

TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS

LAND AREA **500 km²** ALTITUDE **0–49 m**
 HUMAN POPULATION **21,750** CAPITAL **Cockburn Town, Grand Turk**
 IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS **9, totalling 2,470 km²**
 IMPORTANT BIRD AREA PROTECTION **69%**
 BIRD SPECIES **204**
 THREATENED BIRDS **3** RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS **4**



MIKE PIENKOWSKI (UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES CONSERVATION FORUM,
 AND TURKS AND CAICOS NATIONAL TRUST)



Caribbean Flamingos on the old saltpans at Town Salina, in the capital, Grand Turk.
 (PHOTO: MIKE PIENKOWSKI)

INTRODUCTION

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), a UK Overseas Territory, lie north of Hispaniola as a continuation of the Bahamas Islands chain. The Caicos Islands are just 50 km east of the southernmost Bahamian islands of Great Inagua and Mayaguana. The Turks and Caicos Islands are on two shallow (mostly less than 2 m deep) banks—the 5,334 km² Caicos Bank and the 254-km² Turks Bank—with deep ocean between them. There are further shallow banks, namely Mouchoir, Silver and Navidad that extend for 250 km to the south-east, but without islands. They are important for whales and probably for feeding seabirds. The Bahamas lie on separate banks to the north-east, but share some aspects of the geography. The largest islands lie along the northern edge of the Caicos Bank, and comprise, from west to east: West Caicos (c.10 km by 3 km); Providenciales (c.23 km by 10 km); the small cays of Mangrove, Donna, Little Water, Water, Pine, Fort George, Stubbs, Dellis, and Parrot; North Caicos (c.25 km by 15 km); Middle Caicos (c.25 km by 15 km); East Caicos (c.20 km by 15 km); and South Caicos (c.9 km by 5 km), together with some smaller cays. Several very small cays, important for breeding seabirds, lie on the southern edge of the Caicos Bank, c.30–50 km south of the larger islands. Providenciales, North,

Middle and South Caicos are inhabited, and resorts are being developed on many of the small island. The smaller Turks Bank holds the inhabited islands of Grand Turk (10 km by 3 km) and Salt Cay (6 km by 2 km), as well as numerous smaller cays.

The Turks Bank islands plus South Caicos (the “salt islands”) were used to supply salt from about 1500. They were inhabited by the 1660s when the islands were cleared of trees to facilitate salt production by evaporation. By about 1900, Grand Turk was world famous for its salt. The industry closed down during the twentieth century with the last production ceasing in 1975, leaving behind the salinas or saltpans. After depopulation in the late fifteenth century, the Caicos Islands remained largely uninhabited until the eighteenth century (although up until this period, their shallow, complex channels and creeks made them a safe haven for many famous pirates). From 1787, land in the Caicos Islands was given to “Empire Loyalists” who had lost their lands in the newly created USA. The resulting plantations (initially mainly for cotton) cleared much of the high forest which appears to have survived until that time in largely pristine state. The plantation period lasted just a few decades (although it left a substantial archaeological heritage) and the last record of cotton exportation is in 1812. The major change of the twentieth century was the land grant

of much of Providenciales to US development companies, leading to the establishment of holiday resorts and private homes on the island. Providenciales is now the commercial centre (and centre of population) of the territory, with the government remaining largely at Grand Turk.

The climate is generally warm and dry, with occasional heavy rain. Average annual rainfall on Grand Turk is 500 mm while the Caicos group averages c.1,000 mm with the wettest month being May. Over half of the TCI land area is wetland such as intertidal creeks, lagoons, flats, salinas and marshes. Only a small area of land is under cultivation. The terrestrial habitats, where these have not been destroyed by bulldozing prior to building, are in various stages of recovery to high tropical dry forest. This process is slow, and thorny scrub forest is the most widespread at present. Scattered through the dry forest are many ponds of various sizes and of differing hydrology—the freshwater ones being particularly important for birds. In some areas there is rocky shore, either cliffs or low rocks, but generally the coast consists of sandy beaches backed by low scrub (and sand-dunes in some places). Where the dry ground grades into wetter ground towards the southern side of the Islands, particularly on North and Middle Caicos, there are some areas of “Caicos pine” (the national tree) *Pinus caribaea*. Pine woodland occurs in extensive stands intermingled with other seasonally or temporally flooded habitats (such as marsh, mangrove inlets, saltmarsh, mudflats etc.).

