

Mr. Ben H. Thompson

Page 2.

January 15, 1958

Animals and plants that are compelled to remain on small insular units can become unnaturally modified by gene action.

In addition to outlying islands acting as modified buffer areas, they all serve as parts of an important corridor permitting natural evolution by dispersal in animals and plants. Lakes and ponds of brackish water on the outlying islands are needed by the several shore-birds and water-birds that inhabit the general area of the park. Control of marine waters enclosed within the proposed park boundary permits effectively controlling boat traffic and only then can adequate sanctuaries be created for the three species of marine turtles and other wary forms of marine life.

Esthetic considerations: The island and cays adjacent to St. John complement the Virgin Islands Park and are necessary in creating the desirable background of remoteness and primitiveness.

Political considerations: The creation of an international park by Great Britain and the United States would be a further useful example of international cooperation.

STATEMENT ON INDIVIDUAL ISLANDS

Dog Island supports the best examples of vegetation adapted to exist under strong desiccating winds and supports the most extensive field seen of barrel cactus (Cactus intortus). Many hummingbirds from nearby Little St. James Island visit these cacti to feed on the cactus nectar. During our short stay on this island, 11 different kinds of water and shore-birds utilized the brackish pond. This island supports also a bat cave and has more 'character' than any other island of equivalent size. Most of the island can be visited on foot.

Little St. James Island has the best stand of the poisonous manchineel tree; the entire north beach is lined with an uninterrupted stand of these interesting trees. The coral beach superimposed on the sandy beach, although recently disturbed by excavation for commercial sand, and the calcareous tufa along the water level of the beach is unusual. One old Danish site adds interest to this island.

Great St. James Island has three brackish ponds used by many kinds of water-birds and shore-birds. Because brackish and fresh-water ponds are important bird habitat and because there are but few ponds in the National Park area, they would serve as important breeding and feeding areas. This island is one of the most favorable areas for snakes.

East end of St. Thomas Island is needed for preserving native species the individuals of which normally range from this island to, and east of, St. John. A freeway for natural animal and plant dispersal is essential for the preservation of the natural plant and animal communities on St. John Island. In the foreseeable future, visits to the Virgin Islands National Park (St. John) will