



The Spring Board

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Local Florida Realtors Help Clean Up Local Waters

By Jackie Turner



“TBR members were in the park on Tuesday, July 20, to remove litter from the Friends adopted section of Shadeville Rd .”

Understanding the importance of clean water, the Florida Realtors® implemented their Clean Water 2021 Initiative during the month of July. As part of that statewide effort, the Tallahassee Board of Realtors (TBR), decided to offer their assistance to the Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park in support of Keep Wakulla County Beautiful (KWCB). TBR President, Heather Rydak, contacted the park to offer their help with a

Friends Road Clean-up.

As part of the KWCB adopt-a-road program, the Friends have adopted two roads, Wakulla Springs Rd (SR 267 to Shadeville Rd) and Shadeville Rd (Wakulla Cutoff to Hunters Trace). The Shadeville adopted section includes Upper Bridge, which crosses the Wakulla River. Litter along this stretch is only a short distance from

the Wakulla River which in turn flows into the St. Marks River. From there, it continues into Apalachee Bay and then into the Gulf of Mexico. Cleaning up this road section helps protect Florida’s waters.

Led by Danielle Galvin, TBR members were in the park on Tuesday, July 20 to remove litter from the Friends adopted section of Shadeville Rd and focused on the 1.5 mile stretch that includes Upper Bridge. As they picked up litter, TBR members separated recycling from trash. Altogether they removed 38.0 lbs. of recyclables and 62.5 lbs. of trash for a total of 100.5 lbs. of litter! TBR members enjoyed a morning together in service to the park as they helped to clean up Florida’s waters. And for a moment, the area was beautiful....

Ode to a Lubber Grasshopper By Jackie Turner; Photo Courtesy of Jackie Turner

**For weeks, I admired you, on the walkway or in the near-
by grass**

**An entomological jewel with a beautifully patterned form
Your short black wings with multicolor reticulation
Would not allow flight, so you lumbered along**

**Known as the Lubber Grasshopper, you are also called a
Georgia Thumper**

**My fondness for you is not common amongst my own kind
Your voracious appetite for crops and gardens
Makes you a despised critter to most**

**However, I know that you are just trying to make a living
As advertised distasteful to would-be predators
You are a vegetarian extraordinaire
Returning plants to the soil**

**At the end of day, consumed with myself, walking to my
car**

**One foot after another, paying no mind to what lay ahead
Suddenly my shoe rolled on something underfoot
Looking back, I saw a heartbreaking sight**

**Sprawled out on the walkway, with your legs in the air
Mortally wounded, as the last bit of life oozed out
A short life made even briefer by a careless act
Coming from one who loved you so**

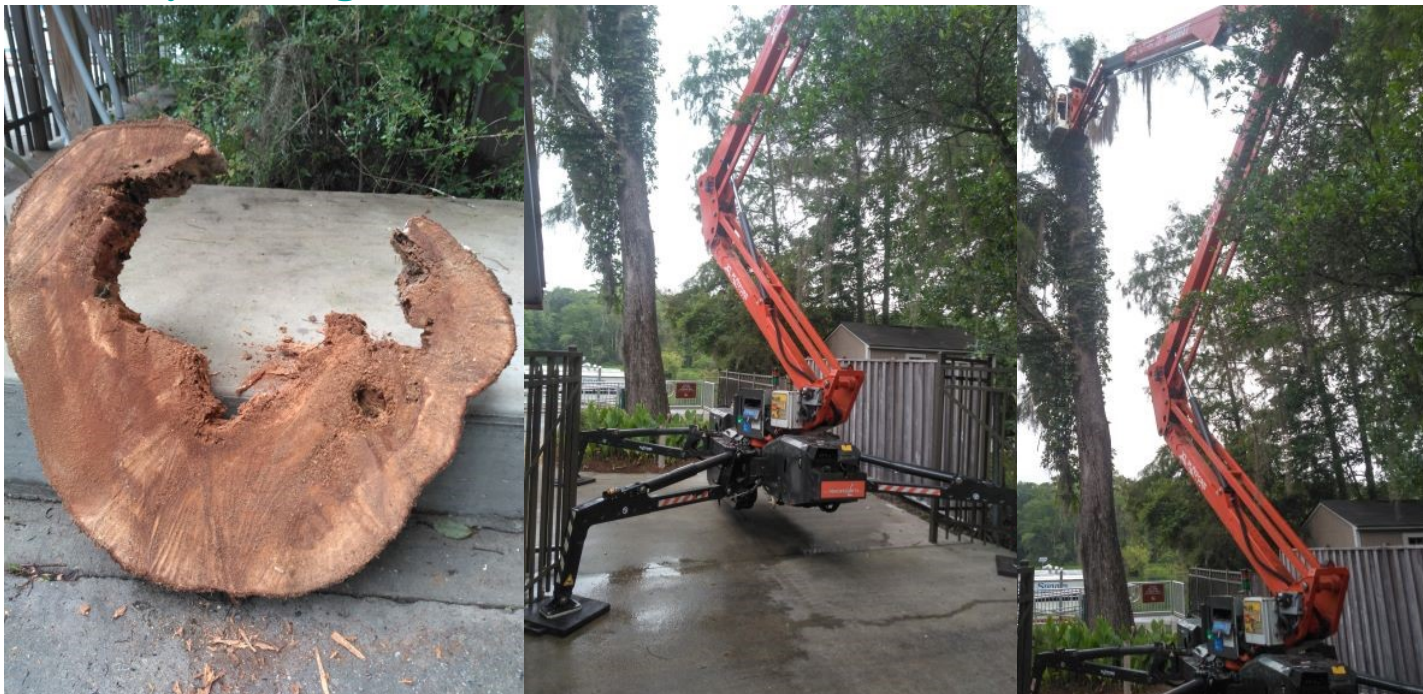


“You’ll never find a rainbow if you’re looking down.”

