



Osprey Observer Fall 2021

EDUCATING . CONSERVING . RESTORING

Message from the President

by Jim Peterson

We lost our founder, mentor, teacher, and environmental hero a few weeks ago. Jim Thomas passed away after a long illness. Jim lived a long and productive life. He taught us so many things and he did so much for the environment in Central Florida. He will never be forgotten. Jim, along with a core group from Friends of Lake Apopka including his friend Jack Amon, started the Oakland Nature Preserve over twenty years ago. Jim's vision of the Preserve is continuing today with its mission to preserve, restore, and educate students and families about the environment.

Jim wanted students to have the love and stewardship of the environment that can only be earned by spending time in nature and learning about it. I hope that we give the young students who visit the Preserve through our class visits, camps, and events, the inspiration that will stay with them a lifetime. I also hope this connection to nature will help them to one day be the advocates of the future the way that Jim Thomas was in our past.

If you have noticed the Jim Thomas Education Center building under construction recently, it's because our bathroom and porch addition is underway. We were fortunate to receive a grant from two local foundations who are helping us extend the building porch and adding three additional bathrooms. Work should be finished in a few months which is very exciting news!

Now is the time that bird migration is occurring and it's a great time to go out and Bird Watch in Central Florida. Each cold snap up north will bring more birds south on their migration routes. Currently we have some of the early Warblers showing up, and I have noticed a few waterfowl arriving around Lake Apopka recently. Our Bald Eagles will be nesting soon. Did you know that Florida has the highest number of nesting Bald Eagles in the United States outside of Alaska?

Please don't forget about the final month of our environmental programs match grant. Please help us if you can! Please check our website and social media for upcoming events. Don't sit indoors, go take a hike in nature!

Thanks for supporting the Oakland Nature Preserve!

Upcoming Events

- Senior Strides – Thursdays at 9:30
- Yoga at the Lake – Wed. and Sat. at 9:30
- Oct 16 – Blue Hike
- Oct 25 – Jack-o'-lantern drop-off begins!
- Oct 29 – Pumpkin Glow 2021!
- Oct 30 – Pumpkin Glow 2021!
- Nov 13 – Blue Hike
- Nov 19-21 – FMNP Environmental Interpretation
- Dec 17-19 – Winter Wreath Walk



Be sure to follow us on Facebook
for Preserve news and events!



October 29-30
6pm-9pm



Pumpkin Glow Jack-o'-lantern Trail

Join us for what could be West Orange county's only nighttime Jack-o-lantern hike. The Glow Trail will be lined with Jack-o-lanterns created by members of the community, creating an ethereal and beautiful night-time hike.

For more information and to register your Jack-o'-lantern visit www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org/pumpkinglow

Matching Grant

Oakland Nature Preserve is delighted to announce that we have received a Challenge Match Grant for our environmental programs! This grant will provide matching funds of \$10,000 if we are able to raise \$10,000. Your donation will be matched, dollar for dollar, so your contribution will have double the impact and will directly help fund our mission throughout 2021-2022 year. Together we can meet the goal to raise \$10,000! **Visit www.OaklandNaturePreserve.org/donate for more ways to give.**

1 DOLLAR + 1 DOLLAR = 2 IMPACT

Your *Matching* *Double the*

Double your impact for the Preserve!

 **OAKLAND NATURE PRESERVE**

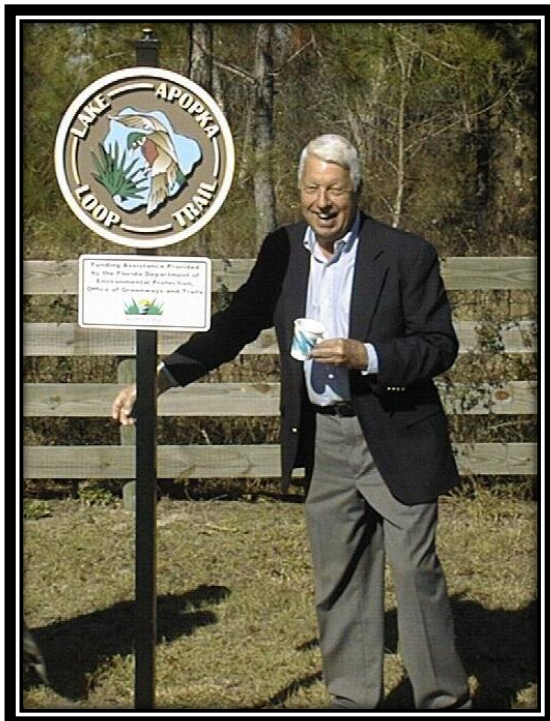
JIM THOMAS - A MEMORIAL

Throughout his life he immersed himself into many battles on behalf of the environment always promoting science to lead the way for sound growth and ecological restoration. He served as President or as an influential board member with many groups around Central Florida including; Friends of Lake Apopka (FOLA), Friends of the Wekiva River, Orange Audubon, Florida Native Plant Society, Florida Wildlife Federation, Reedy Creek Pollution Control Board, the Nehrling Society, and ONP.

