



## YEAR REPORT 2020

Written by: Fernando Simal

January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### 1. Introduction and background

CARIBSS was incorporated in May 2016 in the Island of Bonaire. It is an open, all-inclusive and diverse group of people and institutions working for the preservation and protection of caves in the Island of Bonaire and the Dutch Caribbean region, having as core disciplines scientific research, exploration, education and nature conservation.

#### VISION

To ensure that the caves in the Island of Bonaire and the Dutch Caribbean and their values are recognized, respected and protected by residents and visitors.

#### MISSION

CARIBSS aims to explore, document and preserve the cave systems of the Island of Bonaire and the Dutch Caribbean while ensuring their optimal management, and to serve as a forum where all the different organizations or individuals can share information, projects and initiatives.

### 2. Board of Directors, General Assemblies and Membership

#### a. Board of Directors

The initial Board of Directors that legally incorporated the society was selected with the goal that all the different fields related to caves (e.g. nature conservation, exploration, recreational use, tourism and cultural heritage) were represented and, for easiness of administration, that they were Bonaire residents.

Fernando Simal announced during the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of 2019 that his last day as President would be March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. In January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 he presented the official resignation letter to all members. Additionally, Board Member Brian Albus also presented his resignation at the end of 2019. However, the Covid-19 situation affected the follow up and not much happened during the year. It was only on September, 29<sup>th</sup> that, during the 2020 General Assembly that a new board member was elected (Marco Wildeboer) and F. Simal agreed to stay as president until the end of the year. Therefore, as per December 31<sup>st</sup> of 2020 the Board was composed of the following members:

- Fernando Simal – President

- Elsmarie Beukenboom – Secretary
- Rob Hulsbergen - Treasurer
- Tamanaé Vargas Salazar
- Marco Wildeboer

#### b. General Assemblies and Board meetings

The only board meeting we had in 2020 was held on July 27<sup>th</sup>. The only General Assembly held this year occurred in September 29<sup>th</sup>, was held online via ZOOM, following Bonaire's government regulations for COVID-19.

#### c. Memberships

Overall, in 2020, the memberships remained stable. By the end of the year we had 38 personal members in good standing and 7 institutional ones, also in good standing.

### 3. Finances

During the General Assembly of September 2020, the “kas commissie”, composed by members Sophie Zeegers and Brian Albus released the Treasurer and the Financial Year 2019 report was approved. Similarly, the 2021 budget was unanimously approved at this assembly.

The increase in memberships of 2019, specially the institutional ones, boosted our income during 2020, finally achieving financial sustainability when it comes to our estimated minimum yearly expenses. Yet, there is still not enough funding available for conducting recreational, conservation, cultural or exploration activities towards our goals. Therefore, efforts in the area of obtaining funds should be increased by all members.

The neighbor's association of El Pueblo donated USD 1,000.00 to CARIBSS. This was in relationship to the clean ups conducted by CARIBSS volunteers in the front of their property, previous to the official opening of the Bonaire Caves & Karst Park.

For the first time, funds were collected from the cave tours conducted by the ETR (Education, Recreation and Tourism) group, a fee of USD 2.00 per visitor. Due to the lack of tourism for most of the year, these funds were significantly less than expected. However, the very fact that the vast majority of the cave tour operators and guides of the island are organized as a group and voluntarily collecting fees towards the management and protection of our caves is a huge improvement towards sustainable use of these resources.

### 4. Activities

#### 4.1 Communications, education and outreach

##### 4.1.1 *CARIBSS Web page*

Since mid-year 2018, CARIBSS member Alejandro Gutierrez was the webpage administrator free of charge. In August of 2020, this responsibility was temporarily passed over to Bonsai BV free of charge and this company was still in charge of the web page administration at the end of the year.

##### 4.1.2 *CARIBSS Facebook page*

There was an increase in page “likes” from 410 to 562 during 2020. Similarly, the number of

page followers increased from 418 to 573, which represents an increase of approximately 35%. More Facebook activity is seen with the amount of posts, probably the consequence of the monthly posts of the ETR working group with the latest information.

