



July 2014

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FRIENDS WETWALK DATES SET FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

The Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve will again sponsor off the boardwalk wet walks in August and September. This is one of the rare times that the public can explore the Slough off the boardwalk. Friends vice-president Dr. Charles O'Connor will lead the walks at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm on Saturdays August 23rd and 30th and September 13th, 20th and 27th.

Children must be 8 years or older. Wear tie on/secure shoes, bring a change of clothing, and cameras should be waterproof. Walkers can expect to get wet to the waist in clean rain water. Each excursion will last approximately two hours. Groups are limited to 16. Rain showers will not be a problem, but lightning will cause the trip to be cancelled.

A \$10 donation to the Friends Education Fund is suggested.

Reservations are required. Please email a reservation request to Dr. Charles O'Connor at rcoc77@embarqmail.com Include the date and time requested and a phone number where you can be reached for confirmation.



Wet to the Waist



Dr. O'Connor leads the group in the wet walk at the Slough.



CONSERVATION 20/20 THREATENED AGAIN

by Donna Cressman

Conservation 20/20 is a program that acquires important natural areas and maintains them for future generations. It began in 1996 when county residents voted to increase their taxes and set the money aside for land acquisition and maintenance.

Several significant additions to the Slough have been through the 20/20 program. As all of us who love the Slough and other great natural places know, trees and open spaces help purify the air we breathe the waters we drink. The beauty of nature restores us in the midst of the turmoil of everyday life.

Last year, Lee County faced a budget deficit and the County Commissioners diverted \$26 million from Conservation 20/20 to help balance the budget. In addition, the Commissioners decreased the impact fees paid by builders by 80 percent. It is short-sighted and a betrayal of the will of county residents to use 20/20 funds in this way.

Our five County Commissioners are currently considering the budget, which will be finalized in September. They need to hear from us. Media reports indicate that 20/20 funds will again be diverted, while the reduction in impact fees will continue. Please call or email each commissioner to let him know important the 20/20 program is to the future of our county as a desirable place to live.

John Manning, District 1, 239-533-2224, dist1@leegov.com

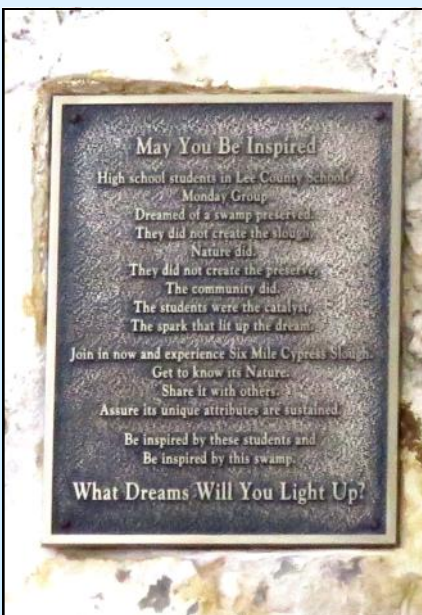
Cecil Pendergrass, District 2, 239-533-2227, dist2@leegov.com

Larry Kiker, District 3, 239-533-2223, dist3@leegov.com

Brian Hamman, District 4, 239-533-2226, dist4@leegov.com

Frank Mann, District 5, 239-533-2225, dist5@leegov.com

They can also be reached at P.O.Box 398, Fort Myers, FL 33902



Monday Group plaque installed at the Slough

Monday Group Plaque Dedicated at the Slough

The Monday Group, High School Juniors and Seniors in Lee Schools' Environmental Education Program, honored past Monday Groups with a plaque installation and ceremony at the center garden at the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve in April.

More formally known as the Environmental Education Research Seminar Class, the Monday Group students helped establish the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, initiated plans for Manatee Park, promoted the Bald Eagle Habitat Protection Ordinance, worked to support Conservation 2020 and Babcock Ranch, brought awareness to exotic species issues, and most recently, has promoted school gardens and worked to celebrate and inspire others about the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve.



Monday Group students at the unveiling of the plaque in honor of previous groups

This year's Monday Groupers were eager to reveal a commemorative plaque to be placed in the center garden at the Preserve. The plaque was designed by the students and seeks to engage the public in the slough's history and aspires to inspire environmental stewardship. The Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve worked with the students to make the plaque a reality.

The event included slide shows of previous Monday group achievements. Speakers of the evening included Dr. Bill Hammond, the original leader of the Monday group and Jim Beever, former group member currently with the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council and Rick Tully, the current teacher sponsor for the Monday Group.

