



# Connections

Newsletter for Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve

[www.sloughpreserve.org](http://www.sloughpreserve.org)

FALL 2006

## President's Message



Five short years ago, Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve came into being as a citizen's support and advocacy voice working with the county to **preserve, protect and promote** this gem in Lee County. Starting with seven dedicated slough Interpretive Naturalist volunteers, we have now grown to well over 300 members. This membership represents slough volunteers, county employees,

community leaders, concerned citizens throughout the private sector, as well as small businesses and large corporations. We have come a long way and have much to celebrate!

This time next year, we'll be planning or will already have the grand opening of the Interpretive Center. Friends have led the "grass roots" fundraising efforts and have proven to our county leaders that building the Interpretive Center is a priority and has the support of the citizens of Lee County. We are grateful to you, our members and friends, for all of your contributions.

"Voters show support for environment" was the headline by Betty Parker, political writer for the News-Press after this year's primary election. We do not claim to have a role in any election, but Friends Advocacy Committee under the leadership of Sharon Kuchinskas has had a significant part in the public's increased awareness of the importance of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve.

When public comment is called for before the City Council, the County Board of Commissioners, the Zoning Hearing Examiner or Conservation 20/20, Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve is there, speaking for you, our members.

Every member of our Board of Directors works hard to bring to life the mission to **preserve, protect and promote** Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve so that future generations can enjoy and appreciate this viable and environmentally important wetlands.

We would love to hear from you. What are your concerns, your thoughts and ideas for a stronger organization? Our work continues and with your support, our voice is stronger and has more influence.

Join us for our Holiday Potluck on December 14<sup>th</sup> at the Rutenberg Center!

Thank you!  
Joyce Sanders, President

## Update: Interpretive Center

Barbara Manzo,  
Deputy Director Lee County Parks  
and Recreation Department



Dear Friends,

First of all, let me thank you for all you do for our department, the public and the Slough. We are very excited about the partnership that has been created between the Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve and Lee County Parks and Recreation Department. We have become dependent upon you as our partner,

not only as assisting us with fundraising, but more importantly, as our voice and conscience in our efforts to help preserve this incredible resource.

As far as the *Interpretive Center* is concerned I want to assure you that this project is moving forward, and we expect to start building soon. We are as anxious as you are to see this project going. We are currently "value engineering" the contractor's bid to see if we can reduce the price that was presented to us.

As soon as these issues are resolved, we will be ready to go to the Board of County Commissioners who will then allow us to move forward with the project. When we know more we will advise you of the progress. Once again, thank you all for your commitment to the Slough and its preservation. Keep up the good work.

## GREEN BUILDINGS 101

By Sissel W. Robertson

Green architecture, the building industry-equivalent of the hybrid car, is coming of age. With global warming and international tension that wanes and waxes with each fluctuation in oil prices, green buildings may play a stabilizing role.

Green buildings are a part of sustainable development, a concept first presented to counteract resource depletion and pollution in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm. Sustainability is like an endowment; it can earn interest in perpetuity, but only if the principal remains intact.

Green buildings are specifically designed with local climate, culture, and purpose in mind. Utilizing recyclable, nontoxic materials from local and renewable sources, it integrates indoor and outdoor environments. Sun, shade, and wind determine the building's orientation to keep it naturally cool in summer and warm in winter. Old wisdom and new technology merge to maximize resource-efficiency and minimize environmental impact.

The result is a safe, attractive, and comfortable shelter that can produce its own energy, store its own water and consume its own waste. Whether commercial or residential, interior walls may be reconfigured with changing needs. At the end of its useful life, the building can be deconstructed, its parts reused, recycled or moved to a new location.

An organic rooftop garden provides additional insulation as well as safe, fresh food, which means better health and fewer trips to the store. The garden may be a place of quiet reflection or social gatherings. Instead of a lawn, native landscaping provides food and habitat for wildlife. Liberated from recurring utility bills, continual maintenance, and

health problems associated with indoor and outdoor pollution, owners of green buildings also have more free time. What investment can match this?

