

Great Tobago Island

BVITIPA008



Country: **British Virgin Islands**

Administrative region: **Great Tobago (Island)**

Central co-ordinates: **18.44519 N, -64.82530 E**

Area: **0.95km²**

Qualifying IPA criteria

A(i), B(ii)

IPA assessment rationale

The whole island of Great Tobago was identified as a TIPA for its botanical richness and presence of globally threatened plants. This TIPA has the fourth largest area Coastal shrubland habitat in the BVI, but didn't qualify for sub-criterion C(iii) because of the poor quality of the habitat and high level of disturbance to the vegetation due to feral animal grazing.

Site description

The whole island was identified as a TIPA. The island is uninhabited and in 1995 it was declared a National Park for its seabird colony, forested area and coral reef conservation.

Botanical significance

A large population of the highly threatened Puerto Rico Bank endemic *Agave missionum* (VU) can be found growing across the island. Unfortunately, the non-native and invasive agave snout weevil has been recorded in this TIPA and is affecting the *Agave* population's health and recruitment. Plant species of national high conservation importance recorded on Great Tobago were the Puerto Rican Bank endemics *Malpighia woodburyana* (VU), *Rondeletia*

pilosa (NT) and *Piptocoma antillana* (LC). The Greater Antilles endemic *Stenocereus fimbriatus* (LC) and the West Indies endemic *Consolea rubescens* (LC) cacti have also been recorded in this TIPA. The Puerto Rican Bank endemic *Opuntia repens* (LC), locally named jumping cactus (as it breaks off and attaches to anything passing by) is abundant throughout the island.

Habitat and geology

Seasonally deciduous forests and woodland are present in less than a quarter of the island. Most of Great Tobago is dominated by the nationally threatened Coastal shrubland habitat.

Conservation issues

The main threats to this TIPA are invasive species and grazing by feral animals; however, feral goat eradication has been underway for several years on the island with activities intensifying in recent years. A long-term monitoring programme has been established on the island to assess vegetation recovery post-eradication. Five non-native invasive plant species *Calotropis procera*, *Leucaena leucocephala*, *Argemone mexicana*, *Aloe vera* and *Arivela viscosa* are actively being controlled. The cactus moth *Cactoblastis cactorum* which attacks members of the subfamily *Opuntioideae* has been recorded in the BVI and can pose a threat to the TIPAs cacti populations in the future.

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
<i>Agave missionum</i> Trel.	A(i)	—	—	✓	—	—	
<i>Malpighia woodburyana</i> 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
---------	--------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------

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.**