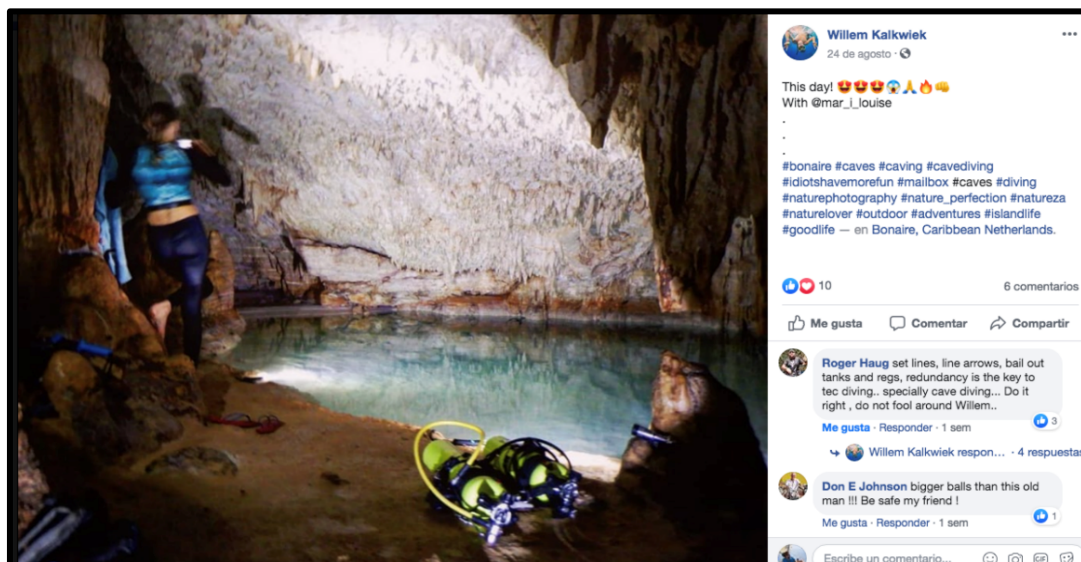
### 4.1.3 Other media

Contrary to previous years, there was virtually a total absence of CARIBSS appearances in external media like local and international radio, magazines, TV, newspapers and other nature organization's newsletters during 2020. This was the consequence of the COVID-19 situation combined with the fact that the Bonaire Caves & Karst Project (Phase I) activities ended at the beginning of the year.

CARIBSS is participating in the publication of a technical book with information regarding *Important Areas and Sites for Bat Conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean*. During 2020, we collected and/or created all the necessary written and photographic material required for the chapter on the ABC Islands. In total, 6 of these locations have been recognized by international experts in these islands (4 on Bonaire, 1 in Curaçao and 1 in Aruba). The book will be published in 2021 by RELCOM (acronym is Spanish for the Latin America and Caribbean Bat Conservation Network).

## 4.2 Exploration

Unfortunately, not much has changed regarding the ungoverned exploration activities and ongoing non-guided visits to caves mentioned in previous reports (Fig. 1). Therefore, CARIBSS maintains its official position towards this undesirable situation, where fragile natural resources and human safety are at risk.



**Figure 1.** Example from 2020 of inadequate cave SCUBA diving activities and promotion.

During the forum conducted as part of the I Bonaire Caves & Karst Tour Guide Course, with the participation of representatives of OLB and LNV, our official position was supported by the officers of these institutions.

### ***CARIBSS official position on exploration - January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017***

*After careful evaluation of the advantages and the risks of unauthorized cave exploring and documenting activities on Bonaire executed by individuals and/or organizations without any kind of government, CARIBBS's official position is against the continuation of such activities. It is very clear to our society that at this point in time the risks greatly outweigh the benefits.*

*Considering the magnitude of the natural and cultural values of our caves and the fragility of these values, before such activities can take place, a minimum requirement of conditions must be met. Among others, these conditions include government involvement, a (complete and approved) written strategic plan with very clear goals and objectives (preferably non-profit), leadership and involvement in the project by local people, proof of qualifications by the people involved and adequate management of communications, especially through social media. At CARIBBS, we are working hard to obtain that kind of organization and management for the caves of our island.*

## **4.3 Nature conservation**

### **4.3.1 Scientific Research**

During 2020, the last monthly bat capturing session of the 2019-20 year-cycle for data collection at the maternity cave Pos di Antoin was successfully completed in February. This data was included in a 12-year dataset of 13 bat maternity roosts in the ABC islands and a manuscript was submitted for publication in a scientific journal.



