



# Friends of the Environment

## Abaco, Bahamas



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Environmental Activities Since 1988

Winter 2008

## Crossing Beach Restoration Completed!

FRIENDS' January 2007 newsletter issue described plans to restore and beautify Crossing Beach, the only public beach in Marsh Harbour. FRIENDS is now proud to announce that the project is complete!

Crossing Beach was a low lying area boasting many invasive Casuarina trees, but not much else. The area was subject to a lot of erosion, mostly due to the shallow Casuarina root systems and poor drainage off the road.

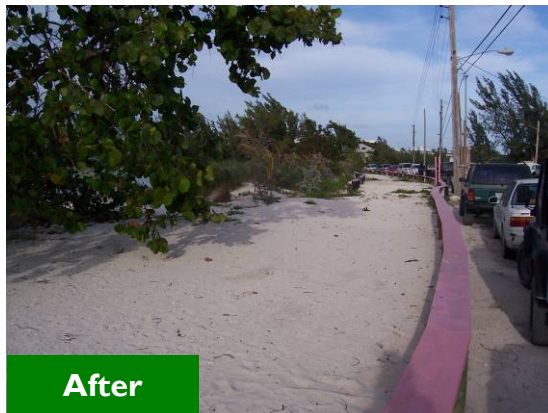
FRIENDS began restoration efforts in February 2007, toppling the Casuarinas and cutting them into manageable pieces. All Casuarinas and Hawaiian Seagrapes were removed with the help of heavy equipment and much appreciated hard labour. Once the beach was clear of invasive species it was leveled out, and sand was delivered.

The sand was used to create a small dune over some of the organic matter on the beach. The dune was built in sections to provide paths for beach-goers and to allow water to pass through. The dune area was planted with native coastal plants such as sea oats, buttonwood and spider lily, as well as other local trees such as Orange Geiger and coconut palms. The dune has become established and has even weathered Hurricane Noel.

Community members have donated picnic tables for everyone to enjoy and the Marsh Harbour town council performs regular litter pick-ups. Crossing Beach is now a source of pride for the whole community. Please stop by and have a look. There is wonderful shade under the seagrape trees!



Before



After

Special thanks to our volunteer advisors and coordinators: Mark Gonsalvez and Steve Kvarnberg. Their time and dedication to the project were greatly appreciated! Thanks also to: E&D Waste, Bahamas Waste, Abacays, Matt Lowe's Cay, Eastern Shores Homeowners Association, Local Government, Islandscape, Abaco Club on Winding Bay, and Al Key, without whose help the project would not have been possible.

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### Upcoming Events:

- February 16th—Marsh Harbour Bird Walk
- February 23rd—Hope Town Native Plant Fair
- March 1st—Reef Ball
- March 1st—Treasure Cay Bird Walk
- March 8th —Treasure Cay Native Plant Fair
- March 22nd —Scotland Cay Native Plant Fair (by invitation)
- April 25th—Earth Day: "Climate Change", Venue: New Vision Ministries.

## Making A Difference:Volunteers and Truckers Cleaning up Abaco's Community



Mr. Donald Pinder, Senior of Sandy Point places his newly acquired tarp over the garbage truck on his early morning collection route. The tarp will help reduce the amount of garbage that flies out of the truck as Mr. Pinder conducts his route.

Joanne Feinstein walks daily when she is at her house in Hope Town. In appreciation for the beauty of the area, she started picking up garbage along the side of the road, but each time she walked the garbage had returned. Soon picking up garbage wasn't enough. She wanted to help create a more permanent solution.

Joanne called Friends of the Environment and offered her help. Bernadette Hall, chairperson of the recycling committee, explained that the problem was created by a number of factors: littering, not enough

trash receptacles and, much to Joanne's surprise, she explained that much of the trash on the side of the road came from uncovered trucks filled with refuse they are transporting to the dump. Although there is a fine for having the trucks uncovered, it is a rule that is ignored more than it's followed.

Joanne offered to research low cost, sturdy tarps when she returned to the United States. She quickly found a supplier and offered to order tarps for trucks that would use them and volunteered to donate the first one.

