



Connections

Newsletter for Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve

September 2010

Gathering of Friends 2010-2011 Program Schedule

Tuesday, December 14, 2010 6:00 pm

Holiday Potluck

Bring your specialty. Not just Desserts this year!

Tuesday, January 25, 2011 7:00 pm

Bats!

Allyson Webb

Florida Gulf Coast University

Tuesday February 22, 2011 7:00 pm

Where Have all the Honeybee Colonies Gone?,

Dr. Jamie Ellis, Professor of Entomology

University of Florida

Tuesday, March 22, 2011 7:00 pm

Author Charles Sobczak

Living Sanibel and Alligators, Sharks and Panthers.

Tuesday, April 26, 2011 7:00 pm

State of the Slough, 2011

Bob Repenning

Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve Land Steward

Friends Second Annual Photography Contest

The second annual Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve Photo Contest is underway. **The rules and entry information are included in this issue and on line at www.sloughpreserve.org.**

You are cordially invited to submit your best pictures to the contest. This event is an opportunity for you to share your beautiful views of this very special natural area and its *native* wildlife.

The judges for this years competition are:

- *Geoff Coe*, professional photographer, Slough volunteer and Friends member,
- *James Mathisen*, US Fish and Wildlife Service Ranger and photography specialist,
- *Charles O'Connor*, Vice President and Education Chair for Friends and a retired professional photographer for US Fish and Game.

Entries will be accepted until 3:00 pm Wednesday, December 15, 2010 at the Interpretive Center at the Slough, 7791 Penzance Blvd. in Fort Myers. If there are any questions, please call the Friends at 239-533-7557.

SUBMIT YOUR BEST SHOTS OF THE SLOUGH—YOU KNOW YOU HAVE THEM!!!

NEW SIGNS AT THE SLOUGH



New Signs at the Amphitheater
Amie Rosen and Andy Gurri hang the signs. See pages three and four
Photo Bob Repenning

Pop Ash Pond, Before and After
Photos Carolyn Babb

Summer Camp Scholarships Are a Great Investment

by
Mary Murray and Jean Scholz



Miss Heather and the campers show off the solar oven purchased by the Friends.
Photo Carolyn Babb

This year, for the first time, the Friends supported scholarships to Summer Camp at the Slough. The camps, conducted by Lee County Parks & Recreation, are week-long experiences designed for the Junior Naturalist (ages 9-12) or Wilderness Explorer (ages 12-16). Scholarship applicants submitted a letter describing their reasons for wanting to attend camp, and readers may remember seeing excerpts in the July 2010 issue of Connections. There were thirteen applications, and thirteen scholarships granted.

Mary Murray, Slough Volunteer and Friends Board Member, had the opportunity to spend two weeks as a volunteer counselor with two of the four groups that attended Summer Camp at the Slough this year -- one week with the Junior Naturalists, and one week with the Wilderness Explorers. Seven of the Friends scholarship students were in one of the two groups. Many of the children attending camp impressed

Mary, but she was particularly impressed with the scholarship students. These campers meant business – they really wanted to be at this camp. They were attentive, involved, eager to learn

and eager to help out. There was a sister and brother who attended separate sessions, he in the younger children's group and she in the older group. Their parents, who are public school teachers, remarked repeatedly how thrilled they were with the stories the children brought home each day: new nature discoveries, new skills learned, new friendships initiated. They reported no trouble waking them up in the morning for camp – in fact, they were ready to go early. Another scholarship winner who was in the Explorers camp was a little anxious about the Wet Walk coming up on Friday. When her older sister brought her to camp on the day before the walk, and was reminded that tomorrow would be the big day, the sister exclaimed "Oh! I went on a Wet Walk with Dr O'Connor a few years ago and it was sooo cool! We saw birds, and fish, and an otter...." Well, that fixed everything for that camper.

A real star among the scholarship students was Zach Wainey. Not only was he helpful to the counselors, he was a quick learner who kept trying with complex skills like fire building. He loved camp so much that it was hard for him to leave at the end of the day. His patient mother would let him spend extra time finishing a task before leaving for the day. On the last day, Zach brought a card to the Friends thanking them for his scholarship, and making a cash donation to the Slough to thank the organization for sending him to this camp that he loved dearly. This was his own money from his hard won savings. He is now a member of Friends.

The Friends organization has done a wonderful thing bringing thirteen kids to camp at the Slough – an investment that will pay enormous dividends. These young people learned about the importance of the Slough and the value of nature, as well as a variety of skills for taking care of themselves in the wild. Through this experience they also learn about themselves, for example, how they address problems and difficulties. They take what they learn home and carry it forward in their lives. Their appreciation of the Slough is reminiscent of the Monday Group – the small band of students who, more than 30 years ago, took action to preserve this remarkable ecosystem. And by the way, the campers of 2010 loved the idea that a group of school children were responsible for the Slough being preserved.

