Supporters of St. Vincent NWR Inc.

Newsletter

DID YOU KNOW?
Last year there were 38,000 volunteers helping in the National Refuge System boosting the USFWS workforce by 20%!

Nancy Stuart and Lisa Card Johnston at the US Senate Building

Board Members

Nancy Stuart, President
Audrey Schmidt, Treasurer
Landy Luther, Secretary
Virginia Satterfield
John Inzetta
Lisa Johnston
Sue Cerulean
Carol Brown
Nancy Widener
Mary Balthrop
Jim Hughes

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

Small Yet Mighty

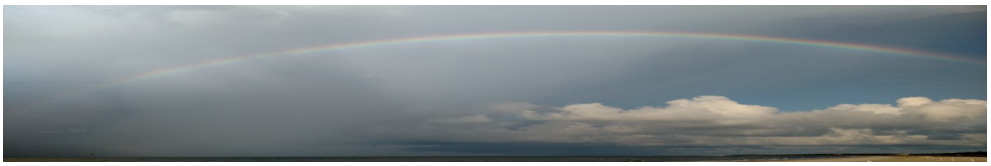
We have had an incredibly busy and productive 2016 thus far. In January three of our Board members (Nancy Stuart, Lisa Johnston and Carol Brown) traveled to Washington DC to work with the National Association of Wildlife Refuges to lobby our State Senators Marco Rubio and Bill Nelson (we were able to meet Congresswoman Graham later in Tallahassee). From there our trio attended USFWS hosted Friends Forward training at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. Both experiences were fantastic learning opportunities as well as a chance to get to know representatives from other refuges around the country. Our collective voices as advocates for the National Wildlife Refuge System are a powerful tool to help our partners in the US Fish and Wildlife Service continue to protect these valuable resources.

Refuge manager John Stark and Supporters Board Member Sue Cerulean hosting Senator Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio's staff aides on the island

USFWS employees (our partners) are not allowed to either advocate/lobby or raise funds on the behalf of the refuges. These are just two of the very critical supports that Friends groups like ours can provide. We ask that you continue to help us by

- Volunteering your time if possible
- Sharing your support of St. Vincent and the National Wildlife System with your local, state and Federal representatives
- Be an active member of the Supporters of St. Vincent and get at least one other person to join our group

We look forward to hearing from you soon!



Calendar of Events

St. Vincent Sambar Deer Hunt

Phase I Applications	5/15/2016—6/15/2016
Permit Claim Deadline	7/19/2016
Phase II Leftovers	7/21/2016—until filled

https://www.fws.gov/saintvincent/hunt-fish.html

St. Vincent White-Tailed Archery and Primitive Weapons

Phase I Immediate Issue	7/14/2016—until filled

Sea Turtle Nesting Season 5/1/2016 - October 31
(or until all nests are surveyed)

2016 Turtle Season is Here!!!

ADOPT A SEA TURTLE NEST
On
ST. VINCENT ISLAND

For $ 25.00
You will receive
*Adoption Certificate
*Nest photo
*Activity/Hatchling Report
*Recognition in the Supporters of St. Vincent, NWR Newsletter

For more information or to adopt visit: www.stvincentfriends.com
Or email us at stvincentislandfriends@gmail.com

Meet John Murphy, Biological Science Technician

John is the new Biological Science Technician at St. Vincent NWR working under the Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) grant. He will be conducting regular surveys of beach-nesting birds to assess their productivity success on the refuge. Where suitable habitat exists, symbolic fencing and signage is installed to protect those areas from inadvertent encroachment by humans. Breeding species of interest include Snowy Plover, Wilson's Plover, American Oystercatcher, and Least Tern.

Before coming to St Vincent, John was employed by Audubon Florida under the NRDA program covering breeding sites in eastern Franklin County. Born and raised in north Florida, John has been passionate about birds since the early 1980s. He formerly served as a member of the Records Committee of the Florida Ornithological Society and is a regional coordinator on the second Florida Breeding Bird Atlas project. When not working with birds or volunteering on bird-related projects, John relaxes by birding the backwoods, beaches and coastal marshes of the Florida panhandle.

