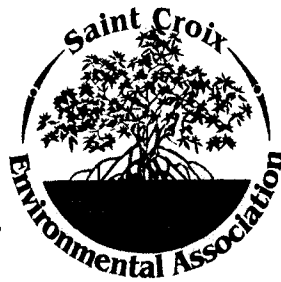


January-February
2006

To encourage environmental action through



REPORT

awareness, education and advocacy.

A Brief History

SEA to Mark 20 Years as Protector of Island's Environment

By Emy Thomas

SEA will celebrate 20 years of protecting the island's environment with a series of festivities throughout the year 2006.

The kickoff will be Sunday, January 8, with a cookout and the music of Jamesie and the All Stars at Mount Victory Camp (See Page 3 for details).

It will be followed by SEA's annual fundraising gala, the Sea Creatures Masquerade Ball and Auction, on Saturday, February 25, at the Divi Carina Bay Casino banquet hall.

Almost monthly events will continue throughout the year, including the unveiling of an original work by local artist Luca Gasperi, a picnic on the beach at SEA's Southgate Coastal Reserve, a reading from books by the late Crucian naturalist George Seaman, and a Halloween party at SEA's "bat tower".

Looking back at SEA's 20-year history it's a shock to realize that the environmental problems that prompted the founding of SEA are still at the forefront now—most notably development in inappropriate locations. Yet SEA has definitely made a difference, and our very existence makes environmentalism an inescapable participant in island affairs.

SEA was founded in April, 1986, by a small group of alarmed environmentalists reacting to a real estate boom similar to the one we're experiencing today.

Plans for several major developments were on the table, threatening to cover the waterfront with hotels, convention centers, marinas, golf courses and condominiums. They showed little regard for the island's fragile ecosystems but, then as now, the government seemed willing to accept permanent environmental degradation in return for the promise of jobs.

The small group of concerned citizens who were determined not to let that happen reactivated the St. Croix chapter of the Virgin Islands Conservation Society and immediately started speaking out against uncontrolled and unsustainable develop-

ment. Then as now we stressed the necessity of a land and water use plan to guide developers and local officials on scientifically acceptable uses of our natural resources.

It's been a hard job, and SEA has received an undeserved reputation as "anti-development," but as a primary player in several high profile cases, SEA can take credit for saving some of the most ecologically important areas of the island.

The Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve probably would not exist without SEA's tenacious advocacy and litigation over a period of six-years, and The Nature Conservancy would probably not have been able to create the east end preserve at Jacks and Isaacs Bays if SEA had not waged a similar battle to keep it undeveloped.

As SEA matured, development issues continued to be the most dramatic, but the organization spread the environmental message in other ways, too. We took a leading role in addressing litter and recycling until a governmental commission took over that job. We monitored air and water pollution, became the community watchdog and whistle blower for sewage disposal violations, and invested a great deal of time and effort in producing a comprehensive proposal for solving our solid waste crisis.

Environmental education, especially of children, has been a primary goal of SEA since its inception. From annual summer camps, SEA has expanded its outreach into the schools throughout the year; coordinates the outstanding Earth Day Eco Fair, a three-day exposure to many environmental subjects for hundreds of children; and now drives to wherever children are in the eye-catching former delivery truck known as the Environmental Learning Lab.

VI ReLeaf, a reforestation program started after Hurricane Hugo to counteract the loss of many trees, also grew considerably. From greenhouses at a few schools, it expanded to tree plantings in public spaces to a three-year mega project of

planting 21,000 mangroves in Salt River to replace some of those killed in the hurricane—a highly successful project with an 82 percent survival rate.

The founders and early activists of SEA are still revered by members today: Fred Sladen, the late Liz Wilson, Olasee Davis, Bruce Wilson, Ulla Neuberger, Joan Eltman, and Mike Walsh. They inspired a tremendous following. Before Hurricane Hugo struck in September, 1989, there were 1487 members of SEA.

Robin Freeman was our first full-time executive director. She served during most of the 90s and helped SEA become a respected force in the community. She was a voice of reason as our spokesperson on advocacy issues, a calm center in an often turbulent office, an outreach worker who involved a more diverse population in the work of SEA, and an organizer.

