

# Vieques

## National Wildlife Refuge



Photos: Tom MacKenzie, USFWS

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### Refuge Facts

- Western end established May 1, 2001; 3,100 acres. Eastern end established May 1, 2003; 14,573 acres.
- Location: the refuge lands are located on the eastern and western ends of the island.
- Administered under Caribbean Island NWR complex.

### Natural History

- The refuge contains several ecologically distinct habitats including beaches, coastal lagoons, mangrove wetlands and upland forested areas. Some of the best examples of sub-tropical dry forest in the Caribbean can be found on refuge lands.
- The marine environment surrounding the refuge contains coral reefs and sea grass beds. The refuge and its surrounding waters are home to at least five plants and ten animals on the Federal Endangered Species list including the Antillean Manatee, the Brown Pelican and four species of sea turtles (Green, Loggerhead, Hawksbill and the Leatherback).
- In addition to its ecological value, the refuge contains important resources of archeological and historic significance and legacies of the Taino culture and sugar cane era.

### Financial Impact

- Currently 12 person staff.
- Year round visitation.

### Refuge Objectives

- To maintain this rare local sub-tropical dry forest habitat and wetlands ecosystem for resident and migratory birds and rare and endangered species.
- To protect historical and archeological resource sites.
- To provide a safe environment for people to enjoy wildlife oriented public use.

### Management Tools

- Education/interpretation.
- Plant inventory.
- Habitat restoration.
- Water management.
- Wildlife surveys.
- Law enforcement.

### Public Use Opportunities

- Wildlife observation.
- Nature photography.
- Hiking.
- Environmental education/interpretation.

### Questions and Answers

*Does the Refuge have an office for visitors?*

Yes. An office/visitor center is located in Vieques Office Park on Road 200, km 0.4. Please call in advance to arrange a visit as we are frequently working in the field.

*Are sea turtles found in the vicinity of the Refuge?*

Yes, Leatherback and Hawksbill Sea Turtles nest on Vieques beaches as the white coral sand beaches provide warm sand for their eggs while adjacent sea grass beds shelter and feed Green Sea Turtles.

*What other endangered species can be found on or near the Refuge?*

Some other species that may be seen on or near the Refuge are the Brown Pelican and the Antillean Manatee.

*Is the Refuge open to the public?*

Yes. Certain areas of the Refuge are open from sunrise to sunset seven days a week. Others are closed due to the presence of unexploded ordnance and the ongoing clean-up by the Navy.