

The Mangrove

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Friends of Matanzas Pass Preserve

OUR ANNUAL MEETING: A BREATH OF FRESH AIR



Thanks to all who attended the Matanzas Pass Preserve Annual Meeting on Feb 8th. Barbara Manzo, Lee County Director of Parks and Recreation, was our Guest Speaker. She came to us after strolling in the preserve and her beginning remarks were about how many people she saw enjoying the natural beauty. Mention was also made of her gratitude for all the obvious work the Friends of Matanzas Pass Preserve are doing

on a regular basis.

In light of current economic conditions Lee County would not be able to support all of the natural habitats under its management without volunteer groups such as ours. Ms. Manzo gave a brief explanation of the 20/20 properties and how they are identified, purchased, and maintained. (One acre of our preserve is under the 20/20 conservation designation).

Many thanks to Barbara Manzo for giving of her time to visit with us and continue to show her appreciation for our efforts! And we had delicious refreshments as well! What could be better?

SAVE THE DATE: NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

On June 4th we will be hosting our inaugural American Hiking Society's National Trails Day® at the Preserve. We'll be joining over 1,000 organizations across the nation to celebrate the positive relationship between humans and nature, health, and conservation awareness. We're still in the planning stages, but there'll be fun activities for adults and kids, including geocaching, nature crafts, guided walks, a mini health fair, and raffles and prizes! Please join us and support your Preserve. Look for more up-to-date information on our website and our local papers.

If you'd like help please contact Julie Schwab at 239.603.4581 or Julie.schwab@alumni.ucsd.edu

The Mangrove is printed and mailed compliments of Lee County Parks and Recreation.



THE RATTLEBOX

*From Vicki Little
of Lee County
Parks & Recreation*

Call it, Seafarers Beachfront or call it Crescent Beach or call it the new County Beach Park! Whatever official name the beachfront park ends up with we'll ALL be able to enjoy this unique open space and beautiful view of the Gulf of Mexico!

This park will give beach visitors over two acres of beachfront space to spread their towels, set up their beach chairs and umbrellas and enjoy a white sandy beach in the heart of Fort Myers Beach! This **free** park will have picnic tables along the grassy area and shade trees that will buffer Estero Blvd. Three access points will allow visitors use of the park and its open sand area designed for volleyball, frisbee, ping-pong, football or many other family friendly games and beach activities.

Landscape along the beachfront steps will shield and block lighting while serving as protection for our sea turtles. Modular restroom facilities will be placed along the south side of the property, next to the 2 handicap parking spaces and ADA accessible beach ramp.

This prime beachfront real estate, along with the Seafarers Mall across Estero, was purchased by Lee County Board of County Commissioner 2010. After months of permitting, cleaning, clearing and planting the beautiful gem of a park will be open for public use in mid April for all Lee County residents and visitors to enjoy. Come check out the dazzling sunset!



OUR BOARD

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Dorothy Rodwell
Laurie Nienhaus

Articles, pictures, and questions for inclusion in *The Mangrove* should be sent to our P.O. Box 6561 or emailed to either:
drodwell@embarqmail.com
editor@glily.com

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends are dedicated to the preservation, protection and enhancement of the natural and fragile beauty of the Preserve; to create a legacy for future generations.



FIND US AT FACEBOOK
OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
FriendsOfMatanzasPassPreserve.org

NEED TO CONTACT US?

Call Dorothy Rodwell
at 851-7166

PROFESSOR MANGROVE'S CORNER

Dear Professor Mangrove,

I thought I saw a cotton ball hanging from a plant the other day. Am I seeing things?



What you saw is indeed a real cotton ball belonging to the Wild Cotton plant (*Gossypium hirsutum*). The two known specimens in the Preserve are found on the edge of the mangrove swamp. The Wild Cotton, both salt tolerant and drought resistant, is mainly found along coastal strands and lower coastal plains. It particularly likes small islands including barrier islands.

It exhibits a gorgeous yellow flower in the summer and its cotton balls in the fall. Birds like to use the cotton lint for nesting and in the process spreads the seeds to other areas.

