

TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Pesticide Impacts

Environmental contaminants from such sources as hazardous waste sites, urban runoff, and oil spills pose significant to native animals, plants and of special concern is the threat to endangered and threatened species. The Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Environmental Contaminants Program works with other FWS programs as well as other Federal and State agencies and the private sector, to prevent losses of indigenous species from pollutants.

Although it is true that DDT can no longer be used legally in the U.S., many of our wildlife species are still being affected by this chemical. DDT and its breakdown products can persist in the environment for decades.

In addition to the lingering effects of certain banned pesticides, fish and wildlife potentially can be affected by some of the thousands of pesticide products currently registered for use in the U.S.

Pesticides are used for many beneficial purposes. When a pesticide is selective for a specific pest, it generally does not pose notable hazards to fish and wildlife. However, many widely used pesticides are not particularly specific for the stated "target" organism. Such pesticides can cause unintended and unwanted effects to "non-target" resources.

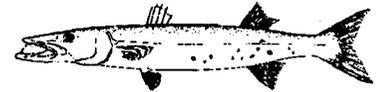
When pesticides are used according to the product label and in a specialized manner, such as spot treatment of weeds with herbicides, exposure of non-target organisms may be avoided. However, there are many pesticides that are not specific in their toxicity or exposure potential, and these compounds can pose threats to endangered species and other non-target organisms. Many poisonings of listed species are unintentional and related to normal uses of pesticides.

There are few cases showing a singular link between a given pesticide and the status of a particular endangered species. However, because these compounds are designed to be toxic and are widely present in the environment, a strong program of research, education, interagency consultation, and careful management of pesticide use is vital for the conservation of many endangered and threatened species.

This article by Laura Lyons was excerpted from Endangered Species Bulletin March/April 1996 Vol XXI No. 2

Annual Fathers Day Tournament

The Committee for the Betterment of Carenage has again hosted the 1996 Father's Day In-Shore Fishing Tournament on Sunday, June 9, 1996 at the Gustave Quétel Fishing Center in Frenchtown. Division of Fish and Wildlife staff assisted the tournament organizers by acting as the official weigh masters and by recording important biostatistical information on all the fish that were landed during the tournament. This year there were 31 boats registered with 105 anglers. Qualifying fish species included dolphin, kingfish, horse-eye, barracuda, amber jack, bonito, tuna and mackerel. The winning catch was a 23.0 lbs. barracuda.



Barracuda



Bonito

Scientists from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were also present to collect those fish species known to cause ciguatera fish poisoning. The Division has regularly assisted the FDA to collect fish samples from various Virgin Islands fishing tournaments. With these fish samples to aid their research, scientists are getting nearer to the development of a test kit to identify the presence of ciguatera toxin in local fish varieties.

The next fishing tournament in the U.S. Virgin Islands will be the July Open, 5-7 July, 1996. The scientist of the DFW have been again asked to be weigh masters for this tournament. Data collected by the Division at these tournaments are very important in monitoring the long-term health of our marine resources. The Division would like to thank the tournament organizers for their cooperation.

What is Natural Resources Conservation Education?

It is a lifelong learning process that promotes the understanding of natural resources and ecosystems - their interrelationships, conservation, use, management and value to society

Captive Bred Puerto Rican Parrot Chick Begins New Life in the Wild

The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently released to the wild a young endangered Puerto Rican parrot chick that is expected to enhance the genetic variability of the species' diminished wild population. Noreen K. Clough, the Service's Southeast Regional Director, called it "an important milestone for the endangered Puerto Rican parrot recovery program."

The release of the chick was timed to arrive at the nest at the time of the day that parent birds are usually away from their nests, foraging for food to bring back to their young. The biologists had earlier discovered a nest containing chicks of approximately the same age and maturity as the young captive-bred chick. The plan was to release the immature parrot to the wild by placing it into a wild nest to be reared by wild birds. Hopefully, they would do so until it was time for the fledgling to leave its nest and fly for the first time. This usually happens approximately 13 weeks from hatching.

Agustin P. Valido, the Service's National Species Coordinator for the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program commented that the release had great significance for the future of the species. "This chick," he said, "was fathered by a founder bird, captured in 1972, from a population in the West Fork area of the forest that has not been occupied by parrots for approximately 7 years. If he survives to breed with the existing wild flock," Valido said, "he will pass on valuable genetic variability to his offspring that will help save these rare parrots from extinction."

Fish Kills

There have been two recent fish kills at Half Penny Bay and Sugar Bay, St. Croix. No signs of trauma from confinement in fish traps, gill nets or other methods of capture were evident on the fish observed. Based on observations, it is most likely that the fish kills were a result of people using poison (chlorox) to force lobster or octopus out of holes in the reef during the day. Virgin Islands law prohibits the throwing into any water of the V. I., oils, acids, poisons or any other substance which can destroy or injure fish. In both incidents, there was a considerable amount of fish killed from several different species.

We can see the effect of poison to fish populations evident by the number dead fish along the shoreline. The effect on other organisms including reef building corals is more difficult to document since it would require knowing the condition of the reef before the poison was released and comparing it afterwards. However, the result is the same, poison such as chlorox are hazardous to the marine environment and their effects can be long lasting. People using this method to obtain lobsters or octopus are threatening the health of our marine environment. Please report fish kills to the Div. of Environmental Enforcement at 776-8600 (STT) and 773-5774 (STX) or Div. of Fish and Wildlife 775-6762 (STT) and 772-1955 (STX).

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