On her watch, we prepared a strategic plan, published bi-monthly newsletters and annual reports, held one or two activities for members each month, held successful fundraisers and wrote winning grants. We formulated a mission statement, "To encourage environmental action through awareness, education and advocacy." And we started a building fund so that we could have a home of our own. The 2000 League of SEA fell short of its goal, but the \$120,000 we raised rests in a special account until that dream can be achieved.

In 2000, SEA entered the new millennium with a new role, that of land steward. An anonymous bird lover gave SEA over \$2 million to buy the land surrounding Southgate Pond and manage it as a wildlife preserve. The resulting Southgate Coastal Reserve is soon to emerge from planning into the operational phase.

Two much smaller gifts SEA has accepted are a lot in Barren Spot that has an old Danish well tower housing dozens of bats and an easement on a beach lot in Frederiksted.

Message from the Chairman

Dear Members:

I would like to wish all our members a very happy holiday season. The new year is full of promise for our community and our organization. I am very pleased to report that the Board and staff are working at a high level, but as always there is more to do than time to do it. We are successful only because of the extra effort provided by our tremendous volunteer members.

The St. Croix community was recently successful in attracting new development to our shores. SEA recognizes the need for development and that our community needs economic growth. SEA supports sustainable development that considers the greater good. It is our organization's mission to advocate for the preservation of the environment. At a minimum we are obligated to hold all development to the legal standards that protect and sustain existing ecosystems. And we will continue to encourage sustainable development that goes beyond those minimum standards.

We invite developers to work with us to ensure that all required environmental protections are included in their projects and sustain existing ecosystems. We will be publicly responsive to any development that is not environmentally compliant.

The finite natural resources of the Virgin Islands are the attraction to our visitors and residents. We must develop an environmentally sustainable community or we will lose the very essence of what we have to offer.

Let us all agree that advocating for the environment is an essential component of successful development and a successful community.

Best wishes for the holiday season.

Sincerely,

Carlos Tesitor, Chair

Executive Director's Report Carol Cramer-Burke

There are so many things happening at SEA and on St. Croix that it's difficult to know where to start. Our Annual Meeting held at The Mermaid Restaurant was well attended. SEA welcomes two new Board members – Don Diddams and Ben Jones and bids adieu, with many thanks, to Zandy Hillis-Starr. The volunteer appreciation holiday party held on the 8th was a wonderful success. Many thanks to the volunteers who brought refreshments, decorations and holiday music and especially to Margarita Hutchinson who also organized a plant sale to raise funds for promotion of SEA Activities.

The Holiday Appeal has been very successful and donations are still coming in. Sue Ladwig has worked tirelessly to get our office organized and looking good. Thanks Sue! We extend a warm welcome to our newest staff member Karisma Elien. After 10 weeks of intensive training at Kent University in England she is now ready to launch the Rare Pride Campaign on St. Croix. To learn more about the Campaign see Karisma's article on page 4.

Many of you have probably already heard about the recent sale of 2,550 acres in Annaly Bay and Estate Hermitage to Florida developer Throgmartin Co. SEA's Advocacy Committee is working to obtain more detailed information about the proposed plans and hopes to work proactively with the principals for a sustainable development process.

The St. Croix Ocean Defense Group continues to work for zero ocean discharge and agricultural reuse of fully treated wastewater from the Anguilla sewage treatment facility. The group is in the process of filing the necessary documents to incorporate as a non-profit organization. They are still in need of donations to help cover the legal costs of their important work. To donate please make your check payable to SEA – ODGLF.

I hope that each of you will find a few quiet moments during this hectic time of year to reflect on the beauty that surrounds us and that in those moments you will find peace and serenity.

20 YEARS

continued from page 1

SEA has been honored in many ways: with financial grants from the likes of the MacArthur Foundation and Alcoa; with awards from entities as diverse as EPA (three times) and Islands Magazine; with praise written into the Congressional Record and the local newspapers; and with the loyalty of members and staff.

