



Subject: Social Studies:

Topic: Protecting our Land

Vocabulary



extinct – plants or animals that no longer exist	indigenous – plants or animals native to The Bahamas
preserve – to keep something in its original or existing state.	endangered – species at risk of extinction
closed season – a period in the year when the capture of a particular species officially forbidden.	invasive – spreading very quickly and undesirably or harmfully
Non-invasive – not tending to spread undesirably or harmfully.	natural resources – raw materials from nature

Our planet is at risk. Our environment is under threat. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the sea we fish, the soil we farm, the forests, animals and plants that surround us are all in danger. - Commonwealth Secretariat, 1990

- In order to rescue our beautiful planet, people all over the world need to change their behaviour.
- We must all – individuals, communities and nations – help to manage our environment and save it for future generations.
- In the Bahamas we have an exceptionally beautiful environment.
- We are surrounded by warm, clear seas that are full of life.

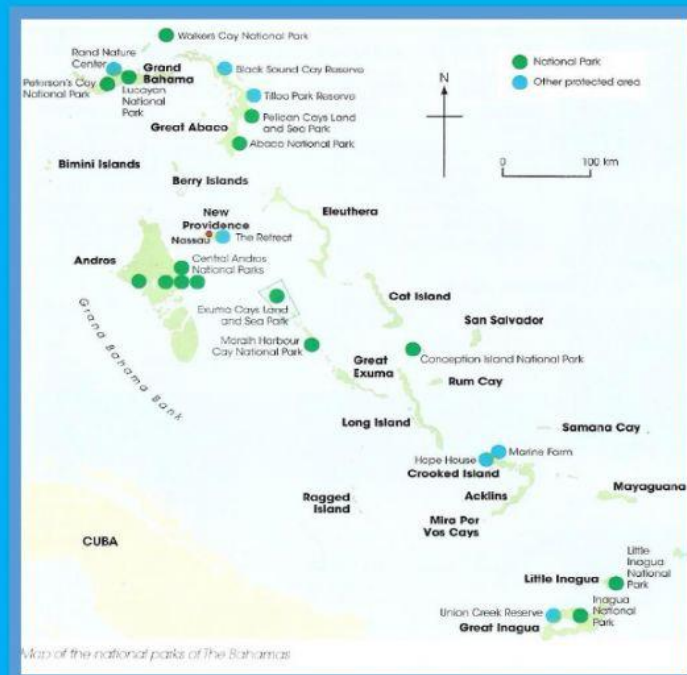
Many different features – low hills, lakes, swamps, caves, lagoons, wetlands, tidal creeks and flats – provide rich variety of environments containing many different plants and animals.

- But many of the original plants and animals of The Bahamas have now disappeared, and others are in danger. The original forests that once covered The Bahamas were destroyed long ago. There are not as many species of plants and animals now as there were even a short time ago. It is vital that we save those that remain.

The Bahamas National Trust

The Trust was set up in 1959 to protect some of these environments, plants and animals, in eleven protected areas, seven of which are national parks.

- The total area now protected by the Trust covers 96,000 hectares. Each of the protected areas is patrolled by Trust Wardens who make sure that people do not harm or destroy the natural habitat.
- The protected areas are named and indicated on the map.



The aims of the Bahamas National Trust include:

- To teach people about conservation
- To manage the national parks for the enjoyment of Bahamians and visitors
- To preserve our rich historical heritage.

Endangered Species

The forests were destroyed long ago, but it is still possible to see some of the trees that grew in those forests. Here are just a few examples:

Gum elemi Mastic Cedar Wild fig Strongbark Stopper Brazzeletto

Wild copper Sea grapes Acaua Haulbark Mahogany Pigeon plum

Unlike endangered species, plants and trees have not acquired special protection. However, the Bahamas National Trust encourages government and private citizens to preserve the following: hardwood trees, such as the lignum vitae, Madeira, silk cotton, cedar and others, such as yellow elder, royal Poinciana and a variety of palms.

The White-Crown Pigeon - The White-crown pigeon is one of most popular game birds of The Bahamas. • It is carefully protected by the Ministry of Agriculture and The Bahamas National Trust. • The opening of the White-crown pigeon hunting season usually begins late in September. • The closed season always begins on 1st March each year.	Hutia - This rabbit-like rodent is found only in the Bahamas. • It was thought that they had all died out - become extinct- but in 1965 a few hutia were found on Plana Cay. They were taken from there to Little Wax Cay, off Exuma, which is part of the Exuma cays Land and Sea Park.
Turtles: the Loggerhead and the Hawksbill - Both of these species were once plentiful, but many have been killed for their meat, and their shells used to make jewelry	Iguanas -These are large lizards. The Bahamian species is now found only on Exuma, Andros and Mayaguana. Their meat is tasty and rich in protein, so many are caught and eaten.
Bahama Parrot - These too were once plentiful but are now rare. • Columbus described great flocks of parrots when he arrived here in 1492. • Today they are to be seen only on Abaco and Great Inagua.	Flamingo - A large beautiful bird, the flamingo is a part of our national emblem. • The world's largest breeding colony of West Indian flamingos - as many as 50,000 birds- are found on the island of Great Inagua National Park.
The Fowl Snake and the Boa Constrictor - These snakes are not poisonous, but they are often killed because they eat chickens and their fowl.	

Protecting our endangered species

- The Bahamas has signed an international treaty known as CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.
- If any of the endangered species is taken from The Bahamas and imported into another country without special permit, the animals will be taken away from the importer and returned to The Bahamas.