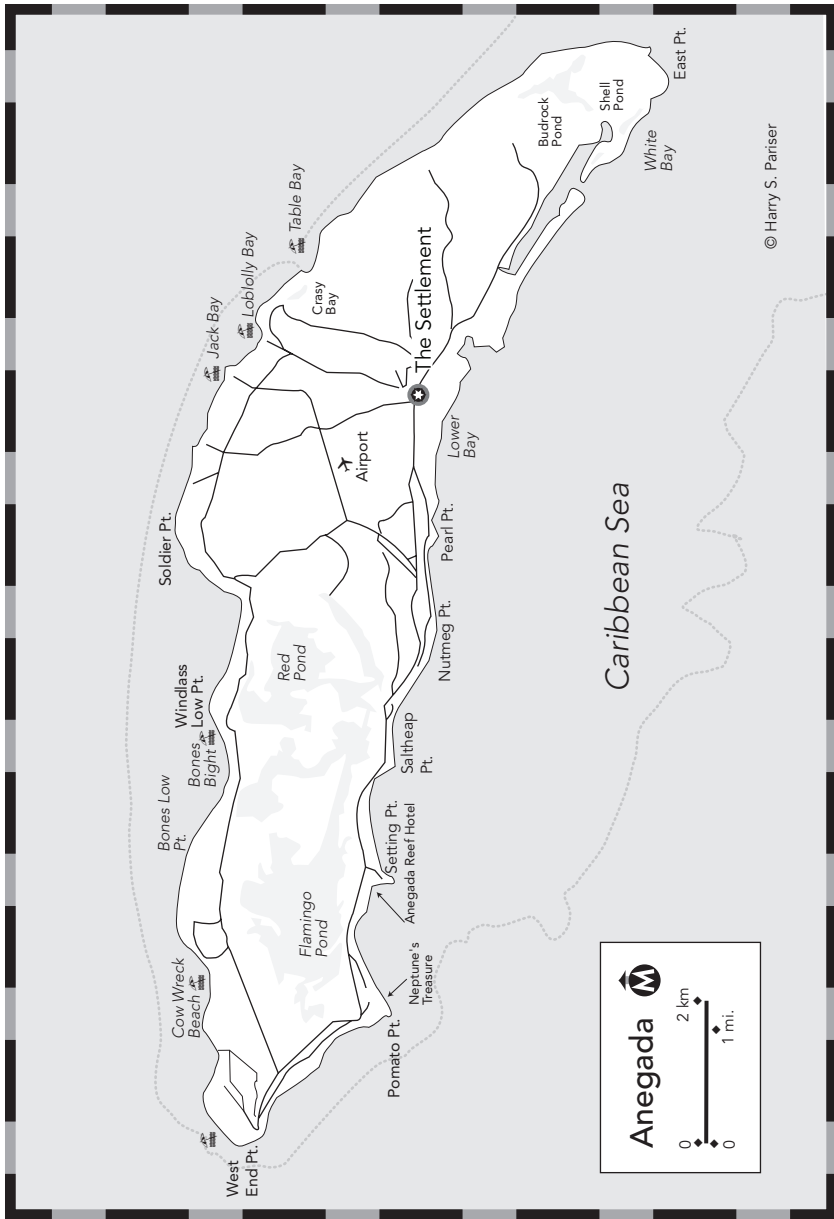


ANEGADA



THE LAND: Only 28 ft. (8.5 m) above sea level at its highest point, the 15-sq-mi. (39-sq-km) island is nine miles long and one to four mi. wide and easily affected by rising and falling tides. Consisting of limestone grating, it is completely flat in the S, and central portions have scattered lagoons, salt ponds, and marshes, as well as glorious beaches. Anegada resembles a Pacific atoll set in the Caribbean and is most similar to islands found in the Bahamas to the N; its surrounding reefs are its most spectacular feature. It is the only British Virgin Island with freshwater springs of any size.

FLORA AND FAUNA: A great variety of animal and plant life thrives here, some of which cannot be found elsewhere in this island group. The monotony of the bracken and mangrove vegetation is punctuated by spreads of lilac-colored wild orchids (*petramicra elegans*) which grow in profusion along Red Pond's salt flats. There are plenty of century plants as well as epiphytes (air plants) and lots of loathesome machineel trees. Other trees include tamarind, turpentine fir, and the ubiquitous coconut. There're also two varieties of wild sage as well as a thorny bush, the "fishing rod tree," which is collected and used as a Christmas tree, a custom unique to Anegada.

Island birds include roseate spoonbills, snowy and reddish egrets, nesting willers, great blue herons, ospreys, little blue, tricolor and green-backed herons, northern water thrushes, Antillean nighthawks, and the more commonplace frigates, plovers, and pelicans. Sandwich, roseate, and gull-billed terns come to visit during the summer months. Flamingoes (see sidebar) have also been re-introduced.

A lesser creature, but no less significant, is the Anegada Rock Iguana (*Iguana pinguins*) of which about 400 remain. This endangered lizard may reach five feet in length

and weigh 20 lbs. They are most commonly seen on the island's N coast where certain trees have been banded with orange paint to denote where they live. Another place you can see them is at the breeding station next to the administration building in The Settlement.

In former times, legend has it that huge swarms of enormous mosquitos, known as "gallon nippers," roamed the island, appearing and disappearing at 10-year intervals. Their bites, in large concentration, were said to have proved fatal to sheep and sent wild goats fleeing into villages for human protection. These goats, as well as small wild horses, donkeys, and a special Spanish strain of cattle, still roam freely and greatly outnumber bipeds.

The most popular underwater creatures with visiting gourmands are its lobsters which are being taken in such tremendous quantities that overharvesting is becoming a real possibility. The conch has already been overharvested, and now small conches are being used to bait traps to supplement the customary fish guts and cowhide. Controls are in place but enforcement is difficult. For example, there is now a season on green turtle, yet some locals continue to dine on them.

HISTORY: Used first by the Indians who left heaps of conch shells behind them on the E end, the island's maze of reefs afforded protection for pirates like Kirke, Bone, and the French pirate Normand (now known as "Norman"). Although the first settlers did grow some food and cotton, they came here expecting to profit from the spoils of the frequent shipwrecks. No sooner was the cry of "vessel on the reef!" heard than the residents, sidearms in hand, would be off and running, competing to be first aboard.

The shipwrecks, which occurred with alarming frequency, were occasionally helped along by unscrupulous residents who