

Bahamas National Trust examines seabirds major nesting areas after the oil spill

Title

The Bahamas National Trust (BNT, BirdLife in the Bahamas) have been making surveys of seabird colonies in western and south-western Bahamas – the Cay Sal Bank area – to measure possible Gulf oil-spill impact. During the second trip, a visit was made to the Bahamas' newest Important Bird Area, the Great Isaac Cay. Located about 18 nautical miles north-north-east of the Bimini Islands in the Northern Bahamas, Great Isaac Cay IBA holds a high diversity of nesting seabirds and has one of the largest populations of Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (approx. 600 pairs) in the Caribbean, as discovered by James Kushlan during monitoring trips in 2008 and 2009.

It's astonishing to see so many seabirds at Great Isaac IBA, and thankfully the populations looked healthy during our latest survey, said Predensa Moore, IBA Coordinator. Other seabirds at the IBA include Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*, Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* and Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*.

The BNT Executive Director, Eric Carey, added "We are very conscious of the importance of the Bahamas for the survival of seabirds in the Caribbean. We, at the Bahamas National Trust, are committed to their protection and have been concerned about the impact the Gulf of Mexico oil spill could have on the region's seabirds." This newly identified IBA has conservation, historical and cultural heritage importance. Supporting the nation's largest Bridled Tern colony and a diversity of other seabirds makes Great Isaac Cay IBA a high priority for protection as a national park.

Photo: Lindy Knowles, Bahamas National Trust