

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

1. Country: Cayman Islands
2. Date: 13.9.94
3. Ref: 6UK002
4. Name and address of compiler:
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5. Name of wetlands: Booby Pond and Rookery, Little Cayman
6. Date of Ramsar designation: 21/09/1994
7. Geographical coordinates: 19°40'N; 80°04'W
8. General location: East of the airstrip, Little Cayman
9. Area: 82 ha
10. Wetland type: E; I; J;
11. Altitude: 0.3m

12. Overview:

The site comprises a mangrove-fringed saline lagoon which supports a major breeding colony of Red-footed Boobies in trees along its northern margin. It also provides a seasonally important habitat for resident and migratory waders, and other waterfowl.

13. Physical features:

A large seasonal hypersaline lagoon (maximum 70cm deep) with extensive fringing mangroves, coastal sand beach and mixed woodland on platform rock. The salinity is 69 p.p.t; the water level fluctuates widely according to rainfall, evapotranspiration and the tides, and the lagoon dries out in summer.

14. Ecological features:

The main vegetation comprises mangrove swamp with a transition through *Thespesia populnea* and *Cordia* sp. to dry evergreen and floristically diverse thicket on rock pavement at the northern margin of the site. Major components of the vegetation include the Cayman Islands endemics *Cordian sebestina* ??

15. Land tenure/ownership of:

- (a) site: Booby Pond is Crown land. The Beach and Rookery are in private ownership.
- (b) surrounding area: Not known.

16. Conservation measures taken:

In 1992, the site covered 50ha, but the boundaries have now been expanded to cover 82ha. The entire site is protected under local legislation, through the Animals Law 1976, and the Animals (Sanctuaries) Regulations 1982 as amended by Gazette No 24 of 1993.

17. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

A management planning process for the site will commence formally this year, in which community involvement will play an important role.

18. Current land use:

(a) site: Booby Ponds used as a public dump. Eggs of Sulidae and nestlings of Ardeidae are collected for food.

(b) surroundings/catchment: Sport fishing, hunting, birdwatching, tourist recreation at the beach.

19. Disturbances/threats, including changes in land use and major development projects:

(a) at the site: Illegal taking of eggs and nestlings (as above). Asphalt drums and rubbish dumping in the lagoon.

(b) in the surroundings/catchment: Not known.

20. Hydrological and physical values: No information

21. Social and cultural values: No information

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Breeding colony of Red-footed Boobies (possibly 30% of the total Caribbean population. It is the only breeding site in the Caymans. Colonies of this species are known to be on the decline in the Caribbean as a whole (c. 7,000). 550 *Egretta thula*, 95 *Egretta tricolor*, 200 *Tringa melanoleuca*, 50 *T. flavipes*, 50 *Limnodromus griseus*, 350 *Trigata magnificens* (100% of the Cayman Islands breeding population). The vulnerable West Indian Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna arboreus*) utilises the pond seasonally in small flocks. The site is also a breeding site for the Cayman Islands endemics *Elaenia nastenica caymenensis* and *Quiscalus niger bangsi*.

23. Noteworthy flora:

The Cayman Islands endemics *Cordia sebestera caymenensis* and *Coccothrinax proctovii*.

24. Current scientific research and facilities: No information

25. Current conservation education:

Arranged by the National Trust for the Cayman Islands: General environmental education; National Trust conservation programmes; Seminars by visiting researchers.

26. Current recreation and tourism:

Beach used for recreation by tourists. Sport fishing, hunting and birdwatching.

27. Management authority: No information

28. Jurisdiction: Department of the Environment

29. Bibliographical references:

Scott, D.A. and Carbonell, M. (eds). 1986. A directory of Neotropical Wetlands. Cambridge/Slimbridge: IUCN/IWRB.

30. Reasons for inclusion: 1a,2b,2c.