-Charlie Chaplain

Photo Courtesy Robert Thompson

The Way of Things By Jeff Hugo Photos by John Melton



In a letter written to Clarence Reed in 2001, the Tree Ring Laboratory of the University of Arkansas estimated the age of the old bald cypress tree that stood in the patio at the Waterfront Visitors Center to be about 465 years old. Unfortunately, the rot that had plagued it for untold years, had become worrisome. It was beginning to lean and lift the concrete surrounding it. The tree would need to come down.

For years, a thermometer tucked within the cypress' rotting heart had accurately reflected the air temperature for rangers and others. Prior to what resembled a long-necked gargantuan spider cutting the tree to pieces, the thermometer was gently removed to the adjacent fence gatepost.

With the aid of "the spider" and a huge crane, the tree was safely disassembled from the top down. It was impressive!

No longer a threat to park guests, the old patio weather tree will fade from memory. It is good to take a moment to reflect upon its service. Its tasks are now assigned to other trees and other spaces. It is the way of things.



Young Hands Help to Protect Park Wildlife By Jackie Turner

For many years, youth organizations and their adult chaperones have helped to protect the wildlife at Wakulla Springs State Park. They assist by removing litter, which is well known to hurt wild animals. Focusing on the main picnic area, they remove all the trash that they can find. They are masterful at finding the very, very small pieces that are easily overlooked.

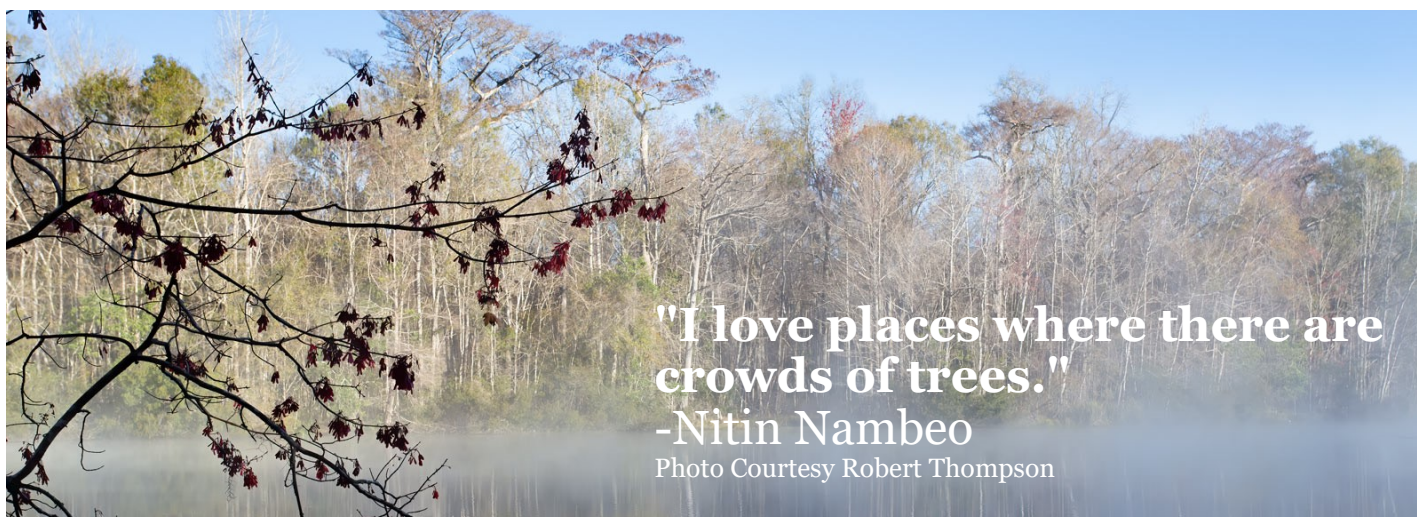
In July, we had two youth groups assist with this important project. On Thurs Jul 1, the Tallahassee Home School was on hand, and on Sat Jul 17, it was the Girl Scout Troop 67 of Tallahassee. Working for about an hour in the morning (to beat the summer heat), each group picked up about a 5-gallon bucket of litter. After their service, they enjoyed the rest of the day in the park.

This project provides young visitors the opportunity to volunteer in a place that they love. Participants learn about the importance of giving back to their community and taking care of the park. They also discuss the need to remove litter to protect wildlife. It is a great activity that helps the park immediately with litter removal and in the long-term with stewardship. It is truly a win-win.



Top: The Tallahassee Home School finished their work and are looking forward to some time at the beach.

Bottom: Girl Scout Troop 67 celebrates making the park safer for wildlife.



"I love places where there are crowds of trees."

-Nitin Nambeo

Photo Courtesy Robert Thompson

Nature Moments with Carter By Maria Wilhelmy



While Ranger Stephen Carter, or as he prefers Ranger Carter, may be new to Wakulla Springs State Park, he is certainly not new to the area or to the 'ranger way of life'.

