

## Another Successful Summer at VIERS Eco-Camps



This past summer, the Friends hosted five Eco-Camps for local children, ages 8 to 14, at the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station (VIERS) at Lameshur Bay on St. John.

The purpose of these Eco-Camps was to educate Virgin Islands children

about the terrestrial and marine eco-systems in which they live; strengthen their scientific background; and create an interest in conservation and the natural world. The remote, densely forested location of the VIERS facility is a perfect environment to meet this objective.

For two nights and three days the campers were transported away from their neighborhoods and immersed in natural beauty. They were surrounded by thick forests, beautiful beaches, and heard the tranquil sounds of the Caribbean forest made up of the songs of frogs, insects and birds. It was not an uncommon sight to see deer strolling through the camp and turtles swimming in the bay.

While there, the children attended classroom lectures and discussions about such topics as ecology and the interdependence of all living things: mangroves, indigenous species of plants, animals on St. John, and the value and importance of much of the local flora, including medicinal plants. These lectures were immediately followed by activities designed to reinforce the information presented. The campers went on plant identification and nature hikes within distinctly different terrestrial environments. This combination of lecture/hands-on learning was an ideal teaching device that ensured the information presented was stored in the students' long-term memory.

Outside the classroom, the children were given plenty of time to enjoy closely supervised swimming and snorkeling in the beautiful and pristine Little Lameshur Bay. This was also a fantastic learning experience, as many of the children had never had the opportunity to use a mask and snorkel. Also on snorkel trips, different types of coral and many species of fish were pointed out and later identified.

As a direct result of these camps, 100 Virgin Islands youth have a much better understanding of the ecosystem in which they live. This enlightening experience will help to foster a feeling of interconnectedness to their environment and will set the children on a path toward conservation and stewardship.

## Program Update

The Friends has been very active (and we believe, successful) during this fiscal year in supporting and implementing projects that help protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources of our Park. We are proud to have many program accomplishments to share with you.



*SCA volunteers clearing Cinnamon Bay Trail*

### On the Environmental Education Front, the Friends:

- completed the production of the **Park Video** that presents to viewers the beauty of our island and encourages them to better care for the Park's fragile resources;
- produced a **Coral Reef DVD** about the current state of the coral reef eco-systems in the Virgin Islands which was provided, along with a set of conservation videos and audio-visual equipment to seven schools, the VINP Visitor Center and several other venues;
- produced an **interactive computer-based environmental education program** using touch-screen technology and purchased the computer equipment for use in the VINP Visitor Center;
- sponsored five **Eco-Camps** for 100 campers this summer which provided these students the opportunity to spend three days surrounded by Virgin Islands National Park studying marine and terrestrial eco-systems; and,
- offered our first ever **scholarship** (the recipient was Leia LaPlace, a biology student from St. Croix) aimed at furthering the study at UVI in fields related to natural resource management.

### To Further our Commitment to Cultural Preservation, the Friends:

- supported the **Cultural Presentations at Annaberg Plantation**, sponsoring demonstrations on historic gardening, basketry and storytelling to enhance the visitors' experience. We also piloted a volunteer docent program that will be expanded next year;
- sponsored a weekly **stage performance by Carabana Ensemble** celebrating the life and times of Toussaint L'Overture, leader of the Haitian slave revolt;
- continued support of the Park's **Archeology** work as it moved to the vitally important – but perhaps less exciting – tasks of preserving, describing and cataloguing the thousands of artifacts previously uncovered; and,

## • TIDINGS NOTES •

### Beulah Dalmida-Smith Returns to NPS on St. John



After a three-year assignment as the Commissioner of Department of Planning & Natural Resources and a two-year stint with the National Park on St. Croix, native St. Johnian Beulah Dalmida-Smith has been selected as the new Management Assistant for V.I. National Park on St. John. In her new role,

