

THE IBIS



January 2015, Jay Bushnell, editor

The IBIS is the journal publication of The Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges

OUR MISSION

is to provide active advocacy and physical support for the successful stewardship of the Refuges.

Advocating

Educating

Volunteering

Funding

Fellowship



Presidents Message

On behalf of the Friends of Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge board of directors let me wish you and yours a very healthy and happy 2015. We enjoyed a successful and productive 2014, thanks to your help and involvement. Your continued support will help improve our refuges in 2015. Just two noteworthy items include the significant yearlong initiative to eradicate invasive plants, namely Brazilian Pepper, from our refuges. This initiative, led by board member Roger McDaniels and funded by grants removed countless Brazilian Pepper plants and trees. Another significant accomplishment was the continuous improvement in our website and electronic communications by our Communications Committee, chaired by board member Peg Hall.

I hope to see you at our Friends Annual Meeting and Refuge Open House on February 28 at Refuge Headquarters where you will receive an update on numerous other 2014 programs and

accomplishments. In addition to a delicious BBQ lunch, Dr. Coleman Sheehy, III, will give a presentation on the Ecology of our Coastal Islands. Following lunch, there will be fun filled activities in the Refuge. In 4th quarter 2014, a nominations committee was formed to develop a slate for vacated slots on the Friends board. Their recommendations will be presented to you for approval at the Annual Membership meeting. The Friends board continues to work diligently on your behalf, and we thank you for your membership and support of the Refuges.

Your president, Bob Hudson

Renewal Time

If you have not yet renewed your membership, this is a reminder that annual membership dues begin in January. You can visit our web page, FriendsofRefuges.org for an application. We now have access to Paypal for dues payment. In the Search column, type join then select either standard join option and mail in payment or Membership Payment for PayPal.



Refuge Open House and Friends Annual Meeting

Saturday Feb, 28th from 9:00 AM-3:30 PM @ Refuge HQ off CR 347

Be sure to mark your calendar for another great day of fellowship, great food, a silent auction and new learning experiences. Come early to mix and mingle, affirm your membership status, check out the merchandise and the silent auction items. The program starts at 10:00 AM. This once a year event is when you get an update of what is going on at the refuges. It is also when you elect a new Friends board for vacated positions. As elected in 2014 president-elect, Greg Lang will fill the position of

president for 2015. The nominating committee of Roger McDaniels, Greg Lang and Katherine Dunlap are proud to present the following slate for 2015: Maria Sgambati as president-elect a one year position, Ed DeHaan, Jaime Jerrels, Roger McDaniels as directors for another 2 year term, and new members, Bill Dummitt and Kit Lane for 2 year terms as directors. Nominations may be made from the general membership as long as those nominees are willing to serve.

Our keynote speaker this year is Dr. Coleman Sheehy, III from the University of Florida. Many of you know of Coleman from his talks on the rookery and the cotton mouth moccasins on Sea Horse Key. No doubt he will touch on this but his talk will focus on "The Ecology of our Coastal Islands." As always, the public is invited to join the presentation and the



afternoon activities but they would have to pay for the luncheon. Not a bad deal for \$10/person and even better deal if they join the Friends group. Lunch will again be prepared by none other Kenny

McCain. Yep, you read it right. We are delighted that Kenny has agreed to again prepare his world famous chicken and ribs with, we hope swamp cabbage. There will be many other fixing.

The afternoon will be devoted to the refuge staff educating us to the multiple things they do and how it is done. It is always very informative and enjoyable.

Annual Great Suwannee River Cleanup

by Jay Bushnell & Richard Herman

This will make the 4th year that the Friends and refuge staff have participated in the Suwannee River Clean up. This year was a three prong attack at different times with Richard Herman and Debbie Meeks organizing the Town of Suwanne, Jay Bushnell and Vic Doig organizing Fowlers' Bluff and Toni Collins spear heading the Camp Azalea stretch of the river.

The clean up seems to be making a difference with less being collected. Yet we still collected 1740

lbs from the Fowler's Bluff site. Special thanks should be given to Waste Pro for providing trash



collection at Fowlers Bluff. Special thanks to John Bamford, Bob McKinstry, Jay Bushnell and refuge staff for

providing boats at the Bluff.

At Suwannee there were 18 hardy souls who braved 50 degree temps with 25 MPH winds, to collect 130

lbs. of various trashes (one tire, one barrel). All were pleasantly surprised



at the lack of litter, a lot of which was collected in the canals by kayakers/canoers.

They also enjoyed a great lunch of smoked chicken (delicious), pulled pork, baked beans, coleslaw, and chips and iced tea provided by one of the local merchants.

Meet Our New Law Enforcement

Officer interview by Jay Bushnell

David Murphy grew up in Mississippi near Biloxi. In 2005, he worked in the Mississippi State Forestry system. In 2006, he started to work for the



FWS at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane refuge. Next he went through the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center program. On completion of

his training he began work at the North Mississippi Refuge Complex and Fort Campbell Military Base in Tennessee. He came to us in November and has been scrambling to catch up ever since.