"I feel extremely fortunate to have seen at firsthand what a great investment we are making in the future." *Mary Murray*



A few burned fingers! But they made fire!



A lesson in cooperation

Photos Carolyn Babb



Scavenger hunt in Phoebe's Garden

Along the Boardwalk.....The Falling Hours by Dotty Brown

The declining number of daylight hours brings new colors to the preserve's foliage. Yellowing leaves flutter to the boardwalk and preserve floor. Cypress needles turn their amber shade and sprinkle the marsh with an autumnal aura. Mahogany red cloaks the Red Maple. The soft humid air laden with a blend of fragrances in the early morning can be intoxicating. The serenity of the season is suddenly broken when Chicken Little's Sky begins to fall like hail stones. It is coming from a squirrel atop the Strangler Fig having breakfast on the tree's sun-ripened figs. An alligator nest was under watchful eyes for the hatching of our next generation of gators which occurred on August 26th. Come, enjoy the harvest season and watch the babies grow while walking the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve boardwalk!!



Conservation 20/20 and Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve by Robert Repenning

On July 1st the Conservation 20/20 Program added 467 acres to the Slough. I have worked with the Conservation 20/20 program to review and add lands adjacent to the Six Mile Cypress Slough. To date 1352.6 acres of land has been added to the Slough through the 20/20 program. This represents forty-two percent of the lands that make up the publicly owned portion of the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. The total acreage in the Slough is currently 3202.68 acres. By far the largest acquisition to date is the 1000.5 acres added north of State Road 82 in May and July of this year this includes the northern watershed of the Slough. This parcel contains some large cypress domes, marshes, and pine lands. Also acquired were some pasture lands that hopefully can be used for reservoirs to treat and store water to improve the hydrology of the Slough. The reservoirs themselves will provide wildlife habitat similar to Harns Marsh but within ready reach of the people of Ft Myers.

These parcels have made the news both for their environmental benefits to the Slough as well as the price. It is important to note that the staff of County Lands works under State policies and procedures that were established to avoid such controversy. Multiple appraisals are required and County staff negotiates to get a price at or below the mid point of the appraisals. To pay more it requires a supra majority of the County Commission (4 out of 5). The parcels north of State Road 82 had a number of factors that created the high price including location within the City of Ft Myers, at an Interstate exit and approved development plans for a large residential community. Two sets of appraisals were done on this property because the land values had dropped after the first set so the appraisals were up to date.



Friends President Carolyn Babb attends a site visit with the 20/20 staff of a new slough parcel added in 2007.
Photo Bob Repenning

The one factor that was not taken into account is how valuable this parcel will be to the County as a wildlife viewing recreational asset so close to town. I strongly believe with the Conservation 20/20 commitment to public access and quality land management that this parcel will become a second major destination for wildlife viewing in the Six Mile Cypress Slough watershed. An additional 218.26 acres of land will be closed on in December to complete this purchase making the total Slough acreage 3420 acres with 46% of the Slough being acquired through the 20/20 program. The current widening project for State Road 82 includes a wildlife crossing to provide wildlife connectivity to the rest of the Slough from these new parcels.

New Displays Are In! by Mary Rude

Thank you to our maintenance man *Andy Gurri* and volunteer *Arnie Rosen* for working in 95 degree heat to install our new displays. Not only did they have to endure the heat, but apparently some resident Cuban tree frogs got "hopping mad" about having their nap disturbed. (They like to tuck into the crevices above the signs.) Andy didn't know he'd need safety glasses for this part of the job!

A huge **thank you** to the **Friends** for funding this project. The total cost for the five displays including design and development as well as fabrication was \$7,239.00. The signs include two for the Amphitheater that are entitled "7 Secrets to Slough Sightings". These hints will help the visitor, especially those unfamiliar with our wetland preserve, to find wildlife and other subjects of interest.

The three new panels at Pop Ash Pond will not only help to identify the birds, but also the wildlife and plants around the pond. They should also be readable from a distance and a wheelchair. Thank you to volunteer *Wilma Keidel* for graciously allowing us to use some of her wonderful images. Staff member *Bob Repenning* was also generous with his photos. Thank you to all who contributed.



Photo Bob Repenning

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Renewing Members: Thank you for your continued support!!

Dr. & Mrs. William B. Akerly
Nancy Lou Bright & Joseph Galipeo
Brenda Brooks
Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society
Peggy Eagan
Gail Evors
Theresa Fields
Jo Ellen Kessler
Phoebe S. Obdyke **C**
Charles & Kathleen Pavlick
Jeff Rosemann & Susan Crawford
Elizabeth Schallenberg **C**
Timothy L. Snyder DDS
Rick Tully **C**
Steve & Marge Ulrich

"C" denotes Charter Member (persons who comprised the first year's membership of Friends)

Welcome New Members !!

