

Connections

Newsletter for Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve

JULY 2011

MISSION STATEMENT

Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve is a not-for-profit advocacy and support organization committed to preserving, protecting and promoting Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve for future generations through education and community partnerships, working together with Lee County and South Florida Water Management District. The Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve is a critical wetland system having positive value in inspiring and educating its visitors about wetlands and their roles in preserving the environment and local quality of life. Friends' vision is to maintain the Preserve's positive community influence in perpetuity.

WADING IN THE SLOUGH

by Charles O'Connor

It is officially rainy season in Southwest Florida and that means it is time for wet walks in the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. This is the chance to go off of the board walk and experience the wonders of the interior of the Slough in all of its glory. Join Friends Vice President Dr. Charles O'Connor for a fabulous and cooling learning experience. This is a chance to learn about the importance of the work that the Slough does for the water as it passes through on the way to Estero Bay.

Children must be 10 years or older; wear tie on/secure shoes, bring a change of clothing, waterproof camera – expect to get wet to the waist in clean rain water.

\$10 donation to the Friends Education Fund suggested. Group size limited to 16.

Registration is required - email Charles O'Connor at rcoc77@embarqmail.com

The walks are scheduled for the following days and times. Please note that the schedule is subject to change due to weather conditions.

Sunday August 7th 10 AM

Sunday August 7th 1 PM

Saturday August 27th 10 AM

Saturday August 27th 1 PM

Sunday August 28th 10 AM



Volunteer Rudy Lampron and walkers in the Slough.



Field Trip to Fakahatchee Strand led by Friends Mary Murray and Janet Bunch



A group of waders head into the Slough with Charles in the lead.

INSIDE

- Roadway Improvement 2
- New Entrance Sign 2
- Kids Camp Comments 3
- Along the Boardwalk 4
- Words from the Heart 4
- Photo Contest 2011 5
- Friends Ten Years Old 5
- Membership News 6
- New Board Members 7
- President's Notes 7
- Membership App 8

Mary Murray Named 2011 Slough Volunteer of the Year

by Carolyn Babb

Friends member Mary Murray was named Six Mile Cypress Slough Volunteer of the Year at the annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in May. Mary is involved in all activities at the Slough including guided walks, scoping, roving, Interpretive Center desk, mentoring new volunteers, scheduling volunteer tasks for slough staff and summer camp counselor. She works many hours and always with a great attitude and a smile on her face. She is well deserving of this honor. Congratulations Mary! You are a indeed a great volunteer and a wonderful FRIEND!



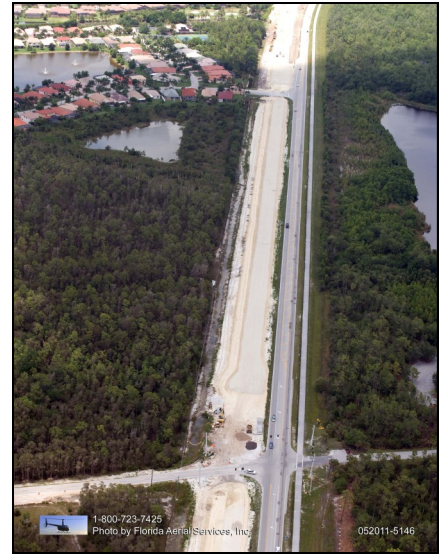
Mary helps out a summer camper in July of 2010.

SIX MILE CYPRESS PKWY CHANGES DAILY

By Carolyn Babb

The roadway project that is underway on Six Mile Cypress is on schedule to be finished early in 2012. The base for the additional two lanes is currently being readied and the new alignment for the intersection at Penzance Boulevard at the entrance of the Slough is also underway. The new traffic signals are in place but will not be operational until the final geometrics for the intersection are done, and the entire project is ready to open to traffic.

Visitors, workers and volunteers should be pleased with the addition of the traffic signals that will make the entrance and exit to the Slough much safer.



1-800-723-7425
Photo by Florida Aerial Services, Inc. 052011-5146



The traffic signal installation at the Slough entrance at Penzance Blvd.

Photo Carolyn Babb

View of Six Mile Cypress Parkway by Florida Aerial Services, Inc. for the Lee County Department of Transportation. View is of the intersection of Six Mile and Penzance Blvd. The entrance to the Slough is at the bottom of the photo on the right. Gator Lake is seen on the upper right of the photo.



