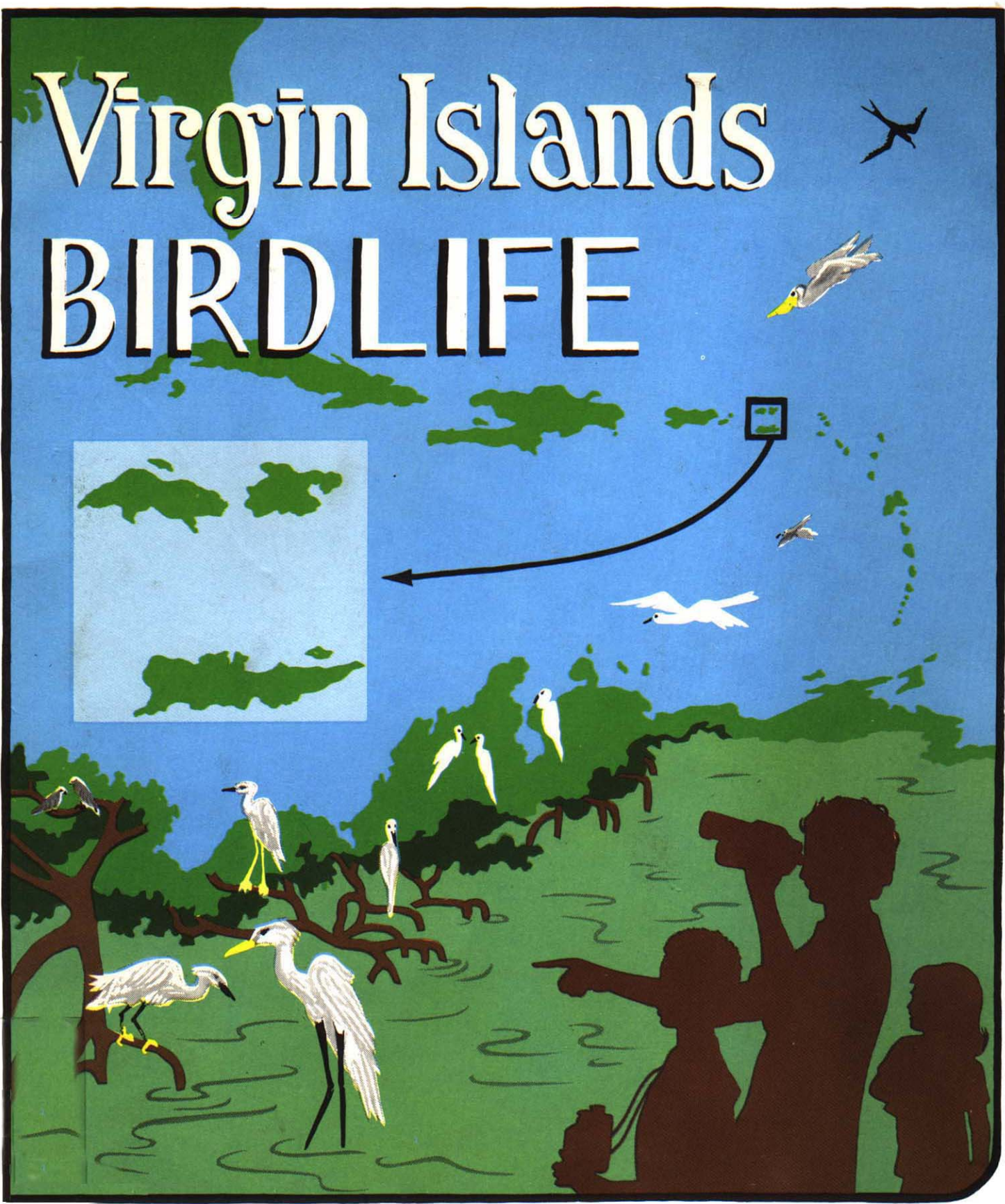


# Virgin Islands BIRDLIFE



Published by the U.V.I. Cooperative Extension Service  
in Conjunction with the U.S. National Park Service



# **Virgin Islands Birdlife**

**Getting To Know Birds  
and  
Where They Live**

by

**Roland H. Wauer**  
U.S. National Park Service

Illustrations by  
**Zandy Marie Hillis and Toni Ackerman Thomas**  
Photos by Tina Henle

Published by the UVI Cooperative Extension Service  
in conjunction with the U.S. National Park Service

Extension Handbook 3  
May 1988

## Foreword

This book, entitled *Virgin Islands Bird Life*, breaks new ground in the expanding field of collaboration between the University of the Virgin Islands and the U.S. National Park Service in the Virgin Islands. Both organizations are committed to complementary missions of promoting and enhancing our human, cultural and natural resources, thus, to help improve the quality of life of the Virgin Islands people.

The Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service, as a partnership between the University, local and Federal governments and the people of the Virgin Islands, actively develops a broad range of educational programs addressing local needs. One of Extension's important missions is to provide V.I. residents with an educational service on the natural and living resources of our islands. Environmental education is one of this agency's growing emphases.

In a similar vein, an important mission of the National Park Service is to provide opportunities for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. As the stewards of some of the nation's most valuable natural resources, the National Park Service has developed unique expertise in management of these resources.

I am pleased that the Cooperative Extension Service has been able to combine resources with the National Park Service in a new type of venture to develop an original publication which will serve both organizations in their respective environmental education missions.

The Cooperative Extension Service has a strong commitment to conserving and managing natural resources through its educational programs. The use of natural resources for the benefit of the people can be enhanced through public education, and I hope that this publication will serve that purpose. Birds are an important part of our environment and, thus, every effort should be made to increase our awareness about them.

I urge all Virgin Islands residents to make use of this publication.

Darshan S. Padda  
Director  
Cooperative Extension Service

0028866



## Preface

*“Keep a green tree in your heart and perhaps the singing bird will come.”*

—*Chinese Proverb*

“Birdwatchers are sensitive, caring people well worth knowing!” This pardonable bit of self-promotion, in a brochure on birdwatching, certainly is consistent with my experience. I also believe that birdwatching — and any comparable nature awareness activity — draws out qualities of alertness and sensitivity in people. Perhaps it is because they learn to “keep a green tree” in their hearts.

Birds offer a fascinating link with nature. Together with the insects, birds are the most “available” of our animals, that is, they and their places of living can be readily experienced. For birders, novice or veteran, time in the field is spent in discovery and awareness. It is the joy of pursuit which enriches.

In a time when our island world is changing rapidly, its living natural resources being depleted, it is important to make an effort to keep people in touch with the earth. *Virgin Islands Birdlife* is dedicated to the idea that providing rewarding experiences in nature enriches peoples’ lives and increases their awareness of and appreciation for their environment. *Virgin Islands Birdlife* is the second (after *Island Insects*) of a planned series of contributions by the Natural Resources program of the V.I. Cooperative Extension Service, intended to add to the supply of appropriate environmental interpretation tools. With this series, we hope to assist educators, their students, and other people to become more aware of important elements of their living environment, and open eyes of understanding.

When I first discussed the possibility of developing this guide with Ro Wauer, he immediately seized upon the idea with cheerful enthusiasm. This I have come to recognize as one of his characteristic “field marks.” Ro is Resource Management Specialist for the Southeast Region of the National Park Service, and has been on St. Croix since 1986. He is an acknowledged bird expert and enthusiast, and a well-rounded biologist with many years of professional experience in matters of environmental management.

We sincerely hope that this guide will help the “singing bird” to come to you. Have a great time birding.

Walter I. Knausenberger, Ph.D.  
Program Leader, Natural Resources  
V.I. Cooperative Extension Service



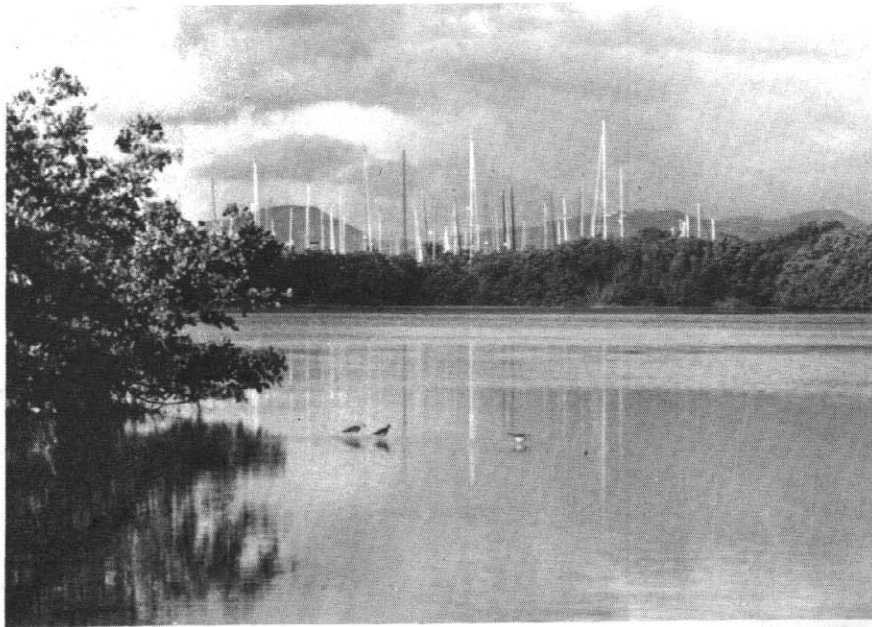
## Acknowledgements

There are several people that provided me with either special assistance or support for this project. First and foremost, I want to thank Walter Knausenberger and Bob Deskins who provided the idea and incentive for the project. Fred Sladen and Rob Norton supported the project through their special knowledge of the Virgin Islands birdlife and many suggestions and as co-authors of the Checklist. Fred also read the manuscript and provided several worthwhile comments. I also thank Cynthia Hatfield for producing the cover, Tina Henle for providing the black and white habitat photographs, and Zandy Hillis and Toni Thomas for providing pen and ink bird sketches. And last but not least, project support was also received from my wife, Betty; Carrol Fleming for her valuable editorial activities; and Tom Bradley and Houston Holder for their moral support.

I would like to thank Herbert Raffaele for permission to use illustrations adapted from his book, *A Guide to the Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands*, 1983, Fondo Educativo Interamericano, San Juan. Illustrations prepared by Hillis of Smooth-billed Ani, Bananaquit, Lesser Antillean Bullfinch, Caribbean Coot, Glossy (Shiny) Cowbird, Mangrove Cuckoo, Common Gallinule, Antillean Crested Hummingbird, Mockingbird, Brown-throated Parakeet, White-crowned Pigeon, White-checked Pintail (Bahama Duck), Black-necked Stilt, Barn Swallow, Black-whiskered Vireo were based on the work of Cindy House. Illustrations prepared by Hillis of the Brown Booby, Magnificent Frigatebird, Helmeted Guineafowl, American Oystercatcher, Scaly-naped Pigeon, Semipalmated Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Common Snipe, and White-tailed Tropicbird were based on the work of John Wiessinger.

