



CONNECTIONS

SAVE THE DATES

Holiday Festivities at the Slough

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Editor: Theresa Roake
Copy Editor: Steve Parker



Members have two ways to celebrate the holidays with fellow Friends at the Slough this year. Hopefully, you can join us for both!

First, please join us on Sunday, December 10 from 3:30 to 5:30 pm for a party on the back deck of the Interpretive Center. We will have music, food, drinks, and festive activities. There is no need to bring anything, but come ready to jingle them bells.

Second, we will be going on a special boardwalk adventure on January 1 to celebrate the New Year for a First Day Slough Hike. We will meet at the Boardwalk entrance at 2:30 pm.

To "register" for the Holiday Gathering, please [click here](#). More information regarding the hike will be coming to your inbox soon.

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PRESIDENT'S NOTES



Dear Friends,

As the leaves began their subtle color transformation, we welcomed cooler weather and the return of our beloved members from the North. We are deeply thankful that we were spared the destructive force of hurricanes this summer and could enjoy an entire and remarkable Wet Walk Season. Our "Wet Walks" were a resounding success, with plenty of admiration, discovery, awe, and laughter. I thank the entire Wet Walk crew for all their time, energy, and enthusiasm in offering memorable moments to many participants.

The sweltering heat of the summer may have tested us. Still, it did not deter us from embarking on exciting field trips and educational adventures, such as a Mushroom walk, a Mosquito Control tour, a Butterfly Gardening presentation, and a Fall Bird Migration walk. We eagerly anticipate more guided nature walks, guest speaker series, and other educational opportunities during the beautiful Southwest Florida winter.

Stay tuned for exciting updates on our upcoming events and initiatives, and join us as we revel in the beauty of the season ahead. Meanwhile, as leaves change and cypress needles softly float to the ground and lighten the Slough's canopy, I invite you to admire the year-round Slough inhabitants and the migratory birds that always happily return to the Slough.

Sabine

"My favorite weather is bird chirping weather." - Terri Guillemets

LEGENDS OF THE SLOUGH

Bill Hammond shares stories of the Slough's origins.

By Steve Parker

Visitors to Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve have every opportunity to learn about the Monday Group. Guides on the boardwalk tours and wet walks nearly always credit the group of high school students who were instrumental in saving the Slough from logging and development in the 1970s. A kiosk in the Interpretive Center details the teens' significance.

Last May, some visitors to the Slough were treated to a firsthand account of the Monday Group by Bill Hammond, the high school science teacher who founded the group, mentored it and inspired the students to save the Slough through a ballot initiative that saw Lee County voters agree to tax themselves to buy the properties that now make up the Slough.

Seated in a rocking chair at the Amphitheater, Hammond held an hour-and-a-half conversation – “Legends of the Slough with Bill Hammond” – on May 13 and again on May 20. The talks were hosted by the Friends organization. The talks resumed this season, with a third being held on November 18. A fourth will take place on December 9.

Hammond said he decided to form a leadership group of students with a positive outlook during a time of integration and tension in schools. He got buy-in from school principals – who let the students out of classes on Mondays to take part – by welcoming some “problem” kids along with the cream of the crop. The Monday Group focused on environmental issues, with the students deciding on the particular causes to pursue.

Hammond had been familiar with the area where the Slough is today because he had trekked down from State Road 82 along an old dirt Jeep trail. He hiked into the waters to collect specimens for the biology classes he taught. Soon, he was leading the Monday Group on excursions there. He said he instilled a spirit of “swampiness” in the students through “multiple times immersing themselves” in the waters he had visited. “Take ‘em in the swamp and sit ‘em down ...”

Hammond offered up one of his commandments to the students: “You must be for something, rather than against something. In no time, we made positive the norm.”

Through the years, the Monday Group took on a number of conservation projects, including securing protections for manatees and bald eagles. At the beginning of each school year, the students voted whether or not to pick up unfinished projects from the previous year's students.

He also listed a red carpet of people who offered advice or help: conservation advocate and author Marjory Stoneman Douglas, political leaders Bob Graham and Lawton Chiles, singer John Denver.

Hammond even offered some advice to politicians: “Pay attention to what students say. Today's sixth-graders will be voters in six years.”

