



Connections

Newsletter for Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve

April 2016

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OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC INPUT IN CONSERVATION

20/20

The public is invited to attend a specially scheduled meeting hosted by the Conservation Lands Acquisition and Stewardship Advisory Committee (CLASAC) to provide input on language for the Conservation 20/20 non-binding referendum that will be on the Nov. 8 general election ballot in Lee County.

The meeting will be 5:30 p.m. Thursday, April 7, at the North Fort Myers Recreation Center, 2000 North Recreation Parkway, Room 102, North Fort Myers, FL 33903

See Page Two for more information about this much needed conservation program in Lee County.

ALEXIS HORN TO DISCUSS FLORIDA PANTHER AT APRIL 27 FRIENDS GATHERING

The speaker for the Friends April 27, 2016 Friends gathering will be Alexis Horn, the Sierra Club Panther Habitat Campaign Coordinator.

Ms. Horn, a native Floridian, has worked in the environmental field for over ten years. She has worked as an endangered species biologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, receiving the Employee of the Year Award for proactive work. She has also been an adjunct professor of biology and environmental science and ran the Florida Panther Campaign for the national Sierra Club.



Alexis Horn, Sierra Club Panther Habitat Campaign Coordinator

The event is free and open to the public, however, **space is limited**. For reservations please email sloughconnections@gmail.com or phone the Friends at (239) 533-7557 and leave a message.

The program is scheduled for 7:00 pm at the Interpretive Center, Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, 7751 Penzance Blvd in Fort Myers.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR SLOUGH CAMPERS

Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve is again offering 25 scholarships to interested campers, which will cover the \$75 fee of for a camp session. All camp sessions involve exploring and learning about nature through the beauty of the Slough. Specify which session(s) you desire. If a youngster is interested in attending two sessions, Friends will grant two scholarships if the essay is accepted and space is available. The camp runs daily – not overnight.

Slough Secrets (8-9 year olds)

July 11th through 15th

Summer Naturalists (10-12 year olds)

July 18th through 22nd OR

July 25th through 29th

Wilderness Explorers (12-16 year olds)

June 20th through 24th



Students are asked to submit a one to two paragraph essay explaining, “Why I want to go to the Six Mile Cypress Slough Summer Camp.” Essays and the application ([download](#)) should be submitted to Charles O’Connor at rcoc77@embarqmail.com or to Charles O’Connor, 10560 Habitat Trail, Bokeelia, FL, 33922. If you have any questions please call the Friends at 239-533-7557 or 239-533-7550.

Entries must be received by Monday, June 1, 2016. Winners will be notified as essays are received.

Usually all applicants can be accommodated, but don’t delay – the camps have become very popular.

If your camper is already enrolled in camp and earns a scholarship, the Friends will reimburse you directly. Let Charles know via email.

Conservation 20/20 Deserves a “Yes” Vote in November

by Janet Bunch

2016 marks the 20th anniversary of Conservation 20/20 in Lee County. It began in 1994 when a land-use study determined that only 10% of Lee County was set aside for conservation purposes. The state average at the time was 21%. A group of concerned citizens recognized this as a critical moment for Lee County to determine what its future would look like. The group coined the term "Conservation 20/20" to depict a 20/20 vision for the future of Lee County, balanced between necessary growth and native land.

Due to grassroots efforts in 1996, Lee County voters passed a referendum to establish and fund, through a half-mil tax increase, a county program to purchase and protect conservation land within Lee County. It became known as Conservation 20/20, after the group that advocated for its creation.

In 2011, an internal audit of the Program by the Clerk of Courts determined that the County was paying too high a price for conservation lands, and acquisitions were halted at a time when land prices were at their lowest. The lack of acquisitions was also used to justify balancing the rest of the budget with these funds. A Blue Ribbon Committee was empanelled to review the procedures and policies of Conservation 20/20, and found that, while some policies were not actually in the language of the original ordinance, best practices were being followed and it was a well-run operation. A number of the members of the Blue Ribbon Committee are now members of CLASAC, the Conservation Lands Acquisition and Stewardship Advisory Committee. This group recommends conservation land purchases to the Board of County Commissioners.

