



Oakland Nature Preserve, Inc.

PO Box 841 Oakland Florida 34760 Phone 407.905.0054

Summer 2006

Message from the President

If you haven't been in the Preserve lately you will be impressed with the growth rate of our upland forest! You should feel good about it. This bit of natural land may be the only one left in West Orange County in just a few years.

Great news! We are rapidly closing the funding gap so we can begin building our much-needed Environmental Education Center. We still need \$100,000 and we are going to get it, whatever it takes! Please help us look for this last bit and lets start building.

The need for environmental education is great. Our school system has almost no program (compared with Seminole and Osceola Counties, which have great programs).

A new book by Richard Louv entitled "Last Child in the Woods", provides a real insight into the consequences of children suffering from "nature deficit disorder". I recently heard Mr. Louv speak and he has done a lot

of interesting research and the results are really scary. We see the results when we lead student groups into our Preserve: many students, even high-school age, are literally terrified when we leave the pavement and go on a trail. These are our environmental decision makers in the near future. Our organization can do a great deal by building our center and providing a good program for all ages.

Please do everything you can to support our efforts. Volunteer your time and money, help us find members and provide your input as we move forward.

Jim Thomas



OAKLAND NATURE PRESERVE

Graphic by Mike Malloy

Educating • Conserving • Restoring

News from the Preserve

Looking for a Few Good Scouts

Are you a Girl Scout or Boy Scout? Do you know one? If so, then we can use your help. We are looking for scouts who would like to volunteer at the Oakland Nature Preserve. Any Girl Scout working toward their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award should contact the Preserve. We also welcome Boy Scouts working toward their Eagle Scout badge. Many opportunities exist for completing a project that would benefit the community and visitors of the Preserve.



Scout Project Recognition Display at the Amon Pavilion on the West Orange Trail. Photo by John Deam

Several projects have been completed at the Preserve including hiking trail markers, bird nesting boxes, trail mulching, and a project that included a tool organizer, shelves, and stairs for the storage shed. A bicycle rack is currently being considered by a local boy scout.

Please contact the ONP staff if you are interested or have ideas. Scouts are encouraged to visit the Preserve to get ideas and offer suggestions that would benefit visitors and the community. Call 407-905-0054 or stop by the office.

Salvatore's Sponsors the Oakland Nature Preserve

Salvatore's Gourmet Market & Café in Clermont recently sponsored a fundraiser for the Oakland Nature Preserve. A wine tasting event with an interesting jelly bean theme raised \$935.00. All proceeds were generously donated to the Oakland Nature Preserve.

Thanks to everyone who supported the fundraiser and to Jackie Osburn for coordinating the event with Jean and Tony Tirri, the owners. Salvatore's has been active in the local community and regularly sponsors non-profit organizations. According to the staff, this event had the biggest turnout for a non-profit group since the first wine tasting fundraiser.

The next time you are in or near Clermont, stop by Salvatore's. The Mediterranean-style eatery is open for lunch and dinner. With a great menu and a selection of 150 different wines, you will certainly find something you like. Salvatore's Gourmet Market & Cafe, 151 W. State Road 50, is open Monday through Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Saturday from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. Call 352-536-1565 for more information.

DPHS Science Honor Society Dedicates Adopt-A-Plot

Saturday, April 29th, this enthusiastic group of Dr. Phillips students finished up another season of restoration and maintenance on their adopted plot in the preserve uplands by planting longleaf pines and an oak tree. Directed by DPHS teacher and ONP Board member Mary Louise Grable, they have been working steadily on this project for several years removing invasive exotic grasses and lantana and planting native species. In the photo below, Mary Louise is giving each student a packet of partridge peas seeds (courtesy of Biosphere) to plant. They scattered the seeds after planting the trees, which were also a gift from Biosphere.

We offer a big THANK YOU to Mary Louise and her group, along with all the critters that now have a wonderful home.



Mary Louise Grable, Sponsor of the DPHS Science Honor Society, is on the far left, with Brittany Zabel, Jackie Larson, Ewogdogwe Harrell, Donald Rajkumar, Lauren White, Heather Hudson, Jihan Zhou, Brittany Swapp and Karly Albert. Shayamal Patel and Jaesuk Oh are in front. Photo by John Deam

DeWitt Receives Honor from ONP

The local corporation, DeWitt Excavating, has been a long-time supporter of the Oakland Nature Preserve, providing paving and site preparation services at cost. Recently, DeWitt announced its agreement to forgive the balance due for paving the parking lot, an amount of more than \$37,000. This was the only long-term debt remaining for the Preserve, leaving it debt-free.



