**4th Annual Kid’s Shark Day at Kimsha Beach**

By Leslie Hickerson

Why should we protect sharks? All over the world, people are becoming more educated about the importance of protecting marine-life, including these once feared apex predators. Unfortunately, there are still several countries that refuse to step up and protect these creatures that are essential to the underwater ecosystem, which we rely on for so much.

This summer, in particular, has been a brutal one for sharks on our neighboring island of Anguilla where video after video is released of endangered and protected sharks being slaughtered including; a pregnant tiger shark and her unborn pups, and most recently a rare great hammerhead.

With 100 million sharks killed by humans each year the species simply cannot reproduce fast enough to keep up. It is important to spread the word that things like shark finning, restricted longline fishing, and overfishing are still happening so that we can affect change in the future.

“As an island nation, we depend on healthy oceans much more than we can imagine! This includes a healthy shark population as they are very important contributors to the ecosystem and coral reefs. If we do not have sharks we will lose our coral reefs and everything which depends on them such as; fisheries, dive tourism, and beach tourism,” says SXM Nature Foundation Project Manager Melanie Meijer Ze Schlochtern. Luckily for those of us that live on St. Maarten, the targeting fishing for and killing of sharks has been prohibited since October of 2011, and we have had a protected shark sanctuary since 2016.

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**Visit Parotte Ville, St. Maarten**

By Sarina Alexander

The bird town, gradually expanding and naturally growing in the direction of innovation, is both entertaining and educational. But the sanctuary, as Parotte Ville has also been baptized as, is the place where many come to get peace of mind and increase their health.

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**Too Cool to Loot and Litter**

By Leslie Hickerson

Those that were on St. Maarten in the days after the destruction caused by Hurricane Irma know that while we were still picking up the pieces that were left of our lives, there were countless incidents of looting that happened all throughout the island. Images of people emptying electronics stores played on the news stations of North America.

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Letter From the Editor

June 21, 2019

Thanks for choosing the ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekly Edition as your source for where to dine, shop, party and participate in island activities.

Now that we are officially into hurricane season, I urge our local readers to be vigilant in preparations. Stock up on supplies including water, food, batteries, flashlights, tarps, baby products and pet food. Even though it is forecast to be a lower than average season, be prepared early.

For our island visitors- thank you for choosing our island to vacation on! I am confident that our publication will give you insight to some favorite activities and perhaps some new things to try. Our writers have covered topics this week that may surprise even our local readers. Have fun exploring!

If you enjoyed reading our publication, please use the QR code to the right to find the digital archive on:

ST-MAARTEN.COM.

Hilary Grant
Editor

Online Portal

For in-depth information about our island, consult ST-MAARTEN.COM - the official online portal. Please use the convenient QR codes with any smart phone to access individual pages directly.

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Please refer to the map on Pages 10/11. Regions of the island are marked with a number which corresponds to the number you see on ads.

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What Is this Funny Graphic For?

The strange pixelated image above is called a QR Code - you must have come across it many times before (only that ours look a bit prettier than most others). QR codes are just a better version of bar codes and store with their unique design basic numeric information.

To use a QR code with your smart phone, a QR reader app needs to be installed on Android phones. iPhones come standard with it. In our magazine, the QR reader will translate the image into a link and open a website. This way, the information in our print magazine leads you right away to the internet and combining both media for your convenience.

Do you like the ad for a restaurant? Scan the code and open the restaurant's menu or make an online reservation. Want to book a sailing trip and enjoy the offered discount? Scan and sign up. It’s easy.
For several years the St. Maarten Nature Foundation and The Réserve Naturelle St. Martin have been working to preserve these species; not only from shark fishing but from waste pollution and environmental disease.

One of the events that St. Maarten Nature Foundation sponsors to raise awareness about shark conservation is the annual Kid’s Shark Day held at Buccaneer Beach Bar in Simpson Bay. This year’s event will be held on Saturday, June 22nd from 1-4pm. This amazing event is a must-do for families, both residents and visitors, to learn about the ocean’s most misunderstood creatures!

