

# THE IBIS

April 2014, Jay Bushnell, editor



Ann Kamzelski

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***



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the Friends of Refuges Annual Meeting and Refuge Open House in February. Because of you, we had our largest participation ever. In addition to Refuge updates and 2013 accomplishments, participants were treated to an excellent presentation about the role the Gulf of Mexico has played in U.S. history by Jack Davis, PhD. Dr. Davis is a Professor at the University of Florida.

We also took great pleasure in recognizing the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service employee of the Year, our own Kenny McCain. Then we learned that Kenny was retiring from the FWS that very day and would be working at the Seahorse Marine Lab. Still he prepared another of his wonderful BBQ lunches for the group. We all know that we have not seen the last of Kenny and we wish him well.

Following lunch, volunteers and Refuge staff conducted many different activities to introduce participants to the Refuge. There was also a paddle from Fletchers Landing on the Suwannee

River. A hearty thank you to all the volunteers and Refuge staff who made this happen. A special thanks to all the folks who contributed to the success of the silent auction.

In 2014, we are continuing to focus our efforts on specific initiatives to benefit the Refuges, and the members of the Friends group. We will give you updates during the year about our progress. For example, if you stop by Refuge HQ, don't be surprised to see a newly expanded and enhanced butterfly garden. Due to the commitment of a number of volunteers, it will be special when finished. Another example is our Communication Committee who continue to find better and more exciting ways to communicate with Friends members. Please check our website [friendsofrefuges.org](http://friendsofrefuges.org), and check us out on Facebook. You will find many updates and opportunities.

As I am sure you have heard in the news, many government agencies are being faced with reductions in spending increases. The Fish & Wildlife Service is no exception. We are extremely proud of our refuge management and staff in how they have approached these challenges with creativity and resourcefulness. We are committed to the principle that with every challenge comes opportunity and are confident that our refuge staff, working hand in hand with our volunteers, will continue to make the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges the very special places that they are.

Your president, Bob Hudson



## **Refuge update**

by Andrew Gude

In order to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and to help in fulfilling our mission, the Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) is creating National Wildlife Refuges Complexes in selected areas. Essentially, this means that some resources were combined between refuges. Putting together refuge “Complexes” is a strategy to address the declining budget situation facing the NWR’s. The Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys refuges were recently included into the North Florida NWR Complex which now includes St. Marks/St. Vincent NWRs, Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWRs, and the Crystal River NWR Complex.

As part of this strategy, in addition to continuing to manage the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys NWRs, I have also assumed management of the Crystal River NWR Complex (this includes Crystal River, Chasshowitzka, and the three Tampa Bay Refuges). I am splitting my time between the Lower Suwannee/Cedar Keys NWR and the Crystal River NWR Complex. Very capable Deputy Refuge Managers like our own Larry Woodward will work with me in carrying out day to day duties at the Refuges. I will continue to make my home in Cedar Key, and I am excited about the opportunities offered by these recent organizational changes.

## **Importance of funding the refuge system**

by Jay Bushnell

While the primary mission of the refuge system is focused on wildlife conservation, it is important to recognize that the system is an economic engine. The report, Banking on Nature, points out that in 2011 for every dollar invested there was a return of \$4.87 to the local communities. Over 70% of the revenue contributed came from non-local visitors who were attracted to the non-consumptive activities like wildlife viewing, photography and hiking in the refuges. The fact that we are having 3-4 thousand folks visiting our web page each month

verifies the fact that we are reaching a large non-local crowd!