Wild Cotton was almost eradicated in an effort to control the pink bole worm. Accordingly, it is both very rare and endangered. Nurseries are forbidden to sell the plant because of the worm. On the other hand, it cannot be pulled out of its natural setting because it is endangered. Go figure.

WHAT'S BLOOMING?



The **Virginia Creeper** (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) is a common and rapidly growing vine in the Preserve's maritime hammocks. It appears particularly fond of the Preserve's Slash Pines. Easily identified by its five leaflets, it exhibits small reddish flower clusters in the spring. Although often confused with Poison Oak and sometimes with Poison Ivy, it's not poisonous. The picture shows the Creeper in its dark red winter colors.

THE LITTLE PRESERVE WITH BIG DREAMS

Our Beach Elementary School has agreed to participate in pilot programs to be presented on March 22nd and 24th. Taught by John Kiseda, Sustainability and Education Coordinator for Lee County Parks and Recreation, the 3rd graders program is called *Home Sweet Home* and the 5th grade program *Connection Inspection*.

The committee for Children's Programs is comprised of Dorothy Rodwell, Kathy Light, Laurie Nienhaus, Pat Tardiff, and Larry Wood. Our goal is to provide high quality children's educational programs unique to Matanzas Pass Preserve. All are based on the tenets of Earth Education, No Child Left Inside, Lee County Parks and Recreation Educational Policies, US Play Coalition, and the Sunshine State Educational Standards for Science. Thanks to the generosity of Lee County Parks and Recreation and their licensing arrangements for Conceptual Encounters, we've access to exciting materials that can be customized to meet our needs.

We'll need volunteers going forward so if you wish to have some real fun, give Dorothy a call at 851-7166. We need you!

AS FOR 2010?

We asked a number of our board members what they thought the most exciting Preserve or Friends events, activities or achievements of 2010 were. Here's what we heard...

Betty Simpson: More and more people are walking the preserve and as we don't advertise our visitors must be feeling especially enthusiastic about their visit and are spreading the word. Even our local folks are beginning to realize we have a gem!

Dan Andre: A successful fund raising wine dinner is one of our greatest 2010 achievements.

Roger Johnson: The most significant developments within our organization last year were the introduction of *The Mangrove*; the involvement of Julie Schwab as grant writer and Dan Andre as Board Member and instigator of our fund raising Wine Dinner. On a less positive note, the year was marked by the passing of long time member, director and active contributor, Claude Bowyer.

Jim Rodwell: Partnering with Lee County for the development of children's education programs.

Chuck Schmidt: The most significant event is always on workdays when Boss Rodwell says it's time for a water break – and when we make a dent in the invasive nickerbean.

Roxie Smith: Our most significant event of 2010 was the fund raising wine dinner which, sadly, I could not attend. But beyond that, I feel it is most significant that there are five board members who have been there from the beginning – since the early 1990's. That says much about the Friends of Matanzas Pass and the Preserve itself.

4TH ANNUAL PLANT SALE



We held our fourth annual plant sale on January 15 in the Topps parking lot with most cooperative weather. John Sibley, of the All Native Nursery brought a truck of plants specific to a barrier island and which are found in the Preserve - Wild Coffee, Jamaican Caper, Blanket Flower, Silver Buttonwood, and Fire Bush.

Cathy Lewis from the Town of Fort Myers Beach was on hand promoting the Town's rain barrel program and the Town's Marine Resources Tasks Force manned a table with literature on the Seascape program. A number of Friends turned out to help with the sale.

The Friends took in \$274 as its share of the plant sale proceeds and an additional \$50 in donations.

ETHNOBOTANY GUIDED WALK

I understand botany. It's the study of plants. Fairly straight forward stuff. But Ethnobotany? As the word isn't in the dictionary or spell-check, further exploration was required.

Ahhh! Ethnobotany is the interaction between people, plants, and culture. Today we may go to Winn Dixie when we need groceries, Walgreens when we require meds, and Home Depot for hardware and building supplies.