Bill Hammond addresses the audience for the Monday Group event



Support From Friends Improves Picnic Area

by Mary Rude

Thank you to the Friends for adding four new picnic tables and resurfacing two old, cracked up tables to our shaded picnic area. These tables are next to the Center Island Rock & Stroll Garden so they enhance and uplift the appearance of the whole vicinity. I see many people sitting at the tables enjoying the ambience...and a bite to eat.

The adjoining Rock & Stroll Garden is looking better and better thanks to Friends Board member Donna Cressman and some of her Master Gardener friends. They have added new plants, mulched and weeded the area. There are a variety of butterflies visiting the flowers and a few species are laying eggs on the greenery. It has really developed into a lovely spot to wander in while absorbing the beauty.

Surrounding the garden there are seven benches which have all been "named" by people who contributed \$1,000 to the Friends. Plaques with wording of their choosing have been installed. There are six other benches around the Slough that have also been claimed and named.

Now, the Friends are offering the opportunity to name the picnic tables. The first has already been claimed! If you are interested, please contact the Friends and honor a loved one or just quote something meaningful to you to share with others.



Friends board member and Florida master gardener Donna Cressman and Florida master gardeners Carolee Drotos and Mary Ann Buehler and volunteer Jack Hyatt at work in the center garden at the Slough

New picnic tables now available for naming opportunities



Boardwalk Rehabilitation Complete

The boardwalk at the Slough was originally opened in 1991. It was built by Kelly Brothers Marine Contractors and called a dock. It is made of marine grade pressure treated pine. Ten workers constructed the boardwalk by hand in ten months working seven days a week for ten hours a day. Construction was done from late fall to spring. All work was done by hand with a gas powered pile driver.

Design of the boardwalk is a circle "8". However no ponds are circled, and visitors cannot see one part of the boardwalk from another part. The alignment was determined by using areas that were considered disturbed areas. Disturbed areas included party spots and man made berms.

In June the county completed a rehabilitation project of areas of the original boardwalk, replacing piers and portions of the boardwalk.



Original Boardwalk Construction (1, 2, 3) slides from Roger Clark

1



2



June rehabilitation of the boardwalk (4) Photo Carolyn Babb

3



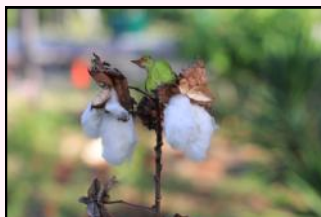
4

Join Us in the Rock and Stroll Garden

by Donna Cressman

Sure, you know that the Rock and Stroll Garden has many memorable engraved stones honoring people and pets, too. But did you know that there are a great many plants there that are native to Florida? That means the type of plants that have been in Florida for hundreds of years, living in community with each other and creating a great environment for wildlife. Many of the plants in our garden support butterflies, bees, and other beneficial insects.

Master Gardeners Donna Cressman, Carolee Drotos and Nancy Olson volunteer in the Rock and Stroll garden on the second and fourth Tuesday mornings. They would be happy to answer questions about the plants and about the lives of butterflies, too.



Meander Musings

by Jeff Montgomery

On our May meander, we encountered a guest who was observing what turned out to be the building of an alligator nest near the crossover where the nest was built about three years ago. I'm not sure if this is the same gator (Jessica?) as then, but it could be. At any rate, the event gave me time to reflect a bit on what remarkable animals alligators are. The following are some little known facts about gators:

- Alligators, crocodiles, caimans and gharials belong to the order Crocodylia.
- Crocodylians are descendants of an ancient order of reptiles dating back some 250 million years.
- The crocodylians have a common ancestor with dinosaurs, but somehow escaped the great extinction of 65 million years ago.
- Crocodylians are the closest living relatives to birds.
- Crocodylians are the only reptiles with four-chambered hearts like birds and mammals. The other reptiles have three-chambered hearts.
- Crocodylians have two aortas, with valves which allows them to direct the blood flow to either their digestive systems or their muscles or both.
- Crocodylians have no coronary arteries. Instead their heart muscle is nourished by absorbing blood. This led surgeons to drill laser holes in the hearts of humans with deteriorated coronary arteries, which has saved human lives.
- There are two species of alligators on earth; our *Alligator mississippiensis* and the Chinese alligator, *Alligator sinensis*. The Chinese alligator lives in more temperate regions and survives the winters in tunnels in the river bank.
- Alligators were critically endangered throughout their range in the 1960s. Protections under the endangered species act of 1973 allowed their remarkable recovery and today they range from Texas to southern Virginia.

All in all, alligators are evolutionarily-advanced creatures, well-adapted to their environment. They deserve a lot more respect than the primordial awe we feel when we encounter this “primitive” reptile in the Slough.



