

Aruba Birdlife Conservation visits Governor

Recently, Aruba Birdlife Conservation (which was established in May 2010) visited the Governor of Aruba, Mr Fredis Refunjol. The Governor was informed of the role the foundation intends to play in conserving Aruba's nature in general and more specifically the island's wild birds. The foundation has been receiving regular signals from the Aruban community that the numbers of birds on the island are rapidly declining. The main causes are the huge increase in construction projects during the past few years, leading increased fragmentation of critical habitat and secondly, the presence of the invasive *Boa constrictor*. The foundation also voiced its serious concerns about Aruba's arrears in ratifying and implementing international nature treaties. Unfortunately, at the local level insufficient attention is given to nature. For example, Aruba's nature protection legislation is not being implemented. The foundation intends to focus on ensuring enforcement of this legislation to prevent further structural damage to Aruba's nature. During the visit, Greg Peterson, chairman of Aruba Birdlife Conservation, presented the Governor with three bird photos on canvas, to decorate the Governor's meeting room. The chairman has been sharing his bird pictures with the Governor for a number of years and knows that the *Shoco* (Burrowing Owl), the *Patrishi* (Crested Bobwhite) and the *Kinikini* (American Kestrel) are among the Governor's favorites. The chairman requested the Governor's special attention for the Shoco. This year alone four traditional breeding territories of Aruba's Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia arubensis* - a local subspecies - were completely destroyed. One of the photos presented to the Governor of the Shoco is a picture of an owl whose breeding ground has recently been destroyed. The Governor is known for his love for Aruba's nature and informed Aruba Birdlife Conservation that they could count on his support. **Photo caption:** *The chairman of Aruba Birdlife Conservation, Mr. Greg Peterson, presents the Governor of Aruba, Mr Fredis Refunjol, with one of the three bird photographs on canvas. On this one, Aruba's burrowing owl in all its glory.*