

*The*

# CAT ISLAND GUIDE



# CAT ISLAND





# History of Cat Island

About the same time as King Arthur founded his Round Table in England, a small tribe of Arawak Indians left the relatively dangerous life of the Lesser Antilles in dug-out canoes, and set course for a group of islands off the east coast of Florida that the Spaniards would name Baja Mar (shallow sea) or the Bahamas.

Very few facts are known about these Indians. We know that they called themselves the Lucayans, the island people, and we know that they hunted, fished and cultivated maize, yam, sweet potatoes and cassava. They used the numerous caves on the islands for burials. No traces of any permanent buildings have been found.

According to Christopher Columbus, the Lucayans were also very friendly and naïve people who were easily manipulated.

## Christopher Columbus

Cat Island or Guanahani was Columbus' first landfall according to early historians and eighteenth century cartographers, but it might not be the actual one. Most archeologists and historians today claim that Columbus landed on the neighboring island of San Salvador (formerly Watling's Island) and that Columbus never sailed as far north as Cat Island.



Cat Island was known as San Salvador until 1926, when the name was given to Watling's Island, 100 miles south east of Cat Island.

Without conclusive archeological evidence, historians can only refer to the journal of La Casas, a priest who accompanied Columbus on his epic journey. His description of the landing site is difficult to reconcile with any specific island. This is evidenced by the fact that so many sites have been suggested as the first landing site. From Eleuthera in the north to Inagua in the south.

The Las Casas Journal describes a large lake in the interior of Guanahani, many islands visible on the horizon, a commodious harbor, a promontory suitable for a fortress, and a large lake in the interior. Proponents for a Watling's Island landing say that their island most closely fits the journal's description, in spite of the fact that there is no such harbor site and no islands visible

from Watling's Island. Cat Island has been dismissed as a possible site because they claim there is no large lake in the interior. The fact of the matter is that there are two large lakes on Cat Island - Gambia Lake in the south, and Blue Hole in the north. There are visible islands on the horizon both from north and the south of the island, and there is a possible harbor site at the southern end. When the Spanish Fleet bivouacked for an attack on Nassau in the 1670 they chose the South End as a harbor.

Proponents of a Watling's Island landing also believe that archeological finds from excavations on Watling's are conclusive proof of the location of the first landing site. They found artifacts like glass beads, iron belt buckles, nails and a Spanish coin that predates Columbus' voyage. It is tempting to think that Columbus landed where these things were found, but it's not very probable. The site was more likely a village where the inhabitants kept their treasures. These coins and beads could have been picked up in trade, found on another island, brought into a grave or used for dowry. Nobody has tried to find any Spanish artifacts on Cat Island.

There is also the mystery of maps and charts. Eighteenth century cartographers from Germany, Venice and London, unanimously show Cat Island/ Guanahani/St. Salvador as the "First Land in America discovered by Columbus". What the historians fail to answer is why the charts of the 1700's all show Cat Island as Guanahani (and why the Bahamian Archipelago was assumed to be the site of Columbus' first landing). That information must have been handed down from somewhere, and although atlases from the 1500's show Cat Island as Guanima, with no mention of Guanahani or Columbus, a hundred years later, Cat Island was the first landfall.

So for many Cat Islanders, Christopher Columbus first stepped ashore at Columbus Point on the south end of the island, if you are from the South of Cat Island, and Port Royal at the northern end if you are from the North.

### **The new settlers**

As the joke goes, when the Lucayans first saw those white winged ships, one supposedly said to another, "There goes the neighborhood!" No joke that. Within 25 years the Lucayans were wiped out - ravaged by European diseases or dragged off to Spanish plantations and mines where they died like flies. The islands of the Bahamas were left depopulated for almost a hundred years.

In the 1600's, the islands received a new kind of settlers. Strategically located between Florida, Hispaniola, Cuba and the Old World, the Bahamas were to prove an ideal area for all sorts of unsavory characters preying upon Spanish Galleons and trading vessels going between the Old and the New World. Pirates and privateers found the secluded, uncharted bays and coves ideally suited for hiding out and staging raids. When the fleets were not sailing, and there was no plunder to be had, these pirates survived by harvesting logwood and Braziletto, both valuable sources of dye. Some of these sailors/loggers gradually settled along the most protected harbors and where they could find fertile land and fresh water.

Cat Island was considered one of the most fertile islands, and although there are no formal records showing any settlers here before 1717, there must have been quite a number of people building and farming on the island as early as the 1600's. There are historical reports from 1725 and 1740 describing "Spanish ruins" on Cat Island.

The popular belief is that these ruins stem back to the time when Spanish warships in the 1670's, established a base on Cat Island, while waiting to attack Charles Town (the present Nassau) . The attacks on Nassau were many, taking place over a long period of time, and during that time, the Spanish are said to have built a settlement in the South called Columba.

Unfortunately, there are no traces left of Columba today.

The 1717 official records show that there were only two settlements on the island, consisting of four whites and 24 blacks.

The population gradually increased, and although the settlers had to defend themselves against pirates, a notorious

Haitian called Augustino Blanco in particular, they had to put up with the daily attacks by mosquitoes and sandflies, and to live on what they could eke out from pot-hole farming. 18th century travelers described Cat Island as a pleasant and healthy place for Europeans to settle.

In 1776, the British colonies in North America rebelled against British rule. Colonists who remained loyal to the British Crown left the North American colonies to search for other places to settle. Many of them ended up in East Florida, but when that territory was ceded to Spain in 1783, some of them continued over to seek their fortune in the Bahamas.

### **Andrew Deveaux**

The first and the most well known of all these Loyalists was Colonel Andrew Deveaux Jr.

In April of 1783, Andrew Deveaux, aged 26, together with seventy followers, set sail from St Augustine in Florida and arrived in Harbour Island, at the north east end of Eleuthera. There he persuaded almost the entire population of 170 men to follow him to Nassau and retake it from the Spanish invaders, commanded by Antonio Claraco.

Claraco's fleet was about three times that of Deveaux and there were almost 1000 men garrisoned in Nassau.

The story of how Deveaux and his 240 men, armed with a few muskets, sticks and clubs, led the Spanish to believe that their small force was very much larger than it was, taking the Spanish off guard and obtaining a bloodless surrender has been told and retold thousands of times. Deveaux permitted the embarrassed Claraco to sail back to Cuba with his fleet intact. Although Claraco blamed the Loyalist tactics of guerrilla warfare for his defeat, his superiors in Havana were not impressed and they sentenced him to jail for eight years.



But the victors were happy. They were given huge tract of the Bahamas between them by a grateful Crown. Although he had sold some of his lands when he died in 1812, Andrew Deveaux still left in his will 1,380 acres at Red Pond and Botswain Hill on Cat Island, the whole of the islands of Little San Salvador and Highborn Cay as well as sizable holdings in Nassau.

Deveaux's father, Andrew Deveaux Sr., took over his son's land on Cat Island and built a Great House, the ruins of which one can still see in Port Howe. He planted cotton and farmed the land until his death in December of 1814. Decendents of Deveaux were among the first to welcome Father Jerome in 1938.

But after the cotton harvest was devastated by a weevil infestation and the slave trade abolished in the beginning of the 1800's, most Loyalists lost their enthusiasm for the Bahamas and moved back to America. Some of the plantation owners left their lands to be divided up by their slaves, and the concept of "generation property" was established. Property was granted to the former slaves and their families until "the sun no longer shines and the water no longer runs". Generation property was regarded as a source of sustenance for the whole family and was not meant to

be divided. A family member was granted the right to farm specific plots of land during his lifetime, after which the land reverted to the family.

The freed slaves often took the last name of their former owners, which explains the multitude of Stubbs, Deveaux's, Rolles and Armbristers on Cat Island.

The total abolishment of slavery was not an easy process. Many of the white landowners were reluctant to release their "property" and in the isolated settlements slaves were not informed of the distant decision to abolish slavery. That, of course, led to some violent incidents. Some Cat Island plantations were burned down, like Henry Armbrister's in New Bight and many slaves simply ran away. In December of 1831, after the abolition of slavery, some Plantation owners refused to free their slaves. A rumor started among the slaves at Joseph Hunter's estate on Cat Island that they had been set free. The slaves, most of them creoles, led by "Black Dick", revolted against their white owner and refused to work. The revolt accelerated, and shots were fired at Joseph Hunter. Six men were sentenced to hang, but only "Black Dick" was actually hanged for the crime.



The major crops after the loss of cotton were pineapple, tomatoes and sisal. The red sandy clay soil of Cat Island proved to be perfect for the sweet, elongated pineapple, and the tomatoes grew like weeds in the sandy soil of the lowlands. There was a problem of transport, however, and the crop that was taken to Nassau by sailboats did not always reach its destination because of storms, accidents and spoilage in transit or on the piers in Nassau before they could be sold. About 30% of the crop did sell and that was enough to sustain the hardy farmers of Cat Island.

For a few years, Cat Island enjoyed a relative prosperity and even had a railway with a hand-driven pushcart built to accommodate the transport of the produce from the farms to the sea. One can see the remains of that railway just south of Old Bight.

But progress left the Out Island farmers in its wake when the Americans learned how to preserve their fruit and vegetables, transport it faster and make it last longer - and shut out foreign exports. The Bahamian pineapple was taken by American entrepreneurs to Hawaii where soil and climate are similar and the land easier to cultivate on a large scale. Tomatoes were a great source of export income, but again American entrepreneurs started large scale farming in the drained land of the Everglades and just to make sure, foreign tomatoes were subject to a duty that was so onerous that export of tomatoes from the Bahamas was no longer feasible.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Cat Island had about 5000 inhabitants and very little else.

### Father Jerome

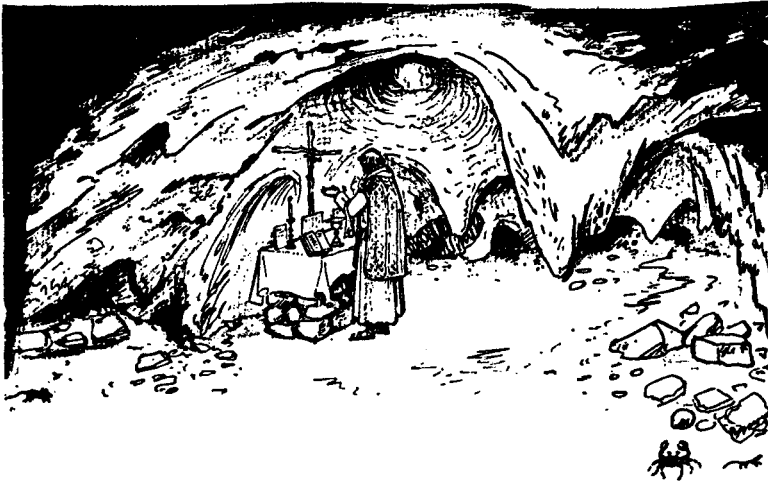
Bahamians have always been a deeply religious people, and in times of need they turn to God. In 1939, He answered their prayers and sent a man to help them. That man was Father Jerome, or Monsignor John Hawes, a world weary architect and priest who was also called "The Great Heart of Cat Island".

Father Jerome was born in 1877 in Richmond, England. His father was a prosperous lawyer and young John grew up with fashionable schools and cricket. When he was sixteen, his father asked him what profession he wanted to enter. Since John didn't have an answer to give, his father decided he should be an architect. His career was as meteoric as it was colorful. At the tender age of 22, a model of one of his church designs was shown at the annual exhibition of world famous paintings at the Royal Academy.



"They get me now on my nose."

Every bishop with self respect wanted to have a church designed by John Hawes. He traveled all over the world on



*Jubilee Mass in the Cave*

behind.

When Father Jerome arrived in Cat Island, he promptly decided to buy the highest hilltop he could see. It was called Comer Hill, and is, in fact, the highest hill in the Bahamas, 206 feet, with a 360° view of the island. He named it Mount Alvernia, after the hill in Tuscany where St. Francis received the wounds of the cross. While he was building, he lived in a cave that had once been a pirates den, a refuge for runaway slaves and a goat shelter. It is now inhabited by land crabs and bats. That cave is now accessible, thanks to Sister Eileen, and can be found on the north east side of the hilltop.

Although Father Jerome had intended to be alone and spend all his time praying, the life of the island and his own restlessness wouldn't let him. There were churches to be built and people to convert. The very first day he landed on Cat Island, he was approached about a church in Port Howe. During his twenty years in the Bahamas, he built four churches on Cat Island alone! About his impatience he said "Up at the Hermitage I live my Franciscan life as a solitary, but when I've said my Office and other religious exercises, not having the gifts of the Higher Contemplation and not being favoured with ecstasies, bilocations and levitations to pass my spare time away- what am I to do? I can't sit down and twiddle my thumbs; hence I drift into the aforesaid manual labours for the good of my neighbors and the love of God."

He decided that the only sensible way to get around on (and off) Cat Island was by boat. He bought a sailboat and hired a local boy as crew. He sailed from his harbour in Freeport (present New Bight) to oversee the building in Port Howe and Old Bight. He also sailed from Cat Island to Long Island and Nassau, sometimes to preach, sometimes to discuss the planning of new churches, and sometimes only for the fun of sailing.

A lot has changed in the world since Father Jerome died in the early 1950's, but fortunately for us, a lot has also stayed the same. On Cat Island you can still catch the "true, true" feeling of the Bahamas. The sisal is platted, the pineapples and the tomatoes are farmed, the land crabs are caught after the rains and the smudge pots are lit in the early evenings to keep away the sand flies. After hundreds of years, Cat Island is still mystical.

different projects, while simultaneously searching for a niche of his own. He tried all kinds of things. His resume reads like a proper adventure story. In addition to being a world famous architect, he was also a philosopher, poet, essayist, fox-terrier breeder, sculptor and collector of architectural treasures. He had also been a mule-skinner on the Canadian Pacific Railroad, an art expert, a tramp a cowpuncher, a sailor and an Australian gold-rush priest.

He came to Cat Island to seek solitude and to live as the poorest of the poor. His role model was St Francis of Assisi.

He had left Australia a modestly wealthy man, but decided that he didn't want any wealth. He gave away all he could, and even left his little dog



*"Cold bath out on the lawn"*

# Culture and Customs.

The people of Cat Island have a very long history. Most Cat Islanders can trace their heritage back to different parts of West Africa, where the slave traders made brisk business from the middle of the 17th century to 1834, when the Emancipation Act ended their lucrative trade.

In records from 1671 there were 443 slaves in the Bahamas, and that was only the beginning. The largest influx came with the Loyalists in the late 1700's, and even after the Abolition, "Liberated Africans" continued to add to the population.

The mixture today also includes the ancestors of French, Swedish and Spanish sailors who jumped ship, a little bit of who knows what pirates and English and American adventurers. Today's Cat Islander is a fun loving, good-natured Bahamian who prides himself in being a Cat Islander, who will readily welcome and help everyone who visits his island. He also has a strong sense of community, and will make sure that a less fortunate neighbour will be cared and provided for in time of need.

Over the years, all these different cultures have brought some of their traditions and knowledge to the island, and the result is a mixture of necessities, availability and ingenuity. This is most prevalent in the food we can find on the island today.

## Food

The starchy cassava, the Indian corn, potatoes, tomatoes and pumpkins were the staple food of the Arawak Indians.



The slaves from Africa brought okra and pigeon peas, peanuts and guinea corn. The English brought the chickens, the pigs, the goats and the horses. They also brought the wheat flour for bread. What everybody found here was the fish and the conch, the land crabs and the crawfish. The emerging result is a typical Bahamian cuisine. You find this type of cooking in most Bahamian homes, and also in the restaurants

You can find conch in all kinds and forms. Steamed conch, scorched conch, grilled or fried conch. In some places you even find dried conch, which smells like very dead conch that will later be soaked and served deep-fried in batter as cracked conch.

Fish, chicken and pork are served baked or fried, accompanied by potatoe salad or rice and peas, and macaroni and cheese. During the land crab season, the peas and rice are exchanged for crab-rice, which feature the whole body of the crab, cooked in the rice together with spices and salt pork.

Every Saturday the restaurants on the island will serve you a souse, which is essentially cooked chicken, goat or sheep tongue in a spicy broth. Eat it with the slightly sweetened white bread that is typically Bahamian.

A traditional Sunday breakfast is boiled fish, which is also served in a spicy broth. Along with bones and gills and eyes and every other part of the fish except for the fillet. That is saved for dinner. You eat the boiled fish together with Johnny cake - a slightly sweetened corn bread, and you drink Guinness, a dark beer with a lot of foam.

