

WINTER
SPRING
2013

THE EAGLE'S EYE



A Publication of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

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WHO? WHAT? WHEN?

Refuge Hosts Wildlife Heritage and Outdoors Festival

Supervisory Ranger Robin Will

What do fly fishing, archery, birdwatching, wild turkeys, cast netting, and lighthouse history have in common? These are all exhibits offered at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge's 7th annual Wildlife Heritage and Outdoors Festival (WHO Festival) on Saturday February 2, 2013 from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. The mission of this festival is "to excite visitors to reconnect with nature and wildlife through a community celebration of nature's diversity and local heritage," and the many exhibitors will provide fun outdoor activities from the past and present.

Visitors can experience how to cast a fly rod, throw a cast net, call turkey or waterfowl, learn about Operation Migration's whooping crane project, explore the St. Marks



Photo: George Burton



Photo: Lou Kellenberger

OUR 'GATORS ARE LARGE
ACROSS THE ROAD THEY AMBLE
DRIVE 35
DON'T TAKE A GAMBLE

Lighthouse, meet representatives from many outdoors support organizations and much more! The refuge will host an Animal Olympics trail for youth of all ages. The Photo Club offers a wonderful outdoor photo opportunity for the whole family and our Silent Auction will benefit our Education Program. Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 2, 2013 to attend the Wildlife Heritage and Outdoors Festival at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and explore the 30+ exhibits. Regular entrance fees apply. Due to the wild animal exhibits please leave your pets at home! For more information, please call 850-925-6121. 

EDUCATION AND REFUGE NEWS

Notes from Nature's Classroom

Environmental Education Specialist Lori Nicholson

It was a busy fall! I returned as the Environmental Education Specialist for the USFWS in September. When I first started we were busy mainly during October, November, and April. Now it seems like we are busy constantly, connecting more kids and adults to nature with lots of kids coming to the refuge or visiting schools. I love it!

I was honored to attend the workshop for the National Association of Interpreters in Hampton Virginia, as the Region 4 **Sense of Wonder** recipient. Region 4 covers more than 430,000 square miles, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, as well as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, 129 National Wildlife Refuges and 14 Fish Hatcheries. The Sense of Wonder Recognition Program recognizes a USFWS employee who has designed, implemented or shown visionary leadership in an interpretive or environmental education program that fosters a sense of wonder and enhances public stewardship of our wildlife heritage. I met wonderful people from other regions and gathered some great ideas.

I am grateful to everyone who supports the EE program, especially my family, Robin Will, SMRA, and all of the education volunteers who make it possible for me to do my job smoothly and affectively. Without SMRA's support and encouragement the last 5 years, our education program most certainly would not have grown as large. Because of their financial contribution, I am able to work over the summer months. Thank you all.

As the end of 2012 approaches we are gearing up for a busy spring. I will change standard correlations as the state changes their requirements, tweaking programs to fit the teachers' needs, and getting ready to hold our second Junior Refuge Ranger Summer camp in 2013. We'll share that "Sense of Wonder" and get kids and parents connected to nature around us. ■

Refuge Manager's Report

Terry Peacock

The whooping cranes arrived right after Thanksgiving. Help us keep a look out for the adult birds. WCEP has limited resources to devote to tracking them. The two adult birds that wintered at Southwood last year have returned. You can call the refuge to report adult whooping cranes and also report them at <http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/>. We really need your help in tracking these adult birds.

Once again, I owe a big thank you to the St. Marks volunteers who turned out and helped me get the pen ready for the cranes. I truly could not keep the project going without volunteers. I especially want to thank Tom Darragh and

Craig Kittendorf. They keep a running list of the tasks we need to complete and keep me on task. They also organize the volunteers and get them to the work day. Thank you all for caring so much about your refuge.

William McCarthy has been developing a timber prescription for the Port Leon area of the St. Marks Unit. Once the prescription is approved, we will begin marking trees to be harvested with blue paint. Many of the areas planned for thinning were originally planted in slash pine by St. Joe in the early 1980s. We will leave slash at a more natural stocking where slash is native and continue thinning so the remaining trees can grow. Thinning will continue until we can plant the appropriate areas with longleaf pine.

Many of you might wonder where your entrance fee money goes. About 80% of the fee money collected whether at the toll booth, honor fee station or Visitor Center is returned to St. Marks. We use the money for the salaries of people who run our education programs and keep the Visitor Center open on weekends and holidays. Fee money can be used for printing brochures and renting vans for tours and stationing porta-potties at various events as well as keeping the restrooms in the Visitor Center and Picnic clean and functioning. These are ongoing expenses that benefit all visitors every day of the year.

