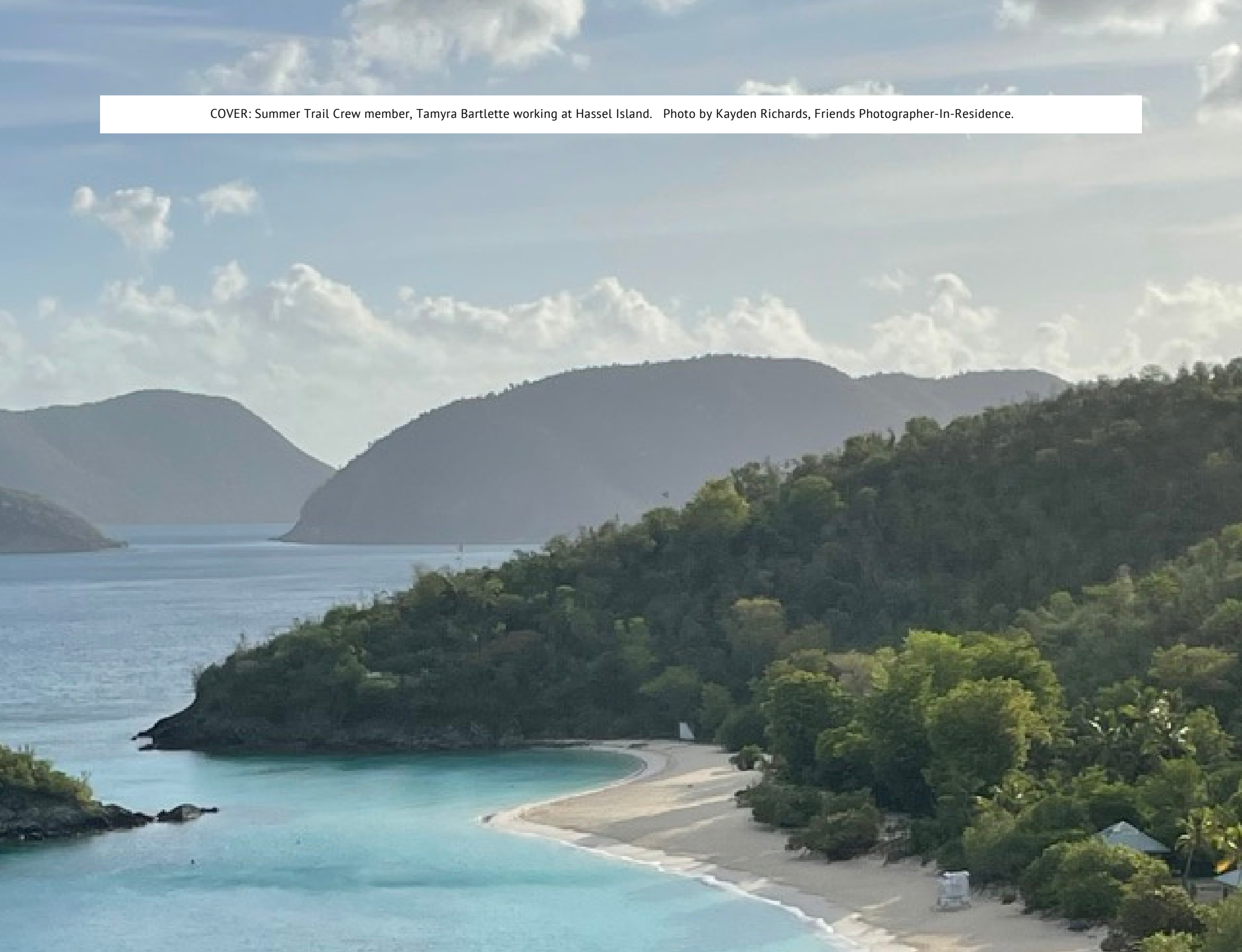




IMPACT REPORT 2022

COVER: Summer Trail Crew member, Tamyra Bartlette working at Hassel Island. Photo by Kayden Richards, Friends Photographer-In-Residence.



THIS IS VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK

Virgin Islands National Park is on the island of St. John in the US Virgin Islands. It comprises 7,259 acres of terrestrial habitat, which is about 60% of the island's land mass. The park also includes 5,650 acres of adjacent submerged lands much of which is part of the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument.

Established in 1956, the park comprises the ridge tops to the reefs providing protection and preservation for tropical and migrating birds, fish, corals and other marine life, as well as some 800 species of plants.