■ Conservation

The protection of natural areas in TCI is provided for through two main legislative means, the National Parks Ordinance (1992) and the National Trust Ordinance (1992). The former defines four categories of protected area: national parks (nearer the UK, than the IUCN model, with some emphasis on recreation); nature reserves (with emphasis on nature conservation, and with visiting restrictions if appropriate); sanctuaries (nature areas with a presumption against visiting); and areas of historic interest (for human heritage sites). The National Trust Ordinance established the Turks and Caicos National Trust (TCNT) as a statutory but independent non-governmental membership body. It is responsible for safeguarding the environmental, cultural and historical heritage of the islands for present and future generations. One of the Trust’s statutory roles is holding environmentally important land in trust for the country, and the TCI government has

started transferring some such lands to the Trust to hold and manage. TCNT plays a unique role in its partnership approach to sustainable conservation, the protection of the natural environment and promotion of environmental awareness and responsibility. It is supported by membership fees, private sponsorship and project grants and fulfils its mission by implementing a range of sustainable projects and initiatives, some of which are revenue generating and used to finance new programs. The Department of Environmental and Coastal Resources (DECR) within the Ministry of Natural Resources, is the TCI government department responsible for nature conservation, fisheries and related matters.

Although statutory protected areas have existed since early 1990s, resource limitations have delayed much progress on the management of these areas by official bodies. However, the conservation fund resourced by a 1% addition to the (now 10%) visitor tax aims to provide the resources necessary for protected area management. Management plans have been developed and are being implemented (by the government) for three of TCI’s marine national parks in the seas adjacent to Providenciales and West Caicos. TCNT has focused on terrestrial and wetland areas including the effective management of Little Water Cay, as well as several historic sites. It has also (in a collaborative venture) developed, and is starting to implement, a management plan (available at www.ukotcf.org) for the North, Middle and East Caicos Ramsar Site and its surroundings, including IBAs TC001–005.

Several projects implemented since 1998 have been designed to cover as much of TCI as possible with bird (and biodiversity) surveys. Where feasible these have been done to cover different seasons and multiple years. For example, systematic surveys through the Middle Caicos woodlands and wetlands, as well as areas on North Caicos and Grand Turk, have been undertaken on several occasions each year. Systematic efforts have been made to fill gaps in coverage, leading to several specially organised visits to Salt Cay, the seabird cays, East Caicos, and other sites. These surveys have highlighted yet more gaps, conservation priorities and also conservation opportunities such as the superb education and awareness potential of the salinas right inside the town on Grand Turk.

■ Birds

Of over 204 recorded species on TCI, 58 are known to breed and 110 occur as regular passage or wintering migrants. Four of the seven Bahamas Endemic Bird Area restricted-range

North Caicos mangroves, flats, pine and dry forest within the North, Middle and East Caicos Ramsar Site. (PHOTO: MIKE PIENKOWSKI)



species occur, namely Bahama Woodstar *Calliphlox evelynae*, Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachi*, Pearly-eyed Thrasher *Margarops fuscatus* and Thick-billed Vireo *Vireo crassirostris*. An endemic subspecies of the Thick-billed Vireo *V. crassirostris stalagmium* is restricted to the Caicos Bank. A number of other species, characteristic of adjacent islands are also present (or have arrived as vagrants) on the islands.

These include Cuban Crow *Corvus nasicus*, otherwise endemic to Cuba, which is a permanent resident on the Caicos Islands, as is an endemic subspecies of the Greater Antillean Bullfinch *Loxigilla violacea ofella* (on Middle and East Caicos, with occasional records from North Caicos). Cuban vagrants (or irregular visitors) have included Endangered Blue-headed Quail-dove *Starnoenas cyanocephala* and Giant Kingbird

Table 1. Key bird species at Important Bird Areas in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Key bird species	Criteria	National population	Criteria	Turks and Caicos Islands IBAs										
				TC001	TC002	TC003	TC004	TC005	TC006	TC007	TC008	TC009		
West Indian Whistling-duck <i>Dendrocygna arborea</i>	VU		■		48	✓	✓	✓						
White-cheeked Pintail <i>Anas bahamensis</i>			■			1,000								
Caribbean Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>			■			3,000								
Reddish Egret <i>Egretta rufescens</i>			■			400		300						
White-tailed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon lepturus</i>		900	■			150							120	
Brown Pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>			■			150		150			60			30
Sandhill Crane <i>Grus canadensis</i>			■			3								
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			■			2,500								
Wilson's Plover <i>Charadrius wilsonia</i>			■			100		90						90
Short-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus griseus</i>			■			3,200					4,000			
Greater Yellowlegs <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>			■			1,000					1,000			
Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i>			■			5,000					6,000			
Least Sandpiper <i>Calidris minutilla</i>			■			6,000								
Laughing Gull <i>Larus atricilla</i>			■			150	900		150		900	450		900
Gull-billed Tern <i>Sterna nilotica</i>		300	■			50	60		60					
Royal Tern <i>Sterna maxima</i>			■			120	150		60	30	40			
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>			■			150				200	60			60
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>		600	■							600				
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>			■						600					
Least Tern <i>Sterna antillarum</i>		3,000	■			50	100		90		2,520			840
Bridled Tern <i>Sterna anaethetus</i>		10,500	■							3,000			6,900	
Sooty Tern <i>Sterna fuscata</i>		144,000	■										132,000	
Brown Noddy <i>Anous stolidus</i>		81,000	■							33,000			22,200	
Bahama Woodstar <i>Calliphlox evelynae</i>	■		■		✓	✓	✓	400	✓					✓
Thick-billed Vireo <i>Vireo crassirostris</i>	■		■		✓	✓	✓	6,700	✓					✓
Bahama Mockingbird <i>Mimus gundlachi</i>	■		■		✓	✓	✓	200	✓					✓
Pearly-eyed Thrasher <i>Margarops fuscatus</i>	■		■		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓

