





PROTECT. PRESERVE. CONNECT.

FRIENDS OF VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK IS THE OFFICIAL PHILANTHROPIC PARTNER OF
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK.

OUR MISSION IS TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES OF
VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK WHILE CONNECTING VISITORS TO THE PARK AND THE PARK
TO THE COMMUNITY.

DEAR FRIENDS

Can you recall your first stunning introduction to Virgin Islands National Park? Was there a moment when its preserved nature took your breath away? Was it sailing into Cinnamon Bay under the orange glow of the setting sun, or hiking down the Reef Bay Trail fringed with lush vegetation and framed by rocky hillsides?

I first swam at Hawksnest Beach. The passing sea turtles, rays and schools of fish are etched in my mind. The many unique species and delicate habitats found in Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument continue to grow my wonder. We are truly protecting treasures!

Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is focused on its mission to support the Park's needs and engage the community. Importantly, we aim to cultivate and nurture good park stewardship so that future generations will come to know and love our Park. I hope that this objective in particular will resonate as a common thread as you review our work.

2021 was certainly one for the record books. Zoom became a verb with new meaning and our Park saw unprecedented visitation. Unsurprisingly, it was members like you who rose to the occasion putting in more volunteer hours clearing trails and monitoring beaches and bays than ever before! Certainly, as an organization, we have honed our skills at volunteer training and management to a level of excellence with your constant efforts! Thank you!

In helping found this organization and many others like it for other parks, Laurance Rockefeller foresaw the need for constant vigilance and advocacy to balance the preservation of natural and cultural resources on public lands, public access to those lands, and the powerful draw of development for economic gain. This very much applies to Caneel Bay and the need to find a relevant 21st Century solution that works today and tomorrow.

On behalf of the Friends, thank you for your support of our shared mission. Today, I am honored to be leading a well-cared for, dynamic, and purposeful organization into the future.

If we can have one shared vision, let it be that we continue to work together to protect and preserve our Park so that future generations can experience the magic of these lands and seas.



Tonia Lovejoy
Executive Director



REMEMBERING A FRIEND

ANDY STILLMAN

FRIENDS BOARD MEMBER TO 2021

When you pass from one world to another, there is a trail of illumination that stretches far behind, filled with a life for all to remember and share. The tears are for the living, a way to fill your cup of sorrow. The fond memories are many and our love is released to all who listen.

To be truthful, Andy loved all parks because he had the view that these are sacred places where people can experience the outdoors, historical and cultural sites that educate and inspire, the fresh air, clean waters, and open sky. I can say for sure it was his love of parks that made him such a strong and ardent supporter of the Friends programs for youth - the School Kids in the Park program, the Junior Ranger program, the camping at Lameshur where countless school-age children experienced visiting, living and working in the Park. For he harbored a belief, that if children are introduced to the Park at an early age, they would understand the need to protect, preserve and connect to their Park.

We thank Andy for his friendship and years of service to Friends. He is missed!



Andrew Rutnik
Board Chairman
On behalf of the Friends Board and Staff



OUR BOARD

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FROM PARK SUPERINTENDENT, NIGEL FIELDS



Swim, hike, snorkel or simply take in the incredible scenic views throughout the Park and with almost every stroke or step, you'll experience the positive impacts of our longstanding philanthropic partnership with the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park.

Together we share more than 20 years of shared stewardship. Demonstrations of a lasting environmental legacy are found from the Leinster shoreline to Lameshur Bay. Educational experiences supported by the Friends reach youth near and far through on-site engagement and virtual videos. A spirit of giving and volunteerism has maintained ongoing research, science monitoring and historical documentation critical for protecting the resources that we all treasure. A short list of recent examples include:

- Planting of hundreds of native plants to stabilize beaches and shorelines.
- Maintaining and improving over 27 miles of park trails.
- Engaging the next generation of stewards through youth education, public programs, and job skill training.
- Funding novel archaeology and archival research offering new insights into pre-Columbian, colonial and post-colonial ways of life.
- Sea turtle monitoring and protection.
- Testing treatments to save and protect certain corals from rapidly spreading diseases.

These and many other joint efforts of the Park and the Friends build a foundation for our future.