# Table of Contents

Foreword .....	ii
Preface .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Bird Communities .....	1
Ocean/ Bay Community .....	2
Wetland Community .....	3
Dry Forest Community .....	4
Moist Forest Community .....	5
Developed Areas .....	6
The Most Common Virgin Islands Birds .....	7
Enjoying And Identifying Our Wild Birds	
The Enjoyment of Birds.....	21
How to Identify Birds .....	21
Protecting Our Wild Birds	
Bird Conservation.....	23
Habitat Protection Amid Change .....	23
The Virgin Islands Connection.....	25
Some Useful Definitions .....	25
Appendix I: Glossary of Virgin Islands Bird Names .....	27
Appendix II: Checklist of the Birds of the Virgin Islands.....	29
Useful References .....	35



## **Bird Communities**

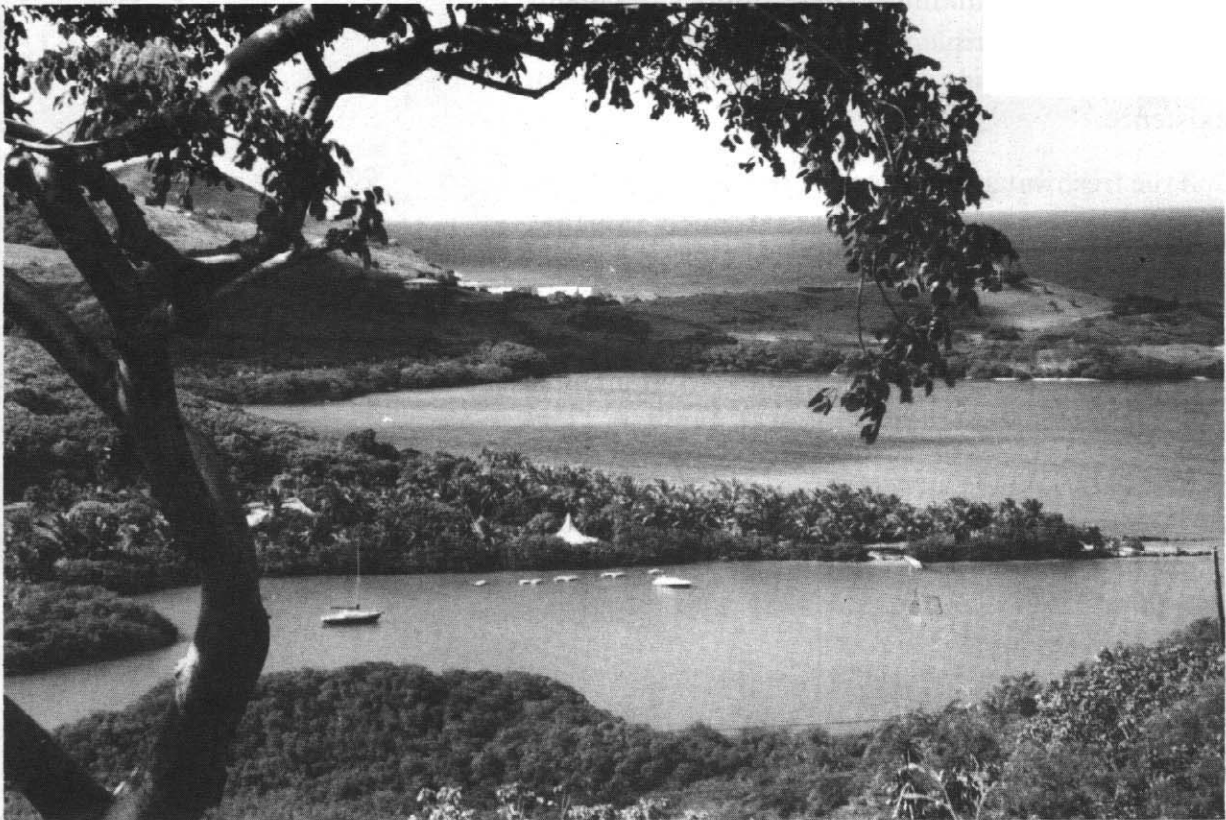
Where would you look to find a pelican? A thrushee? A chicken hawk? Each one of these Virgin Islands birds lives in a different place. The Brown Pelican prefers the ocean and bays where it dives for fish or sits quietly in the water or on a wharf. The thrushee, or Pearly-eyed Thrasher, resides in woodlands or landscaped places where it can find the food and shelter it needs. The chicken hawk, or Red-tailed Hawk, prefers the ridge tops where it can soar high over the forest and fields in search of its prey. Each of these birds, as well as all of their neighbors, reside in particular communities that best suit their specific needs.

The Virgin Islands contain five distinct bird communities: Ocean/Bay, Wetlands, Dry Forest, Moist Forest, and Developed Areas. Each of these areas contain different sets of conditions in which certain birds can best survive.

One example of community relations can be made for our common Brown Pelican that lives in the ocean/bay community that surrounds the Virgin Islands. Pelicans would literally disappear from our islands if the fish, which they depend upon for their food, were to disappear. The fish in our bays depend upon the health of the mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs, on which they depend upon for shelter and food. And the survival of the Virgin Islands mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs depend upon what people do on the land. Too much silt or pollution can threaten an entire community. Too much poaching or over-harvesting of certain marine animals can endanger all the others. Every community consists of numerous living and dead materials that are in one way or another connected to each other. The loss of only one species may very well threaten all the rest.

Birds and people are the dominant members of all five of the land-based communities. Therefore, birds are excellent indicators of the natural health of our communities. Learning birds and their relations with other living things within these communities can be fun and challenging, as well as important to the long-term survival of humankind.





### **Ocean/Bay Community**

The ocean/bay environment surrounds our islands and therefore dominates our very existence. The tropical waters provide feeding grounds for fish-eating birds and waders that hunt small fish and invertebrates in the shallows or on the shorelines. Virgin Islands waters, like all tropical oceans, are usually crystal clear and allow for amazing visibility as much as 20 or 35 feet below the surface. More northern waters are not as clear because they usually contain a proverbial “soup” of tiny creatures that physically restrict visibility and provide food for many types of animals. In contrast, clear tropical waters contain a more limited food source and therefore barely provide enough food to maintain the marine animals and plants on which our ocean/bay birds depend. Virgin Islands’ greatest food sources exist around coral reefs and in the coastal bays and lagoons.

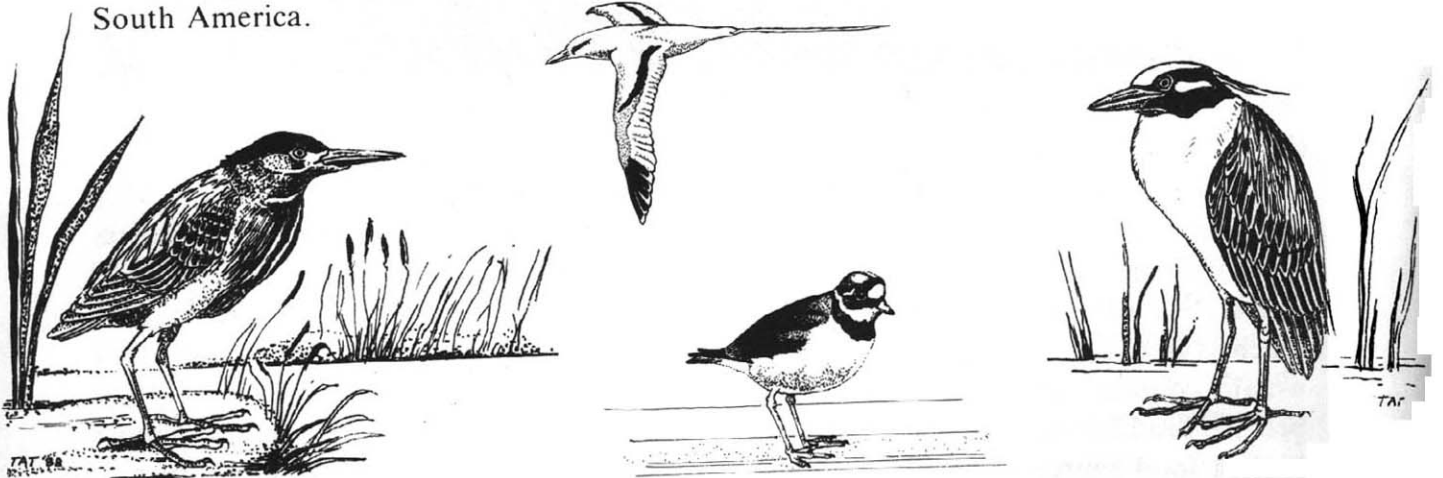
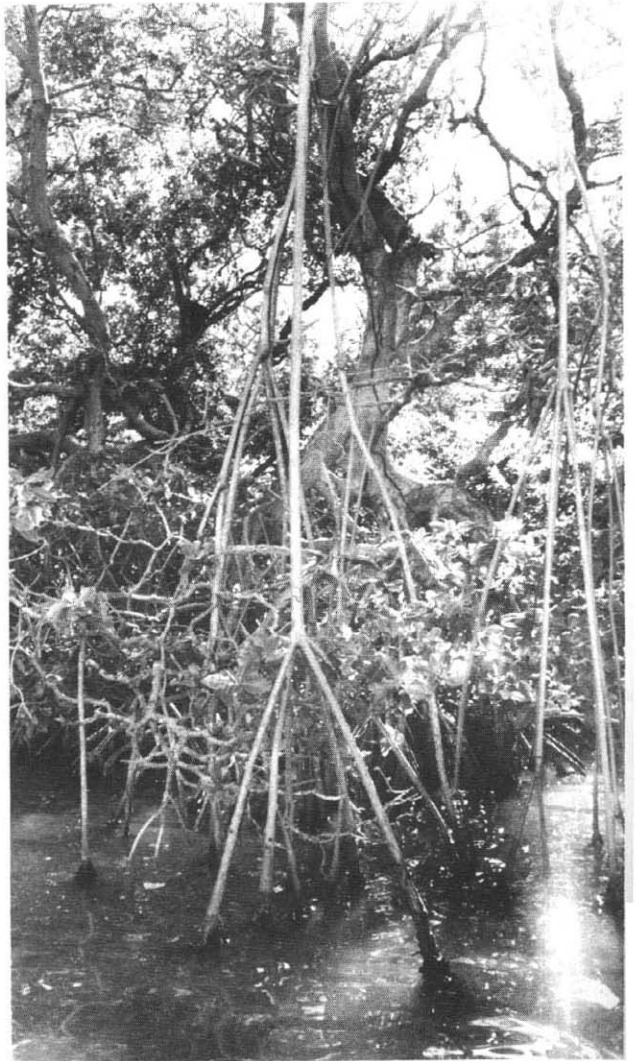
The pelican, boobies, frigatebird, a few herons, gulls and terns, osprey, and a variety of shorebirds most commonly live in or near the ocean/bay community.

## Wetland Community

Wetland communities include both fresh and saltwater ponds, lagoons and associated mangrove forests and swamps. The mangrove forests probably are the Islands' most important habitats. They serve as natural filters for the various sediments and pollutants that flow off the land into the bays. Mangrove lagoons produce lots of nutrients that support an abundance of plant life, fish, oysters, and other creatures that flourish among mangrove roots and their muddy surroundings. These animals and plants serve as the principle food upon which the larger creatures, including people, depend for their existence.

True freshwater ponds and marshes are rare in the Virgin Islands and therefore are extremely valuable. They support a great diversity of animals and plants and have attracted wildlife since long before people discovered these islands. They are most important as a source of drinking water for wildlife. Migrant birds often frequent these ponds in great numbers.

Saltwater ponds are more numerous than the freshwater ponds, and support a larger number of birds than any other island habitat. Virgin Islands' salt ponds can literally be teeming with birds, particularly during the fall months, when thousands of migrant shorebirds stop over to rest and feed before continuing south toward their wintering grounds in South America.



The most common birds to be found in the wetlands are grebes, moorhens, a wide variety of ducks, large waders such as egrets and herons, and numerous shorebirds such as dowitchers, yellowlegs, plovers, and sandpipers. An amazing variety of migrant and wintering landbirds, such as flycatchers and warblers, can also be found in the mangrove forests.

## Dry Forest Community

The dry forest or “bush” includes the cactus scrub habitat that occurs in the driest parts of the islands. Its thickets of low to medium-high vegetation are especially common on dry wind-exposed slopes. Although a quick glance at the dry forest community might suggest a scarcity of plant species, this environment actually contains a surprisingly large variety of shrubs and small trees. Most of these plants produce abundant fruits and seeds during certain periods of the year, thus supporting large bird populations.

The dry forest community is the most extensive terrestrial habitat in the Virgin Islands because it is able to survive on the open slopes and hilltops that are most exposed to direct sunlight and wind. This community contains a greater number of bird species than the more luxuriant moist forest community.

Typical birds to be found in the dry forests include the bananaquit, bullfinch, cuckoos, doves and pigeons, elaenia, grassquit, hummingbirds, mockingbirds, thrasher, vireo, and warblers.







### Moist Forest Community

The moist forest occurs only in the guts (canyon-bottoms) and on the higher and wetter slopes. This is the environment that contains the tallest and grandest trees, with an abundance of air plants (bromeliads) and vines. Today there are only a few good patches of moist forest left in the Virgin Islands. Most of this habitat has been destroyed for pasture, agriculture, lumber and fuel.

