

St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA) Project Field Report –

St. Croix wetland bird surveys, 2022

SEA conducted bird surveys on St. Croix wetlands between January 15, 2022 and April 30, 2022. Eleven (11) sites were surveyed: Southgate Pond, Great Pond, Coakley Pond, Granard Pond (freshwater), Fredensborg Pond (freshwater), Altona Lagoon, Krause Lagoon Remnant, Salt River, West End Salt Pond, Long Point, and the UVI Wetlands (aka Billy French Ponds). When possible, each site was surveyed twice although some sites were only visited once.



Bird Surveys with spotting scope at Coakley Pond

Bird survey methodology followed the Caribbean Waterbird Census (CWC) Level 1 (Site Inventory) Area Search protocol. In this method, the observer moves around the site or search area identifying and counting all the birds in the area. The observer records species present and number of individuals of each species. Further and more specific information on this survey method can be found in the CWC Manual (Sorensen et al 2019).

All surveys were conducted in the morning. Survey days started in the early morning and on days when multiple sites were visited, no surveys started later than 9:00 am. All survey data was entered into eBird and links to each specific survey are found in Table 2. Basic summary data can be found in Table 1. In some cases, such as Southgate Pond, Great Pond, and Salt River, the size of the site necessitated breaking up the location into several smaller surveys.

During this time period, St. Croix was in an extreme drought. The water level at many wetland sites was low or the wetlands were completely dry, especially sites that do not have a connection to the ocean. As a result, the number of bird species and individuals was lower than normal at these sites, in some cases, dramatically so. The greatest number of species was found at Great Pond and Fredensborg Pond (n=38). Surprisingly, the Southgate Pond was very low in species diversity, with only 15 species observed. Southgate is generally at the top of the list for diversity, but it has been especially affected by the drought and was nearly completely dry. The largest number of individuals was found at the West End Salt Pond (n=247), more than double the number found at any other sites. Altona (n= 118) and Great Pond (n=115) had the next highest number of individuals.



Yellowlegs at Salt River

These surveys will be repeated in the fall of 2022 to better capture the wet season avifauna at each site and the early winter migrants.

Sorenson, L. G., A. Haynes-Sutton, F. Rivera-Milan, and J. Gerbracht. 2019. Caribbean Waterbird

Census Manual: Promoting Conservation of Waterbirds and Wetlands through Monitoring. BirdsCaribbean, Natick, MA. Xx pp.

Table 1. Summary data from wetland bird surveys on St. Croix, January – April 2022

Site	number of species (mean/survey)	number of species (cumulative)	number of individuals (mean/survey)
Coakley Pond	11	11	102
Salt River (east bays/pond)	20	20	82
Altona Salt Flats	18	24	118
Krause Lagoon Remnant	21	28	69
Granard Pond	0	0	0
Fredensborg Pond	29	38	94
West End Salt Pond (SPNWR)	23	29	247
Long Point	8	9	19
UVI Wetlands	15	15	87
Great Pond*	32	38	115
Southgate Pond*	11	15	55

Table 2. Links to survey data on eBird

Site	link to survey data in eBird	
Coakley Pond	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S102648096	
Salt River (east bays/pond)	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S108227659	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S108226993
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S108227453	
Altona Salt Flats	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S104487937	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S104488549
Krause Lagoon Remnant	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S104490566	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S105784453
Granard Pond	Pond was entirely dry and no birds were observed at this site	
Fredensborg Pond	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101635283	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S103613740

West End Salt Pond (SPNWR)	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S103330291	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S105493707
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S105495318	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S105495319
Long Point	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S102056708	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S104613895
UVI Wetlands	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S107030192	
*Great Pond and Southgate Pond Surveys were broken into smaller units based on long term CWC monitoring areas		
Great Pond*	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101293437 - GP CWC extras	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101287916 - GP CWC extras
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101294152 - GP-1	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101288910 - GP-1
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101371426 - Great Pond Bay-East	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101289194 - Great Pond Bay-East
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101400166 - GP-2	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101289607 - GP-2
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101400191 - GP-3	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101289607 - GP-3
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101400217 - GP-4	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101290262 - GP-4
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101400252 - GP-5	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101290611 - GP-5
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101400336 - GP-6	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101291141 - GP-6
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101400420 - Great Pond Bay-West	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101291624 - Great Pond Bay-West
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101400513 - GP-7	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101292220 - GP-7
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101400581 - GP-ESE	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101292684 - GP-ESE
Southgate Pond*	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101078388	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101144605
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101077798	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101144827
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101077881	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101145143
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101078176	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101144951
	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101078099	https://ebird.org/caribbean/checklist/S101145254