

**FRIENDS E-News January 2014**

1 message

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# Friends of the Environment

January 2014

[Renew Your  
Membership](#)

## Save the Date

**Hope Town Reef Ball**  
February 15th, 2014  
Abaco Inn

**Marsh Harbour  
Reef Ball**  
March 1st, 2014  
Jib Room

**Great Abaco Family  
Fitness Weekend**  
Treasure Cay,  
March 21st - 23rd

**Rocking with  
FRIENDS**  
June 7th  
Firefly, Elbow Cay

## 6th ASAC Makes Research Accessible to the Community



On January 16-18th, FRIENDS held the 6th Biennial Abaco Science Alliance Conference. The conference was designed to bring together researchers and the general public to share information about Abaco's environment.

ASAC asks that presenters be professional, but encourages them to give their talks in layman's terms in order to make the information accessible to everyone. The presenters at ASAC 2014 did a great job sharing their data in a way that was understandable to the general community as well as the 139 high school students that were in attendance.

The conference opened with a cocktail party at FRIENDS' education center on Thursday Jan. 16th, and continued with a day and a half of talks and poster presentations,

concluding with field trips to Bahama Palm Shores for birdwatching and a visit to Gilpin Point to discuss recent fossil finds (which were presented on at the conference). **Larry Smith wrote about his experience at Gilpin Point and an article what he learned touring his attendance at ASAC.**

Thanks to the sponsorship of JS Johnson and Royal Bank of Canada's Marsh Harbour Branch, FRIENDS was able to bring students from local high schools to attend the conference at no cost to them.

## Education Program Update

A new year means new opportunities for Abaco's students! The year is off to a great start as FRIENDS has already been able to provide 259 environmental education experiences in January alone!

FRIENDS is currently offering field trips to visit our green house and nature trail where students can learn about the importance of native plant diversity as well general biology such as plant parts and their function, how to care for plants and ecosystem services of plants.

Our Education officer is also able to visit schools on request for presentations on the following: Pollution \* Coastal Ecosystems and Species \* Marine Biodiversity Please contact [cassandra@friendsoftheenvironment.org](mailto:cassandra@friendsoftheenvironment.org) to schedule a talk in your class.

Don't forget: FRIENDS has access to numerous educational resources, including research papers relevant to The Bahamas. If you are in need of information on any environmental topic, please contact us!

## Partner Projects

### My Science! My Conch!

Partners from BREEF, Community Conch and The Bahamas National Trust were in Abaco from Jan. 20-25 traveling around to speak to school groups and community members about Queen Conch conservation.

They were able to visit six schools across Abaco: JA Pinder Primary in Sandy Point, Abaco Central High, SC Bootle Secondary School, Forest Heights Academy and St. Francis de Sales.

FRIENDS assisted with logistics and provided a van for the group to use.

### Learning about Piping Plovers

Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey (CWFNJ) and FRIENDS are working together



Students at Abaco Central High learned how to measure conch lip thickness using callipers.

Photo credit: BREEF

to raise awareness of the importance of coastal environments, particularly their role in the life cycle of piping plovers. This project involves school-based education and community outreach. This week researchers from CWFNJ visited Amy Roberts Primary School, held presentations at the Green Turtle Club and Schooner Bay and a volunteer training session at Pete's Pub in Little Harbour.

## Hope Town & Marsh Harbour Reef Balls Coming Soon!

Get your tickets now, before its too late to attend the annual Reef Balls in Hope Town and Marsh Harbour, both events are limited to 100 people due to space. Hope Town's will be at the Abaco Inn on Feburary 15th and Marsh Harbour's at the Jib Room on March 1st. Tickets are available at both locations, on the [FRIENDS' website](#) or by calling the FRIENDS office, 367-2721. \$100 ticket price includes appetizers, dinner, gratuity and dancing to LIVE music by Suppa Time! \$25 Band tickets are also available. Funds raised at the Reef Balls help to make the work of FRIENDS possible! We hope to see you there!

## Go Native in 2014!



You can make a difference in 2014 by trading your Hawaiian seagrape plants for native plants! FRIENDS is offering **free native plants** to home owners and business owners in Abaco who agree to remove Hawaiian seagrape from their property. Bring us a photo or other proof of removal and we'll gift you with a native plant!

Areas with a diversity of native plants are healthier and more resilient than those with monocultures of invasive plants like

Hawaiian seagrape, Casuarina and Brazilian pepper. In addition, Native plants support native wildlife and require less maintenance (i.e. less money spent on landscaping!).

Contact [olivia@friendsoftheenvironment.org](mailto:olivia@friendsoftheenvironment.org) for more information.

## It's Easy to Make a Difference!

There are so many issues in our world; sometimes it can feel a bit overwhelming. However, change starts with us, and it really is easy to make a difference just by adjusting our daily behaviours.

### Here are a few simple things you can do this month to help Abaco's environment:

- **Don't purchase or order grouper in restaurants.** Nassau Grouper are currently engaged in spawning behaviour. By not fishing for or eating grouper during these critical months you can help to ensure that we have grouper for the future!
- **Host a coastal cleanup.** A simple cleanup can make the environment safer and healthier for us all. [Use these data forms for your cleanup.](#) Fax them back to us at 367-0722 so we can add your info to our litter database!
- **Plant a Native tree.** Even better, remove an invasive and FRIENDS will give you a free native plant to replace it with!



## Let's save our Nassau Grouper, because they are super!

The Bahamas Department of Marine Resources has confirmed the official dates for this year's closed season for Nassau Grouper:  
**December 1st, 2013 - February 28th, 2014.**

Please respect the season by not fishing for grouper during that time so that we can work towards a sustainable Nassau Grouper fishery for future generations to enjoy. If you are ordering out, please opt for another protein choice!

What's the reason for the season? you may ask. It all comes down to ensuring the future of the Nassau Grouper population.....Remember how your Grandpa would tell stories about going sculling to visit his sweetheart? Just like him, Nassau Groupers travel many miles to find their mates. They group together to spawn and make babies.

If you catch a Nassau grouper at a spawning aggregation you could be preventing thousands of baby groupers from being born. Not only that, you could be reducing the grouper population of another island!



Photo by Tim Higgs

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