I do not have any updates on budgets yet. We are still under a continuing resolution. The rumblings that we hear are not good as any of you watching the news know. We do appreciate all of you who are members of SMRA. We get a great deal of monetary support from the association which allows us to continue doing great things for the environment even in these lean times. ■

ST. MARKS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
PO Box 68
ST. MARKS, FL 32355
850-925-6121

The purpose of The Eagle's Eye newsletter is to share news about the refuge and encourage people to participate in recreation activities, programs, and events so that they will respect and support St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

Graphics and layout design by volunteer and Photo Club member Francie Stoutamire.

LIKE us, keep up with the latest news about St. Marks, post your pictures and tell us about your refuge visit at

<http://www.stmarksrefuge.org>

<http://www.facebook.com/SMSVNWRS>

<http://www.facebook.com/gotoSt.Marks>

Send comments and suggestions to gail_fishman@fws.gov

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ON AND OFF THE REFUGE

Freshwater Plant Communities Along Lighthouse Road

Ranger Barney Parker

The seven mile drive from the Visitor Center (VC) to the Lighthouse is marked by slight changes in elevation. A forest of pine trees, sabal palms, red maples, sweet gums, wax myrtles, and saw palmettos surrounds the VC. Beyond this point are managed freshwater and brackish pools, salt-marsh, and coastal plant communities separated by transition zones.



Water Lily Photo: Craig Kittendorf

After leaving the VC the road passes through a lowland hardwood forest of black gums, sabal palms, cypress, red maples, and willows. Land beside the road is lower and can be flooded or swampy when the short East River overflows. These plants can withstand intermittent floods. Besides providing shelter for the animals, they provide berries and other forms of food. The trees also slow down rushing water so that sediments can settle out, making the ground more fertile.

The first water body west of Lighthouse Road, East River Pool, is fed by the East River. A low earthen dam, or levee, topped by a concrete overflow section, stops the full flow of the river. The refuge biologist uses this freshwater to manage the salinity of the brackish pools on the east side of Lighthouse Road. Culverts under the road are part of the water control system. Differing salinity levels can discourage some plants or encourage others that provide food and cover for different bird species. Walk onto the short fishing pier at East River and notice bulrushes and fragrant water lilies. Bulrushes, only found in fresh water, look like giant green needles (4-5 feet tall) growing in shallow water along the pond's edge. Lily pads float on the surface; their stems extend to the bottom of the pond. All of the plants in the pond can only live in fresh water. Coots and common moorhens like this pool in the winter. In early spring barn swallows swoop after insects over the water. In summer, anhingas build their nests in the willows.

In the next issue we'll move down the road to visit salt-marshes and sea grass beds. **■**

Have Chainsaw, Will Travel

Greg Titus

Many groups pitch in when disaster strikes. We usually think of utility and rescue companies sending people and equipment, not a fire crew from a national wildlife refuge. However, three members of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge fire management staff responded to clean-up efforts after super storm Sandy. Conditions were not the usual hurricane detail; Sandy was a combination hurricane and nor'easter. In addition to the normal tangle of trees, power lines, and building materials – there was snow, anywhere from six inches to three feet deep.

Fire fighters Travis Pollard and Brian Pippin were sent to central New Jersey as part of a 20 person crew to help remove storm debris from roadways so utility workers could restore essential services. Both Brian and Travis operated chainsaws. Removing trees damaged by the storm was extremely hazardous because of the unusual positions and binds created by the storm.

Fire management officer Greg Titus was dispatched as division supervisor with the Southern Area Red Team. The team's first assignment was working with the state of West Virginia and the West Virginia National Guard and chainsaw crews brought from California, Iowa, and Missouri to open roads to essential services. The team was then assigned to New Jersey to assess the readiness of fire departments in the impacted areas along the coast. "Many of the volunteer fire departments were housed in historic buildings," said Greg. "Some were damaged beyond repair while others were hardly touched." **■**



Greg Titus Photo: Catherine Hibbard, USFWS, Region 5

ST. MARKS REFUGE PHOTO CLUB AND WINTER MONARCH SIGHTINGS

Photo Club George Burton



January finds the Photo Club busy, as usual. The Annual Photo Contest got underway in November. We'll accept photos through January 6, 2013. A separate contest for photographers under 17 years of age will begin in the spring. After judging, contest winners can be seen on www.stmarksrefuge.org. Preparations are also underway for the Wildlife Heritage Outdoors (WHO) Festival which falls on February 2, 2013. Come out and join us for a great day outdoors on the refuge!