Mama Gator keeps a watchful eye on boardwalk traffic

Along the Summer Boardwalk

by Dotty Brown

HIDE AND SEEK!! That is the summer game in the slough's bounteous vegetation and nurturing wildlife. What yellow sparrow sized bird was that? It could be the much admired Prothonotary Warbler! Follow its flight at medium height 'til it reveals its true unstriped breast. What is that vine with the large white fading blooms seen on early walks? That is the night blooming Moon Flower; seek it in full bloom on a Moon Walk. Where is that woodpecker with the rattling *churr*? The Red-bellied Woodpecker with its red nape and faint reddish wash on its lower belly is a noisy active robin size woodpecker frequently heard. Seek it in the woodland areas. Seek the Pileated Woodpecker where you see large holes freshly chiseled from trees and wood chunks on the ground below. Moving leaves not blown by the wind alert you to animal movements in the bushes and ferns. Moving water could be a school of fish or an Otter seeking lunch. What is that camouflaged on green stems? Seek the Cicada, a frog or a chrysalis of a butterfly. COME! Seek with thought and camera your own expressions of your experience in this summer of food producing vegetation and maturing animals.



Colorful Slough Scat Scrutinized By Expert

by Mary Rude

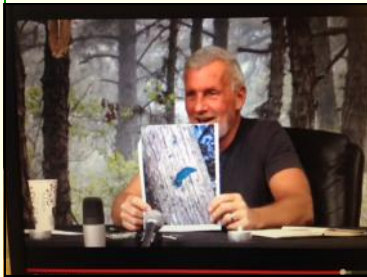
I've been an on-going student of Tom Brown, Jr's *Tracking, Nature and Wilderness Survival* school for about 20 years. In a recent on-line class, students had a rare opportunity to ask Tom well thought out questions on a wide range of topics.

Due to Tom's intense love of nature and experience in the out-of-doors and tracking, I sent in the photograph of the odd turquoise colored animal scat that Friends president, *Carolyn Babb*, took out in the field. We thought it looked canine and surmised it must be coyote...but weren't sure. A coyote was in fact photographed by a wildlife camera verifying that they do utilize the Slough, but... what about the unusual color?



Tom was amused by Carolyn's photo, but then got right down to detailed analysis. He confirmed that it was indeed left by a coyote. He related a story of finding rabbit scat that looked remarkably like marbles with an unnatural vibrant green color. He back tracked the rabbit to a Slurpee cup that had been thrown down in the woods. The contents had mostly evaporated leaving a slurry of brightly dyed sugar water that the rabbit had been drinking. Tom explained that he has seen this occur in a plethora of animals with scat ranging in color from fluorescent orange to paisley. Most times it seems to happen when an animal has gotten into something man-made which is non-fibrous.

So, guide books are very useful, but sometimes you have to get out into the field to experience all the wonder Nature has to offer. Thank you to *Carolyn Babb* for adding enjoyment and education by sharing her wonderful photographs.



Tom Brown answering the question about the mysterious scat



Coyote caught on a wildlife camera behind the Interpretive Center at the Six Mile Cypress Slough

Summer Camp in the Slough

The first week of Slough camp 2014 is now history. Our organization provided 15 campers with the fees for their camping experiences. The Friends also helps with the money necessary for buying supplies needed for the activities. And the three volunteer counselors are all Friends members. Thanks so much to the Friends members for the support that allows us to encourage the campers, the staff and the volunteers.

Emma Fain
FGCU
Volunteer
Counselor



Campers at the Cathedral during the wet walk



Rebecca Mitchell
Volunteer
Counselor



Volunteer
Counselors
Janet Bunch
(left) and CC
Mattingly
(right)
Barbara
Kerby
(center) is
Lead
Counselor



Heather Gienapp, Slough Senior Program Specialist, does a net check after the wet walk

A scavenger hunt in the center garden



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Renewing Members: Thank you for your continued support!

