# Supporters of St. Vincent NWR Inc.

# Newsletter

## BIG NEWS!!

**The Refuge office is temporarily located at the 14 Mile mainland property (on CR 30-A) . This includes administrative offices only. The visitor center is still closed at this time.**

**Board Members**

Nancy Stuart, President
Audrey Schmidt, Treasurer
Landy Luther, Secretary
Virginia Satterfield
John Inzetta
Lisa Johnston
Sue Cerulean
Marie Steele
Carol Brown
Nancy Widener
Mike Turrisi
Trish Petrie

*In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

## ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

The Supporters of St. Vincent NWR Annual meeting took place in February 2015 at the St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve building. In addition to excellent updates on the Refuge and programs our guest speaker, author and long time area nature expert, Sue Cerulean gave a talk about her new book, *Coming to Pass: Florida's Coastal Islands in a Gulf of Change*. This book is a beautiful story of the little developed necklace of islands including St. Vincent Island in the northern Gulf coast. This nature memoir chronicles the uniquely beautiful coast as it is now, once was and how it may be in the future and is both a field guide and call for protection for a beloved Florida landscape. Her book was made available for pre-sale and signing at the event and Sue generously donated her profits to our Supporters group. If you are interested in purchasing a book it is available via Amazon. Use smile.amazon.com and Amazon will donate a portion of your spend to our group!

## 2015 Turtle Nest Adoptions Are now AVAILABLE!

**Each year in May sea turtles return to the Florida coast to lay their eggs. St. Vincent NWR beaches are home to as many as 100 loggerhead sea turtle nests each year. Please think about adopting a nest for the 2015 season. A $25 donation will help support the program costs and volunteer supplies!**

Visit our website at:
www.stvincentfriends.com

## A Lot To "Smile" About!

Did you know that when you shop at Amazon Smile, that Amazon donates .5% of your purchase price to the Supporters of St. Vincent NWR, Inc.?
It's easy (and links directly with your Amazon Prime account)!

Bookmark this link and help us every time you shop!

Smile.Amazon.com

Young whitetail deer

## SEA TURTLE UPDATE

As of July 31 we have 55 confirmed loggerhead sea turtle nests. We already have had several nests hatch!

# 2015 Schedule

**Sea Turtle Nesting Season: May 1—October 15**

**Archery & Primitive Weapons Hunt : Nov 19—21 2015**

***Applications: July 16- until filled***

**Sambar Deer Hunt : Dec 03– 05 2015**

***Phase 2 applications: July 23—Until filled***

**Primitive Weapons Hunt:** ***Jan 19—21 2016***

***Applications: July 16—until filled***

*http://myfwc.com/license/limited-entry-hunts*

# Spring and Summer on the Island

Come over to the island during the spring and you might see ospreys nesting in dead snags around the fresh water lakes, sofshell turtles laying eggs in sand roads, Wood Ducks around nest boxes, the white-tailed deer bucks are dropping antlers and young Bald Eagles begin to test their wings. As we move into summer (June - August) loggerhead sea turtles are laying eggs on beaches. Female alligators are protecting nests in the marshes. Wood Storks are passing through. Snowy Plovers and American Oystercatchers are nesting and feeding on the beaches. White-tailed bucks and sambar stags are in velvet.

Regardless of the season please be aware and respectful of all fenced and protected areas in order not to disturb critical habitats for the animals calling St. Vincent NWR home.

Young sambar stag

***Welcome John Stark!***

***Our new Deputy Refuge Manager started in July. Look for more information in our next publication!***

# International Migratory Bird Day and May Island Tour

Twenty-one people attended our May island tour coinciding with International Migratory Bird Day. The fortunate participants had the opportunity to meet Dr. Lori Lester's research team from Delaware State University who were on the island studying migratory song birds. The group stopped at the research site where Dr. Lester and her students had put up mist nets and were treated to a close up look at two recently captured birds being evaluated. The tour group also saw seven sambar deer along the route!

Dr. Lester gave a short talk to the visitors about the unique and diverse habitats on the island. She explained about the process used to measure wing length, take blood and claw samples from targeted species, how they check fat stores and muscle mass, weigh, sex, band and check the birds' feathers. There were lots of questions from the visitors and a great deal of interest. We signed up two new volunteers as a result of interest in the tour and program which is always a terrific bonus!

The research team estimated an approximate count of over 140 species of birds (from the 12 days they spent on St. Vincent NWR this year). They were able to observe and count by walking five transects & mist net capture. The SVNWR number compares favorably with estimated St. George Island numbers of 178 species (observed over three years of research). Pretty darn impressive. It also appears that resident birds may be more abundant on SVINWR than St. George, perhaps due to a more diverse habitat selection. These preliminary estimates will await confirmation and interpretation of raw data.

The preliminary findings will be checked by verifying data over several years of observation as this is only the first year of the research on SVINWR. The researchers were very excited to have captured a Black-billed Cuckoo, which is rather unusual for this area. They shared how happy they were to be allowed to study the migratory birds on SVNWR and grateful for the support from USFWS. The tour and the research were a great tie-in with USFWS in support of International Migratory Bird Day.

