



Friends Tidings
Summer 2001 Vol. 8 No. 3

Friends upgraded donor and member database gives us better control over our mailing process. If you are still receiving a hardcopy of Tidings in the mail and would prefer to be advised by email when the latest newsletter is posted on the web, please email newsletter@friendsvinp.org and we will mark your record accordingly. This will save postage dollars and volunteer hours which can be applied more productively toward our programs.

**New
President**

Tidings Notes

Eco-Camps

New Assistant - Raquel Hill

Welcome to the Friends' new assistant, Raquel. She started in June and plans to work through the school year. She is keeping the office organized, entering membership data and taking care of several other tasks. Raquel lives on St. John and is a senior in high school this fall.

**Thanks
Volunteers**

Dignitaries Visit -

National Park Service Southeast Regional Dir. Jerry Belson, Deputy Regional Dir. Patricia Hooks and Assoc. Regional Dir. for Professional Services Tom Brown visited St. John in July. Many thanks to Brian Young, Managing Director of Caneel Bay Resort, and his wife, Vicki, for hosting a reception for our VIPs.

Archeology

**Coral
Project**

Students Clear Trails -

An enthusiastic crew of 6 young adults and 2 leaders from the Student Conservation Association (SCA) helped the Park renovate trails this summer. They significantly improved three of the most heavily traveled Park trails. Park staff was pleased with the work and, along with the Friends, hopes to sponsor more SCA crews in the future.

**Volunteer
View**

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle -

Shannon Swann, a NPS health officer on loan to the Park, spent the month of May helping develop a waste reduction and recycling program. She conducted a clean up of Solomon Beach and enhanced the office recycling program.



Joe Kessler and Raquel Hill

Greetings from Joe Kessler, President

The future of the Friends looks bright and I'm proud to be here, leading this organization.

After several weeks of getting familiar, I have discovered a Board of Directors that is dedicated, a staff that is skilled, and an organization with a reputation of getting good things done. I am particularly impressed by the loyalty of and growth in the number of Friends' donors, which has increased 64% in the past year.

A highlight in my work with the Park is the insightful leadership of Superintendent John King. He has implemented positive changes, works cooperatively with the community and is a strong proponent of our partnership.

Although I only arrived on beautiful St. John in early July, my wife, Cristina, and I have enjoyed visiting St. John numerous times over the past 28 years.

I come to the Friends with nearly 20 years of non-profit management experience mostly from my positions with CARE, the international aid organization. My most recent position was as Country Director for CARE in Mali, West Africa.

I have had the privilege of working in 14 different countries and the good fortune to lead several successful environmental conservation efforts, such as providing technical assistance to a national park in Ethiopia, guiding sustainable management of forest preserves in Mali and Niger, and managing water and land conservation activities in most of the countries in which I have worked. These served as good preparation for my work with the Friends.

Now that I am settled in, I have set some priorities on which we will

concentrate our efforts:

- Increase the amount and effectiveness of assistance that we provide to the Park,
- Broaden the Friends' constituency in the Virgin Islands community, and
- Expand membership.

I am delighted to embark on the challenge of leading the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. I know that our members have a lot of choices about where to contribute limited philanthropy dollars and I thank you all for choosing the Friends.

Kids Love Eco-Camps

During July and August, Friends sponsored Eco-Camps at Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station (VIERS) at Lameshur Bay on St. John. Thanks to grants from Disney Cruise Line and VI Dept. of Agriculture's Urban and Community Forestry Program, the camps were offered free of charge to local children ranging in age from 8 to 14.



How many rings does this old tropical tree branch have?

Each of the four camp sessions lasted 3 days and 2 nights and was attended by over 20 campers. The campers participated in activities such as hikes, swimming and snorkeling, stargazing and environmental art projects, as well as daily lessons on coastal ecology, tropical forests, marine biology and issues affecting the Virgin Islands environment.



Snorkeling was a new experience for some of the young people at Eco-Camps.

“The Eco-Camps give us the opportunity to teach kids from the Virgin Islands more about their responsibility in protecting their natural resources. They are going to be taking charge one day and we need to make sure they understand what is at stake,” said Eric Ames, an Urban Forester and environmental educator at VIERS this summer. “Some of them had never walked through a mangrove forest or seen live coral before. It’s great that we can give them this experience.”

As part of their sponsorship, Disney Cruise Line offered campers a special visit and tour aboard the Disney Magic cruise ship in St Thomas. They met the ship’s Captain, learned about Disney Cruise Line’s environmental programs and got their pictures taken with none other than Mickey Mouse himself.



During the parting ceremony, the children presented the Disney Magic crew with a banner thanking them for their generosity. Each camper received a Disney certificate of achievement for participating in the Eco-Camp.

What more can we say, but THANKS!

Above and beyond...

