

# Exploring St. Martin's Wetlands

A free 3-minute presentation



In celebration of World Wetlands Day we are talking tonight about St. Martin's wetlands. Wetlands are areas at the water's edge or areas that are seasonally flooded with water. Here that includes ponds and coastlines...



...the Simpson Bay Lagoon...



...and freshwater streams that are often only seasonal.





In the tropics, mangrove trees are the foundation of most wetlands, providing habitat and food for many wetland species. Mangroves are trees adapted to live in wet, salty conditions. They also prevent erosion and absorb the energy of waves during hurricanes and tropical storms.



Fiddler crabs are one of many invertebrate species found in mangroves, and they are food for many wetland birds.



The Whimbrel (Courlis courlieu) is one of those birds. Its long, curved bill is perfect for pulling fiddler crabs from their burrows. This one just arrived from the Arctic and you can see how skinny it is after flying for several days without stopping. There are about two dozen kinds of migratory shorebird that spend their winter here.





The Ruddy Turnstone (*Tournepierre à collier*) is another migratory bird that winters in St. Martin. Some of these birds travel all the way from the Arctic to Argentina, about 27,000 km roundtrip each year.



St. Martin's wetlands are also home to many birds who spend the whole year here, like the Black-necked Stilt (l'Echasse d'Amerique).





The stilt makes a small nest on the ground.



The eggs and chicks are primarily protected by their camouflage.



But the adult birds will also try to distract any potential predators and keep them away from the nest.





Three kinds of egret—Great Egret (Grand Aigrette), Snowy Egret (Aigrette Neigeuse) and Cattle Egret (Heron Garde-boeufs)—nest together in colonies in mangrove trees.



It can be noisy at the egret colony when there are lots of chicks asking their parents for food.



One egret colony can be found at the cemetery pond in Grand Case, where there is an observation platform. It is just at the end of town as you are heading towards Marigot.





One of the prettiest ponds on St. Martin is Etang de Baie Lucas, which is at Coralita, between French Quarter and Oyster Pond.



There is an observation platform on this pond and it is a perfect place to watch birds or take photos.

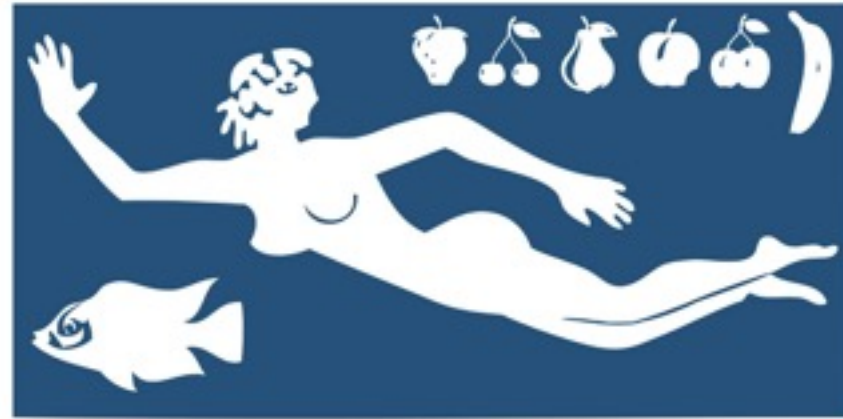


At Etang de la Barriere, just beside the Pinel ferry dock in Cul-de-sac, there is a 225 meter wooden boardwalk through the mangroves where you can see many species. Early morning is usually the best time to visit.





Even the birds enjoy hanging out on the boardwalk, so don't forget to stop by and check it out!



**LES FRUITS  
DE MER**