A referendum to continue Conservation 20/20 will be on the ballot this November. Currently, there are 42 preserves and over 25,000 acres acquired through the program. There is still much work to be done in mitigating the future impact of an ever-burgeoning human population. Voting for the program will not raise your taxes, and voting against it will not reduce your taxes. A yes vote in November will insure continued safe sources of drinking water, protection against storm water damage, vital wildlife habitat for threatened species, and a wide variety of passive recreational opportunities to Lee County's citizens.



Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve North

This 1219 acre parcel of conservation land lies north of Rt. 82 in the Buckingham area of Lee County. Purchase of the property was made with Conservation 20/20 program funding in 2010 and 2011. The property is very important to the health of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, as it contains the Slough's historic headwaters.

Pine flatwoods, oak hammocks, cypress sloughs, and abandoned agricultural fields make up the plant communities of Six Mile North.

A portion of an abandoned railroad grade, which once transported military supplies and goods via train during the 1940's to Buckingham Army Air Field, remains on the site.

Currently there is no public access. However, it is anticipated that a public access point will be created during 2017.

Conservation 20/20 and the Slough

by Janet Bunch

In 1976, a group of high school students who visited what is now known as Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, came to realize that places like it were rapidly being logged and turned into housing developments and shopping centers. The self-proclaimed Monday Group (for the day of the week devoted to field excursions) recognized the value of wetland systems that provide habitat for plants and animals, places for water to collect and replenish drinking water aquifers. They also recognized the slough as a beautiful place for people.

Inspired by the work of these students, voters approved a .25 mil property tax assessment in 1976 to be used toward the purchase of land associated with the Six Mile Cypress Slough system. Purchases were made in 1987 (from Save Our Rivers program), 1994 (donation from Eagle Lakes), 2007 (from capital improvement funds), and funding from the Conservation 20/20 program from 1999-2011.

Public ownership of land within the Slough system now totals more than 3500 acres. with almost 1600 acres of that, or 45%, coming from purchases through Conservation 20/20.

Meander Musings In A Wet Slough

By Jeff Montgomery

Of course, the “big event” for this winter is the unprecedented amount of rainfall and the high water levels for this “dry season”. We all are familiar with how plants like resurrection fern cope with our wintertime desert, but how do our plants adapt to the unmitigated flooding we will have this season? When plants are flooded, the soils they grow in have low oxygen levels and the plants have a difficult time metabolizing the starches in their submerged roots. If leaves are submerged, photosynthesis becomes difficult and the efficiency suffers.

Of course, plants like the bald cypress are considered to be among the most flood tolerant and can survive a full year or more of immersion. Pop ash and pond apple have multiple trunks and roots that emerge from the surrounding water. Red maple and hydric pines emphasize their lateral roots that spread over the surface of the soil rather than their taproots that penetrate the soil. All of the above plants, as well as the herbaceous plants, like duck potato and crinum lilies, utilize specialized tissue in their stems to transport oxygen and other gases to and from the roots. Known as **aerenchyma**, this tissue consists of hollow tubes that act as “snorkels” and is critical to the plants' survival during soggy conditions. Gases are exchanged via openings in the stems, stalks and bark known as lenticels.



Aerenchyma

In addition to the plants that might be damaged by excessive flooding, we have some less desirable plants whose growth might be enhanced by excessive moisture. Normally, the dry season helps control the invasive plants like water fern and water hyacinth. Although these plants produce spores and seeds to get them through the dry-down, their populations are greatly reduced by our normal dry season. Will a year like this spur huge population growth when our “normal” wet season begins?

Assuming we will have a normal wet season this summer, it will be interesting to note the long-term effects of this rainy January on plant populations as the year progresses. I can hardly wait to see what happens!

Along the El Niño Spring Boardwalk—2016

by Dotty Brown

NATURE’s got plenty of RHYTHM. A season for spawning, a season for nesting, a season for mating, a species selection for blooming. These rhythms help us observe the boardwalk with watchful eyes as the habitat rhythms provide each species’ need.

Our observers have noted a dramatic response to the very strong El Niño that has upset the habitat with heavy rainfall during the usual dry season accompanied with yo-yo extremes of temperature. It, too, has its rhythm that is monitored at its source. Patience for the delayed sightings of spring renewals will be rewarded. So...get in step with Nature’s rhythm and enjoy her ongoing rebirth of the harmony of diversity along the boardwalk!