When you go for a picnic or leave on the airplane, don't forget to bring some flour cakes. These are little round breads, baked in the rock ovens you still see in some places on Cat Island.



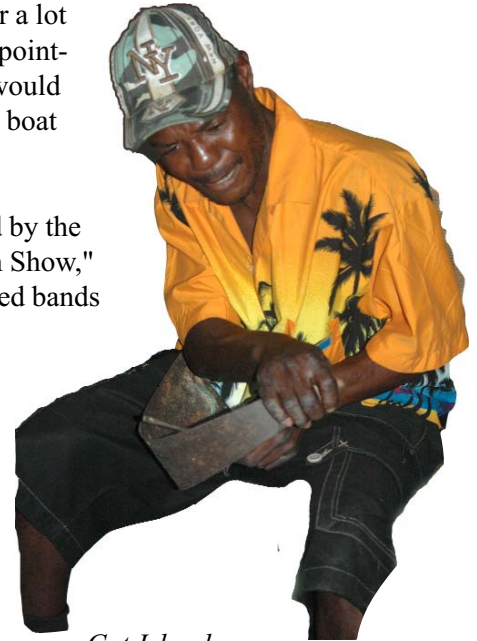
*Fisherman's catch in Bennetts Harbour*

## Music and Dance

Many of the most famous singers in the Bahamas, both secular and spiritual, come from Cat Island. There is a strong tradition of musical appreciation on this Island. Maybe it comes from the fact that Cat Island was the last of the big Family Islands to receive electricity and telephones, and that therefore the oral tradition of story telling and singing was practiced here for a lot longer than anywhere else in the Bahamas. It is told by the older people, that appointed singers would come to church every Sunday to perform. The parishioners would then come from all over the island, dressed to the nines, on foot and by horse, by boat and bike just to participate in these musical services.

The secular music on the island is called "Rake 'n Scrape" The name was coined by the radioman Charles Carter in 1968, in his radio show called the "Young Bahamian Show," when he thought it was time to explore the Bahamian musical heritage, and invited bands from the Family Islands to appear on his show.

Rake 'n Scrape is part of a vibrant pan-Caribbean musical tradition that has its roots in both Europe and Africa. Colonists brought their traditional music and dances with them to the Caribbean colonies - like the quadrille, the polka and the waltz. The slaves picked up the steps and the music, but the careful, measured rhythms and movements of the Europeans did not appeal to the musical sensibilities of the African born slaves. They adopted the dances, but made the music and steps their own. They got hold of the concertina, the favorite instrument of the seamen because it was both cheap and portable, and combined drums, saws, jawbones, bells, notched pieces of wood, rattles and what ever else they could find to make their music.



*Cat Island  
Rake 'n Scrape*

In the Bahamas, the traditional instruments are the concertina or accordion, saw and drum although some bands incorporate the guitar or violin. The rhythm is a mixture of reggae and polka, and the texts of the songs are often related to happenings on the island.

Cat Island has a "Rake 'n Scrape" festival every year in June. Bands from all the islands come to display their abilities and compete for the prize for the best "Rake 'n Scrape" band in the Bahamas. It is usually a three day festival with music, food and lots of ambiance.

## Folklore

Folklore and religion are tightly knit together on the island. Cat Island, like all the Bahamian Islands, is a highly spiritual, deeply religious community. But added to this, there is also the occasional obeah shaman or lady, the spirits that walk among us and the haunted ruins.

The spirits can be good or bad. It entirely depends on how they behaved when they were alive. Bad guys, bad spirits - and vice versa. Fortunately, most of the people on the islands were very good people.

It is said that the ruins on Cat Island are inhabited by the spirits of the people who once lived in the



*The Big Blue Hole in Orange Creek.*

houses. That is why so many of the ruins are untouched. It is safer to build a new house just next to a desirable spot where a ruin is standing, than to demolish an old, abandoned home. The spirits can be very nasty if they are disturbed.



*Washing hole by Dickie Road*

The Bahamian counterpart to Voodoo and Santeria is called Obeah. Like Voodoo, it has its roots in Africa, and was brought over with the slaves. The Obeah man was a feared person in a village. He could cast spells, or make spells go away. Spells could protect you and your property, it could make people fall in love with you and it could even kill you. It all depended on how much money you were willing to spend, and how greedy the Obeah man was.

Obeah is still practiced on Cat Island, although it has supposedly died out. The English settlers forbid all forms of Obeah and practices were punishable by death. It has since been looked upon more as a curiosity than a crime, but to the people of Cat Island,

Obeah is still an effective way to punish sinners.

If you happen to go into someone's home where you see spiders and lizards in dirty glass bottles, you can be sure you are in the house of an Obeah man. The dirt is from the graveyard, and it has been collected during the full moon.

### **Lakes and Blue Holes**

Cat Island is dotted with lakes and blue holes. They range in size from ten feet to ten miles in length. Some are salt-water holes, but many are filled with fresh or brackish water. They are a favorite source of legends and fairytales, and they are also regarded with a fair amount of superstition. Many a brave sailor, who wouldn't think twice about setting out in a gale in a rowboat, would not stick a toe in the water of a blue hole.

There is supposedly a horse-eating monster living in the Big Blue Hole in Orange Creek. This monster apparently loves to eat horses, or perhaps it just likes the large meal that a horse represents. It is normal to cremate a deceased horse, but those that die near the Blue Hole are dragged and tipped in. On a number of occasions farmers have reported sightings of a gargantuan creature rose to meet the sinking carcass, before disappearing into the blue depths of the lake. Not long ago, a man hunting with his dog near the Big Blue Hole disappeared, never to be seen again.



*The sea cave at Man of War Point*

And there is a story about Mermaid's Pool in Baintown. Evidently, two friends were shooting ducks at the edge of the pond when a mer-man showed up. One of the men shot the mer-man and took his body on his sailboat to Nassau. Whatever happened after that is not part of the story.

Ishmael Gaitor, a now long gone institution in Dumfries, told this story about Gaitor's Blue Hole in Dumfries. Long ago, Gaitor's Blue Hole was used by a young Cat Island girl for washing her family's clothes. She would walk five miles every week through the bush to get to the deep, freshwater lake. One day she didn't come back. When she reappeared, several months later, she was pregnant. She told her shocked family that she had met a young mer-man, fallen in love, and lived with him beneath the surface in his stately home. But she was homesick, and wanted to see her family, so she had walked out on him. Several months later she gave birth to a baby mer-maid, but the story doesn't explain what happened to her.

## Caves

There are at least 18 caves on Cat Island large enough to explore. Some studies have been done in order to catalogue their biology and geological structure, but for a serious cave explorer, this represent virgin territory.

Many caves are filled with bats - among them a very rare nectar-drinking bat that you can only find on Cat Island, but don't let that discourage you. They sleep during the day! The most easy to find caves are Griffin Cave, off of Dicky Road in Orange Creek (it is marked by a sign on the left hand side of the road) and Industrious Hill Cave on the main road.

In Griffin Cave you can easily see that it was used as slave quarters, since the opening is distinguished by a man-made entrance with a window in it. If at first you think it looks too low to enter, just know that the narrow tunnels in the beginning give way to larger chambers.

Fern Gully cave by Fernandez Bay has a double entrance, a hefty climb over hughe rocksthat leads to a wide open dirt basin fringed with shallow, hollowed out cave-like structures easy to explore.

Stepwell Cave by Greenwood is the most interesting cave in the south of the island. The entrance is slightly obscured by roots and branches, but they are good to hold on to when you enter the cave.

## Regatta

The biggest event on the island is the yearly Regatta in the first weekend in August. The actual sailboat race, which takes place at the Sailing Club in New Bight, is an "all-island" event. The typical over-rigged Bahamian sloop that was used for inter-island transportation, has reached the status of a racing boat. Quite a few of these boats are involved in a year long tournament, which moves from island to island. They are transported on ships to the different racing grounds, and the crew is almost professional.

This regatta usually starts on a Friday, and goes on for three days. The followers of the regatta - the groupies, the sail menders, the boat builders, the boat owners, the opportunists and the fans, all gather at the regatta place. This makes for sold out hotels and a lot of partying.

The partying also draws the locals, and the local's relatives, who think this is a good time to catch up with mother and father, granddad and his uncle, stepsister and little brother etc. Because of this, the event is also called "Home-coming".

And that is really what this weekend is about. "Walk the walk, and talk the talk" is what the returning Cat Islanders and visitors are doing for three or four days and nights, when they invade their relative's homes and sleep on the porch, the floor and in the yard. If they sleep at all. Any visitor to Cat Island during this period can be sure to find a party to go to, or a dance to attend. Food and drinks are in abundance and the festivities never stop.



# Snorkeling, diving and crabbing

The coasts of Cat island are filled with reefs, wrecks and really interesting fish. The diving and snorkeling is spectacular. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced diver you will find exciting things to look at. The reefs on the eastern side of the island are filled with intricate coral formations and small and large fish. A fair amount of sharks are prowling these reefs, and divers should be careful. Both Hawk's Nest, Greenwood Beach Resort and Shanna's Cove Resort have excellent dive centers, and the dive guides will also show you where the best scenery is to be found.

On the eastern side of the island by the Bluff, a ship called Infanta Maria Teresa sank on the way of being towed from Cuba to England in 1898. It drifted to Cat Island and went under; with it's back broken, and came to rest between two reefs. One hundred years later, Walter Illing and his sons from Greenwood Resort and Diving Center, made the first dive on the Teresa since it sank. They found the wreck in an astonishing good shape. "There are three big guns on it", one of the divers said,"the largest is 21 feet long and of 11 inch caliber. It is in very good condition....you think you can shoot it any-time."



## **INFANTA MARIA TERESA**

led the sortie out of Santiago Bay on July 3rd, 1898. As the flagship of the Spanish fleet she drew the bulk of the American fire in the early stages of the Spanish-American war. Soon she was seriously damaged and on fire. After apparently making an attempt to ram Commodore Schley's flagship, USS Brooklyn, the captain ran the TERESA ashore just a few miles west of the entrance to Santiago Bay and allowed his crew to save themselves. Despite being ravaged by fire and magazine explosions, the US Navy found the cruiser salvageable and she was patched up, refloated and taken to Guantanamo Bay for preliminary repairs. While being towed to Norfolk, Virginia for rebuilding by the repair ship VULCAN she was caught in a tropical storm. The repair ship MERRITT took off the helpless cruiser's crew, the tow line was cut, and the TERESA was lost at sea. She eventually came to rest between two reefs off Cat Island and, with her back broken, was declared a total loss.



*Chris Illing on the gun of Infanta Maria Teresa*

What is left of the Infanta is easy to see. Her guns, although pretty crusty, are still recognizable and various parts of the ship are spread out on the bottom. Please DON'T bring any part home as a souvenir.

The western side of the island is more shallow and sandy, and the fish are smaller but more plentiful.

There are two big drop-offs on the Exuma Sound side for the enjoyment of divers as well as fishermen. One in the south and one in the north. At the deeper depths, the water is filled with large grouper, tuna, red snapper and mahi-mahi.

For the bone-fishing enthusiast, there are plenty of creeks where the wily bonefish will lure you into a grand fight. Orange Creek, Alligator Creek and Armbrister Creek are favorite hangouts for the bonefish.

Tourists often ask what there is to do in the evenings, since Cat Island has a very little nightlife, but there is one great sport that is highly underrated that can only be performed after the sun goes down. It's catching the land crabs.

Arm yourself with a flashlight and a sack, and find a sandy road to follow. If it has been raining, the land crabs have to leave their holes and walk in the open, and that is the time to catch them. When you see a crab, put your foot on it and hold it there. Slowly lift your foot up while you grab the crab, but be careful of the "biters". Put it in the sack and carry it to the kitchen. Ask a local chef to make you some "crabrice", and you are in for a treat.



**Beware of the Poison Wood Tree**

When you are out in the bush looking for the crab or any of the other wonders of the jungle, be sure you don't rub up against the Poison Wood Tree. It could give you painful blisters and a bad itch. If you should become affected, try making a poultice of the leaves from the Gamalame Tree ( or the Tourist tree as they call it in Florida. Take one look at the peeling bark and you will know why). It is supposedly the best antidote. But the best way to stop the itching is to wash the area before it starts. The "poison" is an oil from the tree that gets into your skin, but you can soap it off if you get to it early.

*A Land Crab coming out of it's hole in the ground*



**Poisonwood** (left) is recognized by its shiny leaves and mottled bark. The **Gamalame** (right) is easily distinguished by its peeling brown bark. They very often grow next to one another.



# Contacts for fishing, diving and sight-seeing

## **Orange Creek**

Cappum Small Fishing Guide Service 354-4052

Ricky Dean fishing and dive charter 354-5204

Frank Wolff Diving Center, instructions, snorkeling and scuba dives. 354-4249

## **Pigeon Cay Beach Club**

Snorkeling, diving, fishing and boat rentals 354-5084

## **The Cove and Smiths Bay**

Jeffery Smith Sightseeing and fishing 342-2029

## **Fernandez Bay**

Sightseeing, fishing, diving, bone fishing, and boat rentals 342-3043

## **Devils Point**

Top Cat's Fishing Service: Deep-sea fishing, bottom fishing, snorkeling and diving

14 foot Whaler for rent Nathaniel Gilbert 342-7003

## **Hawks Nest**

Sport fishing and bone fishing charters

28 slip marina with diesel and gas.

PADI Dive Center. Scuba Instructions and daily dives 342-7050

## **Greenwood Beach Resort**

Diving center, instructors and guides. Snorkeling and fishing 342-3053

## **Port Howe**

Charles Zonicle fishing 342-5005 or 342-5011



# Turtle Watch

**What was that we saw just popping out of the water? Was it a bird? Was it a fish? No. It was a turtle! The head of *Celonia Myas*, or Green turtle in plain English, a common visitor in Cat Island who feeds on the grass in the shallow waters of the creeks and beaches.**

Sea turtles are exciting animals. They are beautiful to watch, and they have some extraordinary abilities. When they emerge as hatchlings and first enter the sea, for example, they somehow imprint their location, and many years later (25-35 years for green turtles) when the females become sexually mature they can swim thousands of miles to reach their natal beaches to lay their eggs.

They are also one of the Earth's most ancient creatures. The seven species found today became distinct from all other turtles at least 110 million years ago. The sea turtle's shell, or "carapace", is streamlined for swimming through the water. Unlike other turtles, sea turtles cannot retract their legs and head into their shells. Their color varies between yellow, greenish and black depending on the species.

Cat Island has many healthy habitats for juvenile and mature sea turtles. Juvenile green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) forage in several of the mangrove creeks on the western and southern side of the island where they feed in the turtle grass beds. You can find them both in Alligator Creek and Joe Sound Creek.



If these sites become protected, they will maintain stable populations. Hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) live mostly on the coral reefs in the deeper water of the western and southern sides. Greens, hawksbill, and loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*) all live on the ocean side (what the Cat Islanders call the north shore), where a few loggerheads still nest. In the deep ocean water, mariners occasionally find leatherback turtles (*Dermodochelys coriacea*).

Bahamian fishing regulations forbid the taking of hawksbill; but, unfortunately, greens and loggerheads can still be taken if they measure 24" and 30" respectively. There is a closed season from April 1 to July 31 which covers most of the nesting season.



*Steve measuring the shell of a young turtle*

. The taking or possession of turtle eggs is forbidden. These regulations are expected to be changed in the near future to prevent the harvesting of any species of sea turtles in the Bahamas.

Cat Island guides now give eco-tours in the mangrove creeks and on the coral heads where tourists can see a wonderful variety of birds, marine creatures, and, of course, sea turtles. Cat Island is growing more and more popular as an eco-tourist destination.

The Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research of the University of Florida has a research project in Cat Island to survey the island for foraging and nesting populations of sea turtles, establish long-term demographic studies of the sea turtles, and use a variety of tagging and molecular techniques to answer the questions: where do the turtles come from, how long do they stay, and where do they go when they leave the island. Whenever possible, Cat Island students are invited to work with the scientists, so they will develop a greater appreciation for the sea turtles and their environment.

The Bahamas National Trust has recently formed a Site Search Committee in Cat Island to help the Trust designate marine habitats that should be designated as national parks and marine reserves. This effort should ensure the survival of the wild life in Cat Island.



