



Stuart Holmes, *Cayman Parrots*, c. 1980.

**Inspiration Artists: Marlena Anglin, Stewart Holmes,  
Penny Clifford**

**Age Range: Secondary - Teens**

**Subject Area: Social Studies**

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# **CAYMAN ISLANDS NATIONAL SYMBOLS: FLORA & FAUNA**



**NATIONAL  
GALLERY** | CAYMAN  
ISLANDS

**DART**





# In This Packet

In this lesson, students will learn about Cayman's national flora and fauna. Students will start by understanding what National Symbols are, before looking at each of the unique plants and animals that have come to represent Cayman.

Students will also learn about local artists who have represented national flora and fauna in their work. Sketching activities and follow-up questions are included.





# What is a National Symbol?

National symbols represent a country's identity. They are a way to show patriotism and express who we are to the rest of the world.

National symbols can include a country's flag or coat of arms, its national song, and the plants or animals that are unique to that country.

In this resource, you will learn more about Cayman's national flora and fauna (plants and animals).





# The National Flower: Wild Banana Orchid



Cayman's National Flower is the Wild Banana Orchid (*Myrmecophila thomsoniana*). These flowers are unique to the Cayman Islands.

There are two sub-species - one is found on Grand Cayman, and the other on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

This large scented orchid has magnificent white and purple flowers that grow on stalks measuring up to six feet long. The flowers appear in a cluster resembling banana-like bulbs that give this orchid its name. The Cayman Brac and Little Cayman flower has slightly smaller flowers with a yellowish colour.

The Wild Banana Orchid usually blooms from early April until June. You can see them along woodland trails or at the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park.



# The National Tree: Silver Thatch Palm

The Silver Thatch Palm (*Coccothrinax proctorii*) is a type of palm tree with green leaves with a silver under-side. Like the wild banana orchid, it is unique to the Cayman Islands.

The leaves are unusually strong and can be used to produce several practical objects from roofing for houses to hats, baskets and fans. Historically, rope made from the silver thatch palm was exported countries like Cuba and Jamaica as a primary industry.



Dried silver thatch can be used to make roofs and window coverings.



# The Silver Thatch Palm in Local Art and Traditional Craft

**Marlena Anglin**'s mother taught her how to make rope, baskets and other items out of thatch when she was young. She became a skilled thatch artisan herself, and now creates work for festivals and heritage days. She also teaches crafts to local school-children. Like other thatch artisans in Cayman, her work is both beautiful and utilitarian.



Marlena Anglin, *Silver Thatch Basket and Utensils*, 2013.

**Penny Clifford** painted this image of a silver thatch palm after 2004's Hurricane Ivan. She has been painting and drawing Cayman Islands plants since the 1990s, including for the National Trust-produced book, "Wild Trees in the Cayman Islands".