St. John's 3,000 years of human history found in the park includes the Indigenous Taino's ancient petroglyphs and over 30 former plantation sites from a past when sugar and enslaved labor dominated life on island.

To protect fragile coral reef, sea grass beds, and shoreline mangrove forests over 200 moorings have been installed in park waters making it an anchor-less park with only three permitted anchorage areas.

The National Park Visitor Center and Park Store is in Cruz Bay and worth a visit for maps and more information on the park.





**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.**



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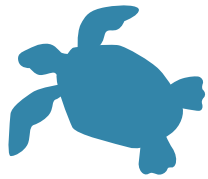
Miles Stair

FOUNDED
IN
1988

MEMBERS
1,542



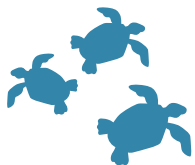
SEA TURTLES



47 beaches
monitored from July-November for
nesting activity



34 nests
protected and watched during
incubation



2,634
hatchlings

2022 BY THE NUMBERS

FY22 ending Sept 30, 2022



600
native trees planted on
shoreline since 2019

166
native plants planted

411
Earth Week
plant giveaway

27
miles of trails
cleared

123
SEMINARS
hikes, walks &
talks aimed at
educating and
engaging
visitors

30
historic sites
maintained

YOUTH

100 Learn To Swim &
educational
session summer
campers

11 Summer trail
youth crew

7 School Kids In The
Park teacher grants

3 Lesson videos

1 Moko Jumbie
Crew support

5 University
scholarships



7,732
VOLUNTEER HOURS



1,350 hours
contributed by 99 dedicated and trained sea
turtle volunteers

5,507 hours
by 256 Trail Camp and walkup volunteers

875 hours
by 125 event volunteers

CORAL



36
new Lionfish responders
certified and trained by CORE

28
Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease
(SCTLD) treatment dives by 58 divers

1696
corals treated for SCTLD

DEAR FRIENDS

Have you ever seen a bird fly just above the ocean? As they skim the surface, their wings make micro-adjustments to maintain their steady majestic glide inches above the water. It is breathtaking to watch the impact of small changes in the right direction.

Thanks to our collective expertise and our can-do attitude, our work in Virgin Islands National Park propelled forward this past year. Our programs were given a surge of energy with volunteers contributing nearly 8,000 hours of heart-fueled sweat and labor. At the same time, Friends staff honed in on their expertise to restore and protect the park's ecology and educate park visitors on how to responsibly enjoy its resources. Thank you Friends volunteers and staff for your dedication and hard work this year!

We added valuable capacity to park operations. More than 2,000 baby sea turtles reached the sea and some 160 native trees were planted! The Sea Turtle Nest Monitoring and Protection Program and maintenance of the park's trail system and ruins are examples of just two programs made possible thanks to the generous support of individual donors and members, sponsorship by local businesses, and grants awarded by foundations. We are so grateful for everyone's help this past year!

Our park is but a small corner of the Earth. Nevertheless, it is this small corner we aim to protect and preserve for future generations. Together, our kind, coordinated efforts have brought the Friends to a wonderful place where we are ready to do what is right and next. I could not be more honored to lead such an organization of people.

That's not to say that we don't face obstacles. Some of the global threats we aim to mitigate are truly daunting and many of the natural and cultural resources found in Virgin Islands National Park are already the last of their kind. We must constantly be looking forward to recognize and understand the early signs and impacts of invasive species, disease, environmental shifts, or human visitation challenges.

There are spots of hope, as Dr. Sylvia Earle would say, where coordinated efforts sprung from a community's desire to see their resources protected result in positive change. You make St. John one of those hope spots. Thank you.

Tonia Lovejoy

TONIA LOVEJOY
Executive Director





*Thank You To
These Recent Park
Retirees For Their
Service*



Ranger Laurel Brannick was an Interpretative Ranger well known to St. John kids of all ages as the guide who introduced them to the park. A self confessed 'bird nerd' with a passion for teaching people about the park, Ranger Brannick continues to lead bird walks and hikes in the park.



Ranger Golda Hermon was an Interpretative Ranger and the Director of the Folk Life Festival overseeing this inspiring annual event and producing a 30th year commemorative documentary. She remains committed to teaching younger generations about the rich legacy gifted by ancestors that is Virgin Islands culture.