*Moss brothers and Raymond Dorsett are some of the children who went tagging the turtles with Steve Connett, the author of this story.*



**The Lionfish is invading the Bahamas. This exotic stranger is feeding on the young reef-fish. The impact could be disastrous. The only way to get rid of the poisonous lionfish is to eat it up!**

That is at least what all the scientists, conservatists and reef experts are saying these days. We have to figure out a way to catch it, cut off the fins and fillet it.

The divers from NOAA ( National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) are using nets and extra heavy gloves to gather the fish into big bags and take them to their laboratories to figure out if there is another way to get rid of them .

We too can use nets, but they are also very easy to spear. As long as you don't touch the poisonous spikes, but only grab the tailfin, you can cut the spikes off and discard them. DO NOT throw them back in the water.

Once in the pan, the toxin - if there is anything left in the fish, will disappear. It is absolutely destroyed by the heat. You can then cook it anyway you like, and it tastes delicious!

The lionfish got in to the Atlantic during Hurricane Andrew when an aquarium in Key Biscayne flooded in 1992. Since then, it has multiplied into huge numbers. The pretty, but dangerous fish, who is native to the Pacific Ocean, feeds on the unsuspecting small reef fish and is slowly diminishing the population of grouper and snapper.

Since it is a native to tropical waters, it stays in the warm waters of the Gulfstream and has followed it all the way up to Long Island, N.Y.

The exact impact of the lionfish is still unclear. Since it is such a new- comer to the Atlantic, it really hasn't had time to become anybody's prey. In the Pacific, it is eaten by some sharks, but it seems our reef sharks have not yet developed the taste.

## Cook Your Catch

At August Moon in Nassau it is served with either a Wasabi Aioli/Nam Prik/Mango-Chili Sambal or what Alexandria Maillis feels like at the moment.

4-5 fillets of lionfish, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, salt, pepper, and oregano.

Prepare the fish by lightly washing and patting dry.

Prepare the marinade, a mixture of garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, freshly ground pepper, kosher salt and oregano.

Marinate as per your time allowance but up to 1 day

Heat cast iron pan to smoking hot (no additional oil is needed)

Place fillet on hot pan. Sear until brown, flip and cook other side.

Serve with lemon.

At August Moon it is served with Skordalia (a very garlicky Greek dip) or a Greek onion/ Garlic/Parsley/Lime Juice/Olive Oil/Salt and Pepper Sauce.



*Me, trying out delicious lionfish at Greenwood Resort*

## Information from the doctor



The lionfish's sharp, slender spines are located on the dorsal, anal, and pelvic fins. A venom gland is located at the base of each spine. The venom is a combination of protein, a neuromuscular toxin, and a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine.

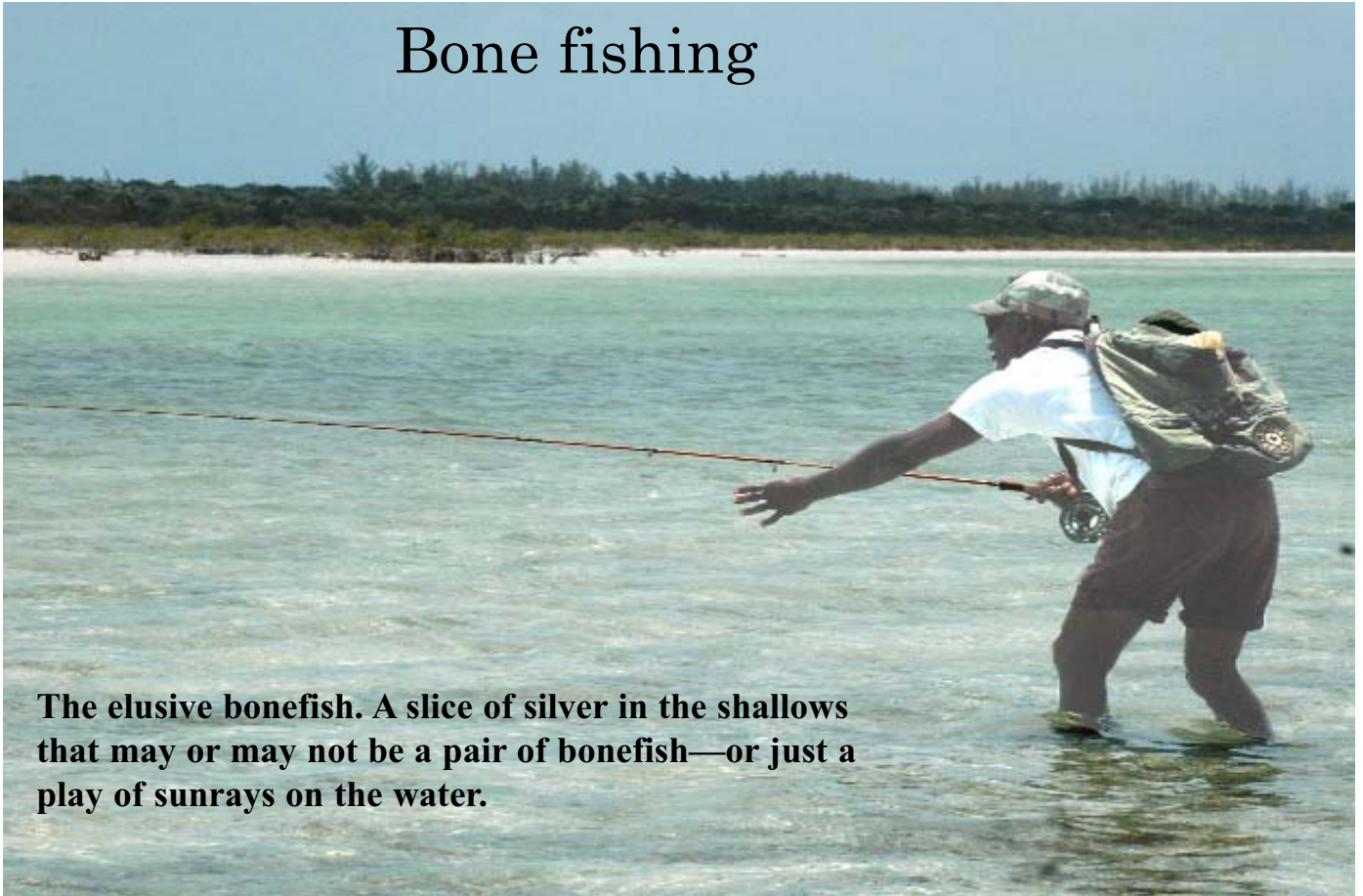
After the fish's spine punctures the victim's skin, the venom travels up a groove in the spine and into the wound. The sting causes intense pain, redness and swelling around the wound site. Although the worst of the pain is over after an hour or two, some people report pain and tingling sensations around the wound.

Stings from lionfish can be serious, and should not be taken lightly. Any broken spines should be removed, if possible, and the affected area soaked in non-scalding hot water (100–110° F or 38–43° C) for 15–20 minutes.

If hot water is not available, aspirin, or aspirin with codeine can be taken. (Do not use hot water and aspirin together.)

Therefore, the presence of a hot pack on board is helpful and can then be used if hot water is not readily available. In addition, it is recommended that you call the Aquatic Toxins Hotline at the Florida Poison Information Center in Miami, where medical experts will advise you about the treatment. This Hotline is available 24/7, and the number is **1-888-232-8635**.

# Bone fishing



**The elusive bonefish. A slice of silver in the shallows that may or may not be a pair of bonefish—or just a play of sunrays on the water.**

Small and extremely bony, almost invisible and barely edible, the Bonefish has become one of the most prized sport fishes in the sea. With a fly rod and wispy feathers as bait, the avid sports fisherman abandons his tuna tower and goes looking for more challenging prey.

Bonefish usually weigh between four and eight pounds and are among the fastest fish in the sea for their size. They swim into flats—level areas in water two to four feet deep, to feed off of small minnows and crustaceans.

Most bonefishing sites, like the flats in Orange Creek, Alligator Creek and all the other Creeks on Cat Island, are found on tropical islands where you would normally lie on the beach or snorkle in the ocean. But it is in these flats that fishermen spend many tiring hours under the sun, wading through the water and soft, slushy sand.

This group of fishermen come to “sight fish,” a style of fishing in which you stalk your catch before you cast. It takes patience, stamina, and acquired skill to be able to see and hook a bonefish in the shallow flats. It also requires good polarized sunglasses, good shoes that fit snugly to the feet and don’t come off in the sometimes sucking sand. What you look for is the glimps of the tail as the fish root for crabs in the mud

As bait, one can use pre-knotted flies or hand made little jobbies or, if you like to go native, hermit crabs or clams. There are many excellent bonefishing guides on Cat Island and you can find them in this guide.



*Bonefish, a sight for really, really good eyes*

The bonefish is silvery in colour with dusky fins—the bases of the pectoral fins are yellow. It is a heavily schooling fish, with some of the larger individuals traveling singly or in pairs.

It is also known as phantom or gray ghost, and is probably pound for pound the strongest and fastest running animal in the collective of salt-water fish.

Bonefishing is a shallow-water pursuit done in depths ranging from 8 inches to 8 feet. Flats sporting currents; dropoffs along the edge and clean, healthy seagrass beds produce abundant small crabs and shrimps that bonefish prey upon. Bonefish are known to follow stingrays, looking for small prey items disturbed by the rooting stingrays.

It is an important game fish. This fish may improve its tolerance to oxygen-poor water by inhaling air into a lung-like airbladder. Live shrimp and grilled steak are some of the most effective baits for this species.

The bonefish is the type species of the *Albulidae*, or bonefishes. It is amphidromous, living in inshore tropical waters, moving onto shallow tidal flats to feed with the incoming tide, and retreating to deeper water as the tide ebbs. Juvenile bonefish may be observed in large shoals of like-sized individuals with large mature fish swimming in smaller groups or in pairs.

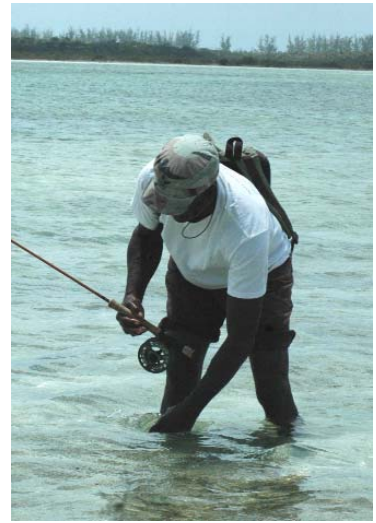
Bonefish are considered to be among the world's premier game fish and are highly sought after by anglers. Bonefish are primarily caught for sport. They are not commonly eaten., but if you ask any of the local restaurants to cook your catch. they will most happily do it for you.

But beware. the bonefish is - as it is called - an extremely bony fish. We have been told that there are ways to grab the spine, twist it, and pull it right out of a boiled fish together with all the bones in the body. But alas, we have never seen it done, and the few times we have tasted the bonefish it has been on the dry side, bony but pretty good.

If you want more information on bonefish and bonefishing, read Dick Brown's book *Flyfishing for Bonefish*. In that you can learn a lot about the different flies, techniques and what bonefish like to eat.

Randakk Kauffman, in his book *Bonefishing with a Fly*, can also give you a lot of information about the different flies and baits used for the fish.

They both agree that little crabs are an important part of the diet, so spend an hour cathing the bait before you try your luck in the beautiful creeks of Cat Island.

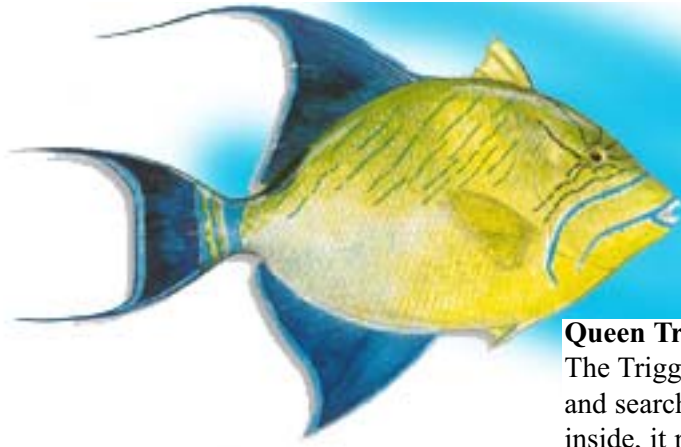


*Willard caught the first fish of the the day*



*"I'm going to take it h ome and eat it"*





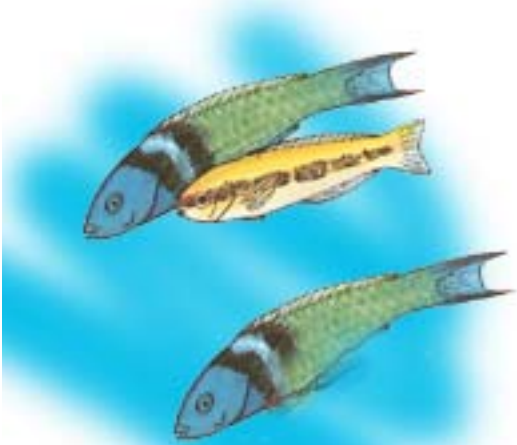
### **Queen Triggerfish**

The Trigger can look at the diver with one eye, and search for a hole with the other. Once inside, it raises the first dorsal spine with a “trigger” and is wedged in. Very tasty fish, and rarely poisonous

## What will you meet on the reef?

### **Bluehead Wrasse**

Wrasses change color and shape while they grow. Some also change sex. They then become brighter and bigger. The Bluehead is sometimes a parasite on other fish.



### **French Angelfish**

Angelfish is the most curious fish on the reef. It will swim right up to the diver for a look. The young French Angelfish have yellow stripes which disappear when they become adults.

### **Nassau Grouper**

The most common fish in Bahamian cooking, and therefore the most hunted. Grouper is a bottom-dweller and hides in caves. There are a lot of different groupers and they vary in color and size. But they all start out as females and lay eggs. They later change sex and become functional males. A really large grouper could be poisonous.



**Blacktip shark.**

This is one of the fastest swimmers in the sea, and it can also be seen jumping out of the water. It will not attack unprovoked, but don't swim to close.



**Shortfin Mako**

The Mako (and the Great White) are called Mackerel Sharks because they swim so fast. It cruises in the open sea, and is frequently seen on the eastern shores of the Island



**Nurse Shark**

Laying in wait at the bottom of the sea, the Nurse shark is usually not bothering the curious diver. But don't go too close. It can be up to 15 feet long



**The scary ones....**



**Spotted Moray**

This is a fish that looks like a snake. When provoked, these eels can bite, and although the bite in itself is not poisonous, their teeth are so contaminated that a wound can be serious if not treated. The Moray is hunting at night, and lives in rocks and crevices.



**Great Barracuda**

The Barracuda does not generally attack people, but it can be scary enough to meet a big "Barri" who swims right up to you and opens his toothy mouth. He is dangerous to eat, since the big fishes often carry the ciguatera poison



**Blue Tang.** Beautiful looking, but not very friendly towards other fish. A sharp spine can slash anyone who comes too close to his sweeping tail. Blue Tang belongs to the family of Surgeonfishes.



**Squirrelfish.** Hiding under the rocks, this little fish is edible, but bony

..and the pretty ones.



**Stoplight Parrotfish.** Male (blue) and female (reddish brown) have different colors and are mostly of different size. The parrotfish eats the algae on the coral and chews the coral to sand in the process.

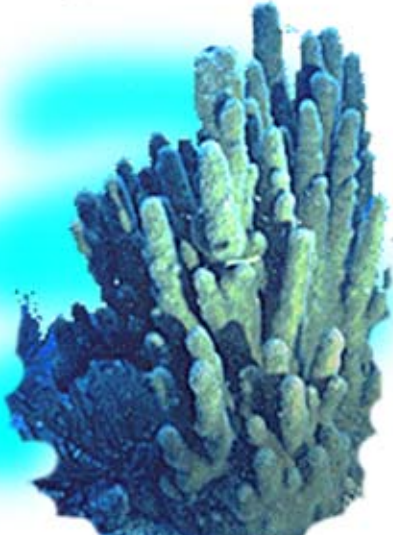


**Yellowtail Damselfish.** The Damselfishes are very territorial, and will attack any other fish that comes too close. Although they are small - the male Yellowtail Damsel gets to be around 7 inches, they are feriosously guarding their homes and their eggs.



**Yellowtail Snapper.** One of the most sought after fish on the reef because of it's taste. It can be up to 30 inches, but are usually smaller.

