services	\$1,541.65	\$1,000.00
Interest from the CD	\$774.93	\$500.00
Rentals	\$20,565.00	\$23,103.00
Foundations	\$56,560.60	\$50,000.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$256,100.18</b>	<b>\$249,603.00</b>
<b>General &amp; Administrative*</b>		
Salaries	\$30,451.48	\$30,000.00
Rent	\$20,700.00	\$21,600.00
BEC Electric	\$9,042.97	\$10,000.00
Communications	\$2,930.26	\$3,500.00
Office Supplies	\$3,516.72	\$3,500.00
Office Maintenance	\$6,097.02	\$6,000.00
Transportation	\$806.01	\$1,200.00
Accounting & Legal Services	\$950.00	\$1,000.00
Bank Charges	\$1,010.15	\$1,000.00
Depreciation	\$3,699.48	\$3,700.00
Meetings/Conferences	\$1,315.00	\$1,500.00
Insurance for Office	\$1,441.73	\$2,000.00
<b>Programs</b>		
Marine	\$22,931.78	\$18,500.00
Terrestrial (ANP & Invasives)	\$36,081.86	\$14,500.00
Recycling	\$25,960.44	\$12,500.00
Environmental Education	\$91,151.15	\$47,600.00
RARE		\$32,000.00
Sustainable Development		\$3,100.00
Development	\$41,155.22	\$35,500.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$299,241.27</b>	<b>\$248,700.00</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>-\$43,141.09**</b>	<b>\$903.00</b>

\*FRIENDS General and Administrative expenses includes the operation of the Education Center, home to the Discovery Program, Education Programs and Summer Camp.

\*\* The 2008 deficit was the result of unpaid pledges. It was covered by a reserve fund raised in previous years. FRIENDS has reduced its budget to ensure that the organization does not run a deficit in 2009.

**Become our FRIEND on Facebook**

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

**Event announcements, news, and more!**

## FRIENDS thanks Friends

**Coastal Awareness Community Clean ups:** Uli Nowlan, The Pelican Shores Community, Tropical Shipping, The Ritz Carlton on Winding Bay, Local Government South Abaco, Standard Hardware, Ace Hardware, Abaco Groceries, Price Right, Pinewoods, Chelsea's Choice, Bahamas Waste, Big Bird Farm, North Rock Water, Yellow Air Taxi, Abaco Print Shop, Island Equipment, Louis Schneider, CAP and ACH and all who volunteered their time to come out and participate.

**Cruiser's Net Announcements:** Pattie Toler

**Earth Day Plant a Tree Initiative:** Michael Parotti, Pinewoods Nursery

**Earth Day Science Fair:** New Vision Ministries, Colina Imperial, The Ministry of Tourism, Pinewoods Nursery, Ebb Tide, Loggerhead Productions, Our judges (Leslie Gelin, Mirella Santillo, Joy Chaplin, Dashinka Roberts, Sally Chisolm, Bryan Thompson)

**Recycling:** Danny Trembley, Evince Joseph, Abacays/Carib Freight, Deans Shipping, Michael Albury, Tropical Shipping, Guana Freight

**Internal Affairs:** David Price, Attorney at Law

**Lemonade Stand Donors:** John MacMillan, Sophie Parker, Harold Parker, Natalie MacMillan and Rosie MacMillan

**Native Plant Fairs:** Michael Parotti, Rolf Sauer, The Hope Town Harbour Lodge, Blane Sweeting, Thomas L. Bethel, Andre Albury, Treasure Cay Community Center

**Moorings Maintenance:** Mark Gonsalves, Tim Higgs, Froggies Out Island Adventure, Dive Guana, Karl Syfrett, Baker's Bay Golf and Ocean Club

**"Party in da Backyard":** Java, The Jib Room, Abaco Big Bird, James Malone, Michael Parrotti, Camille Lowe, Brandon and Stacy Thompson, F&V, The Hope Town Harbour Lodge, Island Delight, Bakers Bay Golf and Ocean Club, The Department of Marine Resources, Maria Silvester, Snappa's Bar and Grill

**Traveling Coral Reef Exhibit:** BREEF, Royal Bank of Canada

**Pete's Pub Fundraiser:** Pete's Pub, Caroline Stahala, Abaco Eco, Leigh Davis, Nancy Albury, Sam & Jackie Cannon, John Haestad, Tupps, The Abaco Rage, Loggerhead Productions, Watercolor Cottages, Bahamas Underground, Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation, Maria Silvester, Layna Cartwright, John Durban, Linda Wiltfang, Pete Johnston, Marjolann Scott, Olivia Patterson, Dan Drummond, Fire and the Goat Peppers, Bruce Ost,

\*A special thank you to The Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation for all their support with FRIENDS marine and education programs.

Please check FRIENDS' website to see those **BUSINESS DONORS** who have so generously given their support this year.

### Recycling in Abaco—Join in!

More and more people are recycling in Abaco.

**Heineken, Vitamalt, Kalik and Guinness bottles, aluminum cans and car & boat batteries are now being picked up!**

All recycled materials are shipped off island to recycling facilities to be re-used.

The more trash we can keep out of the new landfill the longer it will last – and the more noxious chemicals we can keep out, the healthier our air and water quality!

