

Wildlife Services

Protecting People
Protecting Agriculture
Protecting Wildlife

State Report

FY 2010

Virgin Islands



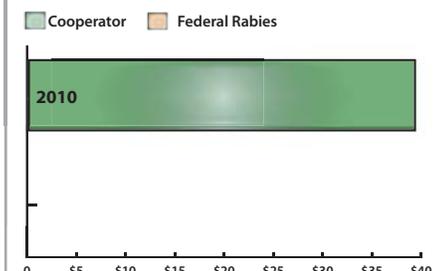
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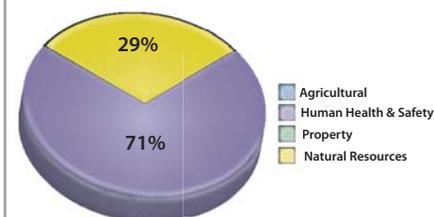
Major Cooperators

- National Park Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Virgin Islands Port Authority
- U.S. Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control
- Virgin Islands Fish and Wildlife Service
- Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture

Total Funding (Thousands)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in the U.S. Virgin Islands

The U.S. Virgin Islands encompass a series of Caribbean islands including St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, governed as a U.S. Territory. The Islands contain a mix of tropical habitats and associated wildlife species. Wildlife Services (WS) projects are managed out of the Alabama State WS office, and include minimizing wildlife/aircraft conflicts at island airports and managing invasive species such as mongoose and black rats on National Park Service lands.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

While WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, these few in-depth examples highlight WS' role in protecting public health and safety, and agricultural and natural resources.

Invasive Species Management—In addition to recently completing a non-native black rat control project on Buck Island National Monument with the U.S. Park Service, WS biologists assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife with control of non-native rats, feral swine, feral cats and feral dogs, and mongoose populations. Invasive, or non-native, species are damaging native flora and fauna on many of the local islands. If left alone, invasive species populations damage rare and sensitive native vegetation and limit the reproduction of endangered sea turtles and migratory birds.

Before WS implemented wildlife damage management measures at Buck Island National Monument, rats were destroying eggs and eating the young turtle hatchlings as they emerged. Since WS completed its efforts, the island vegetation and native wildlife have already begun to show signs of restoration. WS continues to monitor Buck Island to ensure that rats do not become reestablished. WS has worked on nine different islands to help remove predation threats from rats. This has also helped in the reintroduction of the critically endangered St. Croix ground lizard on Buck Island.

Protecting Air Travel—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other wildlife damage aircraft. Experts estimate that wildlife strikes with airplanes cost the U.S. civil aviation industry more than \$615 million annually in the United States. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research from its Sandusky, OH Field Station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and to reduce risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices, and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to aviation.

Tourism represents the biggest industry in the Virgin Islands with most visitors arriving by air at the two major airports in St. Thomas and St. Croix. Both airports are located on the coast where birds are abundant. WS has cooperated with the FAA and the Virgin Islands Port Authority to conduct wildlife hazard evaluations. WS has also provided management plans and recommendations to successfully reduce the presence of wildlife at these facilities and better protect passengers and aircraft from the hazards associated with bird strikes.



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Protecting Endangered Species—The Virgin Islands is home to the largest leatherback turtle nesting population in the U.S. at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge and to the critically endangered St. Croix ground lizard at several small islands surrounding St. Croix. WS helps to protect these two species as well as other sea turtles with population management of invasive species and feral cats and dogs.

Looking to the Future

Public safety has become a growing concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Increased travel through the Virgin Islands airports, coupled with expanding bird numbers has created a greater need for airport managers to deal with threats posed by wildlife.

A second issue that faces the region is the impact of invasive species on native plants and animals. These problems are significant and growing rapidly. WS' partnerships with the National Park Service and Virgin Islands Fish and Wildlife Service have enhanced our ability to provide assistance with these problems. A greater need remains, however, if WS is to adequately protect native species.

Virgin Islands Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving Federally allocated funds, WS also receives funding from agricultural producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting passengers and aircraft from collisions with wildlife
- Protecting threatened and endangered species
- Managing populations of invasive species
- Protecting livestock through cooperative efforts to monitor for the presence of the cattle bont tick
- Protecting human health and safety from roosting birds

Major WS Research Projects of Interest to the U.S. Virgin Islands:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing rodents and introduced vertebrate pest species
- Developing chemistry-based tools for wildlife damage management
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management