



Where I work Dario Sandrini

Photographed for *Nature*
by Micah B. Rubin.

“When I first came to the small Caribbean island of Carriacou in 1990, I had no intention of staying. But something clicked; my partner and I have been here ever since.

I’m from Venice, Italy, so a small island feels cosy to me. We also thought that Carriacou was small enough to tackle environmental problems and help make a difference. We saw the overfishing, deforestation and environmental damage here – not by multinational corporations, but by local people who were unaware of the ecological consequences of their actions.

Since starting an environment and education foundation, called KIDO, in 1995, we have run around 30 projects – from protecting sea turtles to replanting mangroves.

In this photograph, I am hiking to our latest project, the 40-hectare Anse La Roche nature reserve. Deforestation affected several areas of the plot, and one spot was devastated, illegally, with a bulldozer. To reconstitute the forest’s eroded soil, we gather *Sargassum*

seaweed – overgrowth of which is afflicting Caribbean beaches as the sea warms – and use it as fertilizer.

We will also plant thousands of native trees, including replanting 20 key canopy tree species that have almost been lost from Carriacou. This might be the last chance to save the forest: Carriacou’s diminishing rainfall is our nemesis, and each day we water around 3,000 saplings.

With another ten years of care, we will see the forest resurge. Today when it rains, water rushes down the hillsides, taking the topsoil with it – but once the trees are established, rainwater will be caught in the natural terracing across the slope that the formidable buttress-root systems create. Forests take decades to grow, and it will be somebody else sitting under those trees saying, ‘Wow, it’s much cooler here!’”

Dario Sandrini is director of the KIDO Foundation, Carriacou Island, Grenadines of Grenada. **Interview by James Mitchell Crow.** This interview has been edited for length and clarity.