Long perceived as idealistic, impractical, and expensive, sustainable development proved difficult to implement at first, but not anymore. Even Wal-Mart has announced plans to get all its energy from renewable resources. Solar panels will soon grace the roofs of the world's largest retailer. Not only will this have a significant, positive effect on the environment, it will pave the way for others to follow. It will enhance Wal-Mart's image and bottom line. Green buildings may finally become a household word.

*Green Building 101*  
was reprinted with permission of  
*The SouthWest Florida*  
*Women's Digest*

### RATING GREEN BUILDINGS

Sissel W. Robertson

The Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve Interpretive Center will be the first public LEED certified green building in Lee County. The acronym, LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. This 69-point green building rating system was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). No project can achieve all 69 points.

The points can aid in planning and set a standard that will enhance environmental and economic performance of green buildings.

There is currently no one national green standard —there are three. This can be confusing and misleading as gold in one standard, may only be silver or certified in another. The LEED Designation represents the strictest standard of the three.

Ratings give builders an incentive to build the best buildings possible as buyers in increasing numbers are asking for energy efficient homes. Some prospective buyers can't find green homes while others don't know that they exist. There is still a disconnect between builders and buyers, although the gap is beginning to narrow. Understandably, builders will not build green until there is a proven demand.

**THE  
THREE  
GREEN STANDARDS**

**I  
Florida Green Building  
Coalition (FGBC)**

**II  
National Association of  
Homebuilders (NAHB)**

**III  
The U.S.  
Green Building Council  
(USGBC)  
&  
LEED Certification**



Pickerelweeds  
Photo: Charles O'Connor

## LONG-TERM STUDIES

Dr. Win Everham

This Spring, in collaboration with Kevin L. Erwin Consulting Ecologist, Inc. (KLECE), Florida Gulf Coast University's Inland Ecology Research Group (IERG) initiated a long-term study of Six Mile Cypress Slough. Building on the work of John Murray, we established eleven additional transects across the slough. On each transect, we installed two wells to monitor both above and below ground water levels. We were able to establish these wells and begin data collection before the start of the rainy season. We now have detailed data on the response of the slough to rain events. IERG's responsibilities have centered on monitoring water levels. KLECE's group established vegetation plots and collected fish and macroinvertebrate data.

Our goal is the establishment of sites and the collection of baseline data for monitoring change in the slough. This year seemed particularly important as Murray's work indicated the need for additional water flow into the slough. If the South Florida Water Management District initiates projects to restore historic flows to the slough, we will have pre-restoration data, and a format for collecting additional data, during and after restoration.

Funding for the initial effort ends in September. We are working toward continuing funding for this project. We believe the slough is both a vital habitat in our watershed, and offers a rare opportunity to study a functional cypress wetland in the context of a rapidly urbanizing landscape. Our landscape is changing, and it is critical for us to more fully understand the impacts of these changes, allowing us to better plan for future development and to identify, design, and implement needed restoration.

Dr. Win Everham is an Associate Professor at Florida Gulf Coast University.

## ALONG THE BOARDWALK: CALL OF FALL BY DOTTY BROWN



*Photo: Sissel W. Robertson*

A serene ambience envelops the visitor to the slough. A bountiful food supply is maturing to serve the latest generation of fauna. Chlorophyll is fading from the leaves allowing other pigments to color the landscape. Resins from the mature cypress cones are dissolving in the fresh waters and are spreading rainbow designs on the liquid surface as seeds are released from their cages. With mind and ear filtering traffic noise, young Little Blue Heron can be heard calling from the Cypress Dome rookery at Gator Lake. The croaking of the Pig Frog echoes through the swamp. There is much activity by some of the smaller critters in the niches and hollows for you to discover with focused senses. Come, be refreshed and enjoy your slough.