But what about the Calusa, Seminole and early pioneers of this area? Where did they go for the items we so take for granted? They, too, stayed in their "neighborhood" - the mangroves and upland hammocks.

Using the class developed by Dorothy Rodwell, Pat Tardiff now teaches us the scope of ethnobotany in her monthly tours. This modest woman, who has a true heart for the preserve, not only educates us about the plants found in the Preserve, she offers us a glimpse into the cultural past of this area and the people who lived here.

For instance, did you know the Calusas used the milky white latex sap of the strangler fig as a paint base for their ceremonial masks? We're not always talking ancient history here either. The load bearing properties of an oak branch led to the discovery of a surgical screw used to mend complex bone fractures and breaks. These new screws last twenty times longer than their predecessors? Amazing!

Pat's first tour consisted of 18 women from Chapel by the Sea. "I was nervous at first, but once you get into the Preserve and begin talking about the plants and how people survived using them, it's just neat. I love it."

Pat will continue to offer her Ethnobotany tour throughout the summer the last Wednesday of each month and, if her schedule permits, will offer the tour to private groups on other days. Those interested in taking the tour are invited to call 239-229-7356 to schedule. You'll be in for a treat.

Submitted By Jan Hladik (A Workday Regular at the Preserve)

MATANZAS PASS PRESERVE A BUSY PLACE FOR EAGLE SCOUTS



Michael Glase of Troop 734 contacted me a few months ago regarding an Eagle Scout Project for Matanzas Pass Preserve. After agreeing that benches in new areas of the Preserve were needed, Michael and his troop made three off-site from recycled material and placed them on January 22. As you can see from the photo, the benches are well made and are placed using concrete. They'll last a long time.

Joshua Doenitz, also of Troop 734, has placed three well constructed bat houses in the Preserve for his Eagle Scout Project. Much research went into this project. The inside walls are constructed so the bats have something to cling to when inside and the bottoms are open so waste can fall out. The houses must sit atop a pole in order for the bats to be safe from predators. Joshua received a donation of pipe from Florida Power and Light.

Many thanks for the great Eagle Scout projects benefiting the Preserve, visitors and wildlife.

Submitted by Terry Cain
Lee County Parks & Recreation
Land Stewardship Coordinator

ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK HELPS MATANZAS PASS PRESERVE

The mission of Alternative Spring Break is to engage students in an affordable, week long substance free experiential service learning project that encourages an understanding of pressing social issues. This program is one of hundreds that take place across the nation in both colleges and high schools. All are linked through the national organization Break Away.

We are fortunate that our Preserve is one of the destinations of University of Georgia students participating in ASB. These young people focus on environmental awareness and will be doing a weeks worth of mostly hands-on work beginning March 13th. While they'll begin shoreline clean-up by kayak, they'll spend the 16th removing vegetation from the Preserve.

These students they are passionate about helping the environment and improving the world we all share. Their hope is that others will recognize the importance of environmental work in communities beyond their own. They also wish to demonstrate that each person giving just a little of their time can help an entire community.

The board has allotted \$100 to buy lunch for them on their Preserve workday. We welcome these wise young people to our island and to Matanzas Pass Preserve.

WE'RE ON TRIP ADVISOR!

Dan Andre put our Preserve on Trip Advisor and currently there is one review. We are asking that our members and those you know who have visited the Preserve take the time to visit Trip Advisor and write their own review. This, of course, is an example of guerilla marketing at its best!

DID YOU KNOW? Students and faculty from Edison State College, FGCU students and ECO-Action Service Team have all appeared at our work days. FGCU Colloquium classes use our guided walks as field trips for understanding the unique ecological features of our local environment.

We've 60 Members!

That's One Per Acre!
Congratulations to
Sandy Campfredano for
being our 60th member!



Friends at the Shrimp Festival Parade

INTRODUCING OUR TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS



After having lived on the beach for a year and deciding she was going to make it her permanent home, Julie Schwab was ready to get involved in something on Fort Myers Beach. Luckily for us, she chose The Friends of Matanzas Pass Preserve.

"Conservation is my hot button topic. It's been a

passion of mine since I was a child."