Arriving at the refuge on any spring day, it's easy to be amazed by the breathtaking beauty all around. The scale of this magnificence can sometimes overshadow smaller beauties in the big picture. A slight focal adjustment, however, reveals them...WILDFLOWERS...everywhere! Looking closer exposes these gems that, 500 years ago in 1513, inspired Ponce de Leon to name our state La Florida (the flowery land). So, grab your camera!!! 📷

When photographing wildflowers, these tips could help your photos stand out:

1. First, and foremost, **LEAVE NO TRACE**. Be careful where you put your gear and your feet. While some wildflowers are hardy, many are delicate and won't take much handling. And remember that collecting plants or anything else from this federal public land is against the law.
2. Use a tripod, if you have one. Also, use image-stabilization (in-lens or in-camera). The extra stability will help keep your photos tack-sharp.
3. Overcast, cloudy days and shade helps to increase color saturation. Bright sunlight creates sharp contrasts and shadows and can be an exposure nightmare!
4. Get in close (macro, if you have it) for portraits but don't forget the landscape shots.
5. Change your perspective. Shoot from a low angle (kneeling) or up from underneath with camera on the ground for some surprising compositions.
6. Choose your background. Eliminate distracting backgrounds or change your depth of field settings to blur the background and keep attention focused on your subject.

Please get out and photograph wildflowers and other beautiful inhabitants and features of the refuge. Then use your photography to share that beauty with others.



This flower is known by various names including Carolina Desert Chicory, Leafy False Dandelion and Florida Dandelion, *Pyrrhopappus carolinianus* / Photo: George Burton

Have you seen Monarch Butterflies in Winter?

Richard RuBino



For years over-wintering monarch butterflies have been reported along the Gulf of Mexico's northern coast. However, until data from sightings is recorded, monarch scientists are reluctant to accept that over-wintering may be more than occasional. Nevertheless, interest is growing among entomologists at universities and other research institutions. With this in mind, the Northern Gulf Coast Monarch Over-wintering Count will document over-wintering monarchs, if any, along the coast of Wakulla and Franklin Counties in the Florida Panhandle in January and February 2013.

Richard RuBino along with David Cook and Ron Nelson will direct the project; all have had considerable experience tagging monarchs in the fall at the refuge. Two other

associates are Karen Oberhauser, director of graduate studies in entomology at the University of Minnesota and Ilsa Gebhard, a citizen-scientist from Kalamazoo, Michigan, and an affiliate of Dr. Oberhauser.

To be successful, this unfunded pilot effort depends on interested citizen-scientists who live along or who frequently visit the Wakulla and Franklin county coasts during January and February to look for and count monarchs. Interrelated questions central to the project are: 1) do monarchs over-winter along the northern Gulf Coast and 2) does milkweed survive during the northern Gulf Coast winter? 3) If so, where and at what intensities do they occur?

Anyone interested in further information or in participating in the project should contact Richard RuBino at 850-224-9261 or rrubino4@hotmail.com. 📷

Make the Most of Your Visit to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

The Visitor Center is located on County Road 59, three miles south of U.S. 98. Stop in to view the interpretive exhibits, check the wildlife sightings list, purchase entrance passes, and shop in the Nature Store. Restrooms are available here and at the Picnic Area. Visitor Center hours are weekdays 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and weekends 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The refuge is open from sunrise to sunset.



Entrance fees – We accept these federal passes: America the Beautiful, Senior/Golden Age, Access/Golden Access, Military Pass, and the Federal Duck Stamp, as well as day and the St. Marks Annual. All passes can be purchased at the Visitor Center during business hours; day, Senior, and Military passes issued at the toll booth on weekends.



Wildlife Observation – Most wildlife are active in the early morning and late afternoon. The 7-mile Lighthouse Road provides several stopping points. Levee roads can be used for cycling and walking, but portions may be seasonally closed. Fall, winter, and early spring are the best times to get outdoors. Maps are available at the toll booth and at the Visitor Center.



Slow Down! – The posted limit is 15 MPH around the Visitor Center and picnic area and 35 MPH on Lighthouse Road. **Wildlife**, vehicles, boaters, cyclists, anglers, birders, photographers, and hikers all share the road.



Pull Over! – Use designated pull-off areas or pull as far as possible off the road when observing or photographing wildlife and be mindful of other traffic.



Picnicking – Have a picnic at Picnic Pond and enjoy the birds and butterflies at the pollinator gardens. No open fires are allowed. Drinking water is available at the Visitor Center. No food is sold on the refuge. Picnic and restrooms are available at Otter Lake on the Panacea Unit.



Fishing – Freshwater and saltwater fishing are allowed in certain areas of the refuge. Crabbing is only allowed in the bay. The saltwater boat ramp near the lighthouse is open during daylight hours. Pick up a Refuge Fishing Brochure in the Visitor Center or toll booth.



