



# Friends of the Environment

Abaco, Bahamas

WINTER 2016

PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & ACTIVITIES SINCE 1988

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## Science For The Community



Research is presented in the form of posters and spoken presentations



ASAC presenters and participants gather at the Frank Kenyon Centre for a meet and greet.

### Why Does FRIENDS Host ASAC?

FRIENDS planned the Abaco Science Alliance Conference (ASAC) as a way to bring scientists and the community together to share information. Community members do not always have access to scientific journals and reports, which is where this information is normally published; ASAC makes it accessible. Additionally, this venue provides community members the opportunity to share their valuable local knowledge with researchers. Students also get to learn more about opportunities in scientific careers, and ways that they can become more involved in research.

### What can I expect to learn at ASAC?

Talks and posters at the conference cover everything from new discoveries about animals and plants, investigations of human impacts to the environment, integration of research, conservation, and environmental management, to understanding relationships between species and their habitats (past and present). All presentations are related to the Bahamian environment.

### But aren't conferences just for scientists and specialists?

Nope, not this one. All community members are invited to attend, and talks are presented so that anyone can understand, even if you haven't taken a science class. We hope you will join us at the next ASAC in 2018!

### What did I miss this year, and how can I learn more?

In short, the 2016 ASAC covered national parks and protected areas, nutrients and coral reefs, bird extinction on Abaco, impacts of study abroad, The Marls mangrove die-off, ocean noise pollution, impact of marine debris on fish, stingray research, manatee movements, queen conch nurseries, bonefish site fidelity, bonefish spawning, bonefish guide knowledge, the status of bonefish research, piping plover studies and outreach, potcake populations, bottlenose dolphin population trends, impacts of increasing water temperature on snapper, mosquito fish communication, Bats of The Bahamas, a lionfish invasion, checkered puffer ecology, impacts on patch reefs, spiny lobster fishery improvement, anchialine ponds, Bahamas forestry projects, rapid ecological assessments in Abaco, and coral reef restoration.

One paragraph descriptions of each talk and poster are available on the FRIENDS website (see the link below). Also, follow the Abaco Scientist Blog!

<http://www.friendsoftheenvironment.org/education/a-s-a-c/>



FRIENDS is a not for profit Society incorporated under the Bahamas Companies Act of 1991. FRIENDS is also a registered 501(c)3 organization; that means gifts to FRIENDS are tax deductible in The United States.

## President's Letter



What an awesome 2015 for Friends of The Environment! The completion and official opening of the Frank Kenyon Research Centre in April was a milestone and a proud day in the life of FRIENDS. The island of Abaco can now boast of having a first class

research centre that will assist with facilitating environmental education, research and resource management. In addition, it offers dorm style bunk rooms, a laboratory space, large kitchen, and indoor and outdoor classrooms, where we encourage local and visiting researchers, as well as schools to come and do their environmental research and studies. We have continued our outreach initiatives throughout the entire island of Abaco, with our ongoing educational, awareness, preservation and conservation programs, impacting the lives of many.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our many donors and supporters of FRIENDS who have bought into our vision and have been consistent in supporting our endeavors. Without you, we would not be able to keep FRIENDS' doors open and not have a state of the art research centre. For this we say a big Thank You! Kudos to our staff at FRIENDS, who work tirelessly to ensure that the goals and objectives of FRIENDS are met.

The Board of Directors and staff of Friends, embrace 2016 with great expectancy and optimism. We look forward to your continued support, as together we make Abaco the most environmentally friendly destination in the region.

*Wynsome Ferguson*

## Save the Date

**March 20**, Great Abaco Family Fitness Weekend, Treasure Cay

**April** - National Coastal Awareness Month

**April 22nd** - Earth Day

**June 27th - Aug. 5th**, - Summer Camps

**September** - International Coastal Cleanup Month

We are proud to share some of last year's accomplishments:



## 2015 Highlights

Our education program visited **19 schools**, including 285 teachers and parents, gave **55 school presentations**, and ran **53 field trips and 105 classroom presentations** for **2,602 students!** These experiences created some memorable moments for both students and parents.

Since the grand opening of the on April 30, 2015, **22 organizations** have stayed at The Kenyon Centre studying over **16 different research topics** including bonefish, sharks, lizards, archeology, mangroves and sea turtles. Over **300 individuals** have toured the centre's solar demonstration site and **61 local students** have participated in lab sessions at the Centre.

The Abaco community rallied in support of International Coastal Cleanup in September: **288 participants** covered 8.1 miles of ground and collected **2,855 pounds of trash!!**

The Bahamas Government established a fixed closed season on Nassau Grouper (December 1 - February 28, annually).

Four new protected areas were designated for Abaco! East Abaco Creeks National Park, South Abaco Blue Holes National Park, Cross Harbour National Park, and The Marls National Park.