# The bottom-dwellers



**Pillar coral** forms numerous heavy cylindrical spires that grow upward from an encrusting base. Unlike other hard corals, which feed at night, pillar coral extends its polyps to feed during the day.



In addition to the hard corals, there are a variety of soft corals like this **Common sea fan**. The calcium carbonate skeleton of soft corals is located within their bodies, allowing them to move with the wave action. Over 800 species of corals have been described

**Spiny Lobster** Has to change hisshell in order to grow. The maximum size is two feet



**Queen Conch** is a gastropod, a soft-bodied type of mollusk that is protected by a very hard shell Conches eat grasses, algae, and floating organic debris. They eat using a radula, a rough tongue-like organ .



**Starfish** may well be the most unusual well-known creature. They have no front or back: they can move in any direction without turning. Rather than using muscles to move their hundreds of tiny legs, starfish use a complex hydraulic system to move around or cling to rocks. The intake valve for this system is generally located on the top of the Starfish, just off center



# Cat Island Settlements

When you drive down the main road, sometimes called Kings Road, sometimes Queen's Highway, from north to south, you will pass a number of settlements. They all have their own history and their own special things to see.

The topography of Cat Island is unique in the Bahamas with its rolling hills that sometimes reach peaks over 200 feet and make you think of northern states instead of the flat, sandy islands of the Bahamas and Florida. Scrub bush and coconut palms line the road, and flowering vines hide the ruins of old homes, plantations and churches.

There are many explanations to the many abandoned houses and ruins you see on the way. One of the reasons is the allure of the city. Many young Cat Islander have moved away from the Island and left the old homestead to termites and cats.

When Father Jerome came to Cat Island in 1938 there were over 5000 inhabitants on the island. In the latest census of 2000, there were little over 1500 still living here.

Another, more romantic reason, is that the spirit of a dead occupant still lives in the house, and it would upset the spirit to have the house torn down. It doesn't bother it however, if you build right next to it, or even annex an old ruin/house to a new one, as long as you don't tear it down.

A more practical explanation might be that most houses are built on "generation property" and if a house is not properly willed to a family member, it reverts to the family of the property, which means that not one person has responsibility for the house, and no one is willing to assume it.

Most settlements have one road that connects the settlement with the eastern shore of the island. It is absolutely worth the trip to take one of these roads and go and look at the rather different scenery of the Atlantic coast. Spectacular beaches and rocky shores, and along the whole length of the island, the almost unbroken reef. It can also turn into a real treasure hunt with all the debris that has been washed up on the "North" shore.



*The Hermitage on Mount Alveria in New Bight*

# Orange Creek and The Lot

## History

All of the original settlers on the north end of Cat Island lived on the hilltops during the days of pirates so that they could see the approaching ships and escape into the caves and forest.

After the first decades of the 1800's, the threat from pirates ceased and the great concern became hurricanes. This was met by moving to the leeward coast, which is sheltered, from Atlantic storms by a range of hills.

The most protected area was the several miles long area of Orange Creek. It was originally composed of the settlements of Pritchard's, Scotland and Bain Town. Scotland and Pritchard were abandoned for the new Orange Creek settlement, but (North) Baintown still exists at the north end of Orange Creek.

The name Orange Creek derives from a rarely witnessed natural phenomenon. When certain conditions are just right in the Creek bottom, the angle of the sun, the wind and waves, the entire creek takes on a brilliant, luminescent, orange glow. A person might see this marvel a few times in a lifetime; however, it is as unforgettable as indescribable.



*Service station in the Lot*



*Play in Orange Creek*

## Hotels:

Orange Creek Inn  
Shannas Cove (Shanna Bay)  
Tailwinds (Shanna Bay)

## Restaurants and Bars:

Club Crystal 354-4030 (The Lot)  
Periwinkles 354-4151  
North Cat Island liquor 354-4165

## Shops and Grocery

Orange Creek Inn Grocery Store and Laundry  
Seymour's Bayside Grocery  
Miss Eulas's Shop  
Target Hardware

## Handicraft

Teddie May Bain's Straw Work  
Mrs. Rolle Straw Works (The Lot)

## Churches:

Anglican Church and cemetery  
Church of God  
Great Bethel Methodist Church  
Baptist Church

## Institutions

Orange Creek Primary School  
Club Crystal Service Station

# Arthur's Town and Zion Hill

## Hotels:

Boggie Pond  
Cookie House

## Restaurants and Bars:

Boggie Pond 354-2215  
Cookie House 354-2027  
Hard Rock Oasis Restaurant and Bar 354-2159  
Da Smoke Pot 354-2077  
Nancy's Take away 354-2024  
Bee's Place  
Coctails by the Sea 354-3159

## Shops:

Island Groceries  
Campbell's Big Bull Food Store  
Gossip II Liquor  
Burtenae's Fashion

## Handicrafts:

Mrs. Larrimor's Straw works

## Churches:

Anglican Rectory  
St. Saviour's Parish Rectory  
Baptist Church

## Institutions:

Arthur's Town Airport ( Call for customs official  
342-2016)  
Batelco office  
Police Station  
Post Office  
Local Government  
Zion Hill Service Station

## Car Rental:

Basil Thompson

## Scooter Rental:

Pat Rolle, Cookie House

## History

Arthur's Town is the largest settlement on North Cat Island, named after a privateer and pirate Arthur Catt. He was probably also the man who gave his name to the island. There is also another story, that tells about the English settlers who were so upset with the rats on the island that they imported a large amount of cats. These cats, thriving on all the rats, multiplied and almost overran the island, hence the name. There could be truth to both versions.

It is the seat of the local government for the north end of the island, the high school, the post office and the smallest police station you will ever see.

Sir Sidney Poitier, academy award winning actor and Bahamian ambassador for Japan, grew up in Arthur's Town.

The settlement also has a history of plantations, and one can still see the ruins of some of the houses from this era.



*The Anglican Church in Arthur's Town*

# Dumfries

## History

Dumfries was established by British Loyalists from the American Revolutionary War. The original settlers originated from Dumfires in Scotland and had migrated to Virginia. When they reached the New World, they named their new home town Dumfries to honor their Scottish roots, and they remained loyal to the British Crown. They therefore left America at the end of the Revolutionary war to look for other places to settle. Some of them came to Cat Island, and there are also Dumfries settlements in Jamaica and Canada.

The original Dumfries settlement was on a range of hills which run behind the present settlement. The low lying newer settlement was once known as Ways Green, but approximately 150 years ago, the residents moved down from the hills, bringing the name with them.

Dumfries is famous for it's music and has produced a significant number of recording artists, among them Phil Stubbs.

## Churches

Church of God  
New Ebenezer Baptist Church  
Church of England

## Bars & Restaurants

The Gossip Bar and Restaurant - occasional music  
Turning Point Club 354-5218

## Handicrafts

Minerva Thompson Straw Hats 354-5077

## Shops and Grocery

Stubbs Grocery Store  
C&S Farm Supply and Hardware

## Other Points of Interest:

Fresh Water Blue Hole  
Fantastic Mangroves

# Bennett's Harbour Strachan Hill and Thurston Hill

## History

When the British government outlawed the African slave trade in 1805, it didn't stop the traders from continuing to load up ships with unfortunate African men and women. These ships were often seized when they reached Bahamas, and their cargo "freed". The Africans were placed in settlements on different islands to await the government's decision for their future. One such settlement was Bennett's Harbour.

The actual harbor in the settlement was a favorite hang out for pirates and privateers. They would hide in the creek and pounce on unsuspecting ships, passing on the way through the Old Ship Channel.

There are old salt ponds located in the salt lake to the east of the settlement, and although nobody collects salt there commercially anymore, they were very productive in the 1850's. Tens of thousands of bushels of salt were exported from Bennett's Harbour.

## Hotels

Pompey Rock Villas  
Sammy T's Beach resort

## Churches

New Seventh Day Adventist Church  
Salem Baptist Church  
St. Benedict's Anglican Church

## Restaurants and Bars

Pompey Rock Villas Restaurant and Bar 354-6003  
Wayside Restaurant and Bar 354-6002  
Dis we place 354-1133, 427-8960 (Thurston Hill)

## Shops and Grocery:

Len's Grocery  
Bread and Flour Cakes by Catherine McDonald  
Titus Sea Food, (Thurston Hill)  
Puskin Hill Pig Farm, (Thurston Hill)  
Better value Store, (Thurston Hill)

## Other Points of Interest

Mail Boat Landing

# Rokers and the Bluff

## History

The Bluff was another one of the settlements established by Scottish loyalists in the 1780's.

At that time, the threat from pirates was always imminent, and there is a nice story about an African slave woman named Maishe. She was the matriarch of the settlement and entrusted with the special task of being the official lookout for the community. She had excellent vision, and her sense of responsibility was strong. From her vantage point on the hilltop of the Bluff she could see the sails of pirate ships in the distance. Because of her early warning, the settlers in the Bluff had time to hide and organize a defense, and in that way, the Bluff was saved from pirates. Maishe's name is still remembered for her deed.

In the 1850's, the Bluff was one of the larger settlements on Cat Island with over 150 people. The community housed the largest mortar and pestle ever seen on the island, and several persons gathering around it together to thresh the corn operated it.

## Hotels

Pigeon Cay Beach Club  
Apple Tree Inn

## Churches

Anglican Church  
Lovely Zion Baptist Church

## Restaurants and Bars

Apple Tree Inn and Bar 354-1001  
Triple X Bar and Restaurant  
Mack's Restaurant  
John R and Sons Restaurant and Bar

## Shops and Grocery

Island General Shopping Center

# Carieys and Gaiters

## History

Caireys is a settlement established by Eleutheran pineapple farmers before the turn of the century when Cat Island and Eleuthera were the major pineapple producers in the Bahamas. When the Eleuthera farmers ran out of land, their friends on Cat Island provided it.

There is also a profusion of cascarilla trees in this area. The bark of the cascarilla tree is what gives Campari its distinct bitter flavor and celebrated status. The idea for this appetite-inducing aperitif was thought up by the Italian bar owner Gaspare Campari in 1860 when he was operating a café in Milano. The drink became popular and Gaspare was willing to let other café owners use his recipe if they displayed his name "Campari" in their bars.

The women of Cat Island often turn to the gathering of cascarilla bark when they need money. It is hard and time-consuming work to scrape the bark from the tree, soak it and dry it and pack it in bags for further transportation to Nassau, but it is still a ready cash crop.



*A picture from the Archives of Mr Wilson planting pineapples in the Bluff.*

# Industrious Hill and Stephenson

## History

Industrious Hill is a small village with a now closed Government school, an ancient Baptist Church and a small post-office.

Over the centuries, the Caves at Industrious Hill have been the refuge for hundreds of Cat island natives in times of storms and hurricanes. This is celebrated in the hymn "Shelter in the time of Storm", which you can hear both on CD and in the churches.

The cave is multi chambered with a large vaulted northern compartment and a similar southern compartment. There is also a branch of the cave referred to as the "visitor's chamber"

Over one hundred years ago, "Old Man Lindsey" entered the cave to search for water and was never heard from again.

Stephenson is a quaint village, which once was the home of Bahama's greatest folk guitarist, Joseph Spence. Originally from Andros, he married a Cat Island woman, and for a time they lived in a neat little home of the roadside of this settlement.

Joseph Spence could be found at dances and on the dockside, giving impromptu performances with his guitar and harmonica, entertaining Cat Islanders and tourists alike.



*Industrious Hills caves. Look for the sign along the road*

## Restaurant and Bars

Wholesale Liquor and Bar

## Shops and Grocery

J&A Food Store

## Natural Attractions

The Caves at Industrious Hill

## Churches

Hilda Wilson Church of God

# The Cove

## History

The original inhabitant was a British Loyalist named Sawyer, and the village was originally called Jesse Cove (no one remembers who Jesse was). The northern most corner was referred to as Sawyer's and the ruins of the compound are still visible. This is now the site of the Bahamas Electrical Company offices and electrical plant.

On the eastern side of the Cove are the relics of shipping mishaps of yesteryear. The path through the reef made by S/S Modeward when one of its anchor chains broke in 1910, and also the wreck of a ship called Whisky from the 1800's.

## Restaurants and Bars

Club Paradise 342-8053

Lig's Bar

Coconuts 342-8091

## Institutions

Bahamas Electrical Company

## Shops and Grocery:

Rolle's Convenience Store

## Churches

Baptist Church

St Catherine's Anglican Church

# Tea Bay

## History

Tea Bay got its name when plantation owners used to gather daily under a large spreading tree at this site for their afternoon tea.

## Restaurants and Bars:

Ms' B's Takeaway Restaurant 342-8034

## Shops and Grocery:

Drumrainy's food store

Linette's Convenience Store

The Liquor Store

## Churches

Church of God

Church of God (Bahamas)

Baptist Church

# Knowles

## History

Typical of Cat Island, this settlement was founded by a British Loyalist called James Knowles. It is traditionally a sea faring village located mid island with a scenic main road running along the coast. There are many ruins of former slave huts in the area.

## Institutions

Bank of the Bahamas

Cat Island Credit Union

## Churches

St Peter's Anglican Church

## Restaurants and Bars

Bachelor's Restaurant 342-6014

Up and Down Bar

Home Ground Bayside Restaurant and Bar

## Shops and Grocery:

Issie's Convenience Store

Grocery on the Bay

Neighbourhood Convenience Store

Neighbourhood Liquor

## Building of Interest

Conch shed on the west side of the road.

The Media Center



*Ruins of slave quarters and out-door bathrooms dot the coast line of Tea bay and the Cove*

# Smith's Bay

## History

Once a sleepy out-lying village, Smith Bay has sprung into prominence since a harbor was dredged here in the 1960's. Now there is a weekly mail boat, dockage for private yachts, a Port of Entry, a Dock master and Customs and Immigration officials. Here is also the Packinghouse, where local farmers bring their crops to be sold and transported to Nassau. Anybody is welcome to visit the Packinghouse and buy any of the local produce stored there.

The main Clinic and resident island doctor are also located in Smith Bay.

Some of the administrative offices such as National Insurance and National Health Services are also located in Smith's Bay.

There is a very good road across the island to the eastern shore.

## Hotels

The Hallover Inn  
Fernandez Bay Village  
Little Bay Inn  
Island Hoppinn

## Restaurants and Bars

Fernandez Bay Village 342-3043  
Hallover Restaurant and Bar 342-2028  
Hazel Brown's Seaside Bar

## Shops and Grocery

The Heritage Convenience Store  
Kendall Seymour Garage and mechanic  
Dorsett's Laundrymat  
Cindy's Groceries

## Churches

St Luke's Anglican Church  
St Philip's Baptist Church  
Church of God



*The weekly mail boat "East Wind" off-loading at the government dock in Smith's Bay.*

# New Bight

## History

New Bight is made up of three former settlements: Freetown, Pigeon Bay and Douds.

Freetown was a settlement for "freed" slaves, like Bennett's Harbour, Pigeon Bay was named after the many crowned pigeons that frequent the area, and Douds was named after British Loyalist Seth Doud.

Located east of New Bight is Comer Hill, the home of Mount Alvernia, Father Jerome's Hermitage. The summit is the highest point in the Bahamas, 206 feet high. The views from the Hermitage are breathtaking, and the Hermitage itself is definitely worth the trip.

Stone steps lead past the Stations of the Cross to the chapel, bell tower, personal quarters and grave of Father Jerome. He built all this at the age of 62, and lived there until his death at age 80 plus in the 1950's.

A bit to the north west of the Hermitage lies the cave in which he lived while constructing his home. It might be hard to find, because of all the growth, but a local guide will surely find it for you.