All population figures = numbers of individuals.
 Threatened birds: Vulnerable ■. Restricted-range birds ■. Congregatory birds ■.

The Turks and Caicos Islands support endemic subspecies of Thick-billed Vireo and Greater Antillean Bullfinch. (PHOTO: MIKE PIENKOWSKI)





Large numbers of shorebirds, such as these Lesser Yellowlegs and Stilt Sandpipers, pass through or overwinter in the islands. (PHOTO: MIKE PIENKOWSKI)

Tyrannus cubensis, while the Hispaniolan endemic Green-tailed Warbler *Microligea palustris* has been recorded on Bush Cay. All of these landbirds rely on the under-valued dry woodlands.

Globally threatened birds include the Vulnerable West Indian Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna arborea*, significant numbers of which occur in a number of areas although the territorial population is unknown. The Near Threatened Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* occurs, but in very small numbers and normally only single individuals are seen. The Near Threatened Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* is also recorded regularly as a wintering migrant, but only in very small numbers.

Studies on seabirds in TCI have largely been limited to surveys and censuses with incomplete coverage of irregular but major breeding in e.g. inland marsh and pond areas of several of the Caicos Islands. However, the small cays of the Caicos and Turks Banks, as well as some cliffs and stacks of the main islands are important breeding sites for significant numbers of seabirds. Thirteen species of seabird breed, 11 of which are migrants with at least some of the population absent for part of the year. The populations of Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, Sooty Tern *S. fuscata*, Least Tern *S. antillarum*, Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* and Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* are particularly noteworthy. Individual wetlands in TCI vary on a seasonal and annual basis depending on weather conditions. However, with so much wetland habitat available, the network of wetlands is able to support large numbers of breeding, passage and wintering waterbirds (ducks, shorebirds, herons and egrets etc.). The territorial populations of these waterbirds are poorly documented but deserve further survey and monitoring attention.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

TCI's nine IBAs—the territory's international priority sites for bird conservation—cover 2,470 km² (including large marine areas), and about 15% of the islands' land area. The IBAs have been identified on the basis of 27 key bird species (listed in Table 1) that variously trigger the IBA criteria. These 27 species comprise all four restricted-range species, 22 congregatory waterbirds/seabirds, and the Vulnerable West

Indian Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna arborea*—the only globally threatened bird that occurs in sufficient numbers to trigger the IBA criteria. Insufficient numbers of Near Threatened Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* and Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* occur to identify IBAs for their conservation, although both do occur in IBAs.

The nine identified IBAs include two areas of forest (in one case including important ponds) that support the restricted-range birds; two groups of seabird breeding cays; two areas of former saltpans and adjacent creeks; and three other wetland areas (which include some related habitats including cliffs and other coastal types). These IBAs are on or near North, Middle and East Caicos, Grand Turk, Salt Cay and several small cays. No IBAs have been identified on West Caicos, Providenciales or South Caicos. However, West Caicos needs further survey and assessment (especially in light of the major development in progress on this formerly uninhabited island) as some areas may qualify as IBAs. Similarly, several areas of Providenciales (e.g. Pigeon Pond and Frenchman's Creek Nature Reserve, Juba Creek and Flamingo Lake) may qualify as IBAs, but further survey data

Wade's Green–Teren Hill IBA on North Caicos, one of the two dry forest IBAs identified in the territory. (PHOTO: MIKE PIENKOWSKI)