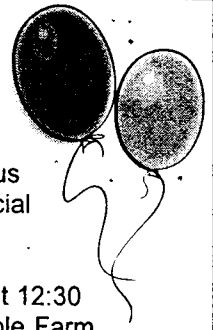
Carol Cramer-Burke is perhaps the ultimate loyalist. Originally a volunteer with the fledgling ReLeaf program, she was so successful she was taken on as part-time staff, a job that grew to fulltime, in hours if not dollars. In recent years, when SEA had three executive directors come and go in rather quick succession, Carol successfully filled in the gaps between them. At the same time she took on the added responsibility of managing the Southgate Coastal Reserve and discovered a new passion in birds. Now she has finally accepted the top job at SEA as her own and is ready to launch the environmental association into the next 20 years.

SEA ACTIVITIES and EVENTS

JANUARY — FEBRUARY 2006

SEA's 20th Anniversary Celebration – Sunday, January 8

Please join us for the kickoff event celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the St. Croix Environmental Association on Sunday, January 8, 2006. We have much to celebrate! Our past twenty years have been highlighted by our efforts to educate our residents and visitors and to advocate for our precious St. Croix environment. We look forward to beginning the next twenty years by gathering at this special event.



The celebration begins at the Mt. Victory Camp on Sunday afternoon with a rainforest hike leaving at 12:30 p.m. The hike will pass through the Mt. Victory Ruins over the ridge to the Virgin Islands Sustainable Farm Institute for a tour by Ben Jones and associates. Then another brief hike up the forest trail stopping at the Nealon's home to catch your breath and have refreshments, and then returning to Mt. Victory Camp at 3:30 p.m. for their famed camp cookout (pork, chicken and veggie fare) and music by Jamesie (King of Scratch) and the Allstars sponsored by the San Martin Team at RE/MAX Realty.

Join us for all or a part of the festivities. Everyone welcome!
The event is free; the cookout is \$15. Please call 773-1989 for details.



- 12.30 PM Assemble at Mt Victory Camp parking lot on Crequee Dam Road
- 1:00 PM Hike/drive to V.I. Sustainable Farm Institute
- 2:00 PM Tour of the Farm
- 3:00 PM Hike/drive back to Mt Victory with stop at the hill top for refreshments
- 3:30 - till Camp Cook Out and Jamsie and the Allstars

Saturday, January 14, 10 AM-Noon: Toni Lance, Certified Falconer and Bird Rehabilitation expert, will guide us to meet and greet her current residents, including a Peregrine Falcon, who has lost part of a wing. Everyone welcome. Donations appreciated to help feed the birds. Pre-registration required; please call Margarita at 773-1364.

Saturday, January 21, 9:30-11:30 AM: Native Plants of St. Croix led by Brinsley Burbidge. This is a special opportunity for participants to view endangered and rare plants of interest to our environmentally concerned members and guests, on a unique tour of St. Georges Village Botanical Gardens (SGVBG). Our leader is the Executive Director of the Gardens and is an avid conservationist. Brinsley has directed botanical gardens in Britain, Colorado, and Florida. He is co-author of the Conservation Plan for Botanical Gardens in the Caribbean, which involves 30 countries. Pre-registration is required; please call Margarita at 773-1364. \$10 fee. Limited to 25 people.

Saturday, February 4, 8-10 AM: Great Pond Bird Watch led by Carol Cramer-Burke. Meet at the west end of Great Pond access road. Bring binoculars, bird guide, hats and mud shoes. Carol will bring a scope to assist with up close views. Free to members; \$10 for non members. Pre-registration required; please call 773-1989 for directions and sign up.

Sunday, February 12, 3-5 PM: Gathering useful plants from the garden with Azyza Shabazz. Azyza will stroll with us through a Christiansted garden to pick traditionally used plants that make hair rinses and conditioners, shampoos, teas, and tonics. She will demonstrate how to mix and make these wonderful concoctions. All participants will go home with some Ylang Ylang or Azucena massage oil for a romantic Valentine's Day, along with other goodies from her demonstrations. Free to members; \$10 for non-members; nominal charge for materials. Pre-registration required; please call Margarita at 773-1364.

Friday, February 17, 4-6 PM: Sea Creatures Masquerade Ball Bidders Club. Join us for an added bit of fun at the SEA office. Come preview the auction items and enjoy a glass of wine while you make your bid plan! For details call SEA at 773-1989.

