



Spring 2008

## Restoration of 1800's Fish Camp Cabin

*Article and photos by Don Hickman*

The Oakland Nature Preserve has been given a cabin that is believed to have been built in the late 1800's. The cabin came from Tom's Fish Camp on the western shore of Lake Apopka and was rented to fishermen that came to fish the lake. The plan is to leave the exterior just as it is and do only maintenance and repairs necessary to keep it sound and water-proof. The inside will be completely remodeled and divided into one bedroom, a bath, a kitchen and a living area. When completed, a resident caretaker will live on the property for security purposes.



*Men from the Oakland Presbyterian Church donate their time and expertise to rehabilitate the cabin.. The cabin crew this day: cabin crew left to right Don Hickman, Emmett Richardson, Frank Merritt, Jack Ross and Dennis Foltz*

Due to the water storage issue in the Town of Oakland, the permitting process has been delayed but we will proceed to clean the cabin's interior and do the necessary maintenance to keep the building sound. The men of the Oakland Presbyterian Church have volunteered to provide the labor associated with refurbishing the cabin and Jim Ross of Ross Design has agreed to generate the documents necessary for permitting.



The wallboard on some of the interior walls has been removed and, surprisingly, the wallboard had been nailed to one-inch pecky cypress wood. Apparently when the cabin was originally built, pecky cypress was used not only for the exterior but for inside walls as well. Before ONP received the cabin, which is of "board and batten" construction, the battens had been removed leaving a space between the boards exposed. Luckily, the walls that were used to divide the cabin's interior can be re-sawed to provide the material for the battens. These battens must be reinstalled to waterproof the walls.

There are also some minor roof repairs that also need to be made. The goal will be to keep the authentic architectural style that characterized the old fish camps of that era.

## *Message from the President*

Have you seen the new environmental education building recently? It is really exciting to watch this long-awaited dream come true. I really feel this building and the programs we can now institute at ONP will be a very valuable asset to West Orange County. I really appreciate all the people who have worked so hard to make this happen.

A word about the building itself. It has 4,000 square feet of enclosed area and a lot of open porches. It is designed to replicate an early pioneer homestead, planned to be practical and provide air circulation for cooling, with an open 'dogtrot' hallway between the two living areas, usually a sleeping room on one side and a kitchen, dining area on the other. Because the kitchen was often hot (and sometimes caught fire) it was separated from the living areas, connected by the dogtrot.

Our building will have a classroom on one side and a museum on the other with the office and bathrooms separated like the original kitchen. We will also have a 'serenity porch' across the whole front, facing

into the woods with plenty of rocking chairs. The museum will have a fireplace and room for small gatherings.

The exterior of the building will not have landscaping. An area at least 20 feet wide will be kept clean and raked as it was done in

pioneer days. This provided fire protection in case of wildfire. It will also have the standard wash pot for boiling the family laundry and maybe a buckboard wagon outside (if we can find one). Our goal is to interpret the cultural as well as natural

history of our area.

We got bids on several types of logs: oak, pine, and cypress. We chose white pine from a Vermont company because it was the only sustainable log available. As an environmental organization, we couldn't justify using cypress or oak. The logs we chose are 'farmed' for this purpose. They are put together with matching tongue and groove and each log has many foot-long wood screws that make it a very sturdy building. It will have a metal roof and the chimney will be rock covered. We will probably use gas logs in the fireplace for effect (still arguing about that one).

We are now planning the programs to be offered. We need lots of docent volunteers to help run this center. We have demonstrated the real need for environmental education in this region and the real value of our programs depends a great deal on the volunteers we get. Please plan to donate at least a few hours a month -- it will be very rewarding!

*Jim Thomas*



Photo by John Deam

*View of the building from the uplands area. The office is on the left, classroom/museum on the right. The serenity porch is on the far right facing the uplands.*

**Visit our website at**  
**[www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org](http://www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org)**  
**for up-to-date information on activities at the preserve.**

## Docent Corner

By Darla Miller

As with the other ONP Board Members, I have my “day job” that takes up much of my time. I would love to spend my days at the Preserve assisting folks that come out to enjoy the boardwalk going to Lake Apopka, to go bird watching and/or just enjoy a day out in the woods. However, the work requirements at the Preserve don’t stop just because I am out earning my daily wages. How then can we provide a wondrous experience for the visitors to the Preserve? What about spreading the news about the exciting new education building? How can we spread the word about the restoration activities taking place at the Preserve, on a daily basis.

This can all be accomplished through a successful Docent program. You’ve heard me talk about this in the last several newsletters.

Providing the public with information regarding the day-to-day activities is the exact reason we need a good selection of Docents. These are folks that can be available to be on site to provide information to our visitors, at times where the members of the Board may not be available. We have several folks that have signed up for this program and we are still developing this program.

