NET - a Northeast Tobago voluntary conservation fund - NC

We are pleased to announce the launch of a voluntary conservation contribution programme to enable visitors to make a financial contribution to the development of marine and coral reef conservation and education in northeast Tobago. Working with a number of dive operators in northeast Tobago we have developed an initiative to integrate communities into proactive conservation activities as well as increase public awareness and appreciation of this globally significant biodiversity hotspot.

When diving, snorkelling or just exploring northeast Tobago, visitors are encouraged to make a contribution of up to US$25 to a community conservation fund. In exchange for this contribution, divers will be given a locally made, hand-engraved token of thanks for their gesture, valid for one year. Every two months the fund is allocated to the implementation of a conservation-themed activity as elected by the participating operators, with each operator spearheading one activity per year with the support of the others. Additionally a small proportion of the fund is invested in the development and maintenance of the recompression chamber facilities in nearby Roxborough.

It is anticipated that conservation activities will include coastal clean ups, underwater clean ups, education and outreach programmes focused on relevant topics such as shark and ray conservation, and anything that is considered appropriate and beneficial to the local communities.

With ERIC facilitating the first of its kind collaboration between the dive operators in Charlotteville and Speyside, including Blue Waters Inn, Extra Divers, Saint Anthony’s, Spencer’s D Lion Diver, and Tobago Dive Experience, NET will be underway in early October. The first activity is planned for the second week of December, after which we will provide a full report in our newsletter.

International Coastal Clean Up - NC

A significant global problem impacting the oceans is plastic pollution. Insidiously growing for the last few decades, the problem has become such that a number of floating plastic gyres now exist in the world’s oceans. With up to 12 million tonnes of plastic estimated to enter the ocean every year, without a fundamental change in our approach to convenience and waste it seems unlikely the problem will be solved any time soon.

Addressing the problem at source through increasing public awareness of the environmental and health repercussions of plastic consumerism, especially single use plastic, is likely to be the most effective measure taken in the long-term. However short-term efforts to control plastic consumption such as plastic bag bans, and information gathering and awareness raising through clean up efforts are an effective tool for local environmental improvement.

As part of the International Coastal Clean Up programme on September 19th, we visited nearby Hermitage Beach with some friends from North East Sea Turtles. A regionally significant nesting beach for critically endangered hawksbill turtles, Hermitage does not escape the plight of ocean pollution. Filling a total of 8 sacks of rubbish weighing just under 50kg we were unsurprised to find food wrappers, bottles, bottle caps and plastic bags featuring heavily. See our Facebook page for a full report.

Remember, it is easy to be a part of the solution every time you visit the beach by taking a bag and removing and disposing of rubbish responsibly. Be the change!
ERIC hosts Trinidad and Tobago Bioblitz 2015 in Charlotteville - LF

“An intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area”, a Bioblitz gives scientists, experts and natural history enthusiasts the opportunity to assess the diversity of the marine, aquatic and terrestrial environments, identify potential areas for research, share information and most importantly, engage the public and increase environmental awareness and interest, all within 24 hours!

Since 2012, The University of the West Indies, with the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalist Club and other interest groups, have conducted BioBlitzes around Trinidad and Tobago. The first event was at Tucker Valley in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, where around 80 people participated and the surveys yielded 211 plant species and 443 animal species. ERIC will be the basecamp for BioBlitz 2015 in Charlotteville, Tobago, and for 24 hours from midday on Saturday 24th October survey teams will embark upon their task of recording as many species as possible in the surrounding area. Sunday 25th October is a chance for the public to meet experts and learn about the species recorded. With interactive displays, guided walks and snorkel trips there is something for everybody to enjoy, so come down to ERIC from 6am – 12pm and don’t forget your camera!

For further information on getting involved check the T&T Bioblitz Facebook page, follow the event live on Twitter and check our October newsletter for a full report of this natural history bonanza!

Working with ERIC - Kimron Eastman

Kimron is one of our community trainees and a staff member of the community based organisation North East Sea Turtles. Since August 2014 he has completed PADI Open Water and Advanced Open Water dive training with ERIC, achieved certification as a Reef Check EcoDiver, and is fully trained in our seabird monitoring protocol. Kimron lives in Charlotteville.

ERIC: What has been your experience so far?
Kimron: “I enjoy the diving and developing my skills. My first night dive was scary but fun. I’m looking forward to helping develop the reach of ERIC and expand our work into the communities, so that more people can understand the work we do and learn about the ecosystems in the area.”

ERIC: What message would you give to people about their environment?
Kimron: “Use what you have wisely because you don’t know how something you are wasting at the present moment could be used. Recycle. You never miss the water til the well run dry.”

Congratulations...

to our community trainees Kimron Eastman, Kirlan Blake and Welldon Mapp who recently completed their PADI Advanced Open Water certification. Their commitment to conservation is exceptional, an excellent example to the younger generation to safeguard the environment for future use and enjoyment.

Like and follow us for topical environmental articles and discussions, as well as photos and video highlights of ERIC life.

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