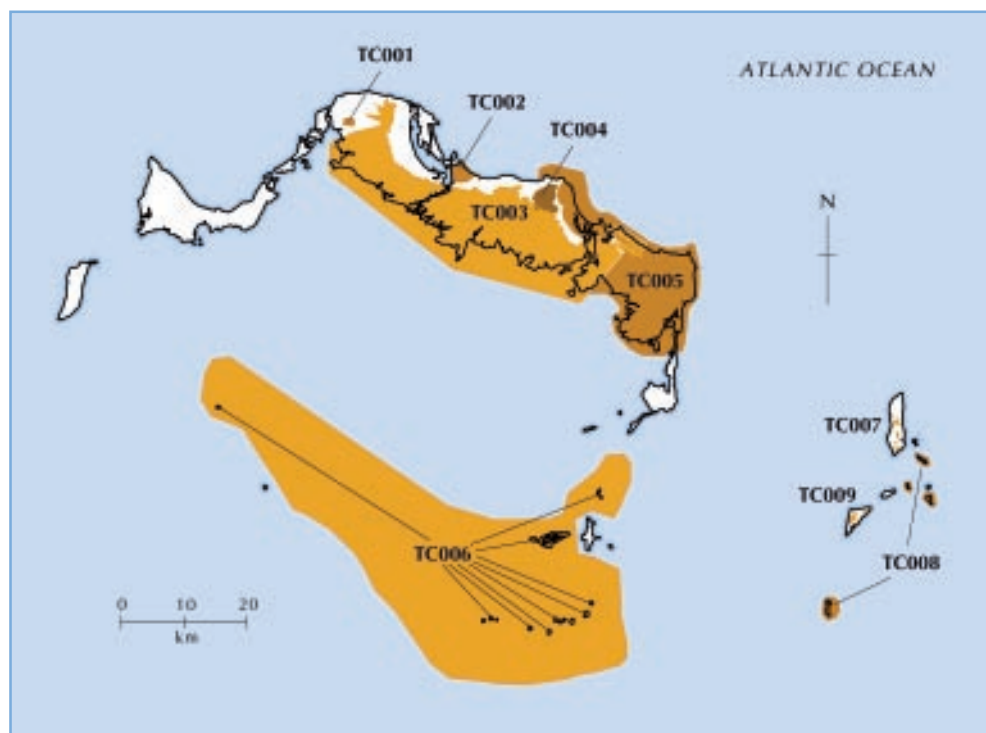


Figure 1. Location of Important Bird Areas in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

are needed. On South Caicos, reinstatement of the tidal flow around Boiling Hole would no doubt lead to the (re-) establishment of the extensive saltpan area as an internationally important site for waterbirds. Further seabird surveys may also point to IBA status for South Caicos' Admiral Cockburn Nature Reserve (Long Cay, Middleton Cay and Six Hills Cay).

There is a clear need for further survey work to fill information gaps, but also for the maintenance of the monitoring work that has started for the seabirds. Any such survey and monitoring results should be used to inform the annual assessment of state, pressure and response variables at each IBA in order to provide an objective status assessment and highlight management interventions that might be required to maintain these internationally important biodiversity sites.

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TC001 Wade's Green–Teren Hill		Unprotected
<p>COORDINATES 21°56'N 72°01'W ADMIN REGION North Caicos AREA 226 ha ALTITUDE 6–30 m HABITAT Forest</p>		<p>THREATENED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS 4</p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p>
 <p>Bahama Woodstar</p>		

Site description

Wade's Green–Teren Hill IBA is close to the settlement of Kew in north-western North Caicos Island. Wade's Green is an old Loyalist plantation with the manor house high up on a hill overlooking much of the island. Teren Hill, a second historic plantation ruin, is in close proximity. This IBA represents the most important remaining high "gallery" forest area in the territory. High forest was the dominant vegetation prior to c.1800, and this is one of the few areas where it has regenerated.

Birds

This IBA supports populations of all four Bahamas EBA restricted-range birds, namely Bahama Woodstar *Calliphlox evelynae*, Thick-billed Vireo *Vireo crassirostris*, Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachii* and Pearly-eyed Thrasher *Margarops fuscatus*. It is probably the most important area in TCI for the thrasher, and holds significant populations of Key-west Quail-dove *Geotrygon chrysia*, Western Spindalis *Spindalis zena*, and Cuban Crow *Corvus nasicus*. The globally threatened Blue-headed Quail-dove *Starnoenas cyanocephala* (a Cuban

endemic) has been recorded (occasionally) in this IBA in 2001–2002, presumably as a vagrant.

Other biodiversity

It is an important site for a endemic reptile species, namely the Caicos barking gecko *Aristelliger hechti* (recently rediscovered), curly tail *Leiocephalus psammodromus*, Caicos Islands reef gecko *Sphaerodactylus caicosensis* and the snake, Caicos Islands trope boa *Tropidophis greenwayi*, as well as a number of endemic subspecies.

Conservation

Wade's Green–Teren Hill IBA is partly on crown lands. Due to its historic importance TCI Executive Council agreed a 99-year lease to TCNT for the central buildings area at Wades Green in 1999 and TCNT now manages the site. However, the rest of the area needs nature reserve status and TCNT management to secure the IBA's biodiversity interest. The area falls within the remit of the TCNT Biodiversity Management Plan.