ONP President Jim Thomas expressed the appreciation of the Board of Directors, since this allows the group to focus on obtaining funding for the future environmental

education center. The lakeside pavilion has been named DeWitt Pavilion in honor of their gift. In addition, the parking lot circle has been named



DeWitt Circle. A ceremony to acknowledge their generous gift and longtime support will be held later this year at the Oakland Nature Preserve. *Photos by Tom Rodriguez*

Rare Plants Rescued

We recently learned that a very threatened plant species was about to be bulldozed for a new mall on Colonial Drive. The Pigeon-Wing (*Clitoria fragrans*) is a very rare legume found only in a few places in Central Florida, primarily in Polk and Highlands counties. Most of the original colonies identified have already been destroyed and it is probable it will be re-classified as Endangered (it is now classified as Threatened). The location of the plants was reported during the development approval process in Lake County and verified by us, but the mall was approved anyway with no plan to preserve the small patch of plants thriving there.

An unnamed committee removed 29 plants and most are now doing well. Our plan is to relocate them to ONP and attempt to propagate them.

Street of Dreams Event to Benefit Oakland Nature Preserve

Be sure to mark Monday, October 23 on your calendar. On that night from 6-10 p.m., Ginn Clubs & Resorts will be sponsoring a *special* Street of Dreams event to benefit four non-profit groups including the Oakland Nature Preserve. Eight custom homes in the Bella Collina development in Montverde will be open for attendees to tour.

Tickets for the event may be purchased from one of the non-profit groups involved with all proceeds benefiting the selling organization. Please make the Oakland Nature Preserve your source for tickets if you plan to attend the Street of Dreams. The price for admission has not been established, but will be determined soon; tickets will be available later this summer.

In addition to purchasing your Street of Dreams tickets from the Oakland Nature Preserve, you can also help by spreading the word. This is a great opportunity for the Preserve to raise money and we are grateful to Ginn Clubs & Resorts for their generosity. Let your family, friends, and neighbors know that they can tour eight custom homes in Bella Collina and support the Oakland Nature Preserve at the same time. Refreshments will be served including adult beverages. Please call 407-905-0054 for additional information.

Nature Trail Guide

Rheann Zielinski, a Girl Scout and local resident recently created a nature trail interpretive guide for the Oakland Nature Preserve. Her project will give visitors the opportunity to learn about the plants and animals along the upland hiking trails of the Preserve. The guide also covers history, geology, and other information that will make each hike around the trail an educational experience. The Nature Trail interpretive guide is a scout project that will help her earn a Silver Award.

The Nature Trail guides (brochures) can be picked up at the Amon Pavilion which is located adjacent to the West Orange bike trail. The Nature Trail, also known as the Yellow Trail is marked with yellow posts numbered 1-20. The brochure lists an interesting piece of information for each number along the trail and will make each hike more meaningful.

Make sure you pick up a brochure the next time you visit the Preserve. Thanks Rheann.

Wildlife Report



Green Anole: William Stebbins



Golden Orb Spider: William Stebbins



Photo: Mike Brinkley

These folks say that hunting in the preserve with their camera is a rewarding pastime. Featured are photo-trophies taken from the boardwalk by Mike Brinkley, Charles & Joy Harsh and William Stebbins.

Beginning with the photo at the top left Charles and Joy shot this juvenile gator sunning on a log near the Pavilion at the end of the boardwalk. The stripes on his tail indicate that he is a young gator. They also bagged the bittern wading in a marshy area near the pavilion. During their walks, Charles and Joy take the time to clear away weedy growth and pick up debris to keep the boardwalk attractive.

William is a member of ONP's Board of Directors. He volunteers many of his spare hours to make the Preserve an enjoyable place to visit. He and Mike Brinkley share the maintenance of the upland walking trails. He also spends many hours with his digital SLR looking for photo ops. His first trophy photo is a gator with a freshly caught fish cruising off to have lunch. The green anole captured in the next photo is a welcome sight in the Preserve.

His golden orb spider looks "lost in space." on his invisible web. He sacrificed a leg to a predator (probably a bird) but still spins his golden web.

