



TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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ISLAND ATLAS ARRIVES

"As populations expand worldwide, competition mounts among most other biological populations for space and the other necessities of life."

"In the U.S. Virgin Islands, such changes are rapid, drastic, and usually irreversible. There is no place to turn, no place to hide. It seems impossible and perhaps undesirable to stop this process of development on the three main islands. However, the small land masses offshore offer possibilities for a different set of uses."

These words are prefaced in the newly released "Natural History Atlas To The Cays of the U.S. Virgin Islands" by Arthur E. Dammann and David W. Nellis.

The atlas has been prepared through funding from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service, Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid Project FW-5, Job Title, "Study of the Wildlife Potential of the Virgin Island Cays."

In 1976, the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands gave the Department of Conservation and Cultural Affairs, currently known as the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, control of the offshore islands and cays in order to preserve the unique biological diversity of these areas.

Arthur Dammann was the first director of the Division of Fish & Wildlife, and has spent nearly thirty years working in the Caribbean. He holds a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Michigan. Dammann has traveled the tropics of all the continents.

David W. Nellis is presently the Chief of the Bureau of Wildlife for the Division. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia, and has spent most of his 24 years in the Virgin Islands studying its offshore cays. He has explored tropical island groups in every ocean and studied the tropical shores of all the continents.

The atlas features detailed information on the flora and fauna, geological composition, shoreline's, and man-made structures present on each island or cay. Recommendations for preservation are also listed for these areas.

Aerial and side view photographs of each island are presented, along with stunning full-color nature photography, illustrating the plants and animals found on these islands. It is the photography and the layout of the atlas which creates a perfect combination between a glossy "coffee-table book" and fact-filled scientific reference manual. The result is a product that will be enjoyed by students, scientists, and wildlife enthusiasts.

FISHERIES ADVISORY COMMITTEES AT WORK OUTLINING REGULATIONS

According to the V.I. Code, "There shall be two Fisheries Advisory Committees (FAC), one for St. Croix, and one for St. Thomas / St. John, each to be composed of not more than 14 members appointed by the joint action of the Commissioners of Economic Development and Agriculture (EDA) and of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR). Each committee is to have one representative from EDA, DPNR, and Justice; a marine scientist and at least six other representatives of the commercial fishing, sport fishing, and dive associations."

The purpose of the FAC is to collaborate with EDA and DPNR in the drafting and administration of rules and regulations for conservation of fisheries resources.

In July, 1992 the St. Croix FAC was approved, with Dr. Betsy Gladfelter as chairman. The committee is comprised of Eric Bough (EDA), Carlos Farchette (DPNR), Dudley Hughes (Justice), Michelle Pugh, Jay Bollenberg, Tam Daley, Jens Skov, Carlos Ventura, Bob Hynson, Jose Sanchez, Hans Larsen, Frank Johnson, and Claude Petersen.

In December, 1992, the St. Thomas / St. John FAC was approved. Andre Webber is chairman. Members include A. Olive (EDA), L. Jackson (DPNR), A. Gardner (Justice), Barbara Kojis, Danny Boland, Spike Herbert, Al Petrosky, Rick Mizell, David F. Berry, Sandra Tarantino, Claude Berry, C.C. Kreglo, and Jason Dalmida.

The committees have met to discuss topics like conch harvesting, marine reserves, and fish trap inspections.

The St. Thomas / St. John FAC prepared draft legislation for the conservation of conch and whelk, which is currently under review by the Governor.

The St. Croix FAC has discussed shrimp management for the Altona / Great Pond area, and fish trap inspections. Regulations are being drafted.

ENVIRO-NOTE

Only 3% of the Earth's water is fresh water.

Americans throw away 25 billion polystyrene foam cups every year.

DUCK HUNTING SEASON OPENS



Duck hunting season opened January 1, and will continue until January 31.

However, the season will be closed for the white-cheeked pintail (Bahama duck), Ruddy duck, West Indian Whistling duck, Masked duck, and Purple Gallinule.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

- All hunters are required to carry a valid V.I. hunting and gun license and a \$15 duck stamp. Licenses may be obtained from DPNR's Enforcement Division. Stamps may be purchased through the U.S. Postal Service.

- Hunters must observe bag limits (three ducks per day and no more than six ducks in possession at any one time).

- Hunting hours are from 1/2 hour before sunrise, to sunset.

- Birds may only be hunted with shotguns using steel shot..

- Ruth Cay on St. Croix is closed to hunting of birds.

PARROT FISH POPULATION STUDIED

With the decline in populations of snapper and grouper locally, it is believed that parrotfish may become the next target species. The Division is currently conducting a survey to discover the status of the parrotfish population in our region. The long range goal of this study is to determine if there is a need to establish management measures to protect the species. Since the onset of the project on Oct. 1, 1992, sampling has continued weekly. St. James and Dog Islands, and the entire coastline of St. John has been trapped. Trap theft occurred at Mary Point and Whistling Cay. Ten traps were lost. Remaining traps were relocated. Mesh size has been changed from 2 inch to 1 1/2 inch.

COMPASS POINT SALT POND DECLARED MARINE RESERVE

In a time when development is on the increase and the ever-growing needs of man are considered foremost, it is good to learn that there are still areas being set aside for wildlife. The winged creatures of the Virgin Islands won a victory when DPNR's Commissioner Roy Adams recently designated "Compass Point Pond", a salt pond in the mangrove lagoon at Benner Bay, St. Thomas, as a marine reserve and wildlife sanctuary.

The Division conducted a study of the area during 1988 to determine its environmental significance. The Benner Bay Pond and adjacent mangrove area was found to be an important habitat for a variety of resident and migratory bird species, as well as a nursery for juvenile fish.

Chapter 1, Section 97(1) of Title 12 of the V.I. Code allows DPRN to designate and establish wildlife or marine sanctuaries.

Plans for the pond include restoring the water flow from the ocean, replanting mangroves, and creating a wildlife viewing area.



QUOTE

"If we allow environmental deterioration to continue, man's fate may be worse than extinction."

- Ron S. Boster



Trees were saved by printing on recycled paper



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