

TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Sportfishing Tournament Updates

The following is an update on various summertime sportfishing tournaments held here in the Virgin Islands:

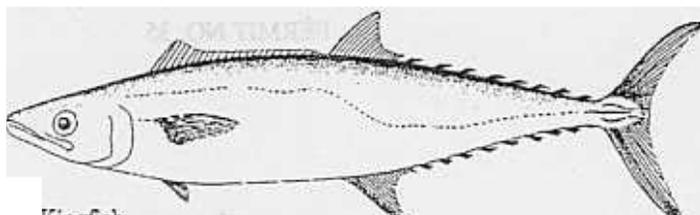
The **Father's Day Inshore Fishing Tournament** was hosted by the Frenchtown Civic Center and held on Sunday, June 12. Fifty eight boats and 206 anglers participated in this event. Two hundred twenty five fish were landed totalling 1815.6 pounds. Of these, 71 were kingfish with a total weight of 797.4 pounds. The largest kingfish weighed 25.2 pounds.

The **31st Annual July Open Tournament** was hosted by the V.I. Gamefishing Club and held on July 2, 3, and 4. A total of 24 boats and 83 anglers participated in the three divisions. The minimum allowed weight for landing a blue marlin was 350 pounds.

The offshore division had 63 anglers on 19 boats fishing for the "Big Five": white marlin, blue marlin, sailfish, wahoo, and allison tuna. Marlin fishing was slow this year with only 14 blue marlin and one white marlin caught during the three days of the tournament. All were released except for the tournament winning blue marlin caught by Johnny Fulgueira of 'Lady Lou' which weighed in at 391 pounds after a one-half hour fight.

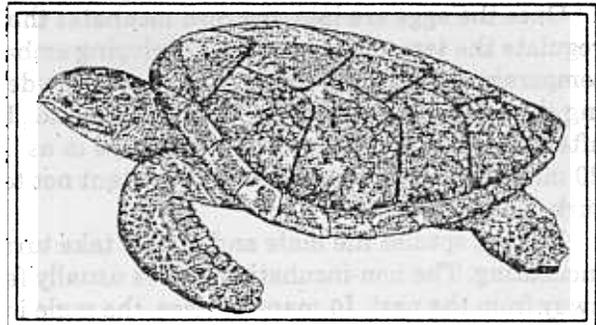
The inshore division had 16 anglers on five boats fishing for all species except the "Big Five". A total of 109 fish weighing 885.3 pounds were caught in this division during the tournament. The largest kingfish caught weighed 25 pounds, the largest dolphin 6.5 pounds, and the largest barracuda 16.5 pounds.

In the onshore division, four anglers 15 years and younger caught 167 fish weighing 13.6 pounds.



Kingfish

The **Bastille Day Kingfish Tournament** was hosted by the Northside Sport Fishing Club and was held on Sunday, July 17. Three hundred ninety nine anglers participated on 113 boats. A total of 314 fish were caught weighing 2,047 pounds. Fifty one kingfish weighing 526.11 pounds and 138 barracuda weighing 1,068.33 pounds were caught. The winning kingfish



The hawksbill turtle, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, can be identified by the overlapping scutes (plates) on its carapace (shell) and its hawk-like bill. This sea turtle feeds on sponges and lives near reefs where it finds sponges and overhangs under which to rest. This turtle reaches 250 pounds in weight and 35 inches in carapace length. The hawksbill turtle is the most common nester in V.I. waters. They will nest on any beach having sand and vegetation to nest under. This species is highly endangered due to take of eggs, meat and shell for jewelry and other ornamental work.

Help Is On The Way

The most serious threat to hawksbill sea turtles has been the take of turtles for their shells. The greatest importer of hawksbill shell has been Japan where they "traditionally" use it to manufacture jewelry and other decorative items. Although Japan is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), they have taken an exemption on hawksbill turtles to be able to continue to import it. Last year, Japan imported approximately 35 tons of shell (this is roughly equivalent to about 7,000 turtles!!). Most of the shell imported by Japan has come from the Caribbean where it is exported by non-CITES signatories. Interestingly, these exporting countries have small hawksbill populations that could not produce the amount of shell being exported. Thus, much of the exported shell must be coming from black market sources in signatory countries.

Recently, bowing to international pressures from CITES countries, Japan has agreed to stop all further imports of hawksbill shell. By the end of July 1994 the impetus to slaughter thousands of Caribbean hawksbills for export to Japan should cease. This ban on trade should significantly improve the chances for hawksbill turtle survival and recovery worldwide. With the enactment of this ban, the most serious threat to hawksbills will be loss of nesting habitat as more and more beaches become the sites for hotels or other development projects.

QUOTE

"This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used."

H. D. Thoreau

Summer Nesting

In the V.I., summer is bird nesting season. Although many birds migrate north to breed, a number of resident species nest here. The season begins with courtship. This is the time when song birds such as the Yellow Warbler sing, Pigeons coo, and the Red-tailed hawk does its long, gliding, soaring flights. Courtship and nest building usually occur in April and May.

Once the eggs are laid, the bird incubates them to regulate the temperature of the developing embryo. A temperature around 98 degrees F is best. The developing chicks are more sensitive to heat than cold. The afternoon sun can kill an exposed embryo in as little as 20 minutes. For this reason it is important not to disturb nesting birds.

In most species the male and female take turns incubating. The non-incubating bird is usually feeding away from the nest. In many species, the male incubates more than the female just after egg laying. This allows the female to feed more and regain weight lost in producing the eggs. Many species go through an elaborate "changing of the guard" ceremony when one takes over incubating from the other. This behavior has fascinated many bird watchers and scientists. Adults must incubate the chick until its down feathers grow out and it is able to regulate its own body temperature.

Different species of birds are born more or less developed depending on the balance of food availability and quality, and predation. Some are born well developed and need little incubation while others must be incubated for long periods of time. Faster development depends on the mother having had high rates of quality food consumption prior to egg laying and the chick having the same after hatching. The birds with shorter incubation fledge (fly) faster and are less vulnerable to predators.

By late August the survivors will have fledged, the nesting season will be over and this year's recruits will be flying over the V.I.

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An Ecological Story

The following story (as reported in Science magazine) demonstrates how a seemingly simple solution to a problem can lead to a disruption of ecological relationships and creation of a much larger problem:

A small village in Vietnam had problems with malaria. The US Army sprayed DDT to control the mosquitoes which transmit the malaria. The DDT also weakened the cockroaches, making it easier for the geckos to catch them. The geckos then died from the DDT which allowed the thatch beetles to proliferate. This resulted in a weakening and collapse of many roofs. The village cats ate the dying geckos and also died from the DDT. This caused rats to move in and eat the villagers food. Cats were imported from the city but these cats had fleas from city rats which were carrying typhus. The village rats became infested with the city fleas which infected them with typhus. The rats became sick and would bite the villagers, thus infecting them with typhus fever. The villagers now had malaria, typhus fever, collapsing roofs, and no food. In the end the villagers had to abandon their village and build a new one ten miles away (without the Army's help).

Our Top Female Angler

Ruth Gomez, a Fisheries Biologist with the Division, recently won Top Female Angler honors at the Hull Bay Bastille Day Kingfish Tournament. Three hundred and ninety nine anglers participated on 113 boats. Fishing from Dean Greaux's Reel M' In, Ruth landed 60.26 pounds of fish for the largest female total in the seven years of this tournament. Ruth, with 17 of the 20 fish caught on the boat, caught her bonito and barracuda on the south side of St. Thomas/St. John from Frenchcap Cay to Ram Head on St. John. Congratulations, Ruth, on some fine angling!



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