



Virgin Island Tree Boa Version 08 Jan 2026

Chilabothrus granti

The Virgin Island Tree Boa is non-venomous, harmless, and the only native snake species with blotchy patterning. It may reach a maximum of 1 meter in length and may live longer than 30 years. Adults are light brown with chestnut blotches edged in black. Juveniles are light grey with black blotches, changing to adult colors as they age. A newly shed boa will have blue-purple iridescence.

Species Status and Protections

The Virgin Island Tree Boa (VI Boa) is Federally Endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973 and Territorially Endangered under the Virgin Islands Indigenous and Endangered Species Act of 1990. Therefore, the following regulations apply.

- [16 § 1538 \(a\), U.S.C.](#) It is unlawful for any person to (B) take any such species within the United States or the territorial sea of the United States.
- [16 § 1532, \(19\), U.S.C.](#) The term "take" means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.
- [12 § 105 \(b\), V.I.C.](#) No person may take, catch, or possess, or attempt to take, catch, or possess, any specimen of an endangered or threatened species unless such person holds a valid collecting permit from the Federal Government in the case of federally listed species or a territorial permit in the case of an exclusively territorially listed species.
- [12 § 105 \(e\), V.I.C.](#) No person may harass, injure, kill, or attempt to do the same, or sell or offer for sale any specimen, or parts or produce of such specimen, of an endangered or threatened species.
- [12 § 102 \(e\), V.I.C.](#) "Endangered species" means any species of animal life or plants which have been listed by the Federal or Territorial governments as "endangered".



The U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife (Division) operates under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to protect, conserve, and manage the Virgin Island Tree Boa, the STX Ground Lizard and all Federally listed species that reside in the U.S. Virgin Islands for any part of the year. Unless covered by an incidental take permit issued by the Service, all persons are obliged to not take a protected species in accordance with the above regulations.

The Division has created the following *Protected Species Site Clearance Protocol and Conservation Recommendations* for the VI Boa to minimize take during the following activities.

- land clearing and debris removal on previously disturbed lands,
- construction or repair of infrastructure within non-forested lands, and
- construction, repair, and maintenance of projects within urban or previously disturbed lands

Activities not covered by this *Site Clearance Protocol* may adversely affect the VI Boa and will need consultation with the Service on a case-by-case basis. This consultation should be routed through the Caribbean Ecological Services (ES) Office of the Service.

Site Clearance Protocol

Compliance with the following protocol is mandatory for any permittee, contractor, and/or recipient engaging in the described activities to minimize potential take of the VI boa.

1. Prior to any construction activities, contact the Division for a free consultation during which all project personnel will be informed of the potential presence of the VI Boa and trained in boa identification. Please provide the Division with a copy of the project plans and/or proposal narrative beforehand. Educational signage with photos or illustrations of these species should be installed now. All personnel involved in the site preparation and construction must be instructed on the importance of native snake protection and preservation and all procedures developed for that purpose. Personnel will be informed of the penalties for injury to any snake encountered. The Division will coordinate this consultation via email or phone to maintain correspondence with all developers, owners, contractors, and other project partners for information sharing.
2. Clearly mark the boundaries of the project area and areas to be excluded and/or protected both in the field and in the project plans to avoid further habitat degradation.
3. With areas clearly marked, and prior to the use of heavy machinery and construction activity (including removal of vegetation and earth movement), biologists or personnel with VI boa experience will survey the project area to verify the presence of any VI boa. It is the responsibility of the property owner to source qualified surveyors for this step. Often, surveys are conducted by the environmental consultant.



4. Surveys must be conducted during the night(s) prior to the start of any vegetation clearing. VI Boas within the project area and adjacent areas will be searched for beginning and not earlier than 7:30 PM and ending not earlier than 9:30 PM. If a VI boa is found it will be captured and temporarily held by the Division, according to step #8. Its location will be clearly marked and coordinates recorded.
5. Survey results must be communicated to the Division as soon as possible. The Division will determine if the project may proceed under the conditions of this protocol or if a take permit must be requested through the ES office.

Steps 1-5 are to be completed prior to ANY construction activities. This includes the removal of vegetation and other earth movements in addition to the use of heavy machinery. Failure to comply will be considered a Territorial and Federal law violation and penalized accordingly.

6. Once the area has been cleared for boas and/or all boas have been captured for temporary holding, hand clearing may begin the following day, followed by a 10 to 14-day rest period before the use of heavy machinery as follows:
 - a. If the area to be cleared is under 1 acre, vegetation may be cut by hand down to 1 meter above ground. This allows boas that are present to move away on their own to adjacent available habitats. Tracts of wooded habitat and associated understory that are outside the footprint and setback of the building and are not required for infrastructure, should be retained as tree boa habitat. Trees at or greater than 7cm dbh should be retained as tree boa habitat where feasible. Any fallen trees at or greater than 7 cm dbh should be placed in an undisturbed location. This will allow any boas present to vacate the site without injury. Connections with habitat on adjacent property should be left intact.
 - b. If the area to be cleared is more than 1 acre – the same protocol as above applies, but the required rest period before the use of heavy machinery is 14 days.
 - c. During the rest period, additional hand clearing of vegetation may occur in accordance with #6-a. It is best practice to place cleared vegetation strategically to support erosion control measures such as sediment fencing and bush berms.
 - d. At the end of the rest period, the Division will inspect the hand clearing for compliance with the above steps.
 - e. Heavy machinery may then be permitted on an agreed-upon date by all project partners at the conclusion of the resting period.
7. Any stone walls or naturally occurring rock piles must be carefully dismantled by hand as these are refuges for the VI Boa.