Jeff Miller was a fisheries biologist with the South Florida/Caribbean Inventory and Monitoring program duty stationed at Virgin Islands National Park. He remains driven to introduce and share the spectacular animals of the coral reefs to visitors and residents alike, to share the trends that are taking place in this world and most importantly, working to help protect these magnificent places.



Dr. Caroline Rogers was a marine ecologist with the US Geological Survey (USGS) and Virgin Islands National Park who has spent 40 years studying marine life. Her dedication to working to combat coral reef challenges will continue as an emeritus scientist with USGS, and in her position on the master's committees for some University of the Virgin Islands students. She credits the time she's spent below the surface for inspiring her love of underwater photography and is working on a coral reef photography book.



A photograph of a turtle swimming in shallow water over a rocky beach. The turtle is dark brown with a lighter head and is moving towards the top right. The water is clear, showing the rocks underneath. A large, light-colored circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

Thank You To You

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



PROTECT THE SEA

The ocean we depend on, depends on us.

The Friends **marine resource protection** priorities are focused on coral reef and mangrove ecosystem health and restoration, sea turtle nest monitoring, invasive lion fish removal, and marine stewardship outreach and education for the local and visitor boating community.

The **Sea Turtle 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, the issue of **invasive Lionfish** is being addressed with the ongoing training and certification of 36 volunteer responders. CORE also conducted 28 coral treatments dives involving 58 divers to treat 1,969 corals for **Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD)**.

The **mooring system** that the Friends helped establish in the park goes a long way to helping protect coral and sea grass from damage by anchors. Friends continues to advocate for the ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the system and funds a diver.

Marine debris is an ongoing challenge. Island wide beach and shore cleanups took place during Ocean Week (October) and Earth Week (April) as well as a couple of days in the summer collecting trash on the north shore areas only accessible by boat thanks to Dulce Vita Sailing.

Outreach and education efforts to both snorkelers and boaters continues to be a priority. They included a video on turtle and boating etiquette, twice a week info table at Maho bay, advertising in the Cruising Guide to the Virgin Islands, and school trips and visits. Thanks to Ocean Surfari a monthly boat seminar is hosted by the Turtle Protection Team.





PROTECT THE LAND

Planting for future generations.

Land resource management priorities include keeping trails accessible and safe, supporting the archaeology, native plant restoration, and trash/debris removal. The program includes a Summer Trail Crew program for youth and the management of a volunteer corps without whom this work would not be possible.

Trails maintenance of all 27 miles of hiking paths remains a focus and is achieved by clearing vegetation, improving trail watershed, constructing retaining walls and steps, maintaining scenic vistas, and monitoring signage.

Coastal planting and beach stabilization continues to be addressed with the planting of an additional 166 native trees along North Shore beaches bringing the total number of trees planted in the past three years to over 600. 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.

Endangered species protection centers on *Solanum conocarpum*, or Marron Bacora, a federally listed endangered plant that is endemic to the Virgin Islands. The world's largest population is located on St. John and consists of less than 200 plants. This year the crew assessed the existing population and surrounding invasive plants that compete for space, water, and light and change the structure of the vegetative community. In preparation for the next phase of this project to establish a population of 100 *Solanum conocarpum* plants in a second location, plants are being raised in the Friends nursery and archeology compliance has been completed.



Vince Schmidt

An extraordinary **volunteer corps** contributed 5,507. 256 volunteers were either walk ups on Tuesday and Thursdays, or weekly campers at our Cinnamon Bay Campground. Special mention and thanks to **Vince Schmidt** long time camp host and volunteer extraordinaire. Along the way, Vince gained a masters in engineering from Columbia and worked for GM for 30 years before discovering that his true destiny in life was to run a weed whacker on a Caribbean island.

PRESERVE CULTURE

Rich stories of heritage and history.

Historical ruin preservation of the 30 sites within the park involves carefully cutting vegetation that is growing out of and around the structures. This year the crew uncovered several ruins that hadn't been cleared in many years including hidden structures at America Hill, Francis Bay, Leinster Bay Factory and Hassel Island.

Archaeological field work support included the funding of archaeology interns and dig supplies to support the park's Chief Archeologist as well as trails crew assistance in the completion of archaeological compliance work associated with the reconstruction of the campground cottages at Cinnamon Bay. Volunteers assisted in the excavation, collection, sorting, and cleaning of artifacts dating back to as early as 700 AD.

In recognition of Black History month two **cultural days** for the schools on St. John included musical and moko jumbie performances, presentations of broom making, johnny cake baking, archeology finds, and more.