TC002 Fish Ponds and Crossing Place Trail		Unprotected
<p>COORDINATES 21°50'N 71°50'W ADMIN REGION Middle Caicos AREA 1,024 ha ALTITUDE 0–15 m HABITAT Coastline, sea, rocky areas, caves, shrubland, wetland</p>		<p>THREATENED BIRDS 1</p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS 2</p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
 <p>West Indian Whistling-duck</p>		

Site description

Fish Ponds and Crossing Place Trail IBA is situated in the western part of the north coast of Middle Caicos. It includes Fish Ponds, Crossing Place Trail, Indian Cave, and Blowing and Juniper Holes. The IBA is characterised by limestone cliffs that slope inland to ponds, which are connected to the sea under the cliffs. There are several sea-caves, and a dry inland cave within the site, Indian Cave. Offshore are a number of small cays. Fish Ponds comprise some of the most important wetlands in the area that are not included within the Ramsar site (see TC003). Crossing Place Trail is the traditional route along the Caicos Islands. The Middle Caicos section is particularly important culturally and scenically.

Birds

This IBA is significant for supporting a population of the Vulnerable West Indian Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna arborea*, and two (of the four) Bahamas EBA restricted-range birds, namely Bahama Woodstar *Calliphlox evelynae* and Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachii*. Regionally important populations of White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*, terns *Sterna* spp. and Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* breed. Unknown numbers of Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri* breed on

the offshore cays. Up to 500 Caribbean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* are present and small numbers of migrant Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* have been recorded.

Other biodiversity

The endemic Drury's hairstreak butterfly *Strymon acis leucostricha* occurs. The endemic reptile species curly tail *Leiocephalus psammodromus*, Caicos Islands reef gecko *Sphaerodactylus caicosensis* and the snake, Caicos Islands trope boa *Tropidophis greenwayi*, occur, as well as a number of endemic subspecies.

Conservation

Fish Ponds and Crossing Place Trail IBA is on crown lands. The Crossing Place Trail has interim protection against development under the Planning Regulations legislation, but more substantive protection (e.g. as a nature reserve) is required, both against built development and any impacts of the proposed causeway to link North and Middle Caicos. The track built to the existing North Caicos ferry cuts across some of the Fish Ponds and has disrupted water flow, resulting in deoxygenation and mass fish deaths, of great concern to local residents. This needs addressing, as noted in the TCNT Biodiversity Management Plan.

TC003 North, Middle and East Caicos Ramsar Site		Ramsar Site/Nature Reserve
<p>COORDINATES 21°47'N 71°46'W ADMIN REGION East Caicos, Middle Caicos, North Caicos AREA 58,562 ha ALTITUDE 0–25 m HABITAT Coastline, sea, shrubland, wetlands</p>	  <p>Caribbean Flamingo</p>	<p>THREATENED BIRDS 1</p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS 4</p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS 0</p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS ✓</p>

Site description

North, Middle and East Caicos Ramsar Site IBA stretches along the wetland (mainly south-west) sides of North Caicos, Middle Caicos and part of East Caicos. It is a wetland complex including a range of wetland and some linked dry-land ecosystems with important natural transitions between them. The submerged mangrove swamps, algal flats, sea-grass beds and several inlet cays are particularly noteworthy. The IBA boundary is the same as that of the Ramsar site.

Birds

This IBA is significant for supporting a population of the Vulnerable West Indian Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna arborea*, and all four Bahamas EBA restricted-range birds. However, this site is most notable for its waterbirds. Over 20,000 waterbirds occur, and the populations of a number of these (e.g. Caribbean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*, and a number of shorebirds) are globally significant. Small numbers of migrant Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* and the Near Threatened Kirtland’s Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* have been recorded wintering in the IBA. The endemic subspecies of Greater Antillean Bullfinch *Loxigilla violacea ofella* occurs, as does Western Spindalis *Spindalis zena* and Cuban Crow *Corvus nasicus*.

Other biodiversity

The IBA is an important site for feeding of immatures or breeding by a number of globally threatened sea-turtles, including the Endangered green turtle *Chelonia mydas* and loggerhead turtle *Caretta caretta* and Critically Endangered hawksbill turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*. On land the endemic reptile species curly tail *Leiocephalus psammodomus*, Caicos Islands reef gecko *Sphaerodactylus caicosensis* and the snake, Caicos Islands trope boa *Tropidophis greenwayi*, occur, as well as a number of endemic subspecies.

