

# TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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## FISH/HABITAT POSTERS

The posters are finally being printed! After several delays due to problems in finding a printer, Katydid's of St. John is in the process of printing the Deepwater Gamefish and Mangrove Habitat posters. Both should be available in July and can be obtained by writing or stopping by the Division and requesting them. Mailing costs can be defrayed by providing \$1.50 (\$3.00 for foreign) in stamps per poster.



Lesser Antillean Bullfinch

Kestrel



## BIRD TIPS

With the extended dry spell (drought) that we are experiencing, many birds are desperately in need of water and food. You can help our feathered friends by putting out a birdbath and filling it every morning. Bananaquits and bullfinches will congregate in great numbers at a sugar feeder and you may need to refill it more than once daily.

Hummingbirds need moisture and will actively compete with each other over a hummingbird feeder. For this reason it is recommended to put up more than one and place them out of sight from each other. As hummingbirds are attracted to red, use red feeders or red plastic tape on a homemade feeder to make the feeder attractive to them. Hummingbirds apparently prefer red because bees tend to avoid red flowers and the hummingbirds can feed more successfully at red blooms.

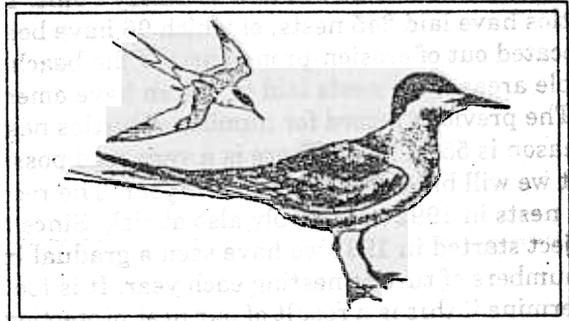
If you happen to find a baby bird out of its nest try to return it to the nest if you can find it. Contrary to popular belief, birds have a poor sense of smell and won't abandon their young after being handled by humans. If you can't find the nest, or can't reach it, tie a small basket lined with soft material in a tree near where you found the bird. Place the bird in this artificial nest. The baby bird's begging calls should soon bring the parents to it.

It's possible to attract quite a number of bird species to your property by placing water sources and feeders around your house. Nest boxes can be used to replace lost nesting habitat once found in dead trees by cavity nesting birds. For more information on nest boxes please contact the Division.

Green Mango Hummingbird



Antillean Crested Hummingbird



The Roseate Tern, *Sterna dougallii*, is a small tern with a deeply forked tail that extends beyond the wingtips. This species of tern also has a dark cap on its head. The voice is high-pitched and squeaky. This species is often seen inshore swarming over schools of baitfish and smaller coastal pelagic fishes such as bonito and jacks. They are commonly used by fishermen to locate these schools of fish.

Migratory Roseate Terns breed in the U.S. and British Virgin Islands between May and July. Total population numbers are not known, but between 3,000 and 6,000 breeding pairs have been estimated for the Lesser Antilles. From previous studies, the U.S. Virgin Islands appears to be the stronghold for Roseate Tern breeding in the West Indies. In 1987, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Caribbean population of this tern as Threatened. Breeding populations are apparently declining due to human disturbance and egg collecting on the breeding grounds, and collecting of juveniles and adults for food on the wintering grounds in northern South America.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife, in collaboration with the USFWS, is providing data for the Roseate Tern Recovery Plan. The Recovery Plan objective is to protect and manage Roseate Tern populations and their habitat to prevent further population decline and increase productivity. Breeding colonies in the USVI are censused and adult and fledgling birds are colorbanded to assess whether or not the decline in the Caribbean populations of this tern might be a result of birds moving between colonies from year to year. Preliminary data of resightings indicates that birds colorbanded in the USVI may nest in subsequent years in Puerto Rico and the BVI. During the summer of 1994, the Division will continue to gather information on the distribution, breeding biology, and reproductive success of Roseate terns in the Virgin Islands.

## QUOTE

"There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot."

Aldo Leopold

## A HOT LEATHERBACK SEASON

After a very slow start, the leatherback turtle nesting season on Sandy Point, St. Croix has surged to potential record breaking numbers. As of the end of May, we have 54 individual leatherbacks nesting on Sandy Point. Twenty eight of these turtles are remigrants from previous years and 26 are new to Sandy Point. These 54 turtles have laid 245 nests, of which 96 have been relocated out of erosion-prone parts of the beach to stable areas. Five nests laid in March have emerged.

The previous record for number of turtles nesting in a season is 55 in 1992. There is a very good possibility that we will break that record this year. The record of 345 nests in 1992 is probably also at risk. Since the project started in 1981 we have seen a gradual increase in numbers of turtles nesting each year. It is too soon to determine if this is a result of our nest protection efforts but the trend is encouraging for the Sandy Point population of turtles.

Another promising development is the use of Passive Inductive Transponders (PIT tags) which we started to use in 1992. These are small (5 mm long) glass encased microchips which are injected into the turtle's shoulder muscle and then "read" with a handheld scanner. Already, four turtles with no evidence of having been tagged before with flipper tags have returned this year with PIT tags from 1992.

As of the end of May, 330 people have visited the project to see and learn about these endangered creatures. Visitor groups include schoolchildren from schools on St. Croix and St. Thomas, St. Croix Brownie Troop and St. Croix Environmental Association. The VI Soil Conservation Service and Rotary Club St. Croix West have taken reservations and coordinated visitor groups.



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Trees were saved by printing on recycled paper

GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS  
OF THE UNITED STATES

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## GOOD-BYE ANN!

After ten years with the Division, Ann Seiler left to be with her husband Chris in Colorado as he starts on a program of veterinary medicine. Ann started as a wildlife biologist and worked with donkeys and deer for three years. In 1987 she became Office Manager and in 1992 accepted the Director's position. During her tenure, Ann spent a great deal of time working on ways to protect our dwindling natural resources. She was successful in some of her attempts and others are still ongoing. We wish Ann and Chris the best of luck and hope that they don't freeze in Colorado.

## LEAD IS DEAD

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing a rule that will prevent small lead- and zinc-containing fishing sinkers from entering the environment and posing a risk by poisoning birds and other aquatic animals. This will also reduce the risk of lead exposure to the fishing public and individuals who manufacture lead sinkers in their homes and to their families. This has come about because Congress has required EPA to reduce human and environmental exposure to lead.

Lost or discarded sinkers can look like food items, small stones or pieces of grit that aid in digestion to a waterbird. Once ingested, the lead or zinc paralyzes their digestive tract and they can die in 2-3 weeks.

The rule will prohibit all persons from manufacturing, processing, selling, and importing any lead- or zinc-containing fishing sinker (including brass) that is one inch or under in any dimension. There are less toxic sinkers on the market such as tin, steel, antimony, bismuth, tungsten, and a terpene resin putty that can be used. This could become law in 2-3 years.



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