



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Governor Gore Bird Sanctuary Expands**

**28 September 2023** – On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023, H.E. Governor Jane Owen hosted a reception on behalf of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands to recognize and thank the generous donors to their Land Reserve Fund for mangroves and to highlight their role in purchasing an ecologically significant parcel of land next to the Governor Gore Bird Sanctuary in Spotts-Newlands. The National Trust relies on donations to fund critical ecosystem protection such as this, including contributions from supporters whose smaller donations make a real difference in the effort to save Cayman's natural world. This event was organized as a way to thank them, as well as to highlight the generous, conservation-minded landowner that sold his land to the National Trust. Mr Fabian Whorms (not to be confused with the CEO of Cayman Airways) had planned to build condos on the site, but after learning of the possible negative effects the development could have on the adjacent protected pond, he decided to sell it to the National Trust so that it could become part of the bird sanctuary. “I am happy to contribute to the preservation of the future of these islands through the efforts of the National Trust to maintain the natural wetlands offering habitats for birds and other wildlife and wish them every success” stated Mr Whorms.

Some of the donations were made through Island Offsets, a local non-profit that helps individuals and businesses compensate for their unavoidable carbon emissions through mangrove protection projects located here in the Cayman Islands. Mangroves act as a carbon sink, sequestering massive amounts of carbon in the trees and soil. Healthy mangrove ecosystems also help the community adapt to the effects of climate change by protecting us from stronger storms, working like a sponge during flooding events, creating rain in times of drought, acting as a fish nursery and increasing our food security, and cooling the island to mitigate extreme heat. When offsets for mangrove protection are purchased through Island Offsets, the money goes into the Land Reserve Fund and is set aside specifically for local mangrove purchase by the National Trust. It is important to know that this innovative finance model works here in Cayman.

Named after Cayman’s former Governor Michael J. Gore, the freshwater marshes of the Spotts-Newlands area are a roosting, feeding and breeding habitat for over 60 species bird species – a quarter of all birds native to the Cayman Islands. In fact, during the dry season, this may be the only substantial body of fresh water for some distance. Other species found here include hickatee turtles, native butterflies, the endemic



freshwater mosquito fish (*Gambusia xanthosoma*), and even the elusive *Tretanorhinus variabilis lewisi*, an endemic subspecies of water snake.

Small, suburban parks like this are essential for the community as well. Easy access to nature is now understood to be a necessity after Covid-19 lockdowns. When people are able to visit a natural area in their daily lives, they are more likely to value wilderness protection in general. And this protected pond is used and enjoyed by residents and visitors on a regular basis.

“Grand Cayman has already seen significant mangrove destruction. The western side of the island has lost more than 70% of this critical ecosystem and deforestation is spreading rapidly eastward. We cannot afford to lose more wetlands, making this purchase especially significant.” said Catherine Childs, Environmental Programmes Manager for the National Trust. “By working together with generous sponsors, international partners, and local landowners, we can accomplish more together and succeed in protecting Cayman’s irreplaceable natural areas.”

**ENDS**

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Frank Roulstone / Executive Director  
National Trust for the Cayman Islands  
Tel: 345 927 6766 Email: [director@nationaltrust.org.ky](mailto:director@nationaltrust.org.ky)

## **About the National Trust for the Cayman Islands**

PO Box 31116 | Dart Family Park | South Church Street | Grand Cayman | KY1-1205 | (345) 749 1121  
[nationaltrust.org.ky](http://nationaltrust.org.ky)



The National Trust for the Cayman Islands is a non-governmental organization whose mandate under the National Trust Law (2010 Revision) includes the preservation of the historic, natural and maritime heritage of the Cayman Islands for present and future generations.

### **About the Blue Iguana Conservation Programme**

The Blue Iguana Recovery Programme began in 1990 with only 30 dedicated Blue Iguanas and the primary goal to restore the wild population to 1,000 Blue Iguanas, encouraging viable population in the long-term. Having met its primary goal in 2018, the initiative formally transitioned to the Blue Iguana Conservation Programme in 2019 with a new focus of sustainably conserving the native species of Grand Cayman.

### **About the National Trust's Environmental Programme**

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands' environmental programme was founded on the concept that the protection of native plants and animals is best achieved by protecting the natural areas in which they depend.

### **About the National Trust Conservation Programme**

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands' conservation programme strives to protect Cayman's native species and the habitats in which they live, and includes the endemic Blue Iguana of Grand Cayman, the Sister Islands Rock Iguana and Cayman's native bat species.

### **About the National Trust Historic Preservation Programme**

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands introduced the launching of its *Historic Preservation Fund* at its Annual General Meeting in September 2021 for the purpose of inviting increased support of its continuing efforts to encourage the preservation and protection of historic homes and buildings for present and future generations of the Cayman Islands.