

# Invasive species workshop concludes at Mercure Hotel



Director for Regional Cooperation and Environmental Education Romain Renoux (left), Director of CAR-SPAW Hélène Souan (centre), and Director of Réserve Naturelle Nicolas Maslach (right) at Mercure Hotel.

MARIGOT--The 3-day Invasive Alien Species Management Strategies workshop organised by Réserve Naturelle in collaboration with the Regional Activity Centre of Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (CAR-SPAW) concluded on Wednesday at Mercure Hotel, Baie Nettle.

The purpose of the workshop, funded by CAR-SPAW, was to bring several managers of protected areas together for three days to exchange practices, techniques, know-how and compare results of one island to the other to better fight against invasive species.

The workshop focused on four major invasive species; rodents, iguanas, plant species and the sea grass *Halophila Stipulacea*. For each invasive species group, the workshop defined a scientific watch on alien invasive species, alien invasive species monitoring plans, eradication plans and long-term impact assessment on threatened endemic species.

Participants invited included representatives of CAR-SPAW, Saba Nature Foundation, Statia Nature Park, Réserve Naturelle de Petit Terre, Anguilla Parks, Sint Maarten Nature Foundation, Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society of the BVI, STINAPA Bo-

naire, Réserve Naturelle of St. Martin, Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS) and UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

"The primary cause of loss of biodiversity in our small islands is the destruction of habitat by agriculture or bad planning and land-use planning and the second cause is the introduction of invasive species that threaten local or even endemic species in colonizing their habitat," explained Romain Renoux, responsible for Regional Cooperation and Environmental Education. "There has been much publicity about the lionfish in marine areas, but there is also the new invasion of sea grass *Halophila*, which is an important concern for marine protected area managers. On land we have the well-known green iguana, and there are rats and mice that pose a significant threat to nesting seabirds. Goats are also potentially invasive with regard to local flora. Most protected areas in the northern islands of the Lesser Antilles face the same issues; rats threatening marine birds, invasive iguanas threatening native iguanas, or feral cats threatening birds."

Added Director of SPAW Hélène Souan: "This is becoming

a subject of major importance in the region and one that has not always been sufficiently taken into account. When it comes to invasive alien species, we usually think of exotic tropical plants and tropical animals. But the major invasive species that are a problem around the world are rats, cats and goats. They were introduced by man, voluntarily, or with boats accidentally. They are difficult to control, because they reproduce very quickly and adapt to all types of environment, climate, and habitat."

On Tuesday afternoon during a field trip, traps were laid on Tintamarre Island to limit the population of rodents. The participants returned on Wednesday morning to see the results. A third of the traps laid caught rats, which was considered not bad considering the rainy conditions.


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