

SCHOOL KIDS IN THE PARK (SKIP) PROGRAM

SEASON REPORT 2022/23



OVERVIEW

The School Kids in the Park (SKIP) program encourages local educators to use the park as a “living classroom,” facilitates visits to the park, and works to remove barriers that may limit students’ participation by covering transportation costs and more. Working with the park’s interpretative rangers, Friends has enabled thousands of youth and their educators to establish a personal connection with their Virgin Islands National Park.

Following best practices in STEM education, SKIP is structured to offer grade-specific interactive learning experiences that build cognitive development, critical thinking, math and science skills. The program aims to create empathy for plant and animal life and promote environmental stewardship and community engagement.

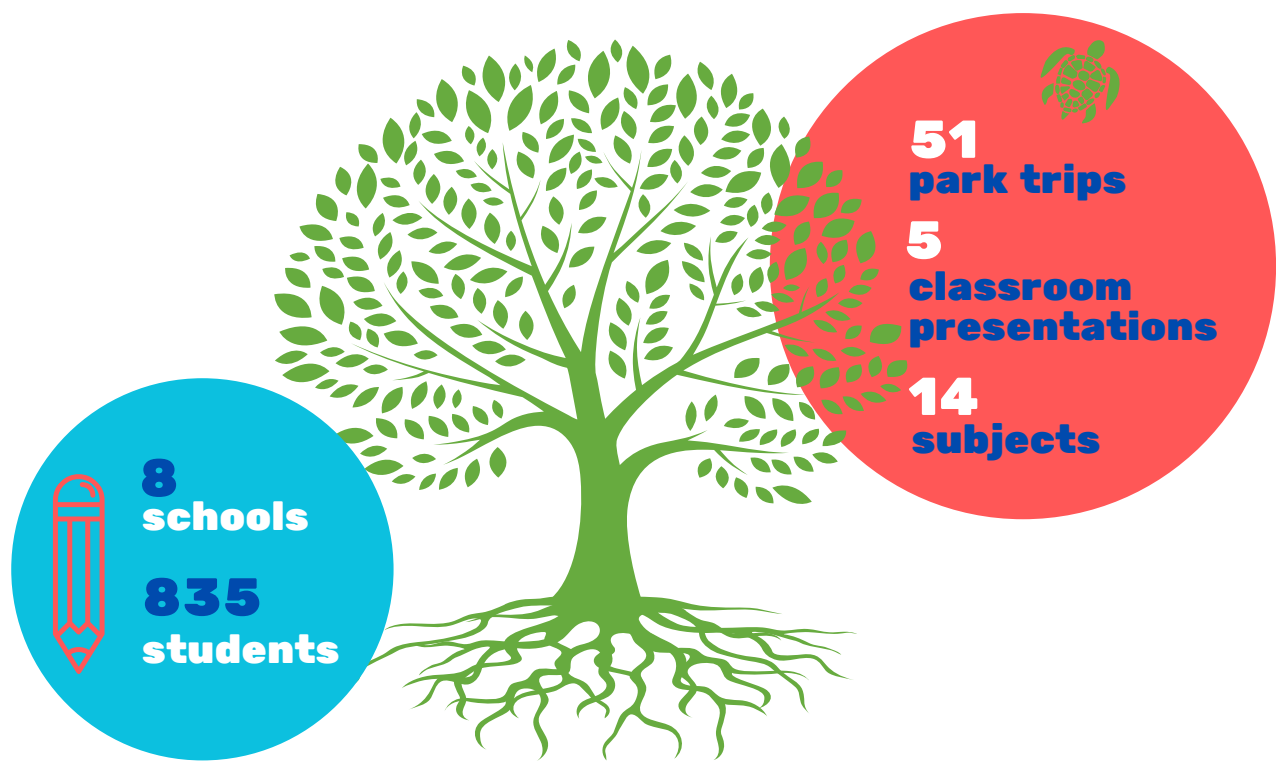
This season between October 2022 and June 2023, Friends helped facilitate 51 field trips into the park affecting 755 students as well as five classroom presentations to an additional 80 students.

Trips in the Park

A priority this season was to build relationships with schools and teachers on St. John and St. Thomas to address some of the disconnect created by COVID-related school closures over the past few years. This focused effort resulted in 8 schools participating in the SKIP program this year visiting over 20 locations in the park to learn about the island’s natural and cultural resources, as well as conservation issues affecting their island home.

The most popular trips in the program were the Network to Freedom hike and Annaberg history tour, sea turtle sessions with the Sea Turtle Protection Program team coordinators, and a guided hike on the Cinnamon Bay Interpretive Loop trail. Reef Bay and Ram Head trails featured as did bird and sea shore walks. Other trips included a photography class with our Artist-in-Residence, Kayden Richards, a coral identification presentation, mangrove trash pickup using kayaks, a moko jumbie seminar, and a tour of the Friends of the Park native plant nursery

Finally, learning about volunteerism on the Friends Volunteer Trail Crew was another popular SKIP trip with students assisting with trail maintenance, ruin preservation, trash and debris pickups and with our native planting projects.



NURTURING THE CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE FUTURE

In Class Presentations

The SKIP program had 5 classroom presentations for the students at Julius E. Sprauve School, Giff Hill School, and Ivanna Eudora Kean High School affecting 80 students. Subjects included sea turtles, archaeology, voluntourism, and tsumanis. The goal for next season is to have more classroom presentations supported by online lesson planning material as a precursor for a trip in the park.

Online Resources

The Friends of the Park website has numerous online resource material and lesson plans for teachers. Students near and far can follow Ret. Rangers Laurel Brannick and Golda Hermon on the Cinnamon Bay Loop trail, or on a seashore and bird walk with our short educational videos; listen to VI stories told by local St. Johnians and resident scientists about the island's history; and study sea turtles and archaeology in our virtual resource library. The Friends is continually working to build up these resources and lesson planning tools.

Accessibility

The SKIP program works to remove financial barriers that limit students from using the park, their backyard, as a "living classroom." We are able to do this by covering transportation costs for all trips into the park and offering mini-grants for teaches to cover supplies and materials for STEM and conservation related lessons. Special thanks to Paradise Taxi, and Chico for helping to shuttle the students to their trips!

Visit our website to learn more
www.friendsvinp.org/school-kids-in-the-park/