## GIFT CARDS TO BENEFIT THE INTERPRETIVE CENTER

By Flo Kornman

Greeting cards are great, but how would you like to significantly honor someone or remember a good friend with a contribution to our Interpretive Center?

Donations will be acknowledged to the recipient by an attractive card displaying our logo and the donor will also receive a thank you from Friends. We ask that donations be twenty dollars or more.

This is just one more way you can promote the Slough while honoring or memorializing someone – perfect for birthdays, holidays, memorials, special events and accomplishments.

Please make your check payable to Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve and mail with your request for cards to:

Flo Kornman  
4289 Mariner Way #110  
Ft Myers, FL 33919

Questions?  
Call or write to Flo:  
[Lkornman@aol.com](mailto:Lkornman@aol.com)  
or 481-0452



Friends accepts \$200,000.00 from the South Florida Water Management District. From left: **Sissel Robertson**, Friends VP; **Rhonda Haag**, SFWMD, Director; **Sally McPherson**, SFWMD, Lower West Coast Service Center; and **Joyce Sanders**, Friends President

*Photo: Alouise Skehan*

## ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORT



By Sharon J. Kuchinskas

**Penzance Square:** Due to the threatening Tropical Storm Ernesto, the rezoning Hearing scheduled for August 30, 2006 was re-scheduled for September 12, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. The committee would like to see a reduction in the amount of maximum allowable commercial square footage.

**Orchid Isles:** The Planned Unit Development (PUD) went before the Fort Myers City Council on August 21, 2006 at 4:30 p.m. President Sanders attended and testified on behalf of Friends. While the advocacy committee will not endorse or condone any developments within the watershed, the Committee Chair feels there is currently no science to support a challenge of the project, given the improvements to project plans over the last two years.

**Conservation 2020 Program:** President Sanders attended the August 1, 2006 Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting to urge the commissioners to retain the current funding rate of the Conservation 2020 program. While the commissioners currently support this idea, the discussion will continue at the second and final Lee County Budget Hearing scheduled for September 21, 2006 at 5:00 p.m.

**Cambridge:** The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has requested further redesign and a resolution meeting with the applicant of the

28.2 acre proposed project, which will discharge into the Slough. The committee will continue to monitor the plans.

**Villas at Penzance:** Seaspray, LTD has recently submitted a revised application for a Residential Planned Development (RPD) on 13.02 acres at the northeast corner of Ranchette and Penzance, about .75 miles west of Six Mile Cypress Parkway. The advocacy committee is currently reviewing the applications, and will comment and continue to monitor the project.

**Crossroads Commerce Center:** The Committee Chair recently received the SFWMD Individual Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) Staff Report on the proposed 70.06 acre mixed use project at the southwest corner of Colonial and SR 82. Portions of the project area will discharge into the Slough. The SFWMD Governing Board will consider the application on September 13, 2006.



*Photo: Joyce Sanders*

## NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Deanna Pipher

**The Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve** have the privilege to offer **you** a chance to “*preserve and protect*” our natural beauty by

participating in the **ADOPT-A-ROAD PROGRAM**. This is a **Litter Control Project** coordinated by the Lee County Department of Transportation, Operations Division.



## SUPER SLOUGH TRASH TEAM!

*Photo: Joyce Sanders*

**Once a month** a group of volunteer super heroes (yes - YOU!) will swoop down on a **1/2 mile section of Six Mile Cypress Parkway**, north of Daniels to south of Penzance – right on the Slough’s border! Lee County D.O.T. will provide awesome safety vests, gargantuan garbage bags, non-lethal sticks and pick up.

Future activities may include a Halloween Trashy Costume Party?!

Volunteers must be 14 years or older. To volunteer to **do good and save the Slough from evil debris:** Call Deanna Pipher 656-4066 or email [deannap7@yahoo.com](mailto:deannap7@yahoo.com).