Beulah will serve as the Park's Public Information Officer and Resource Education Coordinator. Additionally, she will manage a broad-based Volunteer program, coordinate the Park's land protection activities as well as those activities leading to environmental leadership initiatives. Ms. Dalmida-Smith holds a bachelor's degree in Marine Biology from the University of the Virgin Islands and a Masters in Environmental studies from Yale University. *The Friends welcomes Beulah!*

### License Plates Sales Still Strong

Thanks to our new affinity partners, **Caribbean Auto Mart** and **Connections**, the Friends' license plates can be purchased on all three islands. As a result, sales are booming and the plates are now seen on cars on all over the Virgin Islands. Friends' members can still purchase the plates as souvenirs or for registration (in the VI only!). \$55 for numbered plates and \$105 for personalized. *Get your Friends' Plates now!*



### Maho Bay Road Completed

After lots of anticipation, the much-needed repairs on the road have finally been completed. This 435-foot section, once a sore spot for driving, also posed serious ecological hazards – it was estimated that some 170 tons of sediment per year was being washed into Francis Bay from this point. Progress of the concrete drainage improvements will continue for the months ahead. Maho staff will monitor the sediment fences and send samples to Colorado State University for analysis. It is estimated that there will be a 75–95% reduction of erosion rates based on estimates from a study on sediment traps. In addition, the concrete will be assessed in 2-month intervals for any signs of deterioration, as well as to determine if the road is working as designed. *(Continued on page 4)*

### Friends' Mission:

*The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park and promotes the responsible enjoyment of this unique national treasure.*

## News From VINP



*By John King  
Superintendent VINP*

Hello Friends! Wow, summer is over! I trust that your summer has been as interesting and productive as ours has been.

We have had the pleasure of hosting a variety of youth programs this summer. We had an 11-person Youth Conservation Corps program; a 12-person

AmeriCorps program; and two Student Conservation Association trail crews. These groups conducted a variety of conservation-related work projects and also supported both the Maintenance and Resource Management Divisions. The SCA trail crews made some significant improvements to the Cinnamon Bay, Johnny Horn, Brown Bay, and Margaret Hill trails. Hope you can get out on the trails and see their handiwork.

Work on the Lameshur Road has now begun. By mid-October you will see significant improvements to that road making the south side of the park much easier and safer. The design work for the new facilities at Hawksnest Beach is nearing completion. That work, that will involve the construction of new picnic pavilions and restrooms, should begin in the Fall. Replacement of the pavilion and restroom facilities at Maho Bay is scheduled for winter 2003. It won't be long before we'll see some significant improvements to a number of heavily-used park facilities. We're excited about that!

There's lots to look forward to in the days ahead – completion of our Vessel Management Plan; commencement of the planning process that will lead to a new General Management Plan for the park and the new Coral Reef National Monument; start-up of the exotic animal control efforts to reduce populations of feral cats, rats, mongoose, hogs, and goats; initiation of an invasive plant eradication program; and hopefully activation of the new Monument.

Thanks for your continued interest in and support for the park. We appreciate you and all you do to help us make the Virgin Islands National Park a crown jewel of the Caribbean.

### Friends' Vision:

*We seek to be an active partner in helping Virgin Islands National Park be a model of resource protection and cultural preservation which is valued by the community around it and all those who experience this unique national treasure.*

**Memberships can now be renewed on-line by going directly to our website at:**

[http://www.friendsvinp.org/new\\_stuff/joindirect.htm](http://www.friendsvinp.org/new_stuff/joindirect.htm)



**If you would like to receive the Friends' newsletter in the future via email, please drop us a line:**

[newsletter@friendsvinp.org](mailto:newsletter@friendsvinp.org)

## State of Archaeology

By Ken Wild, VINP Archaeologist/Cultural Resource Manager



Virgin Islands National Park's maritime resources, historic archaeological sites, and prehistoric settlements are some of the best preserved in the Caribbean and offer one of the most diverse collections of cultural resources in the entire National Park Service. Management of these resources and the Park's archaeological collections

has required that park archeology become diversified. Research and preservation efforts attempt to address the needs of each of these cultural themes and, in the process, positively affect the community's and visitor's knowledge of the past.