Sharing the rich cultural heritage on St. John through demonstrations of skills and crafts that have been passed down through generations is central to the **Annaberg cultural program** which included supporting the gardener and Friday With Friends docent-led tours, and support for weekly youth **moko jumbie classes**.



The **Artist-In-Residence program** aims to help young Virgin Islanders explore and develop their creative talents and connect them to the Park. Support for Photographer-In-Residence, Kayden Richards included the publication of a book of photography and poetry entitled "Their Eyes Were Watching St. John" and the design and development of his website to showcase his talent.

CONNECT YOUTH PROGRAMS

The park as "living classroom."

Friends believes that the future of conservation on St. John resides in our youth and is focused on building a pipeline of concerned and engaged citizens starting with our **School Kids In The Park (SKIP) program** which included multiple trips to the park, classroom visits, and the provision of 7 teacher grants for supplies and materials. In addition, 3 lesson videos covering seashore treasures, the Cinnamon nature walk, and birds were produced and added to the teaching resource portfolio available to educators.

Five university scholarships were awarded through two scholarship programs: the **Jeffery Matheny Scholarship** and the **Noble Samuel Scholarship**. Recipients were Caliyah Helliger (Howard University), Lila Uzzell (University of Virgin Islands), Lyric Vacharat (University of North Carolina Wilmington), and Ki'Janne' Alfred (Stetson University).

Over 100 summer camp students and community members attended **free Learn To Swim classes** supplemented by beach sessions on turtles, native plants, making Johnny Cakes, and archaeology. Friends has offered free swim lessons for more than a decade including funding the certification and training of life guards and instructors.

Playgrounds are places of joy, adventure, and imagination. Friends is working with the National Park Service and the community to **rebuild the playground in Cruz Bay** that was damaged in the 2017 hurricanes. Thanks to a generous anchor gift from Dr. Steven and Jann Paul as well as other donations from over 100 individuals and businesses, planning and permitting was completed and work on demolition, ground surface preparation, and playground equipment installation is underway.



Aaliyah Hodge

Summer Trail Crew is a professional summer job opportunity for Virgin Island high school students that aims to help participants gain an appreciation and passion for the natural world, conservation, and environmental stewardship. This year the 11-strong crew spent six weeks doing things like working on trails and in the nursery, learning about coral preservation and turtle protection, as well as experiencing diving, kayaking, and snorkeling. Crew leader **Aaliyah Hodge** first joined the summer crew in 2016, worked her way up to heading the crew, and is now the Friends Trail Coordinator working with volunteers to keep park trails and ruins cleared and maintained.





CONNECT EVENTS

Connecting visitors to the park and the park to the community.

Friends of Virgin Islands National Park's **13th Annual Earth Day celebration** took place in Franklin Powell Park for the first time since 2019 with over 20 businesses and community groups participating to help 400 island kids have fun and learn about issues as far-ranging as recycling, planting, turtle and reef protection, coral restoration, and more. With the theme suggested by Giffit Hill School's Honor Society, of Reduce The Waste. Leave No Trace. Save The Place, the fair kicked off with a Litter Stomp Parade lead by VI Waste Management's Litter Critter. In addition, the Friends gave away 411 plants cultivated in our nursery with the goal of promoting food security and access to fresh fruits.

Ocean Week centered around community coastal cleanups on beaches across the island supplemented by three virtual seminars on recycling, supporting seagrass meadows and coral reefs, and cryptic fish of St. John.

123 seminars and guided hikes included Friday With Friends, Cinnamon Campground Chats, and a monthly sea turtle boat trip made possible by Ocean Surfari. A series of four Community Matters panel discussions on WTJX television covering subjects like environmental justice issues, and the future of Caneel Bay was made possible thanks to the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy demands wisdom, Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands and WTJX/NPR.



Over 350 swimmers participated in the **19th Annual Beach-to-Beach Power Swim** down St. John's North Shore beaches on Memorial Day weekend. Recognized as one of the most beautiful open water swim meets in the world, the event depends on the incredible support of some 100 volunteers and in kind and financial sponsorship from 56 local businesses. Registered swimmers represented 38 states and territories with ages ranging from 4 to 79 years old. The 2022 event logo was designed by a young local artist, **Kavone Wyatt**.



Kavone Wyatt

CONNECT INTERPRETATIVE OUTREACH

Educating through videos on turtle protection, classroom resource development, posters, a visitor guide, villa flyers, coloring postcards, stickers, social media, web presence and an advertisement in Destination magazine thanks to 340 Real Estate.