Photo Six Mile Cypress Slough Staff

NEW SIGN INSTALLED AT ENTRANCE OF SLOUGH

by Mary Rude

One of our paired entrance signs was hit and destroyed by a car last year. Thankfully due to insurance, we were able to replace it with an updated sign that matches the style of the other facilities of Parks & Recreation. We were able to customize it a little bit to give our visitors a hint of what lives in our Preserve.

The animals that were chosen to represent the Slough are the alligator (since most visitors want to see one), the Anhinga (their silhouettes are recognizable and the bird is quite prevalent) and the White Ibis – the symbol of our Friends organization.

Stop by and have a look.

SLOUGH HOSTS 66,000 VISITORS JANUARY TO APRIL

By Steve Tutko

Every day I say to myself how lucky we all are to be living in Lee County, a place visited by thousands of people, for a variety of reasons. Our area is blessed with many diverse ecosystems providing numerous recreational opportunities. All the plants and animals also receive the benefits of living in varied habitats.

Tourism, especially ecotourism and hospitality have an enormous impact on the economy of Lee County and the quality of life it provides its residents and visitors. Tourism brings in millions of dollars each year and employs 34,900 people directly and another 14,000 indirectly. Generally, we think of the months of January through April as having the most visitations. During these months the slough had an amazing 66,125 visitors, and I am sure we all know the reasons. Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve is important for education, wildlife habitat, local economics, and most significant as a sanctuary for the soul.

KIDS COMMENT ON CAMP

... I am a very strong person. Being strong is not the only thing though that you need in the woods. You have to be smart. Slough Summer Camp would teach me to be smart. Plus I would be learning things I won't learn in the city. I won't know the difference between animal tracks. Also, one thing about me is that I am horrible with directions, routes, maps, etc. I have trouble with knowing which way is north or south ... I can learn these things at camp. Jazmin, Grade 10

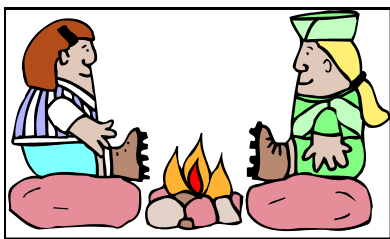


One reason I would like to go to the Summer Naturalists Camp is because I love wildlife and nature! I have been lucky to have such great parents who understand my great urging to get outside and enjoy the wonderful nature around me. Not only do I like to experience nature by myself, I also like to enjoy nature with others as well. I have been to quite a few nature camps in the past few years.... Bryce, Grade 5

I am not a native to Florida and moved here a few years ago Many students here in this area have enjoyed the Slough for their entire lives. I am merely getting to know it and what it has to offer all Floridians. ... It is amazing to walk on the boardwalk among beautiful trees and countless species of animals and plants. I would like to learn why the insects travel in a specific pattern above the lake. Also, I would like to know what types of food the various birds seek out. Andrew, Grade 7

My closeness about nature began when I was merely a child. When I got a little bit older my mother would take the family on nature walks and we would go with my Girl Scout troop to pick apples in a local orchard. When I moved to Florida I was always fascinated by the trees, and the peace that I felt while at the Slough. Every year I seem to go to a sports camp, or a camp that was associated with my school.... This nature camp opened my eyes to what I had nearly forgotten when I was a little kid. I have not lived in Fort Myers for my entire life. This would be my chance to learn more about the land and the species of animals available in this area. Danielle, Grade 9

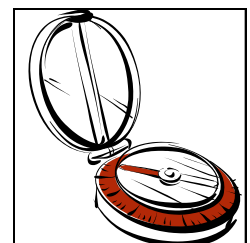
As the youngest, my mom is most worried about me She is always afraid when I go (to Boca Grande) with her because I take off and explore. I tell her I know what kinds of things are dangerous but she still freaks out when I am covered with mud and hitchhikers from the woods when I come back hours later. I need something cool to do this summer and the camp at the Slough would be something I can learn from and enjoy. Brian, Grade 9



I would like to explore nature, learn how to spot animals in the wild, meet new people, learn new skills for observing nature, and experience all that the Cypress Slough has to offer. Since I love the outdoors and am usually trapped in my home or school, I would like to have a chance to explore nature. When I do have time to go outside, I like to play with my friends or walk my dogs. Also, animals are very fascinating to me, I would like to be able to spot them so I can identify their habitats to study and help protect them. Elizabeth, Grade 6