David likes to fish and hunt but also recognizes that his job makes that a little problematic. He related that he got taken with turkey hunting last year in cold Illinois. Please welcome David.

Meet our Volunteers in Residence

by Debbie Meeks

Some National Wildlife Refuges, including the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, recruit resident volunteers for a few months of the year to help with various projects and programs. That is how Maine residents Carolyn Nobbs and Charlie Adkins came to spend their winters volunteering in Florida.

This is their second season living and working on the



Dixie county side of the Lower Suwannee refuge. One of their most time consuming chores is picking up litter. Litter seems to jump out for Carolyn, she spots it long before most people could. From her truck she can even identify the type, "that's a peanut container, we get lots of those for some reason".

So far this year, in only 36 days, they collected 98 garbage bags which is over 1000 pounds. In addition to the usual bottles and cans they retrieved some unusual things including a car fender, tires, two 55 pound tractor wheel weights and a fishing net.

Charlie wonders why Florida doesn't offer a container deposit like their home state of Maine. "Most of these cans wouldn't be here if there was a nickel deposit and the ones we did pick up could buy our lunch" he says. Currently only 11 states have "bottle bill" legislation.

It is often the case, once you start picking up litter you can't stop noticing it. This seems to have happened to Charlie and Carolyn who also join

Suwannee town's weekly trash group, the Litter Grabbers. Monday mornings finds the group picking up trash along the town's streets. They typically gather two or three garbage bags of bottles, cans, cups and ice bags. At least that litter will not make its way into the surrounding refuge.

Friends Science Campers 'Chill' out At Seahorse Key Marine Lab

by Maria Sgambati

Thirteen members of the Friends participated in Seahorse Key's Adult Science Camp on November 2 and 3rd. Although the temperature was chilly, campers warmed up to hands on activities with marine organisms led UF's Dr. Gustav Pauley and Patrick Norby. They were treated to a talk by Guinnessa Mahar, a doctoral student about her research into historical fishing practices in the area. Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory Associate Director, Dr. Coleman Sheehy shared his research on the snake and bird insular mutualism at Seahorse Key, an ecological ecosystem that might be unique in the world. Maria Sgambati filled people in on education and outreach activities at Seahorse Key and



welcomed ideas about how SKML and the friends group can work more closely together. Nine campers spent the night in the lighthouse and enjoyed fish stew a-la John McPherson and the delicious Donna Bushnell

coconut cake. Between classes, participants had time to explore the beach, take photographs, and drink in the view from the light station. Launched in 2013, the two-day adult camp provides for an in-depth learning experience into the resources at Seahorse Key and the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge, while helping to support Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory's ongoing operations.

Volunteer Projects of Interest

The Friends coordinate project through out the year that may interest you. Here are some projects going on right now:

- Work day to upgrade the River Walk trail. Building benches, cleaning the kiosks, trimming brush, shoveling shell, and general sprucing up the trail are all on the agenda. A date

will be scheduled soon. If you are interested contact John or Donna Thalacker at 352-543-6738 or email johnathalacker@hotmail.com.

- Work day for the butterfly garden. Here there is a need to have someone who would be willing to be involved with this project year round but a work day will also be scheduled to weed, mulch and plan where to plant new native flowers. If you are interested contact Donna Thalacker at 352-543-6738 or Jay Bushnell at 352-493-1807 or djbushne@bellsouth.net.

- Work days to remove Brazilian Pepper. Based on a grant that the Friends received, there has been ongoing work to remove BP in the refuge. Roger McDaniels has been scheduling work days on



Tuesdays. The goal is to complete the Andrews track this spring. To learn more contact Roger at 352-543-5232 or rogermac4@yahoo.com

- Friends members will begin a Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys Biological Inventory. The Friends organization has begun working with the Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory on developing a database of biota of the two refuges. The goal is to document members' sightings of wildlife and plants that may ultimately be of useful to refuge managers and others for conservation purposes. Records will be uploaded to the free online iNaturalist database, which will store and serve up our data, and provide opportunities for expert identification and verification. Visit the website <http://www.inaturalist.org>, go to "projects," and search for the project "Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys" to see the records uploaded so far. The database is particularly useful if photographs are posted, and metadata (i.e. date and time) are automatically updated from the image files. Records can also be uploaded from an "app" available free for smartphones (Apple ios or Android), and latitude and longitude are also uploaded automatically from photos made with these devices. Otherwise location data can be recorded by using a handy map feature. All Friends members are invited to participate and contribute records to the database. The iNaturalist

program has a few quirks, and if you have trouble uploading information, feel free to contact Russ Hall (russ@lighthallbooks.com) for assistance.