“During Shark Week, we try to attempt to bring this awareness about sharks to the local community, particularly for the children of the island. Sharks are often thought to be dangerous and a threat to humans, however, the opposite turns out to be true. Sharks do not eat people, but people kill and eat sharks. This is also the reason we organize this annual educational event; to change the image of the sharks on our island, as too often locals have an irrational fear of these beautiful animals,” explains Schlochtern.

Some of the activities include a shark scavenger hunt, a shark quiz, shark coloring, shark tattoos, and face painting! Kids can enjoy all these activities for free!

Along with goodies for all participating children, there will be prizes for some of the event winners and the opportunity to learn what you can do to help protect sharks in the waters around SXM!

Adults are welcome to come to enjoy Buccaneers who will be offering an exclusive Shark & Stormy Cocktail available at the bar for $6, with the cost of the drink being donated to the SXM Nature Foundation and their projects.

For more information about the event, follow the St. Maarten Nature Foundation Social Media pages!

Buccaneers Beach Bar is located on Kimsha Beach right next to the Artium Resort.
Now It’s Green – Now It’s Red: June’s Birthstone

By Hilary Grant, GIA Graduate Gemologist

‘Emerald by day, ruby by night’ is the description you most often hear for this gemstone. Originally found in the Ural Mountains of Russia in 1830, this gem changes colors from green to red. Because it was reminiscent of Russia’s military colors, the gem was named ‘Alexandrite’ after the young Czar, Alexander II.

Although it changes colors, this gem is not a mood ring! Its color change is unique to only a handful of gems. The color change is a magic trick we can thank Mother Nature for. Due to the way the gemstone’s crystal structure interacts with different light sources, we see different colors in natural versus artificial light! During the daytime, or natural light, this stunning gem will be a rich bluish green color; and in the evening in artificial light, Alexandrite will be purplish red.

Although it was originally found in Russia, the Ural mine deposits did not last indefinitely. Thankfully, there are several sources around the globe that Alexandrite has been discovered including East Africa, Brazil and Sri Lanka.

What should you look for when you visit Front Street in Philipsburg to purchase this highly sought after gem? Color change is most important! You should see a distinct color change from a cool color to a warm color. Also, know that most Alexandrite’s are under one carat; anything larger is of fine quality and the price can increase dramatically.

Alexandrite is the birthstone for June as well as the gemstone for 55th wedding anniversaries!

\[Image of Alexandrite gems\]
It will soon be competition time again for St. Maarten’s young steel pan players as they head to St. Vincent to pit their talents against those from other islands.

Steel orchestras evoke the traditional Caribbean, and no matter what song they are playing, there is a touch of joy about the sound.

Isidore York, AKA The Mighty Dow, is the leader of Dow’s Music Foundation (DMF), an organization that gathers for practice at the Festival Village and can be seen and heard at events throughout the island. The Ebony Steel Orchestra has a famous fan in the shape of Deanna Brown, daughter of legendary soul singer James Brown. A regular visitor to the island, Deanna loves to have the pannists to play for her when she is here and once they even visited her in Atlanta. The members are mainly teenagers, and although when Dow started the whole thing, there were several older people involved too, he is happy that the age profile has dropped because that means the tradition passes to a new generation, rather than dying out.

“They love it,” he says of the young members. “Some of them would be here every night if they could.” Dow himself is from a family of pan players and his father, Chester, is the only person in St. Maarten who tunes the instruments. Dow is keen to get some of the youngsters interested in learning that craft too.

He is responsible for taking the music into the island’s schools. “The steel pan is the mandatory instrument here,” he explains, “although students do play other things too.”

DMF was founded in 1991 as the Ebony Steel Foundation. “We had seven members, and it was started as an after-school program,” Dow goes on. “The idea was to play at hotels, the harbor, at parties, weddings, funerals, divorces, the whole works. There was a funding agency called OKNSNA and we got our first funding from them. But even before that, we took out a loan to buy our first instruments. Then OKNSNA came on board, and we were able to buy more instruments, make a CD and provide lessons for students at no cost to them.”