Lyn Brown
Elizabeth Carter
Dave and Jan Cornell
Hugh and Mary Denison
Pacha Donaldson
Kitty Engels
Cheryl Gatbonton
Bill and Rosemarie Hammond **C**
Flo Kornman
Gretchen and Bill McCaw
Matt McNeil
Gretchen Monti
Doris Orff
Clark Rhodes
Stephen Tutko
Wally VanDyke

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

Welcome New Members

Jehaimi Cayce
Sue Christensen
Sue Haberkorn
Randy Hayes
Lynda Leach
CC and Matt Mattingly

Additional Donations Gratefully Received From:

George and Edie Kohut
in memory of Walter Baker
Thad and Jyl Pruss
in memory of Carole Pruss
Schwab Charitable Fund
Melanie and Marcus Smith

Janet Bunch Earns Conservation Honors; Named to 20/20 Advisory Committee

Janet Bunch, a longtime supporter of Conservation 20/20 (and author of articles on the topic for this newsletter) has been named to the program's CLASAC committee by county commissioner Brian Hamman. CLASAC stands for Conservation Lands Acquisition and Stewardship Advisory Committee. The 15-member committee was created by the Board of County Commissioners to review Conservation 20/20 acquisitions and management.

Conservation 20/20 acquisitions have helped expand the Slough from its original boundaries. Friends Excursions that Janet helped organize have enabled Friends to tour many other 20/20 properties throughout the county in recent years.

Before being appointed to CLASAC, Janet was presented a certificate of appreciation by the group for her role as a guided walk leader on 20/20 properties. The certificate, presented by George Wheaton, chairman of the CLASAC management subcommittee stated: "Conservation 20/20 appreciates your dedication and participation during the 2014 guided walks to Prairie Pines, Caloosahatchee Creeks, Wild Turkey Strand and Pine Island Flatwoods Preserves. Your talents and devotion ... allowed 186 people to learn about some of the best attributes of the Conservation 20/20 preserves."

"I am really honored to be appointed to CLASAC, especially at this critical time," said Janet. "As county population continues to increase, this program is more important than ever to assure sources of clean drinking water, wildlife habitat and recreational areas for Lee County residents."



Left to right, Wheaton, Chrm., CLASAC; Karen Andress, CLASAC; Janet, Robin Gardner, volunteer naturalist Caloosahatchee Creeks East; Wiley Parker, CLASAC; Randy Thibault, CLASAC

SHOP AT **FRIENDS CORNER** in the **Interpretive Center** or on line at

www.friendscorner.qbstores.com

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Cadkin Foundation

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Florida Gulf Coast University

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Mary Rude, Supervisor
Six Mile Cypress Slough
Preserve

Connections Staff

Carolyn Babb, Editor

Bruce Bunch, Copy Editor

2014 Photo Contest Snafu

Apologies to Friends member and multiple time Friends photo contest winner Chuck Pavlick for omitting his 2014 Friends Photo Contest honorable mention winner photograph from the April 2014 issue of *Connections*. And to Krystle DiNicola also a previous Friends photo contest winner for omitting her name from her 2014 honorable mention photo of the squirrels.



Honorable Mention Animals
Chuck Pavlick



Honorable Mention Animals
Krystle DiNicola

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Hello Friends - Summer time and the living is easy! Maybe not if you are in one of the places up north beset by tornados and flooding. Your weather hasn't let up since it quit snowing, has it? Here in Florida the calendar says it is rainy season and we seem to be easing into it. We have had enough rain to start seeing water flowing through the slough.

The dates for the wet walks have been set. I can't wait! The walks are so enjoyable. You see a different slough from the ground level. It even feels different. So if you haven't walked in the water please think about joining us this year for a walk.

The Rock and Stroll garden is looking lovely this year. The volunteers are really putting in some noticeable hours. The butterflies are abundant. The other day I watched a large crow hide a mouthful of what looked like red jujube candy under one of the special rocks along the walk way in the garden. The bird sat on top of the trellis while I was trying to photograph zebra longwing butterflies and when I turned away it swooped down with the candy, pushed it under the edge of the rock and covered it with pine needles. It flew back up on the trellis and sat there. I checked a day later and the stash was gone! It was an enjoyable mini play authored by Mother Nature. I imagine the candy was left from a human picnic at the Great Blue Heron picnic shelter.

Winter will be here before we know it! Enjoy your summer.

See you in the Slough. CB



FOLLOW FRIENDS ON **FACEBOOK**

FRIENDS OF SIX MILE CYPRESS SLOUGH PRESERVE



TWEET WITH FRIENDS
@FriendsofSixMil



JOIN FRIENDS TODAY!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail _____

Phone _____

In addition I would like to contribute

\$ _____ additional for the Friends use at the Slough.

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 sticker for 18 Lee Co. Facilities.
- 2 - includes choice of wet walk or moon walk for ten guests.
- 3 - includes table or 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 of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve Corp. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public charity. Registration Number CH13822 Florida Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Friends web site: www.sloughpreserve.org Phone 239-533-7557 Online store: friendscorner.qbstores.com

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.

**WET WALKS
AUGUST 23 AND 30
SEPTEMBER 13, 20, 27**

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