For the romantic couple, it is possible to get married at the Hermitage for the reasonable amount of \$50.00. For more information, contact Sister Eileen at Our Lady of Zion, 342-3029



*Ruins of the Armbrister Plantation house in New Bight*

## Hotels

Bridge Inn  
Twin Palm Beach Resort

## Restaurants and Bars

Blue Bird Restaurant 342-3095  
Bridge Inn Restaurant and Bar 342-3013  
Hillside Restaurant  
First and Last Chance Bar  
Hounourable Harry Bethel's Wholesale Bar  
Grammy Farah's 342-3159  
Gina's  
New Bight Sailing Club 342-3054  
Sunrise Takeaway  
Triple D's 342-2204  
Two Corners Bar & Liquor Store 342-3130

## Public Buildings:

New Bight International Airport  
Government Administration Complex

## Shops and Grocery:

Iva's jewelry and straw  
New Bight Food Store  
MLR Hardware  
Idelle Dorsette's Convenience Store  
Virie McKinney's Convenience Store  
Sweet Things Confectionery  
Charmain Variety Shop  
3D's Barber and Beauty Salon  
New Bight Service Station - Garage and Car Rental  
Lorry's Fashion  
Gilbert's Inn and Car Rental

## Interesting Buildings or ruins

The Hermitage  
The ruins of Henry Hawkins Estate.  
Holy Redeemer Catholic Church by Father Jerome

## Churches

Highway Church of God  
Baptist Church  
Ebenezer Baptist Church  
Our Lady of Zion Catholic Church  
Mount Saints

# Old Bight and The Village

## History

The Village was once a terminus for an old railroad that brought hundreds of tons of sisal and pineapple to the port for further shipping to United States and Europe.

Remnants of this railroad can still be seen today, and there is also a rusty wreck of what could once have been a pushcart. Most of the rail was uprooted and shipped to England to assist in producing armaments during World War II.

Old Bight is made up of three different communities; Moss Town, Old Bight and Chair Road.

When the plantations thrived, over 150 years ago, this was an important area of Cat Island. It had a lot of rich soil, instead of the mostly rocky ground at the rest of the island, and it was here the large cotton plantations and cattle farms were located. Some of the ruins are still visible on the east side of the settlement.

Old Bight is the only place in the Bahamas with a monument to the Slave Emancipation. It is the Church of St Mary's, and it was donated by the family of British Governor Blaney Balford.

*Father Jerome's church St Francis of Assisi and the Church of St Mary. The original roof on Father Jerome's church was made of thatch.*

## Devil's Point

### History

Devil's Point was originally called Jenny's Point, but we don't know who Jenny was. It is famous for being the possible site of Columbus second anchorage on Cat Island on the morning of October 14th, 1492.

There is a navigation light on a high bluff, which was formerly the site of a fortification that guarded the settlement from pirates.

There is also an extensive reef system off of Devil's Point

### Hotels:

Pilot Harbour

### Restaurants and Bars:

Pilot Harbour Restaurant and Bar 342-4066

Beaches Restaurant

Pass Me Not Pool Room and Bar 342-4016

Peter Hill Restaurant and Bar 342-4001

### Interesting Building:

Church of St. Mary Slave Emancipation

### Shops and Grocery:

Jade's Unisex Beauty Shop

Southern Food Fair

Hart's Convenience Store

Corner Drugs

Dawkins Food Store

Winnifred Dry Goods & Straw Store

### Churches

Church of God

Church of God of Prophecy

St Mary's Emancipation

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church



### Restaurants and Bars

Ocean View Restaurant 342-7076

Major's Take Away 342-7012

Hester Little Wholesale bar 342-7019

### Shops and Grocery:

Mackey's Strawworks and Convenience Store

### Churches

Baptist Church

Adventist Church

# McQueen's

## History

Established by British Loyalist Alexander McQueen, this quiet little village is the western most settlement on Cat Island. The beautiful ornate chimneys from the 1700's bear witness to a thriving past.

Next to McQueen's is Hawk's Nest. The oldest English settlement on Cat Island was founded at the site of the present resort. It was attacked and burnt down by pirates in the 1700's, but the site was not deserted. We know that Joseph Hunter (a not too well liked plantation owner) had his estate here, and that the land later was used as grazing land for race-horses and cattle.

## Hotel, Restaurant, Marina and Airstrip

Hawk's Nest Harbour and Marina 342-7050

## Interesting Ruins

Ruins of Chimneys



*Devil's Point*

# Bain Town

## History

This southern most village is the site of one of the largest caves on the island, the Lotto-Man Hole. It is told, that an East Indian sailor was put ashore by a passing ship and marooned. He didn't have anywhere to live, so he took up residence in this deep hole cave. The natives called him Lotto-Man, and the name stuck.

The entrance to the cave is hidden a few feet in the rear of St John the Baptist Church (no longer in use) and you will probably need a guide to find it.

The ruined St. John the Baptist Catholic Church was designed and built by Father Jerome.

## Bars and Restaurants

The Galleon Club  
Rebecca House

## Interesting Ruin

Father Jerome's St John the Baptist Catholic Church

## Natural Attraction

Lotto-Man Cave

## Churches

Baptist Church

# Zonicle Hill

## History

This is another settlement that was established by British Loyalists. This man's name was Charles Zonicle, and he arrived in Cat Island in the late 1700's.

Zonicle Hill is situated on a high hill with a great view over the southern coast on one side, and one of the big inland lakes on the other.

## Hotels

Lake View Motel

## Restaurants and Bars

Lake View Motel and Take-away 342-5090

## Shops and Grocery:

V&G Fish Market and Convenience Store  
King's Car Rental

# Port Howe and Bailey Town

## History

In the settlement of Port Howe, named after Andrew Deveaux's British commander-in-chief in North America, you can see the ruins of the Deveaux Plantation.

But even before Deveaux made Cat Island his home, this site was a hive of activity. This might possibly be the site of the old town of Columba, which was said to have been built by the Spanish in the 1600's, and it was definitely a place of some fortification.

Cat Island was raided again and again by pirates - Augustino Blanco, "The Scourge of Cat Island", in particular, but even the English pirate Edward Teach, known both as Ned, and more notably, Blackbeard and Negro pirates, Black Caesar and Josephus, so it was necessary to have some kind of fortress.

The ruins of Columba were mentioned by visitors to the island in the 1700's.

Take a look at the old cemetery in Port Howe and see if you can identify some pirates or old plantation owners.

## Hotels

Greenwood Beach Resort

## Restaurants and Bars

Greenwood Beach Resort 342-3053

Deep South Palace Bar and Takeaway 342-5129

I D Take Away 342- 5041

Sweet Tamarind Restaurant and Bar 342-5011

## Shops and Grocery

Deep South Super Market

James Brown Hardware and Convenience

## Service Station

Brown Service Station

Meredith Service Station

## Ruins of Interest

Deveaux plantation

## Natural Attraction

Columbus Point reached by walking path from Greenwood

## Churches

St Peter's Baptist Church

Zion Baptist Church

St Mark's Anglican Church

Our Lady of Zion Catholic Church (Bailey Town)



*The Deveaux Plantation. The building in the background is the slave quarter.*

# BUSH MEDICINE

Text and photos by Laurel Richey

Bush medicine is regarded as the Bahamian use of indigenous and introduced plants for medicinal purposes. It is among one of the Bahamian cultural legacies that is slowly dying out due to modernization, including the infiltration of westernized medicine and the availability of over the counter and prescription pharmaceuticals. However, even in the midst of westernized health care, many Bahamians continue to use plants to treat their illnesses. Bush medicine persists it is effective, acceptable in the culture, readily available and because it is more affordable than store bought or prescribed medicines.

It is common for Bahamians to report that they prefer their bush medicines to the doctor's medicine. Many state that, "bush medicine works faster and better than doctor's medicine." Even trained health care professionals on Cat Island prefer bush medicines over modern pharmaceuticals. Retired Nurse Coralea Turner of Orange Creek reported, "When ever you drink bush, it's medicine, that's why these island people so strong - pills rotten your bones." Many medically trained professionals working in the Bahamas admit that some bush medicines appear to work, such as bush medicine used for treating high blood pressure, however they caution against using bush medicines in concurrence with prescription pharmaceuticals.

Bush medicine has been practiced in the Bahamas for well over 300 years, beginning with the earliest settlers, the English and their slaves, who came as colonists in the mid-1600's. The use of the indigenous flora for medicine continued to prosper and be discovered with the arrival of the Loyalists and their slaves of African descent, in the late 1700's and long after that.

Early settlers of the Bahamas didn't enjoy the luxury of doctors or modern day pharmaceuticals, rather these Bahamian inhabitants resorted to using the flora, or "bush" to treat their ailments. People learned of a plants healing ability by watching what the animals ate, and later refined the remedies by trial and error. It was reported that, "anything the critters [goats, pigs and sheep] done eat you can eat, that's good medicine." Additionally it is presumed that



the early Bahamian settlers used plants that looked similar to medicinal plants that were already being employed in England, the United States, and Africa.

In the days before modern medicine, mid-wives, or "grannies" as they were called, were the primary repertoires of medicinal plant knowledge. They would lend advice on plants used to treat particular illnesses, take care of the most serious of maladies, as well as being the deliverers of infants. In the mid 1900's, westernized medicine began to make its way into the Bahamas, however it was mainly New Providence that had access to the new pharmaceuticals and health facilities.

The people of the Out Islands, including Cat Island, did not have access to modern medicines and continued to use their bush medicine. Even as health clinics started to become established on the Out Islands, the clinic was often too far for people to travel to, and even today, some islands lack a permanent resident physician. Thus, bush medicine persists.

Bush medicine is common knowledge amongst males and females, old and young. It is passed down from generation to generation as an oral tradition, but unfortunately much of the knowledge is in peril due to a lack of interest in

today's younger generation. Most Bahamians know of plants to cure colds, coughs, fever, and flu, which is not surprising seeing how these are maladies everyone experiences. Also very popular is Bush Tea, which here on Cat Island is often referred to as 21 Gun Salute.

A prevailing theme throughout the Bahamas is the use of odd numbers in medicinal preparations. Thus, if using several plant species to make a preparation, you must use an odd number of plants, and it is often reported that one should take the remedy for an odd number of days. Upon inquiring why an odd number, no one seemed to know. The only response consistently offered was, "I don't know why an odd number, that's jus' how 'dem old folks tell us to do it." The use of odd numbers in medicinal preparations is prevalent in many healing traditions.

Approximately 165 plants have been reported as being therapeutic on Cat Island. This is significant, as Cat Island has a flora of about 638 plants, thus 26% of Cat Islands flora has been reported as being used medicinally. When comparing Long and Cat Island's bush medicine practices, it was found that 120 plants are used by both Long and Cat Islanders, for the same purposes.

In the subsequent section bush tea will be discussed, followed by a listing of several illnesses and complaints with the bush remedies employed to treat the afflictions. For any one illness, there were numerous plants reported as being used as a treatment, but only the most common remedies are listed. The purpose of this segment is to report on those bush medicines that have been traditionally employed on Cat Island. The information provided has been compiled from numerous interviews the author has conducted with Cat Islanders, and serves as a historical and cultural documentation. In no way will the author be held liable for the use of any of the documented remedies.

To alleviate any possible confusion, plants used in the following remedies will be listed in the following format: Common name(s) (Scientific name Authority [Plant family])

## **BUSH TEA / 21 GUN SALUTE**

On Cat Island, bush tea is either called "Bush Tea" or "21 Gun Salute." Phil Stubbs, a Cat Island native (Dumfries settlement) and popular Bahamian musician, dedicated a song to 21 gun salute. Bush tea is one of the most popular bush medicines, due to the its many uses and the stigma associated with its applications. Bush Tea is taken for several reasons, it is known to:

- 1) strengthen the back
- 2) make one strong
- 3) combat weakness
- 4) supply one with energy
- 5) act as a vitamin and nutrient supplement
- 6) promote longevity
- 7) build the blood
- 8) promote fertility
- 9) aid in sexual dysfunction
- 10) act as an aphrodisiac
- 11) prolong sexual activity

If one inquires about bush tea's effects, one is told it is used to "strengthen the back," which for elder people means just that, strengthening their back after a hard day of work in the fields. However the younger generations, when describing bush tea as being



*Bush Tea for sale*



*Five Finger*

used to strengthen the back, are really referring to the teas ability to strengthen their sexual performance and fertility. Some sayings associated with bush tea include: "It puts pep in your step," "it puts lead in your pencil," bush tea can help the sick, but it can't raise the dead." Indeed, even a former Cat Island commissioner avowed how bush tea worked better than Viagra, Spanish Fly and other aphrodisiacs.

Bush Tea is also reported to "increase and promote fertility." A gentlemen from Nassau was visiting family on Cat Island, and relayed the following story to me. This gentleman and his wife were having problems conceiving children. Upon discussing their problem with family members, they were referred to an elderly gentlemen who lived in Old Bight, who was known for making bush tea to help fertility. The elderly gentleman prepared bush tea for the couple to drink and sure enough the couple had three kids in no time.

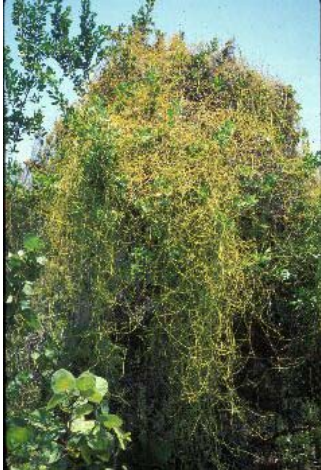


*Leaves of Gamalame*

Finally bush tea is taken to "strengthen the system," to "give one energy and vitamins", to "strengthen the blood", and to "make one live longer." Elder people report, "bush tea makes ya strong and gives ya energy and vitamins, that's why 'dese island people live so long." The typical Bahamian diet is often deficient in a variety of vegetables and nutrients, however it seems reasonable to assume that bush tea and other bush medicines act as a nutritional supplement, providing many more vitamins to individuals than they would normally receive. The variety of plants used in bush tea would no doubt add vitamins and nutrients to the Bahamian diet, which further contributes to a healthier and longer life.

**THE 5 MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS THAT ARE IN ALMOST EVERY BUSH TEA PREPARATION ARE:**

1. **Five Finger** (*Tabebuia bahamensis* (Northrop) Britt.[Bignoniaceae])
2. **Gum Elemi**, *Gamalame*, *Kamalame* (*Bursera simaruba* (L.) Sarg. [Bursaceae])
3. **Love Vine** (*Cassytha filiformis* L. [Lauraceae])
4. **Stiff Cock**, *Hard Bark*, *Feather Bed* (*Diospyrus crassinervis* (Krug & Urb.) Standl. [Ebenaceae])
5. **Strong Back**, *Strong Bark* (*Bouerria ovata* Miers [Boraginaceae])



*Love Vine*

**OTHER PLANTS COMMONLY ADDED TO BUSH TEA ON CAT ISLAND INCLUDE:**

1. **Bo Hog** (*Callicarpa hitchcockii* Millsp. [Verbenaceae])
2. **Australian Pine**, *Cedar*, *Casuarina* (*Casuarina litorea* L. [Casuarinaceae])
3. **Chainey Briar**, *Briar* (*Smilax havenensis* Jacq. [Smilicaceae])
4. **Chicken Ti**, *Chicken Thigh*, *Smith Shallot*, *Wild Orchid* (*Encyclia* sp.[Orchidaceae])
5. **Devil's Shoe String**, *Wild Granite* (*Desmodium cannum* (J.F. Gmel.) Schinz & Thell. [Fabaceae])
6. **Lignum Vitae**, *Nigly Whitey* (*Guaiacum sanctum* L. [Zygophyllaceae])
7. **Madiera** (*Swietenia mahogani* (L.) Jacq. [Ebenaceae])
8. **Sweet Margaret** (*Psidium longipes* (Berg) McVaugh [Myrtaceae])
9. **Three Finger**, *Chicken Toe* (*Thouinia discolor* Griseb. [Sapindaceae])
10. **Wild Dilly** (*Manilkara bahamensis* (Baker) Lam. & Meeuse [Sapotaceae])
11. **Touch Me Not** (*Malpighia polytricha* A. Juss. [Malpighiaceae])



*Stiff Cock*

Generally, when one prepares bush tea, they always use an odd number of plants. The least number of plants would be three, but more commonly, people use seven, nine, or eleven plants for a potent bush tea. Many people erroneously believe that the name 21 Gun Salute means there are 21 plants in bush tea preparations. Very few people actually use 21 plants, most of the renowned bush tea preparations contain on average eleven plants.

Bahamians say the roots have all the strength: "The roots is the best part, that's where all the strength is." Thus when making a potent bush tea, such as for severe sexual dysfunction or fertility problems, the roots are boiled. However, because it is very difficult to obtain the roots and it means a lot of work, most people prepare bush tea using the branches or bark, because it is easier. Exceptions to this are spiny plants, such as Touch Me Not and Chainey Briar, where only the roots are used. Also, in the case of Love Vine, the vine is used, and for Chicken Ti the bulb is used. Finally, one should not collect the plant parts after it has rained, as rain dilutes the potency. It is much better to obtain bush tea plants after a period of drought.