Conservation

The North, Middle and East Caicos Ramsar Site IBA is mainly on crown lands and is included in the TCNT Biodiversity Management Plan. The area is a statutory nature reserve (number 17) and includes the overlapping Vine Point (Man O’ War Bush and Ocean Hole) Nature Reserve (number 22). Working with the local community, the TCNT and its partners have produced and started to implement a “Plan for biodiversity management and sustainable development around the Turks and Caicos Ramsar site”. The strict protection afforded by the statutory nature reserve should be implemented fully and extended to include the ecologically linked dry-land and ponds in Middle Caicos, more fully to East Caicos, and reef areas on North and East Caicos.

TC004 Middle Caicos Forest		Unprotected
<p>COORDINATES 21°48'N 71°42'W ADMIN REGION Middle Caicos AREA 1,374 ha ALTITUDE 0–15 m HABITAT Forest, shrubland, wetlands</p>	  <p>Thick-billed Vireo</p>	<p>THREATENED BIRDS 1</p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS 4</p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS 0</p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS 0</p>

Site description

Middle Caicos Forest IBA lies between the settlements of Lorimers and Bambarra on the north-east side of the island. It is an area of forest that was cleared during the plantation era and is now at various stages of recovery to higher forest and thus supports a good range of scrub and woodland types. There are also different types of permanent and temporary wetlands in the IBA. Some important plantation ruins remain.

Birds

This IBA is significant for supporting the territory’s largest population of the Vulnerable West Indian Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna arborea* and populations of all four Bahamas EBA restricted-range birds, namely Bahama Woodstar *Calliphlox evelynae*, Thick-billed Vireo *Vireo crassirostris*, Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachii* and Pearly-eyed Thrasher *Margarops fuscatus* (this latter species being uncommon). Cuban Crow *Corvus nasicus* and Key-west Quail-dove *Geotrygon chrysis* occur, as does the endemic subspecies Greater Antillean Bullfinch *Loxigilla violacea ofella*. The majority of TCI records for wintering Near Threatened Kirtland’s Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* are from this IBA

Other biodiversity

Endemic reptile species, namely the Caicos barking gecko *Aristelliger hechti* (recently rediscovered), curly tail *Leiocephalus psammodomus*, Caicos Islands reef gecko *Sphaerodactylus caicosensis* and the snake, Caicos Islands trope boa *Tropidophis greenwayi*, occur, as well as a number of endemic subspecies. The Near Threatened Cuban fruit-eating bat *Brachyphylla nana* occurs.

Conservation

Middle Caicos Forest IBA is a mixture of crown and private ownership. The area is unprotected, but its importance is recognised through inclusion in the TCNT Biodiversity Management Plan. Several field roads in the IBA have been reopened by the TCNT for the development of interpretative trails. However, the area needs statutory nature reserve status and the government has approved TCNT’s management of parts of the area, but related land transfers to TCNT are still awaited. Appropriate crown lands should be transferred to conservation ownership and management as soon as possible, and negotiations with private land owners should focus on raising awareness of the biodiversity value of the area, its conservation and appropriate access for visitors. The IBA is important to local people for plants still used for traditional purposes.

TC005 East Caicos and adjacent areas		Unprotected
<p>COORDINATES 21°41'N 71°31'W ADMIN REGION East Caicos AREA 30,440 ha ALTITUDE 0–50 m HABITAT Coastline, forest, shrubland, rocky areas, wetlands, sea</p>	 	<p>THREATENED BIRDS 1</p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS 3</p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS 0</p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

Site description

East Caicos and adjacent areas IBA embraces the totally uninhabited island of East Caicos and adjacent areas of eastern and north-eastern Middle Caicos. The East Caicos portion is a complex of inter-related scrub, woodland, ponds, caves, marshes, flats and other wetlands, adjoining an existing Ramsar site (IBA TC003) which covers only a small part of the island. On Middle Caicos the IBA includes Long Bay (on the north-east shore) and the creeks and flats at Lorimers and Increase, together with the coral reef off Middle and East Caicos. The area at the eastern end of Middle Caicos and around Joe Grant Cay is a complex of cays, creeks and marshes extending to Windward Going Through, and adjoining the existing Ramsar site.

Birds

This IBA is significant for the Vulnerable West Indian Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna arborea* and populations of three (of the four) Bahamas EBA restricted-range birds, namely Bahama Woodstar *Calliphlox evelynae*, Thick-billed Vireo *Vireo crassirostris* and Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachii*. The IBA supports important populations of a number of waterbirds including globally significant numbers of Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens* and Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. Cuban Crow *Corvus nasicus* and the endemic subspecies Greater Antillean Bullfinch *Loxigilla*

violacea ofella occur. The Near Threatened Kirtland’s Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* has been recorded wintering in this IBA, as have several Near Threatened Piping Plovers *Charadrius melodus*.

