

Buck Island

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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Photos (top to bottom):

Buck Island NWR
Buck Island Danish Lighthouse
Red-billed Tropicbird

Refuge facts:

- Acres: 45
- Established: 1969
- Location: This refuge is approximately two miles south of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI).
- Administration: Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex. The headquarters of the complex is located in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico.

Natural History

- The refuge was established because of its importance to migratory birds.
- The island is home to two different species of reptile endemic to the Puerto Rico bank, the Antillean skink and the Puerto Rican racer.
- Just offshore is an outstanding coral reef where thousands of people visit annually to sail, snorkel and scuba dive.
- A Danish Lighthouse established in 1916 is an important part of the refuge's history.

Refuge Objectives

- Conserve, enhance, restore and protect native wildlife populations and habitat.
- Conserve and protect cultural resources.
- Increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural resources of the refuge.

Management Tools

- Wildlife monitoring and surveys.
- Scientific research.
- Invasive species control.

- Habitat restoration and reforestation.

- Law enforcement.

Public Use Opportunities

- Bird watching.
- Nature photography.
- Snorkeling at the nearby coral reefs.

Questions and Answers

Is the refuge open to the public?

The refuge is not closed to the public but no visitor services programs nor do facilities exist to accommodate visitation to the island.

Are there bird watching opportunities available?

Visitors may see red-billed tropicbirds, 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 because of its deteriorated condition. It is no longer operational.

Are diving opportunities available at the refuge?

The refuge does not include the waters surrounding the island, however, spectacular reefs are in the near shore area and several daily charter boat trips are offered out of St. Thomas, USVI.

I thought Buck Island was managed by the National Park Service. Are there two Buck Islands?

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