In order to help train the Docents, we have been conducting monthly “Nature Creeps”. These tours are typically lead by Jim Thomas, ONP’s President. We have taken tours along the boardwalk, along the upland trails and we have explored the construction of the new education building. If you haven’t been out here in a while – we have a lot going on. It is all very exciting.

Peggy Lantz has agreed to assist me with developing this program. I prepared the draft Docent manual about a year ago. Peggy has gone through the manual and provided me with valuable comments. This is another role for Docents. I appreciate her willingness to assist with this manual and the program.

For more information, please contact Darla Miller at [darla.miller@mscwin.com](mailto:darla.miller@mscwin.com).



Photo by Tom Rodriguez

*Jim Thomas (at left) on a Nature Creep through the uplands with a group of eager listeners. ONP invites anyone interested to join the group. Call Tom at the ONP office for the next scheduled Creep. You will either walk through the uplands or on the boardwalk through the wetlands to Lake Apopka. This is a great opportunity to become familiar with the ecology of central Florida.*

### Reading about Florida Native Plants

Identifying a flower or plant you found interesting can present a challenge. It helps to have more than one source of information. I like to cross reference a new find with several books or websites to assure myself that I have correctly identified the plant. By compiling the information from several places it’s easier to eliminate the similar plants and determine the plant’s true identity. Here are some of my favorite sources:

A Gardener’s Guide to Florida’s Native Plants by Rufino Osorio. Published by University Press of Florida. Organized by plant type. Includes trees.

Florida Wild Flowers and Roadside Plants by C. Ritchie Bell and Bryan J. Taylor. Published by Laurel Hill Press. Gives area and bloom seasons.

The Guide to Florida Wildflowers by Walter Kingsley Taylor. Published by Taylor Publishing Company. Organized by flower color.

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/wildflower/>

[http://floridawildflowerfoundation.org/species\\_information.html](http://floridawildflowerfoundation.org/species_information.html)

# Wildlife Report

keeping an eye on the goal

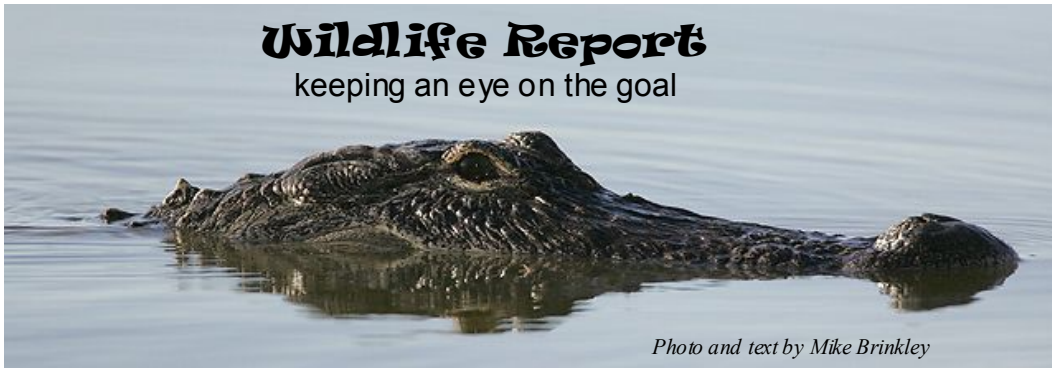


Photo and text by Mike Brinkley



Photo by Mike Brinkley

**American Goldfinch** is a winter visitor at the preserve frequently found in weedy fields and visiting the thistle feeders located near the office building.



Photo by Mike Brinkley

**Snowy Egrets** are commonly seen at the lakeside pavilion especially with water levels dropping making it an ideal feeding spot for many wading birds.



Photo by Mike Brinkley

**The Ruby-crowned Kinglets** constant wing-flicking is a trait that helps birders ID this very small bird in the field. The male shows its red crown on rare occasions usually during a dispute with another Ruby-crowned Kinglet.



Photo by Mike Brinkley

**The Hermit Thrush** is the only member of its genus to spend the winter in North America. It changes its diet from eating nearly entirely insects in summer to one of equal parts insects and fruit in winter.

**Right:** Another winter visitor to the preserve is the **Yellow Rump Warbler**, usually seen feeding in larger groups than many other Warblers primarily feeding on insects and berries.



*Photo by Mike Brinkley*



*Photo by Mike Brinkley*

**Left:** The **Swamp Sparrow** also visits the preserve during winter time, usually seen in open wetland areas along the boardwalk and also visits the feeders.