He said his latest set of talks at the Slough will focus on challenges that lie ahead, including procuring more land adjacent to the Slough and redoubling efforts to keep the water clean. He also cautioned listeners to not let their guards down. just because the land was saved in the '70s does not guarantee it is safe from development forever.

Editor's Note: The next talk with Bill Hammond will take place at the Amphitheater on December 9 from 9:30-11:00 am. Everyone is welcome.



THEY'RE BACK...

Seasonal visitors return.

By Theresa Roake



Gray Catbird

Photo by Carolyn Babb



Yellow-throated Warbler

Photo by Pat Lonergan



Black-and-white Warbler

Photo by Dennis Church

The snowbirds are back. The term “snowbird” typically refers to people that leave the harsh winters of the north and travel to our warmer part of the world. Southwest Florida’s average winter temperatures are considerably warmer than Minneapolis. Our winter sunshine beats the gray days of Buffalo. Like birds, they fly south for the winter.

But the original snowbirds come too. Our feathered friends have returned. Many visitors to the Slough are avid birders and look forward to the Fall Migration. Quite a few are “snowbirds” as well. The number of bird species dramatically increases during Fall Migration. The Slough is an important natural place for these travelers. Some just stop for a snack and a break before heading further south and others will spend the winter at the Slough.

So far this season, we’ve seen American Redstarts, Eastern Phoebes, Belted Kingfishers, Black-throated Green Warblers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Northern Parulas, Eastern Phoebes, Palm Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, Pine Warblers, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. The Wood Ducks are also back and looking for love at Wood Duck Pond.

Gray Catbirds stay for the winter. The easiest way to spot one is to listen for that tell-tale meow. They really do sound like a cat. Once you hear the distinctive call, look for a gray bird with a black cap and cinnamon under the tail perched up in the trees. The “catbird seat” is a phrase used to describe an enviable position. Wouldn’t you like to be high in the trees to see everything below? Carolyn Babb was able to capture a photo of this Gray Catbird on the railing.

Yellow-throated Warblers hang around too. They are a pretty good size (for a warbler) and are aptly named. That yellow throat is vibrant throughout the winter and makes them easy to spot in the trees along the boardwalk at Gator Lake. They don’t sit still for long; they like to hop around and check every nook and cranny for a tasty treat.

Black-and-white Warblers are entertaining to watch all winter. Look for the little black and white striped birds performing acrobatics on the sides of trees. It’s fun to watch them creep up, down and around trees. They are usually among the first birds to arrive for the winter.

These are just a few of the bird species to look for in the upcoming winter months. Happy Birding!

Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Wet walks fill up with excited visitors.

By Steve Parker

Friends member Elizabeth Johnson had never been on a wet walk before this year. But then she saw a friend's Instagram photos of a wet walk and saw photos on the Friends Facebook page. "Everybody looked so happy," said Johnson. She knew she had to do one.

Admitting she was a bit nervous, she asked her friend to accompany her. Johnson liked it so much she signed up for the very next one, taking place just four days later.

"I love this so much, I go around and tell everyone about it. I've told people in the grocery store, I've told my mailman: 'Have you done a wet walk? You've got to do one.'"

Johnson isn't alone in taking multiple wet walks. This wet walk season saw many repeat attendees on the immensely popular outings. All but two of the 13 regular wet walks were sellouts, as were the two themed wet walks and the Family Wet Walk. (The two that didn't sell out were both in August, a weekday walk and an afternoon walk.)



Aquatic critters with Brian Murphy

Friends volunteers staffed the wet walks. Sabine Vandenhende, Tim Denger and David Minnick took turns serving as guide. When not guiding, they also served as "sweeps" – sort of like being a shepherd – a role also filled by Billy Holleran, Amber Howell, Steve Parker, Nancy Olson and Dot Voorhees. A typical wet walk has 10 participants, not including the guide and sweeps.



Wet Walk Crew

The walks follow a special, water-filled, sinuous trail amid thick green ferns, towering cypress, owls and chattering woodpeckers. Water levels may reach chest high, depending on recent rainfall. The trail is very safe and has welcomed tens of thousands of walkers for more than 40 years.

