

MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER

**Hooray!**

**Donkeys Help Foundation - Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire  
exist May 26, 2023 30 years. 1993-2023**

'In 1993, Dutch Marina Melis and her husband Ed Koopman established a donkey sanctuary on Bonaire for sick, injured and orphaned donkeys: Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire.' This text may look familiar to you, as this is the introduction on our website and Facebook page. Of course, that sounds like it all went very easily, but we invested a lot in that; time, money and energy. At the time, of course, we did not know what to expect. In the past thirty years we have had to deal with setbacks, troubles and problems, but we have also welcomed new donkeys and received a lot of love.

At the animal shelter, Marina once started taking in a few donkeys. Soon there were more and she and the sheltered animals had to move. We found Imre and Aida willing to temporarily take care of our donkeys at their kunuku in the Mexico district. After visiting the mayor's office every month for 1.5 years, our request for rental land was finally accepted. This piece of land was next to the airport runway; there only was a road in between. With the help of inmates, we managed to get everything ready in 1996.



If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · [donkeysanctuary.com](http://donkeysanctuary.com) · [info@donkeysanctuary.com](mailto:info@donkeysanctuary.com) · +599 95 607 607

MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER



In the beginning, the donkeys walked on the property freely and all of them wore name tags.

At that time, Marina was already taking part in the education classes given together with Stinapa to reduce animal suffering on Bonaire. The Sanctuary had taken shape and Marina came up with all kinds of ideas to earn money for the donkeys. After all, the foundation was and is a non-profit organisation. Visitors to the island came to visit donkeys at the cost of a donation, the foundation was donated a bus that Marina used to do tours to the Sanctuary and there was a shop where all profits were going to the donkeys.

On the island, several things happened to the donkeys that increased the number in the Sanctuary. Every time an event with donkeys was reported, the foundation went out and if they could be rescued or helped, we took them to the Sanctuary.

Here are some sheltered donkeys with their stories:



**Maud:** She has been very sick, we worked hard with the vets to get her back on her feet. As a thank you she brought us this beautiful foal, she actually came to show it to us.

**Lotte:** Abused and ill-treated. Seized with court permission. She couldn't eat and we got her recovered with tube feeding. We were so happy when she ran to the hay for the first time. She was hungry!





MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER



**Dean:** Attacked by dogs, his whole hind body was open. The vet stitched everything up and Dean had to have some kind of brace on his hind legs because of the danger of slipping while running. Once healed, he was able to run again, together with his friend Astrid!

**Astrid:** This little one came in as an orphan, her mother had been killed. She was so sad that she wouldn't eat and only wanted to lie in the shop. Until Dean intervened, he literally and figuratively forced her to eat and play. So cool to see! Now, after all these years, they are still best friends!



Many little donkeys that came in without a mother for whatever reason, like Astrid, we have raised with PAVO milk for motherless foals! Now that number stands at around 350 orphaned donkeys. That means they also had to be given milk at night, so you can probably imagine how many times Marina got out of bed to give these little ones their milk!

As mentioned earlier, dear donkey friends donated a bus that Marina used to go on tours with joined by cruise boat passengers or other interested parties. The bus was very nicely sprayed with a lot of donkeys, a great calling card for the Sanctuary! This attracted many tourists to take a tour on the bus. The tour first went to the south side of the island and then to the Sanctuary.



If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · donkeysanctuary.com · info@donkeysanctuary.com · +599 95 607 607



MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER

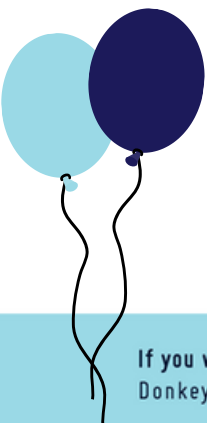


Unfortunately, we were denied a new licence in 2002, the taxi drivers had complained that there was too much enthusiasm for this fun tour and they were getting only a few passengers which meant less income. And after all, the taxi drivers had to eat from it. So did the donkeys, but of course they thought the donkeys were less important.



One of the fun moments we had, for example, was the baby boom in 2007. A lot of foals were born one after the other: Lana, Suusje, Coco, Bennie, Binky. Then there was Cody and Oscar. Nothing but happiness in this mother meadow.

Or when there were all employees whose names started with an M, hilarious!  
Marina, Maïke, Marijke, Mark en Marion.