Find out about recycling in your area by visiting the FRIENDS website: [www.friendsoftheenvironment.org](http://www.friendsoftheenvironment.org)

Call to arrange a pick-up for your neighborhood, business or restaurant: Roberts Trucking, Marsh Harbour; 577-0699



## Wondrous Blue Holes of Abaco By Brian Kakuk

The caves and blue holes found on Abaco have been a well kept secret by the few cave divers who have ventured here over the years. The combined efforts of early explorers added thousands of feet of explored passages to Dan's Cave, one of Abaco's premier cave systems.

The Dan's/Ralph's cave system is a lengthy system of large rooms connected by deeper passages. The rooms vary in depth from 40 to 120 feet and are connected by short, deep, "drain traps" at depths of 120 to 170 feet.

Some of the larger rooms, such as one named Wrigley Field, are more than 500 feet long and 250 feet wide, while shallower rooms such as the

Crystal Palace and the MAD room are so filled with pure, translucent and white crystal formations, that moving through these rooms must be done with the greatest of care.

Many can only be traversed with the use of side mounted cylinders rather than the traditional back mounted cylinders. This allows divers to slip through small openings and weave between formations without having a negative impact on the cave.

Dan's/Ralph's cave system, Reel Breaker Blue Hole and Nancy's Cave, (near the Dan's/Ralph's systems), along with the now well documented Sawmill Sink, are currently being proposed for protection by the Bahamas Caves Research Foundation, Friends of the

Environment, Antiquities Monuments and Museums Corporations/National Museum of the Bahamas and the Bahamas National Trust as a National Park and as a Blue Holes Conservation Area due to the uniqueness of the 8 mile long system beneath.

By protecting these amazing, living, breathing systems and requiring safety protocols for both guides and tourists, the proposal ensures that these amazing places will be here for future generations of Bahamians and their adventurous cave diving tourists and researchers.

Bahamas Caves Research Foundation will soon be hosting stakeholder meetings for the citizens of Abaco to voice either support or concerns with



*Unique crystal helictites, such as these found in Dan's Cave, are rarely found in underwater caves.*

this proposed conservation area. Notices will be posted in the Abaconian for meeting dates throughout the different settlements on Abaco. For more information on the underwater caves and blue holes of Abaco and the Bahamas, check out: [www.bahamascaves.com](http://www.bahamascaves.com) and [www.bahamasunderground.com](http://www.bahamasunderground.com)

## Fish Race, Students Learn

During April and May 2009, 31 schools from all over Abaco and other Bahamian islands including Grand Bahama, Eleuthera, Exuma, New Providence and the Berry Islands, participated in the Race to the Reef competition.

This purpose of the event, sponsored by FRIENDS, was to demonstrate the connectivity between mangrove and coral reef habitats by showing that the same fish move between the two areas.

Each school that participated sent two students out to assist in catching and tagging snapper with radio tags in the Broad Creek near Camp Abaco.

For one month, the fish were

tracked and the three schools whose fish swam the farthest from the tidal creek out towards the reef in open water won a prize.

Daily results of the fish movements were posted on the FRIENDS blog so that the schools were able to check the progress of their fish. The information is still available:

[www.friendsoftheenvironmentabaco.blogspot.com](http://www.friendsoftheenvironmentabaco.blogspot.com)

First prize was awarded to Hope Town Primary, second to J.A. Pinder Primary and third place to Cherokee Primary.

A prize was also awarded to Man-O-War school for the most creative fish name, Miles.



*The students at James A. Pinder Primary in Sandy Point react to hearing that their school won 2nd place in the Race to the Reef competition. Their prize was a new laptop for the school.*

**FRIENDS' Mission: To preserve and protect Abaco's terrestrial and marine environments in order to achieve sustainable living for the wildlife and people of Abaco, Bahamas.**

### Board of Directors

*President*, Jim Richard  
*Vice President*, Cha Boyce  
*Secretary*, Cha Boyce  
*Treasurer*, Charlotte Dunn  
*Directors*: Justin Higgs, Diane Claridge, Laura Davis, Tim Higgs, Bernadette Hall, David Knowles, Ann Pleydell-Bouverie, Anne Albury, Reg Patterson, David Price, Della Kelly

### Staff

*Executive Director*, Kristin Williams  
*Office Manager*, Anita Knowles  
*Education Officer, Pride Campaign Manager*, d'Shan Maycock  
*Program Coordinator*, Olivia Patterson  
*Special Projects*, Lindsey McCoy

### Committee Heads

*Education*, Laura-lee Davis, Justin Higgs  
*Internal Affairs*, Jim Richard  
*Marine Parks & Preservation*, Cha Boyce  
*Data Coordinator*, Nan Kenyon  
*Waste Reduction*, Bernadette Hall  
*Keep Abaco Beautiful*, Bernadette Hall  
*Reef Ball*, Cha Boyce  
*Terrestrial Parks & Preservation*, Anita Knowles & David Knowles  
*Website*, Kent LeBoutillier  
*Sustainable Development*, Charlotte Dunn

**FRIENDS is a not for profit Society incorporated under the Bahamas Companies Act of 1991.**

### FRIENDS' Contact Information

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 website: [www.friendsoftheenvironment.org](http://www.friendsoftheenvironment.org)  
Mailing Address:  
 PO Box AB-20755  
 Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Bahamas



**Be A FRIEND -  
 Plant Native**