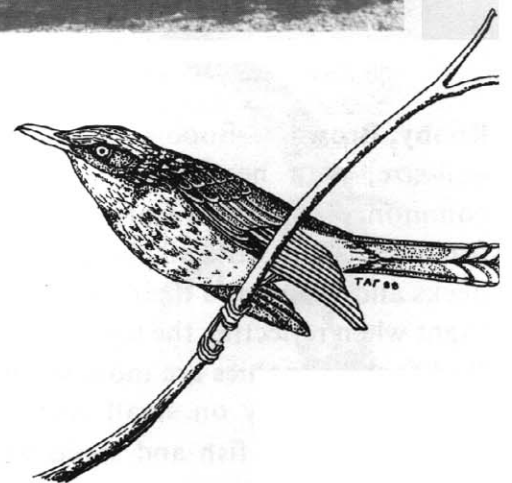
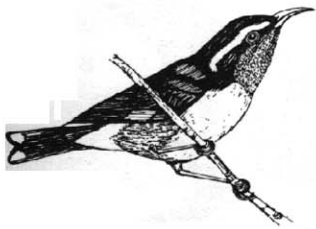
Although this habitat is the lushest and most jungle-like, it supports relatively few bird species. The bananaquit, doves and pigeons, hummingbirds, thrasher, and warblers occur here. One bird — the Bridled Quail-Dove — can be found only in moist forest areas.



## Developed Areas

Developed areas occur in and around the many towns and villages, as well as the abundant fields and pastures. These are the sites that have been changed from natural habitats to those used by people. They can occur anywhere on the islands and often are dominated by a variety of introduced plants. Many of the introduced flowering plants are especially attractive to birds, such as hummingbirds and bananaquits. Although individual sites may be small, their cumulative effects on an island usually are very important.

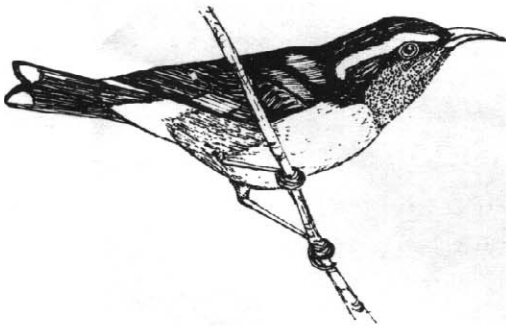
Common birds of developed areas include the bananaquit, grassquit, doves, thrasher, cattle egret, kingbird, mockingbird, and swallows. These are the birds that have learned to adapt to human environments more than the others. They often find good food sources from the non-native plant species that people have brought into this community.



## The Most Common Virgin Islands Birds

The following is a description of only the most common birds, arranged in alphabetical order, you may find in the Virgin Islands. The names used may vary somewhat from those commonly used on different islands. (see Appendix I in the back of the book for a glossary of local names) but these are the standardized names used in the most up-to-date field guides. All the birds known for the Virgin Islands are listed in correct scientific order in the "Checklist" that is included on the last pages of this booklet (Appendix II). Once you identify one of the birds in the field, you may wish to check it off the checklist.

**Ani, Smooth-Billed** — This all black, long-tailed bird with a huge bill is locally known as "Black Witch." Its loud squawky call, sometimes described as "wei-ik," can be heard almost any time of day. Anis are most often seen in brushy fields and along fencerows, sitting atop a bush or tree, or in flocks of 5 to 12 individuals gliding from one high point to another. The Ani is a member of the Cuckoo family.

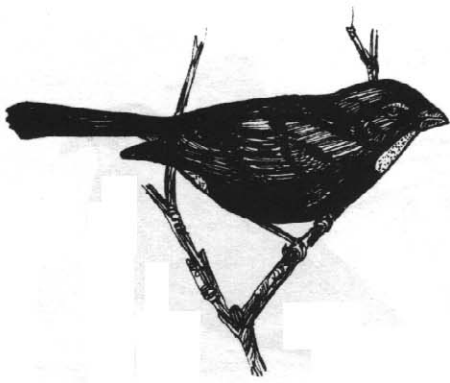


**Bananaquit** — "Quits" are beautiful little birds of bright yellow, black and gray colors. They are best known in the Virgin Islands as "Yellow Breasts" or "Yellow Bellys" after their bright yellow breasts and bellies, or "Sugarbirds" after their habit of eating sugar placed on windowsills and tables. Their long-decurved bills permit them to sip nectar from flowers. And because they are so abundant and obvious, Bananaquits have been named the Virgin Islands' official bird.

**Booby, Brown** — Boobies are large birds, between pelican- and gull-size, with heavy bills. The Brown Booby is the most common of the three Caribbean boobies, and usually can be found in harbors and all along the coastline. Adults have brown necks and heads, and their white bellies can appear aqua color in flight when reflecting the beautiful blue waters. The Masked and Red-footed Boobies are more sea-going (pelagic) in nature and occur only rarely on small islets near St. Thomas. All three boobies feed on fish and squid which they capture by diving head-first into the sea.

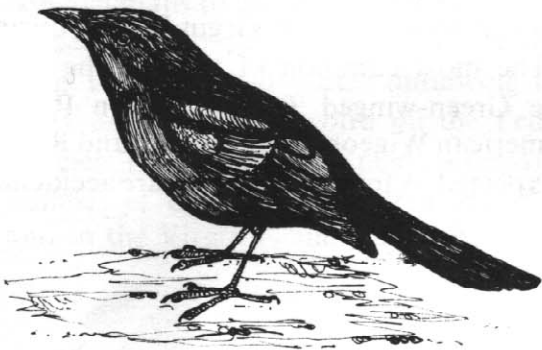
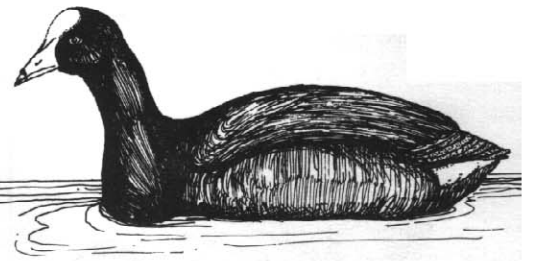






**Bullfinch, Lesser Antillean** — This is a plump sparrow-sized bird; the male is all black with an orange-brown throat and crissum (under the rump), and the female is drab olive color with a tawny crissum. It was reported first in the area of Lynn Point. There also are a few St. Croix sightings. It prefers the dry forest community, where it is likely to increase in numbers. It is an abundant resident on some of the Lesser Antillean islands to the southeast.

**Coot, Caribbean** — This bird and the look-alike American Coot are all black except for white patches on the rumps and all-white bills. The Caribbean Coot has a broad and completely white frontal shield just above the bill; the white frontal shield is replaced by a red knob on its American cousin. The presence or absence of the Caribbean Coot has become a good indicator of wetland disturbance within the Virgin Islands. Populations have declined in numbers as island developments, particularly those on or adjacent to ponds, have increased; it is now rarely seen. The look-alike American Coot, which is more of a migrant, is more adaptable and has increased in numbers.



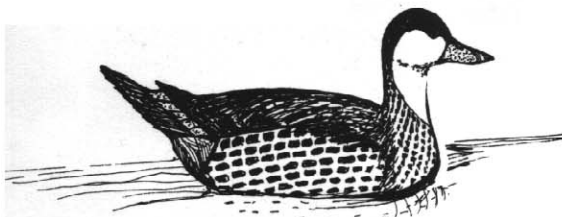
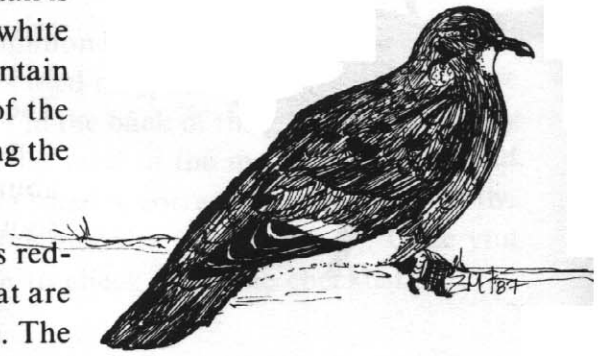
**Cowbird, Shiny** — Males of this species are a glossy violet-black color; females are a drab gray-brown. Although it is rare in the Virgin Islands, it may be on the increase. Cowbirds are social parasites and actually lay their eggs in the nests of other birds. The host birds usually are considerably smaller than the cowbirds, but raise the young cowbirds until fledged, usually to the detriment of their own brood.

**Cuckoo, Mangrove** — Its buffy breast, long black and white banded tail, and black mask and bill help to separate this resident bird from the similar Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Yellow-bills have a rufous patch on each wing that is clearly evident in flight; this patch is not present on the Mangrove Cuckoo. In spite of its name, the Mangrove Cuckoo is more common in the dry forest community than in the mangrove habitats. It is very secretive in nature and so it is rarely seen, but it can usually be detected by its distinct guttural call. Once found, this fairly large bird can often be approached surprisingly closely; it is not shy and depends upon its subtle colors to hide it from danger.



**Dove, Zenaida** — This is the Caribbean analog to the Mourning Dove of the States; its mournful calls are very similar. Its tail is rounded with a white trailing edge. Its wings also possess a white trailing edge. The Zenaida Dove is locally called “Mountain Dove” because it is common in the mountainous parts of the islands, but it can be just as numerous in the lowlands along the shore or around developed areas.

Watch also for the tiny Common Ground-Dove with its reddish wing patches. And there are two introduced doves that are rarely encountered, the Ringed Turtle and Spotted Doves. The two larger “doves” you are likely to see are the Scaly-naped and White-crowned Pigeons.

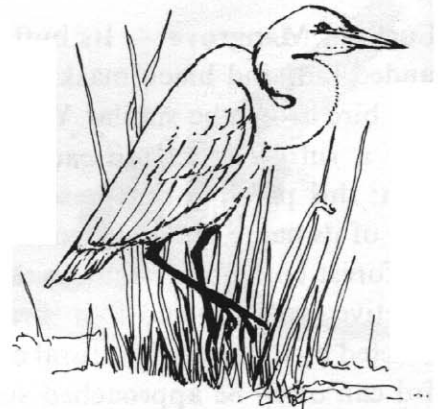


**Ducks** — The White-cheeked Pintail is the Virgin Islands’ only resident duck, although several other duck species overwinter or migrate through the area. Its white-cheeks and red mark on the back of the bill are the best field marks for this native pintail. Populations have declined in recent years because of habitat destruction caused by new developments and disruptive activities that have damaged their nesting, feeding and resting sites.

Several other ducks can be seen in the Virgin Islands during the winter months. The most common of these is the Blue-winged Teal, but the Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Duck should also be expected. A few other species are accidental only.

**Egret, Cattle** — The large white birds so abundant in the open fields or flying across the sky at dawn and dusk are Cattle Egrets. They often perch on the backs of cattle, a habit from which they derive their common name, as well as “Tick Bird,” a more local name. They also will follow a mower or tractor across the lawn or field, picking up insects that are disturbed.

There are two additional white egrets in the Virgin Islands, the little black-legged, black-billed Snowy Egret, and the much larger, black-legged, yellow-billed Great Egret. Both of these prefer wetlands. The Little Blue Heron is all white during its first year, but the legs are greenish to bluish and the bill is usually blue or gray.

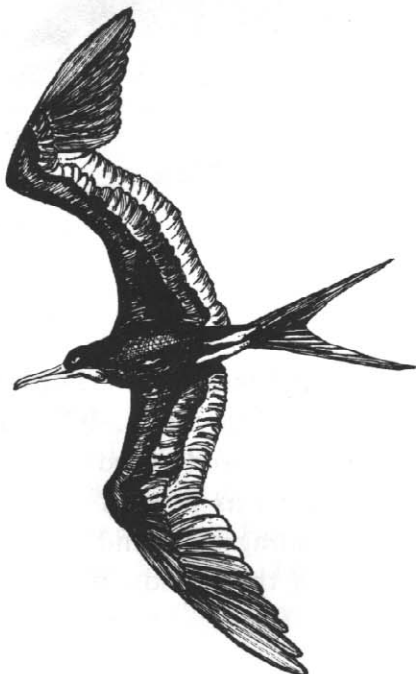




**Elaenia, Caribbean** — This is a drab little flycatcher with two whitish wingbars and a seldom-seen yellowish line on the crest of its head. Although it is shy and not often seen, it is fairly common in a variety of habitats from the mangrove forests and adjacent coastal woodlands to the dry forest community on the hillsides. It can best be detected by its very distinct “che-eup” or “sweet, sweet, churr” whistles which have given it the local names of “pee-whistler” or “John Phillip.” Elaenias feed on insects, dashing out from their perches to grab a fly or mosquito in mid-air, then returning to the same perch to watch for the next morsel.