If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · [donkeysanctuary.com](http://donkeysanctuary.com) · [info@donkeysanctuary.com](mailto:info@donkeysanctuary.com) · +599 95 607 607



MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER



With the help of private money from Marina and Ed, the Foundation was able to buy a piece of adjacent land of about 50 acres in 2005. After the necessary construction; a storage area for food, a feeding area, several courtyards where people could enjoy shade among the donkeys and a water supply, people could go on a kind of donkey safari with their cars. People were allowed to feed the donkeys with bread or buy a bag of food from our little shop. The donkeys loved it. They were already waiting at the cattle grid. Then we, as a foundation, also started charging an entrance fee to ensure an income for the donkeys: 10 Antillean guilders for adults and 5 for children.



And then, when you think you have everything in place, in June 2009 you receive a registered letter from a government messenger. A letter that hit like a bomb! It stated that the rent of the land was terminated because we were too close to the airport runway. Bonaire became part of the Netherlands so Dutch rules were going to apply. We were asked to remove everything from the site before October/November, not only the donkeys but also all the buildings, including Marina and Ed's house. We were in despair, how on earth are we going to solve this in such a short time and where should we go?

We then fortunately, with the help of sponsors, purchased another 2x 50 acres, adjacent to our already purchased land. Here we could rebuild everything with an entrance to the park.

We had not been given much time by the government so we engaged a lawyer, Ernst Wesselius, and he fortunately managed to negotiate a postponement for us.

Again, the foundation faced a huge task but through the good organisation and hard work of Ed together with Genaro, we moved in May 2011!

If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · [donkeysanctuary.com](http://donkeysanctuary.com) · [info@donkeysanctuary.com](mailto:info@donkeysanctuary.com) · +599 95 607 607



MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER

The construction of the new section: stables, shed, palapa hut, giftshop and a new entrance to the drive-through section to the main park.



We did the move in stages. First the part where our guests enter and the rest of the forecourt like our gift shop where one pays the entrance fee, learns something about the donkeys and can buy nice souvenirs to support the donkeys.



Then the donkeys to the specialcare. This is where the stables are and where all the new donkeys come in to observe them for a while and see if everything is going well, the mothers with the little ones stand and our orphaned donkeys. In short, all donkeys that need more care! The move of these donkeys went smoothly.



If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · [donkeysanctuary.com](http://donkeysanctuary.com) · [info@donkeysanctuary.com](mailto:info@donkeysanctuary.com) · +599 95 607 607



MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER



The move of the donkeys from the Walk Inn went a bit more difficult. Robin and Aafke, 2 interns, had made a passage towards the big park we thought they would go through just like that if we were leading with food. This was not true at all. After a long time, we had all but one donkey through. That one was Cody, who was born in the Walk Inn and thought: I'm not going to move. We lifted him with six people and carried him to the big park where his mother Loulou was already waiting. This job was done, and the new section was declared open!



So from 2011, we are on the Kaya Ingenieur I.R. Randolph Statius van Eps, a main road to Sorobon. Here we are easier to find and reach and we get more visitors here than on the old side of the park. Of course, we are extremely happy about this because like this we can care for the now 800 donkeys. But then there must be no more setbacks, we have had enough of those, from 2011 to 2023.

First, there was COVID, no visitors on Bonaire, so no income for the donkeys either. Fortunately, we were supported a little by the Dutch government and generated income by coming up with all kinds of actions in which we were supported by a lot of donkey lovers. This was great because sea freight prices were skyrocketing. Each 40ft container became €800 euros more expensive. It was great that 105 new adopters responded to our action; adopt a donkey. From March 21st we were closed to the public so this help was very welcome.

Then came a second period when we were no longer allowed to receive people in the sanctuary. Marina then came up with the playful nameplate campaign and fortunately for us, this too became a success.



If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · donkeysanctuary.com · info@donkeysanctuary.com · +599 95 607 607



MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER



Then, due to heavy rainfall, we had to close again for a short period, all in 2020. This was of course a disaster year for everyone but when you then have to take care of 750 donkeys as a non-profit, it is hard work, but we made it again by working very hard.

Then came the news that a housing estate was going to be built next to our sanctuary. We were not happy about that at all. At least, that implied people and animals next to the sanctuary so next to our donkeys. Donkeys are territorial and do not tolerate other animals in their territory. In a lot of countries they are being used to protect herds of sheep from wolves and coyotes. So as a precautionary measure to ensure safety, we had to install new internal fencing around the entire property, as we were not waiting for more problems. 4500 meters of new fencing at €145,000. This was really expensive but it had to be done because our current fencing would be too weak and would not keep intruders out. For this we held a Go Fund Me campaign and begged from charities.