Tuesday, February 22, 6:30 PM: Star-gazing. Astronomer Woody Montier back by popular demand to help us look through telescopes at current events in the night sky. Rain date: Wednesday, Feb. 22. Free to members. \$10 for non-members. Pre-registration required; please call Margarita at 773-1364.

Saturday, February 25, 6:30 PM: SEA CREATURES MASQUERADE BALL at the Divi Casino Ballroom. Enjoy an evening of fun, costumes, prizes, live and silent auction and music by Jamesie and the Allstars. Tickets on sale at the SEA office: \$65. For details call SEA 773-1989.

CHRISTIANSTED TREE COUNCIL GOALS

THE CHRISTIANSTED TREE COUNCIL HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THREE HISTORIC TREES IN CHRISTIANSTED TOWN AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE CONTINUED HEALTH OF MATURE TREES LOCATED IN THE TOWN OF CHRISTIANSTED.

2002 – 2004 Success!!

The Baobab tree in the government parking lot on Strand Street is now doing really well! Hopefully SEA members have all been by to visit her—she is flowering and bearing fruit, which are somewhat difficult to see; her canopy is much larger than when we started the project in 2002. It was during 2003 that most of our volunteers worked on her, culminating with her adoption by St. Mary's School in January 2004. About 30 volunteers removed asphalt and constructed a larger area of exposed earth around the base. We received huge amounts of support—both technical and physical—from SEA's Carol Burke, Ferdie Abraham and Cheech of St. Croix LEAP.

2005 Christmas Project

Our first project, now substantially completed, was crown thinning of the beautiful mahogany at the Lord God of Sabaoth Lutheran Church on King Street. The Tree Council was able to provide this service as a Christmas present to the congregation, who wrote:

"We've experienced a different feeling of fresh air flowing through our church while worshiping this weekend. We are always exploring new and innovative ways to address the needs of the congregation and community at large, and we are growing and prospering only because we found great friends like you who have offered their loyalty."

Projects in the Works

The Mahogany tree at the Florence Williams library on King Street. Unfortunately, this tree cannot be saved and must be removed before it takes out the center portion of the library. The Tree Council plans to mount a publicity campaign before removing the tree, to explain to our shocked public why we are taking down one of the very last Christiansted trees. A major part of our plan is the creation of works of art from the lumber by local artists, hopefully resulting in an art show of their creations. The Tree Council has also tasked itself with replacing the tree with an appropriate planting or sculpture.

The Mahogany tree on King Street, on the east side of the Bank of Nova Scotia. This handsome tree is about 80 years old and suffers from the same affliction as the Baobab—asphalt covers her root system to the base of the trunk. There were two mahogany trees until Hurricane Georges in 1996; the second tree broke right at the pavement level during the first half of the storm. Unless the paving is removed and the surface roots aerated, a similar fate will most likely befall one of the last mahoganies on King Street.

How do you become a member of the council? It's so easy. Contact Julie San Martin by calling 773-1048 or emailing her at juliestx@earthlink.net. We need all the help we can get—everything from mailing lists and newsletters to swinging a pick! All you need is interest!

SEA CREATURES MASQUERADE BALL FEBRUARY 25

The annual SEA Creatures Masquerade Ball is quickly approaching. Start planning your costume now. Last year's SEA Creatures Masquerade Ball included a costume contest that generated lots of entertainment in itself. This year there will again be a contest and we've heard the competition will be fierce. Come as your favorite SEA Creature—you could win a prize! For those of you that aren't into costumes, masks will be available for sale at the auction and at the SEA office. And for those of you who really aren't into costumes—just come as you are and enjoy.



Our auction items will include something for everyone. We have off-island trips planned, environmental toys, local art, and lots of other things meant to appeal. Join our *bidders club* and come preview our auction the week before the auction.

The fun starts at 6:30 on Saturday, February 25 at the Divi Carina Bay Casino. You will be treated to an exciting evening of dining and dancing to Jamesie and the Allstars, a costume contest and outrageous bidding at live and silent auctions—all to benefit your local environmental association and their programs. Make your reservations early. We expect a sold-out event. Tickets will be available at the SEA office beginning January 1 for \$65.



Beginnings of A RARE Pride Campaign By Karisma Elien

Every day around the world, the need for protecting the planet's most valuable natural areas grows. How can we keep pace? By putting conservation tools in the hands of those able to influence lasting change: The community.