Born in Tallahassee in 1963, he recalls that most of his life he has been outside or on the water. His parents were outdoors people and conservationists. Carter is a self-proclaimed water person which is reflected in his passion for the water and preventing a water crisis. He wants to preserve the "Real Florida" he grew up in. 15 years ago, Carter got that chance. From the beginning of his ranger career, he knew his dream was to end up here at Wakulla Springs State Park.

As a Park Ranger, he has had the opportunity to become a firefighter, the opportunity to patrol and save sea turtles, rescue wildlife, and do something positive every single day. And I have seen him do that!

A few weeks after he started here and after he was done with all the trainings, Carter was let loose in the park. Within the first few hours, I saw him weed whacking and clearing up our walkways by the Waterfront when suddenly, the sound of the engine stopped and I heard him yell out, "Nature Moment!". All the guests around him gathered at a safe distance and I heard him explaining to them the beauty and importance of a Great White Egret that was walking along the beach. This experience, I could see, brought a smile to park visitor's faces.

Those interpretive moments are what he loves the most, so he feels right at home guiding people along the boat tours. On an ideal tour, he says, nature happens, and presents you with an opportunity to interpret.

So far, his favorite bird to interpret is the Yellow Crowned Night Heron, because it's not a common heron in Florida. He's also seen a Least Bittern which are also very uncommon to see. That is exciting, not only for him, but to the guests on the boat tour. He's seen more of those birds here in this park than anywhere else.

It took him 25 years to figure out what he loves. But ever since he started as a park ranger, he's been happier than ever. Carter has previously worked at Anastasia State Park, Fort Mose Historic State Park, and Ochlockonee River State Park.

With all his experience, he has two pieces of advice for incoming rangers: First, bring a positive attitude with you; Second, find a special, natural, and magical area of the park you love and appreciate.

So, come on down and say hello to our newest Park Ranger Carter. Let him help you find the joy and positivity in nature moments and fall in love with Wakulla Springs, just like he has.



Ranger Stephen Carter takes advantage of a "Nature Moment".

I am Grateful By Amy Conyers



In my time working with the Florida Park Service, throughout several different parks and situations, I have never encountered a staff quite like the folks here. That says a lot. I have worked with a great many dedicated, knowledgeable, and talented folks. Park Rangers are a very rare breed and every one of them should wear the cape of a superhero. Wakulla Rangers are special though. I have spent a lot of time thinking about our park staff lately and I wanted to share some of my thoughts.

I feel that one of my greatest responsibilities as a Park Manager is to ensure that everyone around me has the tools that they need to do their jobs. I try to ensure that everyone has the training, the guidance, and the equipment needed, but equally important, the spark that drives a person to be their personal best. That last one has been more challenging in the last couple of years.

Many of us have experienced the profound loss of loved ones. Others have had everyday norms and expectations disrupted thanks to an invisible enemy. We have faced so much uncertainty. I have seen some of those sparks waiver.

In my efforts to help keep the sparks lit through encouragement and reflection, the staff at Wakulla Springs in turn has reciprocated. In so many ways, they buoy me up. Whether or not anyone is aware, every positive comment about our Park Rangers and Volunteers gives me great pride. I am constantly in awe of the accomplishments, the camaraderie, the talents, and the problem-solving capabilities of the park staff

and volunteers. The visitors notice too. They see the passion. They feel the spark.

I have heard it said that “People Make the Parks”. It’s true. The visitor satisfaction survey in 2017-2018 told us overwhelmingly that visitors value interactions with Park Rangers. More now than ever, people need to be guided into safe outdoor recreation. They want and need help from a Park Ranger. The communication that I receive from our visitors demonstrates the value of connecting with a Ranger during their tour. Here are some of my favorites:

“On Tuesday (7/20), I took my 80-year old mother and another 83-year-old friend to Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park to take the boat ride. We were on 1:00 pm boat. Ranger Steven Urling helped get Carol on the boat. He rolled her down the ramp and helped her get on the boat. Steven’s passion for the park showed through the entire boat ride. He identified the birds with great enthusiasm. He inspired me to learn more about bird identification. Steven did a great job of pulling Carol back up the ramp. You have a real gem in Ranger Steven!!!”

“The park rangers are so passionate and enthusiastic about sharing the wildlife on the river; they really bring the Springs to life.”

“I actually went for a river boat tour with my family on Saturday and had Maria as our guide. I’ve been on a dozen tours over the years and this tour was one of my favorites.

I just wanted to brag on her a bit since it was such a blast having Maria as our guide.”

I received a call from a Lodge guest named Michael. He was asking what tour he should get reservations on to have Steven or Scott for a Captain. He said that he had positive interactions with both over the last couple of days and he was interested in taking one of their tours.

Continued on Page 6

I Am Grateful (Continued) By Amy Conyers

“Holy Smokes! Ethan took us on the tour @1700. Only one word comes to mind: “Outstanding.”

My brother Tom, from Tally, was along (he has taken the tours for over 40 years); he remarked that it was the best he'd ever been on. Ethan is a “keeper.””

“The guide, I forgot his name, but he sings a song before the tour starts, was absolutely the best. He made the tour, and the overall experience, exceptional. He was extremely knowledgeable, and I can tell he has a passion for the area.”

I hear often, from folks who have been visiting since Wakulla Springs was a private operation through 1986, that the tour is better now than it ever has been. What strikes me is that there is significantly less wildlife than there was in the 80s. The glass bottom boat rides are extraordinarily rare because of the degraded visibility. The tours no longer feature pole vaulting fish, swarms of catfish, or views of mastodon bones. Many bird species have declined, the Limpkin that the park was once known for have vanished. There is less to see, yet the experience has improved.

