

continues to monitor Buck Island to ensure that rats do not become reestablished.

Protecting Air Travel—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other wildlife damage aircraft. Experts estimate that wildlife strikes with airplanes cost the U.S. civil aviation industry more than \$470 million annually. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), conducts research from its Sandusky, OH Field Station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and to reduce risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices, and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to aviation.

In the Virgin Islands, tourism is the biggest industry, and most visitors arrive by air at the two major airports in St. Thomas and St.



John. On both islands, the airports are located immediately adjacent to the coast and have numerous bird species using the area around the airports. WS has cooperated with the FAA and the Virgin Islands Port Authority to conduct wildlife hazard evaluations. WS has also provided management plans and recommendations to successfully reduce the presence of wildlife at these facilities and better protect passengers and aircraft from the hazards associated with bird strikes.

Looking to the Future

Public safety has become a growing concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Increased travel through the Virgin Islands airports, coupled with expanding bird numbers has created a greater need for airport managers to deal with threats posed by wildlife.

A second issue that faces the region is the impact of invasive species on native plants and animals. These problems are significant and growing rapidly. Local and Federal agencies are doing some work with limited local funding and grants, but the problems are continuing to grow. Partnerships with the National Park Service and Virgin Islands Fish and Wildlife Service have enhanced WS ability to provide assistance with these problems. A greater need remains, however, if WS is to adequately protect native species.

U.S. Virgin Islands Wildlife Services Funding •••••

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management. Resources for activities in the U.S. Virgin Islands are drawn from cooperators and the WS Alabama program.