Jim always held the philosophy that education is the key to environmental problems that have political solutions and in 1991, founded FOLA as an advocacy group dedicated to the restoration and long-term management of the lake. Dubbed "The King of the Gray Hairs," Jim spearheaded policy actions and funding efforts to bring the lake back to its past glory.



He played a major role in forming ONP, which was incorporated in 1997, with a group of FOLA board members and like-minded Oakland residents whose mission was to preserve, restore, and educate about the environment and tell the history and restoration story about Lake Apopka. He always said that as ONP grew the mission grew with it but always at the core was the need to educate.



As an environmentalist, ecologist, teacher, and private business owner, Jim taught individuals and groups for years regarding environmental-friendly landscapes using native non-invasive trees and plants. His passion for the environment and wildlife was contagious and teaching was a second nature to him.

Jim received numerous awards and recognition for his work on behalf of the environment but it was not important to him to receive credit for taking a stand, it was more important to take the stand and make a difference.

Jim Thomas believed that all life is precious and that everything is connected and we are all indebted to him for teaching us that no battle is too big or too small when we work together to do our part to restore and care for native habitat and the wildlife that live here.

Jim will truly be missed by all.

PUMPKIN GLOW Jack-o-lantern Trail

October 29th-30th, 2021 6pm-9pm



The Glow Trail

Join us for what could be West Orange county's only nighttime Jack-o-lantern hike. The Oakland Nature Preserve's Glow Trail will be lined with Jack-o-lanterns created by members of the community creating an ethereal and beautiful night-time hike. Proceeds will benefit the Oakland Nature Preserve.

This year's trail will begin at the south end of the boardwalk and then proceed along the winding Green Trail back to the ONP parking area (approx. .3 miles). Bring your flash lights and lanterns 'cause it's dark in them there woods.

Want to dress in costume? Go right ahead! We will have candy for the kids and some cool critters to see. This is a family friendly event so please dress and act accordingly.

Calling All Artists and Jack-o-lantern Enthusiasts

We want to display your talent! Bring us your Jack-o-lantern for the trail. Make them fun, make them scary, the choice is yours! All pumpkins submitted will be available for pick up the day after the event. Any pumpkins left behind will be shared with our program animals for enrichment.

Jack-o-lanterns must be carved with light inside for illumination, please use battery powered lighting, no open flames, we want to keep the habitat safe.

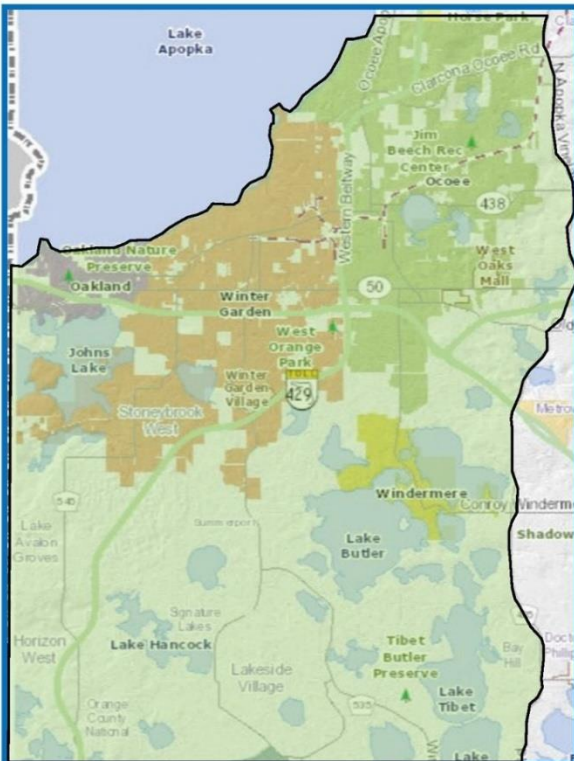
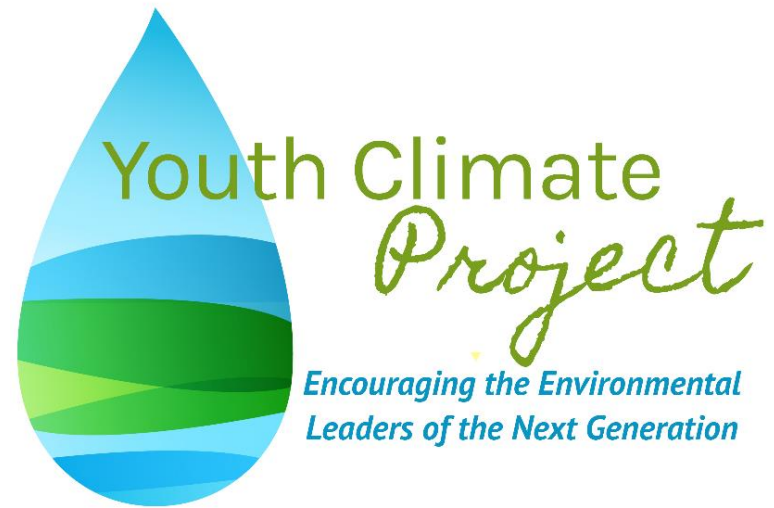


