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Central Virgin Gorda

BVITIPA003

Country: **British Virgin Islands**
Administrative region: **Virgin Gorda (Province)**
Central co-ordinates: **18.48477 N, -64.40129 E**
Area: **7.8km²**

Qualifying IPA criteria

A(i), A(iv), B(ii), C(iii)

IPA assessment rationale

This TIPA is an important site for two of the threatened habitats (Semi-deciduous gallery forest and Upland evergreen forest) and an area with high botanical richness where seven globally threatened plant species grow.

Site description

This TIPA is in the central area of Virgin Gorda, the third largest island in the BVI, from Anguilla Point and Long Bay in the north to Lower Soldier Bay and South Sound Bluff in the south. It includes the entire Gorda Peak National Park, the proposed South Sound West Habitat Management Area and a small part of the proposed Savannah Bay Habitat Management Area.

Botanical significance

Very important populations of the regional endemics and globally threatened Calyptranthes kiaerskovii (CR), Calyptranthes thomasiana (EN) and Maytenus cymosa (EN) occur in the Upland evergreen forest habitat within the national park. Several globally threatened species are found growing on the hills of Gorda Peak towards the coast. The Puerto Rican Bank endemic Zanthoxylum thomasianum (EN), which only occurs on the islands of Virgin Gorda and Tortola in the BVI, have >1% of their global population within the TIPA's boundaries. Important populations of Machaonia woodburyana (EN) grow here, a species only found on Virgin Gorda in the BVI, along with Peperomia wheeleri (EN) and the Range Restricted Endemic (RRE) bromeliad Tillandsia x lineatispica. Other important plants within this TIPA are large populations of the Puerto Rican Bank endemic Malpighia woodburyana (VU), locally known as mad dog because of its stinging hairs, the BVI endemic Metastelma anegadense (EN), Virgin Islands endemic Croton fishlockii (NT) and the Puerto Rican bank endemics Agave missionum (VU), Psychilis macconnelliae (NT) and Tolumnia prionochila (NT).

Habitat and geology

Most of the threatened Upland evergreen forest habitat in Virgin Gorda is within the Gorda Peak National Park protected area located in the centre of this TIPA. This is one of only two islands in the BVI where this habitat occurs, the other being Tortola which has most of the national resource for this habitat (95.83%). Gorda Peak uplands have higher humidity than lower areas, thus providing habitat for unique and rare plants. This area has had limited past disturbance by agriculture due to its steep, rocky hillsides and is mostly threatened by feral animals grazing. Going down towards the coast along the ghuts within this TIPA there are excellent examples of the threatened habitat Semi-deciduous gallery forest (part of the 2nd and 4th best sites for this threatened habitat in the BVI). In the lower areas of this TIPA, the Seasonally deciduous forest and woodland still have several rare and threatened species, despite past disturbances.

Conservation issues

Threats to this TIPA include grazing by feral animals, invasive species, illegal extraction and urban development. Additionally, there has been illegal encroachment along the park boundary by farmers and associated fire risk from agricultureal practices, besides illegal clearance within the park for marijuana farming.

Site assessor(s)

BVI TIPAs National Team, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew - National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands - BVI Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration

IPA criterion A species

SPECIES	QUALIFYING SUB-CRITERION	≥ 1% OF GLOBAL POPULATION	≥ 5% OF NATIONAL POPULATION	1 OF 5 BEST SITES NATIONALLY	ENTIRE GLOBAL POPULATION	SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT	ABUNDANCE AT SITE
Calyptranthes kiaerskovii Krug & Urb.	A(i)	–	✓	–	–	–	
Calyptranthes thomasiana O.Berg	A(i)	–	✓	–	–	–	
Machaonia woodburyana Acev.-Rodr.	A(i)	–	✓	–	–	–	
Maytenus cymosa Krug & Urb.	A(i)	✓	–	–	–	–	
Peperomia wheeleri Britton	A(i)	–	✓	–	–	–	
Zanthoxylum thomasianum Krug & Urb.	A(i)	✓	–	–	–	–	
Tillandsia × lineatispica Mez	A(iv)	–	✓	–	–	–	
Agave missionum Trel.	A(i)	–	–	–	–	–	
Metastelma anegadense Britton	A(i)	–	–	–	–	–	
Malpighia woodburyana Vivaldi	A(i)	–	–	✓	–	–	

IPA criterion C qualifying habitats

HABITAT	QUALIFYING SUB-CRITERION	≥ 5% OF NATIONAL RESOURCE	≥ 10% OF NATIONAL RESOURCE	1 OF 5 BEST SITES NATIONALLY	AREAL COVERAGE AT SITE
Semi-deciduous Gallery Forest	C(iii)	–	–	✓	
Upland Evergreen Forest	C(iii)	–	–	✓	

General site habitats

GENERAL SITE HABITAT	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE

Land use types

LAND USE TYPE	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE

Threats

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING

Bibliography

The BVI TIPAs National Team 2019. **Identifying and Conserving Tropical Important Plant Areas in the British Virgin Islands (2016-2019): Final Technical Report.**