Philanthropy, volunteerism, and in-kind support will increasingly be needed to assist the NPS in meeting our mission going forward. Inflation, construction, and energy costs continue to erode the buying power of our limited base funds. Yet the demands for visitor services and expectations for quality experiences are high. Leveraging our resources and expanding our collective stewardship actions allows us to meet these demands while offering an opportunity to show a potential new visitor how best to love and care for their national park.

Right now is a great time to take a moment to acknowledge the impact of our partners who greatly assist us in caring for the inimitable treasures of Virgin Islands National Park and the Coral Reef National Monument.

Looking ahead there are new challenges before us and great opportunities to create new paths for 21st century conservation. As an expanding, dedicated team of stewards I have confidence that our best years of protection are unfolding before us. We will go further and achieve more as we work together in partnership.

Nigel Fields
Superintendent





6,836
VOLUNTEER HOURS

724 hours

logged towards Cinnamon Bay archaeological compliance work

1,350 hours

contributed by 99 dedicated and trained sea turtle volunteers

3,825 hours

by 225 Trail Camp and walkup volunteers

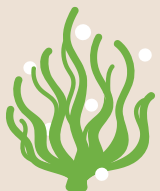
937 hours

by 141 event volunteers

MEMBERS

2,166

up from 1,702 in 2020



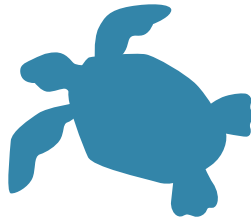
CORAL REEF SUPPORT

Helped conduct **68 dives** to survey and apply **1486 coral colonies** suffering from **Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease** with amoxicillin

Supported training **12 new lionfish responders**

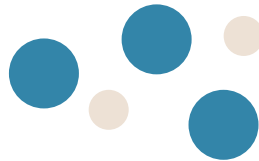
2021
BY THE NUMBERS*

SEA TURTLES



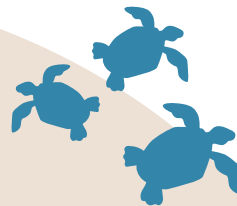
47 beaches

monitored from July-November for nesting activity



34 nests

protected and watched during incubation



2,634 hatchlings



500
native trees
planted on
North Shore
beaches

27
miles of trails
cleared

**LEARN
TO SWIM**

34 new
swimmers

3 new
instructors
trained

*FY21 ending Sept 30, 2021

PROTECT THE SEA

The Park on St. John includes 5,650 acres of submerged lands. Protecting this marine landscape and ecosystem is important for this and future generations. Priorities include addressing issues like saving sea turtles from extinction, and countering threats to coral reefs like stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD), invasive lion fish, the use of poisonous sunscreen by swimmers, and increased boat traffic.

Worth Noting

- The **Sea Turtle Nest Monitoring and Protection Program** set record numbers for beaches patrolled and counted 2,634 hatchlings! The program tripled its devoted volunteer base, collaborated with neighboring programs and organizations, conducted education outreach programs, and detected the highest number of nesting activities on St. John in over a decade! In addition, research partnerships were established that should help us better protect our sea turtles in the future.
- Through our partner, **CORE Foundation**, 68 dives were conducted to survey and apply 1486 coral colonies suffering from stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD) with the antibiotic amoxicillin and 12 new volunteer lionfish responders were trained.
- Outreach and education included partnering with Island Green Living Association on **Earth Day** seminars to spread the word about reef safe sunscreen.



SEA TURTLE PROGRAM VOLUNTEER & BOARD MEMBER

Lani Clark has gone from first time Friends volunteer to full blown passionate 'turtler' in four years and is now also a member of the Board. A St. John resident for some 37 years, she delights in the excitement and knowledge she has gained from the turtle team leads and other volunteers and happily patrols our beaches on the look out for nests and hatchlings.

PROTECT THE LAND

About 60% of St. John's land mass is National Park. This terrestrial habitat is home to some 800 species of plants as well as tropical and migrating birds and other wildlife. Protecting this natural landscape includes trail maintenance for hikers, erosion and land management solutions, and cultivating native species.