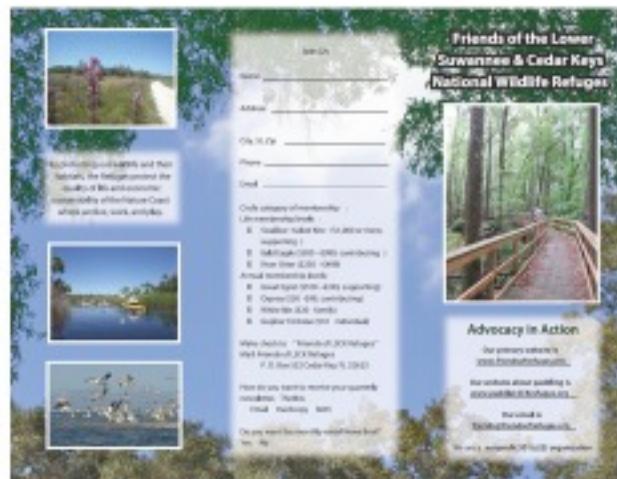
Yet Congress has not adequately supported the refuge system with full funding. When I first became involved with the Friends in 2006, funding of the 500 refuges was under \$386 million. The final budget for 2007 was up to a little over \$400 million. Now we have 561 refuges and a budget request of \$476 million is being proposed. We have not had a biologist position for years and now we have not filled three other positions.

The House and Senate Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies will be considering the 2015 budget for the refuge system. Written testimony representing our advocacy for the increased funding for the refuge system and for our two refuges will be sent to these committees strongly suggesting an increase in funding.

## **Communication Committee Report**

by Peg Hall

The Communications Team is re-designing and re-ordering two Friends brochures, and beginning work on the re-design of the nature-trail guides. *Advocacy in Action* tells who Friends are and what we do. *Adventures on the Refuges* gives



directions to ten special places on the refuges that visitors might enjoy. Both will be distributed through area Visitors Centers, restaurants, marinas, and accommodations, as well as at Refuge headquarters and in our booth at festivals.

The Team also has been tracking the use of our social media. In March, for example, we had almost 4,800 page views on our two websites: [www.friendsofrefuges.org](http://www.friendsofrefuges.org) and [www.paddleLSCKrefuges.org](http://www.paddleLSCKrefuges.org). Our Facebook page was viewed by almost 700 people. Finally, more than 200 people read March email News Brief.

### **Recent Findings of the Lower Suwannee Archaeological Survey**

by Dr. Kenneth Sassaman

In the past year the Lower Suwannee Archaeological Survey of the University of Florida has conducted test excavations at Shell Mound and several sites on surrounding islands, plus at Butler Island, near Horseshoe Beach. Efforts to locate evidence for houses in the center of Shell Mound were unsuccessful, but additional testing on the perimeter of the U-shaped ridge



substantiated the presence of 4,000-year-old deposits below the 1,500-year-old ridge. A newly discovered complex of shell rings and ridges on one of the islands near Shell Mound extends the presence of coastal communities into the 13th and 14th centuries A.D. Abundant debris from the manufacture of shell beads suggests that local communities were producing goods for the exchange networks of Mississippian chiefdoms across the greater Southeast. A growing body of evidence connects the history of native occupation of the Lower Suwannee region to the

goings-on across the entire Gulf Coast, where people shared the experiences of sea-level rise for thousands of years. Fieldwork planned for 2014 includes the first-ever field school in July, when 15 students will descend on Cedar Key to not only conduct additional testing of sites, but also launch experiments in traditional fishing.

### **Hunting Carnivores**

by Debbie Meeks

Many of the gated spur roads off the Dixie Mainline are dotted with lavender and white flowers that hover on tall stalks a couple of inches



above the path. Blueflower butterworts are blooming. Say that fast ten times. They grow near water in shady areas along the path. As with almost all carnivorous plants. The flowers of butterworts are held high in order to reduce the possibility of trapping potential pollinators. It is difficult, at first, to trace the flower to its ground hugging rosette



of succulent leaves. Butterwort leaves digest bugs and pollen so the Refuge is a good place for them to live. Prey is captured when it sticks to the droplets of goo on the tips of stalked glands that cover the leaf surface. The movement of the prey stimulates reservoir cells at the base of the stalks to release digestive enzymes which cover the captured prey. This does not happen fast enough to help capture the prey, but it does improve digestion. Butterwort leaves also produce a strong bactericide which prevents insects from rotting while they are being digested. The leaves have been used medicinally to promote healing.

Happy carnivore hunting!

