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## NEW MURAL WELCOMES VISITORS TO INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Visitors to the Slough are now greeted by new artwork on the exterior wall of the Interpretive Center. The mural provides visitors with hints of the treasures to look for on their visit, including an alligator, a great blue heron, an ibis and many of the plants found in the Slough. The mural was designed by a committee consisting of Mary Rude, former supervisor at the Slough, Heather Gienapp, current supervisor, Carolyn Babb, President of the Friends and Friends members Janet Bunch, Suzanne Frechette and Theresa Roake.

The funding was provided by the Friends and the mural donated to Lee County in November of 2014. US Sign and Mill Company of Fort Myers, with Vice President Rene Kilbourne as the lead for the project, developed and installed the mural in April of 2015. Bob Rude Structures of Fort Myers designed the system to safely attach the mural to the LEED certified Interpretive Center. A dedication ceremony was held on April 30, 2015.

## SIXTEEN WET WALKS ANNOUNCED FOR 2015 SEASON

Join the Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve for an off the boardwalk stroll along the wet walk trail. Walk in clear, fresh rain water that can be waist deep. Participants will exit wet, but not muddy.

The wet walk trail is not for folks who need assistance, walking sticks, or have trouble with knees, ankles or balance. A person with normal balance and gait will have no problems.

You should allot two hours. The group size is limited to 16. Rain showers will not be a problem, but lightning will cause the trip to be cancelled.

Children must eight years or older. Wear tie on/secure shoes, bring a change of clothing and waterproof camera. There is no need for insect repellent.

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

A reservation is required. Please email a reservation request to Charles O'Connor at [rcoc77@embarqmail.com](mailto:rcoc77@embarqmail.com) Include the date and time requested and a phone number where you can be reached.

Saturday, August 15	10:00 am and 1:00 pm
Saturday, August 29	10:00 am and 1:00 pm
Saturday, September 5	10:00 am and 1:00 pm
Saturday, September 12	10:00 am and 1:00 pm
Saturday, September 26	10:00 am and 1:00 pm
Saturday, October 3	10:00 am and 1:00 pm
Saturday, October 10	10:00 am and 1:00 pm
Saturday, October 17	10:00 am and 1:00 pm



## 2015 Hall of Fame Award and New Mural Welcome Visitors to the Slough

by Heather Gienapp

The Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve has been awarded the 2015 Hall of Fame Certificate of Excellence from tripadvisor® for being a top-rated attraction on their website over the past five years. Surprisingly, even with accolades from the internet and visitation growing annually, there are still people living in Lee County who have never been to the Slough. A beautiful new mural adorning the exterior wall of the Interpretive Center will help change that. This artwork, generously donated by the Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, will entice people who frequently drive past the Slough to stop in and explore the park.



The mural project officially launched with the first committee meeting in 2013, attended by Friends Board members Carolyn Babb, Theresa Roake and Janet Bunch, along with artist/volunteer Suzanne Frechette and Slough staff Heather Gienapp. Led by retired Slough Supervisor Mary Rude, the committee worked to create a mural that would showcase what the Slough has to offer its visitors.

The mural is a true representation of typical Slough inhabitants cast in aluminum. Since its installation, staff has received many compliments from visitors who are impressed with the design.

This is an example of a wonderful partnership between Lee County Parks and Recreation and the Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. The end result of this project is a piece of art that supports the mission of the Friends...“promoting Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve for future generations.”

The staff at the Slough is truly indebted to the Friends for their efforts which, most of the time, occur behind the scenes. This mural showcases their support front and center, and represents the dedication the Friends Board and its members have for this magical place.