We have adapted to those short-falls with information and education. We have moved away from the script, the chumming of the water, the commercial-feeling tour. We have replaced it with a Ranger-led tour. Our talented interpreters draw on a lifetime of interest in the natural world, as well as their training to create a tour that they are passionate about.



Every boat tour will identify birds, point out alligators, tell you how much water flows from the spring. Our Rangers do more. They connect with the visitors and share their excitement.

Every tour is a little different from the last and it keeps the visitors coming back for more. Nearly every FTE in the park and some OPS are trained to provide boat tours. Some days, it takes all hands-on deck to meet the visitor demand. Park staff are very well rounded and can fill any gap in the park. We are able to accomplish this because of the skills that park staff arrive with, in addition to the training that they receive and the stability of our work force. Training a captain to be proficient with our boats in a narrow channel, to identify at a glance all the species of birds and plants, and learning the history of the park takes months for Volunteers who come in with limited skills. Park Rangers still take time, but it's weeks, not months.

While a degree is not a Park Ranger requirement, we have 2 Anthropology degrees, a

TOP: Scott Roylance

CENTER: Ethan Whaley

BOTTOM: Collin Johnson

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I Am Grateful (Continued) By Amy Conyers

Hospitality degree (in route to a Master's), an Education degree, a Master's in Zoology, a Master's in Museum Studies and Education, an Interpretation degree, a History degree, and that does not include our Biologist nor the volunteers and OPS Rangers who also Captain our boats. We also have a Master Captain on staff and a very gifted musician who has written more than a dozen songs about this park. Park visitors often request "the singing ranger" and bring their friends and family to hear him.

The Captains aren't just interpreting on the tours and driving a boat. They are making note of wildlife and their behaviors. They are watching out for exotic species. They are making note of changes that they see in the water, in the wildlife, in the plants, and they are recording and reporting those observations. They are working with volunteers and researchers to communicate those observations to restore our natural resources and preserve our cultural resources. They are watching out for safety concerns like wasp nests or overgrown branches which could injure guests. They are also making note of mechanical concerns, that many of them can address on their own or report. They are accomplishing all of these tasks, while steering the boat through a narrow and winding channel, while keeping 20 school children engaged and learning, while helping a birder find the lifer that they hope to see, and while making sure that the couple celebrating their 50th Anniversary felt special on their tour. Park Rangers are uniquely qualified to accomplish all of these goals in a 45-minute tour.

Wakulla Rangers are capable in all areas of the Big 5 but with a special focus and a passion for interpretation. These Rangers well exceed their job descriptions. With their skills and talents, they could clearly be in higher paying positions. Especially in today's job market, their experiences and education afford them a variety of options. They do this job because it isn't a job to them. They are Park Rangers. They care about the resources that they protect. They are enthu-

siastic about the resources that they interpret. They are here to provide a service to a public that shares their love and for those who need to learn more to appreciate our resources. They are here to provide resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting and restoring our natural and cultural resources.

I am grateful.



The rangers “are making note of changes that they see in the water, in the wildlife, in the plants, and they are recording and reporting those observations.” The roseate spoonbill (above) is just one of the unusual species noted on the river in the last year.

Summer — Come and Gone By John Melton



“The old ranger station near the park entrance is no more.”

Another Summer has come and gone at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park. The summer staff and lifeguards have packed up and headed back to school.

Though it was a skinny year for professional lifeguards, we had three good ones. We would like to thank our Summer 2021 lifeguards Madyson Brown, Solomon Keith & Oliver Yost.

We would also like to thank our Summer OPS Beach Ranger Kevin Posey. This was Kevin's second summer with us here at Wakulla Springs and I look forward to his return next summer.

We offer an outgoing thank you to Miranda Capps as well. She helped us in the ranger station this past Summer.

You may see some new faces on our year-round FTE and OPS staff. Welcome, Stephen Carter, our newest full-time ranger. Stephen has been in the Florida Park Service for several years. He comes to us from Ochlocknee River State Park. Stephen is a great addition to the team and a good interpreter too. Welcome OPS Rangers Aslan McMullian and Carson Goodwin to our team as well.

It was an interesting summer around the spring. Lots of

smiling faces and happy people. We had a Common Loon stay with us for a few weeks early in the summer. They aren't really that rare in our area, but this one put on quite a show for us with his fishing techniques.

In June, we had a special treat. The waters became so clear that you could see the bottom of the spring bowl for several weeks. The water had a slight green tinge to it. But for those who were fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time, the Glass Bottom Boat was a big hit again.

I got to spend a day at Saint George Island State Park as consulting arborist removing several dangerous trees from near park residences. It was good to see former Wakulla Springs Ranger Lance Kelly who is now the Assistant Manager at Saint George Island.

Speaking of trees, I am sad to say that we had to have the big Bald Cypress on the patio of the Waterfront building removed. It had a rotting base and was showing signs of heaving making it a very risky tree that had the potential to cause serious damage. Mike Cross' team did a safe and efficient job on the removal.

Something else you might have noticed is that the old

Summer — Come and Gone (Continued) By John Melton

ranger station near the park entrance is no more. It was demolished just a few days ago in preparation for the construction of a brand-new Wakulla Springs ranger station in the same footprint as the old one. We will be in the temporary ranger station at the park drive cross-roads for about two or so months until the new construction is finished.

