

## Islands taking action: Caribbean conservationists connect in Anguilla

**17 November 2025** – Anguilla became a regional hub for knowledge sharing and hands-on conservation training from 23 to 26 June 2025, when 18 practitioners, including 15 conservationists from eight Caribbean countries and territories, took part in the Caribbean Conservation Capacity-Building Exchange Field Visit. Hosted by the Anguilla National Trust in collaboration with the Environmental Awareness Group (EAG), and coordinated by Re:wild with regional partners, the exchange was part of two [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund \(CEPF\)](#) initiatives: Call to Action: Conservation Action Plans for Endangered Caribbean Species (Re:wild) and Preserving the Antiguan Racer: An Urgent Call to Action (EAG).



Regional exchange participants at the Fountain National Park, Anguilla.

© Farah Mukhida/Anguilla National Trust.

The exchange offered practical training in species recovery, including managing mainland islands, eradicating invasive species, designing biosecurity systems, engaging communities and planning species translocations. Building technical capacity and strengthening practice in these areas is needed as the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot continues to face mounting pressures from invasive species, habitat loss and poaching.

### ***Hands-on conservation: sharing knowledge, building connections***

The exchange began with a practical exercise on planning a species translocation, followed by field sessions to observe and practise techniques used in species recovery and habitat management.

At Fountain National Park, managed by the Anguilla National Trust, participants observed the operationalisation of a mainland island: how invasive species can be excluded from sensitive habitats through secure fencing and biosecurity management. The six-hectare site, surrounded by predator-resistant fencing, demonstrated how the concept, pioneered in New Zealand, can be adapted to the Caribbean.



Left: Anguilla National Trust Executive Director Farah Mukhida giving an overview of the Fountain National Park, Anguilla. Right: Biosecure enclosure. © Justin Springer/Re:wild.

On Scrub Island, participants joined the Anguilla National Trust's staff in monitoring the Endangered Anguilla Bank racer (*Alsophis rijgersmaei*). Once found across several islands, the species now survives in only a few locations. Participants helped record data and tag a male snake before releasing it, gaining first-hand field monitoring experience.



Left: Anguilla Bank racer. Right: Field team from the Anguilla National Trust recording the processing of an Anguilla Bank racer. © Justin Springer/Re:wild.

At Road Salt Pond, once a salt-harvesting site, participants observed innovative techniques being tested to create nesting habitat for terns using floating PVC platforms topped with gravel and small shelters. The group was treated to the sight of Least Terns tending chicks while discussing how community engagement supports invasive-species control.

The exchange concluded at Prickly Pear East and West, where participants observed biosecurity systems, maintained bait boxes and monitored the reintroduced Critically Endangered Lesser Antillean Iguana. Capturing and tagging individuals confirmed population growth and contributed to ongoing recovery efforts.



*Top: Regional exchange participants explore Prickly Pear West, Anguilla. © Justin Springer/Re:wild.*

*Bottom left: Lesser Antillean iguana. © Justin Springer/Re:wild.*

*Bottom right: Lesser Antillean iguana measurements being taken. © Connor Blades.*

### ***A model for replication across the region***

Anguilla's mainland island showed that a model developed in larger countries can work within the limited space of small Caribbean islands. Lessons from Fountain National Park are already shaping the Wadadli Wildlife Sanctuary for the Antiguan racer in Antigua and Barbuda and guiding plans for a similar initiative in Barbados.

For Saint Lucian ecologist Saphira Hunt of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, the first-hand experience has strengthened her confidence to lead discussions on creating a similar site. "This knowledge will be invaluable as we continue planning for a mainland island in Saint Lucia. I now feel more prepared to guide biosecurity setup and fencing structures to withstand hurricane-force winds," she said.

### ***Peer-to-peer learning***

The exchange provided valuable opportunities for peer learning. "The trip was incredibly insightful," said Saphira. "While many practices mirrored those used in Saint Lucia, experiencing them in a different context encouraged me to compare and improve our approaches."

Dwayne Rodriguez, Invasive Species Officer at the Bahamas National Trust, noted that the visit came at a crucial time as his organisation builds out its invasive-species management programme. “The methods we observed in Anguilla will be useful for applying rodent management in our parks and for finalising our broader invasive-species strategy,” he said.



Left: Joshel Wilson and Shanna Challenger (EAG) presenting at the meet and greet session. © Connor Blades.  
Right: Dr Jenny Daltry facilitating a session on species translocation. © Justin Springer/Re:wild.

The experience also reignited conservation ambitions. Treya Picking, founder of the JAMCROC Initiative and now Re:wild's Caribbean Programme Assistant, said it motivated her to re-examine opportunities in Jamaica. “This trip renewed my determination to revisit the [Goat Islands] issue and work with partners to assess restoration options within the Portland Bight Protected Area.”

#### ***Strengthening connections and sharing purpose***



Human connections made during the workshop were as powerful as the technical lessons. Stephan Hornsey, Executive Director of the St Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund, described the highlight as “forming strong bonds between participants, working together in the field and building the strength of our Caribbean conservation network.”

Hosting the visit was also an honour and learning opportunity for the Anguilla National Trust. Executive Director Farah Mukhida noted that while it showcased the organisation’s work, it also allowed the team to learn from regional partners, their successes, struggles and the ways those lessons could be applied at home.

Treya Picking (JAMCROC-Re:wild), Shanna Challenger (EAG) and Dwayne Rodriguez (Bahamas National Trust), Prickly Pear West, Anguilla. © Treya Picking.

#### ***Building a regional movement***

The exchange reflects a growing commitment to regional collaboration in conservation, building on the Caribbean Species Conservation Action Network, established through Re:wild’s efforts and its Call-to-Action webinar series.

Justin Springer, Caribbean Program Officer at Re:wild, summed it up: “Exchanges like this allow conservation practitioners to learn from each other’s skills and increase awareness of the work being done across the region. It was a privilege to see so many like-minded individuals learning together. I am confident that participants have left motivated and equipped to protect our islands’ treasures.”

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