In today's world people are always building more buildings and pushing animals out of their homes. This is forcing animals to go onto streets and human-inhabited places. Then, their chances of survival decrease by so much, it's shocking. They are also killing trees, plants and beautiful flowers. I love the Slough because I know that it is a place where animals can live without worrying about being killed or pushed out of their homes. I really hope that I win this scholarship because I can't imagine a better week this summer than a week studying Florida at its best. Just natural, the way that life is supposed to be enjoyed. Tatiana R, Grade 6

I went "Slough Slogging" with my class last year and had so much fun! Everytime my family and I go there we always encounter birds, turtles, lizards, squirrels, gators, and if we are lucky enough maybe even an otter or two. Slough summer camp ... would be a pretty amazing OTTERTunity! Megan, Grade 8





*Along the Boardwalk.....Resilience Reigns
by Dotty Brown*



Summer is time to appreciate the resilience of Mother Nature by understanding beyond the visible. Appreciate and respect the Mama gator’s protecting moves when her young are threatened by predators. Watch quietly as Mama Wood Duck leads her young into protective hideaways. Know that the Bladderwort will have bladders, modified leaves, when its nutrition needs require the digestion of small aquatic animals. (A plant’s vitamin pill!) A tree limb is blown into the rising wet season water and becomes a nursery tree as it decomposes and provides soil for ferns and small shrubs. I stand in awe and marvel at the Cypress trees with their knees and the Resurrection Ferns that thrive where their needs are met and respond to the changes that come. Enjoy the remarkably resilient slough!

Words from the Heart – by Mary Rude

I just want to say *thank you* to the Friends, all the volunteers and the Six Mile staff for continuing to make the Slough the best experience possible for our visitors. I have received a few nice letters, e-mails and comments regarding the Slough. I have not actively solicited these comments, but rather the people spontaneously felt compelled to write their feelings. I’d like to share a few of these with you.

An e-mail from a visitor

Hello,

I just want to say "thank you". We were able to visit the Slough yesterday while visiting Florida to see my parents. We visit Florida every year from Pennsylvania and the Slough is always one of our stops. Each year we see something different. One year it was a group of wild boar making their way through the brush. Another year it was baby alligators. This year we were so blessed to see two otters playing together. Thank you so much for all that you (everyone who works and volunteers) do to make the slough possible. What an amazing place! See you next year!

Karen Deane
Sinking Spring, PA

The below is a typed copy of a handwritten letter received from a nearly blind visitor. The “Thursday Lady” is President Carolyn Babb.

In Appreciation

When I find myself halfway along the boardwalk at the “Slough”, I am nearly overcome by the awareness of His creation. Because of this awareness, I find it impossible to deny His presence.

Entering the preserve, I call alive, all of my senses, (to substitute for my failing sight), and it is amazing what I hear, smell, and feel. The hearing is predominant, making me aware of squirrels, and all the birds, but it is my nose that helps me locate the swine.

I am so thankful to have discovered this marvelous preserve, and with my two daughters I have visited about 35 times this season alone. To find the whole place so neat, and tidy, and so affordable, speaks volumes about the individuals who are caring for this entire entity.

I have found the volunteers to be so helpful and informative, especially the lady who sets up at the Otter Pond on Thursday mornings. I am so very appreciative of the informative conversation from this particular lady.

“Your blind visitor” Shannon Hackem

And lastly, a few comments from our guest book...

“Love this place”

“3rd visit in one week!”

“Alligator-filled Awesomeness!”

“Truly beautiful”.

Bald Cypress cones ready for the next phase of the growing cycle.



Photo Carolyn Babb

2011 Friends Photography Contest Starts in November

Submittal for the next Friends Photo Contest starts November 1, 2011. Photos can be submitted anytime from November 1 through February 1, 2012. Photos must have been taken at the Slough. Categories are for Animals, Plants, Open and Altered photographs. Complete details and rules will be available in the next issue of *Connections* in October. Watch the Friends website for further details at www.sloughpreserve.org



Susan Leach Snyder



Vincent Abbatiello

Three of the Winners from
2010 Photo Contest



Charles O'Connor

FRIENDS ORGANIZATION CELEBRATES TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY

By Carolyn Babb

The first members of Friends held an exploratory meeting on February 21, 2001. In the first newsletter then President Gayle Schmidt said "What brought them together was a desire to promote environmental education and enhance the capabilities of staff and volunteers as they do work to broaden understanding and respect for the complex wetland community the Preserve represents." The mission to preserve, protect and promote the Slough for future generations through education and community partnerships was in place at that time.