Worth Noting

- Despite the pandemic, led by our seasoned crew, 230 **volunteers** logged some 4,000 hours last season maintaining all 27 miles of park trails as well as the many historical ruins and archaeological sites.
- 500 **native trees** were grown and planted along North Shore beaches to address soil erosion issues. The species planted tend to be salt tolerant and have far-ranging root systems. They include buttonwood, seagrape, turpentine, false nutmeg, orange manjack, white cedar, frangipani, and tyre palm.
- Important **research** to guide land management decisions, such as best practices for mangrove planting, and advancing the recovery efforts of the federally listed plant, solanum conocarpum, a rare subtropical dry-forest shrub, was completed.



HORTICULTURAL CONSULTANT

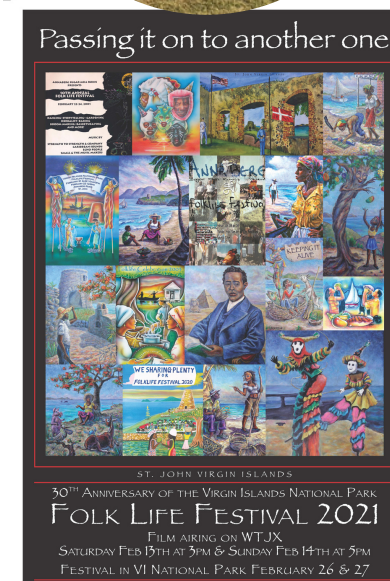
Eleanor Gibney is a Virgin Islander and lifelong resident of St John's north shore. She is an expert on the indigenous and cultivated plants of the Virgin Islands, and the author of "A Field Guide to the Native Trees and Plants of East End, St. John." She is integrally involved with Friends and the National Park Service in the cultivation and planting of native plants along North Shore beaches and in the solanum recovery efforts.

PRESERVE CULTURE & HISTORY

Preserving and sharing St. John's history and culture which includes archaeological sites dating back to as early as 840 BC connects people with their environment, history and culture, and is important for now and future generations.

Worth Noting

- The Park's Annual **Folk Life Festival** celebrates and promotes the rich culture of the Virgin Islands. In a virtual world, a documentary, "Passing It On To Another One" was funded by Friends and produced to mark the 30th anniversary and continue to educate and engage hundreds of students. The documentary weaves together inspirational tales and demonstrations by culture bearers who have participated in the Festival through the years celebrating the cultural arts, music and crafts of these islands.
- Friends sponsored **Community Matters**, a comprehensive seminar series intended to facilitate conversations related to conservation, sustainable development, disaster capitalism, and environmental racism.
- New **archaeological discoveries** at Cinnamon and Catherineburg and the completion of the Cinnamon Bay reconstruction compliance work was enabled by the provision of volunteers and the funding of twelve archaeology student interns to support the Park Archaeologist.



FOLK LIFE DOCUMENTARY PRODUCER & NARRATOR

Aariyah Athanase is currently the writer & producer for Friends' School Kids In The Park Video Project. A native St Johnian, she has worked with Friends for the past couple of years through the AmeriCorps VISTA Program as an Education Outreach Coordinator. She is a graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design. Aariyah's love for art and storytelling stemmed from the Virgin Island's rich cultural traditions, that were shared with her by her elders and culture bearers. She uses her knowledge of film production and visual art to create new and engaging learning opportunities for students throughout the community.



PHOTOGRAPHER IN RESIDENCE

Kayden Richards is an ancestral native Virgin Islander from St. John. Fascinated with animals and nature, he grew up watching hours of Animal Planet, nature documentaries, and looking up to his grandfather, Alva Richards who was pretty much an animal whisperer. Kayden graduated high school in 2016 in Georgia with little to no idea what he wanted to do or be aside from that it would have to be nature and animal related. On moving back home to St. John, he worked at the Animal Care Center and saved up to buy his first camera, a Canon Rebel t6. As soon as he picked up that camera he knew what his main subject matter would be. Kayden has been on a bumpy, self awakening, beautiful journey since. As Photographer In Residence at Friends he is working on developing solo creative projects and honing his skills as well as providing photographic support to Friends programs and events.

CONNECT EVENTS, VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS, & INTERPRETATIVE OUTREACH

Friends hosts and sponsors a full schedule of events and seminars as well as recruiting and managing a large volunteer corps. These events aim to educate and connect people with the Park, as well as oftentimes serving as fundraising opportunities in some cases. In 2021 a number of these events went virtual as we adapted to the times!