A call went out to FRIENDS volunteers and Tonia Ferguson, a teacher in Sandy Point offered to contact their local garbage collector, Mr. Donald Pinder, Sr. Mr. Pinder accepted the offer of a tarp and the wheels were put in motion. In mid-January Mr. Pinder received his tarp and placed it on his truck, helping to keep the streets of Sandy Point a little cleaner.

If you would like to receive a tarp, sponsor a tarp or just get involved please contact Friends of the Environment, 367-2721 or [info@friendsoftheenvironment.org](mailto:info@friendsoftheenvironment.org)

## President's Message

What an exciting time to be assuming the reins as President of the Board of Friends of the Environment! We continue to grow at an unprecedented pace, as does the island of Abaco.



In 2007 the organization found that we had outgrown the rented office space in downtown Marsh Harbour. A decision was made to search for a larger facility which would afford us more room and a better teaching environment for the growing Education program.

If you haven't seen the new Education Center please make time to stop by and take a tour. While still located in Marsh Harbour, the Education Center provides us with more office and classroom space as well as a large fenced in area for use by students, volunteers and members.

We continue to forge strong relationships with partners who are working towards conservation in the Bahamas. Both the Bahamas National Trust and The Nature Conservancy support our work here on Abaco and FRIENDS recently formed a partnership with the Island School in Eleuthera to host students as interns. In January, our third Abaco Science Alliance Conference attracted research scientists, Abaco residents, students and other conservation groups and started conversations about how we can best work together to benefit Abaco's future.

With a full time staff of four, an expanded recycling program, an after school Discovery Club for students starting in January, we are looking forward to a busy year. I want to thank our members and supporters for helping us achieve so much in 2007. If you haven't become a member I hope you will consider joining us this year as we work towards a sustainable future for Abaco and its environment.

Sincerely,  
Jim Richard  
President

## Recycling in Abaco—Join in!

The following items are now collected for recycling in Abaco:  
Aluminum cans, 12 volt batteries, Radiators, Catalytic converters, Air conditioners, Fridges, Stripped or non-stripped copper, Outboard motors - including props, Old heavy equipment and steel, Heineken, Vitamalt, Kalik and Guinness bottles.

Call FRIENDS for information on depots, or call Paul Mills for a pick-up.  
Mills Brother's Fabricating, Marsh Harbour, [551-7990](tel:551-7990)

Friends of the Environment is pleased to announce that it has qualified for its own 501(c)3. That means gifts to FRIENDS are tax deductible in the United States.

FRIENDS will continue its wonderful relationship with PERC, and will also be accepting donations made through that organization.

## FRIENDS Celebrates Retiring Board Members

FRIENDS would like to honor the hard work and dedication of three long time Board members who retired in 2007.

Lory Kenyon was President of the Board during the move from Hope Town to Marsh Harbour, a huge step forward in the history of FRIENDS, giving it an Abaco wide focus. She developed a relationship with the Nature Conservancy, which resulted in FRIENDS becoming a "Partner in Progress" with the Conservancy and led to FRIENDS hiring their first two staff members. Lory also helped organize the first annual reef ball - and every one since, was integral in starting the moorings program that protects Abaco's reefs and served as FRIENDS Treasurer.



Nan Kenyon served on the Board of FRIENDS from its creation in 1988 and was a mainstay during these 20 years. She served many years as Secretary and led the data and newsletter committees, all thankless tasks that are so vital to track the history and growth of FRIENDS. Nan was ever present, helping to make every event she attended more thoughtful and organized than the last. Her eye for detail and institutional memory will be sorely missed!



Michael Albury was essential in establishing FRIENDS in Marsh Harbour, providing its first office space and its first staff member, Anita Knowles. Achievements during his time as President include the creek restoration at Cross Harbour and the creation of FRIENDS' Education program. Michael also oversaw the remodeling project for the Education Center.



All will be missed on the Board, not only for their hard work, but also for the fun and energy they gave to FRIENDS.

## Reef Ball



Mark your calendar. Bring your dancing shoes!