**Figure 2.** Different aspects of the installation of the physical barrier and the data collection at the bat maternity cave Pos di Antoin.



A scientific study of the impact of the physical barriers installed on the maternity cave used by small insectivores (Pos di Antoin) was conducted in 2020 (Fig. 2) The study was conducted by CARIBSS-members Jafet Nassar and Fernando Simal with the support of WILDCONSCIENCE's Biology Master's degree intern from the University of Amsterdam, Daniela Simal. Similar to our previous studies of this type, it consisted in infrared filming of bat behavior during entries and exits pre, during and post installation of the barriers. After data analysis, a new manuscript with the findings will be drafted and submitted to a scientific journal.

#### 4.3.2 *Conservation*

Beside its importance for scientific research, the physical barrier installed a Pos di Antoin is an important achievement for the protection of the cave-dwelling bat populations of Bonaire.

#### 4.4 Cultural heritage

No activities were conducted in this area during 2020. Since our archaeologist and ex-Board Secretary, Ruud Stelten, moved from Bonaire, our society is still looking for a person to lead this working group. Further discussion on this topic is planned for 2020.

#### 4.5 Recreation and exploitation

At the end of 2020, Marco Wildeboer was chosen as the new leader of the ETR group (Education, Tourism and Recreation). Marco is replacing Tamanaé Vargas. A big thanks to Tama for the time dedicated to this task until now.

Since the month of August, the ETR group is busy with regularly scheduled monthly cleanups and maintenance of the hiking trails, fences and gates of the Bonaire Caves & Karst Park. These “quite thorny” activities happen every second Tuesday of the month with a high level of participation, which includes members of other CARIBSS working groups as well (Fig. 3).







*Figure 3. Activities during the cleanups and maintenance activities at the Bonaire Caves & Karst Park initiated by the ETR group.*

During 2020, the ETR working group also initiated an education project aimed to Group 8 students of the primary schools. The first school that will receive the program at the beginning of 2021 is Pelikaan School. In agreement with the school Director, group 8 will be split up in 2 halves and students taken in educative morning cave tours.

#### 4.6 Management and administration

No changes in the management and administration procedures of the organization occurred in 2020.

### 5. Equipment and materials

In August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 we received a pickup truck as a donation from DierenLot. The vehicle provided transportation for the entire year of 2020 and it is still in good condition. Likewise,

the tools and materials acquired in 2018 are also still available and in perfect condition to be used in the future for other projects. We have incremented the list of tools and materials purchased, which now include a reserve of 5mm stainless steel cable, 5mm crimps and crimping pliers to be used in case replacement of some lines is needed at the maternity caves.

On the field of electronics, we purchased in 2020 two new SONY Ultra HD Handycam Camcorder, model FDR-AX53 4K with Night Vision capacity (infrared recording). Additionally, 2 new sets of infrared lighting were acquired. All these thanks to the generosity of DierenLot. In total, CARIBSS possess now three complete sets for infrared recording, which will allow us to initiate in 2021 the study on the long-term effect of the physical barriers on the bat colonies that inhabit the protected cave maternities. This study requires simultaneous recording at three caves.

### **Acknowledgements**

DierenLot for funds provided, the donated pick-up truck, which is still in use and the acquired infrared filming equipment. The Neighbors Association of El Pueblo for their generous donation. Melvin Leermakers and Emma Pratt for volunteering time to the installation of the physical barrier at cueba Pos di Antoin. Finally, all the board members for their donated time.

**Annex 1. 2020 Financial statement**



**Caribbean Speleological Society – Bonaire**

**Report on the 2020 accounts.**

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# 1. BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2020

## ASSETS

	<u>2020</u>		<u>2019</u>	
	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Bank</b>				
MCB Current account		4,305		9,313
<b>Short-term</b>				
Debtors	334		-	
Advance payment	70			
		404		0
<b>Total assets</b>		<u>4,709</u>		<u>9,313</u>
	-0-0-0-0-			
	0-0-0-			

## LIABILITIES

	<u>2020</u>		<u>2019</u>	
	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Equity</b>				
General Reserve	7,817		7,492	
Retained earnings 2019			325	
Retained earnings 2020				
Retained losses 2020	-3,356			
Total Equity		4,461		7,817
<b>Short-term</b>				
Creditors	14		1,346	
Deferred income	234		150	
		248		1,496
<b>Total liabilities</b>		<u>4,709</u>		<u>9,313</u>

## 2. NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2020

### **Functional currency**

The functional currency of the Society is US Dollar.

