



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

May 17, 2017

Buck Island Reef National Monument is one of fifteen known nesting sites on St. Croix for the least tern, *Sterna antillarum*, a locally protected migratory sea bird. Every year the least terns return to St. Croix to nest sometimes establishing a nesting colony on West Beach at Buck Island Reef National Monument. The terns lay small speckled, sand-colored eggs in shallow depressions on the beach. Both adults take turns sitting on the eggs, foraging for food, and protecting and incubating the eggs. The terns are easily disturbed by people walking nearby and will leave the eggs and fly toward the invader. Every time a tern flies off the nest during the day, the eggs or chicks are exposed to excessive heat from direct sunlight and to possible predation.



Photo courtesy Solvin Zankl

The least terns have established a nesting area on Buck Island Reef and to ensure protection for the colony, eggs, and chicks NPS has closed the section of beach from the point to the pier (south). The area is marked with signs, ropes/stakes, and warning tape. Over the years the terns have had marginal success because our visitors are not adhering to the closure. The NPS has allowed multiple use activities to continue alongside the tern nesting, however if the least tern nesting continues to fail, the NPS Superintendent will be forced to close the beach area to all use for a period of time (36 CFR Sec. 1.5 Closures and Public Use Limits).

**The least tern area is CLOSED to all pedestrians;
Do Not approach area; Do Not walk through or swim along shoreline.**

The least tern nesting area on Buck Island Reef NM is unique to the Virgin Islands. It is the only area where the birds have no threat from vehicles, dogs, and other non-native predators. The only danger to the terns nesting success seems to be from human disturbance and dogs illegally on the beach in the park.

We would like to remind our visiting public that dogs are **NOT ALLOWED** in the waters or on land at the Monument. This is necessary to protect wildlife and public health and safety. NPS advises our Buck Island Reef NM visitors to **NOT** bring dogs to the park.

Direct your questions or notice any violations of these regulations to the National Park Service Law Enforcement Rangers or Resource Management, by calling 340/773-1460, daily 8 am to 4:30 pm; after 4:30 pm please call 340/277-6794.