Mike has added this elegant Great Egret, largest of the three egrets seen in the preserve to his growing collection. If you see a large



Alligator: Charles & Joy Harsh



Gator with Lunch: William Stebbins

white bird it's probably a Great Egret, look for a yellow bill and all black legs.

The Purple Gallinule is one of the most beautiful birds you can see in the preserve. It has a deep bluish purple on its chest and light blue on its forehead. Its legs are bright yellow with very large feet which allows it to walk on water plants searching for food.

The Great Blue Heron is one of the most common and largest birds in the preserve. We have a large population of Great Blues with over thirty nesting pairs. Many young Great Blues and adults can be seen feeding near the lake front pavilion.



Great Blue Heron: Mike Brinkley

Invitation

We invite you to share photos you have taken at the preserve. You may submit .jpg files or film photos along with your name, contact information, and a brief description of the subject and any interesting facts about the photo.

Email to :

Webmaster@oaklandnaturepreserve.org
or send a disk containing the information to the ONP office, Attn: Newsletter.



Purple Gallinule: Mike Brinkley



American Bittern: Charles & Joy Harsh



Great Egret: Mike Brinkley

Lake Apopka Update - Summer 2006

Jim Peterson – St. Johns River Water Management District

The St. Johns River Water Management District's restoration of Lake Apopka is under way with numerous projects. The lake is responding positively to the restoration activities. Lake Apopka phosphorus levels are 62% lower than past decades, although they have been fluctuating, which is expected. Recently analyzed samples contained total phosphorus levels in the range of 70 to 100 parts per billion (ppb), the target level for restoration is 55 ppb. Water samples from the late 1990s contained total phosphorus levels over 200 ppb. Last winter levels were down to 59 ppb, an all time low.

The Marsh Flow-Way has been operating for over two years and continues to pump filtered water back into Lake Apopka and the Apopka-Beauclair Canal at an average output of 170 cubic feet per second. This flow is enough to ensure that downstream lakes (Beauclair and Dora) receive treated water most of the

time. This flow is also enough to have filtered more than the volume of Apopka once and removed solids equal to over half an inch of sediments from the lake's bottom. The public access to the Flow-Way property was recently reopened. The access point has been fixed and the path has been re-routed to keep visitors on the dry levees. Current activities allowed are horseback riding, bike riding and hiking along a marked trail that includes a lakeside observation tower.

The gizzard shad harvest is finished until winter. Specially licensed fishermen caught over one and a half million pounds of gizzard shad in five months. Shad were removed from Lakes Apopka, Beauclair, and Dora. Ongoing District-funded research by Dr. Maynard Schaus, from Virginia Wesleyan College, is measuring how these fish disturb bottom sediments and excrete nutrients.

Native submersed vegetation is expanding in Lake Apopka and downstream through Lake Beauclair. Nearly 300 eel grass beds have been mapped recently in Apopka. Additional beds are routinely discovered and mapped using GPS equip-



*This is a recent photo of returning volunteer Vallisneria beds in Lake Apopka.
Photo by Jim Peterson*

ment. Although the total acreage of these beds is presently low, we expect them to continue to expand as long as the water clarity remains high enough to allow light to reach the lake bottom, where these plants grow.

The downside of the 68% increase in water clarity is that conditions have been perfect for the non-native invasive plant Hydrilla to grow, and it has been found in many areas of the lake. The District is spending a considerable amount of staff time to hunt for these plants and to treat them with herbicide

when found. The District would like anyone finding Hydrilla growing in the lake to please call or e-mail the location and details to us so we can continue to eradicate this invasive exotic plant before it has a chance to spread.

Work is under way to prepare over 1,000 acres in Unit 2 of the North Shore Restoration Area (NSRA) for reflooding. The current goal is to have the property flooded during late July or early August. The District is working closely with U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel to develop long-range restoration and monitoring plans for the NSRA properties.

Valencia Community College Gift to ONP

The West Campus Science Department of Valencia Community College recently donated 30 microscopes to the Oakland Nature Preserve. Special thanks go Ron Olmstead, Lab manager for arranging this gift, and Ron Keiper, Dean of the Science Department for approving the gift.

The microscopes will be a major asset when the environmental education program is fully established. School children will be able to get a first-hand look at microorganisms that make up the food chain.