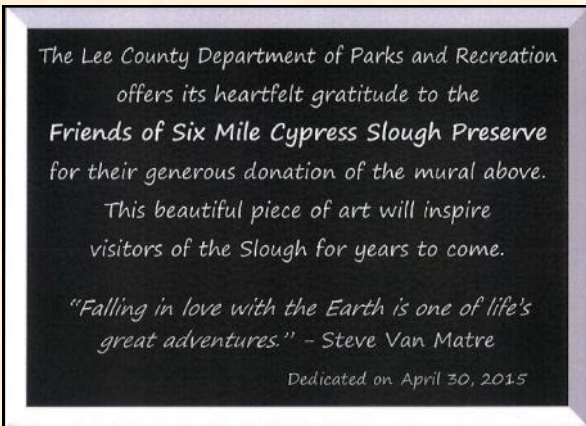




**Friends President (and committee member) Carolyn Babb shares her excitement with the crowd at the dedication ceremony held on April 30, 2015.**



**US Sign and Mill fabricated and installed the mural. The crew proudly stands before the completed project.**



**This plaque is installed below the mural and expresses the appreciation of Lee County Parks and Recreation for the Friends support.**



**Brian Hamman, Chairman of the Lee County Commissioners, shares his gratitude for the Friends' donation at the dedication ceremony held on April 30, 2015.**

Photos Heather Gienapp

# Mural Fabrication and Installation

by John Konopka  
US Sign and Mill

The “Friends of the Slough” Mural Project at the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve consisted of nine individual panels welded and bolted together using 2” x 2” x ¼” thick aluminum square tube. Once all of the square tubing was welded together and laid out on our shop floor, the mesh panels were cut and welded to the frames. The matte black components for the mural were all CNC routed out of ¼” thick aluminum sheets. There were over 300 pieces cut from machine to complete this project. Behind all of these parts and pieces, 675 mounting points were drilled and tapped by hand to use 1/8” threaded studs to attach the matte black image to the mesh background with nuts, washers and silicone for strength and durability over the years. US Sign and Mill used single stage automotive paints during the entire process to insure the colors used would stand the test of time against the harsh Florida sun. There was over 85 hours just in the fabrication and assembly of the mural.

Our install crew stacked the nine individual panels onto a trailer and with the help of an extended reach forklift and one of our crane trucks, the panels were mounted into place individually, then bolted to the next with painted stainless steel hardware then, using 3/8” threaded studs the panels were epoxied into the concrete and foam insulated wall of the building and a horizontal uni-strut mounting system attached to the roof trusses. Four of our installers dedicated close to 20 hours each to make sure this mural showed as nice in person as it did in the computer renderings.



Friends member, Bob Rude of Bob Rude Structures of Fort Myers inspects the first panel of the mural. Bob was responsible for the design of the system that supports the mural on the wall of the Interpretive Center.



The first panel of the mural took the first of three days for installation. After it was firmly in the proper place the remaining panels were installed fairly quickly.

Photos Carolyn Babb

## Snake Home Saved During Tree Trimming Project

In June, Lee County closed the Slough boardwalk for rehabilitation and tree trimming. The boardwalk was closed for seventeen days while posts were replaced and green boards were painted. Many trees were identified for removal and trimming.

Slough regulars were happy to know that their concern for a favorite yellow rat snake and his home in one of the trees identified for trimming and/or removal was heeded, and his abode was saved. Many thanks to Bob Repenning, Land Stewardship Coordinator for Lee County for making this happen.



Snake skin behind snake home  
Photo Carolyn Babb



Saved snake home  
Photo Carolyn Babb



Photo Gail Campbell  
gailcampbellphotography.com

## How Cypress Walk Mitigation Helps the Slough

by Bob Repenning

I walked out on the interpretive center deck and it sounded like an airplane was coming over the slough. I waited but it never appeared. I got thinking what could that noise be? Then I remembered the machinery I saw over at the mitigation area for Cypress Walk, the new community development across the street from the slough entrance. It was a large chipper that can shred full size melaleuca into mulch and blow it into semi trailers for hauling off.

Mitigation is one way we get the exotics out of the slough. The Cypress Walk mitigation is



removing one of the last stands of mature melaleuca from the slough as well as filling nearly half a mile of old agricultural ditch to re-establish sheet flow in that portion of the slough. From a 21.4 acre portion of the slough, all exotics will be removed and kept out for five years. If needed, native plants will be planted to fill in the area. After five years the property becomes part of the County's management responsibility. To help with future management the development company will also give the County \$84,000 towards future management of this site.

## Busy 2015 Season Creates Many Highlights

By Andee Naccarato  
Senior Program Specialist

Can you believe how fast the 2015 season flew by? So many great educational programs and teachable moments happened and I wish I could include each and every one of them in this summary. Of course, that would be an extremely long report! In any case, I am thrilled to share the following highlights.

