

## **SANDY CAY FIELD TRIPS (January - February 2006)**

Prepared by

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the beginning of 2006, Island Resources Foundation, with local partners and individual support from its associates, undertook three trips to Sandy Cay. These visitations included the following activities: ongoing rat monitoring; trail maintenance; termite control; coconut tree count; bird and visitor counts; and overall review of the island's natural status (flora and fauna).

### **FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE**

Date	Participants	Activity
1/8/06	Clive Petrovic (IRF)	Bird count and general observations
2/19/06	JVD Preservation Society members C. Thomas (Resortscapes) J. P. Bacle (IRF)	Rat monitoring and general observations Trail maintenance Termite control Coconut tree count
2/22/06	JVD Preservation Society members Bill Moody (RFB) J.P. Bacle, C. Petrovic (IRF)	Moody Annual Visit Review of environmental issues Ongoing monitoring activities

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## **POST RAT ERADICATION MONITORING**

Bait stations were examined, and we observed no sign of rat activity. Other indicators related to rodent behavior were absent. As mentioned in our previous report, all bait stations will gradually be replaced by new ones of a different design, which we believe will be more effective in preventing crab access. We are currently building these new stations, and they should be ready for deployment during our next trip.

## **TRAIL CONDITION**

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, Chris Thomas (Resortscapes) undertook termite control along the trail and later during the day focused on trail maintenance with the assistance of J.P. Bacle. Overall, the trail appeared to be in very good condition. The abandoned trail section on the south east is barely visible, and the beach vegetation shows positive signs of re-growth.

During our trail activities, Tessa Callwood and Barbara Pyle (JVD Preservation Society) undertook a coconut tree count that totaled 89 trees (54 on the seaside of the trail and 35 inland of the trail). Noteworthy is that we located one seedling on the north shore. This is the first time that a seedling (self-sown) is documented for the island. It is likely that a few more may exist but have yet to be identified. The growth progress of this seedling will now become part of our ongoing monitoring.

## **BIRD OBSERVATIONS**

Bird counts were made during all visits to the island. As in previous visits to Sandy Cay, bird observations were made along the trail and shoreline (Table 1).

Of special interest was the nesting activity of the Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*) along the northeast section of the rocky cliffs (see photo). This species has been observed nesting a few times in the past. It was last observed on May 31, 2000. The crevasses along this section of the cliff offer an ideal shelter for nesting. Unfortunately, the nesting site is somewhat accessible via the vista swath created by the film crew a few years ago (2003). During our trips to the island we frequently block this access with dead branches, but this doesn't seem to deter visitors from accessing the edge of the cliff for the view. Fencing the access is currently under discussion.

**Table 1. Bird observations at Sandy Cay.**

Species	1/8/06	2/19/06	2/22/06
Red-billed Tropicbird	3*	2*	2*
Magnificent Frigatebird			1
Brown Pelican	1	6	1
Brown Booby	2	2	3
Green Heron			
Ruddy Turnstone			
Laughing Gull			
Royal Tern			
Sandwich Tern			
Wilson's Plover			
Semipalmated Plover		1	1
Sanderling			
White-cheeked Pintail			
Scaly-napped Pigeon		2	
Common Ground Dove		1	
Zenaida Dove		5	
Green-throated Carib		2	1
Gray Kingbird	2		1
Yellow Warbler	6	7	6
Bananaquit	21	11	22
Black-faced Grassquit			
* <i>nesting activity</i>			

**SEA TURTLE ACTIVITY**

So far this year, no sea turtles were sighted on Sandy Cay. However, we did observe a few old pits, probably remnants from a few months back.

**VISITATION**

Activity was quite high during our January-February visits to Sandy Cay (see Table 2). During peak hours on February 19<sup>th</sup>, we observed 19 boats, most of them anchored. On January 8<sup>th</sup>, Clive Petrovic counted at least 40 people utilizing the beach and about 35 walking the trail.

Of continuing concern during peak use is the growing number of boats anchoring near shore. Foxy Callwood (JVD Preservation Society) observed that because of limited anchoring space, more and more vessels are dropping their anchors on adjacent reefs. Unfortunately, at this time, no regulations exist to prevent such activity.

**Table 2. Visitation at Sandy Cay.**

	1/8/06	2/19/06	2/22/06
Anchored Boats	8	19	11
Persons on the beach	40	23	29
Persons on the trail	35	37	8



**Red-billed Tropicbird nesting along the rocky cliff.**



**Fig Tree surrounded by numerous spider lilies.**

