



Oakland Nature Preserve, Inc.

PO Box 841 Oakland Florida 34760 Phone 407.905.0054

Summer 2008

Message from the President

This is a call to action! Our many years of hard work by dedicated volunteers will continue to produce a better and better project. As our education building is completed we will be able to offer more and more programs that are really needed. We must remember that today's students are tomorrow's decision makers and the more sensitive they are to the environment, the better the world will fare.

In a recent meeting with staff from the Orange County School Board, we were told repeatedly about the severity of their newly imposed budget cuts. Near the top of the list of things to be cut was environmental education programs. (I didn't know they had much to cut!) This makes it even more important for us to develop the best program possible.

We need a lot more help than we have now. I hope every member and supporter of our organization will consider volunteering for a job, no matter how large or small. I can assure you from my own experience, the rewards and positive feelings of accomplishment are well worth it.

Start by joining our "nature creeps" usually held on the third Sunday afternoon at 3:00 P.M. You can learn a lot about the natural history of the preserve and enjoy it more. Volunteer to help with our major fund raising project, the Oakland Heritage, Arts and Crafts Festival, to be held on Saturday, October 25. We need a lot of help but it's always a lot of fun. Volunteer to help with school groups or even just to help around the preserve. When the building is open we need more help in just showing people around.

We are in the process of compiling a "wish list" of things we need to conduct our programs. We need this for large and small items as we ask for help from the community and approach foundations for grants. Let us know any ideas you have.

We are also planning our opening events as we complete the building. I'd personally like to see our first event to be a wildlife art show. Give me your opinions or suggestions.

We have come a long way since the mid-nineties and I am extremely proud of our progress. We still have a lot of work ahead but it is worth every minute of it!

**Volunteers have invested over 14,975
hours to create and sustain the
Oakland Nature Preserve.**

Jim Thomas

Educating • Conserving • Restoring

News from the Preserve



Bloom and Grow Continues Support

Our friends at Bloom and Grow Garden Society made another generous donation in June. President Betty Anne Griffin presented a check for \$6,000, bringing their total financial contribution to \$30,000. Pictured are Liz Clarke, Tom Rodriguez, Betty Anne Griffin, Phyllis Hickman and Jim Thomas.

Surprise and More Surprises

The refurbishing plan for the Fisherman Cabin is to keep the exterior just as it was when it was constructed in the late 1800's and to configure the inside into modern living quarters for an on-site person to monitor any after hours activities in the Preserve and to open and close the security gates. This will become increasingly more important as the Environmental Education Center is completed.



Dennis Folz and Jack Ross removing interior walls.

The construction of this cabin was of the board and batten type, however, the battens had been removed. Of particular concern was how to obtain the very expensive pecky cypress to replace the battens. This concern was alleviated by surprise number one, when it was discovered that rather than the two-by-four's wall construction that we use today, this cabin was constructed by using one inch thick pecky cypress as the room dividers. By removing these room dividers there is more than enough material to provide new battens. Apparently this cabin was constructed of "green" lumber and over time, the lumber cured and shrunk and it became necessary to cover the room dividers with wall board, to assure privacy. At this time the wall board was put on all internal walls and the ceiling.

Surprise number two came when we removed the ceiling wall boards. The pecky cypress that served as room dividers not only divided the rooms, but extended all the way to the roof. This leads one to believe that when the cabin was first constructed that there were no ceilings as we know them today, but the walls that divided the rooms went all the way to the roof. On the last work day, all of the interior pecky cypress was removed below the ceiling joist. This material will be milled to provide the battens to put on the exterior of the cabin.



Interior walls extending to the roof.

Winter Garden Rotary

Ted Van Deventer announced that the Winter Garden Rotary under the leadership of president Lissa Munroe, has donated another \$2,000 to ONP. Their continuing support of ONP has been instrumental in raising the funds necessary to complete this important project. In conjunction with other local Rotary Clubs, they have donated over \$75,000 to the building fund.

Visit our website at

www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org

for up-to-date information on activities at the preserve.

Oakland Heritage, Arts & Crafts Festival Scheduled for October 25th

This is the fifth year that the Preserve has conducted this Festival, which is the major fundraiser for the Preserve and needs the support of all members and friends. Plans for this year include:

- ♻️ Centralizing the heritage displays in a tent at Speer Park with convenient access to the History Tour.
- ♻️ Eco-Tours of Lake Apopka with SJRWMD personnel to explain the current progress of the lake clean up efforts.
- ♻️ Guided tours of the new education building and boardwalk at ONP.
- ♻️ The Festival committee plans to increase advertising in order to attract more visitors to enjoy the events of the day.



