

in sea level during Pleistocene interglacials would have most profoundly changed the surface area of Utila, the least mountainous of the three major islands.

ISLA DE UTILA

This is the smallest of the three major Bay Islands. Its greatest length is 12.7 km; its greatest width 5.2 km. Utila is largely flat; most of its surface lies below 10 meters and almost half of the island is subject to periodic inundation. The highest land is a rolling upland averaging about 12 m in elevation at the eastern end. Pumpkin Hill, the highest point on the island (74 m) is near its northeasternmost end.

The eastern end of the island is by far the most heavily populated and is separated from the low, unpopulated western part of the island by a canal. About 1,500 people of English, African, and mixed descent inhabit this island (as is true of all of the Bay Islands), most of them concentrated in the town of Utila (apparently a few people live on Jewel and Pigeon Cays off the southwest end).

The low western portion of Utila is largely covered with marsh vegetation. The eastern portion is mostly covered with remnants of lowland rainforest. Along the beach is a narrow strip of coconut palms and the strand is covered either with short grasses (near the airstrip) or is bare. Mangrove swamps are located along the edge of some parts of the island, as well as inland. Just back from the sandy beach is a belt of exposed, pock-marked coral rock upon which grows a variety of vines, low shrubs, and sprawling, matted cacti (*Rhipsalis* sp.).

Apparently the island has no surface fresh water, though subsurface fresh water surfaces at the bottoms of certain caves near Pumpkin Hill.

ISLA DE ROATÁN

Roatán, the largest of the three major Bay Islands, is about 48 km long (excluding the three small satellite islands located at the eastern end), and its greatest width is 5.2 km. In contrast to Utila, most of Roatán is above 20 meters in elevation. The highest point (235 m) is Picacho Hill, near Oak Ridge.

The population of the island is strung out along the length of the coastline. The towns of Roatán (locally called Coxen Hole), French Harbor, and Oak Ridge, all on the south coast, are the largest settlements.

The higher elevations are covered with remnants of lowland rainforest. Coconut palm groves line the sand beaches. Patches of coral rock are exposed along the beach at some localities. As on Utila this rock is covered with a tangle of vines, low shrubs, small palms and the matlike cactus but is higher and less accessible. Other parts of the