*Strong Back*

The plants are boiled in enough water to cover them, for about 1-3 hours, depending on the desired strength. The tea can be taken hot or cold, and normally "sweet milk" (sweetened condensed milk) or milk and sugar are added. Nutmeg and sometimes a raw egg are also added. Sometimes bush tea is taken with a bit of liquor in it, such as gin, rum or brandy. For general strength, to strengthen the back, longevity, energy and nutrients, people drink it everyday, about 1 cup before and after they perform extraneous work. Some only drink it when they want an added sexual boost. If using it for fertility or sex drive, an entire liter should be taken over the course of a week, to achieve the desired effect.

## **BUSH MEDICINES**

A common characteristic of many bush medicines is their bitter taste. The bitter taste is why many young Bahamians no longer want to take bush medicines. It was very common back in the day, for children to be given "bitters" every morning to, "bitter the blood, because children eat too many sweet things." Another woman was quoted as saying, "Sickness likes sweet blood and stays. You have to bitter your blood to keep from getting sick." Bitter tasting plants are used for many reasons, including:

1. Colds, Coughs, Fever, and Flu
2. Stomach Pains and Upset
3. Improvement of Appetite
4. Infantile Grippe and Colic
5. Disease Preventative
6. "Sugar" (Diabetes)
7. Pain



*Jackmadar*

Many of the bush medicines are steeped in warm water or boiled. The amount of water a plant is steeped or boiled in varies among accounts, as does the dosage. When possible, dosage and the amount of water added to preparations is stated, only if reports were fairly consistent. For skin wounds, cuts and irritations, often times a plant is boiled and the resulting liquid is applied to the afflicted area, or a plant is parched (dried) and then crumbled and rubbed onto the wound.

In this section, several ailments are listed along with the bush medicines that are most commonly reported to treat those illnesses. Many of the disease categories are first listed in Bahamian disease terminology which, if need be, is further clarified so that many of the travelers who come to the Bahamas can comprehend. Complex medical terminology has been kept to a minimum. There were many treatments reported for each illness, but listed are those cures that had the most amount of support, starting with the cure that had the most numerous reports.

## APPETITE IMPROVEMENT

Generally bitters are given to improve appetite. Some of the more common bitters include:

1. **Man Root**, Snake Root, Tom Haul, Big Man (*Picramnia pentandra* Sw. [Simaroubaceae])  
A piece of the branch is obtained and the bark scraped off. The limb is then steeped in warm water or gin. The root can also be obtained and boiled in water. Either preparation is drunk. Children generally are given a few teaspoons and adults drink as much as they want.
2. **Jackmadar**, Bitter Sage (*Eupatorium villosum* Sw. [Asteraceae])  
A limb of this shrub is boiled or steeped in water and drunk. Amount taken is the same as Man Root
3. **Prince Torch**, Prince Wood (*Exostema caribaeum* (Jacq.) Schult. [Rubiaceae])  
Steep or boil a branch piece in water and drink. Amount taken is the same as Man Root.
4. **Aloe**, Aloevs (*Aloe vera* (L.) Burm.f. [Liliaceae])  
The leaf of this plant is "milked" or placed in a glass of warm water. The amount taken is about the same as Man Root.

## ARTHRITIS / RHEUMATISM

Many report that bathing in one of the islands many salt ponds or "healing lakes" eases the arthritic pain.

1. **Obeah Bush**, Pond Bush, Witch Bush, Miss Bait Bush, Daddy Esaw Bush (*Stemodia maritima* L. [Scrophulariaceae])  
This herb is boiled in water and the afflicted area is bathed with the resulting decoction.

## ASTHMA / SHORTNESS OF BREATH

1. **Ploppers**, Life Leaf (*Kalanchoe pinnata* (Lam.) Pers. [Crassulaceae])  
Beat the plant in a thin cloth and then put in warm water to let it draw/steep. Butter and sugar are often added. Young children are given 2 tablespoons morning and night, older children are given about 1 cup. This remedy supposedly makes the child vomit, which brings out the cold.

## CHICKEN POX / MEASELS

1. **Yellow Blossomed Sage**, Goldenrod, Coolin Rod (*Lantana bahamensis* Britt. [Verbenaceae])
2. **Sweet Sage** (*Lantana involucrata* L. [Verbenaceae])  
It is said that one must wait 3 days after the marks show up on the skin, before treatment can occur. Branches of either of these plants are then boiled in water alone or together. The affected person then bathes in the decoction and drinks about ½ cup.

## "COLD IN THE EYES" / IRRITATED EYES

1. **Baszily**, Basil (*Ocimum basilicum* L. [Lamiaceae])  
The seeds of this plant are placed in the eye before bed, to draw the cold out of your eye.
2. **Catnip** (*Salvia serotina* L. [Lamiaceae])  
Crush and steep a few leaves in a cup of warm water. Drop a few drops of the resulting liquid in your eyes before you go to bed.
3. **Tamarind** (*Tamarindus indica* L. [Fabaceae])  
Steep the leaves of this plant in warm water. Drop a few drops of the resulting liquid in your eyes.
4. **Pigeon Pea** (*Cajanus cajan* (L.) Millsp. [Fabaceae])  
Obtain a few leaves, bruise them, and place in a cup of warm water to steep. Drip the liquid in your eyes.



*Lignum Vitae Tree in bloom*



*Prince Torch*

## COLDS and COUGHS

Essentially the same remedies are used for both colds and coughs. Of the following plants, these were most commonly reported as being employed as treatments:

1. **Jackmadar**, Bitter Sage (*Eupatorium villosum* Sw. [Asteraceae])
2. **Saab Bush** (*Pluchea symphytifolia* (Mill.) Gillis [Asteraceae])
3. **Goat Bush**, Boston Catnip (*Ageratum conyzoides* L. [Asteraceae])
4. **Bayjareena**, Bay Vine (*Ambrosia hispida* Pursh [Asteraceae])
5. **Sorrissey**, Cerasee (*Momordica charantia* L. [Cucurbitaceae])
6. **Aloe**, Aloevis (*Aloe vera* (L.) Burm.f. [Liliaceae])
7. **Croton** (*Polyscias guilfoylei* (Cogn. & Marchal) L. H. Bailey [Araliaceae])
8. **Rat Ears** (*Commicarpus scandens* (L.) Standl. [Nyctaginaceae])
9. **Pipe Shank** (*Capraria biflora* L. [Scrophulariaceae])
10. **White Bush**, Cough Bush (*Corchorus hirsutus* L. [Tiliaceae])



*Saab Bush*

Many people boil any one of these plants alone, or in combination with others. The plant(s) are boiled in water and usually sour lime, salt, and sometimes butter are added to cut the bitter taste. For adults  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 1 cup full is taken 1-3 times a day for an odd number of days. Children are given the remedy by the teaspoon or tablespoon, depending on their age.

## CONSTIPATION / "TIGHT BOWELS"

1. **Aloe**, Aloevis (*Aloe vera* (L.) Burm.f. [Liliaceae])  
A fleshy leaf is broken off and can be prepared numerous ways. Some "milk" the leaf by putting it in a glass of water to steep and then drink the water. Others prefer to "slip it" by means of taking the outer skin off the leaf and eating a piece of the interior jelly like material. Pills can also be made from the leaf sap. This remedy is very bitter.
2. **Blue Flowers** (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis* (L.) Vahl [Verbenaceae])  
For children three leaves are boiled in 1 cup of water and about a table spoon is given twice a day. Adults boil the whole herb in water and drink about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup twice a day.
3. **Pawpaw**, Papaya (*Carica papaya* L. [Caricaceae])  
The fruit is eaten.
4. **Strip Me Naked**, Dragum (*Polygala oblongata* (Britt.) Blake [Polygalaceae])  
Boil a limb of this plant in water and drink  $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cup full, early in the morning.



*White Bush*

## DIARRHEA / "LOOSE BOWELS"

1. **Rock Bush**, Hard Head, Cutlash Bush, Ram Horn (*Phyllanthus epiphyllanthus* L. [Euphorbiaceae])  
The "leaves" (really they are stems = phyllodia) are beaten and either steeped in warm water or boiled. Adults take about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup, children are given 2-3 teaspoons. The "leaves" can also be chewed for relief.
2. **Guava** (*Psidium guajava* L. [Myrtaceae])  
The bark, leaves, or root is boiled in water. Often times, people boil the barks of Guava, Grape, Pigeon Plum, and/or Dilly together.  
Eating the fruits will "bind you."
3. **Sea Grape**, Grape (*Coccoloba uvifera* (L.) L. [Polygonaceae])  
The bark may be boiled alone in water or in combination with Guava, Pigeon Plum, and/or Dilly. About  $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cup is drunk. The fruits may be eaten to "check you" as well.
4. **Pigeon Plum** (*Coccoloba diversifolia* Jacq. [Polygonaceae])



*Aloe*

- The bark may be boiled alone in water, or in combination with Guava, Sea Grape, and/or Dilly.
5. **Sapodilly**, Dilly (*Manilkara zapota* (L.) P. van Royen [Sapotaceae])  
The young fruit may be boiled in water and drunk. Additionally, the bark can be boiled alone in water or in combination with Guava, Sea Grape, and/or Pigeon Plum.
  6. **Stopper** (*Eugenia axillaris* (Sw.) Willd. [Myrtaceae])  
Boil the bark of this shrub in water and drink.  
The berries are often given to children when they are afflicted with diarrhea.
  7. **Fresh Water Fig** (*Trema lamarckianum* (Roem. & Schult.) Blume [Ulmaceae])  
A branch of this plant is boiled in water. Adults drink about 1 cup twice a day.



*Three Finger Bush*

## FEVER and FLU

The following plants were commonly reported to treat fever and flu

1. **Gale of Wind** (*Phyllanthus amarus* Schum. [Euphorbiaceae])
2. **Prickle Bush**, Fever Bush, Chill Bush, Sticky Bush (*Randia aculeata* L. [Rubiaceae])
3. **White Torch** (*Amyris elemifera* L. [Rutaceae])
4. **Jackmadar**, Bitter Sage (*Eupatorium villosum* Sw. [Asteraceae])
5. **Bayjareena**, Bay Vine (*Ambrosia hispida* Pursh [Asteraceae])
6. **Sorrissey**, Cerasee (*Momordica charantia* L. [Cucurbitaceae])
7. **Jumbay** (*Leucaena leucocephala* (Lam.) de Wit [Fabaceae])
8. **Croton** (*Polyscias guilfoylei* (Cogn. & Marchal) L. H. Bailey [Araliaceae])

The above plants are generally boiled in water alone however, often times it was reported that Prickle Bush was boiled with White Torch. As with treating colds and coughs, sour lime, salt and sometimes butter is added to the decoction. For adults ¼ to 1 cup full is taken 1-3 times a day for an odd number of days. Children are given the remedy by the teaspoon or tablespoon, depending on their age.



*Prickle Bush*

## FISH POISONING

1. **Pigeon Peas Root** (*Cajanus cajan* (L.) Millsp. [Fabaceae])  
The root is gathered and boiled in water. About a cup is taken of the resulting decoction, and sometimes gin is added.
2. **Top**, Bow Top (*Thrinax morrisii* H. Wendl. [Arecaceae])  
The heart of this palm is eaten.

## GAS

1. **Sour Lime** (*Citrus aurantiifolia* (Christm.) Swingle [Rutaceae])  
The leaves are gathered and boiled in water. The resulting liquid is drunk as a tea.
2. **Naked Wood** (*Myrcianthes fragrans* (Sw.) McVaugh [Myrtaceae])  
Limbs of this tree are boiled in water and about ½ cup is taken.

## HEADACHE

1. **Guinea Hen** (*Petiveria alliacea* L. [Phytolaccaceae])  
The root of this herbaceous plant is obtained, snapped in half, and the odor inhaled. It smells a bit like horseradish.  
Numerous people report putting leaves in their hats or tying leaves around their heads for headache relief.  
Some of the more common leaves include:
2. **Match me if you can** (*Acalypha wilkesiana* Muell.-Arg. [Euphorbiaceae])

3. **Alta**, Castor Leaf (*Ricinus communis* L. [Euphorbiaceae])
4. **Sour Sop** (*Annona muricata* L. [Annonaceae])
5. **Top Leaf** (*Thrinax morrisii* H. Wendl. -or- *Coccothrinax argentata* (Jacq.) L.H. Bailey [Arecaceae])



*Shepherd's Needle*

#### HEAD COLD/ CONGESTION

1. **Obeah Bush**, Pond Bush, Witch Bush, Miss Bait Bush, Daddy Esaw Bush (*Stemodia maritima* L. [Scrophulariaceae])
  2. **Saab Bush** (*Pluchea symphytifolia* (Mill.) Gillis [Asteraceae])
  3. **Catnip** (*Salvia serotina* L. [Lamiaceae])
- Any of these plants can be boiled in water separately. The resulting decoction is used to bathe the head

#### "HEAT IN THE BODY" / HOT FLASHES

1. **Shepherd's Needle** (*Bidens alba* DC. [Asteraceae])  
Gather the herb and boil in water and drink about ½-1 cup full.



*Brasiletta*

#### HEART PALPITATIONS / "FAST HEARTBEAT"

1. **Fig** (*Ficus aurea* Nutt. -or- *Ficus citrifolia* Mill. [Moraceae])  
Break off a piece of a branch. Steep the limb in water to "milk it."  
Drink the whole glass to bring your heartbeat down.

#### HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE / HYPERTENSION

1. **Breadfruit** (*Artocarpus altilis* (Z) Fosb. [Moraceae])
2. **Soursop** (*Annona muricata* L. [Annonaceae])
3. **Pear**, Avocado (*Persea americana* Mill. [Lauraceae])
4. **Genip**, Kenip (*Melicoccus bijugatus* Jacq. [Sapindaceae])
5. **Almond** (*Terminalia catappa* L. [Combretaceae])
6. **Croton** (*Polyscias guilfoylei* (Cogn. & Marchal) L. H. Bailey [Araliaceae])

Leaves of any of the above plants can be boiled in water, separately or in combination with each other. Many follow the odd number rule when boiling these plants, thus an odd number of plants are used and an odd number of leaves are boiled (for example, 3 leaves of 3 of these plants are boiled in about 1 quart of water). Drink 1-2 cups per day, until one's pressure comes down.

#### JAUNDICE

1. **Thistle**, Thistly (*Argemone mexicana* L. [Papaveraceae])  
This is a prickly herb with yellow sap. The plant is obtained and boiled in water. About 1 cup is taken everyday until the jaundice is gone.

#### "LOW BLOOD" / ANEMIA

1. **Madeira** (*Swietenia mahagoni* (L.) Jacq. [Meliaceae])  
Steep the "bark" (wood) in warm water. Some steep it in gin. Drink anywhere from 1 tablespoon to 1 cup. This is real bitter, so it is difficult to take a lot at once.
2. **Brasiletta** (*Caesalpinia bahamensis* Lam. [Fabaceae])  
Take a branch from the tree and scrape off the outer bark. Break up the limb and boil or steep limbs in water until the water turns a reddish color. Drink it as a tea.
3. **Beets** (*Beta vulgaris* L. [Chenopodiaceae])  
Boil the beets in water. Eat the beets and drink the water they were boiled in.



*Buttercup*

## MENSTRUAL CRAMPS / PAIN

1. **Buttercup** (*Turnera ulmifolia* L. [Turneraceae])  
The plant is boiled in water and about 1 cup is taken a day, until the pain goes away.

## PAIN, BACK

1. **Horsebush** (*Gundlachia corymbosa* (Urb.) Britt. [Asteraceae])  
Beat the leaves of this shrub so they become tacky, then tie them to your back with a cloth. It was reported that when the leaves fall off, the pain will be gone.
2. **Bush Tea**  
See Bush Tea entry

## PAIN, STOMACH

1. **Jackmadar**, Bitter Sage (*Eupatorium villosum* Sw. [Asteraceae])  
See preparation and dosage under Colds and Coughs.
2. **Rock Bush**, Hard Head, Cutlash Bush, Ram Horn (*Phyllanthus epi* [Euphorbiaceae])  
For preparation see heading under diarrhea.
3. **Spoonwood** (*Maytenus buxifolia* (A. Rich.) Griseb. [Celastraceae])  
Boil a limb of this plant in water and drink 1 cup per day, until the pain is gone.