## DATES FOR TRASH TEAM

**3rd Saturday at 9:00 a.m.**

**October 21**

**November 18**

**December 16**

## FALL AT THE SLOUGH

By Wilma Keidel

It was gradual this year—the rains lingered on keeping the air warm and humid. Then the signs began—the lubbers began emerging—their black and yellow bodies covering an occasional bush. In the warm mornings the webs in the marsh began to glisten from the night's dew—Upon closer inspection the spider could be seen in the center of the zigzag monitoring any movement. An occasional feather could be seen floating on the water. The rafts are empty except for an occasional turtle or an alligator basking in the warm sun. There are new baby alligators in the lake being watched over by their alert mother. The squirrels are busy high in the trees working on the cypress cones—as they remove the seeds and the remnants fall the fragrance of the cones fills the air—as they fall into the water they leave a very fine mist of floating oil.

The forest is quiet except for the Red-bellied woodpecker families moving throughout the trees. The parent can be seen feeding its offspring—easily identified by the dark areas on their heads. The frogs are quiet for the most part now, but sometimes can be seen sitting amongst the vegetation at the waters

edge. Others are often nestled in a tree hole with just their eyes visible. The berries are ripening—the Beauty berry gradually turns a glorious deep purple. The Red bay fruit matures as does the Dahoon holly and the Strangler fig fruit. The Red-bellied woodpeckers noisily fuss near the Strangler fig trees as soon as the fruit turns red and eat them quickly. When you look into the forest the Dahoon holly trees stand out with their bright red berries—sometimes a catbird sits on the tree busily eating.

The dark green leaves on the cypress trees in Ibis Marsh begin to gradually turn bronze and when their job is completed they dry and fall, exposing the cones that are still on the trees. At the same time the trees across Gator Lake follow the same pattern under the umbrellas of vines. The leaves on the Red maple trees turn dark red — each on their own schedule—the leaves on the Sweetgum trees dry revealing their spiny seed pods. In areas where the water has drained we begin to see the little mud turtles sunning on the logs in the woods. The Fire flags are blooming and their leaves have become very ragged from the life cycle of the skippers, which are now flying amongst them in great numbers. The lubbers have grown and can be seen everywhere voraciously eating

the bushes. At Gator Lake Pickerel Weed and Duck potato are in bloom along the edges -- the Primrose willows are covered with lovely yellow flowers. Climbing hemp and Milkweed vines are entwined around the bushes with butterflies flitting amongst the blooms — just a short time later their seeds can be seen floating through the air after the milkweed pods burst and reveal their orderly patterned seeds glistening in the sunlight.

When you walk along the boardwalk as you enter the forest you can hear the leaves as they flutter through the trees to the ground. As the weeks go by it is apparent that the trees are getting barer by the amount of sun that hits the forest floor. When you loop upward you also notice that the sky has become a vivid blue again. We begin to anxiously await the arrival of the migratory birds, which seems to coincide with the blooming of the Saltbushes. The air is filled at times with the sounds of the Red-shouldered hawks and the Bluejays mimicking them. The Belted kingfishers arrive at the ponds and noisily set up their territories. A Green heron is sometimes seen sitting on the bottom branches of the partially bare cypress trees in the marsh. As the areas of dry ground grow larger and larger an occasional White ibis can be seen in the woods and if you stand quietly you can hear them splashing as they walk. An Anhinga with ragged wing and tail feathers can often be seen on a raft. The Fishing spiders are now on the bases of some of the cypress trees, carefully protecting their eggs while others are guarding their nests built into the ferns. The caterpillars, which built their webs on the tree branches last month and then appeared everywhere, seem to have disappeared along with the many Yellow-billed cuckoos, which feasted, on them. As fall deepens and the temperature moderates, we welcome back our seasonal volunteers and increasing numbers of visitors to the Slough. The first cool mornings bring large numbers of



*Photo: Charles O'Connor*

*Continued, next page*

wading birds to the trees along the lake's edge where they enjoy the warm sunshine and the many fish hiding in the grass along the lake's edges where the water has now receded.