Less than a year from that February meeting the group was incorporated and had already co-hosted two events, the 10 year anniversary of the Slough boardwalk and the Born to be Wild celebration. The original board consisted of Gayle Schmidt as President, Ben Johnson as Vice President, Alan Cadkin as Treasurer and Joyce Sanders as Secretary. The membership chairpersons were Alouise Skehan and Lee Marks, Rudy Lampron and Conrad Massa worked on special projects and Ann Massa served as a generalist.

The advisory board consisted of Carolyn Delizia (Swift) and Dr. William Hammond, both are still serving in the same capacity now.

The first Gathering of Friends was held January 21, 2002 at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium with Dr. Hammond as the speaker along with former students of the Monday Group that shared their experiences and roles in preserving the Slough for posterity.

Five years later the newsletter reported the community support of donations from over 300 members, individuals and businesses towards bringing the Interpretive Center to reality. There is the announcement of the partnership with South Florida Water Management District and the donation of \$200,000 towards the building of the Interpretive Center.

The Swing for the Slough golf tournament in the Summer of 2006 added \$23,000 to the Interpretive Center building fund. Another golf outing would follow a year later.

March 20, 2007 was the long anticipated day for the ground breaking for the Interpretive Center. Also that day the Friends presented a check for \$50,000 to the Lee County Board of Commissioners for use for the Green Building Certification.

These are just a few of the highlights of our organizations history. Our next ten years will be as successful and as productive as the first ten.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Renewing Members: Thank you for your continued support!!

Gretchen R. Barsness
Ellie Boyd C
Elizabeth R. Carter
College of Life Foundation
Jerry & Joni Curcuru
Mary Ross Denison
Gail G Dye
Ted & Gerry Geboski C
Joanne & Jack Gifford
Rebecca Harris
Neal & Evie Hartman C
Jasmine Garden Club
Conrad & Ann Massa C
Matt McNeil
Sally McPherson
Bob Repenning
Sissel Robertson
Robert & Mary Rude C
Christina V. Sierra
Timothy L. Snyder, D.D.S.
Kate & Rick Streng

“C” denotes Charter Member, persons who were first year members of the Friends.

Welcome New Members !!

Lynn Brown
Kitty Engels
Clay & Char Lance
Peter & Cynthia Ochsner
Doris Orff
Susan Patton

Additional Donations Gratefully Received From:!

Jerry Bernstein & Frances Pitlick
Kitty Engels
Norman Geissler
Susan Patton
Christina V. Sierra

SAVE THESE DATES

The dates for the next season of Friends Gatherings have been set!

Mark your calendars for the following:

HOLIDAY POTLUCK

Wednesday, December 14, 2011
5:30 pm

JANUARY PROGRAM

Wednesday, January 25, 2012
7:00 pm

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Wednesday, February 22, 2012
7:00 pm

MARCH PROGRAM

Wednesday, March 28, 2012
7:00 pm

APRIL PROGRAM

Wednesday, April 25, 2012
7:00 pm

Speakers have not been finalized. Watch for announcements in future issues of *Connections* and on line at www.sloughpreserve.org

FRIENDS NOMINATED FOR CHRYSALIS AWARDS IN LEE COUNTY

The Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve organization was nominated in the **ECO INNOVATION** category for the 2011 Celebration of Business & Tourism Chrysalis Awards, sponsored by the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau and The Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce.

There were 64 nominees in six categories. The business and individuals were nominated by their organizations or peers. Judging was based on innovation in their category, efforts to promote their destination, contributions to business and tourism and their work to foster growth and sustainability.

The Friends' nomination was submitted by Mary Rude of the Lee County Parks and Recreation Department.

The winner in this category was the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa.

All of the 2011 nominees were honored for their positive impact on the local community.

ENTER THE LEE PARKS AND RECREATION VIDEO CONTEST

Lee County Parks & Recreation is kicking off National Park and Recreation Month with a **Video Contest**.

Visit a Lee County Parks & Recreation facility. Please make sure you are following the rules of the park and that your activities are legal.

Video yourself, your family or your friends participating in an activity or just enjoying the facility and tell what you love about Lee County Parks & Recreation.

Fill out the online entry form and upload your video no later than Aug. 1, 2011.