Saturday, March 1, 2008

Tickets (\$100) available online, from FRIENDS Board and staff, or at Java Café in Marsh Harbour

You can also reserve a table for up to 8 people.

Each year at the Reef Ball FRIENDS presents Annual Environmental Awards to a person, or business in the community that has benefited Abaco's environment in some way.

To submit your nominations for the Environmental Awards send the name and address of your nominee, along with the reasons you think the nominee deserves to be recognized by this award to:  
Anita Knowles, (242) 367-2721 [info@friendsoftheenvironment.org](mailto:info@friendsoftheenvironment.org)



# Look what's going on... at the FRIENDS Education Center!

The Education Center opened in September 2007. Since then, FRIENDS has offered field trips to all Abaco Schools, a teacher's workshop and now has an after school Discovery Club program. Students are building artificial reef balls, creating a nature trail next door to the Education Center and learning in the new classroom.



Students from J. A. Pinder Primary School set up a reef ball mold.



Treasure Cay Primary got hands-on when they mixed cement for their reef ball.



Mrs. D'Shan Maycock, Education Officer, explains coral reefs to groups that build artificial reef balls.



FRIENDS Education Center, located on the edge of Marsh Harbour, has a fenced area for reef ball building and other activities.



FRIENDS has partnered with Every Child Counts on the creation of the Nature Trail. Each week, students from ECC and their teacher spend some time working on the trail as part of their course work.



Above: ECC Students work on selectively trimming branches to clear a walking trail.



During his visit last October, Dr. John Durban gave presentations at the Education Center and Hope Town School. He also took students from Forest Heights on a dolphin survey in the Sea of Abaco. Dr. Durban has researched Abaco dolphins in cooperation with Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation for the past 12 years.

## The Importance of Involving Children Early

by Elwood D. Bracey, MD

Kids develop their values early in life which carry through the rest of their days. Their minds are like sponges and they learn bird calls and ID skills much easier than adults and, if exposed early, they can develop an enduring love of the outdoors and the environment. It's important to expose them before adolescence when it's "cool" to be indifferent.

If they enjoy camping, observing wildlife and seeing the beauties of nature they'll be pro-environment forever and pass those values on to their children.

An appreciation of the world we live and a respect for other living things should be an essential part of mainstream educa-

tion, but it isn't. Religion is often God and people-based and preaches that we're above other life forms which are there for our use. There's a gap in teaching an understanding of and responsibility to the natural world which Friends of the Environment, and similar organizations, fill with summer youth camps and activities.

When I lived in South Africa for three years I was amazed how weekend outings were such a part of family life. Young children, teenagers and parents would take off on a Friday afternoon to a National Park or Game Reserve with their tent, outdoor cooking equipment and binoculars for a wilderness experience.

This not only promotes family togetherness but an opportu-

nity to learn about nature and it's beauty. Granted cheetahs, eagles and crocodiles are more exciting than wild pigs and pelicans, but Abaco has such a wealth of plants and wildlife, especially in and near the sea, and is a much more beautiful place than most in the world. It deserves our interest and respect.

Get those kids out on the weekends and show them the natural wonders of Abaco. Bird walks are available every 1<sup>st</sup> (Treasure Cay) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Marsh Harbour) Saturday of the month. Call 367-2721 for details.

They'll see much more than just birds. You should come along too. It's enjoyable and you'll learn a lot. Bring water, snacks, wear good walking shoes and we'll be back around noon.



A group from the Sandy Point Environmental Camp uses binoculars to keep their eyes on the sky, following some Abaco Parrots.

**FRIENDS' new Discovery Club will be focusing on birding for their first session. The Club operates in South, Central and Northern Abaco. To register your children or to volunteer with the program contact FRIENDS.**



Students of J.A. Pinder Primary School in Sandy Point try out some Treasures in the Sea activities.



Justin Higgs, a Hope Town School teacher, tries out the same activity

## Workshop Beneficial for Teachers and Students

In October 2007, Friends of the Environment held a workshop in partnership with the Bahamas National Trust. The focus of the workshop "Treasures in the Sea – Our Bahamian Marine Resources," was to familiarize teachers with the marine environment and provide a resource book with activities to assist them in bringing the information into the classroom in an exciting and interactive way. Twenty-four Abaco teachers attended the workshop.