Two new programs were introduced to the Slough this year by three enterprising volunteers. Alice and Gary Lavimoniere began offering a program called Southwest Florida Butterflies in December outside the Rock and Stroll Garden. Alice and Gary also volunteer for the Butterfly Estates and were able to borrow host plants, caterpillars, chrysalis, and a variety of butterflies to show visitors of all ages. Nearly **300** visitors learned about our local butterflies during five offerings of this program. Alice and Gary will continue with this program in January, February, and March 2016.

Joy Salberg, otherwise known as the Braided Teller, began offering Storytelling sessions at the Amphitheater in February. As a member of the National Storytelling Network, Joy incorporates animal characters from the Slough in her performances. Over **100** visitors listened to Joy's stories inspired by the Slough's animals and its history this season. Look for Joy with braids in her hair ready to share more stories January-April 2016.

As in previous years, 5 volunteers regularly shared their own knowledge and talents through additional programs. Taken together, nearly **650** visitors learned a little bit extra or experienced the Slough in a new way by attending the following programs:

- All About Alligators by Rudy Lampron
- Amazing Bladderwort by Dotty Brown
- Basket Making by Jamie Ferguson
- Drawing Inspiration by Suzanne Frechette
- Skull ID 101 by Chuck Schmitz

Our programming focus through the end of the summer will be two Specialty Summer Camps: Summer Naturalists (ages 10-12) and Wilderness Explorers (ages 12-16). These unique camps focus on nature awareness and outdoor survival skills, respectively. Two weeks of each camp will be offered and approximately 60 campers will attend a Slough camp this summer. Twenty-five of those spots are funded by a generous contribution from the Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. In this way, the Friends provide support for local families who might otherwise have difficulty sending their children to camp. Thank you, Friends, for making this opportunity possible!

Even when visitors can't attend a special program, educational opportunities abound both on the boardwalk and in the Interpretive Center. Visitors of all ages learn about the inhabitants of the Slough (and how to find them) by taking tours with Volunteer Naturalists and exploring interactive displays with Front Desk Attendants. From November through April.

- **4,361** visitors attended guided walks led by nearly 50 volunteers  
Busiest month – February, with exactly 1,200 people experiencing guided walks
- 35 volunteers welcomed **24,279** people to the Interpretive Center  
Busiest month – February, with 7,226 people entering the Interpretive Center

## Busy 2015 Season Creates Many Highlights

(Continued)

As you may recall, the Slough had over 198,000 visitors during fiscal year (FY) 2014. We seem right on track to break that record at the end of FY 2015. Many long-time volunteers stated that they had never seen the Slough so busy, on the trail or in the building! Stay tuned to find out exactly how many people experience the magic of the Slough by the end of September.



Volunteers also offered specialty programs for visiting school groups. In this photo, Janet Bunch offers the Adaptable Animals program to middle school students.  
Photo Andee Naccarato



All About Alligators with Rudy Lampron  
Photo Carolyn Babb



Volunteer Training Class  
Photo Carolyn Babb

### Guided Walk Procedures

Visitors planning to join the daily and twice daily guided walks will need to arrive early. To enhance the visitors' experience, guided walks are limited to the first 20 people to check in, first come, first served (no groups of six or more). Check in for guided walk begins 30 minutes prior to the start at the entrance to the boardwalk. The entire party must be present at the Trail Host Station to sign up. Each guided walk lasts about 90 minutes and will cover three-quarters of a mile on a raised, fully-accessible boardwalk trail.

### Guided Walk Schedule

April, November and December: Daily - 9:30 a.m.

January-March: Daily - 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

May-October: Wednesdays only - 9:30 a.m.

**Reservations and fees may be required for programs.**

**Register online at [leeparks.org](http://leeparks.org) or by calling**

**Lee County Parks and Recreation at**

**(239) 533-7440 or (239) 533-7275**

## Audubon Florida's Jay Watch Spreads Its Wings Here

by Annisa Karim

Crowd sourcing may seem like a new-fangled way to gather information but scientists have been crowd sourcing for years in the form of *citizen science*. Citizen science enables scientists to collect data relating to the natural world by enlisting trained volunteers. Jay Watch, coordinated by Audubon Florida, is a statewide citizen science program that trains volunteers to conduct scientific surveys that measure annual nesting success and count the total number of Florida scrub-jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) at more than 50 sites around the state.