The Ripple Effect of Naturalist Training

by Andee Naccarato

Volunteers of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve have an insatiable curiosity about the natural history of this special place. Many have discovered that the more they know, the more they want to know. Observing the behavior of a conspicuous Anhinga leads to questions about other birds, fish, and even cypress trees. Volunteers with questions like these inspired the creation of the new, in-depth Interpretive Naturalist Training Program.

This expanded program is based on the previous 9-week training initiated by past Slough Supervisor Mary Rude. Mary's focus on nature awareness continues to be passed on to volunteers taking these courses. The purpose of this new training program is to provide Slough volunteers with opportunities to study our resident animals and plants. The level of detail requested by interested volunteers required the creation of 5 Modules:

1. Getting Started – A 2-session course that focuses on nature awareness and boardwalk orientation.
2. Birds of the Slough – A 4-session course that helps volunteers identify the Slough's feathered inhabitants. Each student "adopts" two bird species, writes a research paper, and develops a one-minute presentation about each adopted bird.
3. Wildlife of the Slough – A 5-session course that presents charismatic wildlife other than birds. Each student "adopts" one invertebrate species and one vertebrate species to research and present.
4. Plants of the Slough – A 4-session course that introduces volunteers to plants that can be easily seen from the boardwalk. Each student "adopts" one plant species to research and present.
5. Safety on the Boardwalk – A 1-session course led by a Lee County Ranger. This final course prepares volunteers before specific training to become Trail Guides, Rovers, or Spotting Scope Attendants.

Not only was this on-going education program inspired by volunteers, but it is managed by Lead Volunteer Mary Murray with strong support from Volunteer Mentors, including Carolyn Babb, Janet Bunch, CC Mattingly, Jeff Montgomery, and Theresa Roake. These remarkable volunteers share their expertise with up-and-coming students on their way to filling new roles at the Slough.

A desire to learn keeps us young at heart. Slough volunteers have such genuine enthusiasm for the Slough's inhabitants, whether they spot a sunning mud turtle or an undulating otter, that they can't help but share their excitement with our guests. We hope their experiences in the Interpretive Naturalist Training Program further empower them to instill a deep love of the Slough in each and every visitor.



Safety on the Boardwalk module participants and instructors.

Slough Secrets Added to Summer Camp Lineup

by Andee Naccarato

As usual, Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve will be offering four weeks of specialty camps for children. But, something new is in store for Summer 2016! A brand-new camp called “Slough Secrets” is currently being designed for 8-9 year olds. Slough Secrets will be offered in addition to the previously scheduled camps, “Summer Naturalists” (10-12 year olds) and “Wilderness Explorers” (12-16 year olds).

The spark to create a new summer program came from parents of Slough campers. Several parents highly complimented the camps for 10-16 year olds and wished their younger children could experience Slough summer camp, too. After careful consideration and brainstorming, the outline and potential activities for Slough Secrets were born.

Knowing that campers return to Slough camps year after year, I wanted to design a program that would complement our existing camps and prepare the campers to progress into Summer Naturalists. For Slough Secrets, each camp day will focus on one branch of the tree of life. For example, Monday (the first day of camp) will emphasize plants, the foundation of the Slough’s habitats. Subsequent days will focus on other creatures that directly or indirectly rely on these plants to survive, such as fungi, reptiles, and birds.

Do you know a special 8-16 year-old child who would love to experience Slough summer camp? The Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve (www.SloughPreserve.org) will be sponsoring a limited number of camp scholarships for children who write a short essay about why they wish to attend camp at the Slough. Feel free to contact Andee Naccarato (239-533-7555) to find out more details or learn how to register. Visit www.LeeParks.org and click on “Online Registration” to view the Slough’s programs schedule, including summer camps.

Camp	Dates	Ages	Focus
Wilderness Explorers	June 20-24	12-16	Primitive skills
Slough Secrets	July 11-15	8-9	Natural history
Summer Naturalists	July 18-22 & July 25-29	10-12	Nature awareness



Scavenger hunt in the garden



Puppet show by the campers



2015 volunteer camp counselors
Miss Janet and Miss Rebecca

2016 SLOUGH SPRING PROGRAMS

All About Alligators Saturday, April 2 - 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.



Drawing Inspiration: Postcards from the Slough Fridays, April 1 and 15 - 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Friends of the Slough Gatherings Wednesday, April 27 - 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.