Please let us know you want to bring a Jack-o-lantern by completing a free registration. Visit:
<https://oaklandnaturepreserve.wildapricot.org/sys/website/?pageId=18197>

Youth Climate Project – a Scholarship Opportunity!

Climate change is real and it is happening now. Turning to science gives us the knowledge we need to understand why climate change is occurring, how it is transforming the environment, and what can be done to alter the domino effect. The Youth Climate Project (YCP) challenges high school juniors and seniors to get involved and learn about the role climate change is projected to play in Florida's future and consider innovative ways we can begin to resolve its effects.

We are excited to announce \$20,000 is available to be awarded for scholarships. **Participants who receive high scores on their research could receive between \$1,000 - \$5,000.**



Schools in this year's project include:

- West Orange High School
- Windermere High School
- Ocoee High School
- Olympia High School
- Orlando Science
- Horizon High School
- Legacy High School
- Innovative Montessori High School
- Homeschool students (see participation map)

Participation registration will close at end of day November 15th
Visit www.YouthClimateProject.org for additional information and registration.

New Restrooms Coming to ONP!

Please be aware that the porch of the Jim Thomas Education Center will be expanding to add restrooms and sinks to the facility. Construction will begin mid-July and will continue into September. There will be no access to the Pioneer Garden area during this time.

This project was made possible by grants from 2 local foundations and the Town of Oakland. Along with the additional facilities the Preserve will be able to hook into the town's sewer system.



Blue Hike Paddle Tours



ONP is delighted to announce upcoming Fall dates of our Blue Hike Paddle Tours. This special program is made possible by generous support from Duke Energy. ONP's Blue Hikes show paddlers the natural beauty, history, plants, and animals of Lake Apopka, along with an interpretative telling of the restoration progress of the lake. They have since diversified to include several other locations, highlighting features and importance of many other central Florida's waterways. Upcoming Blue Hikes include:

- October 16 – Bugg Spring Run
- November 13 – Smith Island
- December 11 – Wekiva Falls, Wekiva River

Registration for Fall paddles will open in August

For more information and registration visit www.OaklandNaturePreserve.org/blue-hike

We Dig Our Volunteers! by Nicole O'Brien

Despite soaring temperatures, our volunteer program was active over the summer. Students from The Barry University School of Law Environmental and Earth Law Journal (EELJ) came as a group to remove invasive weeds in our most recently restored area along the Blue and Yellow Trails and also helped with a bit of trail maintenance. Our regular Saturday Community Volunteer Day crews assisted with weeding around the property and trimming back the quickly growing plants along the boardwalk.

Every hour volunteers invest here helps the Preserve provide more opportunities for our community to explore, learn about, and develop an appreciation for the environment. We are extremely grateful for all the hard work!



More information on all of our volunteer opportunities can be found at
<https://oaklandnaturePreserve.org/Volunteer>

Scout Projects at the Preserve! by Nicole O'Brien

Lyla, Sophia, Lily and Sophia from Girl Scout Troop 767 recently completed their Bronze Award project benefitting our Ambassador Animals. The enrichment they designed and built provides challenges, opportunities and stimulation. The peg boards for the snakes provide climbing enrichment to simulate climbing tree branches. The hide boxes provide a space for our opossums to rest while still allowing our visitors an opportunity to view them. We are grateful for Troop 767's hard work to help us provide for our ambassador animals.



Do a Little by Peggy Lantz



All of us at Oakland Nature Preserve, including you, are more than a little in love with this incredibly beautiful earth of ours. We love trees, owls and whippoorwills, mountains, the Everglades, sun and moon, leaves, flowers, weeds, coonties, raccoons, green anoles, gopher tortoises, black racer snakes, sunrises and sunsets, and more.

