

JOST VAN DYKE EMBARKS ON AMBITIOUS PROJECT TO PROTECT ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

by Susan Zaluski

Beautiful White Bay on Jost van Dyke is a popular tourist spot

For the first time, the community of Jost van Dyke will have the opportunity to develop a comprehensive environmental database for Jost van Dyke and the nearby islands of Little Jost van Dyke, Sandy Cay, Sandy Spit and Green Cay.

The community will accomplish this through a project entitled “Jost van Dyke’s Community-based Programme Advancing Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development.” The project, which will continue until December 2009 is the initiative of a local Jost van Dyke non-profit organization – the Jost van Dykes Preservation Society (JVDPS).

Jost van Dyke, like all other small islands faces the challenge of maintaining the delicate balance between economic growth and sustainable use of its natural resources. However, unlike some other small islands, there is currently little science-based information for the community to employ in its decision making. The current project, which is funded by the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) and coordinated by the JVDPS will address the problem of a lack of scientific information on the natural resources of Jost van Dyke and the surrounding islands. It is also hoped that the project will heighten community awareness and understanding of the natural environment of these islands.


The project has two distinct phases. Phase 1 focuses on the development of an Environmental Profile for Jost van Dyke, Sandy Cay, Sandy Spit and Green Cay (the last three of which are proposed protected areas under the British Virgin Islands Protected Areas Systems Plan. Field research for the Environmental Profile will be conducted by professionals from the Caribbean based Island Resources Foundation (IRF), in collaboration with local BVI consultants and researchers. Research will focus on the following:

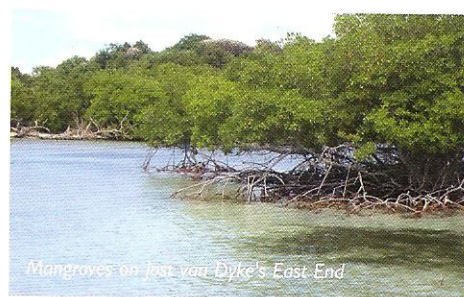
- Vegetation, wildlife and habitats of Jost van Dyke and the surrounding islands
- Marine ecosystems such as coral reefs, sea grass beds and wetlands
- Historical sites and sites of cultural significance
- Waste management and pollution

The Environmental Profile will also provide information on the soil, climate and vegetation of Jost van Dyke and surrounding islands, the government and non-governmental agencies responsible for managing the environment, land use patterns (current and historical) and recommendations for the future.

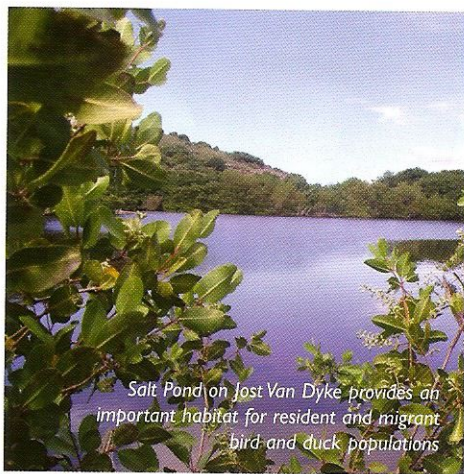
Preliminary research on the project has already identified a number of resident bats, snakes and frogs including the endemic Virgin Islands Tree Boa and the endemic Worm Snake. Some rare plants – including the Ramgoat Cherry and Cockspur have also been identified.

Once the Environmental Profile is complete, a significant effort will be made to share the profile and the information in the profile with residents of Jost van Dyke, stakeholders, visitors and BVI government agencies. This will constitute phase 2 of the project. Other aspects of phase 2 will include the establishment of an environmental information center on Jost Van Dyke and an environmental monitoring programme for Jost van Dyke. Throughout the project, the Jost van Dyke community will have the opportunity to contribute to the project by serving on the Environmental Advisory Group, participating in community meetings and contributing to field research.

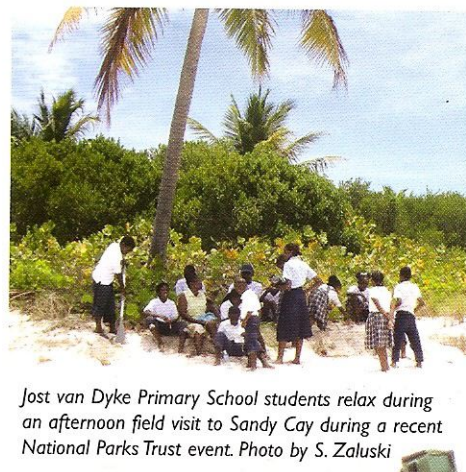
Further information on the project and on the Jost van Dykes Preservation Society may be found at www.jvdgreen.org and www.jvdps.org 



Mangroves on Jost van Dyke's East End



Salt Pond on Jost Van Dyke provides an important habitat for resident and migrant bird and duck populations



Jost van Dyke Primary School students relax during an afternoon field visit to Sandy Cay during a recent National Parks Trust event. Photo by S. Zaluski