That's where volunteer board members **John Fuller** and **Joan Bermingham** went to ensure that the office functioned smoothly during our three months without a President/CEO.

John came in the nearly everyday to help out with computer issues, finances, merchandising, decision making and other various tasks. Sometimes the staff just doesn't know what they would do without his cheerful demeanor and technological wizardry.

Keeping the books straight and the bills paid, that is **Joan's** aim and she hits her target! At least twice each week for several hours **Joan** was in the office and deep into QuickBooks making sure we stay well afloat.

More Great Volunteers

This year we have been blessed with highly skilled, reliable and enthusiastic volunteers. **Jane Israel** spent many days on the computer to assemble our winter and spring newsletters. She did a great job.

Over the summer, the Friends often has a university intern to help out. This year **Elizabeth Ban** came from Yale University to do everything from assisting production of a video about the Park to rewriting our brochure and conducting research - oh, she also taught young campers about marine habitats and advised us on the content of the educational computer kiosk. Elizabeth will be missed!

“Burn Layer” Found at Archaeology Dig



University students assist archeologists at shovel test sites.

Archeologist Ken Wild had a busy summer at the Cinnamon Bay archaeology dig. His efforts were joined by groups from the University of Southern Maine and Syracuse University. Together they had several exciting moments.

One of the highlights was the discovery of a burn layer located at Cinnamon Bay just west of the lab. The layer is approximately 15 cm thick and full of ash, burned timbers and charcoal. It is possible that the layer was from the slave rebellion that occurred on St. John in 1733. A silver coin dated 1714 found just below the layer helped to date the burn.

In addition, the groups performed numerous shovel tests - the systematic digging of small test holes to examine the contents of a given area. The contents of these holes help determine the distribution of material within an area. Analysis of the pottery from these shovel tests may provide evidence of plantation farming predating the Danish plantation era of the 1700s.

Assisting Ken is a new Park staff member, Laurie Lee, who is also working to complete her Ph.D. in archaeology through Syracuse University. Many local and visiting volunteers continue to help in the archaeology efforts at Cinnamon Bay.

Coral Transplanting Is Successful



Project Manager Becky Bremser photographs transplanted staghorn coral at Trunk Bay. Photo by Steve Simonsen.

After the two-year study of coral transplanting in four bays within the Park, it has been determined that transplanted coral colonies survive and grow at about the same rates as the naturally occurring colonies.

Left to nature, little to no recovery occurs to coral reefs that are damaged by natural or human causes. However, some scientists believed the reintroduction of coral colonies to damaged reefs might initiate and speed up recovery.

So, beginning in spring 1999, naturally occurring fragments of elkhorn, staghorn and finger coral were taken from environments where their survival was unlikely and attached to stable substrate on several Park reefs. Every month for two years, trained volunteers monitored the survival rate of these colonies.

Scientists verified and analyzed the data collected to reach these conclusions:

- Survival of transplanted fragments and naturally occurring

colonies is similar.

- The elkhorn coral species has grown and survived at a significantly higher rate than the staghorn and finger coral species.
- Mortality was primarily a result of winter storm swells.
- The shallow reef is a much more dynamic system than previously realized, with high mortality of all branching coral species.

In summary, the coral transplant feasibility project has been an overall success. It has proven that naturally-occurring fragments of elkhorn coral, taken from environments hostile to their survival, can be successfully transplanted to stable reefs, where they cement, survive and grow.

This resource management technique could be suitable for use in cases of severe damage to reefs, such as vessel groundings. However, this technique is not the solution for restoring generally degraded coral reefs.

We give thanks to our sponsors Canon USA and the National Park Foundation. This project would not have happened without their support.

It Makes a Difference

By Elizabeth Ban

I have had the opportunity to spend my summer in paradise. Better yet, I have had the opportunity to work for an organization that helps protect this paradise.

As a graduate student at Yale University, I chose to do my internship with Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. I knew that the Friends was the fundraising arm of the Park when I became a member last year. What I didn't know was exactly how much positive impact the Friends has.

I have worked on a myriad of important projects this summer. But I was especially fortunate to be an instructor at the Friends' Eco-Camps for Virgin Islands youth. It was an incredible experience watching the children learn about the eco-systems of their islands. Of most value was discussing with the young people their role as future leaders in protecting the resources of the Virgin Islands.

I also assisted with the production of an inspirational 10-minute video about the Virgin Islands National Park that will be shown to Virgin Islands visitors.

Our intention is to deepen appreciation and understanding of the fragile natural resources within the Park by showing an inside view of its wonders to guests before they tour the Park.

Without the support of Friends, these and other programs would not exist.

As part of the Friends staff this summer, I have seen what a difference our members' contributions are making. With your continuing support, we can fulfill our mission to protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park.



Moorings in Hurricane Hole, Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument, will be another Friends' habitat protection project.



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