8. If a VI Boa is seen dead or alive within the project area and not in harm's way the activity must temporarily stop to notify the Division for proper reporting and further direction.
9. If a VI Boa is seen dead or alive within the project area and in harm's way, the activity must stop to notify the Division immediately and all attempts should be made to capture the individual quickly and safely according to #13. Until the Division has properly reported the incident and permitted the activity to continue, the activity may continue at other work sites within the project area where no VI Boas are seen in harm's way.
10. Any heavy machinery left on site or near potential VI Boa habitat should be thoroughly inspected before work starts to ensure that no boas have sheltered within engine compartments or other areas of the machine/vehicle. If a VI Tree Boa is found within vehicles or heavy machinery, it should be safely captured according to #13, and the Division should be notified. If that is not possible, the animal will be left alone until it vacates the vehicle/machine on its own.
11. The VI Tree Boa may seek shelter within debris piles. Measures should be taken to avoid and minimize VI Boa take associated with this behavior. New debris piles should be placed in areas farthest from forested areas/VI Boa habitat. Before moving, disposing, or shredding, debris piles should be carefully inspected for VI boas. If debris piles are left on site, they should be placed in an undisturbed area.
12. If a VI boa is accidentally injured or killed during capture and relocation activities during the Action, the Federal Agency and the Recipient shall terminate the authorized activities and contact the Service within 24 hours in order to reinitiate consultation. The Service and the Federal Agency and the Recipient will re-consult to determine whether authorized activities should continue as proposed and whether modifications or stipulations are warranted
13. The Division must be notified of any snakes observed or captured. If a snake is in imminent danger, the snake can be moved to an undisturbed habitat outside the construction area that DFW has pre-approved by the permitted environmental consultant. If no undisturbed habitat exists near the site, the landowner or agent shall identify a suitable release site in collaboration with DFW prior to any vegetation clearance. A permit from DFW under section 2(b) of the Cooperative Agreement will be required for all personnel involved in any snake handling or relocation activities.
14. The Division of Fish and Wildlife serves as the responsible reporter for all incidents involving listed species to the Service. The Division may be called at any point during the above steps to verify compliance and resolve any issues with the VI Boa or other wildlife. Please note that



any boas killed or injured at the site will violate the federal Endangered Species Act but can be avoided by carefully following this protocol.

Conservation Recommendations

The following recommendations are general measures that could benefit the VI Tree Boa but are not required. These recommendations can be applied widely to various projects.

1. Restoring native vegetation
2. Managing invasive species
3. Leaving boulders and large logs in place.

Contacts

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APPENDIX A. SITE PROTOCOL CHECKLIST

Please use this checklist once it is determined that a project site is in the Virgin Islands Tree Boa range.

SITE Location/Address:

Checklist: Please initial and date each step.

_____: 1. Notify all personnel by handing out or sending brochures to each individual and putting up signage at the work site and watching VI Wild Tree Boa video.
Alternative: DFW briefing.

Date: _____

_____: 2. Mark boundaries of the work site.

Date: _____

_____: 3. Coordinate with DFW (contact information above pg. 5) to conduct a site visit with an agreed upon date and time.

Date: _____

_____: 4. Conduct a night survey (Between 7:30PM and 9:30PM) prior to hand clearing to be done by a qualified surveyor (environmental consultant, biologists, or personnel with VI Tree Boa experience). See capture protocols in sections 8 and 9 above.

Date: _____

_____: 5. Share survey results with DFW.

Date: _____

_____: 6. Conduct Hand clearing (vegetation, stone walls, naturally occurring rock piles) down to 1 meter above ground. Preserve tracts of wooded habitat and associated understory outside the footprint and setback of the building and not required for infrastructure. Trees at or greater than 7cm dbh should be retained as tree boa habitat where feasible. Any fallen trees at or greater than 7 cm dbh should be placed in an undisturbed location. Connections with habitat on adjacent property should be left intact.

Date: _____

_____: 7. Rest Period Completed: 10 days for 1 acre or less, 14 days for + 1 acre.

Date: _____

_____: 8. DFW conducts another site visit to confirm and approve hand clearing protocols.

Date: _____

_____: 9. Heavy Equipment begins on the agreed upon start date with DFW and project head. See sections 10-13 for instructions on how to handle/capture VI Tree Boas once heavy construction begins.

Date: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