Winter is coming. Time to turn our attention to maintenance projects with the return of Maintenance Fridays on the schedule. We are planning board walk repairs, floating dock repairs and repairs to the river tour boat dock. We have an awesome staff here at Wakulla Springs. Of course, we could always use an extra hand. If you would like to help your favorite state park with construction projects, grounds, basic maintenance, welding or resource management call our volunteer coordinator Jackie Turner at (850) 561-7281 to become part of our awesome volunteer team. Until next time, stay tuned!



Carson Goodwin is pressure cleaning the propane tank outside the administration building.

An Eventful Day By Jeff Hugo (Continued on page 18)

Finally. The Evening Cruise and Dinner went the way it was supposed to. It was September 11. It was not obsessively hot or humid. It was a reasonably comfortable late summer early evening when guests arrived. Most of the 58 participants, arrived at 5:00pm as requested.

The first boat sailed away by 5:15pm with the second soon to follow at 5:35. The wildlife put on a particularly spectacular show. Everyone was in good spirits as they made their way to the dining room for a delicious buffet-style dinner.

By 7:30pm, folks had gathered at the front of the Lodge. They were looking up. They were looking forward. But eventually they had to look at Jeff Hugo as he introduced them to a *Swift Night Out*.

As the journals and pencils were passed out, people filled in their names and the weather conditions. Park Biologist Patty Wilbur made certain everyone knew as much as they could about swifts. Jeff Hugo took a turn to see if their journals reflected their new-found knowledge.

While all this was happening, an occasional swift would dive into a chimney. It was obvious that an effort was needed to conjure more swifts. So ... Patty and Jeff led the group in

Continued on page 18)



**TOP: The Evening Cruise departs.
BOTTOM: The crowd gathers to see the swifts.**

Volunteer Voices on the River By Jackie Turner Photos by Jackie Turner



TOP: Ken Clineman

BOTTOM: Paul Schafer

For many years, park volunteers have served as boat guides on the beautiful Wakulla River. As is the long-held Wakulla guide tradi-



tion, they tell the story of the river through their mind's eye, as they interpret the natural wonders all around the boat. Like their ranger cohorts, they derive pleasure from the joy experienced by their passengers, as they behold a wild river managed as a wildlife sanctuary since the time of Edward Ball.

Volunteer river boat guides fill a vital need in the park and serve on a weekly or biweekly basis providing regular staffing support. When volunteer guides are on the river, it allows rangers to serve in other areas of the park which include the prescribed burn program, wildlife monitoring, other interpretative programs, major maintenance and construction project.

Currently, we have four excellent volunteers on the river. They are Ken Clineman, Harry McCall, Paul Schafer and Lori Ann Firehammer. Ken is our longest serving volunteer guide and has been conducting tours since 2002. Harry has been on the river since 2014. Paul got underway doing tours in 2018. Lori Ann is our newest guide and has been on the river since April 2021.

Ken, Harry, Paul and Lori Ann generously donate their time and talents to the park. They take good care of visitors, spending time with them before and after tours. They talk to their guests prior to getting underway to better understand their audience and spend time



TOP: Lori Firehammer

Bottom: Harry McCall

with them afterwards to answer the many follow up questions. We are so fortunate to have their service to the park, as evidence by the glowing praise from their passengers.



Junior Ranger Jamboree By Kat Wilson



“Twenty-two education groups from across North Florida came together to provide information and activities.”

On August 28, the breeze on Lake Hall moved banners for the first Junior Ranger Jamboree at Maclay Gardens. Twenty-two education groups from across North Florida came together to provide information and activi-



“Ranger Kat set up a table highlighting Wakulla Springs and the park’s visiting Wakullaphants”.

ties for kids interested in becoming Junior Rangers.

Ranger Kat set up a table highlighting Wakulla Springs and the park’s visiting “Wakullaphants” (A term for manatees in the Wakulla River). The children enjoyed a craft activity making manatee puppets with paper bags and cutouts. Upon completion, they earned an activity stamp in their Jr. Ranger Passport booklet.

The beautiful morning and excited children meant more than 100 manatee puppets had homes in just an hour and half! Visitors to the table could see what migratory paths the manatees took around the state throughout the year. They also had the opportunity to discuss the changes in their habits and to their habitats with a ranger.

But that’s just one table. Many other parks were represented. One of them, Top Sail State Park, had future Jr. Rangers construct fluffy Snowy Plover chicks from cotton balls. It helped the Jr. Rangers appreciate the value of beach habitats.

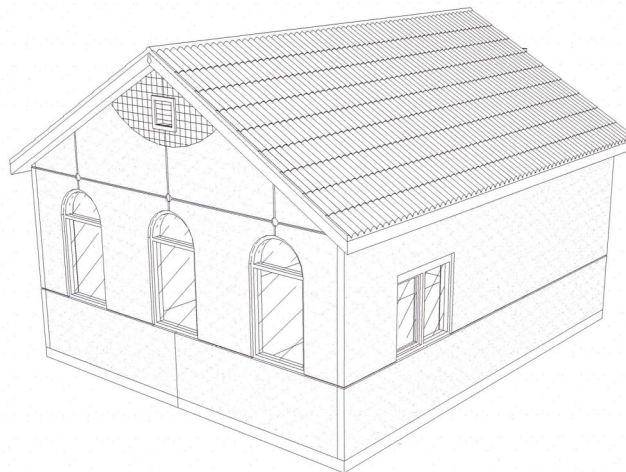
Other organizations brought living ambassadors to represent habitat needs. The Tallahassee Museum brought an Eastern Box Turtle and a Gopher Tortoise to visit. FWC (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) brought a two-year-old alligator.