Now the Saltbushes have begun to bloom and sometimes a Prairie warbler can be spotted—large numbers of Yellow-rumped warblers abound—the Black-and-white warbler can be seen running up and down the tree trunk, an instant glint of yellow up in the trees might reveal the presence of an American redstart. The Tufted titmice and Blue-gray gnatcatchers seem to be everywhere. The Catbird can be heard rustling in the fallen leaves. An Ovenbird may be spotted amongst the leaves on the ground and woodpeckers are busily working on the trees. We watch for the arrival of Yellow-bellied sapsuckers. Carolina wrens are belting out their melodious song—the woods are so exciting now.

The water is low enough now that the elusive River otters can be spotted swimming along—diving down and emerging with a tasty morsel leaving a ring of ripples on the water like a disappearing necklace. One by one we begin to see the Night herons on the bushes around the ponds—even occasionally we now see a Great blue heron amongst them.

The school buses are often in the parking lot and the exuberant sounds of the children on the wet-walk can be heard along the boardwalk. The days continue to get shorter and sometimes the winds usher in a passing front—then the forest seems hushed for a while. The Resurrection fern curls up on the trees to conserve its moisture as the rains get further and further apart. The hawks are rearranging and repairing their nests—the squirrels can be seen everywhere harvesting and storing the generous amounts of acorns and seeds. The woodpeckers are also everywhere—often the instant flash of red on their head can be spotted deep in the forest as your eyes try to find the source of the rhythmic pecking sounds.

They say in Florida there is no change of seasons. The leaves continue to fall—the weather is capricious. This is fall at the Slough.

*Wilma Keidel won First Place in the non-fiction category in the 2006 Six Mile Slough Preserve Writing Contest*

## Honoring Jeff Key

By Sissel W. Robertson

Photo: Jeff Key



Jeff Key's first encounter with the Slough was the 2002 *Born to be Wild* event. He came to find out how he might get involved. His quest led him to Sarah Jameson,

the land stewardship coordinator for the Slough at that time. Before long, Jeff was happily at work as a trained volunteer.

When Sarah considered entrepreneurship, Jeff had an idea: developments in low-lying areas require lots of fill, which require lots of ponds to retain stormwater. Pond management, using natural methods and native plantings, would significantly reduce the need for potentially harmful chemicals otherwise used to control nuisance vegetation.

The business prospered. Sarah and partner, Anick Smith, found they could not run the business *and* keep up with their jobs. Jeff, who has always been self-employed, was the perfect candidate to take over Community Environmental Services, which he had been instrumental in creating. Jeff's business now employs ten people!

By trade, Jeff is a musician. He used to move from place to place with the seasons and the tourists he entertained. But when he and his wife, Wendy, expected their first child, they settled permanently

in Ft. Myers, near Jeff's parents. Jeff not only *entertains* his audience, he *educates* them about the Slough and the importance of preservation. When Friends hosted a Casino Night, as a fundraiser for the Interpretive Center, Jeff donned a tuxedo. His voice and acoustic guitar set the stage for memorable evening.

Jeff is a life-long learner who takes classes at FGCU for personal enrichment. To the delight of his professors, Lee County Parks & Recreation, Friends, and South Florida Water Management District, Jeff also takes part in ongoing studies of the Slough's hydrology. He monitors ponds, wells, exotics, species of special concern, threatened, and endangered species. He seems to be everywhere at once, usually soaking wet, but always with a big grin on his face.

As the Slough becomes enclosed by residential neighborhoods, Jeff hopes the Friends will move into these communities and get involved in various homeowners associations. He envisions Friends educating neighbors about the ease and importance of native plants. Jeff has done so by serving on the board of directors in his own neighborhood of Brookshire. When he leads guided walks, he suggests that visitors re-create a bit the Slough in their own yards, using native plants rather than water-hungry, fertilizer-dependent species.

Friends are also grateful to Jeff for adapting the Friends website: [sloughpreserve.org](http://sloughpreserve.org). The website is linked to, yet separate from the County website. We are fortunate to still have Jeff as our webmaster.