In addition to the regular wet walks, a special Family Wet Walk designed to accommodate children ages 8 to 11 was held October 14. And two themed walks were held. "Hurricanes and forests: One tree's disaster is another opportunity" was led September 2 by Dr. Win Everham of FGCU's Department

of Ecology and Environmental Studies. "Aquatic critters: A peak into the lives of some of the amazing creatures that call the Slough home" was led October 7 by Brian Murphy, retired environmental education teacher.

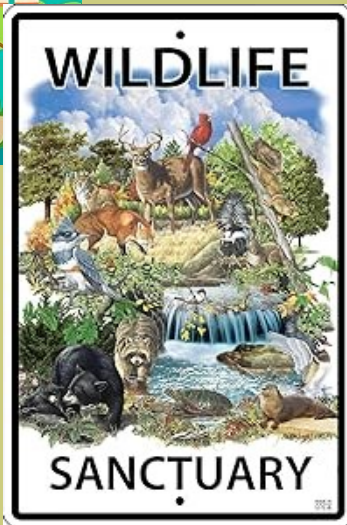
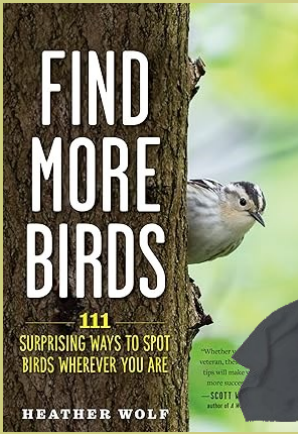
The wet walks were noted by local media, including mentions in the Fort Myers News-Press, Florida Weekly and WGPU. ABC-7 meteorologist Jesslyn Ferentz and her cameraman joined Friends on one of the walks and shared the experience with their viewers.

Photos courtesy of Sabine Vandenhende



WET WALKS

Stories of 2023 Wet Walks in photos



Friends Corner

Please stop by and check out Friends Corner. Store manager Donna Cressman and Friends volunteers have been busy stocking up for the busy season. We have new t-shirts, books, jewelry, beautiful notecards, and of course our famous pink otters.

Don't forget Friends members receive a 10% discount!

Adopt a Road

We're going to be starting to keep our stretch of Six Mile Cypress Parkway beautiful again on December 12 and January 27. More details to follow.

Upcoming Field Trips

- December 1—Shorebirds at Bunche Beach
- January 13—Archbold Biological Station Tour, Venus, FL
- February 12—Caloosahatchee Creeks East, Share & Learn
- March 15—Mosquito Control Tour
- April 8—Wading Trip in Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve

Registration opens two weeks before the date of each field trip.

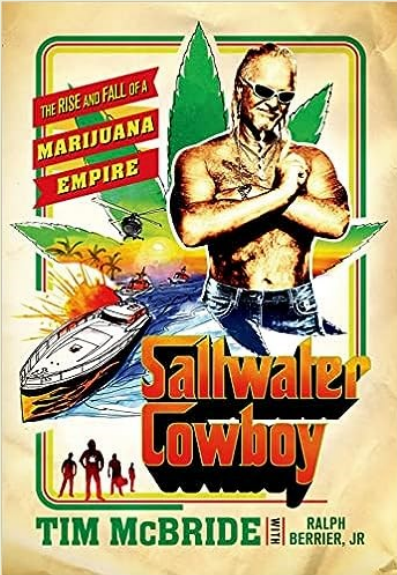
Big News

Photo Contest is going **digital!**
Stay tuned.

