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GVI Limits Offshore Cay Visitation to Protect Nesting Sea Birds

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Whistling Cay, St. John USVI By. GETTY IMAGES

Access to cays restricted to scientific research and permit holders from April 1st to November 15th

In an effort to protect nesting sea birds, the V.I. Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources has issued a reminder that access to offshore cays maintained by the Government of the Virgin Islands will be restricted between April 1st and November 15th. During this period, the cays can only be visited for scientific research or with permission obtained through a free permit.

The affected cays include Bovoni, Capella, Carval, Cas, Cockroach, Congo, Cricket, Dog, Dutch Cap, Flanagan, Flat, Little Flat, French Cap, Grass, Hassel, Kalkun, Leduck, Outer Brass, Perkins,

Ruth, Saba, Sail, Salt, Savana, Shark, Turtledove, West, and Whistling Cay.

DPNR Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol emphasized the importance of these cays as some of the last refuges for indigenous species in the Virgin Islands, including skinks, ground lizards, and cactus. The cays serve as a safe haven for these species, which are part of the region's historical and material culture and are protected under law.

Permits for ecotourism ventures, scientists, agencies, and visitors accompanied by a representative of the DPNR can be obtained by submitting applications at <https://dpr.vi.gov/fish-and-wildlife/permit-application/>. All proposed activities must be outlined in the application. Furthermore, all drone and helicopter activities below 1000 feet overhead are prohibited during the same period.

For more information or inquiries, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife at 340-773-1082.

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