In spite his many responsibilities, Jeff takes time to help his parents who are in declining health. His two young sons, Skylar and Logan, both play piano. Jeff has also been known to give guitar lessons to star struck teens.

Thank you, Jeff. You are is a special Friend, role model and an inspiration to all who know you.

**Mark your calendar!**



*Photo: Charles O'Connor*

## **TELEGRAPH SWAMP Friends Kayaking Tour**

Come kayaking in Telegraph Swamp, Babcock Ranch. **Backwater Outfitters, Inc.** will provide kayaks and paddles at a group rate:

**Tuesday, November 14**  
**\$25:00 per person (pre-paid).**

**Please bring water and snacks**

**Carpool: .**  
Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the Slough  
Slough parking lot

**RSVP and Payment:**  
Steve Caltron 239-541-2592

**Questions?**  
Lynette Brown: 239-443-0097

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*Coming Up:*  
**SLOUGH STORIES  
READING RECEPTION**

*Please  
Stay Tuned  
for Details on this Event  
and the Upcoming Slough Book*

## **Experience the Slough in the Light of the Full Moon**

In the light of the full moon, enjoy a guided sensory walk. Listen to night sounds, smell the fragrances. Get a new perspective!

Wednesday, January 3 at 5:45  
Wednesday, February 1 at 6:00  
Saturday March 3 at 6:30  
Saturday, March 31 at 7:45  
\$5.00 per person  
Minimum age: 6 years old  
Length: Approximately 1 & 1/2 hours  
Pre-registration required!  
(limited space)  
461-7440 or [www.leeparks.org](http://www.leeparks.org)

Questions? Heather: 432-2040

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## **HOLIDAY POT LUCK**

**December 14**

**5:30 p. m.**

**Speaker:**

**Dr. Bill Hammond**

## **Friends Programs**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Monday, January 29th**

**Speaker: Win Everham**

**Monday, February 26th**

**Speaker: Dr. Charles O'Connor**

**Annual Meeting**

**Monday, March 26th**

**Speaker: Bob Repenning**

**All events will be at  
The Rutenberg Center**

### **New Members**

Since June 2006

Gretchen R. Barsness  
Tom Brown, Jr.  
Sean W. Coate  
B. L. Desmond  
Robert Lamke  
William MacFalls  
LuAnn Moss  
Homer Pyle  
Marie Shaffer

### **Renewing Members**

Steven and Kathy Brettholtz  
Diane Buckley  
Brenda Brooks-Solveson  
Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society  
Dr. Joseph F. Campbell  
Maureen and Rick Carpiniello  
Elizabeth Carter  
George and Jacqueline Cooper  
Roger Core  
Janet Cramer  
Bernese Davis  
Dr. Win Everham  
William and Theresa Fields  
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Carol Hampton  
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Charles Holmes  
Jack Horner  
Jasmine Garden Club  
Sue Johnson ©  
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Wendy and Jeff Key  
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John and Sue Miller ©  
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Carol Newcomb-Jones  
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Christine Sierra  
Timothy L. Snyder, DDS  
Margie Tingley  
Stephen D. Tutko  
Robert VanWinkle  
© **Charter Members**

**Thank you, new and renewing  
members, for your support**

**Yea TEAM !!**  
**Together Everyone Accomplishes More**



7330 Gladiolus Drive  
Ft. Myers, Florida 33908

**CONTRIBUTE TODAY!**

Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution to the Interpretive Center Building Fund

\_\_\_\$25 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$100  
\_\_\_500 \_\_\_\$1,000 \_\_\_Other

Friends of Six Mile Cypress  
7330 Gladiolus Drive  
Ft. Myers 33908

275-7790  
[www.sloughpreserve.org](http://www.sloughpreserve.org)

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**Holiday Pot Luck**  
**Speaker: Dr. Bill Hammond**  
**December 14, 5:30. Rutenberg Center**  
**[sloughpreserve.org](http://sloughpreserve.org)**