Ms. Tonia Ferguson, a teacher at JA Pinder Primary in Sandy Point tells of her experience:

*After eight years in the teaching profession and attending local workshops – Ministry of Education's Saturday Activity Sessions, Ministry of Education's Professional Workshops, Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF) Teacher Conference, and The Island School's Teachers' Conference, and an international workshop – Florida Council for Teachers of Mathematics, by far the*

*two-day Treasures in the Sea Workshop was most beneficial.*

*It provided an in-depth knowledge for educational content and hands-on activities for the students. Its range of activities encompasses lower primary to senior high students. Its compilation of information is extraordinary. For me to obtain the information provided in the booklet would have entailed using the Ministry of Education's Science Curriculum (Revised 2001), Modern Biology for Secondary Schools*

*(Copyright 1979), and the Internet and I still would have come up short compared to what the booklet provides.*

*With the closed seasons and the endangered state of the Nassau grouper, Caribbean spiny lobster, and the queen conch, the information is timely and pertinent. Placing such an elaborate resource in the hands of teachers is more than useful, it is crucial . . . That is if we want these species here tomorrow.*



All teachers were invited to participate in a field trip as part of the workshop. The excursion covered mangrove and rocky-shore habitats.

## Dundas and Murphy Towns Step Up to Keep Abaco Beautiful

As you drive through Dundas and Murphy Town you notice a pleasant difference. Inspired by coastal clean-up efforts of FRIENDS and Keep Abaco Beautiful, a program of the Abaco Tourist Office, the communities took matters into their own hands. The Dundas Town Local Government Committee has begun a transformation of Brown's Bay Park, turning it into a family friendly area for community events and relaxation. Restoration efforts include public bathrooms, a play area, beach cleaning and planting of native vegetation.

Both Murphy and Dundas Town participated in Keep Abaco Beautiful's "Best Kept Yard" Competition. The purpose of the competition was to encourage residents to beautify their communities and to improve on such things as stray animals and poor garbage disposal. Winners were announced in December 2007.

Through Keep Abaco Beautiful, community members can now lend a hand by "Adopting an Area". Businesses, schools and individuals are all invited to participate. The program is based on "Adopt-a-Highway" - all participants are responsible for keeping the area they adopt litter-free.

Groups from Hope Town, Marsh Harbour, and Winding Bay have already joined. Won't you join too? This is a great way to make an impact.



Murphy Town's Best Kept Yard Winner, Paula Rolle, along with representatives from Local Government, The Abaco Tourist Office, Keep Abaco Beautiful and FRIENDS. Dundas Town's winner was Fred Jones.

## FRIENDS Thanks Friends



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

**Moorings Maintenance:** Mark and Patti Gonsalvez

**Mermaid Reef Sign:** Cha, Aly and James Boyce, Tim Higgs

**Recycling:** Hope Town Association, Danny Trembley, Kitty Donnan, Peggy Brawley, Junior Mernard, Lawrence & Val McPhee, Ric Symmes

**Reef Ball Invitations:** Aubin Haestad

**Donor Letters:** Joe Shrier

**Hope Town Beach Clean-up:** St. James Youth Group

**Invasive Species Brochure:** Joanne Feinstein and the Nouveau Collective

**Nature Trail:** Steve Knowles, Every Child Counts, Caroline Peyer

**ASAC:** New Visions Ministries

**Wish List Donors:** Erin and Ron Pagliaro, S/V "Dual Dreams"

**Artificial Reef Ball Project:** David and Patti Hanafourde, Alex Forbes, Megan Seese, Betsy Stoner

**Newsletter Edits:** Kitty Donnan

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

## Sea Horse Supports S.A.M.E.



Stafford Patterson of Sea Horse Boat Rentals approached FRIENDS last year with concerns about our marine environment. He felt that more people need to contribute towards the general well-being of the Sea of Abaco. He came up with the idea of a program called Save Abaco's Marine Environment (S.A.M.E.) and asked FRIENDS' help with getting other businesses involved. So far, FRIENDS has approached most of the local dive shops and is appealing to other businesses that rely on the marine environment for their help. S.A.M.E is a donation based program—all funds raised go towards marine conservation and critical moorings maintenance at local reefs. Sea Horse Boat Rentals has added an impact fee/donation line to their contract. The amount is \$5, and customers are not required to pay, but the majority do. Through this simple program, Sea Horse Boat Rentals was able to raise a significant amount over the last few months and donated it to FRIENDS' Marine Conservation Program.