There will be a need for a host of volunteers to help with the various functions of the Festival, including help in running the silent auction, vendor set-up, and food services...and the list goes on. If you would be willing to spend a few hours helping, please call the Preserve at (407) 905-0054. Leave your name and telephone number and someone will contact you with the specifics. No experience is necessary, and any training needed, will be furnished.

Winning the War Against Taro!



Thanks to help from the SJRWMD staff, we have been able to kill vast areas of the noxious and invasive taro in the wetlands along the boardwalk. We now hope to get in some desirable native shrubs and trees to help out-compete the taro.

Eco-Views

Uplands Native of Note



The turkey oak (*Quercus laevis*) was at one time the most prominent tree in West Orange County, found in the original longleaf pine savanna, which once covered more than 40 million acres of the southeast. It forms a major part of a native plant community called sandhill or longleaf pine-turkey oak community which was the dominant ecosystem in central Florida and particularly West Orange. Unfortunately, this soil type was excellent for development of citrus groves and the longleaf pines were cut for lumber and firewood so both species are relatively rare in the area.

It has been determined that all the uplands at ONP were once sandhill community and efforts are now being made to restore them back to the sandhill community. This is difficult because this type of community is fire dependent and we are unable to burn routinely (this would help control exotics). Periodic fires helped to maintain the right mix of plants for this community and stimulate the natural groundcovers of wire grass and other species.

The turkey oak was so named because the shape of the three-lobed leaves resembles a turkey's foot. Acorns of this oak are an important food source for game birds such as turkey, deer and other wildlife. Attempts to re-establish turkey oaks in the ONP uplands have met with limited success but some have survived. We have planted a number of acorns in the last year and have seen some established.

Wildlife Report

keeping an eye on the goal



Photo and captions by Mike Brinkley



Swallow-Tail Kite

The swallow-tail kite, one of the most elegant, beautiful birds in Florida, is easily recognized by its deeply forked tail, distinctive black and white plumage, and graceful aerial displays. Swallow-tailed kites are almost always seen in the air and feed entirely on the fly, primarily on insects, lizards, frogs, snakes and small birds. They drink on the fly swooping low and skimming water from the surface of a river or lake. Swallow-tail kites arrive in Florida from South America in late February to mid-March. They can be seen this time of year as they carry sticks, moss and other nesting material to their nest site. Nests are usually high in the tree tops of pine or cypress stands. After the young fledge, the adults and young fly south again, first gathering in large groups in south Florida before migrating to South America.



Yellow-Billed Cuckoo

The yellow-billed cuckoos wait motionless for long periods, watching for prey to move. When prey is located they make running, hopping dashes to make their catch. Yellow-billed cuckoos are fond of hairy caterpillars, and during outbreaks of tent caterpillars they are valuable in helping keep these creatures in check. Usually shy and elusive, these birds are easy to overlook. Their habitat is usually open woodlands with clearings and dense scrubby vegetation, often along water.



Roseate Spoonbill

One distinctive characteristic of the **roseate spoonbill** is its long spoon-shaped bill. They spend a lot of time in shallow water feeding by sweeping their open bill from side to side in the water to sift up food like small fish, shrimp, mollusks, snails and insects. It has touch receptors in its bill that help it feel its prey. Like the flamingo, the roseate spoonbill's pink color comes from the food it eats. Some of the crustaceans it eats feed on algae that give the spoonbill's feathers their rosy pink color.



Wild Turkey

Leslie Gensheimer took the (photo above) of a **wild turkey** at the Preserve in May. Her husband, Greg, is chairman of the board of directors for the Green Mountain Scenic Byway and she takes pictures for their calendar and website. She has taken some beautiful pictures all along the byway.