Other biodiversity

This IBA is important for the Critically Endangered hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and Endangered green *Chelonia mydas* and leatherback *Caretta caretta* turtles. Most of TCI’s nesting beaches are thought to be on East Caicos and Long Bay. A number of endemic reptiles occur, namely the curly tail *Leiocephalus psammudromus*, Caicos Islands reef gecko *Sphaerodactylus caicosensis* and the snake, Caicos Islands trope boa *Tropidophis greenwayi* as well as several endemic subspecies. The East Caicos cave system is probably important for bats and endemic invertebrates.

Conservation

East Caicos and adjacent areas IBA is unprotected but urgently needs statutory nature reserve status as recommended in the TCNT Biodiversity Management Plan. Quantitative information on the IBA’s birds and other biodiversity is limited and additional survey information is needed. The currently uninhabited area (on East Caicos) has been previously threatened by major resort development, and some threats remain.

TC006 Caicos Bank Southern Cays		Sanctuary/Nature Reserve
<p>COORDINATES 21°11'N 71°47'W ADMIN REGION Caicos Bank AREA 153,180 ha ALTITUDE 0–10 m HABITAT Rocky areas, coastline, sea</p>	 	<p>THREATENED BIRDS 0</p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS 0</p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS 0</p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

Site description

Caicos Bank Southern Cays IBA comprises several small cays that extend south from South Caicos on south-eastern edge of the Caicos Bank. From north to south these cays include Fish Cay, a small rocky cay between South Caicos and the Ambergris Cays; Little Ambergris Cay which consists of several small cays surrounding a central lagoon; Bush and Seal Cays, small rocky cays near the south-eastern extremity of Caicos Bank; and French Cay, a small sandy cay several kilometres to the west of Seal Cays along the southern edge of the Caicos Bank.

Birds

This IBA is a significant seabird breeding site with up to 40,000 birds present. The populations of Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* (primarily Fish Cay), Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus* (Bush Cay, with some on Fish Cay) and Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* (11,000 pairs on French Cay) are globally important. Sandwich *S. sandvicensis* and Royal *S. maxima* terns occur in regionally important numbers. The Green-tailed Warbler *Microligea palustris* (a Hispaniola EBA restricted-range birds) has been recorded on Bush Cay as a vagrant.

Other biodiversity

The Critically Endangered Turks and Caicos rock iguana *Cyclura carinata carinata* occurs, as do a number of endemic reptiles, namely the curly tail *Leiocephalus psammudromus*, Caicos Islands reef gecko *Sphaerodactylus caicosensis* and the snake, Caicos Islands trope boa *Tropidophis greenwayi*. The waters, reef and beaches in this IBA are important to the Critically Endangered hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and Endangered green *Chelonia mydas* and leatherback *Caretta caretta* turtles.

Conservation

Caicos Bank Southern Cays IBA is crown land. The southernmost French, Bush and Seal Cays are a statutory sanctuary (number 24) although this status is not widely realised or enforced, and there are many unauthorised landings from yachts, and boats carrying illegal immigrants. Fish and Little Ambergris cays are TCNT nature reserves, managed by the Trust on a 99-year lease from the TCI government. However, these cays deserve national-level statutory nature reserve status to better ensure their long-term conservation.

TC007 Grand Turk Salinas and Shores		Unprotected	
<p>COORDINATES 21°27'N 71°08'W ADMIN REGION Grand Turk AREA 268 ha ALTITUDE 0–2 m HABITAT Coastal wetland, salina, beach, sea</p>		 <p>Lesser Yellowlegs</p>	<p>THREATENED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

Site description

Grand Turk Salinas and Shores IBA embraces all the major wetland areas on Grand Turk Island. About 40% of Grand Turk is wetland—abandoned salinas (or salt pans) from the salt production industry, saltwater inlets (or creeks) and nearby shores. Some of these wetlands are viewable from the centre of TCI’s capital (Cockburn Town, or “Grand Turk”). The salinas and wetlands include Town Salina, North Wells, South Wells, North Creek, South Creek, Great Salina, Hawkes Pond Salina and Hawkes Nest Salina. The creeks support tidal mudflats.

Birds



This IBA is significant for waterbirds—with important breeding and wintering populations of a range of species. Large numbers of herons, egrets, ducks, shorebirds and terns use these wetlands, but the breeding population of Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* is globally important, as are the large numbers of wintering Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* and Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*. The breeding population of Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* is also globally significant. The Near Threatened Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* has been recorded.

Other biodiversity

The Critically Endangered hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and Endangered green *Chelonia mydas* and leatherback *Caretta caretta* turtles all nest on some of the beaches in this IBA.