### **Behind the Gate Cedar Key Art March Exhibit**

by Jay Bushnell

The March exhibit at the Cedar Key Arts Center was titled, "Behind the Gates" focused on the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWR. Ted Palfy and Jay Bushnell ferried artist behind the



gates of the Lower Suwannee during 2013 to areas not easy to access. Thirteen artist in a



variety of mediums showed their art work during March. Ann Kamzelski did a masterful job of



hanging the work as well contributing her own work. The show was great and we hope you got a chance to see their lovely work. Here is just a small sample of the art work.

### **April 17 Nature Walk**

by Donna Thalacker

The next nature walk at the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge will be on the Refuge's River Trail on April 17. This short trail, is through a diversity of habitats, including



the Suwannee River, a freshwater swamp and drier uplands. Over 40 trees and plants have been identified to add educational value

to this walk. There will be an opportunity to see some migratory birds, including perhaps a prothonotory warbler, plenty of butterflies and maybe even an alligator in the distance. Meet Donna Thalacker at the Refuge parking lot at 9:00 A. M. for a mile long walk on Thursday, April 17.

### **Lower Suwannee NWR Expanded Butterfly Garden**

by Donna Thalacker

At the recent annual meeting of the Friends, Larry Woodward, Deputy Manager of the LSNWR, commented about the many butterflies attracted to the current butterfly garden at Refuge headquarters and how wonderful it would be if the garden was bigger. Donna Thalacker, organizer of the existing garden, asked if that meant we had permission to expand it. Receiving an affirmative, a plan to enlarge the existing 16' by 16' butterfly garden began immediately. Jay Bushnell, Linda Headley and Donna roughed out an area over 3 times the existing size and began to plan the new garden.

The first step involved choosing more flowers that were native Florida plants, plants attractive to native butterflies and other native pollinators, and plants that could thrive in the dry, sandy conditions that exist at the Refuge headquarters. Roger McDaniels, Linda Headley, and Barbara Woodmansee were key in shopping for the plants, while Donna Thalacker designed the garden and chose most of the plants for the area. Fortunately, there are already many native wildflowers in the newly expanded area that, without the influence of mowing, should rebound and fill in the spaces between the new plants.

The second step in expanding the garden was choosing an edging that looked natural, that protected the plants from mowing and other



disturbances, and that would hold up over time in the sun. Limestone rock turned out to be the first choice, but a lot of rock was needed! Friend's have friends, and Friend's member Luz Kraujalis asked her friend and neighbor, George Sresovich of Cedar Key, if he would donate rocks from his Williston farm to the project. George graciously agreed and offered to take us to his rock pile. Eight Friends members; Jay Bushnell, Donna and John Thalacker, Allan Pither, Kit Lane, Ted Palfy, John Bamford, and Luz Kraujalis followed George to his farm in a van, truck and trailer. The volunteers took less than an hour to load the rocks on the trailer. By noon, the rocks were unloaded and the butterfly gardens outlined and

edged with attractive native Florida limestone rock. Thanks especially to Jay, for getting the refuge truck and trailer to transport the over 160 linear feet of rock!



The next step will be on April 7 when the remainder of the plants are scheduled to be planted. Since there are plenty of host butterfly plants on the Refuge and in the area, the nectar plants in the garden will provide quite a show of colorful butterflies for visitors to enjoy. Please stop by and admire the new butterfly garden; which now includes not only the expanded butterfly garden, but an adjacent smaller one as well.

### **Challenges with a Representative/participatory Democracy**

by Jay Bushnell

Of course, our system of government is and has been a work in progress. Yet there are challenges that we need to consider today.

If large sums of money from vested interests outside a state or district can influence elections, we no longer have the ideal representative democracy for individuals. Question would be; whose interests are being represented?

Moreover, if folks do not carefully evaluate the campaign rhetoric for its truthfulness, they are not intelligently or fully participating in the democratic process. If they just accept the rhetoric because it reinforces their biases they are not fully participating. Yet it seems ironic that campaign lies are so prevalent when there are so many objective ways to check these claims. Here are few of my favorite sites: Factcheck.org, Politifact, OMB Watch-center for effective government, Politico, and Congress.org

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*Milli Chapel*