It was a wonderfully successful day. It will serve as a foundation for more Junior Ranger programs like this in the future.



Ranger Kat holds the alligator ambassador courtesy of FWC.

At Long Last By Jeff Hugo Photos by Jeff Hugo, Diagrams Courtesy Amy Conyers



LEFT: The four pre-fabricated concrete walls of the new ranger station were installed on Thursday, September 2. RIGHT and BELOW: Blueprints of the completed ranger station and its interior.

The old ranger station was crumbling. It had been for years. Ranger Bob Geiger had done some cosmetic repairs long ago. But like the proverbial ‘finger plugging the hole in the dike’, more ‘holes’ and façade failures manifested. Would a new ranger station ever rise from the rubble?

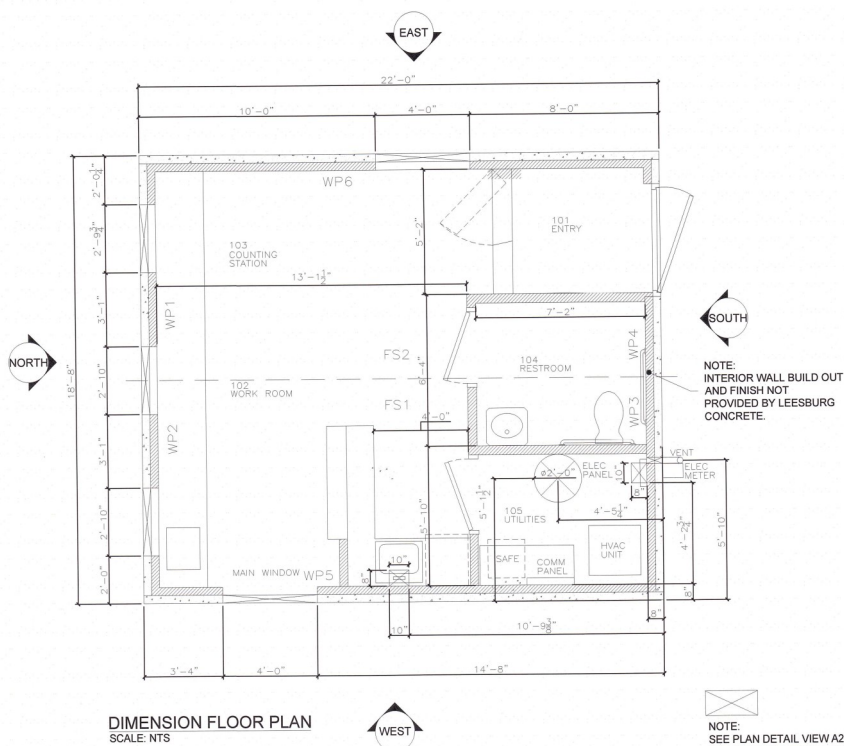
The plans had been in the works for years. But there were change orders. There were natural disasters which moved the allocation of resources. There were delays.

On Monday, August 9, the old ranger station was torn down. In its old footprint would rise a pre-fabricated concrete building courtesy of Leesburg Concrete on Thursday, September 2. A crane would add the concrete roof panels the next day.

Of course there is still much to do. But with the shell in place, the plumbing, electric, and other inte-

rior accoutrements can be connected, installed and completed. It will probably be at least another two months. But there is a light at the end of this tunnel.

We hope that park guests and staff will be impressed with the shiny new welcome to the park.



River Trimming By Jeff Hugo Photo courtesy of Maria Wilhelmy



FROM REAR TO FOREGROUND: Kat Wilson, Josh Rowe, and Maria Wilhelmy trim encroaching vegetation from the river boat tour route.

During the busy summer months, it is difficult to coordinate tasks that require multiple staff members to execute. Kat Wilson, Maria Wilhelmy, and Josh Rowe have a “Let’s-get-it-done” attitude.

The recent growing season exacerbated the amount of foliage and, in turn, large paper wasp nests in close proximity to the river boat tour course. The trio set a time, place, and plan in motion to resolve the issue.

On July 27, with pruners in hand and wasp spray in reserve, they cast off from the dock in the pontoon boat. They soon came to realize that the number of wasp nests encountered had been underestimated. Some creative thinking and skillful maneuvering filled the void and removed any issues.

Their timely work left the river course with fewer hazards. Their selective work also spared the tour route the look of having been trimmed. The Wakulla River still winds wild and free, but a little safer.



“A river doesn’t just carry water, it carries life.”

- Amit Kalantri

Photo Courtesy of Robert Thompson

Resource Management News and Notes By Patty Wilbur Photo by Patty Wilbur



A brown water snake swallowing a 'fishy' meal.

It's been a busy summer at Wakulla Springs State Park. While most of the visitor activity centered around cooling off in the spring or picnicking with family and friends, park staff worked hard in the backcountry to manage the park's habitat.

