



# ANGUILLA NATIONAL TRUST

## *Preservation For Generations*

### Press Release

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#### **ANT Joins Month-Long Regional Festival that Focuses on Global Warming and Biodiversity**

On 22 April, the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB), the largest single regional organisation devoted to wildlife conservation, launched the 6th annual Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival (CEBF) which runs from 22 April to 22 May 2007. This year, the month-long Festival, supported by environmental organizations across the Caribbean, focuses on the threat of climate change to regional biological diversity.

The purpose of the Festival over its 5-year history has been to increase public awareness of the region's exceptionally rich and threatened bird life, using the Caribbean's celebrated endemic birds as flagships of conservation. According to Dr. Joseph Wunderle, Senior Research Biologist, USDA Forest Service in Puerto Rico, an astonishing 72% of the approximately 208 resident island bird species are endemic to the Caribbean islands—that is, they are found nowhere else in the world. Yet sadly, rates of species extinction have been highest on the world's islands, including those of the Caribbean.

In launching this year's Festival, Andrew Dobson, President of the SCSCB, remarked that the imminent threat of global climate change is a new destructive force that compounds the many threats that the region's plants and animals are already experiencing. According to Dobson, and leading conservation voices on Caribbean natural history, the very fabric of the life-supporting Caribbean environment is at risk.

"With climate change, our forests, watersheds, coastal wetlands, coral reefs and beaches are all expected to take yet another turn for the worst in ways we cannot even fully appreciate," Dobson said. "The only thing we are certain of is that native species, such as the wild birds of the Caribbean, are today faced with a suite of threats greater than they have ever confronted in their history."

The annual Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival, which attracted over 20 000 participants in 2006, has been described as an unprecedented initiative of regional unification for heightening environmental education and awareness.

In Anguilla, the Anguilla National Trust has organised a series of activities to mark this important event. Festival activities began on 21 April (coinciding with Earth Day which fell on 22 April) with a hike organised for the ALHCS Environmental Club along Anguilla's spectacular northeast coastline, a wetland bird count of all 25 of the island's saltponds, an Environmental Camp trip to Prickly Pear to observe the important nesting grounds of the cay's brown booby population, the launch of Anguilla's Bird Guide at Wallblake House on Friday 25 May 2007 at 6:30pm, and a public viewing of Al Gore's Academy Award winning documentary "An Inconvenient Truth". The film will be shown on Thursday 17 May 2007 at 6:30pm at the Teachers Resource Centre. A brief introduction to climate change will be given by Ms Gina Brooks-Hodge.

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#### About the Anguilla National Trust

The Anguilla National Trust was established in 1993 to act as custodian of Anguilla's heritage, preserving and promoting the island's natural environment and its archaeological, historical and cultural resources for present and future generations. It is in the business of ensuring the sustainability of Anguilla's heritage. The ANT is a dynamic people-centred organisation working in collaboration with public and private sector entities to manage Anguilla's natural social and cultural heritage.

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For more information about the CEBF, events and activities planned for the Festival, or to obtain copies of the Bird Guide of Anguilla, please visit the ANT office or call 497 5297.

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