## RASH / "PRICKLE HEAT"

1. **Yellow Blossomed Sage**, Goldenrod, Coolin Rod (*Lantana bahamensis* Britt. [Verbenaceae])
2. **Sweet Sage** (*Lantana involucrata* L. [Verbenaceae])
3. **Shepherd's Needle** (*Bidens alba* DC. [Asteraceae])  
Any of the above three can be used alone or in combination with one another. These plant parts are boiled in water and the resulting decoction is bathed in. Some report that you should drink it too.

## SORE THROAT

1. **Rock Bush**, Hard Head, Cutlash Bush, Ram Horn (*Phyllanthus epi* [Euphorbiaceae])  
The "leaves" (phyllodia) of this plant are chewed to obtain relief, or they can be boiled in water and the resulting decoction is gargled.
2. **Physic Not** (*Jatropha curcas* L. [Euphorbiaceae])  
This is a rare tree on the island. A limb of this tree is obtained, the outer bark is scraped off, and the limb is placed in a glass of hot water to steep. Sweet milk is often then added to the infusion and one then gargles the throat with the resulting liquid.

## SORES / CUTS

1. **Rooster Comb**, Scorpion Tail (*Heliotropium angiospermum* Murr. [Boraginaceae])  
Leaves of this herb are parched (dried) and then crumbled and dusted on the sore or cut.
2. **Soldier Vine** (*Tournefortia volubulis* L. -or- *Tournefortia poliochros* Spreng. [Boraginaceae])  
Boil this vine like plant and bathe sores, then parch some and dust on sore.



*Rock Bush in rock*

*phyllanthus* L.



*Rooster Comb*



*Sweet Sage*

3. **Buttercup** (*Turnera ulmifolia* L. [Turneraceae])  
Obtain a piece of this plant and boil in water. Bathe afflicted area. Parch some of the leaves and dust on the sore or cut.
4. **Aloe**, Aloevis (*Aloe vera* (L.) Burm.f. [Liliaceae])  
Apply the leaf sap to the sore or cut.
5. **Gumma Bush** (*Solanum americanum* Mill. [Solanaceae])  
Boil plant and bathe sore or cut, then parch some leaves and dust affected area.
6. **Knucker Box**, Clock Bush (*Jacaranda coerulea* (L.) Griseb. [Bignoniaceae])  
Parch leaves and dust on sore. Especially recommended or cancerous lesions.
7. **Rock Bush**, Hard Head, Cutlash Bush, Ram Horn (*Phyllanthus epiphyllanthus* L.[Euphorbiaceae])  
Beat leaves (phyllochia) of this plant and squeeze juice on cut to heal it up.



*Pisser Bed*

### STOP CHILDREN FROM WETTING THE BED

1. **Pisser Bed** (*Chiococca alba* (L.) Hitchc. [Rubiaceae]) -or- (*Vallesia antillana* Woods.[Apocynaceae])  
There are two different species that are referred to by this common name and both plants are employed for this affliction.  
White berries are given to the children to eat. If no berries are available, then the branches of either shrub are boiled in water and about a cup is given to the child to drink.
2. **Strong Back**, Strong Bark (*Bourreria ovata* Miers [Boraginaceae])  
Limbs of this shrub are boiled in water and about a cup is given to the child to drink.
3. **Cedar**, Australian Pine, Casuarina (*Casuarina litorea* L. [Casuarinaceae])  
The wood of this tree is boiled in water and given to children to drink
4. **Wild Granite**, Devil's Shoe String (*Desmodium canum* (J.F. Gmel.) Schinz & Thell. [Fabaceae])  
This vine like herb is gathered and boiled in water, and about a cup is given to children to drink.

### "STOPPAGE IN WATER" / INABILITY TO URINATE

1. **Watermelon Seeds** (*Citrullus lanatus* (Thunb.) Matsum. & Nakai [Cucurbitaceae])  
The seeds are dried or parched, ground, and steeped or boiled in water. About one cup of the resulting liquid is drunk.

### "SUGAR" / DIABETES

It is common knowledge that bitter plants are used to treat diabetes or "sugar." It has been said, "the more bitter you have in your blood, the sugar can't live there." However not all the plants used to treat diabetes are bitter, but most are. Some of the more common remedies include:

1. **Sailor's Cap**, Sailor's Choice, Periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus* (L.) G. Don [Apocynaceae])  
This plant has petals of two different colors, white and purple. Most use the white flowered plant in treating diabetes.  
One or two plants are picked and boiled in anywhere from 1 pint to 1 quart of water. 1-2 cups are taken daily. This remedy is not really bitter.
2. **Tarpin**, Sugar Bush, Well Wit, (*Chrysophyllum oliviforme* L. [Sapotaceae])  
This tree is easily characterized by its leaves. The top of the leaf is dark green and the underside is covered in fine satiny



*Periwinkle*

rusty colored hairs.

A limb of this is boiled in water and a cup is taken twice a day . This remedy is not bitter.

3. **Jackmadar**, Bitter Sage (*Eupatorium villosum* Sw. [Asteraceae])  
A limb of this shrub is boiled in water and drunk. It is very bitter.
4. **Aloe**, Aloevis (*Aloe vera* (L.) Burm.f. [Liliaceae])  
A fleshy leaf is broken off and can be prepared numerous ways. Some "milk" the leaf by putting it in a glass of water to steep and then drink the water. Others prefer to "slip it" by means of taking the outer skin off the leaf and eating a piece of the interior jelly like material. Pills can also be made from the leaf sap. This remedy is very bitter.
5. **Prince Torch**, Prince Wood (*Exostema caribaeum* (Jacq.) Schult. [Rubiaceae])  
Steep or boil a piece in water and drink about a cup full.  
Bitter.

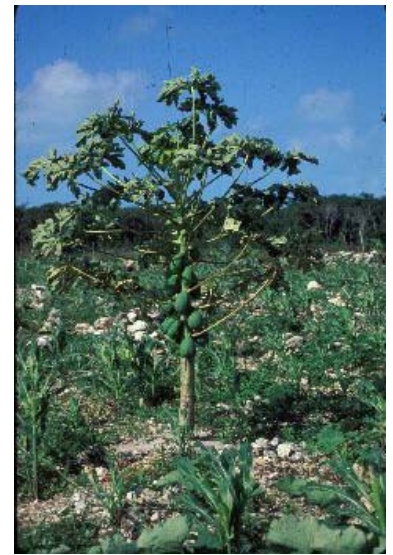


*Sugar Bush*

### UPSET STOMACH

Many people vomit to relieve themselves of an upset stomach, however there are other remedies.

1. **Rock Bush**, Hard Head, Cutlash Bush, Ram Horn (*Phyllanthus epiphyllanthus* L. [Euphorbiaceae])  
For preparation see heading under diarrhea.
2. **Sour Lime** (*Citrus aurantiifolia* (Christm.) Swingle [Rutaceae])  
The leaves are gathered and boiled in water and the resulting liquid is drunk as a tea.



*Papaya*



*The author, Laurel Richey, with the boys from Boggie Pond: From the left ,Kemeo Pratt, Lynden Pratt, "Killer", and Mandell Rolle*

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# Walking Tours on Cat Island

By Nicholas Cripps

For the self-sufficient tourist there are a multitude of things to see and do, but remember this place is not for people who need to have a program!

There are numerous footpaths and tracks throughout Cat Island with many attractions along the way. Each settlement has least once East /West track leading to the Atlantic ocean. These range in length from one and a half to 5 miles long. Other footpaths have been cleared and we offer these to you. Remember your compass and drinking water.

**1.** We start at Orange Creek and follow the paved road north towards Port Royal. The paved road ends, and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile along the unpaved road you find the first footpath, which begins across the road just north of the sign to Port Royal Beach. Take the first cleared road to the right, and although it appears to end kind of abruptly, don't be discouraged. It continues as a footpath after the clearing and it will take you to the edge of the Blue Hole Lake. After passing the lake, bear left up to Glass Hill - it's 162 ft. elevation provides magnificent views. Continue down the trail, and you will first meet a freshwater lake with magnificent mahogany trees and beautiful stands of sable and coconut palms, and then on to the beach on the north shore.

Back towards the Blue Hole, there is an alternative for the hardy hiker. When you come back to the fork in the trail, follow the lake path to the left for beautiful water views. These views are especially captivating with a mist rising off the water. Follow the edge of the Blue Hole all the way to Dickie Road, which runs alongside the southern end of the Blue Hole. There is the junction between the Lakes leading directly back to Orange Creek, but you would have to wade through some shallow water to follow it, and bring a machete to clear the way in places.

**2.** Dickie Road is a fascinating walk or drive. Dickie Road is the first turn to the left when leaving Orange Creek Inn, going south. You pass the first fresh water blue hole where locals still wash their clothes, then through the farming area to the southern end of the Bad Blue Hole. On your right you can visit the Griffin bat cave, but remember your flashlight! This cave was a hide out for slaves who built walls and window openings into the face of the cave entrance. Traveling on, you meet the hard rock and red soil which is so much a part of Cat Island, and all along the ups and downs of this track you will see pot holes and caves literally alongside the road.

Upon reaching the shore, you can go south for about one and a half miles to a beautiful sandy beach named Camper Down, with coconut trees and cultivation amidst swarthy secret trees. Just up the track here there is a nice fresh water deposit, if you have been swimming, and close by is the old Stuart home, now a rental cottage. The track continues back to the Lot settlement, again over rolling hills and small patches of farming. There are many unkempt foot paths on this northern end and so if you are going to explore them take along a good ordinance Survey map.

**3.** Heading south to Dumfries in the center of the settlement just opposite the Turning Point Bar, you'll find another track to the ocean. About 1 mile along this path you reach a great stretch of mangroves on both sides. This is the dry area of the Great pond. Heading left (north) into these mangroves you will be amazed at their size, some of them 30 to 40 ft. tall. I call this "The enchanted mangrove forest". If the mangroves are not flooded the path continues to one of the longest caves on Cat Island, said to stretch for 3 mi. underground. Your guide to hire for this excursion is Mr. Gaitor who lives in Dumfries.

Shortly before the Great Pond there is a sidetrack north to a blue hole which is well worth visiting even though it is a bit out of your way. Following the original track which winds and turns all the way to Hallover Point, there you can head north along the shore to Anguilla, where a developer started to build a marina. From there it's an easy walk on a wide road back to Arthur's town airport.

4. One of my favorite short walks is at the Bluff settlement where it is only just over 1 mi. across the island. The beach is beautiful and there are two fresh water holes where you may want to wash off the salt if you have been swimming. At the midway point of this walk you can see both sides of the island with its seas shimmering in beauty and peacefulness. Back at the bluff there is a sea cave just south of the jetty which makes an interesting excursion to your walk. Just north of the settlement on the Exuma Sound side is a simple but old cemetery, just south of the church, with many of the dates still readable. Close by is the beautiful western beach of Pigeon Key.

5. As we head south, I will jump to New Bight, since if you have your own map you can find and explore for yourself the other settlement tracks to the Atlantic Ocean.

At New Bight, just south of the police station and government offices you will see the ruins of the old Armbrister plantation home. walking past this building you set off to Mount Comer, the highest hill in the Bahamas at 206 ft.. Father Jerome built his Mount Alvernia retreat here and the view from the top is breathtaking. If you can arrange you visit at sunset this experience would be part of your trip to Cat Island whether you are spiritual or not. It is a very special sight to experience.

6. In Old Bight, about one mile south of the turn off to Greenwood, you will find the Straw Lady of Cat Island. Just south of her shop or from the rear of the Primary School, a track starts which follows the edge of Gambier or Great Lake of the South. Follow the NE side of the lake's shoreline, DO NOT take off on any of the side paths. Pass along the small lake and enter into the great lake where you will see a small island in front of you. Continue along the shore until you meet an old field wall crossing your path and built well into the lake just about opposite the island. Turn left and follow this path up to Mount View at 150 high giving wonderful views of the lake and having ruins of an old house. Follow this path through the field and boundary walls and you'll see orchids where the old drive way ran. From here you come to the main road from the Bight (left) or to Greenwood (right). You can cross it and find an open dirt path which takes you to the sea between two ponds at Fine Bay, or walk the two miles to the right which will lead you to the entrance road of the Greenwood Inn with it's beautiful beach, snorkeling and a nice cold beer at the bar. Approximate length is five miles.

7. The last path I recommend is from Port Howe to Columbus Point. At Port Howe you can see the remains of one of the most architecturally important buildings in the Bahamas. It's the old Deveaux plantation home with it's slave quarters built right along side, a degree of trust between it's masters and slaves not seen elsewhere in those times. Following the main road from the NE to Bailey Town you reach a sign on the right of the House of the Zion Church, which marks the beginning of your walk. Of interest, just on the opposite side of the road from your path, are fresh water wells.

Past the church you follow the path over two hills before reaching a farming valley at about one mile. There is an old well and coconut trees on your right and shortly after this you reach a fork, taking the right hand trail. This trail continues showing the remains of old Plantation farming walls and the ruins of a house and farm area at about 1 ½ miles. After that, the path bears right and comes out at Winding Bay Beach. Walk east along the beach to the last Casuarina tree, and there you will find your track again leading inland through Palmetto scrub, passing a brackish pond on your left, and then coming out at a salt water pond. If you follow the pond around it's northern end for about 100 yards you will find your track again, heading south/east towards the eastern sea shore.

Once out on the beach and rocks you follow the sea shore around to Columbus Point. On the way you will see brain coral imbedded in old rock and the remains of old coral head formations high and dry in the rock. There is a cave worth visiting just past Columbus Point before you begin to head back for Winding Bay and Churney Bay. The rocky edge is very sharp and you need good boots to walk in. Also at Churney Bay, if the sea is running right, you will find

a natural tidal geyser on the rocky beach. From there you can see the caves on Martin Bluff looking towards Port Howe which you may also want to visit.

Having reached back to Winding Bay again, you can either return by your first path (making for a hike for about 5 and 6 miles) or head east across the island again then walk to Little Winding Bay and on to Greenwood Inn (an additional distance of about 2 ½ miles) . This hike gives you several different types of walking, various views of the land and the sea and an opportunity to swim although no fresh water to rinse off with.

There are also walks that will take you to remnants of old plantation homes. You may find these through local knowledge for your own gratification. The above mentioned paths are the ones I myself have traveled and felt were worthy of your exploration. I hope you enjoy them too.



Nick Cripps, author of the Walking Tour article, and an ardent walker himself. Lives on “Top of da Hill” near Shanna Bay in the second highest situated home in the Bahamas.

## The Lure of Yesteryear

When you have followed Nick’s paths, and all of a sudden stumble on to the ruins of an old plantation, give yourself time to really enjoy the sight. Picture yourself as the original inhabitant of the old ruins, the life, the days, the nights of a forgotten time.

You didn’t wear shorts. You didn’t always have water. And there was no OFF.

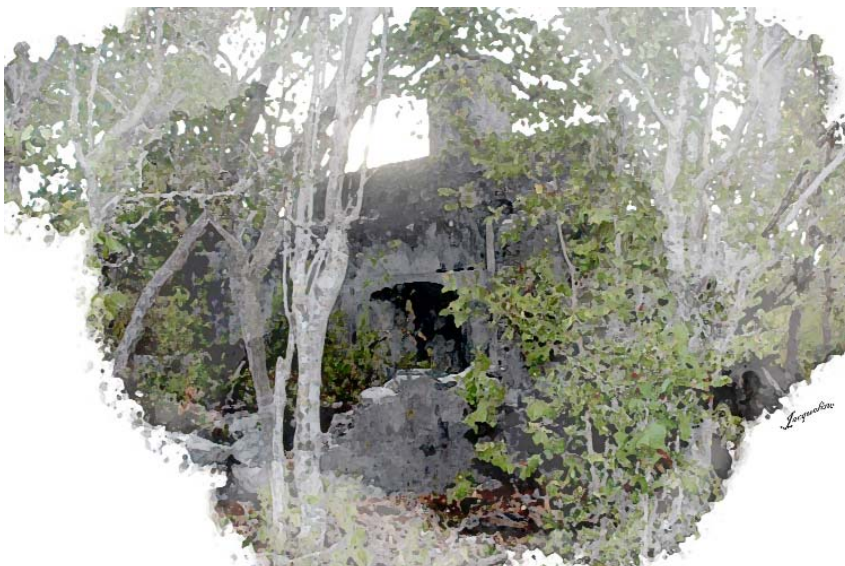
And in spite of that, there was an elegance to the times that we don’t have any longer. The plantation ruins suggest spacious rooms with fire places and receiving areas.