Why focus an entire program on just one species? Great question! The Florida scrub-jay is our State's only endemic bird species, found nowhere else in the world (I think it should be the official State bird – no offense, mockers!). Many species rely on specific habitats for their long-term survival. The Florida scrub-jay lives specifically in the scrub and scrubby flatwoods habitats of Florida. Consequently, the destruction of these habitats could lead to the extinction of the Scrub-jay. This gregarious species was listed as federally threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act in 1987, largely due to loss of its native scrub habitat and decades of fire suppression that allowed the scrub to become overgrown and unsuitable for scrub-jays. The high, dry, sandy scrub-oak patches where these birds live and breed exclusively have been prime real estate for Florida developers and for citrus farms. Today, only about 5 percent of the original scrub-oak habitat remains. The goal now, is to conserve each of the ten distinct genetic units of scrub-jays found around the State.

Lee County manages several Parks and Preserves that contain these highly desired scrub and scrubby flatwood plant communities. These conservation areas also support a small number of scrub-jays. Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park (HCMP) was established in 1994 for the continued protection of the Gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) and is co-managed by Lee County and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Since its establishment, the Park has also been managed for the scrub-jays on-site. Starting in 1999, the County was able to acquire properties east of HCMP with Conservation 20/20 funds. Some of these parcels contained scrubby flatwoods. Alva Scrub Preserve (ASP), as this Preserve came to be named, required the treatment and removal of non-native invasive exotic vegetation as well as native plants that have invaded the oak scrub community due to lack of fire on the site.

On May 11, 2015, Audubon Florida's Jay Watch conducted a training session at HCMP to inaugurate Jay Watch into Lee County. Having this citizen science program here is very exciting. It allows land managers to utilize well-trained volunteers to conduct standardized surveys so that we may have consistent data to look at over the years. Jay Watch data can help land managers make decisions on fire intervals and the potential need for mechanical work. From June 23<sup>rd</sup> – June 25<sup>th</sup>, the first, official Jay Watch surveys were conducted at HCMP. Slough volunteers, Mary Murray, Carolyn Babb, and Janet Bunch spread their wings and participated in some of these inaugural Jay Watch surveys.

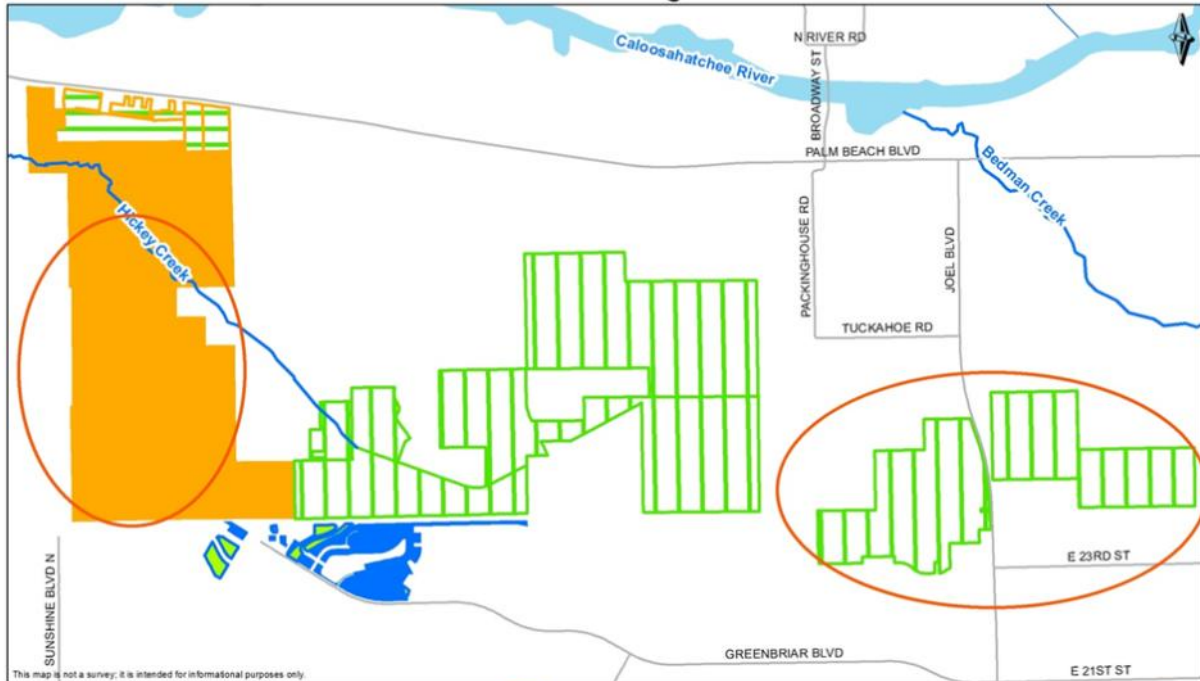
The success of the Jay Watch program, and the program's contributions to the recovery of Florida scrub-jays, depends upon dedicated volunteer citizen scientists.