Hunting – Hunting is permitted for resident game species on specific dates on the Panacea and Wakulla Units. Hunt brochures are available at the toll booth, the Visitor Center, and online <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/pubs/smkhnt.pdf>. Go to <http://www.fws.gov/saintvincent/hunt-fish.html> for hunting and fishing information on St. Vincent NWR.

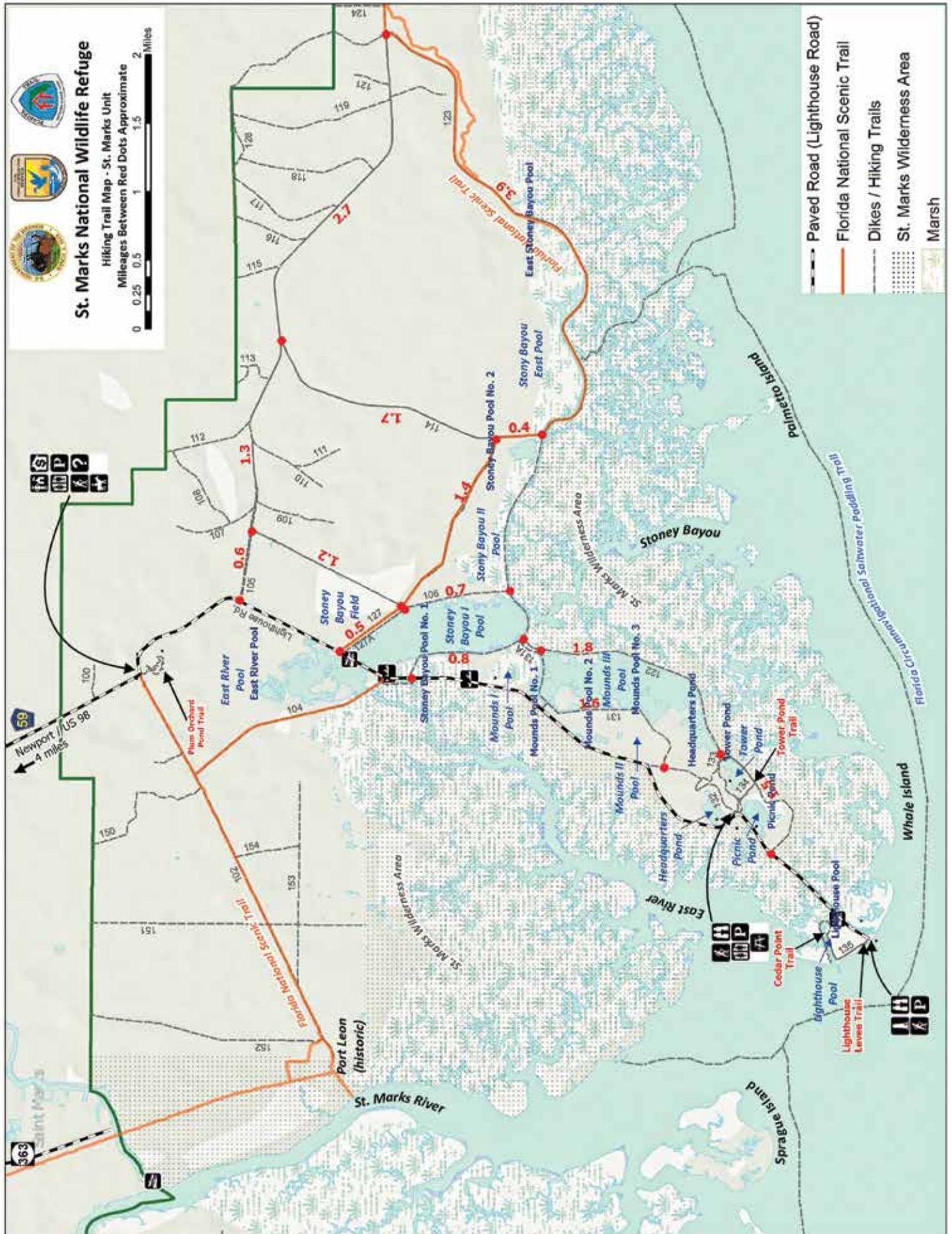


Camping – There is no public campground on the refuge. A few primitive campsites are only for through hikers on the Florida National Scenic Trail and the Kayak/Canoe trail. Permits are sold at the Visitor Center.



Trails – About 80 miles of marked trails including more than 49 miles of the *Florida National Scenic Trail* cross the refuge. The 1/3 mile *Plum Orchard Pond Trail* behind the Visitor Center is open to foot traffic only. *Tower Pond Trail* (1 mile loop), near Picnic Pond, is open for walking and bicycles. *Cedar Point Trail* (1/4 mile) begins west of the saltwater boat ramp for walking. *Lighthouse Levee Trail* (1/2 mile) is open for walkers and bicycles. Be sure to pick up the plant brochure for this trail.

