

SAINT VINCENT

INTRODUCTION

No report was received on the current situation in Saint Vincent or its dependencies in the Grenadines. The following account is based on some material provided by Byron Swift of WWF-US and the literature, principally Putney (1982).

Saint Vincent is a volcanic island 344 km² in extent in the southern Windward Islands, between Saint Lucia and Grenada. It became fully independent in 1979, and has a population of some 113,000. The Grenadine Islands, a string of tiny rocky islands stretching for 100 km between Saint Vincent and Grenada, are divided politically between the two. The northern group, including the main islands of Bequia, Mustique, Cannouan and Union, and some twenty-eight islets and rocks, are dependencies of Saint Vincent.

Saint Vincent is very rugged and mountainous, rising to a peak of 1,219m on Soufriere Mountain, an active volcano with a crater lake over 500m down inside the crater. The climate is humid tropical; the average annual rainfall exceeds 6,000 mm in the highlands and supports luxuriant rain and cloud forest. Most of the lowlands have been cleared for agriculture, especially bananas and arrowroot, and there is some tourist development, particularly in the south. The Grenadines are low limestone islands rising to a maximum elevation of 300m. Rainfall is much less than on Saint Vincent, and the dominant vegetation is cactus scrub and dry woodland.

Except for the hot crater lake on Soufriere, there are no wetlands of any great size in the islands. Waterfowl are scarce; for example, during short surveys in March and July 1971, Lack *et al* (1973) recorded only five species. *Bubulcus ibis* is a common resident and there are small resident populations of *Butorides virescens* and *Egretta caerulea*. *Anas discors* and shorebirds are hunted during the migration seasons, and many other migrants occur, but numbers are small. There are many beaches with nesting sea turtles *Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas*, *Dermochelys coriacea* and *Eretmochelys imbricata*, small islets with sea-bird colonies and patches of coral reef throughout the islands.

The governmental body concerned with conservation in Saint Vincent is the Forestry Department within the Ministry of Agriculture. Four small protected areas have been established on Saint Vincent; two in the interior near the south end of the island, and two on tiny offshore islets. One of these, Milligan Cay, is an important roosting area and probably a breeding site for Ardeidae. Four small protected areas have been established in the Saint Vincent Grenadines, all in the interior of Union. Areas proposed for protection include a large tract of the forested highland, Young's Island off the south coast, and the Tobago Cays in the Grenadines.

WWF-US has recently assisted the Government of Saint Vincent in drawing up a new wildlife law. Still in draft version, this new law would provide the basis for the establishment of wildlife refuges and would give complete protection to all wildlife except for a few game species (Anatidae, Columbidae, etc.). Schedule III of the draft version lists fifteen sites for protection as wildlife refuges. Most are small islands of importance for breeding sea-birds, but several, including Milligan Cay and Chateaubelair Islet, are known or thought to be important for Ardeidae.

WETLANDS

Very little information is available on the wetlands of Saint Vincent and the northern Grenadines. Descriptions of the three main wetlands are based almost entirely on Putney (1982). Other wetlands, probably of only local importance, include: a small salt pond near Owia Bay, at the northeast tip of Saint Vincent; a small mangrove swamp near Black Point on the east coast of Saint Vincent; three small salt ponds near the south end of Cannouan Island; and a small salt pond on Mayo Island. Chateaubelair Island, off Saint Vincent's west coast, may be an important roosting site for Ardeidae. (For map, see Dominica.)

Soufriere Crater Lake (1)

Location: 13°20'N, 61°11'W; in the Soufriere Mountains, in the northern highlands of Saint Vincent.

Area: c.900 ha.

Altitude: c.500m.

Province and type: 8.41.13; 12.

Site description: A crater lake with hot water, 500m down inside a volcanic crater on Soufriere Mountain. An island rose above the surface of the lake in 1970.

Principal vegetation: Cloud forest and secondary vegetation in surrounding areas.

Land tenure: Public land (state owned).

Protection: None, but all land over 305 m on the island is protected as forest use land.

Land use: None.

Waterfowl: No information.

Other fauna: No information.

Threats: None known.

Research and conservation: The lake lies within a large proposed protected area which incorporates much of the forested highlands of Saint Vincent.

References: Putney (1982).

Source: See references.

Criteria for inclusion: 3b.

South coast wetlands and Milligan Cay (2)

Location: 13°08'N, 61°11'W; on the south coast of Saint Vincent, between Brighton Bay and Sharp's Bay.

Area: c.100 ha.

Altitude: Near sea level.

Province and type: 8.41.13; 01, 03, 05, 07 & 08.

Site description: Two small coastal mangrove swamps near Sharp's Bay and in Nilikin's Bay respectively, a small saline pond to the east of Nilikin's Bay, some sand beaches, and an offshore cay, Milligan Cay, to the east.

Principal vegetation: Mangroves; some cactus scrub in surrounding areas.

Land tenure: Milligan Cay is public land (state owned); other areas are privately owned.

Protection: Milligan Cay is protected in a small reserve; other areas are unprotected.

Land use: There is considerable urban and suburban development along the coast.

Waterfowl: Milligan Cay is an important roosting site and probably a breeding site for Ardeidae, particularly *Bubulcus ibis* (hundreds) and *Egretta caerulea* (Byron Swift, pers. com.).

Other fauna: There is a sea-bird colony on Milligan Cay.

Threats: No information.

References: Putney (1982).

Source: See references.

Criteria for inclusion: 3a.

Union Island Mangroves (3)

Location: 12°35'N, 61°26'W; on the south coast of Union Island, in the Grenadines.

Area: A few ha.

Altitude: 0m.

Province and type: 8.41.13; 08.

Site description: A small coastal mangrove swamp and associated saline marshes; the only significant wetland in the northern Grenadines.

Principal vegetation: Mangroves.

Land tenure: No information.

Protection: None.

Land use: There is some cultivation and tourism on the island.

Waterfowl: No information.

Other fauna: There are coral reefs offshore.

Threats: Seaborne pollution on the nearby coast.

References: Putney (1982).

Source: See references.

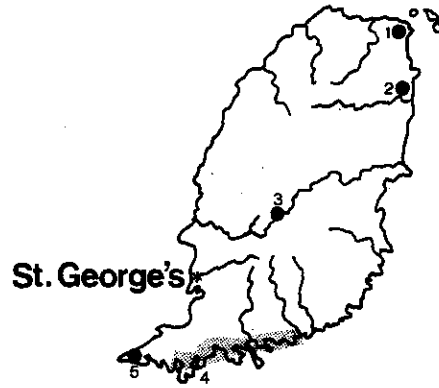
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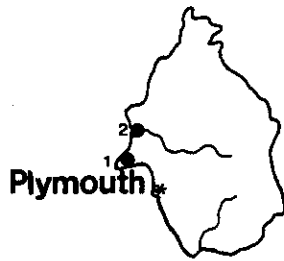
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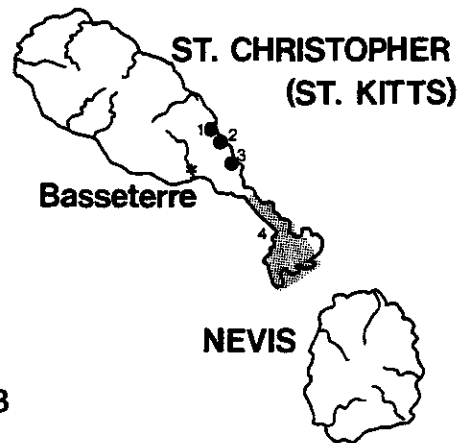
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