# Meet the Newest Board Members Supporters of St. Vincent NWR, Inc.

**Lisa Johnston** is a graduate of the University of Iowa and spent the majority of her career in Chicago with a Fortune 500 risk and insurance broker working with large law firms. During her summers, she would sail on Lake Michigan. Two years ago, she and her husband Bob were on vacation in the Forgotten Coast and fell in love with the pristine natural beauty of the area, including what she feels is the absolute treasure: St Vincent NWR. Lisa joined the board in November 2014 and has since been involved with turtle patrol and other efforts in support of the Refuge.

**Susan Cerulean** is a writer, naturalist, and activist based in Tallahassee, Florida. Her second nature memoir—*Coming to Pass: Florida's Coastal Islands in a Gulf of Change* was just published by the University of Georgia Press. Previous books include *Tracking Desire: A Journey after Swallow-tailed Kites*, *UnspOILed: Writers Speak for Florida's Coast*, and *Between Two Rivers: Stories from the Red Hills to the Gulf*. She has been exploring St. Vincent Island since 1984.

No Picture Available

Marie Steele has been a resident of Indian Pass for 25 years and her husband Captain Joey Romanelli is owner operator of St. Vincent Island Shuttle & Fishing Charters. Both have been long time volunteers for the Refuge. We are lucky to welcome Marie back as she was one of the original founding board members. She is a retired Federal & State Permitted Wildlife Rehabilitator and a was a Volunteer Coordinator for Department of Environmental Protection and was a member of the Gulf County Turtle patrol.

# Meet the Summer Intern Kimlynn Nguyen

The Supporters group was proud to sponsor an intern, Kimlynn Nguyen, this summer for 10 weeks, Kimlynn graduated from the University of Florida with a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation and previously worked at St. Marks NWR as an intern there.
She is not only talented and a hard worker but also well traveled. She has been to Vietnam with family hiking to see the many temples in the country, and studied abroad in Swaziland, Africa studying the effects elephants had on the ecosystem.

She loves wildlife and enjoyed being able to work in an environment on the Refuge that allowed her direct access to their habitats. At St. Vincent NWR she was able to experience a few new things; marine turtle nesting surveys, reinforcing Bald eagle nest boundary lines, capturing nuisance animals, radio tracking red wolves, captive management of the red wolves, and aid in setting/removing the feral swine initiative pens with USDA Wildlife Services. The Supporters group hopes to continue helping the Refuge and students alike benefit from these unique and valuable conservation internship experiences.

Would you like to contribute an article or pictures to our newsletter?
Have suggestions regarding articles or information you would like to see?
**Please contact us at: stvincentislandfriends@gmail.com**

Join us on Facebook and Twitter for more up to date happenings on and around the Refuge! @stvincentnwr

# Red Wolf Program Update

## http://www.fws.gov/redwolf/redwolfrecovery.html

St. Vincent NWR has participated in the red wolf (*Canis rufus*) propagation program since January of 1990. These medium-sized canids are native to the southeastern United States and the species was nearly forced into extinction following European settlement of the region. To save this iconic species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for several decades has been overseeing a collaborative effort to reestablish a wild population, including captive breeding of zoo-based wolves, natural propagation using carefully monitored wolf pairs placed on isolated islands (of which St. Vincent is the last remaining active site), and eventual release of wolf pups into a population at Alligator River NWR in North Carolina.

St. Vincent NWR's previous female red wolf #1729, who was whelped on the island in May 2008, died in January 2015 and was replaced two weeks later with another female from an exhibition zoo in South Carolina. This new female and the existing male were placed in a large acclimation pen for the duration of the breeding season. They were released in June after it was certain no pups would be born this year. Unfortunately soon after her release the female dispersed from the island by swimming across St. Vincent Sound to the mainland. The female red wolf remained in close proximity to the island and was ultimately hand captured in the shallow waters of Indian Pass lagoon. (Staff monitors and tracks the red wolves by radio telemetry collars on a daily basis). She was confined to the acclimation pen on the island until being transferred to the Tallahassee Museum in Tallahassee, Florida. Staff are awaiting formal commitment regarding a replacement female red wolf from the Species Survival Plan group after their meeting held the week of July 24 in Missouri.

As you may or may not know the red wolf recovery program is under intense scrutiny and is facing drastic changes. The St. Vincent Supporters strongly support the continuation of the program both in North Carolina (Alligator River NWR) and here on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge. The wolves provide ecological benefits including removing species such as raccoon and feral pig that prey on our sea turtle nests. Wolves are extremely territorial and often force coyotes to leave the island, thus preventing them from predating sea turtle nests. We in the Supporters group love the fact that we can help keep this iconic endangered species in the wild.

If you would like to add you support to keeping wolves in the wild on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge. You can write to Pete Benjamin, Ecological Services Field Office, 551 F Pylon Drive, Raleigh, North Carolina, 27607.

Some of the issues with the wolf population in North Carolina revolves around conflicts with the public in the introduction area. You can be a strong voice to let them know that you support our small pack on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge. Detailed history and current information is available online from various sources online (search red wolf). We would like to encourage members to educate themselves and get

## Out and About

On the right is a picture of several of our board members participated in the Wildlife Heritage Festival (WHO) at our sister St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and were able to share information about St. Vincent NWR!

To the left is a picture of our volunteer and staff turtle patrol taken during a training event in May