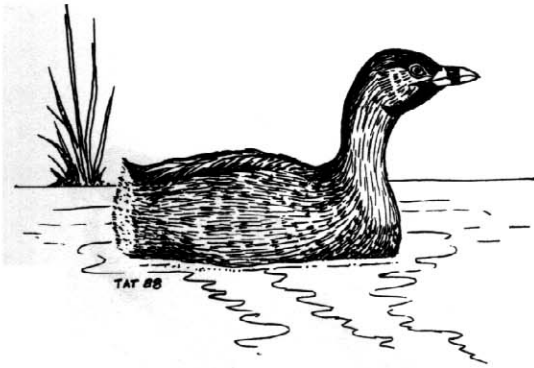
**Falcon, Peregrine** — There is no faster and more powerful bird in all the Caribbean than this large falcon. It has been clocked at over 175 miles per hour in a dive, and uses its amazing speed and agility to capture its prey, often on the wing. It is actually able to capture flying bats and swifts, as well as pigeons, shorebirds, and ducks. In fact, in certain areas of North America, Peregrines capture so many ducks that they are better known as “Duck Hawks.”

In the Virgin Islands, Peregrines are only migrants or winter birds that go north in spring to nest on cliffs from the Southern Appalachians to the Arctic. These birds are highly susceptible to pesticides, and their populations declined to a very low level prior to the United States outlawing the sale of the pesticide DDT and placing the bird on the Federal list of Endangered Species. It has since then made a remarkable recovery, and the number of Peregrines is increasing all across North America, and in the Virgin Islands, as well.



**Frigatebird, Magnificent** — This is the huge black and white bird (males may show red throat patches) with a scissor-tail found soaring overhead, especially along the coasts. Its wingspan may be seven feet across! At dawn, 8 to 20 individuals can sometimes be found soaring over a hilltop where they float on thermal drafts. In spite of its size, this bird can be very acrobatic; watch one pursuing a gull or tern in an attempt to force the other bird to drop a fish it has just captured. Frigatebirds also fish by flying low over the water and scooping up fish along the surface. If this bird accidentally dives into the sea, however, it may drown. Unlike most birds, particularly other seabirds, the frigatebird lacks the oily substance to waterproof its plumage to keep it dry and afloat. Locally, it is known as “weather bird.”

**Grassquit, Black-faced** — Its name comes from the male's black face and throat; the female is a drab olive-brown color. Its short, conical bill is used to feed on seeds. And its very distinct loud buzzy songs are hard to miss. This plump, little bird can be found almost anywhere on the islands where there are grassy patches for it to find seeds and other edibles. In fact, it also frequents a few outdoor restaurants where it has learned to feed on crumbs in and around the tables. A local name is "Sin Bird."



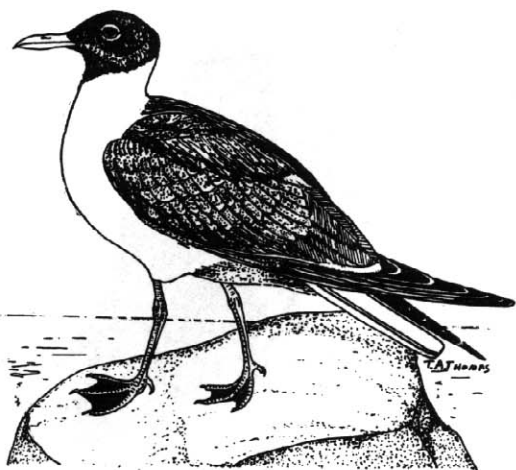
**Grebe, Pied-billed** — You must look carefully for this little waterbird. It often can be seen in the middle of a pond, half submerged with only its pied bill and head out of the water. It has the ability to sink straight down, although it also can dive forward. It feeds on small fish, frogs and insects. Grebes build floating nests among dense shoreline vegetation, so ponds that are kept cleared of edge vegetation will not support this fascinating species.

**Ground-Dove, Common** — This is the tiny little dove so common in more arid habitats. It is tan to light brown in color with reddish wing patches that are evident in flight. It usually is found walking along the roads and trails and around residential areas, but also perches on powerlines, antennae and the like. Its single-note call may be repeated over and over and can become quite monotonous.



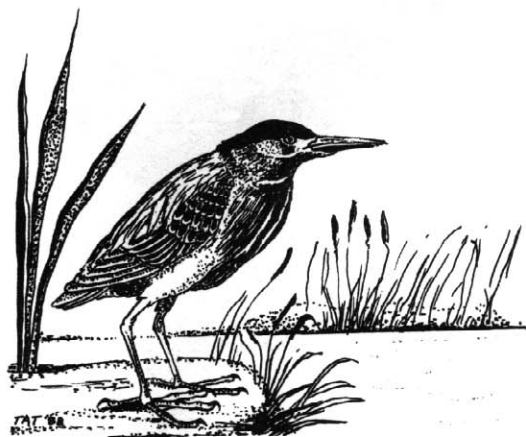
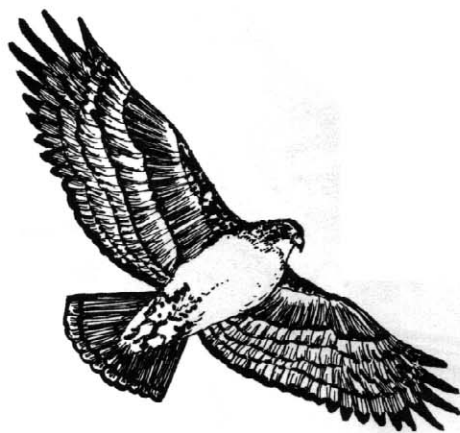
**Guineafowl, Helmeted** — This is the large "guineabird" commonly found in farmyards and adjacent fields. It is easy to recognize by its large size, spotted body, and naked head. Introduced from Africa, it has been used as a good "watchdog" because of its extremely loud cackling calls and aversion to strangers. In some pasture areas of the islands, it may be the dominant animal species.





**Gull, Laughing** — Its name comes from its laugh-like calls, but its all black head in summer is its most obvious marking. This is the common summertime gull in the Virgin Islands where it frequents the harbors and coastlines. It nests only on a few of the small rocky islets near St. Thomas. In winter, the Ring-billed Gull is present in small numbers, and one may also find the Herring Gull or one of the black-backed gulls if watching very carefully.

**Hawk, Red-tailed** — This is the Virgin Islands' only resident broad-winged hawk; it commonly can be seen soaring over the ridges and valleys. That is when its reddish tail and broad wings are most evident. Although it is sometimes called "chicken hawk" by Virgin Islands residents, that is not a fitting name because it rarely preys on chickens. Red-tails more often feed on rats, lizards and large insects. The only other resident hawk is the American Kestrel. All of the other raptors (birds of prey) reported for the islands — Osprey, Northern Harrier, Merlin and Peregrine — are found only during migration or winter.

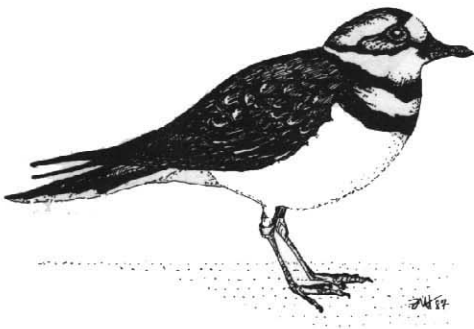


**Heron, Green-backed** — This little heron is easy to identify because of its relatively small size, dark color, and reddish legs. Watch for this heron among the shoreline vegetation at fresh-water ponds and mangrove swamps. When feeding, it will sit very still over the water and wait for a passing fish, frog or other aquatic creature to come close enough to spear with its large, sharp bill. Unlike all the other herons and egrets, this bird is less of a wader, but prefers skulking along the bank or shoreline vegetation.

**Hummingbird, Antillean Crested** — This is the smallest of the two resident Virgin Islands hummingbirds, and the only one with a prominent crest. The larger, non-crested hummer is the Green-throated Carib. Both birds are fairly common nectar-feeders in gardens and at flowering trees and shrubs in all the islands' plant habitats. They are important pollinators of the flowering plants that they visit.



**Kestrel, American** — This little falcon (previously known as Sparrow Hawk) is a fairly common resident throughout the islands. It is best known locally as “killy-killy.” The American Kestrel is one of three falcons that are found here. The other two — Merlin and Peregrine — occur only in winter or as a migrant. All three have dark caps, pointed wings, and long tails. Kestrels have a reddish tail and back; the Merlin has a streaked breast and barred tail; the Peregrine is much larger and shows black sidebars on the head. Kestrels feeds on insects, small lizards and frogs, and occasionally small birds.



**Killdeer** — This is a brown and white plover with two black chest-bands . It may be quite common at some times of the year and completely absent at other times. It prefers freshwater wetlands or grasslands rather than seashores. Its “kill-dee” call, that is heard whenever it is disturbed, is what has given it its name.

**Kingbird, Gray** — This the most common bird of the Virgin Islands. This gray, white and black flycatcher can be found almost anywhere and perches on treetops, shrubs, fenceposts, buildings and powerlines. It is locally called “chi-chery” after its persistent and loud call. Do not confuse this bird with the longer-tailed Mockingbird. Another flycatcher, the Puerto Rican Flycatcher, is a rare resident on St. John.



**Kingfisher, Belted** — Watch for this fairly large, gray to green-backed bird with a white collar, a crest and striped breast at anytime but mid-summer. It prefers quiet bays or ponds where it feeds on small fish and other aquatic fauna. If you watch carefully you may see it dive into the water and come up with a fish or frog neatly speared by its large, sharp bill.



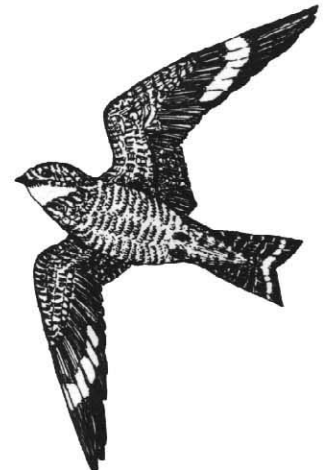
**Martin, Caribbean** — Its white breast and belly help to separate it from the all-dark Purple Martin that also occurs here. Martins are efficient insect-eaters and often spend hours flycatching overhead. Their aerial maneuvering is a joy to behold. Although the Caribbean Martin can be found anytime of the year, it is most numerous in spring and summer when it nests.

**Mockingbird, Northern** — Mockers look at first somewhat like Gray Kingbirds, but have longer tails and do not perch so upright. Both species live on the edges of fields and urban environments. During their spring breeding season, they sing a huge variety of songs and oftentimes long into the night. At these times, the Mocker is likely to repeat phrases whistled to it.

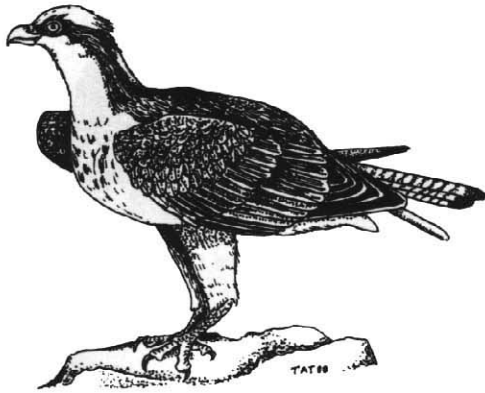


**Moorhen, Common** — This bird closely resembles the coots, but adult moorhens possess bright red bills and shields, while coots have white bills. Almost every fresh and salt water pond in the Virgin Islands has one or a few of these birds. It can usually be found skulking along the weedy shoreline vegetation, but may be seen swimming across open water as well.

**Nighthawk, Antillean** — This is one of the few Virgin Islands birds that is resident only during the summer months; it winters in South America. However, during spring and fall, this species and the related Common Nighthawk move through the area as migrants. Nighthawks are most active at dusk and dawn and on cloudy days. They feed on insects which they capture in flight over fields and wetlands. They are ground-nesters that apparently have discovered suitable nesting sites that are not used by the abundant and predatory mongoose.

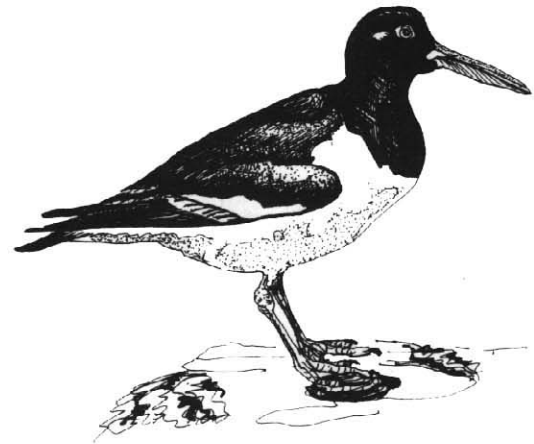


**Night-Herons** — Both the **Black-crowned** and **Yellow-crowned** Night-Herons reside in the islands. Although juvenile birds are difficult to separate, adults are fairly easily identified by either their black-cap, in the case of the **Black-crowned** species, or white and black cap of the **Yellow-crowned** bird. Both are nocturnal in their habits and so are not often seen during the daylight hours. During the daytime, they can be found among the heavy vegetation along the edges of ponds or swamps where they quietly perch.



