

SAINT KITTS-NEVIS

INTRODUCTION

No information was received on the current situation in St. Kitts-Nevis. The following account is based on Putney (1982), IUCN (1983) and Goodwin *et al* (1984).

Saint Kitts (or Saint Christopher, as it is more properly known) and Nevis are mountainous volcanic islands rising to peaks of 1,315m and 1,096m respectively, in the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles. The two islands have a combined area of about 265 km² and are separated by a narrow channel less than four kilometres wide. Formerly a British Crown Colony, the islands became independent in 1983. Almost three-quarters of the population of 49,000 live on Saint Kitts. The economy relies heavily on the cultivation of sugar cane, and the tourist industry has only recently begun to be important.

The climate is tropical, an average annual rainfall of 2,500 mm to 4,000 mm in the highlands supporting rain and cloud forest. In the drier lowlands, much of the native woodland and cactus scrub has been cleared for agriculture and livestock grazing. There are nine salt ponds and several patches of mangroves of importance for waterfowl, particularly migratory shorebirds, in the southern half of St. Kitts, but no wetlands of any significance on Nevis. Both islands have many sand beaches and extensive offshore coral reefs and sea-grass beds with important marine resources.

No information is available on the governmental conservation body in St. Kitts-Nevis. The Nevis Historical and Conservation Society, a non-governmental body created in 1980, is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the island's natural resources and architectural and historic heritage. According to Putney (1982), only one protected area had been established in the islands prior to 1982 and this, a small reserve near the west end of St. Kitts, did not include any wetland habitat. However, four areas were proposed for protection and one of these, incorporating the whole of the southeast peninsula of St. Kitts, included the island's largest wetland, Great Salt Pond, and several smaller salt ponds.

WETLANDS

No recent information is available on the wetlands of Saint Kitts and Nevis. The following site descriptions are based on Putney (1982), Goodwin *et al* (1984), and some waterfowl counts made by Edouard Benito-Espinal in September 1982. (For map, see Dominica.)

Greatheeds Pond (1)

Location: 17°20'N, 62°42'W; on the east coast of St. Kitts, NNE of Basseterre.

Area: c.30 ha.

Altitude: Near sea level.

Province and type: 8.41.13; 05, 07 & 08.

Site description: A small saline lagoon surrounded by mangrove swamps, behind a sea beach.

Principal vegetation: Mangrove swamps dominated by *Laguncularia racemosa*; sugar cane fields and secondary vegetation in surrounding areas.

Land tenure: Public land (state owned).

Protection: None.

Land use: Disposal of solid waste; cultivation in surrounding areas.

Waterfowl: A breeding area for *Nyctanassa violacea*, *Larus atricilla* and probably other species, and an important feeding area for migratory shorebirds. 350 shorebirds were observed during a brief survey in September 1982, mainly *Pluvialis squatarola*, *Charadrius semipalmatus*, *Calidris pusilla* and *Micropalama himantopus*.

Other fauna: No information.

Threats: The southern border of the pond abuts the island's main rubbish dump, and this must have a significant effect on the ecology of the pond.

References: Putney (1982); Goodwin *et al* (1984).

Source: Edouard Benito-Espinal.

Criteria for inclusion: 3a.

 Half Moon Pond (2)

Location: 17°19'N, 62°42'W; on the east coast of St. Kitts, northeast of Basseterre.

Area: 17 ha.

Altitude: Near sea level.

Province and type: 8.41.13; 05, 07 & 08.

Site description: A permanent saline lagoon, up to 50 cm deep, and mangrove swamps behind a sea beach. Impoundments have been constructed in the pond for shrimp farming. A salinity of 184 p.p.t. was recorded in November 1983.

Principal vegetation: Mangroves; *Coccoloba uvifera*, coconut palms and scrub along the beach; coconut groves and sugar cane fields to the north.

Land tenure: Privately owned and leased to a shrimp farming company.

Protection: None.

Land use: Commercial shrimp farming.

Waterfowl: An important feeding area for migratory shorebirds; over 660 were present in September 1982, mainly *Calidris pusilla* (over 500), *Tringa flavipes* and *Himantopus himantopus*.

Other fauna: Brine shrimps *Artemia* sp occur in the pond.

Threats: There is some pollution from domestic waste. The entire ecology of the pond has been changed with the shrimp farming activities; sea water is now pumped into the shrimp ponds and inorganic fertilizers are applied.

References: Putney (1982); Goodwin *et al* (1984).

Source: Edouard Benito-Espinal.

Criteria for inclusion: 0.

Muddy Pond (3)

Location: 17°18'N, 62°41'W; on the east coast of St. Kitts, east of Basseterre.

Area: c.30 ha.

Altitude: Near sea level.

