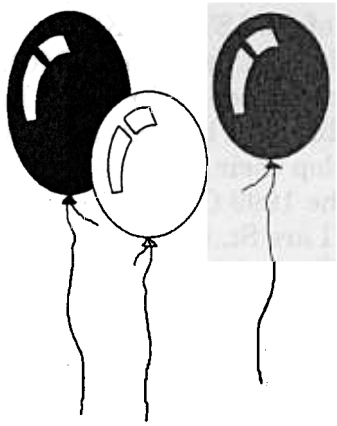
TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES — DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

June 1999 — **Volume 11 Number 9**

Balloons Can Be Dangerous

Every year, thousands of helium-filled balloons are released into the air. Some of these balloons are released accidentally. Others are released in large numbers during various celebrations. People think balloons look pretty when they are floating up into the air. Although the floating balloons look like they are disappearing, they eventually lose their helium and fall back to the earth. Some of these balloons can get in the ocean, where they become a harmful form of marine debris. Some marine animals, especially sea turtles, have been known to eat balloons. The swallowed balloons can block air passages, possibly causing the animals to suffocate, or may lodge in intestinal tracts, where they may disrupt digestion. Either way, balloons can be dangerous!



On a recent beach clean-up exercise on St. Thomas, a group of summer camp students collected several balloons from a popular east end beach. Not only did the balloons litter the beach, they posed a potential threat to marine animals. Beach goers can celebrate special occasions without balloons. For example, paper streamers can decorate the area and not pose a threat to the wildlife and marine animals. Just make sure to clean up after the party and dispose of the decorations properly.

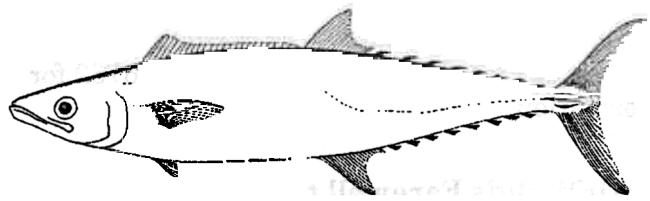
Information for this article is from the Center For Marine Conservation, International Coastal Cleanup 1998 Annual Report.

May 1999 - Redhook, St. Thomas

Temperature		
Maximum	Minimum	Rainfall
88.5 °F	73.5 °F	.41 inches

The Center for the Betterment of Carenage hosts their Annual Father's Day Tournament

On Sunday, June 13, 1999 the Committee for the Betterment of Carenage (CBC) hosted the Father's Day Fishing Tournament. Registration



was held on Saturday afternoon in Frenchtown where 162 anglers signed-up aboard 41 boats. There was a thunderstorm on Saturday evening, the bad weather created marine conditions which were less than desirable for a good day of fishing. In spite of the bad weather, there was a total of 164 fish caught which consisted of barracuda, kingfish, horse eye jack, mackerel, little tunny (bonito) and black fin tuna. The largest fish was a 39.0 pound king fish.

This year's cash prize of $ 2,000 was certainly an added draw to the usual array of prizes. This most generous prize was donated by Offshore Marine. Other prizes included hotel stays, dinners and various types of watches and jewelry. Congratulations to all winners and better luck next year to all others.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife has been collecting data from recreational fishing tournaments since 1994. The division participates in nine annual tournaments per year. The information collected at the tournaments is used to show trends in species populations. The data will help in determining any changes in the local fisheries and the success of current resource management.

Quote

" The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

- George Bernard Shaw

Environmental Education Materials Available

The Environmental Education Bureau of the Division of Fish and Wildlife is proud to announce the availability of the fifth video in "Our Natural Virgin Islands" series. Saltponds: Nature's Water Pollution Prevention System is 14:30 minutes of fact filled information about this little understood habitat.

Also available is the newest poster in the, "Habitats of the Virgin Islands" series. Beach Habitats of the Virgin Islands identifies typical species of plants and animals found along our shorelines.

Lastly, a new bumper sticker, "Save Our Saltponds" is ready to decorate and educate the general public about these special places.

All items are available free of charge but there is a postage fee. Please call at 340 775 6762 for information.

DFW Bids Farewell to Ralf H. Boulon, Jr., Chief of Environmental Educational and Endangered Species Coordinator

It is with great reluctance we bid farewell to this eighteen year veteran of the Division. Although he will be only a phone call away, it will not be the same as having him down the hall to share his wit, wisdom and all around calm approach to everything.

Mr. Boulon has accepted the position of Resource Manager with the National Park Service in St. John. He will be doing much of what he did at DFW. He is especially delighted in reducing his daily commute to six minutes from its previous one hour. Rafe, best wishes in all your future endeavors.

What is Coastweeks '99?

The 1999 International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) has been scheduled for the three week period from September 18 through October 9, 1999. For the 18th consecutive year communities across the world will celebrate the importance and value of our coasts by conducting beach cleanups, environmental festivals and other activities.

In 1982, Ms. Barbara Fegan of Massachusetts created COASTWEEKS as an educational tool to focus attention to the value of coastal natural resources. In 1994, Ms. Fegan turned the coordination of COASTWEEKS over to the Center for Marine Conservation (CMC). CMC established the program themes for COASTWEEKS- pollution, wildlife, and habitat- around which coordinators develop their activities.

The 1999 COASTWEEKS coordinators for the USVI are St. Croix, Marcia Taylor, University of the Virgin Islands, Phone: 340 778 1112 and St. Thomas/St. John, Donna Griffin, DPNR- Division of Fish and Wildlife, Phone: 340 775 6762. Please call for more information about COASTWEEKS.

PLEASE

Let us know your feelings about the TROPIC NEWS. Are we providing you with information that is interesting to you? What else would you like to see? Call or write us and give us your suggestions.

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Donna M. Griffin - Editor

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