Timothy & Amy Denger
Zach Waaney

FRIENDS MEETINGS AND GATHERINGS

IF YOU PLAN ON ATTENDING ANY OF THE FRIENDS ACTIVITIES THAT ARE LISTED ON THE FRONT PAGE EMAIL CAROLYN BABB

carolyn_babb08@comcast.net

OR

CALL THE FRIENDS AT THE INTERPRETIVE CENTER at 239-533-7557 and LEAVE A MESSAGE BY THE DAY BEFORE THE GATHERING.

THANK YOU!

Alligator on the Front Desk!!!

Did you notice the new donation jar on the desk at the Interpretive Center? Special thanks to Friends Member and Slough Land Steward **Bob Repenning** for his handy work that is now our new donation jar. Look for it on your next trip to the Interpretive Center.



Keyed In To Hidden Wildlife

by Mary Rude

Thank you to **Bill Sanders** for taking the time out of his busy schedule to create some unique art for the Slough...once again! Bill was kind enough to agree to make an answer key to the wildlife and other items that are hidden in our main Cypress Slough and Pond display. For those of you who have spotted the bobcat and woodpecker...have you seen the wren nest, snake skin or our new pig frogs - courtesy of the Friends? The guide is located at our front desk. Challenge yourself first and then check our key to see if you found them all!

HELP ALWAYS NEEDED AT FRIENDS CORNER. VOLUNTEER FOR FRIENDS FUND RAISING EFFORTS

TRASH PICKUP FOR THE SLOUGH THIRD SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH JOIN US 9:00 a.m.

SIGNS AT THE SLOUGH



Photos Carolyn Babb

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Jacquelin Cadkin
Cadkin Foundation

Carolyn Delizia Swift

Dr. William Hammond
Florida Gulf Coast Uni-
versity

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Mary Murray

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Mary Rude, Supervisor
Six Mile Cypress Slough
Preserve

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Hi to all the Friends! A million thanks to all of the renewing members and new members for the support that enables our organization to continue the Friends' mission at the Slough with the purchase of more needed signage at the amphitheater and Pop Ash Pond. The pictures in this newsletter do not do them justice. I hope that everyone can get to see them soon. There is so much information contained in them. The staff of Mary Rude, Heather Gienapp, Bob Repenning and Andy Gurri worked very hard on the signs, and it shows. The staff works every day to make the Slough the wonderful place for all to learn and enjoy. Lee County Parks and Recreation can be very proud.

Unfortunately, as Lee County employees, they are having to take "furlough days" (time off without pay due to budget constraints). The Interpretive Center has been closed one day so far due to the furlough day requirement. The public is indeed lucky that the boardwalk is accessible from shortly after sunrise until dusk even though staff will be gone on previously scheduled work days.

Lee County Department of Transportation has begun the roadway project on Six Mile Cypress Parkway in earnest, and it is already affecting entering and leaving the Slough at Penzance Blvd. The construction project lasts until February 2012. When it is finished there will be a traffic signal at the entrance to the Slough and a four lane cross section of roadway between Colonial Avenue and Daniels Road. Until then please be careful when you come to the Slough. I've already seen two serious accidents at the entrance. My guess would be due to driver impatience!!!

The summer seemed rainy but it was normal according to the statistics. There were several weeks that the rain gauges at the Slough had more than six inches of rain in them. The Slough was cool and deep in a lot of places. But it sure felt good on some of the Friday trips to check the Research wells in the vari-



ous locations in the Slough. New volunteers to help with the project are always welcome. I've learned so much helping Friends board member Jeff Key with this project. I even used my experiences for a project for the wetlands module of the Master Naturalist Program.

Looking forward to a busy winter season and hope to see all of you at the Slough. CB

Connections STAFF

Editor	Carolyn Babb
Copy Editor	Alouise Skehan Pyle
Lay-out/Design	Carolyn Babb
Printing	Lee County Parks & Recreation

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carolyn_babb08@comcast.net

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In addition I would like to contribute

\$_____ for exhibits and displays for the Interpretive Center.

TOTAL\$ _____

Mail to Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough, 7791 Penzance Blvd, Fort Myers. FL 33966

Friends web site: www.sloughpreserve.org Phone 239-533-7557

Special thanks go to the Lee County Department of Parks and Recreations for its generous support in producing this newsletter. Thanks to Lee County also for providing meeting space at the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve Interpretive Center.



Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve
7791 Penzance Blvd.
Fort Myers, Florida 33966

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