Province and type: 8.41.13; 05 & 07.

Site description: A small saline lagoon with some brackish marshes, behind a sea beach.

Principal vegetation: Secondary vegetation in surrounding areas.

Land tenure: Public land (state owned).

Protection: None.

Land use: None.

Waterfowl: An important feeding area for Ardeidae and migratory shorebirds. Species recorded in September 1982 included *Nyctanassa violacea*, *Butorides virescens*, *Egretta caerulea*, *E. thula*, *E. alba*, *Anas discors* and six species of shorebirds.

Other fauna: No information.

Threats: None known.

References: Putney (1982).

Source: Edouard Benito-Espinal.

Criteria for inclusion: 0.

Great Salt Pond and nearby ponds (4)

Location: 17°14'N, 62°39'W; on the southeast peninsula of St. Kitts.

Area: c.275 ha (Great Salt Pond, 203 ha).

Altitude: Near sea level.

Province and type: 8.41.13; 05, 07 & 08.

Site description: A large saline lagoon (Great Salt Pond), up to 1.2m deep, in the interior of the southeast peninsula of St. Kitts, and four small saline ponds (Friar's Bay Pond, Little Salt Pond, Major's Bay Pond and Cockleshell Pond) behind sea beaches. The ponds have muddy shorelines and there are small patches of mangroves at Friar's Bay Pond, at Little Salt Pond, and on the northeast shore of Great Salt Pond. Great Salt Pond and Little Salt Pond (23 ha) are part of an old salt producing facility; Little Salt Pond is separated from Great Salt Pond by a dike, and appears to be fed by a fresh or brackish spring. Salinities of 230 p.p.t. and 72 p.p.t. were recorded at Great and Little Salt Ponds respectively in November 1983.

Principal vegetation: Mangrove swamps; littoral vegetation and cactus scrub in surrounding areas, and sea-grass beds offshore.

Land tenure: Privately owned.

Protection: None.

Land use: Some tourism, and lobster and conch fishing offshore; the peninsula remains largely unspoiled.

Waterfowl: An important feeding area for shorebirds and Laridae. Sixteen species were recorded during a brief survey in September 1982 including *Tringa flavipes* (230), *Calidris pusilla* (590), *Micropalama himantopus* (56) and *Himantopus himantopus* (110).

Other fauna: The brine shrimp *Artemia* sp occurs in Great Salt Pond. There is a breeding colony of *Fregata magnificens* to the south of Little Salt Pond. Five beaches around the peninsula provide nesting areas for the sea turtles *Chelonia mydas*, *Dermochelys coriacea* and *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and there are extensive coral reefs offshore.

Threats: There is some seaborne pollution on the north shore of the peninsula.

Research and conservation: Great Salt Pond is one of the largest remaining unspoiled salt ponds in the Lesser Antilles. The southeast peninsula of St. Kitts has been identified by Putney as an area with multiple resource values and a priority area for protection. The entire peninsula has been proposed as a protected area.

References: Putney (1982); Goodwin *et al* (1984).

Source: Edouard Benito-Espinal.

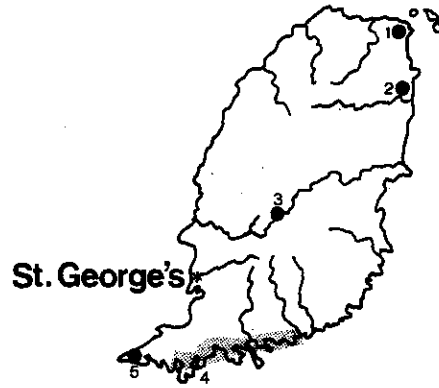
Criteria for inclusion: 3a.

DOMINICA



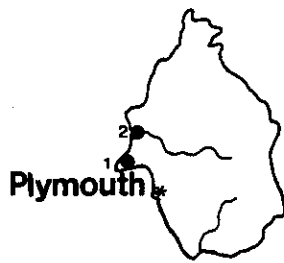
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GRENADA



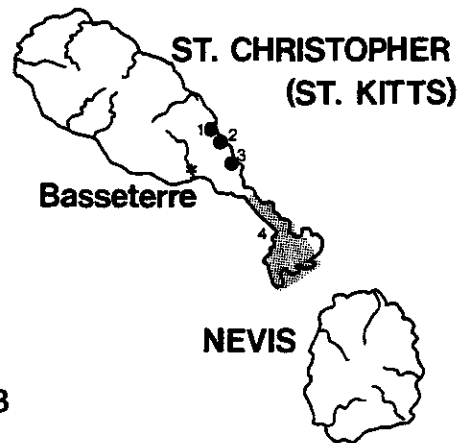
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MONTSERRAT



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