## FRIENDS Thanks Friends

**Turtle Trot**, HG Christie Real Estate, Hope Town Harbour Lodge, Hummingbird Cottage Art Center, Sunny and Don Meinhold, PROMPT (Paradise Race Organization, Management, Promotion & Timing), Abaco Inn, Elbow Cay Properties, Ministry of Tourism, Hope Town Inn & Marina, LC Hull & Co., Firefly Sunset Resort

**Science Fair**, New Vision Ministries, CARIBSAVE, Albury's Ferry, Disney's Animals, Science and Environment, GEF Small Grants Program, John Durban, Judges: Joy Chaplin, Huel Moss, Kaderin Mills, Nancy Albury, Paula Lamm, Canishka Alexander, Brian Albury, Debbie Curry, Jim Richard, Annstacia Storr, George Martin, Holly Fearnbach

**Kayak Challenge**, Adam & Sarah Lawrence, Todd Cash, Ryan Cash, Frank Knowles, Pete's Pub, Abaco Eco, Abaco Family Medicine, Abaco Petroleum, MH Exporters & Importers, Black Fly Lodge, Ministry of Tourism, Abaco Cancer Society

**Hope Town Music Festival**, Chris Farren/Combustion Music, and all of the community members who made the event possible!

# Kenyon Centre News and Updates



We are very proud of the progress of the Kenyon Centre in the first nine months! Moving towards our first year of operation, and our second summer, we are excited about the potential for new research, new and stronger partnerships, and more Bahamian students introduced to hands-on learning!

## Growth in the First Year

The Kenyon Centre is coming into its own as the newest destination for research and education in Abaco! Our partnership with other community groups has also helped identify new uses for the Kenyon Centre such as a location for press conferences, community meetings, and even spay and neuter clinics. Events such as these introduce the centre's sustainable development principles to more community members and give FRIENDS the opportunity to give back to the community in new ways.

Many of the needs at the centre could not be anticipated, so we proceeded cautiously in the first year to allow centre guests to identify the most pressing needs, especially for the lab. These include deep freeze sample storage, additional lab equipment, and tables.

Thanks to a surplus of solar energy at the Kenyon Centre, FRIENDS has been able to subsidize power at the Education Centre, however it would assist our sustainable development goals to move towards being entirely off-grid. New lab equipment will also require additional power, so the Kenyon Centre is looking to grow its solar array and battery bank.

Contact us to learn more about our upcoming adult field course on Turtle Research!

## Program Spotlight: B.A.M.!

Bahamas Awareness of Mangroves, or B.A.M.!, is a program created by the Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation in partnership with FRIENDS. B.A.M. teaches students the local and global importance of mangrove ecosystems and involves them in positive actions to help those ecosystems. Participating schools started their own research projects to study the growth of mangrove seedlings in various substrates. This project will inform future restoration projects and also helps participating students achieve skills for Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) requirements.

Students have been measuring their mangrove propagules weekly and we are looking forward to the results of their research projects!



Photo by Jim Richard

## Why Join FRIENDS (or renew your membership)?

*Your contribution to FRIENDS:*

- \* Provides environmental education to create a new generation of responsible citizens and environmental stewards*
- \* Reduces invasive species and promotes biodiversity*
- \* Conserves Abaco's habitats and natural resources for future generations to enjoy*
- \* Supports our amazing quality of life in Abaco*

Please use the enclosed envelope or visit our website make sure you are a member for 2016!

[www.FriendsoftheEnvironment.org](http://www.FriendsoftheEnvironment.org)

# Proud to Announce New Parks for Abaco!

East Abaco Creeks



mangroves and hardwood coppice  
marine nursery habitat  
high density of marine blue holes

South Abaco Blue Holes



crystal caves  
amazing fossil discoveries  
pine rocklands and coppice

Cross Harbour



bonefish spawning aggregation  
marine nursery habitat  
shark mating area

The Marls of Abaco



mangrove flats  
bonefish feeding area  
bird and sawfish habitat

Not only do these newly declared parks (Aug. 2015) protect numerous valuable natural resources, they also aid in protecting Bahamian livelihoods and represent future job opportunities. Each area will be governed by a management plan that is yet to be designed by community stakeholders and conservation managers.

## Sea Beans: A Club for Curious Little Citizens

Sea Beans is a weekly after school club for young Bahamians (ages 3-5) that will be piloted in Spring 2016. Sea Beans are seeds that wash up on our coasts from distant lands. Finding a sea bean is a beachcomber's treasure.

It is this sort of discovery and delight in nature that we want to pass on to young Bahamians.

FRIENDS has been working with students in grade school since 2006, providing over 12,000 environmental education experiences. During this time, children under 6 years old have occasionally been involved in our programs. Their interest helped us realize the need for early environmental education; especially for providing opportunities for kids to connect directly with nature.

The Sea Beans curriculum was developed with the assistance of education partners at Disney's Animals, Science and Environment and was designed with specific benchmarks in mind for each lesson. Activities will focus on themes related to local animals and habitats; club members will learn a word of the week, participate in arts and crafts, reading and games, and outdoor exploration. Themes include: plants, animals, coral reefs, mangroves, fossils, and litter.



**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.**

### FRIENDS' Contact Information

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### Officers:

*President*, Wynsome Ferguson. *Vice President*, Jim Richard. *Secretary*, David Knowles. *Asst. Secretary*, David Price. *Treasurer*, Charlotte Dunn.  
**Directors:** Justin Higgs, Diane Claridge, Reg Patterson, Jody Albury, Joy Chaplin, Mike Lightbourn, Alana Carroll

### Staff:

*Executive Director*, Kristin Williams  
*Education Officer*, Cassandra Abraham  
*Program Coordinator*, Olivia Patterson  
*Office Manager*, Ruth Albury  
*Events Coordinator*, Cha Boyce  
*Program Assistant*, AJ McIntosh

