



Osprey Observer Fall 2023

EDUCATING . CONSERVING . RESTORING

Message from the President

by Rick Pollard

"Nature is not a place to visit, it is home." - Gary Snyder

It's often said that one finds themselves in the calm, contemplative splendors of nature. Luckily for us, we live in a state that's vaster than nearly every other place you could call home in the United States.

This year, Governor DeSantis - in partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Committee (FWC) - is taking a bold approach to get more Floridians out in the fresh air with the Great Outdoors Initiative. On Oct. 13, 2023, this initiative was announced as an effort to encourage more Floridians to explore our flourishing state parks, recreation areas and waterways. With this initiative, Floridians can now attain a 50 percent discount on annual state park passes. Discounts included in the Great Outdoors Initiative will remain active until Jan. 13, 2024.

"Storms make trees take deeper roots." - Dolly Parton

Florida is home to some of the best state parks, waterways, and recreational lands. In our humble community of Oakland, we are graced with many **free** parks and trails network with the Oakland Nature Preserve serving as a beloved highlight. In addition to the preserve, Oakland residents can explore even more nature at Jake Voss Pier, Blue Hike Kayak Tours, and the West Orange Trail. And for more fun under the sun, there's also Pollard Park, Speer Park and VanderLey Park for picnic gatherings and outdoor games and sports.

Those of us on the Oakland Nature Preserve Board of Directors look forward to seeing you on the trails this fall!

Plan to visit and learn more about Florida's state parks at <https://www.floridastateparks.org/>

"Where flowers bloom, so does hope." - Lady Bird Johnson

Upcoming Events

- 10/27-10/28 – Pumpkin Glow
- 11/6 – Homeschool Series age 6-8
- 11/11 – Veteran's Day
- 11/13 – Homeschool Series age 9-12
- 11/18 – Blue Hike
- 11/23 – Thanksgiving
- 11/27 – Homeschool Series age 13-16
- 12/9 – Blue Hike
- 12/25 – Christmas Day
- 1/1 – New Years Day
- 1/6 – Blue Hike
- 1/8 – Homeschool Series age 6-8
- 1/15 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 1/19 – Florida Master Naturalist Freshwater begins
- 1/22 – Homeschool Series age 9-12
- 1/27 **Oakland Heritage Day (Speer Park)**
- 1/29 – Homeschool Series age 13-16
- 2/1 – Summer Camp 2024 Schedule posted on website



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

October 27-28
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

Thank you to our Presenting sponsor
Healthy West Orange!

Welcome new Corporate Sponsor!

We are proud to include Leap Frog in our family of corporate sponsors. A.J. and Kiki Grossman live and work in our community! As the ONP encourages us learn to live in harmony with nature, the Grossmans encourage harmony in their professional practices by helping family law and corporate clients navigate conflict skillfully and with dignity.



Would you like to become a Corporate Sponsor of the Oakland Nature Preserve? Here are the perks:

- Early registration and membership discounted Summer Camp
- Website and newsletter recognition
- Complimentary exhibitor space at our annual fall festival

Visit www.OaklandNaturePreserve.org/membership or email director@oaklandnaturepreserve.org for more information about Corporate and Event sponsorship opportunities.

PUMPKIN GLOW Jack-o-lantern Trail

October 27th-28th, 2023 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. The 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:

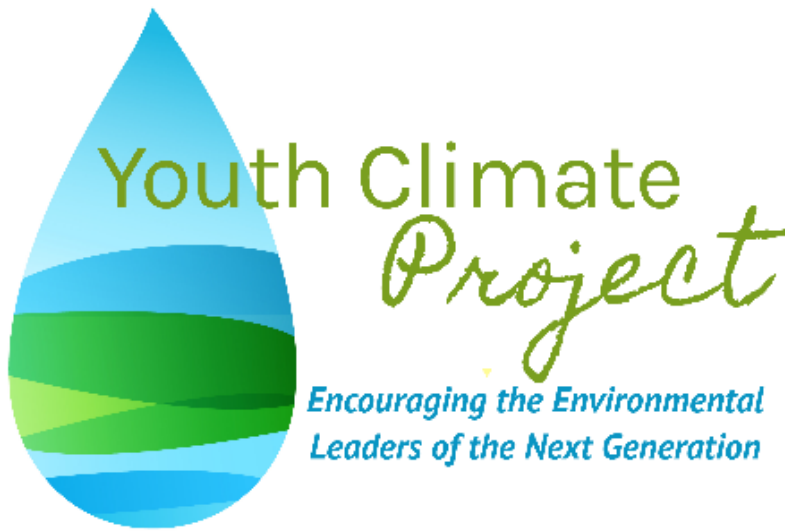
<https://oaklandnaturepreserve.org/pumpkinglow>



**HEALTHY
WEST ORANGE**

Thank you to Healthy West Orange
for being this year's Pumpkin Glow
Presenting Sponsor!

