

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Graduate Student Gets Name For Cove Approved

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The body of water just south of the Cyril E. King International Airport has a new name: Hawksbill Cove. In 1992, the airport underwent a massive construction process, which extended the runway from 4,200 feet to 7,000 feet, stretching into the Caribbean Sea. The result was an artificial cove that up until 2016 had no name – until now.

Scott Eanes, a graduate student in the Marine and Environmental Program at UVI, was the pioneer behind the naming. In the midst of writing his thesis on the habitat utilization of the critically endangered Hawksbill sea turtles, he realized that the cove had no name, and he decided it would be best to name it after its most important resident.

The process of naming the cove was challenging and time-consuming, according to Mr. Eanes. After contacting the Board of Geographic Names (BGN) – an agency that governs the application and geographic names of places, features and areas – he underwent an application process, which required letters of support from any and all members of the community.

“The application had to be reasonable, appropriate for the location, and there needed to be justification for choosing the name,” Mr. Eanes said. The application process took about six months, after which the BGN unanimously passed the decision to name the area, Hawksbill Cove.

One of Mr. Eanes professors, Dr. Paul Jobsis, the director of the Center for Marine and Environmental Studies at UVI said, “I was skeptical at first. I have never been involved in naming an area. I have some concern that the area may be targeted by poachers. I now agree with Scott that naming the area Hawksbill Cove can bring some attention to the plight of the territories sea turtles and the need to conserve and protect them.”

According to Dr. Jobsis, for years the Hawksbill sea turtle population was dwindling and neared extinction. One of the main reasons was because of poaching. However, there have been a number of conservation efforts such as protection of beaches, reduced lighting on beaches, fines for poaching and rewards for information leading to the prosecution of turtle poaching. This has led to a slow increase in the Hawksbill sea turtle population over the years.

However, due to the turtle’s large migration patterns, they can migrate to other parts of the Caribbean where there may be no poaching laws. “One needs to know that sea turtles know no boundaries between nations where harvesting is legal or illegal,” Dr. Jobsis said.

“The Hawksbill turtle is critically endangered and needs all of our help in protection, preservation, and conservation, along with research and data collection if they are to remain off the extinction list,” Mr. Eanes said.

Along with getting the cove an official name, Scott has impacted the Master of Science in Marine and Environmental Science program in a number of ways.

“Scott has been a strong force not only in doing the research, but also in public speaking and getting the public involved in our research. His indomitable spirit and enthusiasm for sea turtles seems to have no bounds,” Dr. Jobsis said. “He loves sea turtles and wants to see them survive in the wild where they play a critical role in the Caribbean marine ecosystem.”