



**OCEAN  
OBSERVATORY**  
DUTCH CARIBBEAN



# PROTECTING THE DUTCH CARIBBEAN SEA

The Dutch Caribbean is made up of six beautiful islands: **Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten**. Each island is home to incredible natural habitats, both on land and in the sea. One of the most valuable treasures of these islands is their National Marine Parks.



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## WHAT IS A MARINE PROTECTED AREA?

*Have you ever heard of a protected area? What do you think it means?*

A protected area is a place that has special rules to help take care of its environment. These areas are protected because they are **important for nature, animals and people**. Some protected areas are on land, like rainforests and national parks, while others are in the sea, called **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**. The term MPAs include marine parks, fully protected marine areas, no-take zones and marine sanctuaries.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Dutch Caribbean islands are made up of **99% sea**, with only 1% being land! This marine environment covers an incredible **81,000 km<sup>2</sup>**, so protecting our sea will really help our people, nature and even tackling climate change!

## WHAT IS A NATIONAL MARINE PARK?

A **National Marine Park** is a special type of marine protected area found in the sea or lakes. In the sea, they help **protect important species and habitats** like coral reefs and seagrass beds, as well as fish (including sharks!) and many other marine creatures. By protecting these areas, we ensure that **marine life stays healthy for future generations**.



Support sustainable  
tourism and  
recreation

Keep coral reefs and  
ecosystems healthy

## WHY ARE MARINE PARKS IMPORTANT?

They help to...

Allow fish  
populations to  
grow

Protect marine life  
from harm



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## WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN HAPPEN IN MARINE PARKS?

Many exciting activities can be enjoyed in a marine park, such as:

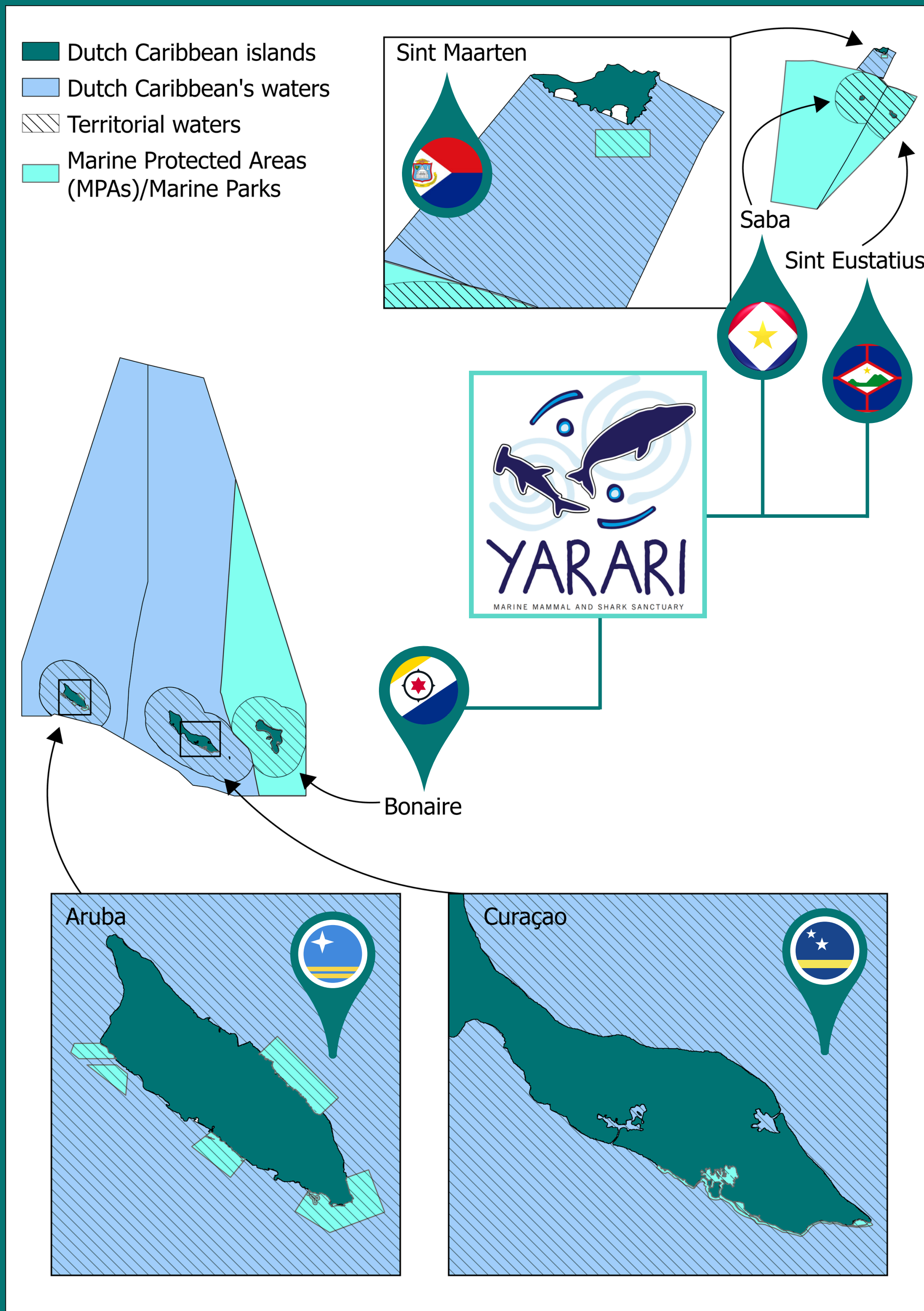
- **Snorkeling & Diving** – Exploring coral reefs and spotting marine life.
- **Boating & Kayaking** – Enjoying the ocean while respecting marine habitats.
- **Fishing** – In some areas, fishing is allowed, but there are rules to follow and catch limits for certain species of fish. For example, in Bonaire there are two no-fishing zones, and an area where lobster fishing is not allowed at certain times of the year (between May 1<sup>st</sup> and October 31<sup>st</sup>).