- Binoculars and bird guides and a bicycle pump and tools are available for loan in the Visitor Center.
- Watch for poison ivy, thorny vines, biting insects, and snakes. Do not feed or approach any wildlife.
- All pets must be leashed and under the owner's control at all times.
- Collecting or taking artifacts, natural features, animals, or plants from federal property is not permitted.
- Personal watercraft or airboats may NOT be launched from the saltwater boat ramp.



SCIENCE ON ST. MARKS REFUGE

On the hunt for invasive plants!

Volunteers are combing 20 plots throughout the refuge to identify the presence and extent of invasive plants. Team leaders will survey them in order of priority. Targeted species, such as Chinese tallow, cogon grass, Japanese climbing fern, and torpedo grass, are known to occur on some plots, but the extent is unknown. Other plots are sensitive areas, such as wetlands, where we want to ensure invasive



Cogon Grass Photo: Nick Baldwin

plants are not present. Volunteers record the lat/long of each plant or clump of plants, as well as photograph the plant. Team leaders then enter the data into iMapInvasives, a national invasive plant species database. All of these species can quickly

take over an area, shading out native vegetation and/or clogging waterways. Stopping them early is more successful and less costly than waiting until they become well established.

Phenology Report

The refuge is participating in the USA National Phenology Network, a collaborative volunteer effort to record seasonal changes in plants including flowering, emergence of leaves, pollen release, fruiting, seed-cone ripening, and leaf coloring. Information is submitted to the national database. Call the refuge to join this project.

Two sets of native trees at widely separated locations on the refuge were chosen for long-term observation. A set of 25 trees in eight species was selected in early 2012 near Buckhorn Creek on Highway C-372 near Sopchoppy. A diligent volunteer visited each tree 42 times through October. At Buckhorn Creek two of three laurel oaks produced acorns but gave up the entire crop, possibly to squirrels, evidently still unripe, between August 29 and October 19. The few female cones of the longleaf pines were still green and tightly closed on October 10 but were, surprisingly, ripe and fully open just nine days later. *David Roddenberry*

Plant in Brief - Saw Palmetto – *Serenoa repens*, a palm

Lives in – practically every ecosystem throughout Florida and the coastal plain of the Southeastern U.S. Prefers sandy soils of pine flatwoods, scrubs, sandhills, or cypress domes. It tolerates a wide range of conditions from full sun to deep shade.

Age – can live 500 to 1100 years in the wild!

Interesting facts – Saw palmetto is named for the saw-like blades that run along its leaf stems that can easily cut you! One of the few plants that can be found in every Florida county.

You should know – The saw palmetto is one of the most ecologically important plants found within the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and Florida. The seeds (fruit) are a major portion of the diets of many animals; including the Florida black bear, white-tailed deer, raccoon, opossum, fox, and more. Saw palmetto thickets provide critical shelter for wildlife, including the Florida panther and eastern diamondback rattlesnake. Considered “fire proof”, saw palmettos are often the first plants to begin growing after a fire, even during freezing temperatures. The seeds are also the source of the commercially important saw palmetto extract pill, used as an herbal treatment for various ailments. As a result, seed collection has become heavily regulated due to irresponsible over collecting. Often confused with Florida’s State Tree, the sabal palm (*Sabal palmetto*), both are often found growing together, and look similar. Sabal palms are true, tall palm trees with smooth blades along the stems. Saw palmettos grow in low, bushy, thickets, with saw-like blades along their leaf stem edges. This holds true, regardless of age or size. *Scott Davis / Photo: Refuge Files*



Saw palmettos and sabal palms growing near the Education Building. Notice a juvenile sabal palm growing to the left of the adult tree.

Swallow-tailed kite study update

In June 2012, Gina Kent from the Avian Research and Conservation Institute captured a swallow-tailed kite on the refuge. DNA tests proved the bird was a female. Data from a GPS satellite transmitter showed that she moved around north Florida for several weeks before flying down the peninsula and across the Gulf of Mexico to northern Mexico. She made it safely to Bolivia where she’ll probably stay until January. We hope this bird returns to the refuge to nest again next spring.

ST. MARKS REFUGE HISTORY

Yes, This IS Lighthouse Road

Gayla Kittendorf

One of the most frequent questions we hear at the Visitor Center or the toll booth is, “Is this the road to the lighthouse?” Easiest directions in the world, “Yes, stay on this paved road all the way to the end, and you’ll arrive at the lighthouse.” Lighthouse Road begins at U.S. Highway 98, across from the county campground at Newport, and goes approximately 11 miles to the parking lot at the lighthouse. But there was a time when you could not have driven that far because the land on which the lighthouse sits was an island! It is interesting to see in a later report, after the road had been in place for a few years, the name “Lighthouse Island” used. Early lighthouse logs tell of trips to town by boat for supplies and other purposes. The weather was not always cooperative, resulting in extra time away from the lighthouse due to storms and rough water, and no doubt delays in getting to town, as well.