FOCUS ON SHOREBIRDS:

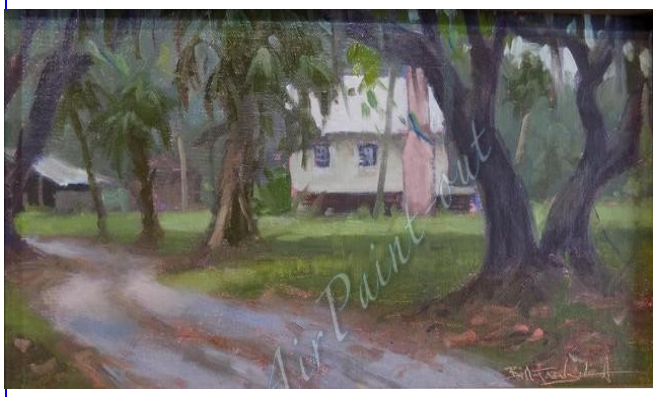
Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus)*

Credit Lucas Price

Snowy plover (designated as a threatened species in Florida) is a small shorebird that can reach a length of 6.7 inches with a wingspan of 13.4 inches (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2011). They are small and almost undetectable on the white sand beach unless they move. Their chicks after hatching have the appearance of tiny fuzz balls on long spindly legs.

As more and more coastal areas are developed the snowy plovers face increasing threats from humans in addition to natural predators. In Florida they nest on sand beaches of the Gulf of Mexico and because their nests are well camouflaged and just small scrapes in the sand they are very vulnerable to human traffic (foot and vehicle). Although on St. Vincent NWR their habitat is fenced and signage installed to help eliminate human threats they are still extremely vulnerable to disturbance and predation from any number of animals such as raccoon and feral swine. Nesting areas are also susceptible to water over wash during heavy storms and high tides/sea level rise.

ARTS and MUSIC



This year's Forgotten Coast en Plein Air paint out centered around the natural environment with an emphasis on highlighting land conservation, habitat restoration and environmental stewardship. So what better fit than to have artists come and capture the natural beauty of St. Vincent NWR! We were delighted to host four renowned artists this year.

Bill Farnsworth

Nancy King Mertz, Debra Huse, Lori Putnam and Bill Farnsworth painted on the island in various spots and later displayed their amazing works at the Plein Air wet room in Apalachicola. Bill's oil painting of the cabin (pictured) was purchased by one or our Supporters and donated to the refuge to be displayed at the future office and visitors center. Artists' work can be viewed and purchased at *http://www.pleinairfl.com/index.cfm/m/117/fuseaction/art.artistList*

Nancy King Mertz

CONGRATULATIONS SUE CERULEAN

Congratulations to our own Board of Directors member, naturalist, speaker and author extraordinaire, Sue Cerulean. Sue recently won the GOLD AWARD FOR NON-FICTION at the 10th Annual Florida Book Award Competition for her book, "Coming to Pass: Florida's Coastal Islands in a Gulf of Change" (University of Georgia Press) This book is an homage to St. Vincent Island as well as other barrier islands near by with Sue sharing her passion for the future health of our refuge. David Moynahan's photographs create a perfect complement to her words.

Support the University of Georgia Press and order a book from their website www.ugapress.org/index.php/books/coming_pass/

ST. VINCENT ISLAND ANTHEM

Story and Interview* by Susan Cerulean

Last May, New Mexican composer and singer Becky Reardon, and Tallahassee's beloved Velma Frye joined me for a week to explore St. Vincent Island,. The island (a National Wildlife Refuge) became both inspiration and subject of an anthem written by the two musicians. I was the privileged observer of their creative process—the only observer, besides the dolphins and the wild birds. My contribution was to introduce the artists to the island and its wildlife, guiding them on foot and by kayak, and with my husband Jeff in our motor boat. The recent illegal takeover of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, as well as unspeakable forays against Florida's state parks and public lands, remind me that we need every kind of advocacy and passionate outcry on behalf of our wild places.

If you'd like to hear our Refuge's new anthem accompanying pictures by David Moynahan, click here: https://youtu.be/bN9XlbJRyno Please read on to immerse yourself in the creative processes of Velma Frye and Becky Reardon. (* excerpts from Sue's question and answer, taken from a series of conversations and interviews shared this past year.)

Sue: Tell me why you both devoted so much time to composing and recording this song.
Becky: As I read your book, *Coming to Pass: Florida's Coastal Islands in a Gulf of Change*, I began to dream of an adventure, a collaboration between you and Velma and me at Indian Pass. I knew we had just the right combination of skills.
Velma: We felt like St. Vincent Island needed an anthem. Whenever someone sings it, they will be reminded about how beautiful this Refuge is, and why we should protect it.