**Osprey** — This large black and white hawk is also known as “Fish Hawk” because of its habit of catching fish. It actually dives into the water after its catch, and then flies off with its prey grasped tightly in a claw. It occurs in the Virgin Islands from early September through March, and nests from Florida to Canada. It is most often seen over harbors and wetlands, but may occasionally be found soaring over the upland forests.

**Oystercatcher, American** — This is one of the largest of the shorebirds, and is easy to identify because of its black hood and prominent orange-red bill. It is a resident bird that prefers the rocky shorelines over the sandy beaches. Its name is derived from its habit of catching and eating oysters and whelks. It is locally called “Whelkcracker.”



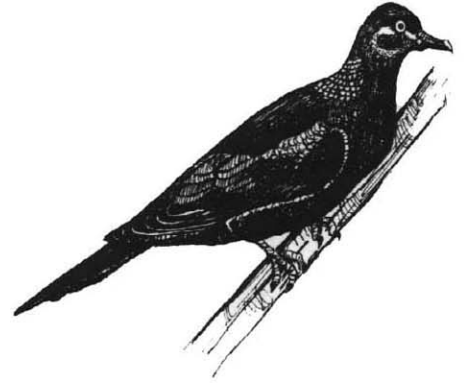
**Parakeet, Brown-throated** — This bird is included only because it can be found consistently in the Red Hook area on St. Thomas. It prefers the mangrove vegetation along the bay across from the ferry boat landing. All of the native parrots were long ago eliminated from the Virgin Islands. The **Brown-throated** Parakeet was introduced to St. Thomas from Central America many years ago, and has adjusted to this new environment.





**Pelican, Brown** — This is one of the most easily identified birds in the Caribbean. Its huge pouched bill, designed to catch and hold fish, and its long, broad wings are good characteristics. It is common in the harbors and along the shorelines. Nesting birds like the more isolated islands, such as Buck Island, St. Croix, where they construct stick nests on the trees and stronger shrubs.

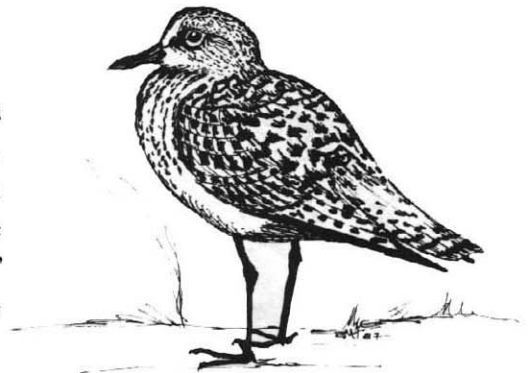
**Pigeon, Scaly-naped** — This is the largest of the Caribbean pigeons and doves, and can be fairly common, especially during the nesting season and afterwards when young birds are flying with adults. This bird is commonly known as “Red-necked Pigeon” because in the right light the neck appears very reddish in color. In general, the Scaly-naped Pigeon is a bird of the upland forests and wooded residential areas; the similar White-crowned Pigeon prefers the mangroves and other wetland habitats.



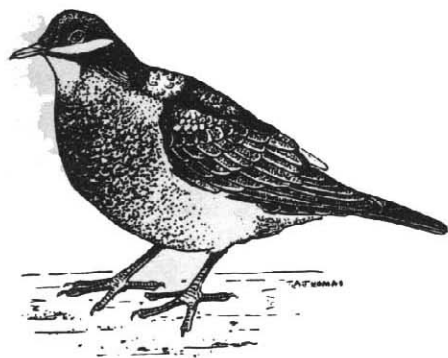
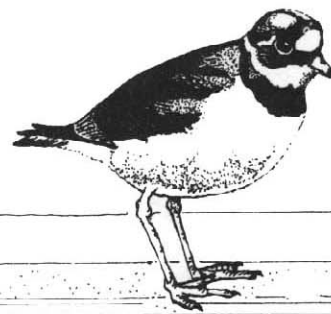
**Pigeon, White-crowned** — Its white crown, sometimes pearly white in the right light, and slate-gray body give this beautiful bird a most distinctive appearance. It is sometimes called “Blue Pigeon.” Although White-crown populations are still high in a few more isolated areas, development in and around our wetlands has caused serious population declines in general. The species is now listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as “endangered.”



**Plover, Black-bellied** — This is a fairly large shorebird that can be quite numerous during migration. It prefers wetlands, although occasionally it is found in open fields and pastures, an area much preferred by the similar Lesser Golden Plover. The latter bird is a fall migrant only. Watch for the black “wing-pit” of the Black-bellied Plover, a marking that is not present on the Golden Plover.

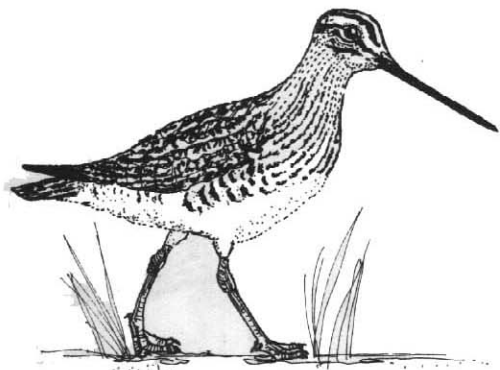
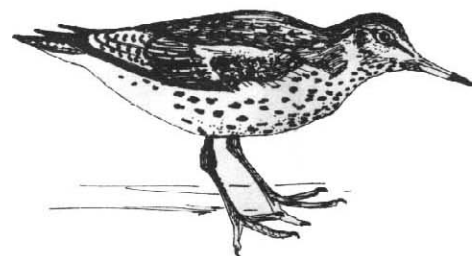


**Plover, Semipalmated** — This bird is much smaller than the Black-bellied Plover, and can be quite common on the sandy beaches and less so around saltponds. It is easy to identify by its bright yellow-orange legs and base of its small bill, black breast band, and white forehead. The Wilson's Plover is similar in size but lacks the yellow legs and has a much heavier, dark bill.

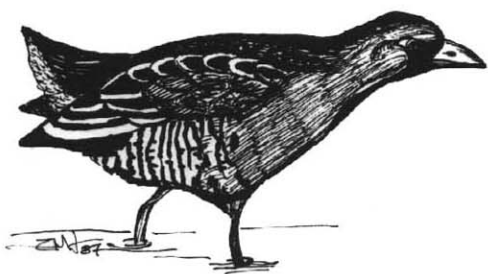


**Quail-Dove, Bridled** — The distinct broad white line below each eye and rusty breast are its best field marks. It is found only in the moist forest community on St. John and St. Croix, where it spends most of its time feeding on the ground. It is fairly common but quite secretive; its very low-pitched and mournful one-note call is easy to miss. This bird cannot withstand too much habitat change, and, therefore, is an excellent indicator of the condition of the forest.

**Sandpiper, Spotted** — Most "Spottys" seen in the Virgin Islands lack the spotted breasts that are present during the nesting season. Although it may at first look like other shorebirds, its habit of verticle tipping as it walks, and flying with short rapid wingbeats, are good characteristics to help identify this bird. Virgin Islands birds only winter here or are migrants that may occur as early as mid-August to as late as May.



**Snipe, Common** — The snipe commonly rests and feeds in wet grassy places in fields and along the edge of ponds. Its blackish-brown plumage and striped back provide excellent camouflage and it is often difficult to see; it may not fly until practically stepped on. Then it rapidly flies off with quick wingbeats and guttural squawks. A careful search in wet areas during the winter months can usually uncover one of these plump, long-billed birds. It uses its long bill to probe in mud for worms and insects. Its long toes allow it to walk across soft muddy areas without sinking in.



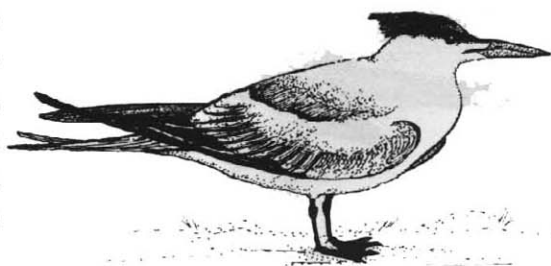
**Sora** — This is a little plump rail with a yellow bill and legs, that can be quite common during migration and winter. It prefers wetland edges and, unlike most rails, can be fairly easy to find. It is hard to believe that the Sora, a bird without a streamlined body and with such small wings, could annually migrate across the open ocean between the Virgin Islands and North America. It is closely related to the resident coots and moorhens.

**Stilt, Black-necked** — This is the large, black and white shore-bird with long pink legs, usually standing upright in the center of a pond. They are not difficult to find because they constantly call to one another, especially when they are disturbed. They serve as good “watchdogs” for the other pond residents. Unlike most Virgin Islands’ waterbirds, this species is resident all year long.

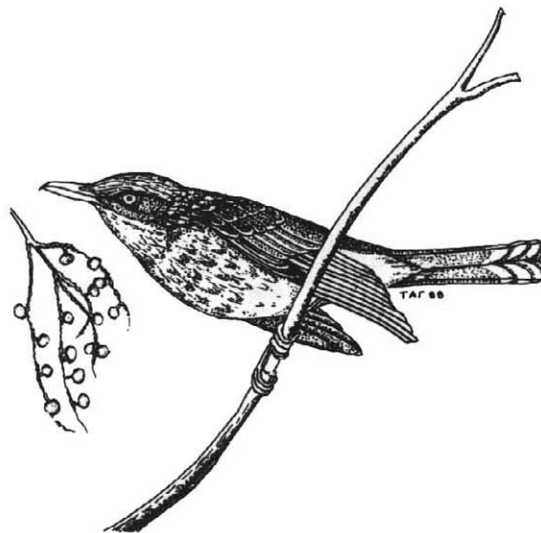


**Swallow, Barn** — This is the most common of the several species of swallows that pass over the islands as migrants or overwinter there. Barn Swallows possess dark backs and forked tails. They feed on-the-wing on insects over grassy fields and ponds. Flocks of a few to several dozen swallows are not uncommon from late August through mid-April. Watch also for the less common Tree, Northern Rough-winged, Bank and Cliff Swallows.

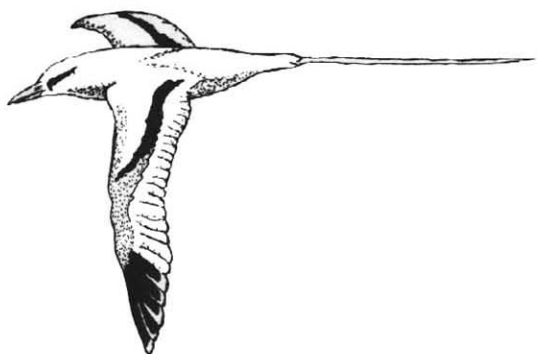
**Tern, Royal** — This is the reasonably large gull-like bird of the harbors and coastlines that has a large yellow bill and black top-notch. At times it can be quite numerous, but usually it occurs in small numbers. Watch it dive into the water for fish, which it stabs with its sharp bill. Even in flight, it can maneuver its catch around to swallow headfirst. During the summer months, the smaller Least Tern is also common around the islands.



**Thrasher, Pearly-eyed** — This bird competes with the Gray Kingbird as the most numerous bird in all the Virgin Islands, although it is not as visible as the kingbird. It is a robin-sized bird with a streaked breast, light bill and eye, and tail with white markings. It is locally called “Thrushee,” and although it is a skulker that frequents the deep forest, it can be expected anywhere there is even the minimal amount of vegetation. It is often abundant in towns and around residences. The Thrushee is a very gregarious species that dominates the moist forest community where its loud constant calls and songs can be heard throughout the day and night.



**Tropicbirds** — Both the White-tailed and Red-billed Tropicbirds are snowy white in color, have long streaming tails, and yellow to orange bills which make these seabirds the most spectacular birds of the Caribbean. The White-tailed Tropicbird has black markings on the mantle, while the Red-billed bird has an all white mantle. They frequent rock islets near St. Thomas during the nesting season, and are rarely seen elsewhere, although white-tailed birds are occasionally recorded off-shore the larger islands.