Lighthouse Road is said to have been built as early as 1931. The original road was a graded dirt road, surfaced with lime rock surfacing in 1939. A 1939 narrative report states, “Surfacing of Lighthouse Road has been greatly speeded up by the use of a new lime-rock surfacing material obtained from a pit near Stony Bayou.” It’s been said that the original road was built by the Works Progress Administration (later renamed Works Projects Administration), but this program did not come into being until 1935. Even the Civilian Conservation Corps did not begin until 1933. The first CCC camp for St. Marks Refuge was established in April 1936 and began working on construction projects on May 1. However, both of these programs were responsible for all or most of road maintenance and improvement projects on the refuge. Narrative reports by the refuge manager spoke of the men in these programs in glowing terms, describing their good character and strong work ethic, in light of some grueling environmental conditions.

With the establishment of a road, visitors flocked to the lighthouse for tours, to the point that the lighthouse keeper was faced with the daunting task of balancing public relations with the important duties necessary to maintain the lighthouse. In 1940, about 400 visitors visited the lighthouse per week! A 1940 narrative report, written after the lime rock surfacing was completed, says, “The completion of the rock road to the lighthouse has increased the number of visitors to the refuge over 100%. Many people, natives to this part of Florida, are coming to the refuge for the first time in their lives saying they never knew that there was a good road into and through the area.” The same report mentioned “about 1200 fishermen have used the area for fishing during the last quarter.” It went on to say that fishing was done in lakes and ponds and borrow pits along the rock road.

Although locals may remember dodging potholes, today a smooth paved road leads to the lighthouse. While an expanded refuge experience may be had by hiking or biking the miles of trails on the refuge, quite a lot can be seen from Lighthouse Road. Each trip promises something different; raccoons, bobcat, deer, turtles, alligators, birds, butterflies, wildflowers, and snakes can be seen on or near the road. Please remember that you are a guest in THEIR home and drive SLOWLY. Not only will you save the lives of wildlife, you’ll see more and just maybe develop a new appreciation for this wonderful refuge! 📷



The road to the lighthouse about 1937. *Photo: Refuge Files*

RECURRING EVENTS

See the Full Events Calendar on the next page for more specific information. Entrance fees apply.

First Sunday at the Refuge

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is committed to sharing the natural and cultural history of this area to the public. The refuge's First Sunday at the Refuge programs do just that. Presentations begin at 2:00 p.m. on the first Sunday and last about an hour. Tasty refreshments, interesting topics, and lively discussions make this event a hit. Check our Facebook page, St. Marks Refuge Association Web site, local newspapers, or call the Visitor Center for more information.

Digital Photography Class

The digital nature photography class is held on the first Saturday of each month. Adults and families are welcome. The class includes the basics of photography, explanation of terminology, and composition. A photo safari follows if time and weather permit. The tram has room for ten, so sign up early. Ranger Barney Parker, former FSU photography instructor, teaches the class. Limit 15 and registration is required.

St. Marks Photo Club

Digital photography has made this popular hobby perfect for every age. The St. Marks Photo Club meets on the third Saturday of every month at 9:00 a.m. Meetings may involve reviewing member photos, a technique or software seminar, or a photo safari. Rest assured that whatever is on the agenda, having fun will be a definite by-product! This enthusiastic group welcomes new and accomplished

photographers. After the meeting we encourage you to stay and enjoy the rest of the day discovering the refuge. Contact President Tom Darragh at 850-556-3477 or thomasd@talstar.com for information.



Tots on Trails and Families in Nature

These popular programs are designed to acquaint children and families with the natural world. Join Ranger Heather Bevis and refuge volunteers to learn about the plants and animals of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Tots on Trails meets on the **second Thursday** and the **second Saturday** at 11:00 a.m. Activities for pre-school children last about 45 minutes. Families in Nature programs engage the whole family on the **fourth Saturday** of each month between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Please call the refuge to sign up.



Winter Birding Tours

Share an adventure behind the gates with extraordinary birder and naturalist Don Morrow. Learn about the birds and other wildlife that call the refuge home. Don introduces you to the many migratory and resident birds of St. Marks. Keep your eyes open for alligators, deer, bobcats, and raccoons. Meet at the parking lot at the Visitor Center to be transported in an enclosed bus. Tours leave at 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Bring snacks, beverage, binoculars, camera, and field guides. Limit 25 per tour. Reservations required.