Some of us are a little more avid than most (a “little” do you think?).

Edmund Burke had something to say about “little”, too. Burke was a Irishman who served in the British House of Commons between 1766 and 1794. He said,

“No one made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.”

But do you remember that multi-state blackout that occurred in California and its neighboring states several years ago? I read that if everyone in California had changed just one incandescent light bulb to a fluorescent one – it would not have happened! Now that’s “little”.

So this Blog is my little effort to encourage you to do a little. And maybe a little more, or a new little thing.

- * **Do this one little thing:** Carry reusable bags in the car always. But you already do this, don’t you?
- * **Do this one little thing:** Carry a reusable water bottle. Never buy water in a plastic bottle.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Recycle your milk cartons, cans, and bottles, even your egg cartons and plastic bags.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Reuse paper that is printed on only one side.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Recycle all junk mail, envelopes, and twice-used office paper.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Buy in larger quantities and sort into one-use amounts.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Send \$25 to The Nature Conservancy of Florida.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Send \$25 to Audubon of Florida.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Send \$25 to Florida Wildlife Federation.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Send \$50 to Oakland Nature Preserve.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Let your grass grow at least three inches high. Cut only one inch. Leave grass cuttings where they lie or use them for mulch in flower beds.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Water your grass only once a week (or not at all unless it’s turning brown).
- * **Do this one little thing:** Hand water newly planted plants.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Wash the car on the grass.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Sweep the sidewalk and driveway. Don’t hose them.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Take shorter showers.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Let some corner of your yard go natural – leaves, weeds, whatever. The insects and birds will love it.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Plant a native tree or flower.
- * **Do this one little thing:** Never buy cypress mulch. Use pine bark, Florimulch (made from invasive melaleuca trees) or red mulch (made from used pallets.)

What's In Bloom

by Jackie Rolly

Its autumn, although from the weather it would be hard to tell. One look at the Florida natural areas though will give it away. Regardless of the heat, lack of rain, and crazy weather, our native plants are showing off. From the tall, graceful Lopsided Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum secundum*) swaying in the wind, to the low mounds of love grass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*) with their sprays of feathery purple wands lighting up like neons in the landscape, fall in the Florida sandhills is a walk in a wonderland. Well maybe that's going a little far. The amazing array of fall flowers in amongst the grasses is always a surprise. Blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), Florida paintbrush (*Carphephorus corymbosa*), Goldenrod (*Solidago stricta*), Goldenaster (*Chrysopsis scabrella*), Palafox (*Palafoxia feayi*), Pineland lantana (*Lantana depressa*), and many others are all to found peeking up from the grasses. Even the Flower Scrub Mint (*Conradina canescens*), a winter bloomer is starting to show their purple blooms. The Firebush (*Hamelia patens*) flowers are turning to fruit (drupes) in time for the winter migrating birds to stop by. We are starting to see many fall migratory birds, like the warblers, kinglets, buntings, and catbirds. The trees are alive with their songs as they scavenge. So get out and enjoy the fall landscape on the upland trails at Oakland Nature Preserve and see if you can identify the flowers, grasses and birds.



Who is on the Prowl at Oakland Nature Preserve?

Our Trail Cameras are staying very active photographing resident bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, opossums, and rabbits in the uplands. They snapped a bobcat family recently, along with owls, and a Whip-poor-will (a first on the cameras at ONPI!). Check out the album in the museum or our Facebook page for the most recent photos. A big thank you to our wonderful volunteer Gloria, who keeps the kiosk on the Orange Trail updated with recent photos too!



FMNP Environmental Interpretation Course at ONP November 19-21

Florida Master Naturalist Program Mission

The mission of the Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP) is to promote awareness, understanding, and respect of Florida's natural world among Florida's citizens and visitors. FMNP participants will increase their knowledge of Florida's natural systems, of the plants and animals that depend upon those systems, and of the role of humankind in shaping our past, of determining our future, and as stewards of the land.



The FMNP Environmental Interpretation course is designed to make participants better environmental interpreters and educators, so that others may learn about Florida's natural history and conservation issues. This course will cover concepts such as the fundamentals of interpretation, key elements of an effective interpretive program, how to create themes, sub-messages and transitions, group management, addressing diverse audience needs, developing interpretive displays and practicing interpretive techniques.

As a Land Steward course, Environmental Interpretation will provide participants with additional knowledge and skills to make them more effective educators, citizen scientists, and informed participants when engaging in conservation issues. The knowledge and skills each participant gains from these Land Steward courses will ultimately improve their ability to contribute to environmental education, scientific data collection, and conservation planning efforts. (There is no requirement to have taken any of the FMNP Core Courses to enroll in a Land Steward class.)

Save the Date

