



ANGUILLA NATIONAL TRUST

Preservation For Generations

World Wetlands Day 2006

On 2 February, the world observed World Wetlands Day. This year's theme was "There's wealth in wetland diversity – don't lose it." While Anguilla is a coral-based limestone island with no surface rivers, there are still many coastal and inland ponds that can be categorized as wetlands. The Anguilla National Trust took this day as an opportunity to celebrate the island's wetland and cultural diversity.

The importance of wetlands to Anguillians cannot be overemphasized and deserves special recognition. These areas trap runoff sediments from land-based activities such as farming and construction. They provide protection from tropical storms and hurricanes and act as buffers against powerful waves, high tides, and strong winds. The plants and trees found in these ponds stabilize soils and help prevent erosion and flooding. They filter water and recharge groundwater supplies so that we can use them for drinking, irrigation, and washing. They are places to which we can go to relax, to go walking, to take photographs, or to just enjoy nature's beauty and diversity. And Anguilla's wetlands are diverse: they house over 130 species of resident and migrant birds and a plethora of different animals, invertebrates, and plants. All of these organisms are linked through an intricate and massive food web. Should any of these organisms be removed, repercussions may be felt throughout the system; nothing is immune or isolated – and that includes human beings.

As part of the World Wetlands Day activities, the Anguilla National Trust organized a fieldtrip to the East End Pond Conservation Area. On Wednesday, students from across the island visited the Pond for a morning of learning and fun. While much can be learned in the classroom, it was hoped that the students would gain a better appreciation for these dynamic ecosystems by being immersed in it. Activities combined the arts and the natural sciences and included bird-watching, drawing, writing, and a game that studied the relationship between wetlands and bird migration.

Our relationship with the natural world and with saltponds and wetlands, in particular, is a close one and deserves celebrating – not only on 2 February, but all year long.

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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