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**Les Fruits de Mer Joins BirdsCaribbean**

*First Institutional Member in the French Caribbean*

June 8, 2015—Grand Case—St. Martin’s connection to the regional conservation community just grew a little bit closer. Local non-profit association Les Fruits de Mer recently became the first institutional member of BirdsCaribbean in the French Caribbean. BirdsCaribbean is the largest regional organization devoted to wildlife conservation in the Caribbean. Although the two organizations have been working together for almost two years, joining helps integrate Les Fruits de Mer, St. Martin and the French Caribbean into the regional bird education and conservation community.

“Working with BirdsCaribbean has really helped us have a big impact quickly, even though we’re a young association,” explained Les Fruits de Mer President Jenn Yerkes. “They’ve provided training and materials developed for the Caribbean that have really enhanced many of our events and educational workshops. Simply being part of something bigger also makes an event more meaningful and interesting to our members and the public.”

Les Fruits de Mer has collaborated with BirdsCaribbean on a number of projects and events over the last two years, primarily in the areas of education and outreach. Les Fruits de Mer’s annual Migratory Bird Festival and Endemic Animal Festival events are part of Caribbean-wide programs organized by BirdsCaribbean to celebrate migratory and endemic birds: International Migratory Bird Day and the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival. Les Fruits de Mer has also added birdwatching sites to BirdsCaribbean’s flagship eco-tourism project, the Caribbean Birding Trail.

Les Fruits de Mer works closely with BirdsCaribbean on multiple education programs. Last year, Les Fruits de Mer co-founder Mark Yokoyama received training on two ecology-oriented programs: Wondrous West Indian Wetlands and BirdSleuth Caribbean. In addition to incorporating activities from these programs into their outreach and education programs, Les Fruits de Mer has partnered to help translate materials into French and train local educators in the BirdSleuth Caribbean curriculum.

The organizations began working together after a Les Fruits de Mer member attended BirdsCaribbean’s international meeting in 2013. “For someone new to wildlife education, it was a real eye opener,” according to Yokoyama. “It’s probably the only opportunity to spend a week with hundreds of Caribbean educators and conservationists, learning, sharing and tackling issues on a regional level. More than anything, BirdsCaribbean is a network of inspired individuals and organizations. Being a part of that network is key to our mission, and being the only member organization in the French Caribbean makes our role even more important.”

Membership also gives Les Fruits de Mer a chance to help BirdsCaribbean. “We support our member organizations, but our accomplishments are also the work of our member volunteers,” explained BirdsCaribbean’s Executive Director Lisa Sorenson. “Les Fruits de Mer are partners in many of our education and outreach programs, but members are also part of internal working groups managing BirdsCaribbean’s media and technology.”

Les Fruits de Mer have released a collection of desktop wallpaper and screensaver images to celebrate the partnership. It features 24 images of St. Martin birds and can be downloaded for free from their web site. Looking to the future, Les Fruits de Mer will continue to collaborate with BirdsCaribbean on education and awareness projects. Yokoyama will also lead a workshop at the 20th International Meeting of BirdsCaribbean in Jamaica this July. Once again, it will be a chance to connect St. Martin—and the French Caribbean—to the regional conservation community.

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**About Les Fruits de Mer**

Les Fruits de Mer is a non-profit association based in St. Martin whose core mission is to raise awareness about nature, culture, and sport. The organization carries out this mission through publications, an education program, and special public outreach events that entertain, inspire, and inform. The association is currently accepting new member applications on its website, http://www.lesfruitsdemer.com.

**About BirdsCaribbean**

BirdsCaribbean is the largest regional organization devoted to wildlife conservation in the Caribbean. It is a non-profit organization whose goals are to promote the scientific study and conservation of Caribbean birds and their habitats, and to promote greater public awareness of the bird life of the region. For more details, see: http://www.birdscaribbean.org.

**Photos:**

birdscaribbean-logo.jpg: BirdsCaribbean is the Caribbean region’s largest conservation organization.

lesfruitsdemer-logo.jpg: Les Fruits de Mer recently became the first institution in the French Caribbean to join BirdsCaribbean.

brown-pelican.jpg: The Brown Pelican is featured in a new collection of desktop wallpapers of St. Martin birds released to commemorate the partnership.

birdsleuth-caribbean.jpg: BirdSleuth Caribbean is one of many BirdsCaribbean programs Les Fruits de Mer participates in.