



# TROPIC NEWS

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

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## Migrant Birds Depart Mangrove Wetlands

Winter migrants to the U.S. Virgin Islands are once again on the wing. Ten mangrove wetlands on St. Thomas/St. John were home to at least 10 migrant warbler species, 8 species of migrant shorebirds, 4 species of migrant ducks, and 2 other migrant species (Osprey, Belted Kingfisher) during the 1988-1989 winter season, according to a Division of Fish and Wildlife study. March 1989 data suggest that many of these birds have already left for their northern breeding grounds. However, the Northern Parula Warbler and Northern Waterthrush are still abundant in mangrove wetlands; and some shorebirds may still be observed. Grab your binoculars and cameras for a last look at this year's winter migrants!

## Tips for the Fishermen from the Bureau of Enforcement

Fishermen by tradition conduct their fishing activities from very early mornings to sometimes late at night. If you are operating your boat between sunset and sunrise you are required to display proper navigation lights. If your fishing activities generate garbage such as plastics and other refuse it cannot be dumped at sea. It must be brought ashore and disposed of at the city dump.

## BAITFISH

Information on the baitfish, blue fry (Jenkinsia lumprotaenia), has been collected during the past three years. Blue fry appears to be an annual species which spawns during full moon phases. They form spawning aggregations which migrate inshore along the south side of St. Thomas and St. John. During these aggregations, blue fry are fished by fishermen with large cast nets as bait for yellowtail snapper and blue runner (hard nose) fishing and for use in fish traps.

Blue fry are more commonly called dwarf herring. They are one of the smallest species in the herring family. Herring are important species in all seas for consumption and bait. They are rapid growers and readily respond to environmental variables.

Environmental factors have had a profound effect on blue fry. Several years ago they were found in large abundance in bays along the south shore of St. Thomas, such as Mangrove Lagoon and Secret Harbor. Development, runoff and sewage have combined to make these habitats undesirable and reduce abundance.

Concern over depleted stocks has resulted in regulations prohibiting 1) use of beach seines, 2) wanton waste; and 3) export of baitfish.

ATTENTION AIRCRAFT

This Division has received numerous complaints about low-flying aircraft and helicopters, especially in the Cockroach-Congo Cay area. Please be advised that such activities may be in violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act and, to the extent they disturb nesting seabirds, are also in violation of rules and regulations promulgated under authority of section 94 (b) of Title 12, Virgin Islands Code, which state: "It shall be unlawful for any person to land on, or create any disturbance near any island or cay listed in the annex...."

The annex lists 19 islands and cays, all of which belong to the Virgin Islands. A separate list is attached for your convenience.

Two birds, the Brown pelican and the Roseate tern, are Federally listed. Willful harassment of threatened or endangered species

is prohibited by Federal law, and the penalties for such activities are quite severe.

It is the view of this Division, shared by the Bureau of Environmental Enforcement, that evidence of a disturbance is when birds are provoked or frightened into concerted action such as taking to the air en masse.

We are asking the public to report incidents of low flying, or harassing behavior in and around the cays, particularly taking note of the offending aircraft's ID numbers. Perhaps in this way we can identify the few offending pilots and stop this harmful practice.

If you have any questions or concerns you might like to raise, please call the Director, Mr. Denton R. Moore, at 775-6762, or Chief Joseph Sutton, head of the Bureau of Environmental Enforcement at 774-3320.

Freedom and Back Again

The dolphins that escaped from the filming pen on St. John have been found. They escaped on March 3, 1989 by jumping over the fence which formed their enclosure in Haulover Bay. The son "Natua" was found in St. Martin on March 24. He was reportedly begging from boats anchored in Phillipsburg. He had lost 70 pounds but was healthy enough to be returned to the Dolphin Research Center in Florida. The mother, "Theresa", was found in Nanny Cay, Tortola on March 30 where she was begging food from fishermen and boaters. She had lost 150 of her original 425 pounds and is being held in Tortola until she regains her strength for transport back to Florida. Theresa is 30 years old and has been in captivity for 15 years. Natua was born in captivity and is 15 years old.