Worth Noting

- The 18th Annual **Beach to Beach Power Swim** from Maho to Hawksnest was in person with 280 registered swimmers supported by 150 volunteers on land and in the water who provided safety support from kayaks, paddle boards and boats! A wonderful demonstration of community spirit to raise funds for our Learn To Swim and marine conservation programs.
- Hundreds including school-aged children attended some 14 **virtual seminars** during Ocean Week, Earth Week, and more, covering subjects as diverse as birds of St. John, turtle protection, and reef safe sunscreen. Seminar subjects on community and cultural issues included Caneel Bay and sustainable development. Visitors and members participated in 26 walks and talks as part of our **Friday With Friends** program.
- **Volunteers** contributed nearly 7,000 hours clearing trails, monitoring beaches for turtle nests, helping with archaeology compliance, and supporting events.

“ I recently led the November USVI trip for our organization staying at the Cinnamon Beach campground. Our group consisted of 9 volunteers and 2 leaders. On behalf of Mark Hardgrove, Director of Field Operations and US Virgin Islands Trip Leader, and myself and Norman Hageman, we would like to thank you for hosting our group and we hope to continue this for the years to come. Specifically, we would like to compliment Taylor White and Mark Gestwicki. Both were professional, caring and organized. We very much look forward to bringing the next group in February 2022, and we thank you for enabling this for our non-profit organization.”
~ Susan Murray, ConservationVIP



CONNECT YOUTH PROGRAMS

Good conservation work does more than address the environmental challenges we see today. It connects people with their environment and invests in the future. Your ongoing support is helping to build a pipeline of conservation education opportunities for island youth from **School Kids in the Park** to our **Learn to Swim** program and our **Summer Trail Crew** as well as the **Jeffery Matheny Scholarship**, the **Noble Samuel Scholarship and Internship**, and the **AmeriCorps VISTA** program.

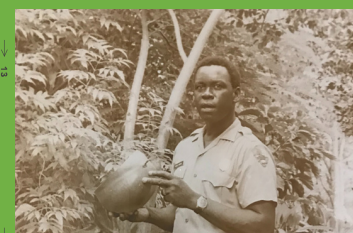
Worth Noting

- The Park and Friends have offered free swim lessons during the summer for a decade. Three instructors qualified as Red Cross trainers and 34 children attended classes in the 2021 **Learn to Swim** program.
- Expanding horizons! A paid six week program for high school students, our **Summer Trail Crew** of twelve gained valuable conservation skills maintaining our trails, working with the archaeology team, and attending turtle seminars and first aid training. Not to mention kayaking and snorkeling adventures in the Park.
- Thanks to a generous endowment by anonymous donors, the **Noble Samuel Scholarship and Internship** was awarded for the first time to Ki'Janne' Alfred and Lila Uzzell. Named after a beloved Park Ranger, the award is available to St. John youth attending college.



NATURAL RESOURCE INTERN

Ameir Sprauve is working with Friends through the AmeriCorps VISTA Program. Born on St. Thomas and raised on St John, Ameir worked on the Trails Summer Crew for four years working his way up to the position of team leader and discovering an interest in natural resource protection. Ameir graduated from Giff Hill School in 2019 and is currently attending classes part-time at the University of the Virgin Islands where he is pursuing a degree in management.

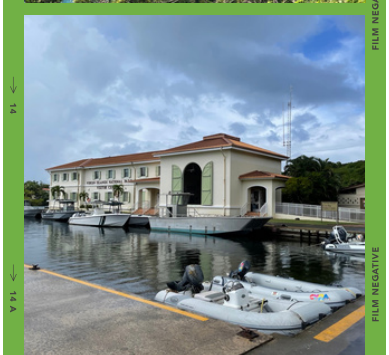
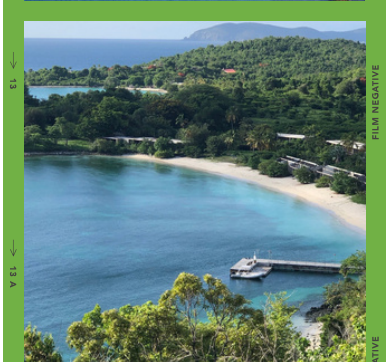


CONNECT ADVOCACY & THE PARK OF THE FUTURE

As the philanthropic partner of Virgin Islands National Park, Friends recognizes it serves the public as both a vehicle and a voice to stand up for the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources found in Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument. That applies to current challenges and issues as well as envisioning what the future of the Park could be.