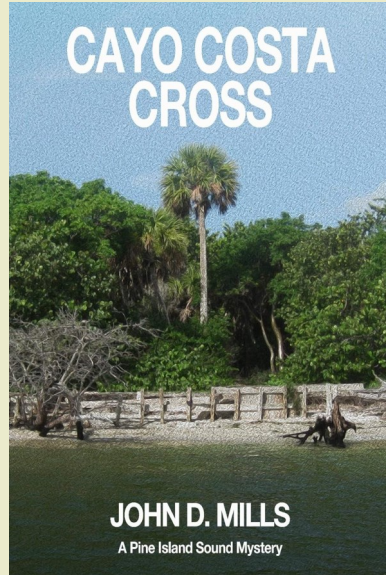


SLOUGH BOOKWORMS

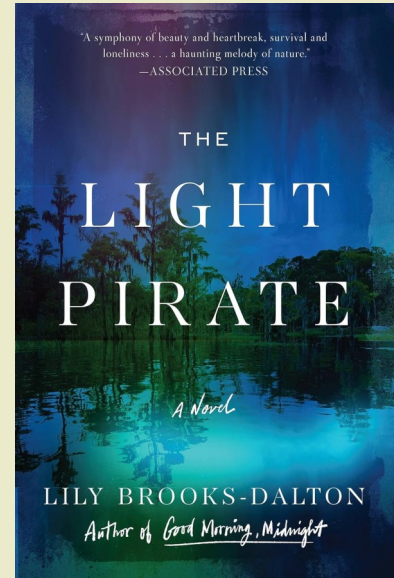
LIVE AND IN PERSON



December's book



February's book



April's book

Monday, December 4 brings a fun Florida read in *The Saltwater Cowboy* by **Tim McBride with Ralph Berrier, Jr.** Saltwater Cowboy is the memoir of Tim McBride describing his life as a South Florida marijuana smuggler and as a 'guest' of the American federal prison system. The book reads like a novel, told in the first person. We just might have a special guest for the occasion.

On **Monday, February 5**, we will discuss *Cayo Costa Cross* by local author **John D. Mills**. Jim McKenzie will stop at nothing to save his daughter . . . When Jim leaves home in search of work to pay for his daughter's tuberculosis treatment, he gambles his hope on a stolen gold and jewel encrusted cross. But the price of his treachery is high, and he is no match for the wilds of 1910 Cayo Costa. Then it's 2019 and Lynn Chapman never knew the cost of family legacy . . . Bequeathed an old note from an ancestor, Lynn knows the story of her family's lost fortune—of the golden cross once buried on the island of Cayo Costa and never found. Will it be found and at what cost? Special Note: The author has graciously offered to join us for the discussion.

April Fools' Day, no fooling, we will be sharing our thoughts on *The Light Pirate* by **Lily Brooks-Dalton**. It tells a story of Florida slipping away. As devastating weather patterns and rising sea levels wreak gradual havoc on the state's infrastructure, a powerful hurricane approaches a small town on the southeastern coast. A mother gives birth to an unusual child, Wanda, whom she names after the catastrophic storm. Moving from childhood to adulthood, adapting not only to the changing landscape, but also to the people who stayed behind in a place abandoned by civilization, Wanda loses family, gains community, and ultimately, seeks adventure, love, and purpose in a place remade by nature.

All discussions will be **in person** and take place on the back deck of the Interpretive Center at the Slough.

MEMBERSHIP

For more information or to renew/join online go to our website at
www.sloughpreserve.org.

Welcome New Members.

Madeline Aadnes
Theresa Aguiar
Marsha Bates & Chris Stotler
Luanne Brinn
Lars Conover
Charles Cooper & Cynthia Willenborg
Bonita Cordy & Robert McElroy
Linda Corn
Rebecca Ditgen & John Shepherd
Patrick Doyle & Deven Billingsley
Susan Frederick
Jonathan Hart
Solemi Hernandez
Shirley Johnson
Elizabeth Johnson
Brigid Kleinschmidt
Marie Lauzau
Robin Lemke & Stephen Landis
Vanessa Macedo
West Mitchell
Madison Mitchell
Kate Mock
Don Monteith
Madeline Morrison
Brian Murphy
Clara Palmer
Valerie & Douglas Phillips
Leah Picciano
Lisa Pickell & Michael Sauer
Alexia Plankey
Heather Skaza Acosta
Paula Sklodowski
Kateri & Frank Snow
Ryan Sperzel
Russ Stansfield
Lisa Stingley
Michael Stout
Michelle Velasquez

Renewing Members. Thank you for your continued support.

Stasia Arcarese
Joseph Archazki
Kris & Steve Bauer
Rick Bauer
Jennifer Boddicker & Annisa Karim
Jennifer & Jerry Boeckman
Greg Boester
Barbara & Bill Catineau
Dawn-Marie Driscoll & Jim Harshbarger
Theresa Fields
Katherine Galloway
Linda Graf
Tori Gray
Debra & Brad Holley
Amber & Rob Howell
Sarah & James Mann
Richard Martinez
Jackie & Steve Parker
Anita Parmer
Marilynne Ponto
Dot & Scott Voorhees
Elaine Weissborn & Ronald Lindensmith

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