Sue: Tell me about *Heyo, hey-ai-yah.* What does that mean?
Becky: *Heyo, hey-ai-yah* is a vocable, words that comes from no particular language, at least no human language. I use vocables to express the language of the world--whatever the birds are singing in, or the whales. Think about the howls of the wolves, or sounds made by human babies before they settle on what we think of as language. Those are vocables.

So there you have it: A week I'll never forget, and a gift of a song we hope is sung widely, especially in Gulf and Franklin counties. I will leave you with a fragment of a verse that didn't make the final cut, but summarizes the whole of my personal commitment to the island.

"From my small kayak, watching the plover
I vowed that I'd never let the fight be over
Keeping St. Vincent Island, rare and free, where wild things live in harmony
St. Vincent Island, let it be, forever a sanctuary!"

On behalf of St. Vincent Island, heartfelt gratitude to Becky Reardon and Velma Frye!

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

Now more than ever we need VOLUNTEERS for the refuge and added "Friends" to help with Supporters programs and committees! With so much happening on the refuge in addition to the ongoing need to stretch VERY limited funding and resources for our USFWS partners WE NEED YOU! If you think you might be interested please contact our Volunteer Committee Chair, Lisa Johnston (pictured) via our email address: **stvincentislandfriends@gmail.com**. She can tell you all about the opportunities we have for 2016! From Turtle Patrol to committee support, fund raising and beach clean ups there is something for everyone.

Photo credits: Debbie Hooper
deb@joebay.com

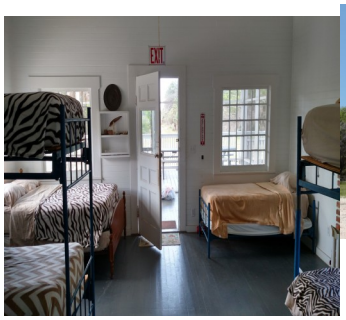
SEA TURTLE PATROL

Photo credits: Debbie Hooper

At least every other year volunteers must attend a mandatory Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC) training in Panama City Florida. In addition we meet on the island every year prior to the start of the nesting season to go over protocol, safety and vehicle maintenance procedures. Along with veteran turtle patrol volunteers like Mike and Robin Vgroepe (pictured) we welcomed several new turtle patrol volunteers this year!!

SPRING CLEANING

Volunteers helped clean and prepped the historic cabin for several research groups that stayed on the island in May (new sheets/ blankets and a bit of scrubbing really made it look nice!)



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY

Volunteers were treated by Terry Peacock, Refuge Complex Manager and John Stark, St. Vincent NWR Refuge Manager to a wonderful relaxing day and lunch on the island. Great time to enjoy nature and friendships.

Photo credits: Debbie Hooper
deb@joebay.com

Meet New Board Members
Mary Balthrop & Jim Hughes

We have recently had some changes in our Board of Directors. Michael Turrisi stepped down shortly after our annual meeting and we have since added two new Directors, Mary Balthrop and Jim Hughes. In this edition we would like to introduce them both.

Mary Balthrop recently retired from Florida State University (FSU) Coastal & Marine Laboratory where she served as Associate Director from 2010 to 2016. Prior to the marine lab, Mary was on the FSU International Programs staff, serving at the FSU London Center, in London, England, from 1997 to 2004, including as Director. She began the FSU Programs in Ireland and Australia, serving as the program leader and teaching in these locations. After her return to the U.S., Mary was the International Programs Faculty Services Director and taught sociology on main campus. She will lead and teach the FSU Ireland Program in Dublin, Ireland for 6 weeks in summer 2017. She also serves on the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve Advisory Committee. Home for Mary is at St. Teresa Beach in Franklin County. Until his death in 2011, Mary was married for 38 years to Van Lewis. She has two daughters and four grandchildren. Mary enjoys boating on the Gulf in her little 40 year old 13 foot Boston Whaler, kayaking the local rivers, and her decades-long practice of yoga and meditation. She looks forward every year to sharing the month of July with her grandchildren at St. Teresa, playing on the mud flats, and seining for critters to observe in the saltwater aquarium on the front porch.