Promoting Art in Nature

by Bev Ringenberg

The Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge partnered with the Cedar Key Arts Center this year to sponsor a new mural featuring the 2015 Old Florida Celebration of the Arts design contest theme, "Seeing the Art in Nature." The artwork invites visitors to experience nature's artwork in the wildlife refuges surrounding Cedar Key.

Local artist, Travis Parks, designed and painted this mural with the hope of "inspiring people to get out and enjoy all the beauty around us." The peaceful openness of the refuges waterways and flats are contrasted against the quiet darkness of the scrub. As you look closely you can see a kayaker off in the distance and a hiker leaving the forested area, all overseen by a Great White Heron, a three "painted" turtles and a kingfisher.

Thanks also goes to Stoney Smith of Hudson Foods, Inc. who supported the project by making the northeast wall of the "CK gas station" Jiffy available for the project. A dedication plaque commemorating the 51st Annual Spring Arts Festival was installed on Monday, January 19. More information about the festival which will be on March 28 & 29 this year can be found on the festival website at www.CedarKeyArtsFestival.com.

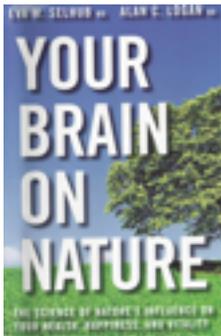


Donna Bushnell, Bob Hudson, Bev Ringenberg and Stoney Smith

Book Review

Seldom, Eva & Logan, Alan, (2012), Your Brain on Nature, by Jay Bushnell

What these authors describe that is based on scientific research, may very well confirm what many of you intuitively knew. You may have sensed that being out in nature is good for your health. Yet you may not have suspected how important. Their research used EEGs, EKGs, TRSS, MRIs and studies using controls to outline how important nature is for our mental and physical health when compared to an urban environment. Turns out that chemicals called phytoncides as well as negative ions are emitted from the natural environment helping to reduce stress. Even DHEA, an important neurotransmitter is elevated when in a forest. They note that our ability to synthesize DHEA declines as we age. The Japanese refer to the experience of walking in natural environments as “forest air bathing.” They



are careful to protect and use their forest lands which make up to 64% of Japan.

Urban environments generate stress and too often lack access to healing properties in nature. The authors emphasized that there has developed a disassociation with nature. Nature based recreation has decrease 50% in the last 40 years. Too much “screen time” whether TV, over using the web

or playing computer games is beginning to negatively affect our cultural IQ. This is a reversal of the trend during the 20th century when our general IQ was increasing. This is referred to as the Flynn effect, named after James Flynn who first documented this.

This disassociation from nature goes way beyond simply the health of individuals, it affects the very structure of social interaction. The authors indicate that culturally we are becoming more narcissistic and less empathetic. As they state, “nature ...can help keep anger and impulsivity in check.” Maybe our Congress needs to have a nature retreat! Culturally, we are stressed ranking, 5th out of 151 nations. Happiness seems elusive. They cite that 75% books with happiness in the titles have been published since 2000.

Nature should be considered a form of medicine. The good news is that there are things one can do to benefit from what nature provides. Take a walk in the woods, or park, perhaps with grandchildren. Get a pet. Place a plant in your office or home. Try to

get a window room in the hospital if ever there. Evaluate your screen time. Carefully assess your diet habits and especially avoid processed foods.

I would recommend reading this book, for the sake of your own health and society.

Thank guano! A New Bat house

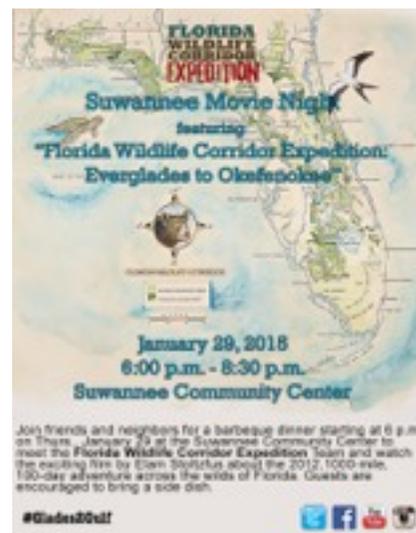
by Pam Darty

Thirteen years ago, near the headquarters of the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge the HUGE bat house was built. All these years later a second bat house was erected in hopes that the Brazilian free tail bats will move into the fresh, new house before the old one falls. Driven by instinct, about sixty thousand of the small bats live in close quarters, huddled together, like sardines. They are considered



colonial bats. Their natural homes would have been large hollow trees, but due to nearly a century of non-stop logging in the surrounding counties, there are no hollow trees large enough along the Suwannee. This large bat house provides the same habitat size, smell, and feel, as a tree would.

The bat house had to be maneuvered inch-by-inch by Jason, the front-end-loader operator to set it atop the posts already in place. After their work was done, Daniel and Jason made their own exit and let nature take its course.



**NOTICE OF EVENT-contact Debbie Meeks
278-5088**

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