However, some areas of marine parks are **fully protected**—this means that people are **not allowed to fish, boat, or dive** in these areas to prevent disturbance to marine life.





# WHAT AREAS OF THE DUTCH CARIBBEAN SEA ARE PROTECTED?



The Dutch Caribbean Islands include a patchwork of protected areas around each of the six islands. This currently covers an amazing **31%** of the total Dutch Caribbean sea. The sea of Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius are **entirely protected**, together forming the *Yarari* sanctuary, whereas the other islands have **smaller MPAs**, like the Man of War Shoal Marine Park in Sint Maarten.



Many countries across the world have agreed to **protect 30%** of the world's **land and oceans** by the year **2030**. What an amazing aim to help our planet!

## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2015, the **Yarari Marine Mammal and Shark Sanctuary** was created. This vast area of protection ensures that at least 20 species of marine mammals along with 30 species of sharks and rays are protected. The sanctuary initially included the whole sea of **Bonaire** and **Saba**, followed by all of **Sint Eustatius'** sea in 2018. Hopefully, Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten will also be included one day. The word "Yarari" is a Taíno Indian word meaning "a fine place". This sanctuary certainly is a fine place for these important creatures!





# WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP OUR SEA?

If we all make small changes, together we could really make a huge difference! Here are some actions you could take to help our sea...



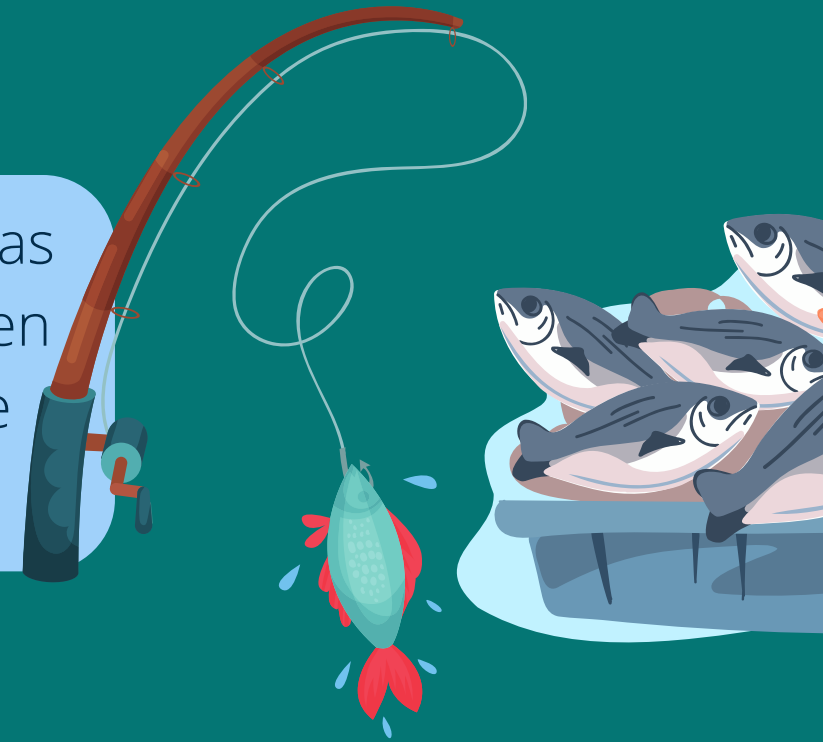
## BEACH CLEAN



Why not **organise a beach clean** with your class or family? Plastic and rubbish can be left on the beach, blown in to the sea or get carried in by the tide. When in the sea this rubbish can be there for **hundreds of years** as plastic can not easily break down. When it does break down, it is toxic!

## CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

When choosing what food you eat, including seafood, you can ask how that food has been grown, farmed or fished. If you chose to eat more **local** seafood that has been caught by sustainable, **artisanal fishing**, like hook and line, you can help reduce your environmental impact and carbon footprint.



## USE YOUR VOICE!



**What change would you like to see?** You can write to our local authorities and Government by following **this guide** to encourage them to help protect our sea. Your voice can make a huge difference in helping to make change and ensure our sea is looked after!

## REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

**Reducing** the amount you use and **recycling** what you do use can prevent more rubbish ending up in the sea. **Reusing** things is also important, particularly by choosing **second-hand** items or sharing belongings with family and friends, as this helps to further reduce your carbon footprint. Thrift shops can be a great place to find wetsuits and snorkelling equipment!



## USE ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS



Have you looked on the back of your beauty and cleaning products? Some of them say they are **harmful to aquatic life with long-lasting effects**. Choosing eco-friendly products that are **biodegradable** and **non-toxic** to marine life will have a hugely positive impact by ensuring less nasty chemicals make it to the sea from our drains.



## SAY NO TO SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Where possible, choosing to **avoid single-use plastics** can make a big difference. This prevents plastic from ending up in the sea, which would otherwise harm marine life that can get tangled in the plastic. They can also mistake it for food, like sea turtles who mistake a plastic bag for jellyfish. A lot of plastic can **only be recycled once**, so it's best we try and avoid using it to start with! **Have you got a reusable water bottle?**



## SPREAD THE KNOWLEDGE

Telling your friends and family about what you learn is a great way to **spread knowledge** and inspire people to **care for our sea**. They can then pass it on, which becomes an incredible ripple effect of information. Let's help other islanders learn about our amazing sea and what we can do to look after it!