Jim Hughes Jim's career spanned over 40 years as Georgia Public Schools educator and coach. He served as Head Coach and Athletic Director at Thomasville High School (1970-1982) and Colquitt County High School (1983-1999). Dr. Hughes was inducted into the Thomasville/Thomas County Sports Hall of Fame (1999), and the Moultrie/Colquitt County Sports Hall of Fame (2000). He was also inducted into the Georgia Athletic Coaches Association (GACA) Sports Hall of Fame (2009), and most recently was inducted into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2014. Retired from coaching 2000, hired as Executive Director at Georgia Industries for the Blind (Bainbridge) where he served thirteen (13) years before retiring in June of 2013. Currently Jim alternates living in Thomasville, GA and Cape San Blas with wife, Lillian, also a retired public school teacher and administrator. They have been married 44 years with 3 adult children and 4 grandchildren.

Join us on Facebook , Twitter & Instagram

RESEARCH UPDATE

Special update by Carol Brown, Research Committee Lead

Neotropical Migratory Bird research:

The team from Delaware State University was on the island from April 10 through May 9. Two tours were able to visit the research site at Road 5 and B. There were four graduate students and the lead researcher (briefly) who stayed at the cabin and conducted research using mist nets on site. The research this year was conducted solely on St. Vincent.

The cost to the Supporters was primarily for diesel fuel used to power the cabin. Dr. Heckscher has advised that their project funding from NOAA was undecided. He asked if they could work with the Supporters to provide in-kind support should they need to do matching grant requirements for future grant requests and we are supporting that approach.

Sea Turtle Research- FSU- Dr. Mariana Fuentes

Dr Fuentes will be on the island from June 24 through July 1, doing research at night. She has agreed to help publicize our turtle adoption program and provide photographs and updates as part of her research. She was unable to secure full grant funding for the project and so the Supporters will be offering financial assistance of up to $600 to cover cost of diesel at the cabin where the research team members will stay.

TOUR UPDATE

Tours for the remainder of 2016 and 2017 dates have not yet been set; however in May Carol Brown led a review of the 2015-2016 activities and set up our goals and objectives for tours including performance and enhancing the experience based on attendee feedback. This past tour season ended May 4, 2016 with the International Migratory Bird Day tour. The Supporters provided fourteen (14) tours over the season starting with the weeklong Wild Week tours in October. Tours are general provided during winter and spring twice a month on Wednesdays. Average attendance was seventeen to eighteen. Currently we have three volunteer drivers and three interpretive guides that rotate responsibilities based on availability.

2016
SUPPORTERS OF ST.VINCENT, NWR ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

Our annual membership meeting was held February 21, 2016 at the St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Reserve Center. Thank you to the Board and volunteers for their tireless work setting this meeting up for success. From lunch to our guest speaker, Dr. Mariana Fuentes, the gathering offered something for everyone. Attendees were treated to a first viewing of a marvelous cinematic video shot on St. Vincent Island produced by cinematographer Ian Edward Weir. After some opening remarks by our Treasurer, Audrey Schmidt, Sue Cerulean and her Musical Trio led the audience in singing the new St. Vincent NWR anthem crafted especially for the refuge.

Lifetime memberships were awarded to collaborators and passionate supporters Ian Edward Weir, Tim Croft (editor of the Port St. Joe Star), and Michael Allen (manager of local radio station WOYS). The business portion of the meeting provided an overview of the 2015 strategic planning process and four key focus areas (shared in previous newsletters). Members were asked to continue their engagement through active membership, recruit at least one other friend or family member to join, advocate for the National Refuge System and St. Vincent NWR in particular and get engaged in committees or other volunteer activities when possible. The membership voted to approve the amended By-Laws and the slate of officers and board directors for 2016. Nominations from the floor were called for; there were none.

John Stark, St. Vincent NWR refuge manager was introduced and provided a review of the importance of partnership with Friends' organizations with the USFWS and the incredible value that the Supporters of St. Vincent NWR provides to the refuge. He also gave a brief update of the current activities and plans for 2016.

Carol Brown introduced our guest speaker, Dr. Mariana Fuentes. Dr. Fuentes gave a very interesting talk about her research regarding marine sea turtles. Dr. Fuentes will be conducting marine turtle tagging on the refuge this summer. Approximately sixty people were in attendance. The total money received was $2,062.25 including memberships (renewal and new) and donations.