**Turnstone, Ruddy** — This is one of the Virgin Islands' larger shorebirds. It has a ruddy-colored back, black breast, and a short upturned bill which makes it easy to identify. Its name comes from its habit of turning over rocks and debris in search of food. This is another of the winter-only birds and one that usually can be found on the beaches and rocky shorelines.



**Vireo, Black-Whiskered** — Look for the black lines (whiskers) below the eyes and the white lines above the eyes, which are markings that separate this bird from the rarely seen Red-eyed Vireo. Starting each year in February and lasting until mid-July, the two-note whistles (“John Chewit” or “John Phillip,” from whence it gets its local name) can be heard throughout the daylight hours. After mid-summer it is less obvious, but a few individuals can be found all year around. The majority of birds go to South America for the winter.





**Warbler, Yellow** — This little yellow “canary” is a year-long resident of the islands. The chestnut-colored streaks on the yellow breast of the male are its best field markings. Some birds have chestnut caps. Yellow Warblers use a wide range of habitats and can be expected anywhere in the islands. All the other Virgin Islands warblers are only migrants and/or winter residents.

Look over the checklist of birds (see Appendix II) to see how many warblers frequent the Virgin Islands during migration and/or wintertime. Some of the more common winter resident warblers include the Prairie, Cape May, Black-and-white, Hooded, Worm-eating, Northern Waterthrush, and American Redstart. These are lively and colorful species.

**Yellowlegs, Greater** — This is the rather large shorebird with long, bright yellow legs and a slightly upturned bill. It prefers shallow fresh and saltwater ponds throughout the islands, and although a migrant, is sometimes present all year long. It is most common in winter. The smaller version of this bird with the straight finer bill is the Lesser Yellowlegs.



NAME THAT BIRD



BIRD'S NAME	WHAT ARE ITS COLORS AND FIELD MARKS?	HOW BIG IS IT?	WHERE DOES IT LIVE?	OTHER THINGS TO NOTICE (flight pattern, wing shape, call, special behaviors):

## Enjoying and Identifying Our Wild Birds

**The Enjoyment Of Birds** — No other group of wild animals gives so much pleasure to so many people. Our feathered friends can be enjoyed any time and place. No other animal is so representative of wild nature, probably because of birds' ability to fly freely from place to place. Yet birds can easily be attracted to feeding stations and to trees and shrubs that we can plant around our homes. In fact, birds often can be attracted so close that they can be studied with the naked eye.

However, to appreciate birds most fully, binoculars and a field guide are essential. Binoculars can enlarge a bird's apparent size by as many as 7 to 10 times or more. The use of binoculars to identify birds at a distance is easy to learn. First look directly at the subject and then, still watching the bird, simply bring the binoculars up into position without changing your position or looking elsewhere. A few tries should produce immediate success.

Birding in the Virgin Islands can be greatly enhanced with an easy-to-use field guide. Two very fine field guides are available on the Virgin Islands birdlife: James Bond's *Birds of the West Indies*, and Herbert Raffaele's *A Guide to the Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands* are both helpful. Both field guides are available in most bookstores. These books include the majority of the approximately 300 Caribbean birds, and most of these species are illustrated in color or black and white. The few birds that are not illustrated are those accidental species reported only once or a very few times. In addition, because many of the birds found in the Virgin Islands are common North American species, it is always useful to have one of the many North American bird field guides available as well.

You will soon discover that finding and identifying birds can be a most enjoyable hobby. And it is a hobby that costs very little and can be done with little or no special training. It can be done alone or in a group, and at any time of the day or night.

At the start, you probably will be surprised at how many birds you already know. However, you may discover that you know many of the birds by local names rather than those used in the field guides. Birds, like plants, have local names that may vary greatly from island to island. You should become familiar with the standardized common names, used consistently in the field guides. You will then be better able to use the field guides and communicate more easily with other people interested in birds.

**How To Identify Birds** — It is a true joy to discover that the birds seen in books are in fact real creatures that live around you. Often, the bright colors of birds are much more spectacular in real life than in the books. As a starter in bird identification, a few clues will help you identify birds more readily. Remember that all birds vary in size, shape, markings, voice, and behavior. Placing these characteristics into perspective is a good first step in bird identification.

**Sizes** of the Virgin Islands birds may vary from the tiny Antillean Crested Hummingbird (only a couple inches tall) to the Magnificent Frigatebird or Brown Pelican; the latter two birds have a wing-span of over six feet. Make size comparisons when trying to identify birds: is it Bananaquit-size? Thrasher-size? or larger?

**Shapes** of birds' bodies, wings and bills vary a great deal, as well. Long-legged birds, such as herons and egrets, usually are waders and occur in wetlands. The Red-tailed Hawk is a large, broad-winged bird that most often is found soaring over ridges and pastures. Bananaquits are small and quick, and possess a relatively long bill which they use to probe for nectar and insects in flowers. The tiny but chunky Black-faced Grassquit has a small conical-shaped bill which it uses to eat seeds.

**Bird field markings** (patterns or plumage characteristics) usually contain bright colors or sharp contrasts and so are one of the best clues in bird identification. Consider the vast array of markings on warblers. They may vary from almost totally one color, such as the yellow of the Yellow Warbler, to the yellow, black, reddish and white pattern of the wintering Cape May Warbler. The black and white of the Black-necked Stilt and the all black of the Smooth-billed Ani are additional examples.

The **voices** of many bird species are often their most obvious and distinct characteristic, especially during their nesting season, when they are most vocal. Singing in birds is closely related to territorial defense. Every species possesses a very distinct song or series of songs, such as the Mockingbird and Thrasher. Every species also possesses very distinct calls or chirps. Bird recordings are available to help identify or to learn the abundant bird voices.

**Bird behavior** varies with the different families and species. The behavior of raptors differs from that of waders and divers. Seedeaters behave considerably different than the flycatchers and gleaners. And there are less dramatic behavioral differences within each family group.

Much of the knowledge necessary to make quick bird identification must come from field experience, and spending time with an experienced birder can help a great deal. That person can pass on many tidbits of information that otherwise might take years to acquire.

### FILL THE BILL

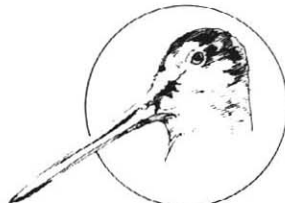
(answers on page 24)

RANGER RICK'S NATRISCOPE BIRDS BIRD-BIRDS

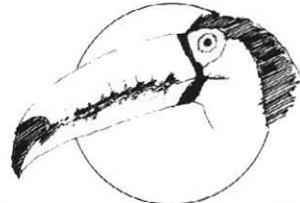
1  NECTAR	2  WORMS IN THE MUD	3  SEEDS	4  FISH AND OTHER WATER ANIMALS
5  TINY WATER PLANTS AND WATER ANIMALS	6  FLYING INSECTS	7  CATERPILLARS AND OTHER INSECTS	8  FRUIT



WHIP-POOR-WILL \_\_\_\_\_



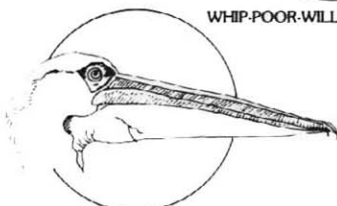
SNIFE \_\_\_\_\_



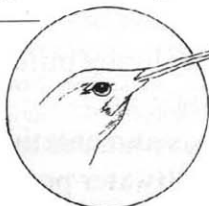
TOUCAN \_\_\_\_\_



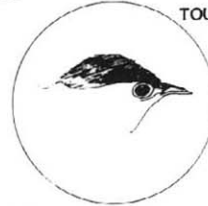
GROSBEAK \_\_\_\_\_



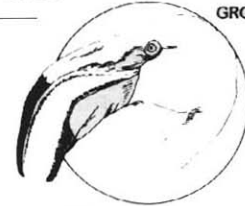
PELICAN \_\_\_\_\_



HUMMINGBIRD \_\_\_\_\_



WARBLER \_\_\_\_\_



FLAMINGO \_\_\_\_\_

## Protecting Our Wild Birds

**Bird Conservation** — Bird populations can change or disappear due to a variety of natural or human-caused occurrences. Natural causes are usually linked to events that may be either very fast in nature, such as volcanic eruptions or tidal waves, or very slow in nature, such as an evolutionary process. There is not very much one can do to change or greatly influence the natural processes. However, changes in bird populations due to human influences can be controlled. All living things are connected, and the loss of one population can have serious affects on others.

At least seven bird species are known to have totally disappeared from the Virgin Islands in recent years. These birds include the West Indian Whistling-Duck, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Masked Duck, Snowy Plover, Puerto Rican Screech-Owl, White-necked Crow, and Lesser Puerto Rican Crow. Several other species, such as the Least Grebe, American and Least Bitterns, Ruddy Duck, and Clapper Rail are just barely hanging on somewhere in the region. Although they still occasionally are recorded, they no longer are considered a member of the Virgin Islands breeding fauna. In other words, they probably are on their way out.

In most instances, the changes in bird populations result from habitat changes caused by human developments of one kind or another. The filling in and development of a major wetland is the most serious of these. But even small incremental changes to an area can create serious impacts, many of which are hardly noticeable at first. Then suddenly a bird population disappears as a result of a seemingly minor change that could only have made a difference if it had been part of a series of changes. It is like the proverbial straw that finally breaks the camel's back.

**Habitat Protection Amid Change** — The Virgin Islands' Ocean/Bay Community, often the subject of postcards and TV commercials, is reasonably stable, although it is subject to siltation, abuse and overuse by land developers, fishermen, and careless boaters. Some of the Caribbean's marine habitats, particularly the coral reefs and seagrass beds, have been degraded in recent years. And the increasing number of proposed developments to be located on the major beaches and adjacent hillsides suggest continuing degradation of these significant areas.

Freshwater habitats are extremely important as a water source for all land creatures, including people who also use the freshwater for irrigation and other purposes. The use of these waters often results in direct conflicts between people and wildlife. Unless certain freshwater ponds are given special protection they often are filled in or drained and used for other purposes.

Saltwater pond habitats are less fragile because they usually are influenced by sea tides and surges and do not provide water for drinking and irrigation as do the freshwater ponds. But they do become nearly as stressed due to pollution, sedimentation, and other physical impacts. Many of the Virgin Islands most productive saltwater ponds have been seriously damaged by adjacent developments and inadequate protection of the watersheds.



Virgin Islands wetland communities are often filled in or drained, cut off from the natural drainage, and used for other purposes. They also may be sprayed with pesticides to control potential pests that provide the essential foodbase for many native birds. These losses usually affect both humans and wildlife.

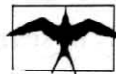
The Dry Forest Community provides some of the best sites for peoples' homes and other developments by virtue of the extent of the community and the open character of the surrounding topography. On our steep slopes, inadequate care of the soils during and after construction can cause serious erosion that can become a serious problem in the entire watershed and severely damage the valuable marine habitats.

The Moist Forest Community is most appealing to visitors and other people who seek tropical tranquility; it is the closest thing to a "jungle" experience in the Virgin Islands. The protection of the moist forest habitat should therefore be of major importance to the Virgin Islands Government and the tourist industry.

**Mongoose** — Several of the Virgin Islands bird populations have declined due to the influence of the introduced mongoose. These daytime predators were brought to the islands to help rid the fields of rats, which are introduced, not native. Mongooses found many of the ground-nesting birds easier prey than the rats which were either tree nesters or adapted to a nighttime schedule. This is a classic case where a well-meant introduction of an exotic species had unexpected disastrous impacts.

**Monitoring** — Monitoring of the various Virgin Islands communities is absolutely essential to detect many of the more subtle changes, and to understand the meaning of those changes. Monitoring projects can and should be undertaken within all the Virgin Islands communities. Although the most useful monitoring should be scientifically designed, the weekly, monthly or annual field monitoring can be undertaken by any person who can correctly identify the birds. It is indeed ironic that many of the new facilities being planned to accommodate visitors, who come to the islands to enjoy the unique resources, may in the process of development, upset the very resources which attract our visitors here in the first place.