### ***General***

The financial statements have been prepared in a computerized accounting system.

### ***Translation of foreign currencies***

Transactions arising in foreign currencies are translated into the functional currency at the exchange rate at the date of transaction.

### ***Investments***

Investments are stated at the amounts- and allocated to the year at which they were acquired. The Society does not use a system of depreciation.

### ***Assets and liabilities***

Assets and liabilities are stated at the amounts at which they were acquired or incurred.


### ***Income and expense***

Income and expenses are allocated to the year to which they relate.

### 3. INCOME AND EXPENSE 2020

	Breakdown by period of income and expense												
Description	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Totals
<b>Income</b>													
Members contributions	800.00	125.00	-32.55						-1.41		50.00	-14.15	926.89
Inst. Members contr.	700.00		-33.96						-5.66				660.38
Cave Park fees	54.00	26.50	-4.52	122.00		-6.90	64.00	18.00	-4.64				268.44
Donations	150.00				1,000.00			52.00					1,202.00
Services													-
Sales merchandise													-
	<b>1,704.00</b>	<b>151.50</b>	<b>71.03-</b>	<b>122.00</b>	<b>1,000.00</b>	<b>6.90-</b>	<b>64.00</b>	<b>70.00</b>	<b>11.71-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>50.00</b>	<b>14.15-</b>	<b>3,057.71</b>
<b>Expenses</b>													
Cave Park													
clean up													-
Maternity Pos di Antoine								448.67	426.35	90.87			965.89
Maternity Kueba	405.47	39.60											445.07
Dierenlot Project								1,927.67	1,793.40	6.50			3,727.57
Signs													-
Car													
Fuel									140.11	71.93			212.04
Maintenance									10.00	360.00			370.00
Road tax and Insurance			190.00							428.67			618.67
Miscellaneous													
Differences prev. Year				-76.00			-36.00	-10.00				-4.78	-126.78
Communications										8.20			8.20
Office expenses									65.00				65.00
KvK, Legal fees						120.00							120.00
Bank expenses	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.59		0.59	0.59	4.16					7.70
<b>Totals</b>	<b>406.06</b>	<b>40.19</b>	<b>190.59</b>	<b>75.41-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>120.59</b>	<b>35.41-</b>	<b>2,370.50</b>	<b>2,434.86</b>	<b>966.17</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4.78-</b>	<b>6,413.36</b>
<b>Result 2020</b>													<b>-3,355.65</b>

#### 4. BUDGET AND PROPOSED BUDGET

Description	Budget 2020	Actual 2020	Differences		Budget 2021
<b>Revenues</b>					
Members contributions	1,000	927	-73		1,000
Inst. Members contributions	500	660	160		600
Grants	5,900	0	-5,900		0
Donations		1,202	1,202		200
Sales merchandise	2,500	0	-2,500		0
Cave tours fees	300	268	-32		800
Services		0	0		0
	<b>10,200</b>	<b>3,058</b>	<b>-7,142</b>		<b>2,600</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
<b>Cave Park</b>					
Clean-up		0	0		0
Maternity Pos di Antoine	1,200	966	-234		200
Maternity Kueba	700	445	-255		200
Dierenlot project	4,000	3,728	-272		200
Other projects			0		0
Various materials			0		0
<b>Car</b>					
Fuel	1200	212	-988		500
Maintenance	200	370	170		200
Road tax and Insurance	650	619	-31		650
<b>Miscellaneous</b>					
Differences previous years		-127	-127		
Taxes	90		-90		
Communications	150	8	-142		150
Office expenses	100	65	-35		100
Merchandise costs	1,250		-1,250		0
KvK and Legal fees	120	120	0		120
Bank expenses	50	8	-42		50
Unforeseen					
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9,710</b>	<b>6,413</b>	<b>-3,297</b>		<b>2,370</b>

#### 5. NOTES AND OTHER INFORMATION

- This year has been closed with loss of \$ 3,300.00- caused by the completion of the DierenLot project.
- A grant of \$ 4,000.00- from DierenLot was received and booked in 2019.
- Donations have been received up to \$ 1,200.00
- The plan to generate from sales of merchandise was not executed.