Financial support including for the St. Vincent trip now comes partly from the government and partly from several private sponsors.

The number of youngsters now involved is around 500, and sometimes the schools buss the kids to DMF, while at other times the foundation goes to the schools to give theory classes. Theory classes? Oh yes. This is not just a bunch of happy people doing what comes naturally. There is much more to steel pans than you might think.

Dow shows me a couple of instruments, with the notes written in felt tip around the surface. He explains the indentations (which look like welds but are actually made with a tool called a center punch) that keep the sound of one note in one place, enabling not just a full scale but several octaves to be produced in one piece of steel.

With their clean, shiny appearance, it is hard to believe that these instruments were once actual oil drums, but they are thoroughly spruced up and then chromed in Trinidad, spiritual home of the steel drum.

And it’s not just the construction that raises this observer’s eyebrows: Dow goes on to talk about fourths and fifths, crotchets and quavers, terms that used to baffle many of us in our school days, and although millions of people around the world play the guitar or keyboard, musical theory is still absolutely perplexing to those of us who bluff our way through, playing by ear.

“It’s like a xylophone laid out in a circle,” he says helpfully.

No doubt this also comes as a surprise to the tourists who come from the hotels and the cruise ships for steel pan workshops with the Mighty Dow and his crew. There’s a chance for the locals too. The Summer Music Workshop runs from July 6, 2019 to July 31, 2019.

For details of that and all things pan, check out the Dow’s Musical Foundation Facebook page, email dmf5xmn@gmail.com or call +1 721 542-6971 or 522-6508.

The Pan-Caribbean Appeal of the Ebony Steel Orchestra

By Chris Morvan
As wealthy or famous as people may be, very few feel the need for professional protection – but St. Maarten does attract celebrities and billionaires who have that concern. For instance, it is common knowledge that the Russian billionaire and owner of Chelsea FC, Roman Abramovich, is a St. Maarten aficionado and his yacht can be seen here from time to time, although that doesn’t necessarily mean he is on it.

Similarly, it is not unknown for Brad Pitt, Denzel Washington and other Hollywood A-listers to pop down for some island sun.

When such people do visit, security services are available if you know where to look. The man in the well-tailed grey suit in our picture is Marvin Burke, and that is what he does for a living. After a career in the police force in Trinidad and Tobago, Burke moved here and set himself up in the security business.

If you’ve seen the movie The Bodyguard, starring Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston, you may have thought Costner was under-sized and under-powered for the role. Marvin Burke makes him look puny. But that is not the whole point. If you’re going to be in someone’s constant presence, you probably don’t want a monosyllabic hulk in your house. Burke is a composed, thoughtful character.

“We provide a range of services including 24-hour protection,” he says. “When someone contacts us, we will show them a list of options that we can provide and we will discuss with the client exactly what they need.”

This includes armed protection: Burke has a licensed firearm. This, he says, can be particularly appropriate for clients whose own security people are not permitted to bring their weapons into the country.

There is also backstage security for concerts featuring visiting stars. The work is very different from that of the companies who provide a presence at the door of public buildings. Burke is keen to point out the importance of training, including the ability to spot suspicious activity before it turns into actual trouble.

“Prevention is better than cure,” he advises. What was it that made Burke go into this business in the first place?

“I’ve been in security all my life,” he says, “Starting with the police. There is a sense of gratification in making a client feel safe, and when they leave the island it is good to have the satisfaction of a job well done.”

He ranks St. Maarten as a low-risk area among Caribbean islands, while declining to name names as regards the more dangerous ones.

Discretion also means he does not disclose the identity of clients. He has a good relationship with a company at the airport which deals with VIPs, and that is where much of his business comes from.

Another way of doing it, if your rich and famous friends are thinking of coming to St. Maarten, is to use the company email address, theagencynv@gmail.com.
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Try your skills on our Sudoku. Ranging from easy to difficult, giving you the opportunity to see if you are a puzzle master. Need help or want to see if you got it correct? Find the Sudoku solutions on Page 15. Good Luck!