After an active early spring prescribed fire season, we were able to get a few more knocked out as the weather turned hotter and more humid. Josh Rowe and I assisted with burns at Torreya State Park on May 27th and June 17th. We were also able to burn the zone surrounding our shop compound on June 15th. I wished the fuels had had a bit longer to dry out for that burn, though I'm glad we lit it when we could. After that day, the weather turned more humid, the winds died down, and afternoon storms

picked up. It was tough to get much burning done once we got further into summer.

We did have one surprise burn. On June 7th, Josh and I were up at Emerald Sink attempting to pressure wash the dive steps there. We were finding it difficult to back the fire engine close enough to get the job done. It may have been just as well that we hadn't had a chance to use the water in the tank yet. In a weird coincidence, Amy called to say that the Florida Forest Service was putting out a wildfire along New Light Church Road, just north of Emerald Sink! The wind was blowing hard out of the south that day, so

neither Josh nor I had smelled or seen the smoke. The wind was in fact the cause of the trouble. It had blown an oak tree down onto the powerline along the road. Thankfully, Duke had gotten the tree off the line and Forestry had the fire knocked down by the time we got there. Since Josh and I were able to continue mopping up the fire, Forestry didn't need to plow a fire break through our fence. All told, the wildfire probably burned about a quarter acre. It was mostly confined to the mowed grass along the right-of-way, and only crept a couple yards onto the park property.

With all the sunshine and rain, the plants really grow quickly this time of year, especially the invasive exotics. It's important to survey and treat as many of them as possible before they have a chance to spread. Over the summer, Josh and I tackled Chinaberry, camphor tree, cogon grass, Japanese climbing fern, mimosa, nandina, tropical soda apple, Chinese privet, Chinese tallow, Chinese wisteria, trifoliate orange, showy rattlebox, bamboo, English ivy, and air potato. (I'm probably forgetting a couple.) We also met with a couple staff members from The Nature Conservancy to point out a few patches of exotics in the Apalachicola National Forest south of our Riversinks parcel, which they will work on treating.

There has been plenty of other activity going on at Riversinks as well. Our habitat restoration project there is in full swing. Whitfield Timber has just finished cutting in the NE quadrant there and has begun work in the NW quadrant.

Resource Management News and Notes (Cont'd) By Patty Wilbur Photo by Patty Wilbur



“Our site prep contractor, B&B Dugger, recently began working in the SE and SW quadrants of Riversinks.... They began by pushing up the remaining logging slash and burning the piles.”

Once that is complete, they’ll finish up by thinning trees in our Turner Sink parcel.

Our site prep contractor, B&B Dugger, recently began working in the SE and SW quadrants of Riversinks. They are working to prepare 107 of the clear-cut acres for planting wiregrass and longleaf pine. They began by pushing up the remaining logging slash and burning the piles. They will be removing the stumps and harrowing the ground as well. This smooth surface should allow other contractors to follow behind them, planting longleaf pine plugs and properly sowing the native groundcover seed with a Grasslander seeder. Hopefully the prep will also reduce competition for the young plants.

Keeping the woods roads clear is always hard work, especially during the height of the growing season. The summer thunderstorms and hurricane season add to the challenge. While Tropical Storm Fred wasn’t the worst storm to ever hit this area, it still managed to bring down several very large trees (and plenty of smaller ones too). One large white oak fell across the park drive, so it was probably a good thing that the park was closed the day of the storm. John Melton and Maria Wilhelmy cut enough of its branches off for traffic to get through when the park reopened, and Jeff Hicks, Bruce Graybeal and I cleared the rest with chainsaws and tractor the next day.

Over the next couple weeks, Kat Wilson, Josh and I cleared the hiking trail and the rest of the roads on the legacy property. We’ve also recently cleared and mowed the roads at the Ferrell tract.

On a more troubling note, late this spring several of the riverboat guides noticed that vegetation along the river channel was declining. Several species of plants, including knotweed, pickerelweed and water hemlock, had begun to turn yellow and brown. Some died and left bare patches in their place.

The water level in the river had gotten extremely low around that time, so I’d speculated that it might be related; however, the plants in question had remained submerged. It was thought that we might have had a pulse of saline water backing into Wakulla Spring from the tunnel at Spring Creek, but the Northwest Water Management District’s data showed that this hadn’t happened in over a year. Since several plants were affected that weren’t closely related, it seemed to rule out a pest or disease, which would usually be more specific.

We wondered if an herbicide might have leached into a conduit feeding the spring. Quarterly water sampling by DEP showed that herbicide levels in the river were well within normal range at those times, but we wondered if a short-term pulse might have occurred. It took a while, but we found a lab in

Resource Management News and Notes (Cont'd) By Patty Wilbur Photo by Patty Wilbur

South Dakota that could test for herbicides in plant material. Bob Deyle helped me collect some of the affected leaves in August, which I froze and overnighted to the lab. (Thanks to the Friends for paying for the testing.) They'll screen for several herbicides that can potentially be carried in groundwater. If we find that an herbicide was to blame, perhaps we can prevent this from happening again. Thankfully, the plants seem to finally be recovering.

Considering the loss of plants along the river's edge, it was a surprisingly good year for the apple snails here. In June, Josh and I spotted 777 clusters of apple snail eggs laid along the survey route. This was the third highest monthly count since the apple snail egg surveys began in 2006. (The highest counts were exactly 882 seen in both June and July of 2011.) The counts have stayed high this



A large mockernut hickory fell across one of the Sanctuary roads.