Winter - Spring Observations



Cooler weather means the biting insect population is down and this is the best time of year to get out on the levee roads on foot or bicycle. Many plants begin sprouting fresh green growth in February and March.

Bald eagles are actively nesting and feeding newly hatched chicks. Refuge ponds are full of a variety of ducks. Alligators sun on the banks on warm days but wait out cold weather underwater.



Shore birds, ducks, snow geese, and songbirds begin leaving in March while other species of migrating songbirds will stop off on their way north. Climb the observation tower at the lighthouse and scan the sand flats for shore and possibly wading birds. Stoney Bayou #1 is a prime location for shore birds as the gates are open for the tide to ebb and flow.



January to April 2013 Full Events Calendar

Call the refuge at 850-925-6121 for more information and to make reservations.

Unless otherwise stated, public programs are held in Nature's Classroom adjacent to the Visitor Center.

JANUARY

Tuesday, January 1 – New Year's Day, Visitor Center OPEN

Saturday, January 5 – Digital Photography Class

Sunday, January 6 – First Sunday at the Refuge, Ever wonder how St. Marks NWR functions so smoothly and easily? Bring your questions and Ask the Staff at this special First Sunday discussion group to learn the routines and unforeseen challenges they face in keeping equipment moving, budgets balanced, and wildlife protected while providing superior recreational opportunities.

Sunday, January 6, 2013 – St. Marks Photo Contest closes.

Sunday, January 6, 2013 – Last day for the St. Marks Small Game and Hog Hunt. Write or call the refuge to request a permit.

Thursday, January 10 – Tots on Trails

Saturday, January 12 – Winter Birding Tours

Saturday, January 12 – Tots on Trails

Saturday, January 19 – St. Marks Photo Club

Monday, January 21 – Martin Luther King Day, FEE FREE and the Visitor Center will be OPEN

Saturday, January 26 – Families in Nature, **Whooping Cranes!**

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 2 – WHO, The Wildlife and Outdoors Heritage Festival - experience how to cast a fly rod, throw a cast net, call turkey or waterfowl, meet members of Operation Migration's whooping crane project, explore the St. Marks Lighthouse, meet representatives from many outdoors support organizations and shop at the Silent Auction!

Saturday, February 2 – NO Digital Photography Class today

Sunday, February 3 – First Sunday at the Refuge, Peter Cowdrey, Educator in Residence at the Museum of Florida History, shows how Apalachee Bay and the St. Marks area were portrayed on the earliest maps of Florida. Through early Spanish, French, British and American maps of our coastline, we can get hints to how features have changed over time and the locations of early settlements. Peter will be dressed as an 18th century ship's navigator and describe some of the tools used.

Saturday, February 9 – Winter Birding Tours

Saturday, February 9 – Tots on Trails

Thursday, February 14 – Tots on Trails

Saturday, February 16 – St. Marks Photo Club

Monday, February 18 – President's Day, Visitor Center OPEN

Saturday, February 23 – Families in Nature, **Scatastic!**



Joe Duff leads the Class of 2012 Whooping Cranes to St. Marks NWR Seemingly Accompanied by the Spirit of Crane #10-12 Photo: Claire Timm

MARCH

Saturday, March 2 – Digital Photography Class

Saturday, March 2 – St. Marks Refuge Association, Annual Meeting

Sunday, March 3 – First Sunday at the Refuge, Meet Operation Migration pilot Brooke Pennypacker and learn first-hand about his experiences in teaching awkward chicks to become elegant fliers and follow the ultra-light aircrafts on the migration route.

Thursday, March 7 – Tots on Trails

Saturday, March 9 – Tots on Trails

Sunday, March 10 – Daylight Savings Time begins – gates close at 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 16 – St. Marks Photo Club

March 16 – refuge pools open for boats with electric trolling motors

Saturday, March 23 – Families in Nature, **Nature Photography with the St. Marks Photo Club!**

APRIL

Saturday, April 6 – Kids Fishing Clinic, 9:00 a.m. to Noon at Wooley Park, Mound St., Panacea. Call Lori Nicholson or David Moody at the refuge for more information.

Saturday, April 6 – Digital Photography Class

Sunday, April 7 – First Sunday at the Refuge, *Butterflies and Migration*; Dean and Sally Jue

Thursday, April 12 – Tots on Trails

Saturday, April 14 – Tots on Trails

Saturday, April 20 – St. Marks Photo Club

Saturday, April 27 – Families in Nature, **Terrific Trees!**

Check www.stmarksrefuge.org or www.facebook.com/SMSVNWRS for hikes and tours scheduled after this newsletter went to press.

