

Sailing St. Croix, US Virgin Islands : leave paradise in its place

VINE

Virgin Islands Network of
Environmental Educators

Seeing a need to improve environmental and cultural education opportunities throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands, the V.I. Network of Environmental Educators (VINE) was formed in August 2004 by educators wanting to share information and community contacts. Co-founded by Captain Dee, VINE members work together to offer environmental education programs and provide resources for teachers and the community.

VINE is actively developing new programs and materials for use on a number of issues, including the impacts of water pollution, the role of mangroves in the marine environment, the life cycle of the leatherback sea turtle, energy conservation, the cultural history of the virgin islands and preventing soil erosion to name a few.

Leave Paradise In Its Place

Over 2.25 million people visit the US Virgin Islands every year. Visitors come here to see the beauty of our natural resources, the crystal blue waters, the colorful fish and corals, not to mention the wonderful climate.

Many of us do not realize that shells, sand and corals that look like great gifts and treasures to take home have purpose in sustaining the many eco-systems in the marine environment. You can contribute to the conservation of our natural

resources by following the simple rule of "look but don't touch or take". Think about it! If each person were to take one shell or one piece of coral, we would quickly have nothing left. Many small creatures that depend on abandoned shells to hide and protect themselves would become defenseless.

Old Conch shells are hideouts for octopus and other sea creatures. Leave them as a shelter or haven for sea life.

Pieces of coral and other marine life that wash up on the shore today, break down and help form the sandy white beaches of tomorrow. Please, do not remove anything other than trash from the beach.

The numbers of fish and live has decreased over the years for many reasons. Please do not contribute to the demise of our marine life, coral reefs and beaches by taking coral, shells, and beach sand.

Please respect the Virgin Islands natural resources. We want you and your friends to continue to enjoy the Virgin Islands that we know and love.

Sea Star and sand dollars are living animals. They find food in shallow sea grass beds. Enjoy them by observing them in their natural habitats.

Endangered sea turtles use our beaches by making nests

and laying eggs under the sand. Be careful where you place umbrellas and other beach items.

Make sure your trip is an enjoyable one, you may take as many pictures as you want, but please "Leave Paradise In It's Place".

Did you know that?

All native plants and animals of the USVI are protected under the Indigenous Species Act. It is illegal to take, catch, possess, injure, harass, or kill any native animal, or plant. All fish (unless harvested for food), coral, shells, and other marine life are protected. You will not be permitted to leave the territory with shells, corals or any other marine life in your possession.

Hermit crabs change their sea shell houses as they grow. Assure these creatures a home by leaving empty shells on beaches and in the waters.

For more information about VINE and its activities and resources please visit <http://www.usvircd.org/VINE>