This is the mission statement for the island of St. Croix. "Let us begin to take PRIDE in ourselves as individuals, become educated on environmental issues that are affecting our communities and express the concepts that can help change attitudes and behavior, in order to generate tangible benefits for generations to come."

Working along side my community through an island wide Pride Campaign, together we will slowly begin to change the social, economic and political challenges facing conservation efforts. Raising awareness of the environmental issues in our community, working within the schools and connecting the biology in the textbook to the community will be a few things the island Pride Campaign will focus on. It is about understanding the environment that we live in and learning how to respect it. This is our community, our home and our planet let us take "PRIDE".

MEET THE BOARD

We are pleased to introduce SEA's current Board of Directors. SEA's Board consists of some of our most active volunteers. Board service requires each Board member to use their expertise to guide our organization along its path as set out in SEA's mission: to encourage environmental action through awareness, education and advocacy.

Ferdi Abraham

An avid birder and outdoorsman, Ferdi is known throughout the island as the owner of Ferdi's Forest, a landscape design and installation business. Ferdi and his wife Sarah have been a part of SEA for years. Originally from the nature island of Dominica, Ferdi continues to envision similar possibilities for St. Croix.

Donald R. Diddams, Treasurer

Don has had a long-term interest in environmental and other issues related to development. During his career he gained expertise in government budgeting and finance, and estimating the fiscal impacts of development. Don and his wife lived aboard their sailboat and sailed the Caribbean for 5 years, selecting St. Croix as the location where they would again move ashore in 2003. He views service on the SEA Board of Directors as a way to contribute to goals he supports.

Ariel Fromer

A native Virgin Islander, Ariel has recently returned to St. Croix after completing a dual degree in Economics and Environmental Science at Tufts

University. Ariel is now employed by Miller & Jacobs Capital in Christiansted, a hedge fund with a financials focused portfolio. Ariel is an avid sailor, sailing competitively for recreation.

John Harper, Secretary

John, a twenty year resident of St. Croix, is Branch Manager and Vice President of Marshall & Sterling Insurance. He joined the SEA Board in 2003 after over 15 years of membership. John also serves on the Finance Committee. He grew up in Wilmington, Delaware and is a graduate of the University of Richmond. Other community activities include Cruzan Bikeways and Rotary. Hobbies include cycling and watching his wife Theresa run circles around him.

Derrick Hill

Derrick accepted our invitation to join SEA's Board earlier this year. Derrick is the sole proprietor of N2 The Blue Diving Adventures, a St. Croix scuba operation which he started 3 years ago. Previously, Derrick managed a dive operation on Grand Turk, where he was introduced to a mature marine sanctuary and its enormous advantages. Besides being out "in the field" daily, Derrick enjoys leading snorkel trips for SEA members. "It's a lot of fun to share different underwater creatures with people for the first time."

Benjamin Jones

Ben is the manager and creator of the VI Sustainable Farm Institute. Located in Estate Mount Victory, the institute focuses on sustainable agricultural education. Ben describes himself as a steward of soil and plants. He began

farming in 1996, spent two years in Ecuador at a biological reserve working on agriculture and education projects, and then returned to Georgia to reclaim a Blue Ridge farm. Ben arrived in St. Croix in 2002 and established the Farm Institute shortly thereafter.

Ditty Layton, Vice Chair

As a school administrator at The Good Hope School and a long time SEA Board member, Ditty has helped SEA in many ways. She has been elected to every office and is currently a part of the Education Committee and Southgate Development Committee. Through out the last twenty years, Ditty has committed many hours of service to the organization. She and husband Richard have raised their three daughters on St. Croix.

Carlos Tesitor, Chair

As a long time Board member of SEA and the Virgin Island Conservation Society, Carlos has provided practical leadership as we prepare the plans seeking CZM approval to develop SEA's Southgate Coastal Reserve. Carlos is a construction contractor and has been involved in numerous building projects throughout the Virgin Islands for the past 20 years.

Lisa Yntema

Lisa joined the Board in 2004 and is an active member of the Southgate Development Committee and the Advocacy Committee. Lisa has spent much of her life on St. Croix, mostly in the West End hills or ocean. She is a life-long naturalist and a 3rd generation birder.