## FILL THE BILL



*(answers for page 22)*

- **Hummingbirds** have long hollow beaks that they use to probe flowers for nectar. The beak protects the tongue which slurps up the nectar.
- **Curlews, godwits, kiwis, and snipes** have very long beaks that they use to probe for worms, crustaceans, and other small creatures in mud and water.
- **Cardinals, sparrows, grosbeaks, and other finchlike birds** have very short, conical beaks. These beaks are very strong and can break open tough seeds.
- **Spoonbills and pelicans** have long, flattened or pouchlike beaks that they use to scoop up fish and other aquatic creatures.
- **Flamingos and some ducks** have bills that act like strainers to filter tiny plants and animals from the water. (Only certain kinds of ducks are filter feeders.)
- **Nighthawks, whip-poor-wills, swifts, and swallows** have large, gaping mouths that act like nets to trap insects. These birds catch insects on the wing.
- **Warblers** have small, sharp, pointed beaks for picking insects from leaves, logs, and twigs.
- **Toucans** have very long, thick beaks for reaching out and plucking fruit from trees.

## The Virgin Islands Connection

More than one-half of all birds that spend their summers in the northern latitudes fly south for the winter months. The largest group of these are the warblers, of which more than two dozen species use the Caribbean islands. The survival of these and many other bird groups are dependent upon how well we maintain the natural conditions of the mangroves and other forest habitats.

Biologists have only recently begun to understand that most birds are more dependent upon their wintering grounds — where they spend as much as six to seven months each year — than they are on their breeding grounds, where they may only spend three or four months annually. The destruction of birds' wintering habitats often has more impact on a population than does the destruction of one segment of the nesting habitat. This places considerable importance on those very special tropical habitats where many North American birds spend their winters. The mangrove and upland forests of the Virgin Islands and other Caribbean islands serve a much more important function in the survival of many bird species than was ever before realized. Our Caribbean habitats are essential in the life cycle of a large number of waterbirds, shorebirds and perching birds. The Virgin Islands connection to the continued existence of millions of North American birds must not be ignored.

### Some Useful Definitions

**Community** - A group of animals and plants that live together and interact with one another, forming a distinct living system with its own composition, structure and function.

**Ecosystem** - Any area that is composed of living and non-living materials, combined together to form a specific environment.

**Glean** - A method a bird uses in searching foliage for food, usually relating to small birds that "glean" the vegetation for insects.

**Habitat** - Place where certain animals and plants live within a community, often characterized by dominant plants or physical characteristics; e.g., mangroves, freshwater pond, etc.

**Invertebrate** - An animal without a backbone, such as insects, spiders, crabs and snails.

**Migrant** - *An animal that annually moves from one area to another and then back again as part of its normal life cycle. Many bird migrants nest in North America and migrate south into the Caribbean to spend their winters.*

**Nutrients** - Material required by any animal or plant for normal growth and maintenance. Much of the debris that flows through the mangroves is broken down into energy-rich nutrients that in turn provide a rich food base for a wide variety of associated animals and plants.

**Predator** - An animal that captures and feeds upon another animal as part of its natural life history.

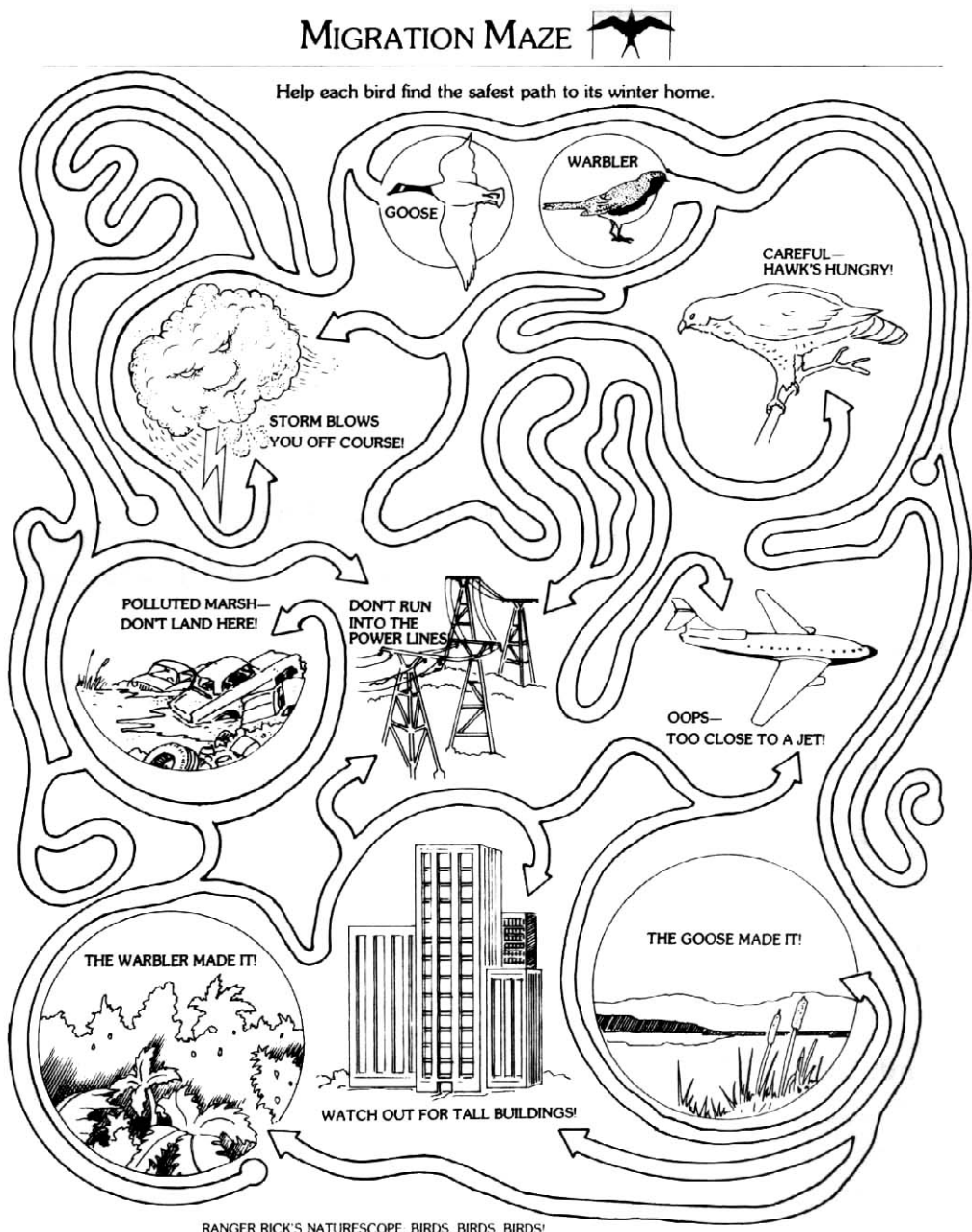
**Pollution** - Harmful substances deposited in the air, water or land, leading to a state of dirtiness, impurity or unhealthiness. Pollution affects the native flora and fauna as well as people.

**Raptor** - A bird of prey, such as hawks and owls.

**Shorebird** - A bird that feeds in very shallow water, usually by wading in standing water or along the shoreline.

**Terrestrial** - Land as opposed to water; a terrestrial species is one that lives on the island.

**Watershed** - An entire drainage area of a particular topographic feature, including slope, gut, and floodplain.



## APPENDIX I

# Glossary of Virgin Islands Bird Names

compiled by  
Walter I. Knausenberger

This list combines several sources, oral and published. Many local native speakers have contributed to this list. Virgin Islands common names, as those of any geographic and ethnic area, result from a mixture of influences, and may be inconsistent. This is why you will often find several names in the standardized list, at the right, apply to a single local common name, and vice versa. Also, the usage tends to differ between St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix. Not all the Virgin Islands names listed will be found in this book, but all the birds in the "standardized list" are discussed. Some local names apply to a group of birds, not a specific one. For example, "gaulin" applies to perhaps a half-dozen herons and egrets at one time or another. There are asterisks (\*) by these birds.

The well-known variability of common names is exactly the reason why the American Ornithological Union (A.O.U.) has promoted the use of "standardized names". This allows people of different origins to communicate more effectively with each other about birds. World-wide, of course, the only and universal standard is the scientific "binomial" name.

<b>Virgin Islands Common Name</b>	<b>Standardized Common Name</b>
Bahama Duck	White-cheeked Pintail
Barbee Dove, Barmee Dove	Bridled Quail Dove
Black Witch	Smooth-billed Ani
Blue Gaulin	Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron
Blue Pigeon	Scaly-naped Pigeon, White-crowned Pigeon
Brass Wing, Brass Wing Duck	White-cheeked Pintail
Cattle Bird, Cow Bird	*Egret
Colibri	*Hummingbird
Chi-Cheree, Chicherri, Chinchery	Gray Kingbird
Chicken Hawk	Red-tailed Hawk
David	Laughing Gull
Doctor Bird, Dacta Bird	*Hummingbird
Fish Hawk	Osprey
Gaby	Royal Tern
Gaulin	*Herons, Egrets



Grass Sparrow	Black-faced Grassquit
Granny, Groung Dove	Ground Dove
Gray Gaulin	Great Blue Heron
Half Bird	Laughing Gull
John Chewit	Black-whiskered Vireo
John Phillip	Caribbean Elaenia, Black-whiskered Vireo
Kiddy-Kiddy, Killy-Killy	American Kestrel
Little Doctor Bird, Lil' Dacta Bird	Antillean Crested Hummingbird
Man-O-War Bird	Magnificent Frigatebird
Marmee Dove	Bridled Quail Dove
Mountain Dove	Zenaida Dove
Pee-Whistler	Caribbean Elaenia
Quail Dove	Bridled Quail Dove
Pilikin Bird, Pilinki Bird	Brown Pelican
Red-necked Pigeon	Scaly-naped Pigeon
Sin Bird, Sin-Sin	Black-faced Grassquit
Sing-Sing	Bananaquit
Snipe	*Generalized name for all Shorebirds
Sugar Bird	Bananaquit
Thrushee, Thrush, Trush, Trushee	Pearly-eyed Thrasher
Tick Bird	Cattle Egret, Smooth-billed Ani
Weather Bird	Magnificent Frigatebird
Whelkcracker	American Oystercatcher
White-headed Pigeon	White-crowned Pigeon
Yellow Belly, Yellowbreast, Yellow Canary	Bananaquit

## APPENDIX II

# Checklist of the Birds of the Virgin Islands

by

Roland H. Wauer, Fred W. Sladen, and Robert L. Norton

Common and Scientific Family Names	Status *
<b>GREBES - <i>Podicipedidae</i></b>	
— Least Grebe	acc.
— Pied-billed Grebe	Unc.1
<b>SHEARWATERS &amp; PETRELS - <i>Procellariidae</i></b>	
— Greater Shearwater	acc.3
— Audubon's Shearwater	Unc.4
<b>STORM-PETRELS - <i>Hydrobatidae</i></b>	
— Wilson's Storm-Petrel	VRare.3
— Leach's Storm-Petrel	Rare.3
<b>TROPICBIRDS - <i>Phaethontidae</i></b>	
— White-tailed Tropicbird	Unc.5
— Red-billed Tropicbird	Com.4 (T)
<b>BOOBIES - <i>Sulidae</i></b>	
— Masked Booby	Rare.4 (T)
— Brown Booby	FCom.1
— Red-footed Booby	Rare.4 (T)
<b>PELICANS - <i>Pelecanidae</i></b>	
— Brown Pelican	Com.1
<b>CORMORANTS - <i>Phalacrocoracidae</i></b>	
— Double-crested Cormorant	acc.3
<b>FRIGATEBIRDS - <i>Fregatidae</i></b>	
— Magnificent Frigatebird	Com.1
<b>BITTERNS, HERONS &amp; EGRETS - <i>Ardeidae</i></b>	
— American Bittern	acc.3
— Least Bittern	acc.3
— Great Blue Heron	UCom.2
— Great Egret	FCom.1
— Snowy Egret	UCom.1
— Little Blue Heron	Com.1
— Tricolored Heron	UCom.1
— Reddish Egret	acc.3

