



# MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES & HOUSING

THE VALLEY, ANGUILLA, WEST INDIES

Telephone: 1 (264) 497 2651/2652/2752/2753

Fax: (264) 497-3651

## PRESS RELEASE

### Sombrero Island – Anguilla’s first Ramsar site designated

22 May 2018

The Government of Anguilla is pleased to announce that Sombrero Island has been officially recognised as a wetland site of international importance through Ramsar site designation. The island now joins a network of over 2,300 sites that conserve and protect some of the world’s most significant wetlands. As a Ramsar Site, Sombrero Island’s status as a wetland of international importance and a key biodiversity site is raised, increasing opportunities for eco-tourism and fundraising for wetland and site management.

The Honourable Curtis Richardson with responsibility for Environment said: “This week the Government of Anguilla, through the Ministry with responsibility for Environment is pleased to announce that Anguilla has formally designated its first RAMSAR site, Sombrero Island and now joins other members of the global community.” Hon Richardson continued, “We are really pleased and excited that we were all able to achieve this output through the Ramsar Small Grant Fund and the support of Government of Anguilla and its agencies working together collectively.”

Lying 65 kilometres northeast of Anguilla, Sombrero Island is a 38-hectare flat-topped limestone outcropping situated in the middle of the Anegada Passage. Mid-way between Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands its isolation from any other landmass has made it one of Anguilla’s hidden treasures – an island rich in history, colourful stories, and biodiversity.

Despite its almost-entirely bare cliffs and rocky areas, Sombrero Island provides a home for a startling number of birds and lizards. These include a globally important population of Bridled tern *Sterna anaethetus*, as well as regionally important populations of brown booby *Sula leucogaster*, masked booby *Sula dactylatra*, and brown noddy *Anous stolidus*, and the endemic Critically Endangered Sombrero Island ground lizard *Ameiva corvina* can also be found along with the recently discovered, possibly endemic, and tentatively named Sombrero dwarf gecko *Sphaerodactylus* sp.

In 2005, Sombrero Island was identified as an Important Bird Area and, in 2007, the Government of Anguilla declared the island and its surrounding waters a Nature Reserve Marine Park. Over the last three years, the Anguilla National Trust has been working with the government to further designate the park as Anguilla’s first Ramsar Site. This designation recognises the Government of Anguilla’s commitment to protect the island’s regionally-rare wetland type, containing both human-made and marine/coastal karst systems, its globally and regionally significant seabird nesting populations, as well as its endangered and endemic reptiles.

Support was given to the Government of Anguilla by JNCC, who advise the UK’s Overseas Territories on biodiversity and nature conservation. JNCC’s CEO, Marcus Yeo, said: “We are delighted to have worked with Government of Anguilla in this designation, thus expanding the UK’s Overseas Territories Ramsar network”.



-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

1. For further information contact:

Mr Karim Hodge

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Infrastructure, Communications, Utilities, Housing, Agriculture & Fisheries (MICUHAF),  
Government of Anguilla

+ 1 (264) 497 2651

+1 (264) 476 7271

[Karim.Hodge@gov.ai](mailto:Karim.Hodge@gov.ai)

2. The JNCC is a scientific authority on UK and international nature conservation, advising governments, and working in partnership with business and society. [www.jncc.defra.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk)

3. Images ©Farah Mukhida/Anguilla National Trust

a. Sombrero Island ground lizard *Ameiva corvina*

b. Masked booby *Sula dactylatra*

c. Sombrero Island's moonscape deep creviced landscape created by mid-nineteenth century phosphate miners excavating guano

For further information contact:

Mr Karim Hodge

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Infrastructure, Communications, Utilities, Housing, Agriculture & Fisheries (MICUHAFE), Government of  
Anguilla

+ 1264-497-2651

+1 (264) 476 7271

[Karim.Hodge@gov.ai](mailto:Karim.Hodge@gov.ai)