

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

INTRODUCTION

No report was received on the current situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The following account is based on a list of wetlands provided by C.H. Floyd, Director of Planning in the Ministry of Commerce and Development of Industries and Resources, and on the literature, principally IUCN (1982 & 1983).

The Turks and Caicos Islands comprise a British Crown Colony of about thirty low-lying islands to the southeast of the Bahamas and some 200 km north of the Hispaniolan coast. The Turks and Caicos groups are separated by the Turks Island Passage, a 35 km wide channel over 2,100m deep. The total land area is only 500 sq. km, but both groups are surrounded by extensive shoal sand banks, the Turk Island Bank of 254 sq. km and the Caicos Bank of 5,334 sq. km. Almost half of the islands' population of nearly 8,000 live in the smaller Turks group, and only thirteen of the islands are inhabited. Until recently, the islands remained almost undeveloped and unspoiled, the inhabitants depending largely on fishing for lobster and conch, but the tourist industry is now expanding rapidly, particularly on Providenciales, the most westerly of the inhabited islands.

Institutional Base for Wetland Conservation and Research

There is no government department specifically responsible for the conservation of wildlife or protected areas; parks are under the responsibility of the Chief Minister subject to review by the British Governor, and marine reserves are controlled through the Fisheries Department. Relevant legislation is enforceable through the Fisheries Department and the Department of Public Works.

Non-governmental conservation bodies include the Foundation for PRIDE, incorporated in 1976 in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., and operating out of a field headquarters in Turks and Caicos, and the Turks and Caicos National Trust, created in 1981. Both are concerned with broad conservation issues. The Foundation for PRIDE has concentrated on the development of alternative energy producing devices, the management of marine resources and the development of marine parks.

Progress in Wetland Conservation and Research

The National Parks Ordinance and Regulations were approved in 1976, and a Temporary National Parks Commission designated a large number of terrestrial and marine national parks, national reserves and wildlife sanctuaries. Many of these incorporate important wetland habitat, but whether or not any have as yet been officially gazetted is unknown.

The Wild Birds Protection Ordinance of 1916 gives complete protection to all birds except for a few pest species (including Laridae) and a variety of game species (including *Pelecanus*, Anatidae, Charadriidae and *Gallinago*) for which an eight months open season is allowed.

It is understood that the Government is embarking on a major ecological conservation study in July 1985, but the details are unknown.

WETLANDS

A list of wetlands in the Turks and Caicos Islands prepared by C.H. Floyd includes no less than 110 sites with a total area of 26,669 ha, over half of the surface area of the islands. The wetlands are distributed as follows:

Grand Turk: 419 ha of wetlands

North Creek, 149 ha
Town Pond, 85 ha
Great Salinas, 39 ha
The Sound and South Creek, 49 ha
Hawke's Nest Salinas, 40 ha
Six wetlands of less than 20 ha

Salt Cay: 164 ha of wetlands

Town Salinas, 101 ha
Five wetlands of less than 20 ha

Turks Cays: 4.5 ha of wetlands in three sites

South Caicos: 427 ha of wetlands

Victoria Salina, 346 ha
Basden Pond, 22 ha
Mangrove, 23 ha
Four wetlands of less than 20 ha

Middle Caicos: 7,297 ha of wetlands

Fish Ponds, 1,377 ha
Flamingo Pond, 28 ha
Armstrong Pond and Swamp, 1,120 ha
Farm Creek Pond, 250 ha
Big Pond and Lagoons, 2,984 ha
Eel Pond and Swamp, 150 ha
Increase Creek, 219 ha
Finaway Creek, 524 ha
Jack Pond, 229 ha
The Creek and Swamp, 350 ha
Fourteen wetlands of less than 20 ha

North Caicos: 4,888 ha of wetlands

Flamingo Pond, 3,113 ha
Whitby Salina, 30 ha
Pumpkin Bluff Pond, 177 ha
Mally Pond, 21 ha
Monacah Salina, 30 ha
Conch Cay Salina, 71 ha
Bay Cay Salina, 830 ha
Sawgrass Pond, 45 ha
Mud Hole Pond, 77 ha
Mangrove Pond, 31 ha
Dick Hill Creek, 392 ha
Nine wetlands of less than 20 ha

Providenciales: 3,830 ha of wetlands

Cheshire Hall Creek, 150 ha
Pigeon Pond and Salina, 179 ha
Frenchmen's Creek, 1,326 ha
Chalk Sound, 978 ha
Stubbs Creek, 65 ha
Corrinice Ponds, 36 ha

Turks and Caicos

Davy Bight Pond, 28 ha
South Dock Road Pond and Swamp, 36 ha
Fish Pond and Swamp, 64 ha
Juba Point Salina, 661 ha
The Bight Swamp, 142 ha
Mangrove Creek, 85 ha
Eight wetlands of less than 20 ha

East Caicos: 8,546 ha of wetlands

Salt Pond, 38 ha
Flamingo Pond, 63 ha
Flamingo Hill (Scatter Swamps), 582 ha
White Salina Bank, 7,810 ha
Six wetlands of less than 20 ha

Caicos Cays: 598 ha of wetlands

Pine Cay, 59 ha
Water Cay, 85 ha
Dellis Cay, 111 ha
Parrot Cay, 343 ha

West Caicos: 497 ha of wetlands

Lake Catherine, 118 ha
East Side Bay Salina, 356 ha
Three wetlands of less than 20 ha

In addition, there are over 38,000 ha of intertidal sand banks and mudflats, mainly along the south coasts of North, Middle and East Caicos Islands. No further information is available on these wetlands.