— Cattle Egret	Abun.1
— Green-backed Heron	FCom.1
— Black-crowned Night-Heron	UCom.1
— Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	FCom.1
<b>IBISES - <i>Threskiornithidae</i></b>	
— Glossy Ibis	acc.3
<b>FLAMINGOS - <i>Phoenicopteridae</i></b>	
— Greater Flamingo	acc.
<b>DUCKS - <i>Anatidae</i></b>	
— Fulvous Whistling-Duck	acc.3
— West Indian Whistling-Duck	acc.
— Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	acc.
— Green-winged Teal	Rare2
— Mallard	int.
— White-cheeked Pintail	UCom.1
— Northern Pintail	Rare2
— Blue-winged Teal	FCom.3
— Cinnamon Teal	acc.3
— Northern Shoveler	Rare2
— Northern Wigeon	Rare2
— Ring-necked Duck	Rare2
— Greater Scaup	acc.2
— Lesser Scaup	Rare2
— Hooded Merganser	acc.2
— Ruddy Duck	Rare2
<b>OSPREY - <i>Pandionidae</i></b>	
— Osprey	FCom.2
<b>HARRIERS &amp; HAWKS - <i>Accipitridae</i></b>	
— Northern Harrier	Rare3
— Red-tailed Hawk	Com.1
<b>FALCONS - <i>Falconidae</i></b>	
— American Kestrel	Com.1
— Merlin	UCom.2
— Peregrine Falcon	UCom.2
<b>QUAILS - <i>Phasianidae</i></b>	
— Helmeted Guineafowl	int.
<b>RAILS, GALLINULES &amp; COOTS - <i>Rallidae</i></b>	
— Clapper Rail	Rare
— Sora	UCom.2
— Purple Gallinule	acc.2
— Common Moorhen	Com.1
— American Coot	UCom.2
— Caribbean Coot	Rare2
<b>PLOVERS - <i>Charadriidae</i></b>	
— Black-bellied Plover	FCom.2
— Lesser Golden Plover	Rare3
— Wilson's Plover	UCom.1

— Semipalmated Plover	UCom.2
— Piping Plover	acc.3
— Killdeer	FCom.1
<b>OYSTERCATCHERS - <i>Haematopodidae</i></b>	
— American Oystercatcher	UCom.1
<b>STILTS &amp; AVOCETS - <i>Recurvirostridae</i></b>	
— Black-necked Stilt	Com.1
— American Avocet	acc.2
<b>SANDPIPERS, TURNSTONES &amp; SNIPES - <i>Scolopacidae</i></b>	
— Greater Yellowlegs	FCom.2
— Lesser Yellowlegs	Com.2
— Solitary Sandpiper	UCom.1
— Willet	UCom.2
— Spotted Sandpiper	Com.2
— Upland Sandpiper	acc.3
— Whimbrel	Rare2
— Long-billed Curlew	acc.3
— Hudsonian Godwit	acc.3
— Marbled Godwit	acc.3
— Bar-tailed Godwit	acc.3
— Ruddy Turnstone	FCom.2
— Red Knot	Rare3
— Sanderling	UCom.3
— Semipalmated Sandpiper	Com.2
— Western Sandpiper	FCom.2
— Least Sandpiper	Com.2
— White-rumped Sandpiper	Rare2
— Baird's Sandpiper	acc.3
— Pectoral Sandpiper	FCom.2
— Dunlin	acc.3
— Stilt Sandpiper	UCom.2
— Buff-breasted Sandpiper	acc.3
— Ruff	acc.3
— Short-billed Dowitcher	FCom.2
— Long-billed Dowitcher	acc.3
— Common Snipe	UCom.2
<b>PHALAROPES - <i>Phalaropodidae</i></b>	
— Wilson's Phalarope	Rare3
<b>JAEGERS - <i>Stercorariidae</i></b>	
— Pomarine Jaeger	Rare3
<b>GULLS &amp; TERNS - <i>Laridae</i></b>	
— Laughing Gull	Com.4
— Common Black-backed Gull	acc.3
— Ring-billed Gull	UCom.2
— Herring Gull	Rare2
— Lesser Black-backed Gull	acc.3
— Gull-billed Tern	UCom.4
— Caspian Tern	acc.3



— Royal Tern	Com.1
— Sandwich Tern	UCom.4
— Roseate Tern	Com.4
— Common Tern	UCom.4
— Arctic Tern	acc.3
— Forster's Tern	acc.3
— Least Tern	FCom.4
— Bridled Tern	UCom.4
— Sooty Tern	Com.4 (T)
— White-winged Tern	acc.3
— Black Tern	Rare3
— Brown Noddy	Com.4 (T)
<b>PIGEONS &amp; DOVES - <i>Columbidae</i></b>	
— Rock Dove	int.
— Scaly-naped Pigeon	Com.1
— White-crowned Pigeon	UCom.1
— Ringed Turtle-Dove	int.
— Spotted Dove	int.
— White-winged Dove	acc.
— Zenaida Dove	Com.1
— Common Ground-Dove	Com.1
— Bridled Quail-Dove	UCom.1
<b>PARROTS - <i>Psittacidae</i></b>	
— Monk Parakeet	int.
— Black-hooded Parakeet	int.
— Brown-throated Parakeet	int.
— Mitred Parakeet	int.
— Canary-winged Parakeet	int.
— Hispaniolan Parrot	int.
— Lilac-crowned Parrot	int.
— Oranged-winged Parrot	int.
<b>CUCKOOS &amp; ANIS - <i>Cuculidae</i></b>	
— Yellow-billed Cuckoo	UCom.3
— Mangrove Cuckoo	FCom.1
— Smooth-billed Ani	Com.1
<b>OWLS - <i>Strigidae</i></b>	
— Puerto Rican Screech-Owl	VRare1
— Short-eared Owl	acc. (T)
<b>NIGHTHAWKS &amp; NIGHTJARS - <i>Carprimulgidae</i></b>	
— Common Nighthawk	UCom.3
— Antillean Nighthawk	UCom.4
— Chuck-will's-widow	UCom.2
<b>SWIFTS - <i>Apodidae</i></b>	
— Black Swift	acc.3
— Chimney Swift	acc.3
— Short-tailed Swift	acc.3

<b>HUMMINGBIRDS - <i>Trochilidae</i></b>	
— Green-throated Carib	Com.1
— Purple-throated Carib	acc.
— Antillean Crested Hummingbird	Com.1
— Antillean Mango	acc.
<b>KINGFISHERS - <i>Alcedinoidae</i></b>	
— Belted Kingfisher	FCom.2
<b>WOODPECKERS - <i>Picidae</i></b>	
— Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Spor.2
<b>FLYCATCHERS - <i>Tyrannidae</i></b>	
— Puerto Rican Flycatcher	Rare1 (J)
— Caribbean Elaenia	FCom.1
— Eastern Wood-Pewee	acc.3
— Gray Kingbird	Abun.1
<b>SWALLOWS - <i>Hirundinidae</i></b>	
— Purple Martin	Rare3
— Caribbean Martin	FCom.4
— Tree Swallow	Rare3
— Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Rare3
— Bank Swallow	UCom.3
— Cliff Swallow	UCom.3
— Cave Swallow	acc.3
— Barn Swallow	Com.2
<b>THRUSHES - <i>Turdidae</i></b>	
— Gray-checked Thrush	acc.3
— Veery	acc.3
<b>MOCKINGBIRDS &amp; THRASHERS - <i>Mimidae</i></b>	
— Northern Mockingbird	FCom.1
— Pearly-eyed Thrasher	Abun.1
<b>STARLINGS - <i>Sturnidae</i></b>	
— European Starling	acc.
<b>VIREOS - <i>Vireonidae</i></b>	
— Yellow-throated Vireo	Rare2
— Red-eyed Vireo	acc.3
— Black-whiskered Vireo	FCom.4; Rare2 (C)
— White-eyed Vireo	acc.2
<b>WARBLERS - <i>Parulidae</i></b>	
— Golden-winged Warbler	acc.2
— Blue-winged Warbler	Rare2
— Northern Parula	Com.2
— Yellow Warbler	Com.1
— Chestnut-sided Warbler	Rare3
— Magnolia Warbler	Rare2
— Cape May Warbler	FCom.2
— Black-throated Blue Warbler	UCom.2
— Yellow-rumped Warbler	UCom.2

— Black-throated Green Warbler	acc.3
— Blackburnian Warbler	acc.3
— Golden-cheeked Warbler	acc.3
— Yellow-throated Warbler	Rare2
— Prairie Warbler	UCom.2
— Palm Warbler	Rare2
— Bay-breasted Warbler	acc.3
— Blackpoll Warbler	FCom.3
— Black-and-white Warbler	Com.2
— American Redstart	Com.2
— Prothonotary Warbler	UCom.2
— Worm-eating Warbler	UCom.2
— Swainson's Warbler	acc.2
— Ovenbird	UCom.2
— Northern Waterthrush	Com.2
— Louisiana Waterthrush	UCom.3
— Kentucky Warbler	Rare3
— Common Yellowthroat	Rare2
— Hooded Warbler	UCom.2
— Canada Warbler	acc.3

#### HONEYCREEPERS - *Coerebidae*

— Bananaquit	Rare3
--------------	-------

#### TANAGERS - *Thraupidae*

— Scarlet Tanager	Abun.1
-------------------	--------

#### FINCHES - *Fringillidae*

— Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Rare3
— Blue Grosbeak	Rare2
— Indigo Bunting	UCom.3 (T)
— Black-faced Grassquit	Com.1
— Lesser Antillean Bullfinch	FCom.1 (J);
— Bobolink	Spor.3
— Nutmeg Mannikin	int. (C)

#### ORIOLES & BLACKBIRDS - *Icteridae*

— Shiny Cowbird	Rare1
— Northern Oriole	Rare3
— Troupial	int. (T)

\* STATUS KEY: Abun. = Abundant; Com. = Common; FCom. = Fairly Common;  
 UCom. = Uncommon; Rare = Rare; VRare = Very Rare;  
 Spor. = Sporadic; acc. = accidental; int. = introduced

1 = Permanent Resident (breeds); 2 = Migrant & Winter Resident;  
 2 = Migrant only (transient); 4 = Summer Resident only

Sites (when exclusive); (C) = St. Croix; (J) = St. John; (T) = St. Thomas

The above checklist is partly derived from two earlier checklists: *Birds of St. John, USVI A National Park Checklist*, by Robert L. Norton, 2nd printing, 1986; and *Checklist of Birds of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands*, by Fred W. Sladen, 1987.

# Useful References

## Books

- Bacon, Peter R. R. 1978. *Flora & Fauna of the Caribbean*. Key Caribbean Publ., Trinidad. Broad introduction to Caribbean environments and the common animals and plants within each.
- Bond, James. 1960. *Birds of the West Indies*. Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston, MA. Good field guide for the entire Caribbean. It includes bird illustrations for all West Indies species.
- Campbell and Lack (Eds.) 1985. *A Dictionary of Birds*. Buteo Books, Vermillion, SD. Provides excellent up-to-date reviews of almost every ornithological subject.
- Cronin, Edward W., Jr. 1986. *Getting Started in Bird Watching*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. Good basic guide for the beginner that offers information on bird identification using easy to grasp principles of habitat, size, behavior, song, etc.
- Hayman, Peter, John Marchant & Tony Prater. 1986. *Shorebirds An Identification Guide*. Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston, MA. Best up-to-date identification guide on shorebirds available; includes all species and covers all plumages.
- Pettingill, Olin Sewall, Jr. 1975. *A Laboratory and Field Manual of Ornithology*. Burgess Publ. Co., Minn., MN. A popular teaching manual for field and laboratory. It deals with all phases of bird biology and ecology.
- Raffaele, Herbert A. 1983. *A Guide to the Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands*. Fondo Educativo Interamericano, San Juan, PR. Most up-to-date field guide to the Virgin Islands available. It includes illustrations of all Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico bird species. It also includes sections on bird decline and biogeography, and conservation in general.
- Robbins, Chandler S., Bertel Brunn, and Herbert S. Zim. *Birds of North America*. 1983. Golden Press/Western Publ. Co., NY. Excellent field guide to all North American species that may occur in the Virgin Islands in migration and in winter. Excellent illustrations.
- Terres, John K. 1980. *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, NY. Complete compendium of information on birds and bird identification.
- Welty, Joel Carl. 1963. *The Life of Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, NY. Most thorough textbook on birds available. Includes all phases of bird biology and ecology.

## Conservation Societies and Magazines

- Audubon*. National Audubon Society, 950 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. Beautiful magazine published six times each year, containing articles on all topics of conservation.
- Birding*. American Birding Association, Sonoita, AZ. Magazine published six times each year and contains articles on bird identification and where to go to find birds.
- National Wildlife & International Wildlife*. National Wildlife Federation, 8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, VA. Two beautiful magazines published every other month, and dedicated to public education about wildlife and habitat protection.
- Ranger Rick's NatureScope: Birds, Birds, Birds!* National Wildlife Federation, 1412 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036-2266. Information on pages 20, 22, 24, and 26 is from this publication.



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Works, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914 (as amended), in cooperation with U.S. Department of Agriculture. The University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action Organization, providing educational services in the fields of agriculture, home economics, rural development, 4-H youth development and related subjects to all persons regardless of color, national origin, or sex. Dr. D.S. Padda, Director