### **Birdwatcher's Checklist**

- Double-crested Cormorant
- Anhinga
- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Tricolored Heron
- Little Blue Heron
- Snowy Egret
- Green Heron
- Black-crowned Night-Heron
- White Ibis
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Osprey

- Bald Eagle
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Limpkin
- Purple Gallinule
- Common Moorhen
- Rock Pigeon
- Eurasian Collared-Dove
- Mourning Dove
- White-winged Dove
- Eastern Screech-Owl
- Great Horned Owl
- Barred Owl
- Red-bellied Woodpecker

- Downy Woodpecker
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Carolina Wren
- Northern Mockingbird
- Brown Thrasher
- Tufted Titmouse
- Blue Jay
- Fish Crow
- Northern Cardinal
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Boat-tailed Grackle
- Common Grackle
- Brown-headed Cowbird

**Find** a complete list of birds identified at the Preserve online at [oaklandnaturepreserve.org](http://oaklandnaturepreserve.org) in a downloadable file, or pick up a copy from the Preserve office as you begin your hike through the uplands or down the boardwalk to Lake Apopka. Tom Rodriguez, with the help of a number of fellow birdwatchers, maintains the list.

## Volunteer & Donor Spotlight

*Tom Rodriguez*, Executive Director

Volunteers from **Bloom and Grow Garden Society** pose during a workday at ONP. The organization has been a long-time supporter of the ONP and made several financial contributions. Shown left to right are Nancy Pavey, Jan Cochran, Phyllis Hickman, Gretchen Boyd, Mary Lyn VanDyke, and Nancy Sines working on an area near the boardwalk entrance that the organization maintains with flowers and vegetation



Photo by Tom Rodriguez



Photo by Tom Rodriguez

Representatives from the **Girl Scouts of Citrus Council Dr Win Service Unit** gather after a full morning of removing non-native “Air Potato” from the Preserve. The group learned the importance that native vegetation has on wildlife while donating time and resources to the Preserve.

Volunteer **Mike Brinkley** stands aboard his airboat showing the litter he removed from Lake Apopka. He is organizing a cleanup effort with other “air-boaters” to remove additional litter from the Lake. The cleanup will focus on large items such as old fish traps, propane tanks, broken utility poles, boat remnants and other large debris. **Please call 407-905-0054 if you are interested in helping**



Photo by Tom Rodriguez



Photo by Tom Rodriguez

Students enjoy a natural setting while learning about their environment at **Yosemite National Park**. Three representatives from ONP recently visited the park to learn about their education programs. **Jack Amon** deserves full credit for coordinating the trip and providing the financial resources to make it possible.

Tom Rodriguez (center) accepts a donation of microscopes from **Valencia Community College**. Ron Olmstead, (left) director of the Science lab on West Campus and Professor Dr. Richard J. Wright coordinated the donation. Valencia Community College is a long-time supporter of the Preserve and has made previous contributions.



Photo by Tom Rodriguez



Photo by Tom Rodriguez

Volunteers from **Windermere Preparatory School** take a break after removing a variety of non-native plant species from the Preserve. This was the fourth time volunteers from WPS helped with the restoration of the Oakland Nature Preserve

# Oakland Heritage Festival 2007 Sponsors

Oakland Nature Preserve and the Town of Oakland appreciate the faithful support of our Festival Sponsors. Their support plays a vital role in the success of the Preserve and the development of its educational programs.

**Castle & Cooke Florida, Ltd.**

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**Friends of Lake Apopka**

**Bray ACE Hardware Co., Inc.**

**All Aspects Dental Group**

**Biosphere Consulting, Inc.**

**Breedlove, Dennis & Assoc.**

## Membership Application for Oakland Nature Preserve

Name (Personal/Business/Organization): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (C S Z): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Select Your Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ Student or Youth (under 18) - \$10.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual - \$35.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Family - \$50.00 (List family names on the form. Newsletter sent to first name on the list.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor - \$75.00 (List one contact name on the form)

\_\_\_\_\_ Patron - \$125.00 or more (If a business or organization, list a contact name on the form)

### Activity and Volunteer Interests

\_\_\_ Hiking /Walking \_\_\_ Bird Watching \_\_\_ Nature Photography \_\_\_ Ecology

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Opportunity Interests:

\_\_\_ Restoration \_\_\_ Trails and Grounds \_\_\_ Ecology Studies

\_\_\_ Education \_\_\_ Docent \_\_\_ Fund Raising \_\_\_ Oakland Heritage Festival

\_\_\_ Project Management \_\_\_ Office Support \_\_\_ Building Maintenance

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to ONP and Mail along with this form to:**

**Oakland Nature Preserve**  
PO Box 841  
Oakland, FL 34760-0841

Your interest in **Oakland Nature Preserve, Inc.**, a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization, is vital to restoring and conserving the natural beauty of the Preserve, and educating visitors about the ecology of the Preserve, Lake Apopka and Central Florida