For more information go to www.leeparks.org



PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Hello Friends,

In the picture to the right I am standing at one of the staffs that is used to measure the depth of the water in the Slough for the on going research project in the Slough. This is located about 600 feet from the back deck of the Interpretive Center on the old Penzance roadbed. It hasn't been dry at this location since I started volunteering for the project five years ago! It is usually at least knee deep. Believe all you hear about our drought here in SW Florida! The rest of the research locations are also as dry as I have ever measured. But by the time this is out and on its way to the Friends members I am sure we will be having rain.



Penzance Blvd. rain staff in June—

DRY

Board member Theresa Roake and I have completed an inventory of merchandise for Friends Corner in anticipation of ordering new merchandise for the up coming season. Thanks Theresa for all of your help!

Please make sure that when you are at the Slough you stop in the shop. Remember all of our profits from Friends Corner are for use at the Slough for educational programs and supplies that are needed for the activities at the Interpretive Center.

The members who work at the store are doing a great job. The store is open almost every hour that the Interpretive Center is open. That is dedication. Thanks to all of the "worker bees" for your time. It couldn't be done without your effort.

On July 23rd at 2:00 pm at the Interpretive Center there is going to be a baby shower for Heather and Jon Gienapp and their expected baby boy. If you would like to come and enjoy the celebration please let me know so we have enough cake!

As expected it is now raining A LOT! The water has gone up in areas of the Slough by at least 12 inches and rising. What a needed relief! Can't wait to go wading!

See you at the Slough! CB



Feeding Frenzy at
Pop Ash Pond

TWO NEW MEMBERS ADDED TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Theresa Roake and Donna Cressman have been added to the Friends Board of Directors. Both of these ladies are a wonderful addition to the board and have already spent many hours at the Slough and in meetings of the board.

Theresa has been a volunteer with Lee County Parks and Recreation for over two years. She has worked with Waterways Coordinator Betsy Clayton on the Calusa Blueway Festival, with Kathy Cahill, Volunteer Services Coordinator, aiding with the Lee County Volunteer database and Kelly Williamson, Program Specialist at the Caloosahatchee Regional Park, assisting with kayak trips. She was also in the latest Interpretive Naturalist Training Class at the Slough. In the spare time she has left after volunteering, her interests include sailing, kayaking, biking, hiking, reading and crafting.

Donna is another very active volunteer for Lee County. She has been a Master Gardner since 2006. She does volunteer gardening for Lee County as well as programs about gardening in Florida. Previously she owned and managed bookstores in Pennsylvania and Texas. In her spare time after volunteering she is the Landscape Committee Chairperson for her community.

We welcome these talented and enthusiastic ladies to the Friends Board of Directors.



Theresa Roake



Donna Cressman

Advisory Board

Jacquelin Cadkin
Cadkin Foundation

Carolyn Delizia Swift

Dr. William Hammond
Florida Gulf Coast University

Carol Newcomb-Jones

Wiley M Parker, A.I.A.
Parker/Mudgett/Smith
Architects, Inc.

Clyde Dabbs

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Charles O'Connor
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Theresa Roake
Secretary

Donna Cressman

Nancy Johnson

Jeff Key

Bernard MacDonald

Molly Meadows

Joyce Sanders

Jean Labriola Scholz

Steve Tutko

Parks and Recreation Liaison

Mary Rude, Supervisor
Six Mile Cypress Slough
Preserve

Connections Staff

Editor/ Lay-out/ Design	Carolyn Babb
Copy Editor	Bruce Bunch
Printing	Lee County Terry Park Facilities

JOIN FRIENDS TODAY!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail _____

Phone _____

In addition I would like to contribute

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

TOTAL\$ _____

Membership Level (Please Check One)

- Student (\$10)
- Individual (\$20)
- Contributing (\$50)
- Supporting (\$100)
- Associate (\$250) - 1
- Sustaining (\$500) - 1, 2
- Corporate Sponsor (\$500) - 1, 2
- Patron (\$1,000) - 1, 2, 3

- 1- includes parking pass for 17 Lee Co. facilities
- 2 - includes choice of wet walk or moon walk for ten guests
- 3 - includes rocking chair naming opportunity

HOW CAN YOU HELP WITH YOUR TIME? I AM INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH:

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.

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

WETWALKS
AUGUST 7TH
10 AM AND 1 PM
AUGUST 27TH
10 AM AND 1 PM
AUGUST 28TH
10 AM

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

