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Prof pens song on Bahamas' 'Living Jewels'

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◀ YSU professor Ron Shaklee strums his guitar on campus. Shaklee is the author of a song called "The Living Jewels of the Land, the Sky and Sea," which has been recorded and released for play in the Bahamas.

The next time you're in the Bahamas, switch on the radio and you just might hear a song written by YSU professor Ron Shaklee.

Shaklee, director of the University Honors Program and professor of geography, wrote a song called "The Living Jewels of the Land, the Sky and Sea," which has been packaged by the Bahamas National Trust to promote wildlife awareness and environmental stewardship.

Shaklee wrote the song at the request of Sandy Voegeli, who has established the Living Jewels Foundation on San Salvador Island in the Bahamas. The foundation promotes awareness about San Salvador's natural resources.

"The song is supposed to raise wildlife awareness in kids, in hopes that when they grow up they'll respect wildlife a little more than their parents do," said Shaklee, who annually leads a group of YSU students

to the Bahamas for field research. More than 400 students have participated in the trips in the past 20 years.

The song mentions eight individual endangered species in San Salvador, including Lana the iguana, Rupert the Nassau grouper and Myrtle the sea turtle.

A representative of the Bahamas National Trust heard a group of children perform the song and worked with Shaklee and Voegeli to get it recorded by Ira Storr and the Spank Band, a popular Bahamian composer and band. Storr is a San Salvadorian who was intrigued with the project, Shaklee said.

"The Living Jewels" has been released for radio play in the Bahamas. "Right now it is more like a public service spot than a mass-sale song. Eventually the Trust plans to develop it into a mass-produced CD and accompanying music video," Shaklee said.

Shaklee said any profit from the song will go to the Bahamas National Trust.

Shaklee has played guitar for much of his life and started writing songs as a hobby about seven years ago. He has teamed up with Steve Reese, professor of English, to develop a songwriting seminar for students in YSU's honors program. He also performs a few times a year with Music at Madison, which is held north of the Cafaro Residence Hall at Dorian Books on Madison Avenue.

"A lot of the songs I write are about the Bahamas; it's just something I do in my spare time," Shaklee said.

For more information about the Living Jewels Foundation visit www.savesansalvador.com. For more information about the Bahamas National Trust visit www.bahamasnationaltrust.org.

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