

TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Make every day "Earth Day"

Earth Day originated in the early 1970's as a means of bringing national attention to the issue of ecology and the need to preserve the earth's natural resources.

The event is nationally observed. Many well-known celebrities are very active in Earth Day activities. Global issues such as the destruction of tropical rain forest, ozone depletion, and the pollution of our oceans are addressed.



Earth Day 1996 will be celebrated with a range of activities territory wide during the month of April.

Celebrating for one day and talking about the earth's problems aren't going to be enough to turn things about. We need to make environmentally minded decisions every day of the year.

The Earth Works Group's handbook "Fifty Simple Things You Can Do To Save The Earth" offers the following suggestions:

* Stop junk mail. About 100 million trees a year could be saved if we reduce the amount of unwanted mail we receive.

* Use a "clean" detergent. Choose phosphate free products, and use a little less detergent than the manufacturers recommend.

* Snip Six-pack rings. These last many years and are hazardous to fish, birds, and other wildlife.

* Switch to rechargeable batteries. When disposable batteries decay, they release heavy metals such as mercury and cadmium into the soil.

* Choose paper products over styrofoam.

* Reuse your shopping bags.

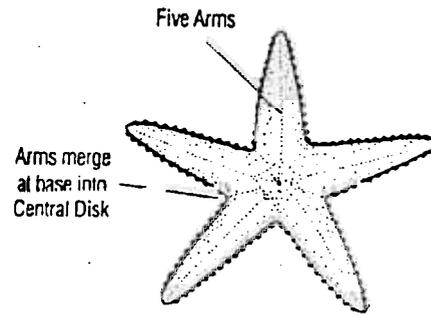
* Maintain your car. Make sure your tires are properly inflated - it will make them last longer. Keep fuel filters clean, and keep your car tuned up. This helps reduce gasoline consumption by up to 9%.

* Aerate your faucets. Aerators reduce the water volume but increase the pressure. Install a displacement bag in your toilet tank to conserve water.

* Support recycling in your community. Buy recycled products.

Species of the month

Oreaster reticulatus: The West Indian Sea Star
Asteroids have long been known as starfish, but



SEA STAR

the more modern and appropriate common name is sea stars. The West Indian sea star is the largest and most massive of the seastars occurring in the region. It is the commonest, most

spectacular sea star of sandy areas and Turtle Grass beds. It is usually found in shallow water, generally less than 15 m.

O. reticulatus has four to seven arms which are broad with numerous blunt spines on the upper surface. The arms are triangular, merging at the base into the central disc. Broken arms can be regenerated, and in a few species a new animal can form from a severed arm. The mouth is located centrally on the undersurface, with the anus on the top. Two or four rows of tube feet, tipped with suction discs, extend from the mouth down each arm. The W.I. seastar occurs in various colors, including olive green, yellow, brown and reddish brown. The maximum size is about 50 cm in diameter.

1996 Tournament Schedule

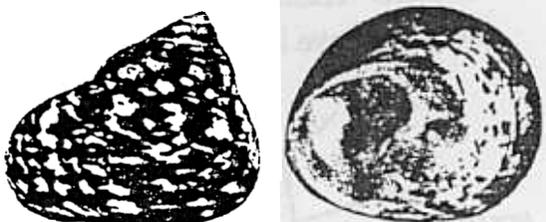
Fishermen, get ready for the 1996 Tournament Season due to start next month. Best of luck to all participants!

VI Gamefish Club Dolphin	14 April
Frenchtown Mother's Day	5 May
Frenchtown Father's Day	9 June
July Open	5-7 July
Northside Fishing Club Bastille Day	Cancelled
American Yacht Harbor Bill Fish	25-28 July
USVI Open Boy Scout	24-29 August
September Moon Classic	31 Aug-3 Sept.
St. Croix Golden Hook	26-29 Sept.

Schedule as of 3/13/96 and subject to

Whelk season closed

Whelk harvesting season runs from October 30 through March 30 each calendar year. The closure of the season allows the whelk population to mature and reproduce for a period of time without disturbance from poachers. During the closure period it is illegal to harvest, sell or possess whelk caught in our local waters.



West Indian Top Shell
Cittarium pica

The West Indian Top-shell is a medium sized, marine gastropod which lives in the intertidal zone of exposed or partly sheltered coastlines, and grazes on algae. Besides the octopus, porcupine-fish, and wrasses, humans are the whelk's main predator.

It takes 5 1/2 years for a whelk to reach average adult size. The legal size to take whelks is 2.7/16" (6.2cm). The maximum known movement for a whelk was 150 feet in 6 months. Whelks are more active by night than by day. The slow growth rate and low mobility coupled with high demand and economic value make this species highly vulnerable to overfishing.

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Trees were saved by printing on recycled paper

Clean Vessel Act Pumpout Products

The Clean Vessel Act (CVA) Federal Aid Pumpout Grant Program is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Aid. The Program will award \$40 Million over 5 years to States to install pumpout and pump stations for boaters' disposal of human waste in an environmentally safe manner. The Program includes funding to State agencies for educational materials.

The funding comes from the Sport Fish Restoration Account of the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, referred to as the Wallop-Breaux Fund. That fund results from a 10% excise tax on fishing equipment and a 3% tax on electric trolling motors and sonar fish finders, a portion of the Federal fuels tax, and import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats.

Currently, the Reference Service has 40 CVA products and expects to maintain a clearinghouse of approximately 300 products. The materials submitted to FWRS will be made available, free of charge, to DFW. Anyone interested in these materials should contact the Division. A bibliography listing all CVA products will be available to all interested parties free of charge.

For additional information on the Fish and Wildlife Services' new clearinghouse, or the Clean Vessel Act Federal Aid Pumpout Grant Program, contact Bob Pacific, USFWS, Division of Federal Aid, Rm 140 ARLSQ, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Arlington VA 22203, phone: 703/351-1845, fax: 703/358-1837 or robert-pacific@mail.fws.gov.



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