

The Virgin Islands Tree Boa (*Epicrates monensis grantii*) is a blotched brown semi-arboreal snake, occurs on a number of islands from Puerto Rico eastward into the British Virgin Islands. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, it is restricted to the eastern portion of St. Thomas. The Virgin Islands tree boa lives in subtropical dry forests where it hunts at night, eating mainly lizards asleep in trees. During the day, the boas seek refuge in termite nests or under rocks and debris.

The Virgin Islands Tree Boa (*Epicrates monensis grantii*)



The Virgin Islands Tree Boa, *Epicrates monensis grantii*, is an endangered snake species that can be found at VIARNG Estate Nazareth Military Compound on St. Thomas. The distribution of the Tree Boa throughout the Virgin Islands shows an uneven distribution around the island, indicative of a long history of population decline and extermination due to habitat loss to infrastructure development. Nonetheless, recovery efforts for this snake in the territory have been ongoing for nearly 20 years due to the efforts of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources-Division of Fish and Wildlife (DPNR-DFW). As a federal agency, VIARNG is required under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 to conserve threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species found on its properties. VIARNG will consult on a regular basis with the territory office of the DPNR-DFW to ensure that VIARNG actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species found on its installations.

The smallest of the American Terns, the Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) can be found nesting on sandy beaches or on gravelly stone beds. Nests are simple scrapes or shallow depression in the sand or gravel. One to three sandy-colored, speckled eggs hatch after 21 days.

The Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*)



#### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

| ADULT                               | JUVENILE                          |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Length: 8.5 inches;                 | Pale orange legs                  |
| Sexes similar                       | Pinkish bill                      |
| Flies with very rapid wing beats    | White forehead, breast, and belly |
| Dives into water for prey           | Black eye patch                   |
| Slender pointed bill                | Pale crown streaked               |
| Very short legs                     | Pale brown back                   |
| Short forked tail                   | Dark carpal bar                   |
| Smoothly rounded head without crest | Gray wings with brown tips        |
| Pale under wing                     | Short tail                        |

On St. Croix, the Least Terns have been recorded nesting at 26 sites in various habitat types, including beaches, salt flats, a dredge spoil pile, gravel parking lot and the containment areas around storage tanks and roads at the HOVENSA Oil Refinery (DPNR-DFW). Available data suggest that the population has suffered a serious decline in St. Croix; however studies are currently underway to assess the status of the species. Predation by dogs, cats, mongoose and human disturbance are responsible for most nest failures. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, Least Terns is not federally listed; however, the species is territorially listed as endangered.

Bulletwood (*Manilkara bidentata*)



In the USVI threats to plants and wildlife are increasing through habitat loss, degradation, and alteration, increasing levels of pollution, burgeoning populations of non-native species, and a general lack of understanding of wildlife issues. The increasing demand for land for housing and resort development has created pressure on wildlife habitat. On St. Thomas, alone, one third of the island is classified as “developed, although this statistic does not take into consideration the level of fragmentation or the integrity of remaining habitat.

Woolly nipple (*Mammillaria nivosa*)



The Vanilla Orchid (*Vanilla barbellata*) is currently listed as a threatened plant species by the Virgin Islands DPNR-DFW.

Vanilla orchid (*Vanilla barbellata*)



### How Does Extinction Happen?

Species disappear because of changes to the earth that is caused either by nature or by the actions of people. Sometimes a terrible natural event, like a hurricane, can kill an entire species. Other times, extinction will happen slowly as nature changes our world. For example, after the Ice Ages, when the great glaciers melted and the earth became warmer, many species died because they could not live in a warmer climate. Newer species that could survive a warmer environment took their places. People can also cause the extinction of plants and animals. The main reason that many species are endangered or threatened today is because people have changed the homes or habitats upon which these species depend. A habitat includes not only the other plants and animals in an area, but all of the things needed for the species survival: from sunlight and wind to food and shelter.

*The following resources were consulted in compiling this brochure:*

- A Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for the U.S. Virgin Islands. 2005. Division of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Virgin Islands Army National Guard Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan FY 2008 - FY 2012.

*Prepared for*

Virgin Islands National Guard  
Joint Force Headquarters  
ATTN: CFMO-E  
4031 La Grande Princesse, Lot 1B  
Christiansted, St. Croix  
United States Virgin Islands 00820-4353

*Prepared by*

Virgin Islands National Guard  
Joint Force Headquarters  
ATTN: CFMO-E (Mr. Maurice Yabba)  
4031 La Grande Princesse, Lot 1B  
Christiansted, St. Croix  
United States Virgin Islands 00820-4353

*Brochure design*

Maurice Yabba, VIARNG

## VIRGIN ISLANDS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD (VIARNG)

### INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (INRMP)

### Endangered and Threatened Species Program



### What are Endangered and Threatened species?

Endangered species are those plants and animals that have become so rare they are in danger of becoming extinct. Threatened species are plants and animals that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. There are approximately 1300 endangered or threatened animal and plant species in the United States and its territories. Today, two endangered or threatened species utilizes VIARNG facilities. The Virgin Islands Tree Boa (*Epicrates monensis grantii*), an endangered snake species can be found at the Estate Nazareth Military Compound on St. Thomas. On St. Croix, the Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*), a threatened bird species can be found at the Estate Bethlehem Military Compound.