Full Moon Walk Thursday, April 21 - 8:00 - 9:30 p.m.



Native Plant Stroll Tuesday, April 12 - 10:00 - 10:30 a.m.



Slough Yoga Tuesdays, April 5 - 26 - 9:00 - 10:15 a.m.



Youth Bird Walk Saturday, April 9 - 8:00 - 10:30 a.m.



**Reservations and fees may be required for programs.
Register online at www.LeeParks.org or by calling
Lee County Parks and Recreation at
(239) 533-7440 or (239) 533-7275**

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. Public guided walks are free with paid parking of \$1 per hour per vehicle. Organized groups of six or more people should arrange for a group tour by calling 239-533-7555 at least two weeks in advance.

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.

LOOK WHAT THE FRIENDS ACOMPLISHED IN 2015

Direct Support to the Slough of \$32,000 including:

Wall art external Interpretive Center

Public announcement by Waterman Broadcasting

Public wet walks for over 150 people

Camp scholarships for 15 campers

Camp supplies

Camp intern stipend

Camp speakers honoraria

Friends Field Trips including:

Babcock Webb Wildlife Management Area

Wild Turkey Strand

Downtown Fort Myers

CREW Wildflower Walk

Galt Preserve

Funding for Lee County school field trip buses and teachers

Invasive plant control—financial and physical

Rocks added to Rock and Stroll Garden

Photo contest - 81 photographers, 207 photos

Books, CDs, DVDs for Blake Cadkin Resource Library

Gathering speakers including:

Geoff Coe, Florida Wildlife Photographer

John Kiseda, Sustainability Educator

Robert Repenning, Land Steward, Lee County

Nicole Johnson, Director of Governmental Relations for the Conservancy of Southwest Florida

Volunteer of the Year

Volunteer thank you gifts

Accomplishment pins volunteer education

New binoculars for guided walks

Funded staff education opportunities

Friends Corner sales

Butterfly garden maintenance and plantings

University of Georgia students support

Funding for development and design of new guided walk brochure

Adopt A Highway Participation

Resource library reorganization

Complete 2015 Annual Report available at www.sloughpreserve.org

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Renewing Members: Thank you for your continued support!

Carolyn and William Babb
Gretchen Barsness
Kelly Bishop
George Boyer and Donna Cressman
Frank Burns C
Pete Cangialosi
Elizabeth Carter
Ron Chappell
Jan and Dave Cornell
Linda and Mike Daniels
Gayle Edwards
Theresa Fields
Eileen Fonferko
Shirley Fox C
Kay Flatten
Suzanne Frechette
Robin Gardner
Jan Grier
Linda and Carl Grisipino
Susan Handke
Teri Krass
Irmgard and Rudy Lampron C
Mary and Frank Murray
Kris and Bob Nelson
Charles O'Connor
Theresa and Steve Roake
Mary and Bob Rude C
Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society
Steven Smith
Mary Lou Weddle
Vi Weis

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

Welcome New Members

Amber Crooks
Deborah Gunden
Pat Hirt
Pat Richards
Barbara and Barry Wernikoff

Additional Donations Gratefully Received From:

Kay Flatten
Pelican Preserve

VISITING PLAYWRIGHT TOURS SLOUGH

By Bruce Bunch

Jordan Hall, the award-winning Canadian author of the ecological-themed play *Kayak*, visited Fort Myers early in January while her play was being produced for local audiences by the Theatre Conspiracy.

“Jordan wanted to visit a natural environment while here and I immediately thought of the slough,” said Theatre Conspiracy producing artistic director Bill Taylor. “We had a wonderful afternoon, even if I did get in trouble when I forgot to turn my cell phone off on the boardwalk.”

By happenstance, slough volunteers Mary Denison and Janet Bunch attended the performance of *Kayak* the evening of Jordan’s slough visit. They were thrilled that she had chosen to spend time at “their” preserve during her time in Fort Myers.



Slough volunteers Janet Bunch, left, and Mary Denison, right, with Canadian playwright Jordan Hall at the Theatre Conspiracy.

Annual Meeting March 2016

by Carolyn Babb

The Friends annual meeting was held March 23, 2016. Six board members were approved for re-election by the membership at the meeting. Frank Murray will remain as treasurer for the next two years. Theresa Roake, Donna Cressman, Teri Krass, Jean Labriola Scholz and Steve Tutko were elected to serve as directors for an additional two years.