ST. MARKS REFUGE ASSOCIATION

SMRA President's Message

Betsy Kellenberger

Winter has come to the refuge and roadside flowers have faded, but other life reveals itself as migratory ducks return to the impoundments and Apalachee Bay. Birding, photography, hiking, and biking pick up in the winter months as the temperatures moderate and the bugs stop biting! The St. Marks Refuge Association is wrapping up the year with capacity-building workshops for our board members as we make plans to expand our membership and increasing our support of the refuge. Our Nature Store in the Visitor Center is our chief source of income. Memberships and donations add more to our support of educational, biological and visitor services programs.

As the new year approaches, remember the association in your end-of-year giving. We have special funds for environmental education, lighthouse restoration and the whooping crane reintroduction program. Direct your contribution to one of these funds, to our new endowment fund, or to the general budget. St. Marks Refuge Association is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization and all donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

We'll send our annual membership renewal letters in February so watch your mailbox. An announcement for the association's Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 2 will be included in the mailing. Plan to come as will have a Refuge Update, volunteer awards, election of officers and of course an excellent lunch! It's a great time to get together with other members to renew old acquaintances, greet new people and hear about volunteer opportunities at the refuge!

Remember the Nature Store for that special gift and mark your calendars for the Wildlife Heritage and

Outdoor Festival on February 2. Watch our website and Facebook pages for more news about this early spring event where we celebrate the crafts and skills of our area. 



Association Endowment Fund

Lou Kellenberger

The St. Marks Refuge Association has established an endowment fund to provide a permanent source of revenue for generations to come. Its purpose is to receive gifts and bequests which will be invested to produce stable income to fulfill the mission of the association. Our fund is a component of the Community Foundation of North Florida (CFNF) and is professionally managed to ensure the funds remain strong over time.

Anyone can contribute to the endowment fund in any amount or at any time. Gifts may be made in the form of cash, check, credit card, appreciated stock, real estate, retirement plan benefits, charitable trusts, annuities, life insurance or bequest under a will. A brochure has been created and can be picked up at the Visitor Center or you can obtain more information by e-mailing info@stmarks-refuge.org.

The Community Foundation of North Florida provides professional gift planning assistance to our prospective donors and facilitates immediate and deferred gifts of all types. The Community Foundation of North Florida can be contacted at info@cfnf.org.

Your gift to the St. Marks Refuge Association Endowment Fund at the Community Foundation of North Florida will help support the refuge and create a lasting legacy for this magnificent place we all love. 



St. Marks Refuge Association Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____



Individual / Family	\$25
Senior (over 62)	\$20
Non-Profit Group	\$50
Corporate Support	\$200
Life	\$250
Patron	\$1000

Please make checks payable to St. Marks Refuge Association. Mail completed form and check to St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., PO Box 368, St. Marks, Florida 32355. Materials can also be dropped off at the refuge Visitor Center. St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

ST. MARKS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

PO Box 68

ST. MARKS, FL 32355

(850) 925-6121

WWW.FWS.GOV/SAINTMARKS

WWW.STMARKSREFUGE.ORG

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SMSVNWRS

Monarch Update

David Cook

Over the seven-week monarch butterfly counting and tagging season at St. Marks, volunteers counted some 1337, and tagged 987 monarchs. These numbers are a bit lower than last season, when we counted 2040 and tagged 1588. Serendipitously, our biggest counts were on the Friday and Saturday of the Monarch Festival; from those collected both days, 787 were tagged and released at the tagging demonstrations throughout the day of the festival. I'm glad the monarchs got the memo and came to their festival! We were also able to provide 160 monarchs to the University of Massachusetts Medical School for its ongoing research on monarch navigation and orientation. Many thanks to the 11 volunteers who helped at the festival tagging station, and to the 63 different early-morning volunteers who gave up their sleep to support the project and enjoy a St. Marks sunrise! Now we'll wait to see if any tag recoveries tell us where these monarchs went!



Visit the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and Nature Store today!

In the Visitor Center pickup free Refuge maps, pamphlets, fishing and other information to enhance your visit to the Refuge. While there, check out the wildlife and history exhibits and the Nature Store.

The Nature Store is operated by the St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., a friends group. It features merchandise and souvenirs that highlight the animals and plants of the Refuge and the Lighthouse. All proceeds support Refuge projects, such as environmental education for school children, visitor services and biological projects.



Merchandise Includes:
*shirts, hats, mugs,
books for children and adults, puzzles,
photo cards & bookmarks made
by the Photo Club,
lighthouse and whooping crane
merchandise,
fishing maps, lapel pins, earrings,
finger puppets, chocolate and post cards*

Hours:

Monday – Friday 8:00 to 4:00
Saturday & Sunday 10:00 to 5:00