

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Renowned Photographer Presents 'Birds Of St. Croix' Exhibit At Lew Muckle School

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ST. CROIX -- St. Croix's birds were in the spotlight at Lew Muckle Elementary School's Learning With A Purpose summer program on Monday, July 17. Kindergarten to 5th grade summer school students heard renowned architect and photographer, Charles Peters describe the characteristics of about 54 species of birds in his "Birds of St. Croix" photo exhibit.

The poster-sized photos were displayed on two easels with names identifying each specie, from the fowl (chicken) around the yard, and the heron flying in the darkness of the night, to the mountain dove perching high on a treetop. All of the species in the display are indigenous to St. Croix, Peters explained.

Students were mesmerized as Peters presented on the habitats of most of the birds. The inquisitive students asked several questions about the habitats or natural communities of the birds on St. Croix. The photographer identified the Lagoon area in Christiansted as an ideal location for bird-watching. He added that bird communities are found in the ocean and bays, wetlands, dry forest, moist forest, and developed areas on St. Croix. For example, he said, the snowy egret can be found in the wetlands.

“What does the egret eat?” asked student Jahnessa Charlemagne. “Lizards, worms, and fish,” replied Peters, adding, “St. Croix has a large population of the great egret.” Another student was curious about the turkey, asking if it is a bird. A third grade student raised her hand and said that “humming birds fly backwards.” “That’s right! Where did you learn that?” asked the photographer, explaining, “It is the only bird that flies backwards and is the most popular bird in the Caribbean.”

The photographer, who served on the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Board, also took an environmental message to the students.

“What can we do to protect our environment,” he began, adding, “We need a landscape plan. We need more trees to keep birds flourishing on the island. The West Indian whistling duck moved out because of development and the closing off of some wetland areas.” Peters encouraged the students to read and help preserve the environment.

Peters, who was a prominent photographer on the U.S. Mainland, transitioned from architect and builder to photography. He said the “Birds of St. Croix” photo collection began in 2007 and is still growing. The photographer plans to launch a public exhibit of his photographs at the Florence A.S. Williams Public Library in Christiansted in August 2017.

Muckle School Summer Program Administrator Delicia Espinosa said students followed through on the “Birds of St. Croix” presentation with a field trip to Salt River Ecological Preserve on Wednesday, July 19.