The **Deveaux Plantation** in Port Howe is one of the most impressive on the island. There you can really feel the parties in the diningroom, the business in the kitchen, the trading and entertaining in the study.

At the **Hunter Plantation**, on the backway between Old Bight and Greenwood, you can just imagine yourself sitting in the round tower, overlooking the Atlantic in the distance, and sipping Mint Julep in the darkening night.

Off of the Greenwood road, you can find the way to **Bourbon Plantation**. Try to get there in the spring, when the *Lingum Vitae* tree is blooming. They surround the old stone walls with intense blue flowers and a fragrance like gardenia. They also attract the big black bumblebees whos humming almost sounds like music in the jungle. It is truly magical.

In New Bight stands the ruins of the **Armbrister house** on the way to the Hermitage, and it is easy to see how it must have looked when nothing stood between the Plantation house and the sea.



# General Information

## How to get to and from Cat Island

### **AIR:**

**Bahamasair** operates two days a week from US via Nassau to Cat Island. Check with them for an up to date schedule. Phone: 800 222-4262

**Lynx Air** flies to New Bight from Ft Lauderdale Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Check for up to date schedule. Phone: 954 772-9808

**Continental** flies to New Bight from Ft. Lauderdale on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Check for up to date schedule. Phone: 800 525-0280

**Southern Air** flies three days a week between Nassau and Arthur's Town. Phone: 242 377-2014

**Cat Island Air** flies daily between Nassau and New Bight and Arthur's town. Phone: 242 377-3318

### **BOAT:**

There are also two mail boats that operate between Nassau and Cat Island. This is not the most comfortable way to go, and it takes a long time. Between six to eight hours, depending on the weather.

*East Wind* goes from Potters Cay to Smith Bay

North Cat Island Special (or maybe some other boat if the Special is in the shop) goes from Potters Cay to Bennett's Harbour.

## *Taxis and Car Rentals*

Thompson Rent a Car, Arthur's Town

Gilbert's Car Rental, New Bight 342-3011

New Bight Car Rental, New Bight 3423014

D&L Taxi Service, Wilson Bay 354-5088

**All local phone numbers in this booklet are given without the area code. If you are calling these numbers from somewhere outside Cat Island, the area code is 242.**

## *Hotels*

**Apple Tree Inn & Bar** , The Bluff. 354-1001

**Boggie Pond**, Arthur's Town. 354-2215

Boggie Pond Resort offers an excellent restaurant with Bahamian dishes. Six rooms with a/c and kitchenette. Music, dance and pool tables for nightly entertainment.

**Bridge Inn**, New Bight. 800 688-4752 or 342-3013

Fax: 342-3041

E-mail:

Bridge Inn is located in the Bight, a small, secluded settlement with fascinating historical buildings. Each room is fully complemented with television and two beds and is comfortably air-conditioned. When checking in to the Inn, don't forget your complimentary drink. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served in the restaurant/bar. Guests enjoy bonefishing and island exploring.

**Club Paradise**, The Cove. 342-8053

9 fully furnished ocean view rooms. Restaurant and Bar.

**Cookie House**, Arthur's Town. 354-2027

Six rooms right on the water. Restaurant and bar. Boat dock for gazing at the sunset or tying up for dinner. Located right next to Arthur's Town airport.

**Cutlass Bay Club**, Port Howe. 800 484-1801 or 342-5053

E-mail: [info@cutlassbayresort.com](mailto:info@cutlassbayresort.com)

Website: [www.cutlassbayresort.com](http://www.cutlassbayresort.com)

Cat Island's first residential resort community invites you to spend your vacations or a well-deserved retirement. The Cutlass Bay Club combines the traditional resort with the opportunity of owning a home. The Club features a fresh water swimming pool, tennis court, the Cat Island Dive Center, bone and off-shore fishing. A gourmet restaurant offers dining al fresco with breath taking views of the turquoise Caribbean Sea.

**Fernandez Bay Village**, New Bight. 800 940-1905; 954 474-4821 or 342-3043

Fax: 342-3051 or 342-2087

E-mail: [info@fernandezbayvillage.com](mailto:info@fernandezbayvillage.com)

Website: [www.fernandezbayvillage.com](http://www.fernandezbayvillage.com)

Fernandez Bay Village is located on a private mile of white sand beach. It is a small intimate resort with 16 beautiful stone and glass beachfront villas and cottages. Each room has a/c, overhead fans, private terrace and our signature garden shower. The setting is ideal for swimming, snorkeling, shelling, bonefishing, kayaking, sunning and all boating activities. Eco tours, Island tours, picnic lunches and biking are all available. Charming and spacious, the clubhouse is home to the front desk, boutique, library, wi-fi, thatch roof restaurant and honor tiki-bar. Guests enjoy a continental breakfast, a la carte lunch menu and freshly prepared dinners, all served on the seaside dining terrace. Friends and family gather at sunset for appetizers, live music and a nightly bonfire. Rental cars and boats can be arranged. The New Bight airport, Mt Alvernia and local restaurants are nearby. Guests return year after year to enjoy our authentic Out Island hospitality and friendly staff.

**Greenwood Beach Resort**, Port Howe. 800 688-4752 or 342- 3053

E-mail: [gbr@grouper.batelnet.bs](mailto:gbr@grouper.batelnet.bs)

Website: [www.greenwoodbeachresort.com](http://www.greenwoodbeachresort.com)

Located on a spectacular eight-mile pink beach, where the only foot steps you will find are your own. Enjoy dinner in the large, oceanfront dining room. All 20 rooms have king size beds; guests enjoy beach front gazebos, Jacuzzi, bicycling and kayaking.

**Hallover Inn**, Smith's Bay. 342-2028

**Hawk's Nest Resort & Marina**, Hawk's Nest. 800 688-4752 or 342-7050

Fax: 342-7051

E-mail: [info@hawks-nest.com](mailto:info@hawks-nest.com)

Website: [www.hawks-nest.com](http://www.hawks-nest.com)

Over 400 acres of beachfront with ten oceanfront rooms. A two-bedroom beach house is also available. Guests enjoy complimentary golf-carts, bicycle, kayaks, tennis, as well as basket and volleyball courts. A 5000 foot airstrip with AV gas facility, a PADI diving center and a 28 slip, full service marina with diesel and gas. Dive boats available. Two bars and a gourmet restaurant.

**Island Hoppinn**, Smith's Bay. 216 978-8800 or 342 2100

Fax: 330 239-4411 or 342-2101

E-mail: [islandhoppinn@aol.com](mailto:islandhoppinn@aol.com)

Website: [www.islandhoppinn.com](http://www.islandhoppinn.com)

Island Hoppinn in Fernandez Bay has a very personal atmosphere that gives you immediate and lasting comfort during your visit to our tropical paradise. Our very clean, air conditioned ocean suites feature tropical decor, private bathrooms and garden showers. Our Sport fish or Bottom Fishing charters are sure to land you a “fresh catch” dinner. Sattelite TV, wireless internet, satellite radio, telephones, DVD TV’s, and weather reports from Island Hoppinn’s exclusive weather station. Let us spoil you with delicious cuisine.

**Lake View Motel & Take Away**, Zonicle Hill. 342-5090

**Little Bay Inn**, Smith's Bay. 342-2004

Six rooms with private bathrooms, shared kitchen.

**Orange Creek Inn**, Orange Creek. 354-4110

Fax: 354-4042

16 double rooms with A/C, TV and kitchenette. Food store and laundromat on the premises. Car rentals. Across the street from the beach, it is beautifully located with a view over Orange Creek.

**Pigeon Cay Beach Club**, Roker's Bluff. 800 688-4752 or 354-5084

Fax: 354-5084

E-mail: pigeoncay@starband.net

Website: www.pigeoncay-bahamas.com

Pigeon Cay Beach Club is a remote paradise. Located in the north end of Cat Island, the Club has six airy cottages. All cottages are constructed of native stone and stucco. Mexican tiles and wood floors throughout. Guests enjoy beach bar and BBQ, Hobi-cat, canoe, biking, snorkeling and fishing. Meals available upon request.

**Pilot Harbour Beach Resort and Restaurant**, Old Bight. 342-4110

**Pompey Rock Villas**, Bennett's Harbour. 354-6003 or 354- 5222

Fax: 354-6004

E-mail: pompeyrock@batelnet.bs.

Guests enjoy a well equipped club house with bar and restaurant. Five beach front cottages with kitchens and living rooms for four or more guests in each cottage.

Great bone fishing in nearby creek. Deep sea fishing can be arranged.

**Sammy T's Beach Resort**, Bennett's Harbour. 354-6009, Fax 354-6010

E-mail: info@catislandbeachresort.com

Website: www.sammytbahamas.com

A private beach nestled within a cove. Lush landscaping of mainly the natural vegetation, with the addition of popular Bahamian flowers. Peace and quiet, the food and the staff, is what makes Sammy T's the place you are searching for. Our resort has the feeling of home, and we like to think we have invited some friends over for a couple of days, just to relax and regenerate themselves.

**Shanna's Cove**, Orange Creek. 354-4249, 359-9668.

Fax: 354-4250

E-mail: shannascove@gmail.com

Website: www.shannas-cove.com

The Shanna's Cove Resort is the ultimate vacation spot for leisure seekers and sun-hungry beach-lovers. Enjoy the white sand on the empty beaches and the subtropical vegetation. We are located at the end of the road on the northernmost point of the island. Our bungalows are situated on a secluded beach with wonderful views of sparkling turquoise water. Kayaking, bonefishing, snorkling, scuba diving or just relaxing - the beach belongs to you!

**Tail Winds Resort** Orange Creek.. 354-4243

Fax: 354-4243

E-mail:TailWinds@hughes.net

Website: www.tailwindsresort.com

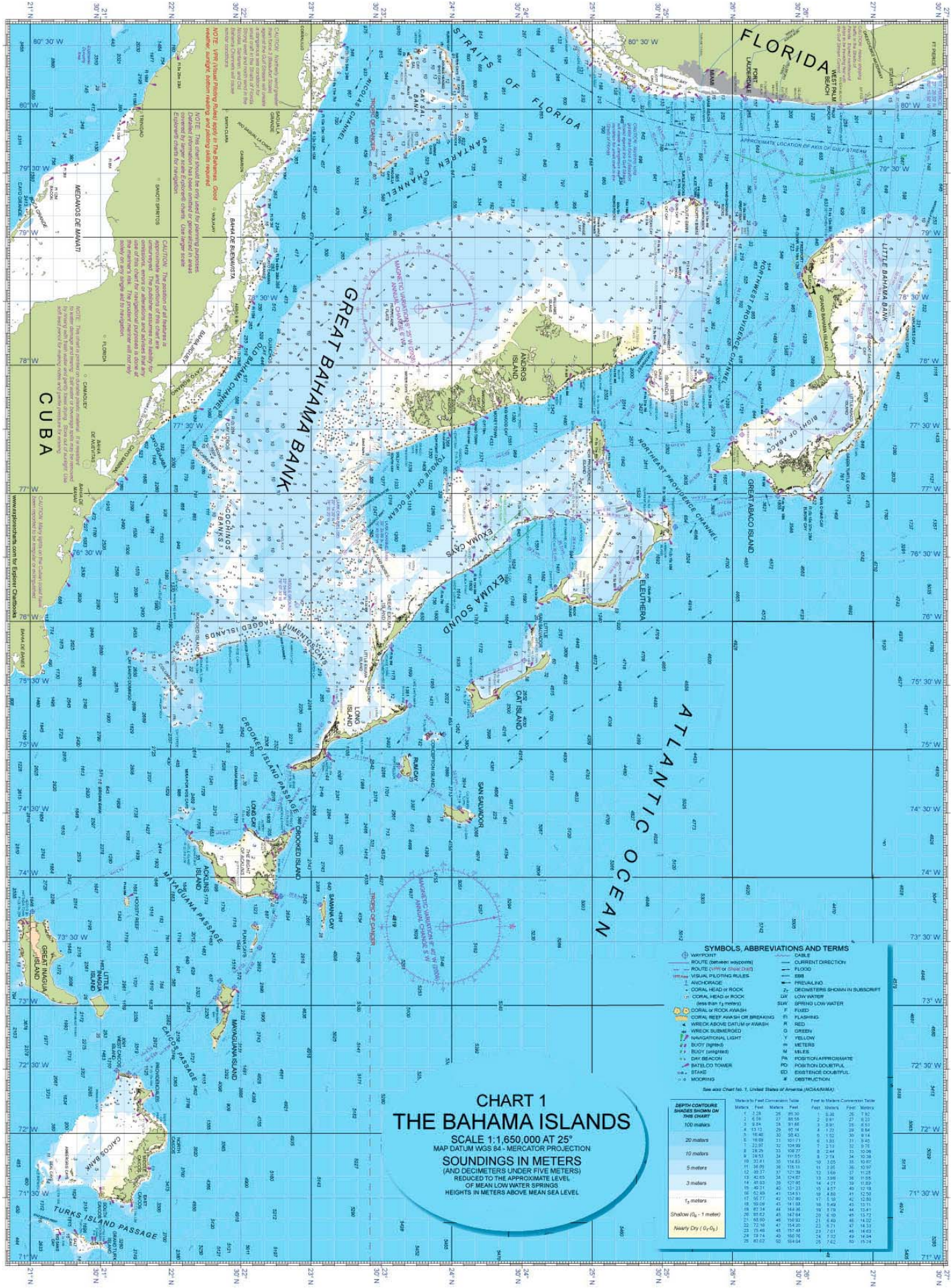
A small, private resort on a beautiful stretch of Shanna Bay where you can be completely by yourself and find yourself completely. Lounge in our generous hot-tub under the stars or relax with us in the beach bar where you can sip a frosted tropical drink with or without umbrella!

**Twin Palm Beach Resort**, New Bight. 342-3108

Fax: 342-3108

## ***Restaurants and Bars***

All Restaurants and Bars are listed under the different settlements. We have also provided telephone numbers for most of them. It is advisable to call and tell the restaurant that you will be coming, since not all restaurants are open all the time.



**CHART 1**  
**THE BAHAMA ISLANDS**  
 SCALE 1:1,650,000 AT 25°  
 MAP DATUM WGS 84 - MERCATOR PROJECTION  
 SOUNDINGS IN METERS  
 (AND DECIMETERS UNDER FIVE METERS)  
 REDUCED TO THE APPROXIMATE LEVEL  
 OF MEAN LOW WATER SPRINGS  
 HEIGHTS IN METERS ABOVE MEAN SEA LEVEL

- SYMBOLS, ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS**
- SWAYPOINT
  - ROUTE (dashed line)
  - ROUTE (thin or show flag)
  - VISUAL FIXING PAIRS
  - ANCHORAGE
  - CORAL HEAD OR ROCK
  - CORAL OF ROCK AWASH (less than 1 meter)
  - CORAL REEF AWASH OR BREAKING
  - WRECK ABOVE DATUM OR AWASH
  - WRECK SUBMERGED
  - NAVIGATIONAL LIGHT
  - BOAT LIGHT
  - DAY BEACON
  - BATTELLO TOWER
  - STAKE
  - MOORING
  - CAUSEWAY
  - FLOOD
  - PREWALKING
  - DECMETERS SHOWN IN SUBSCRIPT
  - LOW WATER
  - SPRING LOW WATER
  - FIXED
  - FLASHING
  - RED
  - GREEN
  - YELLOW
  - METERS
  - PA POSITION APPROXIMATE
  - PD POSITION DUBIOUS
  - ED EXISTENCE DUBIOUS
  - CONSTRUCTION

See also Chart No. 1, United States of America (MCA/AMMA)

DEPTH CONTOURS SHOWN ON THIS CHART	Meters to Feet Conversion Table	
	Meters	Feet
20 meters	66.0	65.6
10 meters	33.0	32.8
5 meters	16.5	16.4
3 meters	9.8	9.8
1 meter	3.3	3.3
Shallow (0.1 - 1 meter)	0.3 - 3.3	0.3 - 3.3

CAT ISLANDS, BAHAMAS



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THE ULTIMATE FISHING EXPERIENCE

- ~ 10 Room Hotel & Rental Homes ~
- ~ 4 Star Restaurant & Clubhouse ~
- ~ 28 Slip Marina ~
- ~ Complete PADI Dive Operation ~

HOME OF  
THE ANNUAL  
**WAHOO CHAMPIONSHIP**  
&  
THE ANNUAL  
**BILLFISH BLAST**



## NEW DREDGING PROJECT

50' Wide & 7' Depth at MLT  
Marina will be open all times



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