

## SANDY CAY FIELD TRIPS (June 2006)

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### INTRODUCTION

During our June trip to the British Virgin Islands, we met with members of the Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society on June 11<sup>th</sup> and made a field trip to Sandy Cay on June 13<sup>th</sup>. In addition to assessing the island, our primary purpose was to invite the JVDPS to take an active role in the rat eradication phase of our Sandy Cay invasive species program.

During the June JVD meeting and the Sandy Cay field trip, we reviewed other issues related to trail maintenance, visitation and associated recreational activities; we also carried out an overall review of the island's natural status (flora and fauna).

### FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

| Date    | Participants  | Activity   |
|---------|---|--|
| 6/11/06 | JVD Preservation Society members<br>J. P. Bacle , IRF | Meeting in Jost Van Dyke with<br>Preservation Society members<br>RE<br>Rat monitoring, general observations, and<br>trail maintenance issues |
| 6/13/06 | Dave Blyden, JVD Society<br>J.P. Bacle, IRF           | Training on rat monitoring<br>and other monitoring activities<br>Trail maintenance   |

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## **POST RAT ERADICATION MONITORING**

The Foundation's ongoing commitment for Sandy Cay rat monitoring is scheduled to end in October 2007, at the conclusion of the current SANDY CAY III program. As we approach this date, we felt that the time was right to invite a local stakeholder (JVDPS) to gradually take over this activity since we anticipate that the monitoring will continue beyond the currently funded program.

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, Jean-Pierre Bacle spent half a day on Jost Van Dyke to review rat monitoring procedures and record keeping with Dave Blyden, the current caretaker for Sandy Cay. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Bacle and Dave Blyden visited Sandy Cay for a session of on-site training. The intent is that IRF will provide oversight as Mr. Blyden takes over the rat monitoring regime for the next 14 months.

We also took the opportunity to overhaul some of the old stations with newly designed ones. This overhaul process will continue throughout the year until all stations are replaced.

All bait stations were examined, and we observed no sign of rat activity. Other indicators related to rodent behavior were absent.

## **TRAIL CONDITION**

During our June visit to Sandy Cay, the trail appeared in excellent condition. A few palm fronds were removed from the trail, and minor pruning was undertaken where vegetation has encroached.

The abandoned trail section on the south east is barely distinguishable, and the beach vegetation has grown over many sections of the old foot path.

## **BIRD OBSERVATIONS**

Bird activity on the island was very high, if not the busiest in recent years. This was particularly so for the perching birds (*Passeriformes*), which were nesting throughout the island. We counted over a dozen nests for each of the following species: Scaly-napped pigeons (*Columba squamosa*), Zenaida doves (*Zenaida aurita*), and Yellow warblers (*Dendroica petechia*). Other species that were nesting included: the Grey kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*), Laughing gull (*Larus atricilla*) and Bridle Tern (*Sterna anaethetus*).

While on the island, we noticed a flock of terns and gulls numbering above 30; they were staging and foraging along the southwest sandy spit.

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

| Species                   | 6/13/06 |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Magnificent Frigatebird   | 4       |
| Brown Pelican             | 5       |
| Brown Booby               | 2       |
| Laughing Gull             | 21*     |
| Royal Tern                | 4       |
| Bridle Tern               | 7*      |
| Least Tern                | 8       |
| Noddy Tern                | 3       |
| White-cheeked Pintail     | 2       |
| Scaly-napped Pigeon       | 19*     |
| Common Ground Dove        | 2       |
| Zenaida Dove              | 26*     |
| Green-throated Carib      | 2       |
| Gray Kingbird             | 8*      |
| Yellow Warbler            | 16*     |
| Bananaquit                | 28*     |
| Black-faced Grassquit     | 1       |
| * <i>nesting activity</i> |         |

### SEA TURTLE ACTIVITY

Very little sign of turtle activity was noted. However, we did observe a few old pits, probably remnants from earlier this year.

### VISITATION

The sea conditions were quite rough as a tropical wave was passing through the area (see photo #1 below). During mid-day, we observed a maximum of five boats anchored along the west side of the island.

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

|                      | 6/13/06 |
|----------------------|---------|
| Anchored Boats       | 5       |
| Persons on the beach | 13      |
| Persons on the trail | 11      |



**Party of seven leaving the island as a tropical wave approaches.**



**Laughing Gull nesting along the rocky cliff (left of the barrel cactuses).**





**Zenaida Dove's nest snuggled in branches of a pipe organ cactus.**



**Well-cleared trail section along the upland ridge.**





**The second coconut seedling (self-sown) that is recorded on the island.**