Photo Carolyn Babb



# Conservation Lands in NE Lee County South of the Caloosahatchee



This map is not a survey; it is intended for informational purposes only.



Scrub-jay Habitat

Map created by Annisa Karim  
 @AKarim@LeeGov.com | Map 2015  
 Generated by ArcGIS Online. JayWatch  
 "In Witness is the Preservation of the World" - Thomas P. O'Rourke

## Lee County Conservation Lands Acquired Prior to the C20/20 Program

- Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park
- Hickey's Creek Greenbriar Connector Preserve

## Lee County Conservation Lands Acquired via C20/20 Funds

- Addition Parcels to Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park
- Addition Parcels to Hickey's Creek Greenbriar Connector Preserve
- Alva Scrub Preserve



Volunteers await the birds.



Jay watch monitoring volunteers receive instructions from Audubon's Marianne Korosy

Scrub-jays are called with recorded sounds of the social birds.



Photos Annisa Karim

# MEMBERSHIP NEWS

## *Renewing Members: Thank you for your continued support!*

Lequita Adkins  
Eleanor Blitzer  
Lyn Brown  
Sue Christensen  
Dave and Jan Cornell  
Jan Grien  
Ward and Norah Johnson  
Alice and Martin Krebs  
Lynda Leach  
CC and Matt Mattingly  
Matt McNeil  
Corrine Murphy C  
Chuck and Kathie Pavlick  
Frank and Mary Porter  
Bob Repenning  
Mary and Bob Rude C  
Marie Shaffer  
Stephen Tutko  
Wally Van Dyke

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

## *Welcome New Members*

Donna Deegan  
MK Klintworth  
Carol Rabanus

## *Additional Donations Gratefully Received From:*

Lori and Michael Cullen  
Norah Johnson  
Carla Palmer for Summer Camp at the Slough  
Frank and Mary Porter  
Shiona Sommerville and Arvind Krishnamurthy  
Steven and Margaret Urich in memory of Joan Cassin  
Donna Cressman in honor of Joyce Sanders birthday

## Friends Honored by Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium

The Friends of the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve organization was honored by the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium with the Calusa 2015 Award in recognition of a not for profit organization's commitment to connecting people of all ages to the wonders of nature and the Slough.



Our organizations have similar goals that include educating our memberships and visitors to the Slough and the Nature Center in hopes of preserving and protecting the natural world in southwest Florida and taking that knowledge with them.

We appreciate this recognition for the efforts of our members, our donors and our visitors.

## Along the 2015 Summer Boardwalk

by Dotty Brown



Summer is the alpha and omega of the boardwalk's rhythm. The grounds are groomed. Old habitat have been trimmed. New habitats have been created to be explored by the native wildlife. Pruned limbs will be left to become nursery trees. Fungi will decompose naturally, returning their nutrients to the soil. Snakes will find new crevices in which to curl. Cypress trees have matured their cones. The cones fall. Their resin dissolves in the water leaving a rainbow residue on the water's surface and releasing the seeds to begin another tree. White fluffy parachutes bearing seeds from the white vine and the willows float in the breezes. The promise of new vegetation lies in the ripening seed of summer.

