

## Hurricane Georges and the Environment

Hurricane Georges passed over the territory on Monday, September 21, 1998. As the hurricane approached the territory, it miraculously down graded to a category 2. The environment was spared what could have been a very devastating blow. The damage to the environment ranged from minimal in some areas to severe in others.

Some of our mangrove areas have suffered considerable damage to the canopy, others have suffered some damage due to ropes tied to them by boats. The mangroves were just regaining their pre-Marilyn status and now they will have to start over again

The Red Hook Saltpond's berm was broken allowing an exchange of water and also allowing for fish to enter the pond. Many of the other ponds experienced a lot of water from runoff and heavy rains as a result of the hurricane. This changes the salinity of the pond but most of the animals which live in saltponds are suited to these drastic fluctuations in salinity.

Sand loss ranged from minimal to very severe (8 feet at Sandy Point, St. Croix). As seas settle and surge reduces the sand is normally redeposited. Some areas will experience permanent sand loss whereas some areas such as Chenay Bay Beach Resort has experienced an addition of some ten feet of beach.

Coral reef damage has not yet been assessed but it is likely that the extremely large south swell that accompanied the storm resulted in coral breakage and fish mortality. Dead fish, moray eels and conch were reported from south side beaches. Further assessments of damage will be reported here.

## DFW Environmental Education Bureau Receives Environmental Protection Award

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) has been selected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to receive a 1998 Environmental Quality Award (EQA) for the Region II area. Each year EPA searches for those who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to protecting and enhancing environmental quality in their region.

The Environmental Quality Award is the highest recognition presented to the public by EPA. Altogether, the Virgin Islands received awards in four categories;

Individual Citizen - Susanna Ocasio, St. Croix.  
Non - Profit Organization, Environmental or Community Group - Paula Morgan, Thom McCelland, and the "Reef Rangers", St. Thomas.

Environmental Education - St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA).

Federal, State, Local or Tribal Government Agency - DPNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, USVI.

The award ceremony was held on July 8, 1998 at the Federal Building in St. Thomas. U. S. EPA Region 2 Director Ms. Jeannie Fox presented awards to the Virgin Islands recipients. Other persons attending the ceremony included Congressional Delegate Donna Christian Green, Senator Adlah "Foncie" Donastorg and EPA representatives from New York, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

For more information on EPA's Environmental Quality Awards, contact Jim Casey, U.S. EPA Caribbean Environmental Protection Division, at (340) 714- 2333.

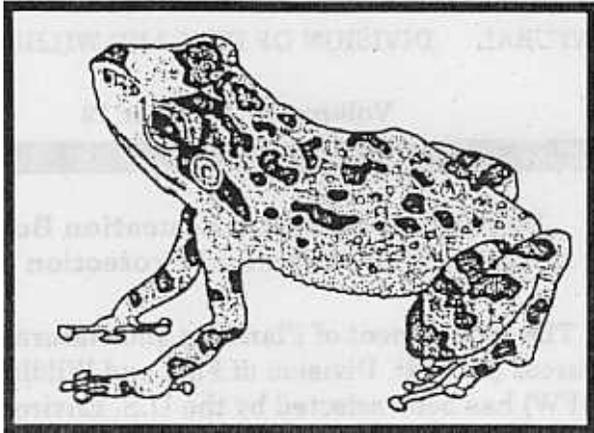
## Quote

"We can find happiness in protecting the world around us not only because we cherish it for its awesome beauty, power, and mystery, but because we cherish our fellow humans, those who live today and those who will live tomorrow."

- Jacques Cousteau  
(1910-1997)

September 1998 - Redhook, St. Thomas  
Temperature

Maximum	Minimum	Rainfall
89.00 °F	74.60 °F	6.89 inches



The Cuban tree frog, *Osteopilus septentrionalis*, can be distinguished from our other frogs by its larger size (2.5 - 3.0 inches as opposed to .5 - 2.0 inches for our native ones). Its color varies from cream and yellowish green to beige with dark brown spots and net like makings. The males are smaller and may have a bright yellowish cast to their skin, at least while mating. These frogs can change color within minutes. They have prominent toe pads and partially webbed hind feet.

The males and females may congregate in large numbers in suitable bodies of water for short periods. There can be as many as 2-3 dozen mating pairs in larger bodies of water after heavy drought-breaking rains.

*Osteopilus* skin is toxic to humans and a potential health hazard. Poisoning occurs if the mucus gets into eyes or highly vascularized tissue in the mouth or nasal passages. This can easily happen after handling a specimen.

The mating call of the Cuban tree frog is a singularly unmusical croak, which, unfortunately, is now heard in Florida and the Keys, Puerto Rico and the Virgins, in addition to the natural range in Cuba, the Bahamas and the Caymans.

To protect against these frogs, see that cistern lids fit securely, and that cistern downspouts and overflow pipes are covered with strainers (for example, 1/2 inch hardware cloth), which should be designed to allow easy removal and cleaning. Swimming pools should be covered with netting of the sort used to protect fruit trees against birds, at least during mating periods.

To get rid of frogs already in cistern or pools, you should try to remove them individually by hand or net, then add chlorine to kill any tadpoles or eggs. A hyper-chlorine powder (available commercially) could be mixed in water in a bucket and then dumped into the cistern, which should be stirred. Add one ounce per 1000 gallons of water. An equivalent alternative would be to add one quart of chlorine liquid bleach (4-5 % sodium hypochlorite) per 1000 gallons.

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## COASTWEEKS 1998

Celebrate, Educate, Participate  
September 19 - October 11, 1998



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Donna M. Griffin - Editor

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GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS  
OF THE UNITED STATES

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