The annual report for 2015 was presented by President Carolyn Babb. Highlights included a partial listing of accomplishments by the Friends for the year.

Robert Repenning was the speaker for the meeting with a history of the slough presentation dedicated to long time slough supporter, Roger Clark.



Bob Repenning, speaker for the annual meeting

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

The iris are blooming. The kites are soaring. It is definitely spring in the slough. We are seeing a lot of nesting activity. I love the spring activity in the slough:)



Our annual meeting was held last week. There was a great turnout for the speaker, slough land steward, Bob Repenning and his program on the history of the slough, dedicated to Roger Clark.

I presented the Friends complete 2015 annual report. (Thank you Theresa Roake for putting it all together for us.) It is available on the website www.sloughpreserve.org. Please take time to read it and see all of the excellent ways the organization uses your membership fees and donations.

Our organization is continuing to grow and prosper because of the continued support of the membership. This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Friends. Thank you to the original members with the foresight to see that the slough could be an even better learning place than it was before the Interpretive Center was a reality.

I am looking forward to another great year of the Friends. We are off to a great start.

See you in the Slough. CB

Visit the Parks

By Steve Tutko

Because I am a Tourism Ambassador Volunteer for the Lee County Visitor Services at RSW Airport, it puts me in the unique position to talk to visitors about our area. Some visitors have been here before and some are new to Lee County. It makes me smile when I am able to tell them all there is to see and do, especially Eco-tourism, or as some like to call it, nature based tourism. We all know how important tourism is to our economy. It generates income and provides one in five jobs that are directly related to tourism. We know how popular Lee County happens to be by looking at the traffic and the number of people at the beaches, restaurants, shops and filling the parking spaces at the slough.

I would like to tell all the visitors I see to visit as many natural attractions as possible, especially the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, to fully enjoy and experience Southwest Florida.

This year the US will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of our National Parks, or as Ken Burns likes to say, "America's Best Idea". Take the time to visit a national, state or county park if possible, or just go for a walk and take a look around.

The next time you are stuck in traffic, take a deep breath, and say to yourself "how fortunate we all are to live in beautiful Lee County".

Photo Contest Winners Announced

The winners of the Friends photo contest have been announced. The photos will remain on display in the Interpretive Center for the next year. Postcards of all of the photos are for sale in the Friends Corner. Sixty-four photographers submitted 173 photographs for judging.

See Pages 10 and 11 for the winning photographs.

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.

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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

FOLLOW FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK

FRIENDS OF SIX MILE CYPRESS SLOUGH PRESERVE



TWEET WITH FRIENDS

@FriendsofSixMil



PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



First Place Animals
Chuck Pavlick



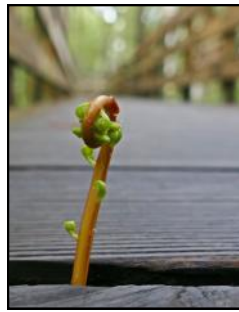
Second Place Animals
Deborah Wedeking



Third Place Animals
Jason Boeckman



Honorable Mention Animals
Lequita Adkins



First Place Plants
John McConnell



Honorable Mention Plants
Linda Meredith



Second Place Plants
Heidi Wise



Third Place Plants
Theresa Baldwin



Second Place Open
Thomas Taylor



First Place Open
Landon Snider



Third Place Open
Raymond Kerr



Honorable Mention Staff
Carolyn Babb

PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



First Place Altered
Deborah Wedeking



Second Place Altered
Sabine Vandenhende



Third Place Altered
Benjamin Anderson



Second Place Youth
Quinn Campbell



First Place Youth
Kaitlyn Stucker



Third Place Youth
Quinn Campbell



Honorable Mention Youth
Quinn Campbell



Second Place Staff
Bob Repenning



Honorable Mention Youth
Shyla Rae Flint



First Place Staff
Carolyn Babb



Third Place Staff
Charles O'Connor

JOIN FRIENDS TODAY!

Membership Level (Please Check One)

Name _____

- 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

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail _____

Phone _____

- 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

In addition I would like to contribute

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

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

TOTAL\$ _____

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

Newsletter email: 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**

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