#### Easy

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Those that were on St. Maarten in the days after the destruction caused by Hurricane Irma know that while we were still picking up the pieces that were left of our lives, there were countless incidents of looting that happened all throughout the island. Images of people emptying electronics stores played on the news stations of North America, leaving such a negative impression that people still regularly ask if St. Maarten/St-Martin is safe to visit nearly two years later.

In an effort to make a difference and ensure this doesn’t happen again in the future UNICEF and the Ministry of Education Culture, Youth & Sports (MECYS) partnered to form the ‘Too COO L To Loot’ project. This campaign aims to teach students that looting is un-cool and has long-lasting effects on individuals, businesses, and a ripple effect into the rest of the community.

Since the campaign launched, it has had numerous programs and activities for students from the age of 5-18 including a logo contest won by 18-year-old Xochiquetzal Li Gonzalez Toro, debates held by high-school students, and art auctions. Those students that were part of the event will, hopefully, refrain from ever looting themselves and encourage their families to do the same.

Recently the campaign combined their efforts with Tes Verheij and the Wastefactory to offer the program Too Cool to Loot & Litter.

“A couple of months ago, UNICEF approached me to see if I could think of a program for secondary schools. I came up with Too Cool to Loot and Litter. It was a 4-hour presentation where we educated and discussed looting and littering and the 5 R’s (Respect, Refuse, Recycle, Reuse, and Reduce),” says Verheij.

During her presentation, Verheij and the Too Cool to Loot team had an open discussion with the students about looting. They took the time to explain that any form of looting is stealing. There is an easy connection between looting and littering as the damage caused by looters is left behind.

“It was an educational program in which we touched on; carbon footprint, how to recycle and reduce waste by refusing single-use plastics and their environmental effects,” describes Verheij.

Every school that participated sent two or more students from each grade. The students that got to go to the Wastefactory for the program will do a presentation about everything they learned in their own classes to reach as many students as possible.

“We finished the program with a t-shirt design. All the students made a design for ‘Too Cool to Loot and Litter’. Each school will have one design winner and this design will be screen printed on t-shirts. So each school will have its own identity. Some students will get to come back to learn the process of screen-printing and print their own shirts at the Wastefactory. Out of all the designs, we will create a mural to finish the project,” says Verheij.

The Wastefactory will be hosting a weekly Summer Camp from June 17th to July 27th, where students will learn how to up-cycle different materials, how to make their own paper and make crafts out of clean waste.

For those interested in participating in this educational and fun camp, contact Tes at wastefactorysintmaarten@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page.
The Unique St. Maarten/St-Martin Crossword Puzzle

Our crossword puzzle truly is unique, and many of the questions need intimate knowledge of Sint Maarten/Saint Martin and the Caribbean. We ask questions of local interest, geography, tropical biology, and even history. So, don’t feel bad if you are stumped! If you try to solve the puzzle as a visitor to our island and get stuck, don’t be shy: ask a local.

The questions are valid for our hemisphere; this means that if we ask about an island to the north of our location, it can only be Anguilla. Crossword puzzles don’t allow for names with spaces, so we might pull together a name or compound word. If the answer is ‘Orient Beach’, we will use ‘orientbeach’.

Sometimes, the questions are a bit tricky. But that’s part of the fun. Mistakes do happen, even though our puzzle is produced right here on the island. If you detect an error, drop us a line at SXM@EMAIL.COM.
Visit Parotte Ville, St. Maarten

Text and photo by Sarina Alexander

For centuries it has been believed that the name given to a child or a family’s surname, could determine its likelihood of success, personality traits or reveal the family’s occupation. When I visited Parotte Ville, how amusing was it to discover that the name of its mayor and founder was George Parotte.

Mr. Parotte has been an animal lover all his life, but his true passion was always in the one creature that comes in a variety of sizes, colors, species, and abilities. That one creature that made his job as a taxi driver fly away and a new business venture take off.