THIS IS ST. JOHN, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS!

Welcome! Welcome!
To Our Island
And Our Park!

ENJOY YOUR VISIT!

- Keep your distance. Do not touch or feed turtles, fish, donkeys or other wildlife.
- Protect our coral & yourself! Wear reef safe sunscreen & protective clothing. Stand only in sand not on coral or rocks. Beware of fire coral & urchins.
- No glass bottles on the beach.
- Pack it in, pack it out. Take it with you or put it in a trash can!
- Only park in designated areas to help protect native vegetation and combat erosion.
- Plan your visit and learn more about its' natural and cultural resources! Visit the Virgin Islands National Park website - www.nps.gov/viis

DID YOU KNOW
THAT OVER 60%
OF ST. JOHN IS A
NATIONAL PARK?

HELP PROTECT & PRESERVE THE PARADISE WE ALL LOVE!

Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park is the official philanthropic partner of the park. Your support makes our work including protecting sea turtles, maintaining trails and ruins, saving our coral reefs, and connecting kids with the park possible! Donate, become a member, or shop to help protect & preserve this piece of paradise you love! Visit our website to donate & learn more about the difference you make: www.friendsvnp.org

Friends of
Virgin Islands National Park
PROTECT • PRESERVE • CONNECT

Virgin Islands National Park
Virgin Islands Coral Reef
National Monument
U.S. Virgin Islands

VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK ST. JOHN, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS VISITOR GUIDE

ENJOY YOUR VISIT!

Stunning beaches, miles of trails, marine life, fauna & flora in abundance, & a rich cultural history! Some 60% of the island of St. John is Virgin Islands National Park and much of the surrounding water is Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument.

Hope that you enjoy your visit & help protect our park & yourselves by following park rules!

Distance. Sea turtles are endangered species by law! Please do not touch or feed them including fish, deer, & donkeys.

al & yourself! Wear reef safe sunscreen & protective clothing. Stand only in sand not on coral or rocks. Beware of fire coral & urchins. Stay hydrated when hiking. There is a water station in the Cruz Bay

ncy, glass bottles are not allowed on the beach & flying is prohibited. Dogs are not allowed on the beach & must be leashed on trails. Please help protect native vegetation by staying on trails. Do not block traffic.



PRESERVE

nter & Park Store in Cruz Bay for information, gifts, and to purchase a park & join guided walks, hikes & turtle talks. Volunteers are needed to help maintain trails & ruins. Visit www.friendsvnp.org to learn more about how you can help the Virgin Islands National Park by donating to Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park.

ENJOY YOUR VISIT!

- Keep your distance. Do not touch or feed turtles, fish, donkeys or other wildlife.
- Protect our coral & yourself! Wear reef safe sunscreen & protective clothing. Stand only in sand not on coral or rocks. Beware of fire coral & urchins.
- No glass bottles on the beach.
- Pack it in, pack it out. Take it with you or put it in a trash can!
- Only park in designated areas to help protect native vegetation and combat erosion.

Welcome! Welcome!
To Our Island
And Our Park!

VNP Visitors Center in Cruz Bay
(340) 776-6201, ext 238 /
<https://www.nps.gov/viis>

Events, Seminars, Activities, Volunteer Opportunities
<https://friendsvnp.org>

VNP NPS Park Ranger Hotline
(866) 995-8467

Report Sea Turtle Nesting Activity - (340) 643-8560 /
VINP.turtles@friendsvnp.org

Report Injured Turtles - STAR Network (340) 690-0474

Donate, become a member, or shop to help protect & preserve this piece of paradise you love!
<https://friendsvnp.org>

DON'T TOUCH THE
TURTLES



SEA TURTLES ARE AWESOME

- The sea turtles you see on St. John in Virgin Islands National Park are mostly green sea turtles and hawksbill sea turtles.
- Green sea turtles are the ones you see snorkeling at Maho. They eat seagrass and can weigh up to 400 pounds.
- Hawksbill sea turtles are the turtles that lay their eggs on St. John's beaches. They eat coral sponges and can weigh up to 150 pounds.
- Sea turtles are endangered species so we need to take extra good care of them so that they are around for many more years. Thank you for helping us protect them by keeping a distance of 6-10 feet when swimming with them, not touching them, and wearing reef safe sunscreen.
- Have fun coloring the other side of this card!

