



# Incidents Report Form

## Nature Foundation St Maarten

**Incident name:** Animal traps at the Natural pool hike

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2021 and 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2021

**Time:** 11 am and 1:30 pm

**Staff members NFSXM involved:** Star Peterson (Ranger), Melanie Meijer zu Schlochtern (Manager)

**Involved organizations:** Nature Foundation St. Maarten, St. Maarten Coast Guard

**Involved persons:** reported by Thomas

**NFSXM equipment used:** vehicle, GPS, phone

### **Summary of the incident:**

The Nature Foundation received reports from concerned residents and the coastguard regarding animal traps being placed along the hiking trail to the Natural Pools. Also, a Facebook post regarding the animal traps was shared multiple times. The traps resembled a bear trap and were located close to the natural pools hike from Point Blanch. Both a dog and its owner were caught in two separate traps, with luckily minor injuries. A member of the coastguard also investigated the incident and located the traps and reported it to the main office of the Nature Foundation. Shortly after, the ranger made his way over to the location in the hopes to remove the traps. After a thorough comb through the area, no additional traps were found.

The Nature Foundation posted awareness information on social media, which included the advice to hikers to be cautious and to report if any other traps were recorded. If any other traps will be found, the Foundation will remove the traps due to the safety for hikers and their companions. The owner will be able to collect the traps at the office if any were removed. The Foundation staff will do another survey in the area next week, to ensure no traps are along the hiking trail and natural pools.

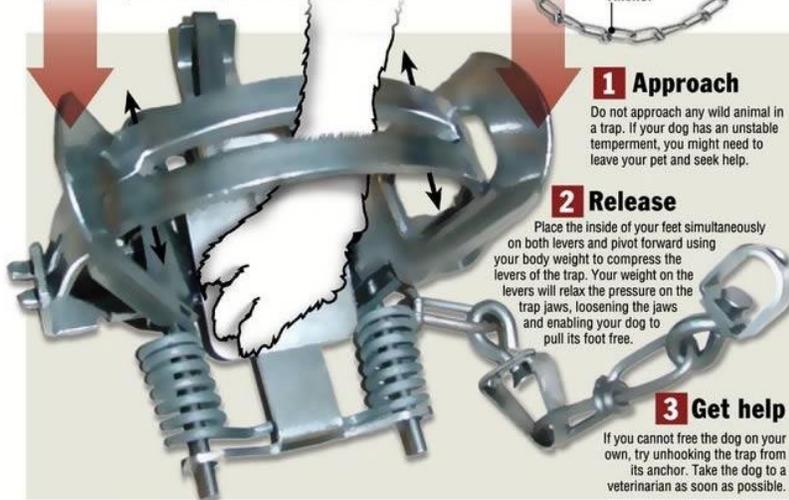
The Foundation ranger revisited the site on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, the entire area from Point blanch until the Natural pools was surveyed and again no traps were recorded around the hiking trails. Upon arrival there seemed to be poles for fencing that was driven into the ground to create some form of enclosure. This was not present during the first patrol. No traps have been reported by visitor or residents or sighted since the incident was brought to our attention via Facebook on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July.

### **Biological and environmental info:**

If animal traps are not regularly checked, animals can be seriously injured, or if animals are trapped for long periods they could starve to death. The natural pools are also a major attraction for locals and visitors alike, the hikes are used daily and is one of the most popular hikes on the island. The presence of these kind of traps could cause a danger to visitors and hikers and can damage the image of the island by nature loving tourism. Also commonly, hikers, whose dogs get caught in traps, are often injured during rescue attempts. It is important to know how to release an animal caught in a trap often used, below picture shows how it works.

## What to do if your dog is caught in a trap

If a dog is accidentally captured in a trap or snare while in the company of its owner/handler, it is possible to safely remove it. It is essential that you understand and can quickly and calmly follow the steps required to release a dog from a trap or snare. Remember that the surprise and shock of being captured may cause the dog to become extremely excited or agitated, enough to bite at anyone who comes close to it.



Source: [www.wildlife.rgj.com](http://www.wildlife.rgj.com)

J. Ferrin/Reno Gazette-Journal

Information about releasing a animal trap.

### Legislation:

The Nature Foundation understands that the area of the hiking trail to Point blanch is owned by Buncamper family and relatives, however the parts close to the coastline are maybe owned by government. As the trail is a public hiking trail, and gives access to the Natural pools of St. Maarten, the traps could cause a serious hazard and danger to hikers and their pets. It is not clear if it is legal to place such animal traps on your own property or on property of the government.

### Recommendations:

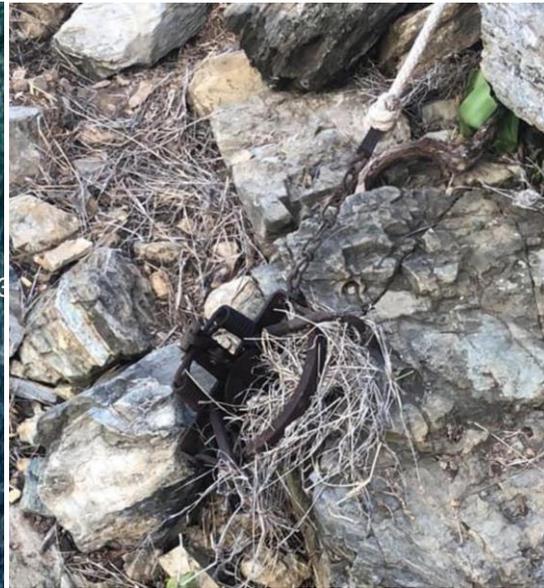
The Nature Foundation recommends advising the public to be more vigilant at the location. If in the event traps are placed in high traffic areas again individuals may remove the traps and bring them to the nature foundation for the owners to retrieve or provide the location to the Nature Foundation. Also put out a statement informing the owners of said traps to be more responsible for how and where they place their traps, to ensure no danger to hikers and companions.

Nature Foundation would like to receive more information if there are parts owned by government in the area of the Natural pools. It is recommended not to allow placement of traps which could cause harm to hikers and pets in natural areas and publicly accessible areas.

**Pictures:**



Reported location of the traps recorded



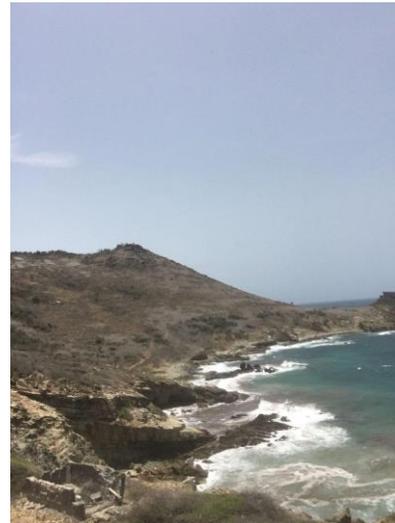
Picture of the trap which was reported



Reported dog trapped in trap.



Example of traps



Land scape of natural pools