2023-2024 Youth Climate Project Scholarship Opportunity



The Amon Family Foundation, in partnership with the Oakland Nature Preserve, are excited to announce an opportunity for high school seniors in west Orange and south Lake County high schools, and homeschool students to participate in the Youth Climate Project (YCP).

The effects of climate change are taking place all around us and the YCP is designed to “encourage the environmental leaders of the next generation.” The knowledge derived from science, research,

and education is the key to solving the problems created by climate change and finding innovative solutions. YCP was created to support participants as they work towards their goals and will be awarding \$20,000 in scholarship funding. Participants who receive high scores on their research could receive between \$250-\$7,500. Seven students received scholarships in the 2022-2023 scholarship year!

Lisa Nguyen	Ocoee HS	\$7500
Blake Thompson	Homeschool	\$6000
Kishen Sukhu	Ocoee HS	\$5000
Tenielle MacCabe	Homeschool	\$750
Benedict Ridore	Ocoee HS	\$250
Jake MacTavish	Ocoee HS	\$250
Bruno Rodriguez-Mendez	Ocoee HS	\$250

Visit www.YouthClimateProject.org to find more information about this year's scholarship opportunity.

The Amon Family Fund Inc (AFFI) was founded in May 2021 by Jack Amon, former resident of west Orange county. As a farmer, community activist, and participant in environmental efforts in Central Florida, Jack's goal was to establish a sustainable vehicle to encourage and support environmental and educational opportunities for young people focused on environmental challenges of the 21st century.

The operation of the Fund is assisted on the Board of Directors by two of his children, Jennifer Triggs and Jonathan Fritz, and guided locally by the accounting firm of Derek Blakeslee project.



We dig our volunteers! by Nicole O'Brien

Hello Volunteers and Supporters!

ONP is participating in the 3rd Annual Town of Oakland 'Trees of the Season' display at the Healthy West Orange Arts and Heritage Center. Our tree was chosen as the winner in 2021 (Monarch Butterflies) and 2022 (Tracks and Trail Cam pictures)!

For future years, we wish for this new tradition to continue with a committee of volunteers. We are forming a Holiday Tree Committee in the new year and are looking for creative people to join! Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at nobrien@oaklandnaturepreserve.org if you are interested in assisting on this committee.



Save the Date!

**Pours at the Preserve
March 9, 2024**

Contact Jennifer at director@oaklandnaturepreserve.org for sponsorship opportunities!

Blue Hike Paddle Tours



ONP is delighted to announce upcoming Spring 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 waterways. Upcoming Blue Hikes include:

- Jan 6 – Katie's Landing at Wekiva River
- Feb 3 – Montverde to Smith's Island
- March 2 – Bugg Spring
- April 6 – Alexander Springs
- May 4 – New Location TBD
- June 1 - New Location TBD

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



**Ready. Set.
Walk!**

HealthyWestOrange.org

Looking for a way to stay active? Want to explore our west Orange Community? How about making new friends? Have we got the program for you!

Join the West Orange Walkers!

Healthy West Orange, Orlando Health, and the YMCA of Central Florida have come together to offer monthly meetups, 5ks, and breakfasts, all across west Orange, and all year long!



ORLANDO
HEALTH®



Nature Fest 2023!



Nature Fest 2023! Continued.....



Mark your calendars for Nature Fest 2024!

September 21, 2024



Nature Fest 2023

Event Sponsors

Gopher Tortoise \$2500

Amon Family Foundation - Boat Tour Sponsor

Longleaf \$1000

Toole's Ace Hardware

Bobcat \$500

Shannon Till Insurance Agency, Inc
 Orange County Commissioner Nicole Wilson
 Friends of Lake Apopka
 Alarie Design Associates, Inc

Town of Oakland—Bird of Prey Presentation Sponsor
 Chin Photo Art—Children's Art Tent Sponsor

Thank you for your support!

What's In Bloom

By Jackie Rolly

It's 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 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.



Love grass
(*Eragrostis spectabilis*)



Florida paintbrush
(*Carphephorus corymbosa*)



Lopsided Indian Grass
(*Sorghastrum secundum*)

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 ONP!). 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!



Registration Opening Soon

Florida Master Naturalist Program Freshwater Systems January 19 - February 23

The Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP) is an adult education UF/IFAS Extension program developed by the University of Florida. FMNP training will benefit persons interested in learning more about Florida's environment or wishing to increase their knowledge for use in education programs as volunteers, employees, ecotourism guides, and others.

The FMNP consists of three Core Modules: Freshwater Wetlands, Coastal Systems and Upland Habitats. Each Module is 40 contact hours of classroom learning, field trips, and practical experience.



For more information on class schedule, instructors, field trip locations, and to register please go to <http://www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu/> Select "Current Course Offerings", Freshwater Wetlands, Orange County



Oakland Nature Preserve
Oakland, FL
<http://www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org>
407-905-0054

