



# Caribbean

*A vista from Dominica.* Credit: David Kirsch / Creative Commons license

Spread over nearly 4 million square kilometers, the lands of the Caribbean region are home to a wealth of wildlife found nowhere else in the world.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) together with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), works to conserve iconic species and ecosystems in the Caribbean. The USFWS Caribbean Program provides technical and financial support to projects that reduce threats to biodiversity and strengthen the capacities of local individuals and institutions to undertake sustained biodiversity conservation actions in the long-term.

Bound together by the Caribbean Sea, the region's unique diversity of coral reefs, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds are an important feeding and breeding area for a variety of fish, marine mammals, seabirds, and sea turtles.

These ecological systems provide services such as storm protection, erosion control, and food provisions for local communities, while contributing to the economy of the Caribbean and also to the American Gulf Region by supporting healthy commercial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries.

Geographic funding priorities include the Greater Antilles including the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica; the Lesser Antilles including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago; and South America including Guyana and Suriname.

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*The Caribbean region is home to approximately 6,500 plant, 150 bird, 470 reptile, 40 mammal, 170 amphibian and 65 fish species found nowhere else in the world.*

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### Program Highlights

- Supporting the conservation of the critically endangered Jamaican iguana by establishing a comprehensive management strategy that results in a variety of outcomes including the designation of a buffer zone surrounding the core conservation area for this species.
- Implementing a consumer behavior change campaign in Trinidad and Tobago that addresses the illegal wildlife trade for species including parrots and monkeys complemented by baseline assessments of consumption patterns and training for conservation and law enforcement officials.
- Strengthening local stakeholder capacity to manage and protect the newly created Three Bays Marine Managed Area in Haiti with a combination of activities such as community-led patrols, piloting income-generating beekeeping businesses, and leading environmental education workshops.



*Birds such as blue and gold macaws in Trinidad and Tobago are among the species threatened by the illegal wildlife trade in the Caribbean.* Credit: Dennis Jarvis / Creative Commons



*Queen conch meat is consumed domestically throughout the Caribbean and exported. Conch shells and shell jewelry are sold to tourists and the live animals are used for the aquarium trade. Their slow growth, occurrence in shallow waters and late maturation make queen conch particularly susceptible to over-fishing, their greatest threat.*

Credit: Sean Nash / Creative Commons

### Threats to Wildlife in the Caribbean

Caribbean wildlife is imperiled because of the following threats:

#### Invasive Species

Invasive species can outcompete and lead to the reduction or extinction of native and endemic species.

#### Agricultural Encroachment and Intensification

With the need to sustain livelihoods and grow economies, agricultural and fishing activities are conducted without long-term sustainability considered.

#### Residential and Commercial Development

Economic and tourism-driven development pose risks and reduce habitat for wildlife when conducted without accompanying mitigation efforts.

#### Detrimental Tourist Activities

Without proper education, guidance, and regulations, tourists can unknowingly harm native wildlife such as birds, sea turtles, iguanas, and coral reefs.

#### Wildlife Trafficking

Unchecked illegal poaching of threatened wildlife for sale in local and international markets can pose a considerable challenge to their survival.

### Vision for Program

The Caribbean Program seeks to conserve the unique species and ecosystems of the region by empowering local actors to implement solutions that are sustainable, culturally sound, and economically viable, so Caribbean people and nature can thrive.

### Strategic Objectives

1. To reduce the underlying threats to Caribbean biodiversity by supporting the implementation of on-the-ground projects.
2. To conserve the flora and fauna of the Caribbean region by strengthening the ability of local institutions, decision makers and civil society to deliver enduring conservation actions.
3. To maximize conservation impact by developing strategic partnerships with key stakeholders on the local, national, regional and international levels.

### Focus Areas for Funding in 2019

#### Conservation of Threatened Species and their Habitats

The Service seeks to support-on-the-ground projects that promote a comprehensive approach to the recovery and conservation of threatened species and their habitats in the Caribbean, reduce the threats and increase local capacities to engage in species conservation actions and management.

#### Addressing Illegal Trade of Wildlife in the Caribbean

In the Caribbean region wildlife trafficking threatens an increasing variety of terrestrial and marine species including but not limited to marine turtles, queen conch, spiny lobsters, sharks, parrots, macaws, reptiles, timber, among others, while damaging local communities and undermining sustainable development efforts. The Service intends to support projects that address the root causes of illegal wildlife trade, by improving the capacities of Caribbean government agencies, their personnel and civil society to protect biodiversity from poaching and trafficking.

#### Coastal and Marine Protected Areas Management and Conservation through Institutional Capacity Building and Local Community Engagement

The Service seeks to support projects that strengthen the management and conservation of coastal and marine protected areas and their buffer zones, while effectively addressing the key threats to priority species and ecosystems and providing alternatives that support the rational use of natural resources by the local communities.



*Fishing in Haiti.*

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