We came to discover that beyond the mayor’s acute knowledge of birds, he is also well rounded in other subjects such as the medicinal attributes of many locally found plants, the history of our island and his ancestors but also business management.

Parotte Ville is as cosmopolitan as St. Maarten/St-Martin, gathering about 25 species and 170 birds.

Initially, George – as you will kindly be invited to call him - wanted to base the bird aviary on the northern side of the island but encountered a few “red tapes from the government and a lack of social support” due to their inability to grasp his vision and foresee the international scale of recognition that Parrot Ville would acquire. Indeed, the modest bird agglomeration has been featured in the New York Times Magazine, USA Today, Travel Talk, Bird Talk; received a certificate of excellence on Trip Advisor and is rated #2 out of 34 things to do in St. Maarten.

Having studied birds for the past ten years in regards to their history, diet, medical needs and having raised them since he was 17, George has created a space that enables birders and curious visitors to enjoy more than a simple bird watching habitat but to experience a close and voluntary interaction with them. They playfully fly on your hand to eat from the cup of seeds you’re holding, land on your shoulder or head and if your offer your finger as a toy, you might just regret that stinging decision. I heard “ouch! that hurts!” quite enough times to assume that putting my finger in a birds beak isn’t something I want to try…

When looking at businesses and opportunities in St. Maarten/St-Martin as opposed to abroad, I can’t help but wonder what the missing key elements are for the ventures here to expand as much as they do elsewhere. In the US, the 2011 National Survey reported that “bird watchers spend nearly $41 billion annually on trips and equipment”.

The economy of the local communities in which bird watching occurs benefit up to $14.9 billion from avitourism, also called bird tourism.

Also, during the American Birding Expo in September 2017, it was found that “among other events, the Space Coast Birding Festival generated nearly $1.3 million over 5 days.”

We can probably expect growth in bird lovers in St. Maarten/St-Martin thanks to the initiative of many schools on both perimeters of the island, that take the children on school trips to Parotte Ville where Mr. Parotte enthusiastically shares the beauty of his passion.

The bird town, gradually expanding and naturally growing in the direction of innovation, is both entertaining and educational. But the sanctuary, as Parrot Ville has also been baptized as, is also the place where many come to get peace of mind and increase their health. A recent article in CNN Health, among many other websites, highlight the benefits of bird watching for well-being.

If you’re on vacation or a resident, I highly encourage you to swing over on Bishop Hill Road in Belvedere and discover this spot for yourself. You won’t regret it, because I sure don’t! And if you too, are a bird lover or would simply like to see this newly founded, local heritage, endure over time, feel free to donate or invest in what is already, one of St. Maarten’s top attractions.

For information, call +1 721 580-8516 or email: parottevillexmin@gmail.com. The address of Parrot Ville is: Bishop Hill Road, Belvedere, St.Maarten
There are so many fun-filled ways to learn something while on vacation. If you’re visiting our island, some type of water activity or excursion is probably somewhere on your list of things to do while in Sint Maarten! If it’s affordable, time-efficient and fun; the better it is, right?

Reef-It is a walk-in snorkel park and a coral reef nursery in Point Blanche. After hurricane Irma in 2017, “80-90% of our coral reefs were destroyed”. In collaboration with St. Maarten Nature Foundation, they came up with the great idea to use reef balls to regenerate a reef habitat where corals can grow.

In addition to the wealth in the diversity of its ecosystem, making it home to a large number of marine species; corals reefs are crucial sources of income for the fishing and tourism industry. They are also needed for the protection of coastlines from the damaging effects of wave action (erosion, flooding) and tropical storm damage.

Before we begin the eco-tour, a friendly member of the Reef-It staff gives the usual safety instruction, gives tips and info like the presence of “plastic in the belly of all fish”. (Yes, the ones you ate also… Yes, that plastic bottle found its way back to you.) But even, a cool fish identification card attached to a wrist band, you can use underwater to name the fish you see.