With the Friends' help, investigations at the laboratory at Cinnamon Bay have continued to be decisive in understanding the prehistory of these islands just before Columbus' arrival into the New World. Along with the Cinnamon Bay remains, Trunk Bay artifacts were added to the research materials being studied in the laboratory. Thousands of artifacts continue to be catalogued and analyzed by researchers, students and volunteers.

Historic studies also play a key role. Artifacts recovered this year from both Annaberg and the Caneel Bay Overseer's house are on-going projects, as is Syracuse University's continued research on materials recovered from the Cinnamon Bay Plantation. This year local historian David Knight completed the first historic report on the Annaberg Plantation. These undertakings help us to understand life in the historic past but also aim to preserve the structures that symbolize this heritage.

Thanks to our Americorps volunteers, historic preservation also tops the list of things to do. These students cut destructive vegetation from the Trunk Bay Factory, Catherineberg Plantation and the Cinnamon Bay ruins; they carried out archeological testing at Cinnamon Bay, Caneel Bay and conducted a survey for a proposed overlook at Lind Point. Student interns from University of Southern Maine and Shepherd College also joined in to help, doing everything from reconstructing prehistoric pottery to spraying herbicides at the areas cleared at Hassel Island around the historic Creque Marine Railway.

Finally, Maritime Resources are also a top priority! Last year, I invited East Carolina University to the Park. As a result, a five-year agreement was drafted. Under this agreement, students, faculty, and equipment will be donated to underwater archeology efforts. To a large extent, the Friends and its partners made this agreement possible. For the first time in the history of the park, scientific surveys and site assessments of maritime sites were undertaken. This year much of the work was conducted in the new monument. The work ensured that the proposed Hurricane Hole mooring system, which the Friends is also spearheading, will not only protect the natural habitat but will also benefit other maritime sites.

Thru the Friends, it has been possible to deepen our knowledge of the past and preserve so much more of the islands' wonderful heritage for future generations. Today the Friends' assistance is needed more than ever to help us protect these resources, to learn from them and to use them in a manner that is beneficial for all.

## Friends Produces New DVD as Educational Tool for V.I. Schools

Thanks in part to a gift from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Friends has donated a new nine minute DVD presentation that will increase knowledge and awareness regarding coral reefs and the urgent need to protect them. The DVD, along with a 27" TV, VCR/DVD player, and AV cart, were donated to six local high schools, UVI's St. Thomas and St. Croix campuses, V.I. Environmental Resources Station, and Cinnamon and Maho Bay Campgrounds.



Joe Kessler, with Shirley Joseph (Julius E. Sprauve Principal) and Faye Fredericks (JESS Librarian)

The Friends originally created the DVD hoping to instill a sense of stewardship of the Virgin Islands marine environment in its viewers. The information presented addresses the different habitats that surround coral reef ecosystems: including mangroves, coral reefs and sea-grass beds. The viewer is then led through statistics on the current state of the Virgin Islands tropical marine ecosystem, specifically discussing the natural and human causes for decline.

"The partnerships that were formed with the schools are truly one of the greatest successes of this project, said Friends' President, Joe Kessler. "It is exciting to see the relationships that are beginning to grow."

This sentiment was echoed by Julius E. Sprauve School Principal Shirley Joseph, who added, "The Friends' gift will be used to increase our student's awareness and build their understanding of the importance of protecting our tropical marine ecosystems."

## The Friends Welcomes Emily Burton—Our New Program Manager



After three years as the Friends Program Manager, Becky Bremser has moved on to work for the Trust For Public Land as their new Project Associate in Tampa Florida. When she arrived the Friends was made up of only an Executive Director and a team of volunteers. With her strong focus and organizational skills, Becky helped the Friends to grow to what it is today, with 3,000 members, three full time staff employees and volunteer Board of Directors. We wish her lots of luck!