Worth Noting

- As regards to **Caneel Bay**, Friends will continue to advocate for the protection of the resources cradled in Caneel Bay on behalf of the people. With the Retained Use Estate (RUE) expiring in 2023, we advocate for science to drive NPS decision-making, for the process determining the future of Caneel Bay to be responsive to public feedback, and we ask for NPS to take accountability for the preservation and protection of the Caneel Bay property, including the completion of the environmental assessments and determinations regarding the disposal of known hazardous waste on the premise. We will continue to encourage public comment through designated channels.
- Our youth are our future! The **playground** in front of the National Park Visitor Center is the only public play space in Cruz Bay for children and was significantly damaged in the 2017 hurricanes. Friends has worked diligently to advance this project and is now raising the funds with a view to breaking ground in 2022! in addition, as plans are put in place to rebuild the **V.I. Environmental Resource Station (VIERS)** that has been closed since the 2017 hurricanes, Friends will work to ensure that the extraordinary opportunities for school children to experience the Park at VIERS are taken into account.
- Friends would like to see **the park of the future** embracing emerging digital technology to provide vacation planning information and responsible recreation advice to visitors, to disseminate information to an increasing boater population and manage the mooring system, and to evaluate resource allocation in the face of increased visitation. In addition we will advocate for strategies to address issues like light pollution, traffic, and waste management and recycling.



A large sea turtle, likely a hawksbill, is shown swimming underwater. The turtle's head is in the upper left, and its body extends towards the bottom right. The shell is dark with intricate light-colored patterns. The background is a vibrant underwater scene with a coral reef and clear blue water.

*Thank You To You
Our Donors, Members, Sponsors,
And Volunteers For Sharing Our
Love For The Park And
Making The Work We Do
Possible!*

BUILDING CHILDHOOD DREAMS ST. JOHN PLAYGROUND PROJECT

Playgrounds are places of joy, adventure, and imagination, where children create memories to carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Friends is working with the National Park Service and the community to rebuild the playground in front of the Park Visitor Center that was damaged in the 2017 hurricanes. The playground and the adjacent ball field are managed by the Virgin Islands Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation under a special use permit.

Substantial work has been done in the past year to move this project forward with construction now set for 2022! This is a multi phase project with a total **funding goal of \$800,000** so every donation will make a critical difference! Thanks to a wonderful and generous gift from Dr. Steven and Jann Paul of \$350,000, as well as donations from more than 100 individuals and businesses we are over halfway to our goal!



PLANTS

Trees and plants selected for the playground are native and shade bearing: *Tabebuia Heterophylla* (Pink cedar), *Coccoloba Uvifera* (Sea grape), *Bucida Buceras* (Gre Gre), *Pimenta Racemosa* (Bay Rum), *Cordia Sebestena* (Cordia), *Capparis Cynophallophora* (Jamaican caper), *Conocarpus Erectus* (Buttonwood), *Guaicum Officinale* (Lignum Vitae), and Grass (*Zoysia*).



EQUIPMENT

- Large playhouse (6-12 years old)
- Small playhouse (0-5 years old)
- Large swing set
- Supernova rotating balancing ring
- Toddler swing set carousel
- Agility course
- Ranger Station replica
- Interpretative signage



WAYS TO GIVE

- Donate, become a member, adopt a turtle, and shop online at www.donate.friendsvinp.org
- Checks can be mailed to Friends of Virgin Islands National Park, P.O. Box 811, St. John, VI 00831
- Visit the National Park Visitor Center Store when you're in town
- Interested in Planned Giving and leaving a legacy on St. John for future generations? Please contact Lisa Price at lprice@friendsvinp.org



Thank You!

Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and contributions including donations and membership dues are tax deductible.



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PROTECT. PRESERVE. CONNECT.

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