Again, we were helped by many kind people and were able to buy the fencing. But it also had to be installed, what a job. Frank came to volunteer for the 3rd time and took on a big part along with Ed and Genaro. In April 2022 we got great help from the army. To support us, they too bought a Name of Fame sign.



We were absolutely delighted with all this help and the realisation of a completely new fence around the sanctuary.

What else could happen to us now?

Something out of our control; Bonaire's bad weather, or climate change.

What a lot of rain we've had. So much that we were just flooded. We had to take the car to the feeding area. The water came up to the car door. Again, we could not receive visitors and had to start finding a structural solution for the water problem. We started a Go Fund Me action and with success. So many lovely people, worldwide, helped us. In the photos we posted, people saw how terrible the situation was and donated en masse.

If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · donkeysanctuary.com · info@donkeysanctuary.com · +599 95 607 607





MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER

We had to take all the seniors out of our senior meadow and put them in the big park. This did them no good because, of course, they are in our senior meadow for a reason. You can tell the age of a donkey by their teeth. These sweet seniors have big, long brown teeth or no teeth at all. Among all the youthful donkeys, they did not get to their daily portion of food because the younger donkeys eat much faster.



Fortunately, we could soon start raising the park and pouring concrete floors. Then the elderly donkeys would be able to return to their own meadow. One truck after another with diabase (sand) was brought and the concrete floor at the meadow with the mothers and their foals was poured. This was followed by the other mother's meadow and our senior meadow.

After that, all the seniors went back in their own meadow, we have concrete floors at the mother and foal meadows and the park has been raised for the most part. Again, we have overcome this crisis!



If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · [donkeysanctuary.com](http://donkeysanctuary.com) · [info@donkeysanctuary.com](mailto:info@donkeysanctuary.com) · +599 95 607 607

MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER

We are now in 2023 and almost celebrating our 30th anniversary. There are now 800 donkeys living with us in the sanctuary. Often when we bring mares inside, they are pregnant. Females outside are almost always pregnant. They are pregnant for 13 months and 6 weeks after giving birth they are in heat again. The stallions smell that, fight with each other and the strongest stallion gets to mate with the female. That is the reason why so many foals have been born at the sanctuary recently. Those are the happy moments. We have also had some mothers with foals come in who we, due to various circumstances, had to take off the streets. For the mares, that means their last foal, because with us all stallions are castrated. For the foals, it means growing up in a safe, loving environment.

Here you can see some of our foals: Zdenek, Ryder, Zdenek, Zoia and Lola



This was 30 years of Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire. Of course, we cannot mention everything, there were highs and lows. We are very happy with the new sign at the entrance, designed by Deviate Design. Grateful to all our sponsors and donors who have supported us over all these years. Also glad for all the people who have helped us over those 30 years! Without the volunteers and interns who have come by, we could not have done this either.



If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · donkeysanctuary.com · info@donkeysanctuary.com · +599 95 607 607



MAY 2023

# DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE NEWSLETTER



Dear sponsors, friends of us and our donkeys, adoptive parents, donors and all acquaintances. In the past 30 years of our existence and my life, many things have happened. Therefore we have decided to share all of it in a nutshell with everyone through this special edition newsletter for our 30th anniversary.

We are really happy with the faith and support we have gotten from all of the sponsors, adopters, donors and most importantly our friends. There were times where we desperately needed it and you showed up! Ed, my partner, and I remain grateful to everyone for all the support we have been able to receive over the past years to do our work for the donkeys, without which we would never have succeeded! Our thanks also go to our permanent helpers, interns, volunteers and everyone who has contributed to the welfare of our donkeys and our Donkeys Help Foundation since 26 May 1993.

We can't thank you enough  
A big donkey kiss  
Marina and Ed



## How can you help us?

Come visit us or adopt a donkey!

The entrance fee and profits from all sales in the shop fully benefit the donkeys. Did you adopt a donkey? Then you can visit your adopted donkey as often as you like throughout the year. On our website: [www.donkeysanctuary.org](http://www.donkeysanctuary.org) and Facebook page: Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire you can find more information.

## Donation

It is also possible to donate in dollars to the following bank account.

Maduro & Curiël's Bank Bonaire, Account number: 10878904

in the name of Stichting Donkeys Help

Swift: MCBKBQBN

If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!  
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · [donkeysanctuary.com](http://donkeysanctuary.com) · [info@donkeysanctuary.com](mailto:info@donkeysanctuary.com) · +599 95 607 607