With the change of tides comes a new fresh face at the Friends. Emily Burton arrived from northern New Jersey with a degree in Environmental Geography and two years as an AmeriCorps volunteer in Portland, Oregon. She also studied abroad in Australia to learn about the natural and cultural ecology down under, and has taught many environmental education programs to people of all ages. Nonetheless, Emily is not new to the island of St. John; she spent the 2000–2001 season at Maho Bay Camps as the Assistant Activities Director. Now she has returned and is in full swing as the Friends' new Program Manager. *We Welcome Emily!*

# Fiscal Year 2002 Program Update

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- began **preservation work on Hassel Island**, in Charlotte Amalie Harbor, in an effort to open the Creque Marine Railway site to visitors.

## To Support Natural Resource Protection the Friends:

- began preparatory work for the implementation of the **Resource Protection Mooring Project** which includes storm protection moorings in Hurricane Hole, moorings for hardnose fishing and dive moorings all within the newly proclaimed VI Coral Reef National Monument;
- completed the **Maho Bay Road Project** which paved a portion of the road and constructed erosion control structures all with the aim of reducing runoff into Maho Bay and Francis Bay;
- supported the **African Dust Research Project** which is investigating chemical contaminants in the dust carried across the

Atlantic from West Africa and their impact on coral (and possibly human) health in the VI; and,

- again sponsored a **SCA Trail Crew** which during their five-week stay did significant work on the Cinnamon Bay Trail and Loop, Margaret Hill/Caneel Hill Trail, Ram Head Trail and the Europa Bay Trail.

The Friends set a very ambitious program plan for this year and the results have been impressive. This has put us in a good position as we enter into discussions with VINP leadership to develop a program plan for 2002/2003. Each year around this time the Park presents a “support request” to the Friends with their prioritized needs that best fit with the Friends’ mission. The Friends’ Board of Directors then selects projects from this list, which coupled with the on-going or uncompleted projects and any Friends-initiated projects, will make up our program plan for the next year – this will be presented in the December newsletter.

## President’s Message



By Joe Kessler

We are coming to the end of a program year that was very challenging, rewarding and gratifying. **Challenging** in the sense that we took on a very ambitious set of projects, many of which required hands-on management by the Friends’ small staff. **Rewarding**, as we were largely successful in meeting this challenge and being

able to assist the Park in its quest to be a model of natural resource protection and cultural preservation. And, **gratifying** in that our members and other donors continued to be exceptionally generous and supportive even during this very tumultuous year.

The Friends can only be successful with your support, and you were there for our Park this year. Several of our members came forward personally with special contributions that made the Eco-Camps for kids, Scholarship Fund, Hassel Island Preservation and the Interactive Kiosk a reality. The general membership was very responsive to our recent appeal to support cultural preservation projects and this allowed us to fund Annaberg and the live theater presentations. I am extremely grateful for this support. You have helped make Virgin Islands National Park better for both today and the future.

I am humbled by your support because I know that you have many choices for, and demands on your philanthropy, and I am deeply appreciative that preserving and protecting Virgin Islands National Park remains one of your priorities.

## • TIDINGS NOTES •

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### Cruz Bay Playground Improvement

A grassroots community effort is underway to improve the playground near the VI National Park’s Visitor Centers. Spearheaded by Karen Nogueira and assisted by the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park, this project has the full support of the VI National Park.

“I was at the playground with my daughter last week and was disturbed by the state of the playground equipment” said Karen Nogueira, owner of Kariba Designer Jewelry in Mongoose Junction. “I figured that I could either complain about the playground, or I could do something about it”, she said. Karen chose the later course of action.

Current plans call for new toddler swings and a safer climbing structure. The swings will be completely repaired and the playground area will be fenced. Karen has begun raising funds for this project and sourcing playground equipment. “The more funds that we raise, the more that we will be able to do”, Karen said. She hopes to be able to complete the improvements by the year’s end. For information on how you can help, please call the Friends at 340/779-4940.

**Check out our Winter Tidings for upcoming seminars, volunteer opportunities and our Annual Meeting.**