While Julie wouldn't mind actually working in the Preserve, she feels her time is best spent in helping the Friends seek much needed funds.

"While my degree is in Third World Studies, I've largely worked with non-profits, helping them fundraise."

In December, on behalf of our organization, she submitted a grant to the American Hiking Society's National Trails Fund. We will know in April if it will be awarded.

And what else would she like to help the Friends accomplish?

"I'd like to see a larger membership as well as more education, community awareness and outreach. It's not just about our Preserve. The values and benefits of conservation and preservation people learn here can be applied anywhere."

Julie recently was hired full-time at WGPU Public Media and also serves on the town's Marine Resource Task Force. John Tylek, also a member of the Friends of Matanzas Pass Preserve, is often sighted in Julie's company.

Larry Wood is in his fifth year as the principal of our Beach Elementary School and has been in education for forty years.

"Beach Elementary is a return to the days of a small school. We have great community support and I'd like to see the kids and our staff become more involved with the Preserve."

Students at the school are often rewarded with trips to the Preserve – such as after the writing portion of the FCAT testing when the fourth graders were treated to doughnuts on the Preserve's dock. The school and the Preserve are a natural combination, especially given our proximity to one another."

And what does he feel he brings to his role as board member?

"I think I bring a lot of enthusiasm and a willingness to make decisions. I'm looking forward to working with the existing board, who have already done a great job of maintaining this gem of ours. I'd also like to use my sphere of influence as principal to engage not only our students, but also our parents and teachers. I'm happy to act as spokesman."

When asked if there was anything more he'd like to add, he replied, "Working at Beach Elementary *and* in paradise? That makes me the luckiest person on earth."

This man with a large heart for his students has most certainly added to our luck!



WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN US?

To join, fill out the membership application and return along with your annual dues to:

Friends of Matanzas Pass Preserve, Inc.

P.O. Box 6561

Ft. Myers Beach, FL 33932

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Types of membership: Individual \$10/yr _____ Life Membership \$100 _____

I'd like to donate an additional amount of: _____

Amount enclosed: _____

THE WILDFLOWERS OF FORT MYERS BEACH
NOTECARDS UNVEILED AT WINE DINNER



Cat Claw Blackbeard



Snowberry



Poor Joe

These notecards, lovely for both personal use and as a gift to others, are photographs of wildflowers growing in Matanzas Pass Preserve. Featured are such plants as *Kiss Me Quick*, *Cat Claw Blackbeard*, *Wild Cotton*, *Butterfly Orchid*, *Snowberry* and *Blanket Flower*. Photos were taken by Jim and Dorothy Rodwell during 2010. The cost is \$15 for a package of six cards and envelopes and 100% of the profits go back to the Friends. Call Dorothy at 851-7166 to order.

HERE'S A PEEK AT OUR SPRING SCHEDULE:

Tuesdays: Friends Meeting at Bay Oaks, 4:30 p.m. – April 12, May 10, June 14

Wednesdays Ethnobotany Walk - 9:30 a.m. – April 27, May 25, June 29

Wednesdays: Stress Detox Zone at the Preserve Walk - 9:30 a.m.– April 13, May 11, June 8

Thursday: Matanzas Mangrove Walk 9:30 a.m. – April 7, 14, 21, 28, May 5 & **(Wed)** June 15

Saturday: Workdays in the Preserve - 8:00 a.m. – April 2, 16, 30 & May 14, 28 & June 11, 25

Important Note: As Preserve work days can change, please call Pat Gano at 745-5970 or check www.friendsofmatanzaspaspreserve.org or to be sure a particular date has not been rescheduled.

SPECIAL DATES & LARGER EVENTS BEYOND OUR PRESERVE

Great American Cleanup/Earth Day Trash Bash – April 16

Earth Day – April 22

National Trails Day – June 4th

Also, on May 2nd, Dorothy Rodwell will be speaking to the Fort Myers Beach Garden Club on Ethnobotany.

FRIENDS OF MATANZAS PASS PRESERVE

PO Box 6561

Fort Myers Beach, Florida 33931