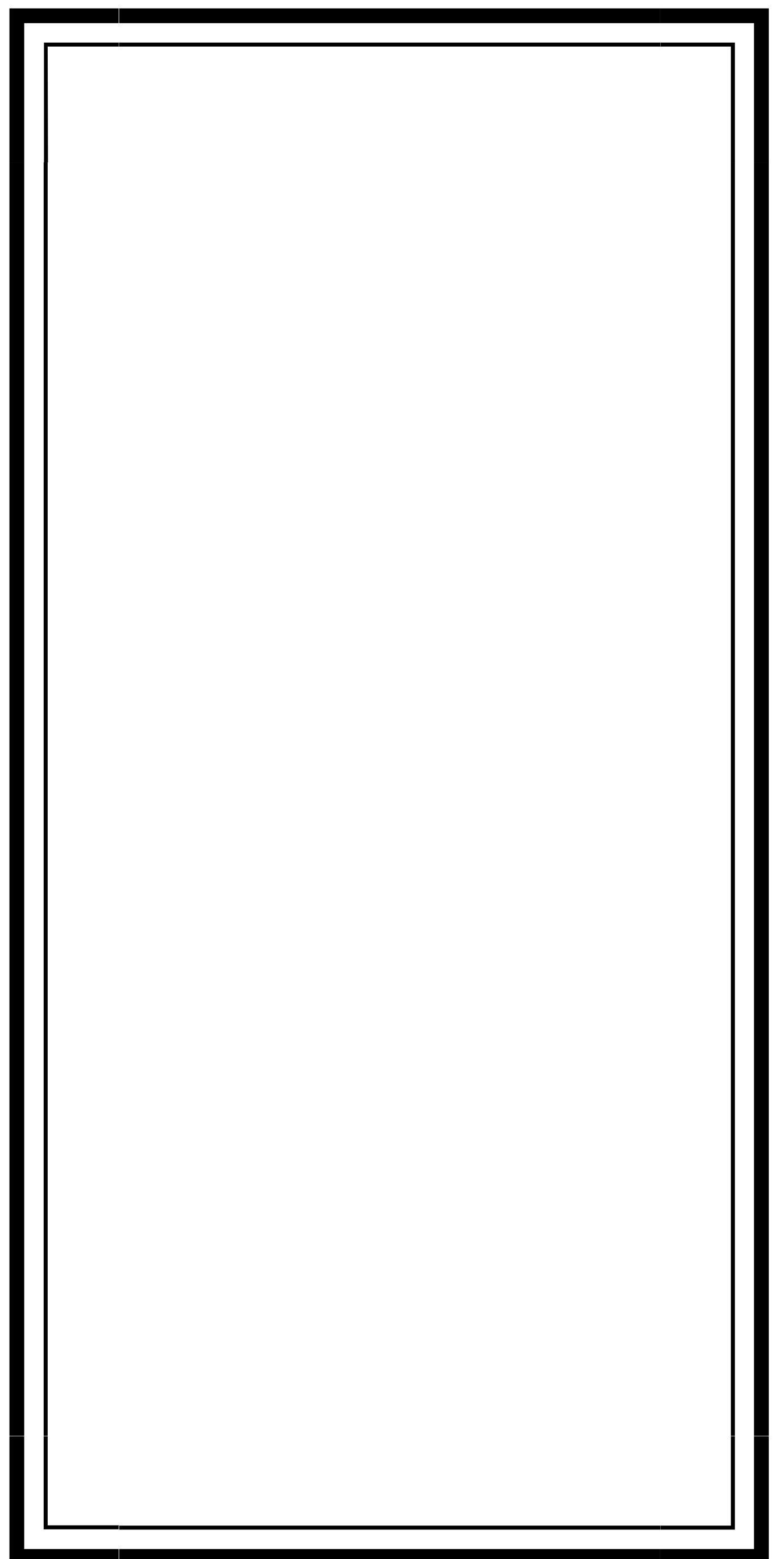


Penny Clifford, *Silver Thatch Palm*, 2005.

# Sketching Activity

Draw or paint a Penny Clifford-inspired silver thatch palm.

Use graphite pencils, watercolour paints or coloured pencils.





# The National Bird: Cayman Parrot

The Cayman Islands Parrots are two sub-species of the Cuban Parrot (*Amazona Leucocephala*).

There are two types, one in Grand Cayman and one in Cayman Brac. Both have shiny green feathers with darker edges over the body, a white eye ring, red cheeks, black ear patches and brilliant blue wing feathers which are only obvious when the bird is flying.

The Cayman Brac Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala hesternana*) is quieter and smaller with more black trim on its feathers. It has a pure white forehead with a large maroon patch on its chest.

About 2,000 parrots inhabit Grand Cayman, while the Cayman Brac Parrot maintains a stable population of about 400. Nesting in tree holes in old-growth forests, the colourful parrots depend on undisturbed woodlands and black mangrove forests for survival.



