



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR HOSTS EXOTIC PET AMNESTY WEEK & INVASIVE SPECIES MURAL CEREMONIES

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) announces that the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) will host **Exotic Pet Amnesty Week** to bring attention to the impact of invasive species on the Virgin Islands natural environment from Monday to Friday, June 23rd – June 27th.

This year's observance will also celebrate the installation of murals by Virgin Islands artists Eliana L. Schuster-Brown and Heidi Herzog Gonzales to highlight the challenges invasives can pose. Ribbon-cutting ceremonies will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, June 24th, at the Svend Aage Ovesen Seaplane Terminal on St. Croix, followed at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, June 25th at the Charles F. Blair Seaplane Terminal on St. Thomas.

"We are excited to work with local artists, Seaborne Airlines, and other stakeholders to spread awareness that while invasive species are some of the most common wildlife you see across the territory, they can spread diseases, disrupt delicate ecosystems, and harm fisheries and coastal habitats," Nicole Angeli, Ph.D., director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife, said. "DFW encourages everyone to do their part to help control these challenges."

Throughout that week, residents are invited to bring in or walk with a photo of their rare, non-native animal species from birds to snakes for a **FREE PERMIT**, without penalty, to the Division of Fish & Wildlife's offices from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Mars Hill on St. Croix and Tropical Marine on St. Thomas. The list does not include livestock such as chickens, ducks, and other farm animals permitted through the Department of Agriculture.

The activities are held in conjunction with National Pet Preparedness month and funded by the Office of Insular Affairs. For more information, call the office at 340-773-1082 or 340-775-6762 or visit www.dpnr.gov.vi/fish-and-wildlife.