Visit www.friendsvnp.org/sea-turtles



CONNECT ADVOCACY

The park of the future.

Marine stewardship priorities are focused on coral reef and mangrove ecosystem health and restoration including the maintenance of the mooring system, sea turtle nest monitoring, invasive Lionfish removal, and outreach and education for the local and visitor boating community. It is incumbent that Friends partner with universities, schools, agencies, NGOs, and the public to advance opportunities to educate, protect and conserve our precious marine resources. The Friends have prioritized an effort to help rebuild the Virgin Islands Ecological Research Station (VIERS) on St. John with the NPS and University of Virgin Islands (UVI). Additionally, we are working with the Iowa State University on a major mangrove restoration project.

Visitation and Resource Management is critical. Friends has commissioned an economic study to assess issues like visitation demographics, traffic, light pollution, and waste management in order to advocate for a long term solution. In addition, the organization is working to include the use of 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.

Friends continues to advocate for the protection of the resources cradled in **Caneel Bay**. 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. We will continue to encourage public comment through designated channels.

The Friends continues to support the St. John community's aspirations for a **K-12 public school on St. John**. We applaud the Territorial government and the National Park Service for their efforts to move forward with this long-standing issue. Based on a 2001 precedent established by the Cherokee Nation in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the mechanism for a land exchange and the terms by which the National Park Service may exchange land back to a State, or Territory, are defined. It is this precedent that creates the framework for our understanding and consideration of the land exchange today for the intended purpose of founding a K-12 public school on St. John.



WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR PARK

DONATE

Please donate online via our website or mail checks to Friends of Virgin Islands National Park, P.O. Box 811, St. John, VI 00831

BECOME A MEMBER

ADOPT A SEA TURTLE

VOLUNTEER ON OUR TRAILS OR AT OUR EVENTS

SHOP

Proceeds from sales of Virgin Islands National Park merchandise and more support our work. Please visit the Park Store in the National Park Visitor Center or shop online.

LEAVE A LEGACY

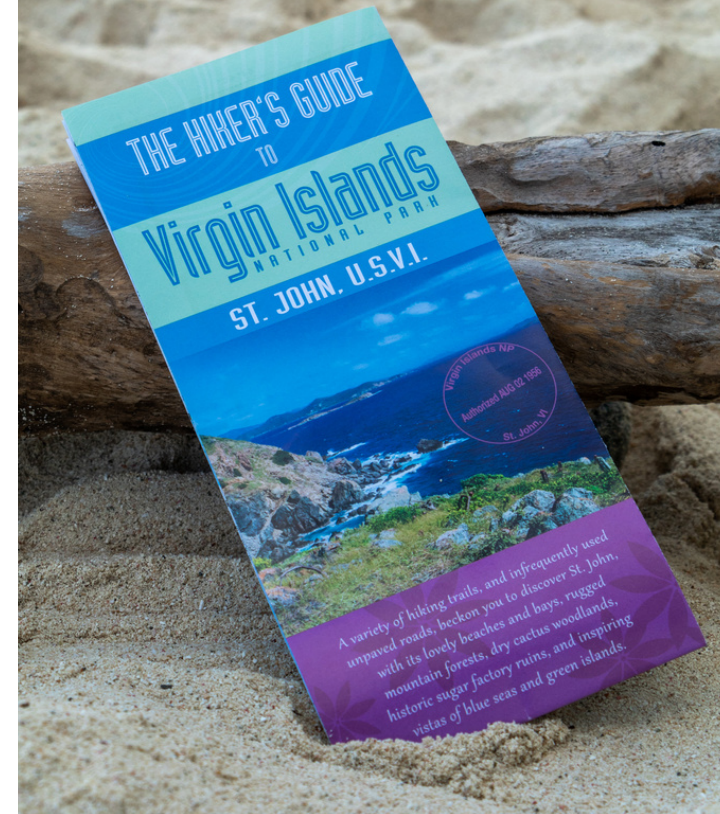
Planned giving is an opportunity to leave a legacy on St. John for future generations. Please contact Lisa Lord Price at lprice@friendsvinp.org.

Thank You!



**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.FRIENDSVINP.ORG**





Impact Report Photo Credits: Kayden Richards, Dr. Caroline Rogers, William Stelzer, Friends of Virgin Islands National Park.

“I am certain that when the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we, too, will be remembered not for our victories or defeats in battle or politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit.”

John F. Kennedy



WWW.FRIENDSVINP.ORG

PROTECT. PRESERVE. CONNECT.