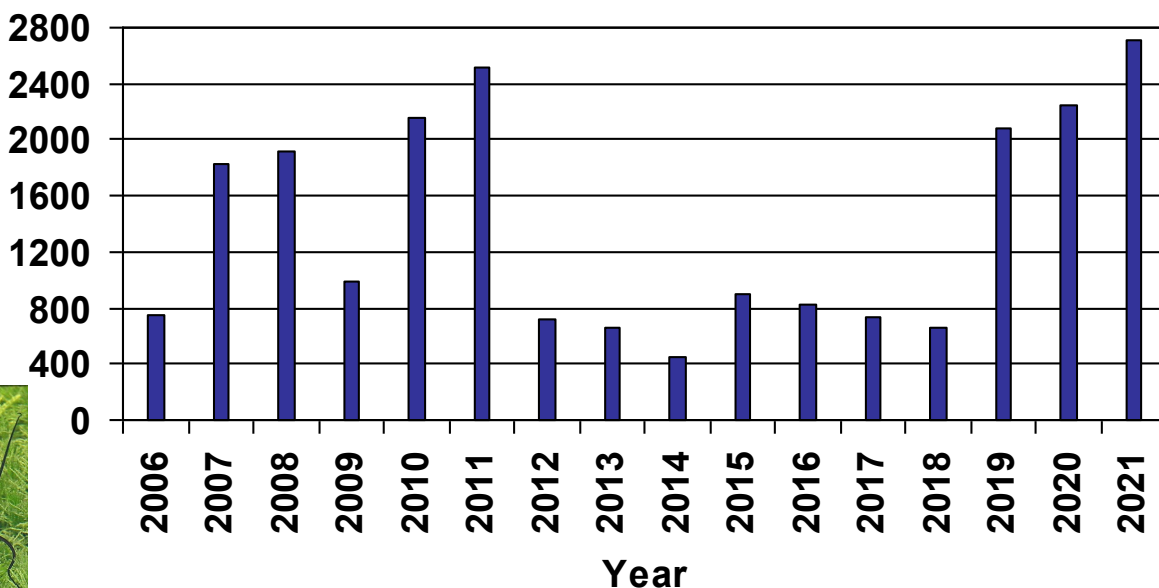
summer, with 765 clusters found in July, and 627 seen in August.

I'm excited to see autumn on the horizon! Cooler weather means we can accomplish even more each day to protect this wonderful place that we love.

Apple Snail Egg Clusters 2006-2021



Egg Clusters



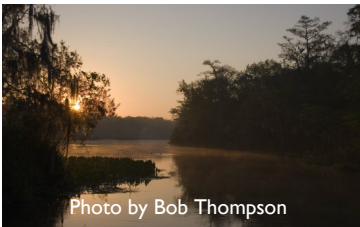


Photo by Bob Thompson

Wakulla Springs State Park
465 Wakulla Park Drive
Wakulla Springs, FL 32327
Phone: 850-561-7276

Upcoming Events!

Saturday,
September 18
9:00am – Noon
Coastal Clean-Up

Thursday,
September 23
6:00pm—7:00pm
Going Native

Saturday,
September 25
9:00am—Noon
Natl. Public Lands Day

Thursday,
October 14
6:00pm—7:00pm
A Timeless Glimpse

Saturday
October 23
9:30am—10:30am
Coffee with a Ranger

Saturday
October 23
11:30am-3:00pm
Spooky Springs Cruises

Sunday,
October 24
5:15-8:00pm
Friends Beach Bash

Saturday
October 30
5:00pm-8:00pm
Evening Cruise and Dinner

MISSION: To provide resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting, and restoring natural and cultural resources

An Eventful Day (Continued) By Jeff Hugo

Swift Night Out for Three Voices. Jeff and Patty traded lines while the 74 spectators joined in at just the right moment with theirs: *Twittering, the swifts call for rest.*

Sadly, the effort was a bust. The large flock of swifts that normally circled the lodge never appeared. But, counting was easy. The average number of swifts counted was 5.

There were two previous instances when the swifts, the stars of the show, did not materialize. Both instances were associated with inclement weather. Even though September 11, 2021 was lovely, they were not present. Who can figure? We can only hope that next year bears improvement.



Friends members Linda Keays and Karen Taylor man the Friends booth.

Ranger Collin Johnson wrote the music. Other members of the staff assisted Collin with some of the lyrics, vocals, and instrumentals as well. Ranger Kat Wilson was a featured vocalist on three of the songs. It was a wonderful collaborative effort.

The 90 plus attendees seemed to think so as well. The Friends sold many CD's and added at least a score of family memberships to their ranks.



Once the Swift Program concluded, most of the guests wandered into the Lodge lobby for the CD Release Party. The Friends of Wakulla Springs had commissioned a CD of 12 songs reflecting the diverse natural resources of the park.

Saturday,
November 6
8:00am—9:00am
Early Morning Boat Tour

Thursday,
November 11
6:30pm—7:30pm
Bell(es) of Wakulla Springs

Saturday,
November 20
10:30am—1:00pm
Hidden Spring Bike Ride

Saturday
November 20
4:30pm-7:30pm
Evening Cruise and Dinner

Saturday,
December 4
9:00am—10:30am
Morning Nature Walk

Thursday,
December 9
6:00pm—7:00pm
Going Native

Saturday,
December 11
10:30am—1:00pm
Hidden Spring Bike Ride

Saturday
December 18
4:30pm-7:30pm
Evening Cruise and Dinner

Saturday,
January 1
9:00am—10:30am
First Day Hike