Nine Banded Armadillo

Some controversy exists about whether the **nine banded armadillo** was introduced to Florida in the early 1900's, or whether it naturally migrated from western states to the east coast. It is found statewide in areas with dense ground cover and sandy soil. Armadillos are the only mammals in Florida with an exoskeleton which covers its body with hard bony plates. Nine bands of plates cover the body from shoulder to hip and 12 bands cover the long tail. It is primarily nocturnal, solitary, and a burrower. It digs a series of dens with multiple entrances usually protected by stumps, palmettos, or trees. Its diet is composed of insects, especially beetles, and other invertebrates and some plant foods such as mushrooms and beautyberries



Volunteer Spotlight

Tom Rodriguez,
Executive Director



Doris Mager, "Eagle Lady"

Doris came to the Preserve for the March meeting and displayed her birds of prey for the crowd, which included students from Dr. Phillips High School. She had a great horned owl, a screech owl and a caracara.

ONP Co-Sponsors Lake Apopka Cleanup

Board member Mike Brinkley has organized a Lake Apopka clean up with fellow airboat enthusiasts to remove trash from the shoreline of Lake Apopka. Scheduled for July 19th, the important project will include the removal of abandoned wire fish traps that have been responsible for trapping and killing many fish, turtles and other wildlife. We need to generate some funding. Donations can be sent to Tom at ONP, designated for the clean up project.



Window on Lake Apopka

Island Apple Snails in Lake Apopka

By Jim Peterson, St. Johns River Water Management District

A new name was recently given to an invasive apple snail that was found in a Winter Garden retention pond during 2006. The Winter Garden snails that were originally identified as channeled apple snails have been renamed island apple snails. These snails were first dis-



covered in a retention pond adjacent to Lake Apopka. They later spread into a canal that leads to Lake Apopka, and into the lake itself, near the pond area.

The island apple snail, *Pomacea insularum*, is the most common invasive apple snail in the state of Florida, after spreading rapidly over just a few years time. They are native to South and Central America, and were first discovered living in the United States in 1989, when they were found in a Texas wetland. Island apple snails officially arrived in Florida in the late 1990s, although one study thought they might have been cultured by the aquarium industry in the 1980s and released first in south Florida. Island apple snails are currently found in Florida, Alabama, Arizona, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, North Carolina and Texas. They also have spread to other countries where they, and another closely related invasive snail, have devastated rice and taro fields due to their voracious appetite for plants.

Environmental scientists are concerned with the rapid spread of these snails in the state of Florida. These invasive snails feed aggressively on aquatic and terrestrial plants. In contrast, the native Florida apple snail feeds on periphyton, which is a mixture of detritus and algae that attaches to aquatic plants and surfaces. The island apple snail lives two to four years and may begin laying eggs when it is only six to eight weeks old. The island apple snail lays a pink egg mass, containing approximately 1,000 eggs, every 10 to 14 days. Eggs may be found above the water line on plants and structures.

The snails have both lungs and gills, so they can live in and out of water, and they have a long siphon they can use to reach the air if the water they are in becomes stagnant. In times of drought, they can burrow in the sediment, seal up their shells, and live for five months or longer.

For over two years, staff from the St. Johns River Water Management District (District) has visited the Winter Garden retention pond area once or twice a week. When invasive snail egg masses are found, they are manually destroyed, in hopes of stopping them from hatching and spreading further into Lake Apopka. When the egg control method began, some suggested that the District should just give up and let the snails spread, because no standard treatment existed to eradicate these snails. Now it appears that this technique of egg control may have prevented the snail from spreading further. Current total egg masses observed each visit are down, and the highest numbers of egg masses that are found appear in the same pond where they originated. District and Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission scientists have recently been working together trying some new experimental treatments including using vegetable oils



sprayed on the eggs, and treating waterways with copper sulfate to kill adults. Other biologists and officials in the state of Florida as well as other regions, who are also plagued with these invasive snails, are working on techniques to kill them. There may be a chance to use some of these new techniques at Winter Garden. In the meantime, we ask everyone to please notify the District if you find bright pink egg masses like the ones shown in the photo attached. Please do not destroy eggs, if you do not feel comfortable in distinguishing the difference between native snail eggs and the invasive snail eggs.

Education Building Progress



Our education building is almost complete—on the outside. There is still a lot of work needed to plan and complete the furnishing of the interior of the classroom, museum and office.

We have asked the Florida Game and Fish Commission for help in obtaining displays for our new museum and classroom. We have been promised an adult bear! The bear will be salvaged road kill, not “collected” - a dramatic beginning to our collection of things that will interest visitors. Now we have to find a taxidermist who can mount it and the money to pay for it!

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