Did You Know?



Did you know that sperm whales have the largest brain in the Animal Kingdom? On average, a sperm whale's brain weighs 17 pounds! That's the weight of about six phone books! The human brain weighs about 3 pounds, that's the same as one phone book.

## Third Abaco Science Alliance Shared Diverse Information

by Kitty Donnan

The Third Biennial Abaco Science Alliance Conference (ASAC) sponsored by Friends of the Environment, January 3-5, 2008, shared an abundance of scientific research being conducted in Abaco and the Bahamas. This year's conference was well attended by residents, students, and visiting scientists. Eleanor Phillips, The Nature Conservancy Country Program Director, opened the forum with remarks on important Bahamas' environmental work.

The Honorable Earl D. Deveaux, Minister of Public Works and Transport, set the stage with his on-target and thought provoking remarks. An astronaut on an Apollo Nine orbit is said to have remarked, "Of all the beautiful sights I saw from our spacecraft, the islands of the Bahamas were the most spectacular of all." Minister Deveaux mentioned this to emphasize that the Bahamas most precious resource is its environment. He noted that the Sea of Abaco is world class and must be guarded vigilantly.

One of the most intriguing things about ASAC is the diversity of subject matter. Par-

ticipants learned about: findings of a 20 year study on bottlenose dolphins, sentinels of the marine environment; the first acoustic survey of beaked whales; and results of the Cross Harbour Sound creek opening, which provided more than 150 acres of restored wetlands as a juvenile fish nursery.

Several speakers addressed climate change, how rising global sea levels might impact the Bahamas, as well as patterns of rainfall and the wise use of wetlands for maintaining fisheries, replenishing groundwater and flood control.

Abaco's fragile environment is especially susceptible to island invaders and needs to be guarded against plants and products that harm birds, butterflies and native plants. A Bahamas National Lionfish Response Project researcher highlighted one of the most serious marine invaders, the lionfish. Dr. Keith Tinker, Director of the Antiquities, Monuments and Museums Corporation of the Bahamas discussed a different aspect of destruction, stressing the importance of protecting the Bahamas' cultural heritage and

landscape.

Visual presentations took participants underwater to learn about and see images of: the resilience of coral; fossils upwards of 3820 years old, discovered at Sawmill Sink and other Abaco inland blue holes; the sheer beauty of deep, dark blue holes where, when lights shine on cave tops and sides, the growth glows like crystal chandeliers. Research cave diving in the Bahamas includes studying not only biology and archeology, but also bio-science, hoping for discovery of anti-fungal and anti-cancer



Nancy Albury of Antiquities Monuments and Museums Corporation describes Sawmill Sink, a source of fossils in Abaco.

properties.

A birding guide author pointed out the contribution of amateurs in expanding the knowledge of Bahamas' natural history. Another author interpreted Columbus's journal descriptions of plants, animals, and marine life, in light of our contemporary knowledge of biology, taxonomy and pre-Columbian history.

All of the scientists expressed their delight in learning what others are doing, in different fields, but often with opportunities for collaboration. Their conversations with one another will surely have important outcomes for Abaco and the Bahamas, which is one of the most valuable aspects of ASAC. FRIENDS is pleased to spearhead this worthwhile conference and asks you to mark your calendars now for January 2010.



The conference sparked many interesting discussions. David Campbell and Samantha Whitcraft confer about the history of Monk Seals.

**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.**

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*Terrestrial Parks & Preservation*, Anita Knowles & David Knowles  
*Website*, Kent LeBoutillier

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

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**Be A FRIEND -  
 Plant Native**

