



# TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

OCTOBER

988

VOL. I NO. 1

## Regulations

### SHELLFISH REGULATIONS (Whelk)

The whelk season throughout the US Virgin Islands reopened on October 1 for six months. It will close March 31.

The minimum legal size is any animal which will not drop through a 2½ inch galvanized ring of the kind you can buy in any marine hardware store.

(Conch)

On St. Thomas/St. John:  
Complete closure until 1993

On St. Croix:

1. 9" minimum size
2. 6 animal bag limit for personal use (non-commercial)
3. Closed season July, August, September every year
4. No sale undersized shells in souvenir shops

\*\*\*\*\*

### CONCH POACHERS CAUGHT

Six St. Thomas fishermen were arrested Oct. 8, 1988, and were charged with illegal possession of 364 conch. Bail was set at \$5,000 each.

St. Thomas/St. John

### Fishermen's Committee of Overseers Makes New Rule Protects Red hind

The fishermen's committee has recommended that a known spawning area south of Saba Island be closed to all trap fishing during January, February and March.

This area is less than three square miles in size, but the Committee believes it is a major Red hind and Nassau grouper spawning reef.

\*\*\*\*\*

### PLASTIC POLLUTION LAW SIGNED

Beginning December 31, 1988, tough new law regarding the dumping of plastics and other garbage at sea will come into effect. Next month, this News Letter will tell you how YOU can help make this law work.

\*\*\*\*\*

Enforcement

### LOBSTER VIOLATORS FINED

Two men, one from Florida, the other from the Bahamas, were detained by a Port Authority Guard at Red Hook on suspicion of illegally spearing and "wringing" undersized lobsters last month.

Both men pled guilty and were fined \$500 each.

CONCH ENHANCEMENT

WILDLIFE PLANT BOOKLET

An illustrated plant booklet describing and picturing fifty VI plants most commonly used by birds and other wildlife has been printed by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

Copies are available at the Redhook office of Fish and Wildlife, and in the main office down town.

\*\*\*\*\*

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

This newsletter is only one of the several new programs funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to bring information about the natural resources found on these islands to the people.

In the planning stage is a video program, brochures, slide shows and field trips for some school children.

\*\*\*\*\*

Endangered species

THE LEATHERBACK PROJECT

The leatherback project on Sandy Point Refuge, St. Croix is the largest in the United States. Through the end of July, 48 leatherbacks and three green turtles deposited eggs in 258 nests. 147 nests were relocated to prevent loss due to erosion. 6,711 baby turtles were successfully hatched and have begun their uncertain lives in the sea.

The Conch Enhancement Project, is open for business. The pen is 100' long and 50' wide, and is located in National Park Waters at St. John.

While October generally marks the end of the most productive breeding season, about 30 adult animals are presently in the facility.

\*\*\*\*\*

EPIRB REMINDER

The Coast Guard wishes to remind fishermen going more than three miles off shore that as of October 3, 1988, they must carry as part of their safety gear, a Class A Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB)

\*\*\*\*\*

SEABIRD RESEARCH

During October, the Division continues to study seabirds breeding on the offshore cays surrounding St. Thomas and St. John. This month marks the beginning of the winter nesting season, and the return of the Red-billed Tropicbirds to their nesting colonies. A large, mainly white bird with a long streamer tail, they nest in holes and cliff ledges on the uninhabited offshore cays. Raising one chick, they depart by early spring to lead an ocean existence until returning again in winter to breed in the Virgin Islands.

