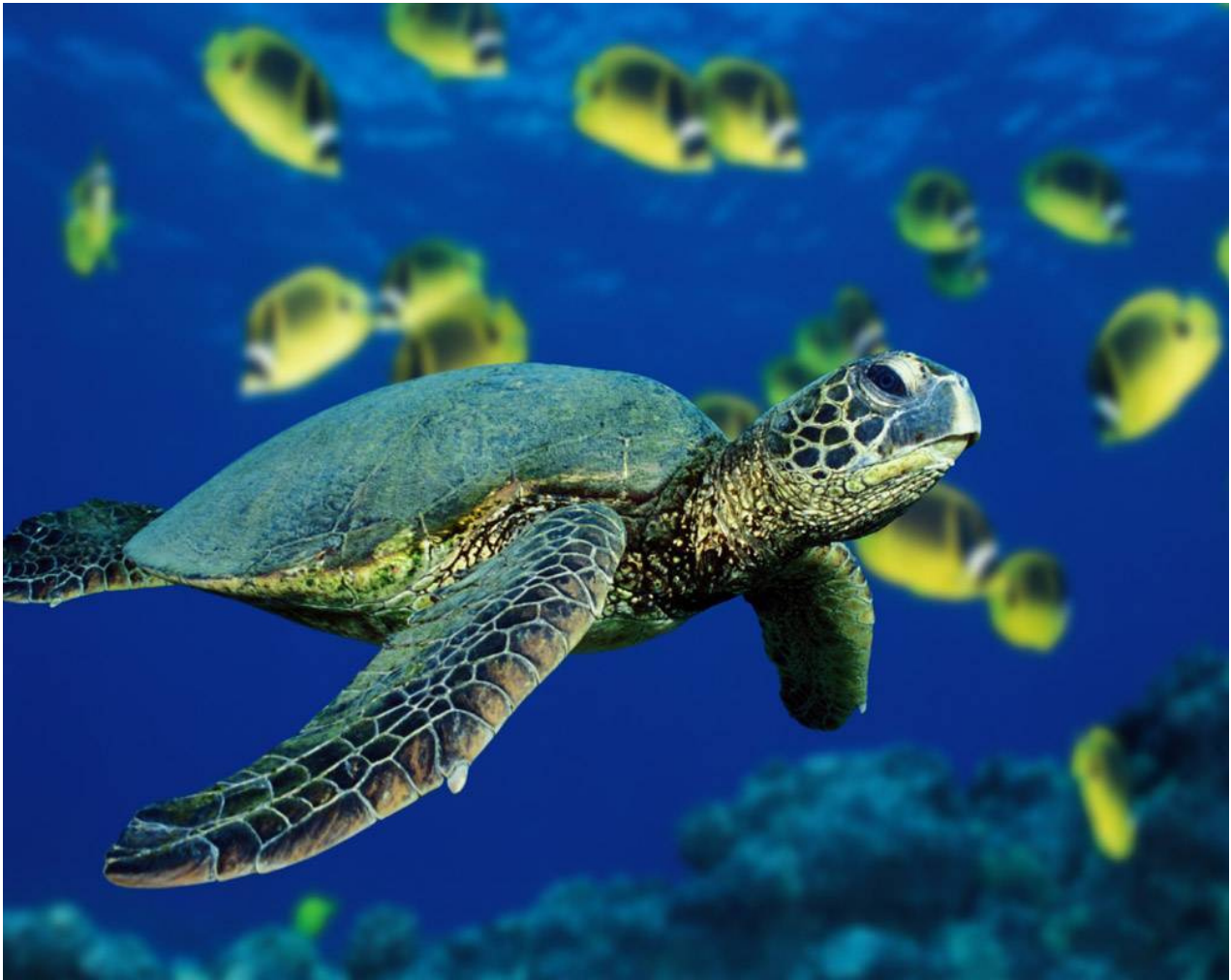


# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Buck Island Sea Turtle Movement Pattern Studied By National Research Organization

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The National Park Service (NPS) on St. Croix has partnered with Dr. Kristen Hart of the U.S. Geological Survey in a long-term study of sea turtles within Buck Island Reef National Monument in an effort to determine the reptiles' movement patterns, habitat usage, and other behaviors.

According to information issued by NPS, acoustic receivers have been deployed at underwater stations throughout the monument and are being used to detect the presence of tagged sea turtles when they swim within range of the hydrophones.

Once captured and transferred to a boat, the animals are outfitted with small transmitters and released back into the sea where they were originally found. The transmitter signals stored on each hydrophone are downloaded every few months and analyzed.

Field work is conducted twice a year for approximately four weeks. In 2015, it is scheduled for March 3-13 and Sept. 13 -26. Hand-captured juvenile and sub-adult Green Hawksbill sea turtles in the waters closest to Buck Island have been generally used in the study.

Boaters are asked to use extra caution to avoid researchers swimming near the island.

NPS officials say the project is expected to last for a number of years, and results will be shared through a variety of scientific publications and public presentations. Furthermore, officials say the research is expected to provide managers with information about the locations that are critical for sea turtles and help minimize potentially harmful human-turtle interactions to enhance conservation efforts for the endangered species.