St. Croix Environmental Association
www.stcxenvironmental.org

(340) 773-1989
(340) 773-7545

5032 Anchor Way, Suite 3
Christiansted, VI 00820

Name _____
Spouse/Partner _____
Organization _____
Mailing Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Membership
 New Renewal
Phone _____
Alt. Phone _____
Email _____

Volunteer Opportunities

- Environmental Advocacy
- Environmental Education
- Fundraising
- Member Events and Programs
- Office
- Publications and Newsletters
- Other _____

Annual Membership Category

- Individual \$35
- Family \$50
- Contributor \$51-\$199
- SEA Sponsor \$200-\$999
- Bronze Sponsor \$1,000+
- Silver Sponsor \$5,000+
- Gold Sponsor \$10,000+

Payment Option

- amt. \$ _____
 Check # _____ or Cash _____
 Visa
 MC
 Amex
 Name on card _____
 Card # _____
 Exp date _____

Signature _____

Date _____

For office use: DB _____ TY/RCPT _____ CF _____

ver-1/06

Good Neighbors: People whose actions speak loudly

Gallows Bay Hardware now uses paper bags. It is their contribution to decreasing roadside trash around the island (if it blows away paper dissolves quickly and the color blends into the background). Now all we need is a recycler for the paper. Gallows Bay Hardware has replaced the 20,000 plastic bags per month, that ended up in the landfill or along the roads, with paper bags. The cost for making the substitution is in some cases as much as ten cents per bag. The additional cost is *not* being passed on to Gallows Bay Hardware customers.

Gallows Bay Frame is Talk'n Trash. That's what Betsy Campen calls her "art for a cause recycling project." Kudos to Betsy and her creativity for reusing Hovensa oil refinery barrels, organizing local artists, the youngest being only eight years old, to paint the barrels for use as island garbage and recycling containers AFTER they are auctioned on February 18th at the St. Georges Botanical Gardens to raise money for garbage removal fees. Let's all support Betsy and the Talk'n Trash project however we can. And let's remember to deal with our litter appropriately, especially now that we will soon have the opportunity to appreciate art at the same time.

And, last...but certainly not least, Kudos to the **Buccaneer**. We all know that the **Buccaneer** does an outstanding job of making its grounds environmentally pristine but not everyone knows their policies...which, by the way, can be applied to each of our lives. We thought we would pass on the **Buccaneer's** guidelines for your consideration in your homes and place of employment.

- Use environmentally friendly cleaning products whenever possible
- Avoid the use of bleach unless absolutely necessary
- Be conscious of run off and dispose of any necessary chemicals appropriately
- Discuss waste reduction at each of two weekly management meetings
- Recycle printing paper
- Turn off A/C in rooms that are not occupied
- Keep the beach lights low so as not to distract turtles using the beaches for nesting
- Signs are posted in outdoor spaces to dispose of plastics appropriately

St. Croix Environmental Association
Arawak Building - Suite 3
Gallows Bay, St. Croix USVI 00820

Education Loft

From Dan Odell

Dan with the Van is just completing a successful "Currents Connecting Cultures" project. Dan has extended the experience to students in public schools by taking a fifth grade class from Ricardo Richards on a field trip to Southgate. More and more schools are making requests for visits from the Learning Lab. As a result Dan is focusing on SEA's traditional audience of fourth through sixth grades while continuing to respond to as many requests as possible.

SEA is encouraging teachers to schedule complete units that fit into their curriculum to provide students with a comprehensive view of our interconnected environment.. Educational standards are being applied to the teaching units. This task is greatly reduced by the research of former education coordinator Marilyn Chakroff.

Look for Dan and the Learning Lab at the Agriculture and Food Fair in February and around the island all of the time.

Special Thanks

A very special thank you to the **Buccaneer** for providing a lovely venue for SEA's November Annual Meeting. We had a wonderful evening in a wonderful setting thanks to the **Buccaneer** and the skill and expertise of their hospitality staff.

THE ST. CROIX ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION

The SEA Report is a bimonthly publication of the St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA), a chapter of the Virgin Islands Conservation Society (VICS). VICS is a nonprofit membership group affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation.

SEA's hours are Monday through Friday 9AM to 5PM.
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