

# Buck Island

## *National Wildlife Refuge*



photo: USFWS



photo: E. C. Oaks



photo: J. E. Saliva

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### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1969.
- Acres: 45.
- Location: the island is located 2 miles from the south coast of St. Thomas.
- Administered under Caribbean Islands NWR office.

### Natural History

- The island was transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service due to "its value for migratory birds." However, birds rarely use the refuge because of an abundance of black rats.
- Although the rocky coastline offers little in the way of recreation potential, the surrounding waters contain reefs and a shipwreck that attract large numbers of snorkelers, divers, and boaters.
- The Coast Guard maintains a lighthouse on the refuge.

### Financial Impact of Refuge

- No staff.
- 100 visitors annually.

### Refuge Objectives

To manage and protect natural plant and wildlife communities.

### Management Tools

Law enforcement.

### Public Use Opportunities

- Hiking.
- Bird watching.

### Questions and Answers

*Is the refuge open to the public?*  
Yes, this island refuge is open during daylight hours, seven days a week (boat access only).

*Are there birdwatching opportunities available?*

Little nesting occurs due to the presence of introduced rats; however, visitors may see red-billed tropic birds, frigate birds, terns, laughing gulls, and other species in the vicinity of the island.

*Is there a lighthouse on the island that is open to the public?*

The historic Buck Island Lighthouse is closed to the public. It is now in a deteriorated condition and no longer operational and has been replaced by an automated navigation light.

*Are diving opportunities available at the refuge?*

Federal property does not include waters surrounding the island; however, spectacular reefs are in close proximity to the refuge and commercial dive trips are offered out of St. Thomas, USVI.

*I thought Buck Island belonged to the U.S. Park Service. Are there two Buck Islands in the Caribbean?*

Yes, Buck Island Reef National Monument (belonging to the U.S. Park Service) is located just off the north coast of St. Croix, USVI. Buck Island National Wildlife Refuge is about 2 miles from the south coast of St. Thomas, USVI.