Rain replenishes the ponds. Currents are fun to observe by watching leaves float gently down the open flow ways. Temperatures reach the sizzle degrees. The great blue heron cups its wing to ventilate its body and catch any breezes. Some birds pant for relief from the heat. Shade is welcome. The croaking of frogs is heard. Each species has its own song. Many young insects like the black lubber grasshopper and the swarms of baby spiders are found along the boardwalk paths. Numerous species of butterflies, including the Ruddy Daggerwing, Queen, Zebra Longwing and numerous swallow-tails drift on warm breezes. Sunrises come with puffy pink clouds and open gates. Sunsets can be spectacular and the gates close. More daylight hours for visiting and observing the wonders of this awesome diversity of nature are in this summer calendar.



**COME! ENJOY!**

**Advisory Board**

Jacquelin Cadkin  
Cadkin Foundation

Dr. William Hammond  
Florida Gulf Coast University

Carol Newcomb-Jones

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

**Board of Directors**

Carolyn Babb  
President

Charles O'Connor  
Vice President

Frank Murray  
Treasurer

Theresa Roake  
Secretary

Donna Cressman

Jeff Key

Terri Krass

Jean Labriola Scholz

Steve Tutko

**Parks and Recreation  
Liaison**

Heather Gienapp, Supervisor  
Six Mile Cypress Slough  
Preserve

**Connections Staff**

Carolyn Babb, Editor

Bruce Bunch, Copy Editor

**Someone you should know**

**Meet Steve Heitz**

by Bob Reppenning

Steve Heitz started volunteering at the slough doing resource management last winter. He was hired in September for a job created to provide resource management assistance to Six Mile Cypress Slough, Hickey's Creek and other preserves in the County. The position is half time and stationed at the Slough. Steve grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Steve recently moved to this area after he retired from Hershey Entertainment & Resorts and the Pennsylvania State Police. During his twenty-five years with the State Police Steve held many positions ending his career in the mounted unit where he aided in security at many functions including inaugurations in Pennsylvania and Washington, site security and searches at the 9-11-01 Flight 93 crash site in Shanksville, Pa. and crowd control at events and protests throughout the state. After retiring from the State Police, Steve went to work for Hershey in their Safety and Security Division where he soon became the Assistant Director. After leaving that position he and his family retired to Ft Myers where he came to the Slough looking for something to keep him busy.

When this position came open he was a natural to fill it with his enthusiasm and love for working out of doors.



**PRESIDENT'S NOTES**

We finally got the mural on the wall, and it is gorgeous. Thank you again to all of the members for their continuing support, the donors for remembering the slough when honoring loved ones and to the visitors for the generous donations. We couldn't continue the work here at the Slough that was set in motion in 2001 by the original members without you. The dedication ceremony was attended by a lot of folks and the Lee County Board of Commissioners represented by Commissioner Brian Hamman.



It's about time for summer camp to begin. The volunteers have been trained and a new lead counselor has been hired. Once again the Friends provided funding for some of the campers to attend camp. The deadline for application for Wilderness Explorers camp (ages 12-16) has been extended to July 15, 2015. If you know someone that wants to go to camp and isn't signed up, there is still time to sign up and write that paragraph to get the Friends scholarship for the fees. Our hope is that the campers really enjoy themselves and have fun. There are all kinds of great activities planned. I can't wait to take them on a wet walk.

Happy, happy July 1st birthday to Joyce Sanders, one of the founding members of Friends and the person that recruited me to the board. Thank you. It's one of those important zero birthdays. I 😊 hope that there are many more to come.

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](http://www.sloughpreserve.org) Phone 239-533-7557 Online store: [friendscorner.qbstores.com](http://friendscorner.qbstores.com)

Newsletter email: [sloughconnections@gmail.com](mailto:sloughconnections@gmail.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.

**We Know Who You Are:)  
Friends renewing their membership need only send a check noted for membership. Please include a note if there is a change in your email address. It is not necessary to fill out a new membership form. Thank you for all of your support.**

**QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, REQUESTS TO  
[sloughconnections@gmail.com](mailto:sloughconnections@gmail.com)**

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