Mask, snorkel, fins? Check. Shyly squirming into the cold water, as I awkwardly got accustomed to my new way of moving, we trail around the rocks, discovering lobsters at the coast. Further out, following the underwater trail, we see a range of beautiful and colorful fish, sea urchins and this huge sea snail. When our guide kindly requests whether we want to take a break, the guys are so swift in saying no, that I wasn’t about to be the one to say yes. (Sure, let’s… not stop for a minute. I breathe underwater, through a tube every day…)

It’s really pleasant to experience tours like this in a small group. You get more personal attention with human scale excursions. And people are actually excited for you when you find something that appears to be… an egg? At times, the Nature Foundation comes in to give extra information about corals and even do experiments with the kids. Family and schools enjoy this tour where they get to take a fun quiz and play a lucrative game at the end!

Did you guess that one of the developers of Reef-It, Aukje VAN KUIKEN, is a teacher?

With her background, she found ways to “plant seeds of awareness” in a fun and conversational style. She believes that people shouldn’t “just think about the ‘now’, the short term. If we continue doing everything the way we’re currently doing them, the sea won’t be as nice and enjoyable as it is now”.

Reef-it also donates a portion of admission fees to the St. Maarten Nature Foundation, making a cocktail of good-time and giving back to the planet.

Want to experience this for yourself? Find them on Facebook and Instagram at reef.it.sintmaarten or online at www.reef-itsxm.com.

FUN FACT: Did you know? When corals are exposed to UV or blue light, they emit green fluorescence.
Crossword-Puzzle Solution

Easy

6 8 2 5 9 3 7 1 4
7 9 1 2 4 5 3 8
4 5 3 8 7 1 9 6 2
5 2 6 9 3 8 1 4 7
3 1 7 4 6 2 8 9 5
8 4 9 7 1 5 3 2 6
9 6 5 1 2 7 4 8 3
1 3 8 6 5 4 2 7 9
2 7 4 3 8 9 6 5 1

Medium

1 3 7 2 6 8 5 4 9
8 5 9 4 7 3 1 2 6
2 4 6 9 5 1 8 3 7
3 6 8 1 9 2 7 5 4
9 7 4 3 8 5 6 1 2
5 1 2 6 4 7 3 9 8
4 2 3 7 1 6 9 8 5
6 8 1 5 2 9 4 7 3
7 9 5 8 3 4 2 6 1

Difficult

9 4 2 3 1 6 5 7 8
8 3 5 7 2 9 1 4 6
1 6 7 8 4 5 9 2 3
5 1 3 2 6 8 7 9 4
6 7 4 9 3 1 2 8 5
2 8 9 4 5 7 3 6 1
4 9 6 5 7 3 8 1 2
7 5 1 6 8 2 4 3 9
3 2 8 1 9 4 6 5 7

Sudoku Solutions:

Easy

6 8 2 5 9 3 7 1 4
7 9 1 2 4 5 3 8
4 5 3 8 7 1 9 6 2
5 2 6 9 3 8 1 4 7
3 1 7 4 6 2 8 9 5
8 4 9 7 1 5 3 2 6
9 6 5 1 2 7 4 8 3
1 3 8 6 5 4 2 7 9
2 7 4 3 8 9 6 5 1

Medium

1 3 7 2 6 8 5 4 9
8 5 9 4 7 3 1 2 6
2 4 6 9 5 1 8 3 7
3 6 8 1 9 2 7 5 4
9 7 4 3 8 5 6 1 2
5 1 2 6 4 7 3 9 8
4 2 3 7 1 6 9 8 5
6 8 1 5 2 9 4 7 3
7 9 5 8 3 4 2 6 1

Difficult

9 4 2 3 1 6 5 7 8
8 3 5 7 2 9 1 4 6
1 6 7 8 4 5 9 2 3
5 1 3 2 6 8 7 9 4
6 7 4 9 3 1 2 8 5
2 8 9 4 5 7 3 6 1
4 9 6 5 7 3 8 1 2
7 5 1 6 8 2 4 3 9
3 2 8 1 9 4 6 5 7

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