

Title

Invasive Boa constrictor serious threat to Aruba's beloved bird populations!

The presence of the invasive Boa constrictor was first documented in Aruba in April of 1999. Ever since, the numbers of boas caught by the Park Rangers has been impressive. Hundreds are caught each year and only those seen in areas frequented by persons who then notify the Rangers for their assistance. It is safe to presume that a multifold of those caught actually live in Aruba's wildlife.

Quite some places in the world have been confronted with invasive snake situations. The saddest being that of the Brown Tree Snake in Guam. Insufficient action was taken to keep the snake's population under control. The consequences now are that several endemic species of animals, including birds have become extinct.

Scientists, up to this day, have no off-the-shelf solution for such undesired intrusions. Many researches are being conducted and the hope is that one day they might find an effective and efficient solution. Reality of the matter is that if we take a passive stance in Aruba towards the boa while waiting for others to come with a solution, that we will live to regret it. Such a day may come sooner than we could imagine. The boa gets more offspring than the Brown Tree Snake.

Aruba Birdlife Conservation is in discussion with Parke Nacional Arikok (a Key Biodiversity Area for the Critically Endangered Aruba Island Rattlesnake *Crotalus unicolor*) on developing a practical plan to keep the boa numbers in check. In the coming weeks we hope to present at least a temporary solution to help save our birds and other fauna species. We are also working on an analysis of the estimated impact of the boa on our bird populations and we hope to publish these findings shortly.

The scenario that one day in our future an Aruban grandmother has to explain to her grandchildren that we used to have birds named Troupial, Prikichi, Patrushi and Shoco, but that since the boa got loose in our wildlife they have become extinct because we did nothing about it, is simply not an acceptable story. We must act soon or regret later.



Pictures

The pictures were taken on August 10, 2010, at 7:00 a.m., and demonstrate how a Boa constrictor laying in ambush on a branch catches and devours a Yellow Oriole that unfortunately landed on that location (in Papiamentu a Gonzalito or also a Trupial Kachó, in Dutch ?Gele Troepiaal?; scientific: *Icterus nigrogularis*). This beautiful bird is classified in Aruba as a ?scarce breeding resident?. From catching the bird, constricting it and devouring it whole, head first, took less than 15 minutes. The Park Rangers later caught the snake.

The pictures were taken by Greg Peterson, president of Aruba Birdlife Conservation.