Valencia Community College has been a long time supporter of the Preserve and has also donated other gifts including audio visual equipment and plant presses.

Membership Application for Oakland Nature Preserve

Name

Business/Organization

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone / Fax / email

Volunteer / Interests

Restoration Education Office Support Oakland Heritage Festival Fund Raising Docent
 Project Management Building Maintenance Trails and Grounds Other _____

Student or Youth—\$5.00

Individual—\$25.00

Family—\$35.00

Sponsor, Corporation or Organization—
\$50.00

Patron—\$100.00 or more

Make check payable to: ONP and Mail to:

Oakland Nature Preserve
PO Box 841
Oakland, FL 34760

Please mail this form with your check. Your interest in
Oakland Nature Preserve
is vital to the ongoing restoration effort.

Oakland Heritage Festival

The planning committee for the Festival reports that most activities are on schedule and going well. John Deam reports that 28 vendors have already signed up, with a good mix of services, businesses and crafts. Bob Hennen took over the responsibility for the Sponsor program and has implemented some great new ideas to gain this vital support.

We have two musicians signed up to provide entertainment.

Dominic Gaudius, who played his unique two-necked guitar at the Festival last year to the delight of his audience. The second artist is KZ Zuckerman, who plays acoustic guitar. Jackie and Mike Osburn heard her play at an event they attended earlier this year and were impressed with her talent and style.



Bob Montgomery and guest in his Fort Model A. These rides are a popular event. Photo by William Stebbins

Krista Compton from the West Orange Chamber of Commerce has a group of adult volunteers from West Orange Leadership for the day of the event.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Jackie Osburn is responsible for Marketing. She is still looking for a committee to handle signage for the event. This includes banners, large road-side signs, directional signage for the community and the Festival itself. She needs one person to head the committee and to recruit the other committee members. Activity leaders have given Jackie lists of the signage they need. If you can do this job, we need you! Please volunteer!

Darla Miller is head of the ONP Committee. She has the responsibility for organizing all the activities that ONP sponsors to raise money. She reports that she still need a person to take charge of the overall organization of the Lake Apopka Boat Tours. This was a great event last year, and it needs someone to oversee the operation. Several people have volunteered to help, but not to take charge. Could that person be YOU??

Call the ONP office, 407-905-0054, to become an important part of this exciting project.

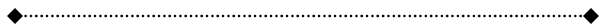
Recent Donors Add to the ONP Building Fund

Ginn Clubs & Resorts have made a major donation of \$100,000 to our building fund. Our neighbors, across the lake from DeWitt Pavilion, have also agreed to provide assistance as we begin the building process and we are very grateful for their interest.

Significant recent donations include:

Ginn Clubs & Resorts	\$ 100,000
Bond Foundation	30,000
Keene's Pointe Golf Classic	20,000
Castle and Cooke, Ltd.	10,000
West Orange Committee 101	5,000
West Orange Junior Service Club	3,000
Bob Mackey	3,000
Bloom 'N Grow	2,000
Disney (for Theresa Joiner's volunteer service)	1,000
Salvatore's Wine Tasting Event	935
Mosquito Creek Outdoors	250
Apopka Women's Club	200

These donations are in addition to funds raised in the past by local Rotary groups for their 100th Anniversary Project and ONP. In addition to the above list, we have also received commitment from Orange County (\$200,000) and SJRWMD (\$30,000). Our sincere thanks to all our donors!



Bloom 'N Grow Members Install Garden

Have you seen that beautiful natural landscape at the boardwalk entry? For several years this area has been weedy and ugly. Bloom N' Grow Garden Society made a project of installing native wildflowers and shrubs and it is beautiful!



Front Row: Carole Wingate, Rosemary Lewis, Kay Chastain. Back Row: Jackie Brown-Colberg, Judy Britt, Ardis Summers, Gretchen Boyd, Billie Ruth Austin, Peg Thomas, Phyllis Hickman. Photo courtesy Gretchen Boyd.

Oakland Nature Preserve, Inc.
PO Box 841
Oakland, FL 34760-0841

Visit our website

www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org
Information on activities at the Preserve
Wildlife Photographs
Coming Soon:
Follow construction of the new
Environmental Education Building

Our thanks go to these hard-working ladies who have done so much to support ONP since we started.



The blooming new look at the boardwalk pavilion. Photos: John Deam