



TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

August / September 1992

Volume 4 Number 12

RECREATIONAL FISHING REPORT

The Bulletin of Marine Science recently printed an article by Cecil A. Jennings on the results of a survey on non-charter boat recreational fishing in the USVI.

The survey, conducted in 1986 using telephone interviews, was used as an attempt to determine what effect recreational fishing in the Virgin Islands is having upon the local fish populations.

The results indicated that about 10% of the total population of all three islands is actively engaged in recreational fishing.

According to Jennings "Recreational fishing in the U.S. Virgin Islands can be divided into two categories: charter boat and non-charter boat angling. Anglers aboard chartered fishing boats ... target migratory pelagics such as marlins and tunas."

"Fishing in the Virgin Islands" says Jennings "has evolved to the point where there is a distinctive non-charter boat component."

"A few non-commercial anglers may still use fishing as a means of obtaining dietary protein or supplementing their incomes. However, the majority of the non-commercial anglers contacted during this survey viewed fishing solely as a recreational activity and spend thousands of hours and dollars annually in its pursuit."

Non-charter boat recreational anglers fishing from shore or boat reportedly landed mostly members of the snapper family on all three islands. "Other frequently caught families ...included groupers, parrotfishes, barracuda, grunts, triggerfishes, surgeonfishes, and mackerels."

Most local anglers reportedly kept only what they intended to use for personal consumption.

Boat anglers harvested more fish than anglers fishing from shore, with better yields reported by boaters off St. Croix than St. Thomas-St. John. "This trend was significant ... and may reflect reduced fish stocks closer to shore where extensive coastal development and overfishing have occurred."

Jennings cautions that telephone surveys alone may produce biased results, and added that additional methods such as mail surveys and limited creel surveys may provide more accurate data.

In conclusion, Jennings suggests that "this segment of the recreational fishing industry made modest demands of the resources and modest contributions to the local economy." He also points out that "*...harvest patterns suggest a depletion of nearshore (fish) stocks in St. Thomas-St. John ... that may be related to overharvest and extensive coastal development.*"

PLAYING TAG WITH BLUE MARLIN

The normal swimming pattern and migrational movements of the Atlantic Blue Marlin (*Maicaira nigricans*) is mostly a mystery to sportfisherman and scientists alike.

The summer months are the time of year when the greatest number of marlin are passing through local waters.

Division staffers Jimmy Hunt, Toby Tobias, and Kenny Turbe are attempting to unfold part of the mystery by tagging Blue Marlin with ultrasonic radio tags. By using the tags along with Global Positioning System coordinates, they hope to plot the vertical and horizontal movement of the fish. This information will be used to gain information on the marlin, their migratory patterns, and survival after catch and release.

NEW BROCHURES AND KID STUFF

The Division is currently involved in producing more brochures outlining important environmental issues facing the Virgin Islands. The brochures, available to the public at no charge, are designed to increase awareness concerning our valuable natural resources, and offer suggestions on how citizens may become involved in preserving them. New topics include Seagrasses, Coral Reefs, and Mangroves. The brochures will list the importance of each resource, the problems it faces, and steps that can be taken to reduce the burdens placed upon the resource. The brochures will be available in upcoming months. Other brochures are presently available, also free of charge, and can be obtained by contacting the Division offices on St. Thomas or St. Croix.

For younger islanders, a monthly newsletter called "Tropic-Kid News" will feature games, puzzles, and craft ideas with an environmental theme. The newsletter will be distributed to local schools. A teachers' guide will supplement the newsletter, offering activities which can be conducted in the classroom to educate students about the preservation of natural resources.

COMING SOON

- COASTWEEKS CLEANUP DATA
- EMPLOYEE PROFILES
- SHOREBIRD UPDATE

WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

A watershed is an upland area bordered by hills and other land features that act as a funnel, carrying runoff produced by rainfall downhill. This runoff eventually passes down to the low-lying saltponds and mangrove lagoons and is deposited into the ocean.

The movement of the water downhill is slowed by trees and shrubs. Without such vegetation, large amounts of soil would be removed from our hillsides, causing erosion. Even small amounts of soil deposited in the ocean will kill our delicate coral reefs, suffocating the coral and destroying important marine habitats.

Soil isn't the only thing that can be carried downhill. Pesticides and other lawn care products and poisons, oil, sewage, and other waste materials find their way to the ocean by way of watersheds. Virtually everything that is poured onto our islands' surface will find its way to the sea, whether we intend it to or not. Saltponds and mangroves act as filters, keeping the ocean clean.

That's why we must act responsibly when planning development and waste disposal. Involvement is important at every level, from the legislative branch on down.

How can you help keep soil and toxic wastes from entering the watershed and polluting our oceans?

- * Plant trees, shrubs, and ground covering plants near your home to reduce soil erosion.
- * Use only environmentally safe pesticides and lawn care products.
- * Make sure your septic tank is well-maintained.
- * Don't pour waste oil on the ground...take it to a waste oil disposal facility.
- * Support efforts to limit coastal development which calls for the reduction or elimination of mangrove lagoons and saltponds.
- * Report illegal dumping of waste.

Remember...everything travels downward. If we don't work together to protect our islands' fragile natural resources, we'll all be going downhill!

Trees were saved by printing on recycled paper

MANGROVES ARE IN BLOOM



This is a good time of year to see mangroves flowers and seeds. The red mangrove propagules hang down from the trees. These propagules will float vertically in shallow coastal waters where the seedlings will eventually take root. The seeds of the black and white mangroves also float, but

they will begin to sprout.

The Green-throated Caribe, Hummingbird and Bananaquit (sugarbird) feed on mangrove flowers. The Zenaida and Ground Doves are often seen feeding on the seeds of the white and black mangroves.

The Division offers guided tours of the mangroves. Reservations are required in advance, and can be made by contacting the Division office in Red Hook 775-6762, or Fredricksted 772-1955.



MANGROVE SEEDS

QUOTE

"When you look out the other way toward the stars you realize it's an awful long way to the next watering hole."

- Loren Acton

The Home Planet



This newsletter was funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the Government of the VI.

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CHARLOTTE AMALIE, V.I.
PERMIT NO. 35