Check out this video for more information on how these endangered birds are being protected:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sE44cR1nwqI>



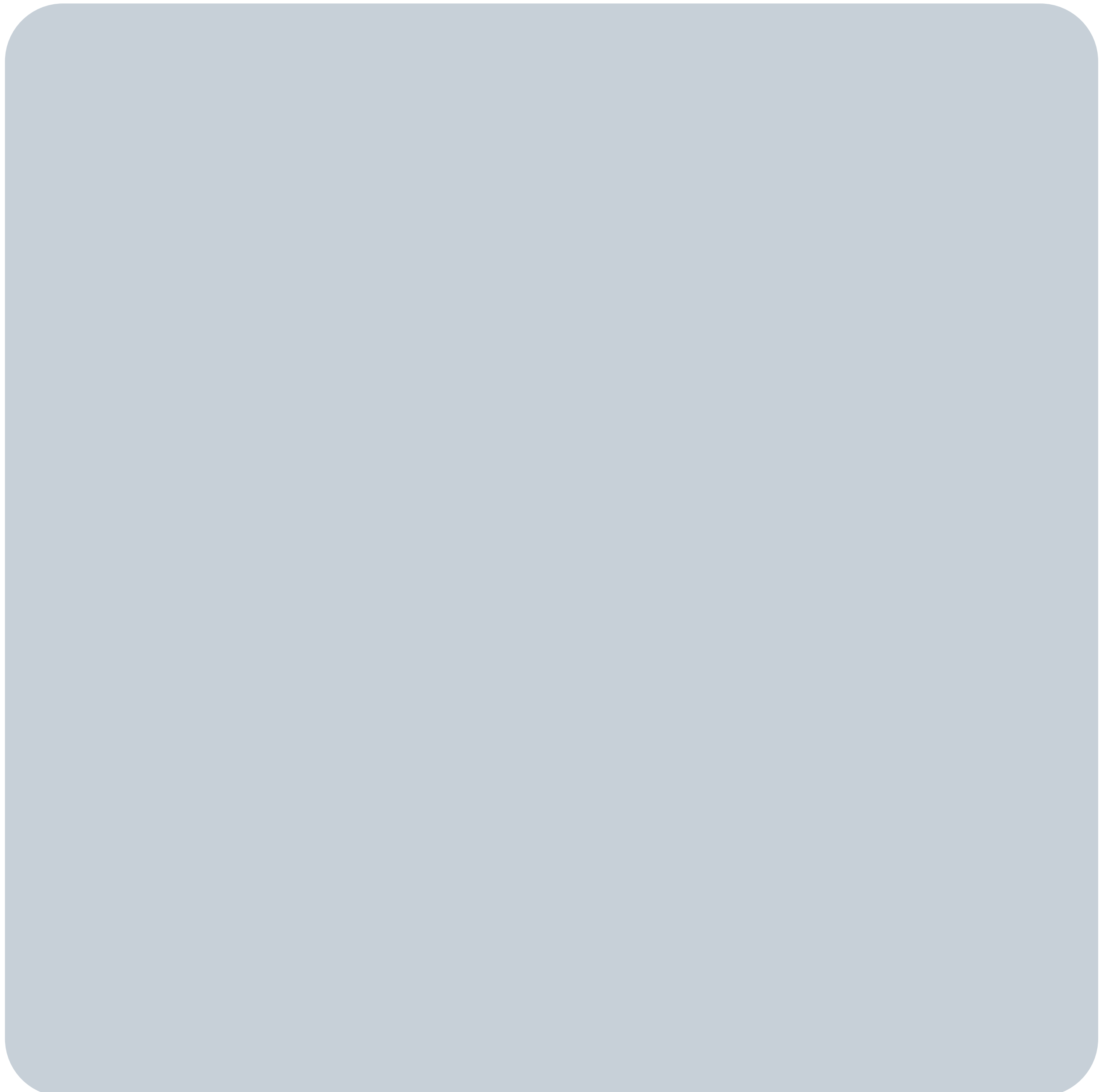
# Art Activity:

## National Symbols Scene

### Materials:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Pen (optional)
- Coloured pencils
- Crayons
- Paint

In the space below, draw or paint a scene that includes all three of the national flora and fauna that you learned about in this lesson. How many different ways can you represent each symbol?





# Follow-up Questions

- What is a national symbol?
- Why do you think it is important for countries to identify national symbols?
- What new facts did you learn that you did not know before?
- What are the similarities and differences between the Grand Cayman Parrot and the Cayman Brac Parrot?
- Do you think it is important to preserve traditional craft knowledge like silver thatch weaving? Why?
- Why do you think the wild banana orchid was chosen as Cayman's national flower?
- Why do you think an artist would choose to paint or draw one of our national symbols? What might they be trying to express?