Conservation

Grand Turk Salinas and Shores IBA is a mixture of crown and private land ownership. Salt pans are regarded as waste-land rather than the unique resource that they are, and are being infilled. The TCI Government Development Manual outlines the requirement for an environmental impact assessment for any development in a salina, but the Department of Planning does not enforce this need. With the constant threat of development impinging on the integrity of these wetlands there is a strong case for designating them as a statutory nature reserve (for both their historic interest and biodiversity value). Town Salina would be an ideal focal area for development as an awareness-raising/ educational “watchable wildlife pond”.

TC008 Turks Bank Seabird Cays		Sanctuary/Nature Reserve	
<p>COORDINATES 21°24'N 71°05'W ADMIN REGION Big Sandy Cay, Long Cay, Penniston Cay AREA 1,815 ha ALTITUDE 0–12 m HABITAT Sea, rocky areas, beach</p>		 <p>Sooty Tern</p>	<p>THREATENED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

Site description

Turks Bank Seabird Cays IBA comprises the small, rocky cays south-east of Grand Turk, starting with Long Cay which is c.2.5 km south-east of Grand Turk, and ending in the south with Big Sand Cay—the south-easternmost point of the territory. The IBA includes Long Cay, East (formerly Pinzon) Cay, Penniston Cay and Big Sand Cay. Some of the cays have sandy beaches, especially at Big Sand Cay.

Birds

This IBA supports over 100,000 breeding seabirds. Globally important populations of Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (primarily East Cay), Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (primarily Penniston Cay), Sooty Tern *S. fuscata* (on Big Sand Cay) and Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* (mostly Long Cay, but some also on Penniston) breed. Numbers of White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* are regionally significant. East (or Pinzon) Cay supports unknown (but probably large) numbers of Audubon’s Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri* (which probably also breed on other cays in the IBA). Small numbers of Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* and Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* breed on Penniston Cay.

Other biodiversity

The Critically Endangered Turks and Caicos rock iguana *Cyclura carinata carinata* is common on Long Cay and Big Sand Cay. The endemic curly tail lizard *Leiocephalus psammodromus* also occurs on some of the cays. The shores are likely to be nesting beaches for the Critically Endangered hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and Endangered green *Chelonia mydas* and leatherback *Caretta caretta* turtles.

Conservation

The Turks Bank Seabird Cays IBA is crown land and the cays are variously designated as at different levels of protection. Long Cay is a statutory sanctuary (number 25). Other small cays near Grand Turk constitute the Grand Turk Cays Land and Sea National Park (statutory national park number 7). However, Penniston Cay and East Cay are wrongly classified in the protected areas system and need transferring from national park status to a statutory sanctuary. Gibbs Cay should remain a part of the national park. Big Sand Cay is a statutory sanctuary (number 23). The cays are subjected to disturbance and there appear to be problems enforcing the sanctuary status of the cays.

TC009 Salt Cay Creek and Salinas		Unprotected
<p>COORDINATES 21°12'N 71°15'W ADMIN REGION Salt Cay AREA 251 ha ALTITUDE 0–2 m HABITAT Coastline</p>		<p>THREATENED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>RESTRICTED-RANGE BIRDS 3</p> <p>BIOME-RESTRICTED BIRDS <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>CONGREGATORY BIRDS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

Site description

Salt Cay is the southernmost inhabited island in the Turks, about 10 km south-west of Grand Turk. Salt Cay Creek and Salinas IBA embraces the natural creek area on the south-east side of Salt Cay and the abandoned salinas (saltpans) throughout the island, many of which are viewable from the roads in and around the settlement of Balfour Town. The salinas support many historic relics of the abandoned salt production industry.

Birds

This IBA supports a globally significant breeding population of Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*, and regional important numbers of Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*, Wilson’s Plover *Charadrius wilsonia*, Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* and Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. Large numbers of (wintering and migratory) shorebirds occur, with up to 2,500 wintering Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* recorded. Three (of the four) Bahamas EBA restricted-range birds, namely Bahama Woodstar *Calliphlox evelynae*, Thick-billed Vireo *Vireo crassirostris* and Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachii*, occur.

Other biodiversity

The shores are probably important for nesting Critically Endangered hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and Endangered green *Chelonia mydas* and leatherback *Caretta caretta* turtles. The Critically Endangered Turks and Caicos rock iguana *Cyclura carinata carinata* occurs but is rare.

Conservation

Salt Cay Creek and Salinas IBA is a mixture of crown and private land ownership. Parts of the saltpans are designated as a statutory area of historic interest (number 32). Salt Cay Creek is recognised locally as an informal sanctuary. However, this IBA needs nature reserve status with the boundary including both Salt Cay Creek and the salinas. With critical wetland areas right within the town, this would be an ideal focal area for development as an awareness-raising/ educational “watchable wildlife pond” (combining the historic interest with the wildlife feature).