



THE EAGLE'S EYE



THE NEWSLETTER FOR ST. MARKS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2015

Bring Back the Monarchs!

Bring Back the Monarchs

by Robin Will, Supervisory Ranger

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service launched a major campaign this year aimed at saving the declining monarch butterfly. While monarchs are found across the United States- numbering some 1 billion in 1996 – their numbers have declined by approximately 90% in recent years, a result of numerous threats, particularly loss of habitat due to agricultural practices, development, and cropland conversion. A new cooperative effort is gathering steam to build a network of diverse conservation partners and stakeholders to protect and restore important monarch butterfly habitat, while reaching out to Americans of all ages who can play a central role.

From California to the Corn Belt, the Service will fund numerous conservation projects totaling \$2 million this year to restore and enhance more than 200,000 acres of habitat for monarchs while also supporting over 750 schoolyard habitats and pollinator gardens.

St. Marks is proud to have received \$20,000 in Monarch Conservation funding this year. The refuge will educate visitors and the local community about the monarch butterfly population crisis as the catalyst to expand native pollinator nectar plant landscaping.

Here's how:

- Set up a small nursery to initiate propagation of native pollinator nectar plants, including the five species of native milkweed to Wakulla County, Florida. Staff and volunteers will schedule regular work days in the nursery and in the field to survey and census additional milkweed populations on and near the refuge. *Spring 2015*
- Develop an education strategy for local schools with outreach programs, publicity and educator training to expand pollinator gardens from the coast to the Florida state line, connecting gardens to the



27th Annual Monarch Festival Saturday October 24!

Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail, originating in Plains, Georgia. *By early summer 2016*
Develop training and implementation dates for partners to become involved in expanding the native milkweed propagation sites to continue garden development for pollinators. Include Florida Native Plant Society chapters, Audubon chapters, Xerces Society, Panhandle

Wildflower Alliance, Florida Department of Transportation, North American Butterfly Association chapter, Florida Wildflower Foundation, Florida State University, Florida A & M University, Tallahassee Community College, and Emory University. *Spring 2016*

- Develop an outreach program for refuge volunteers to educate groups on and off-site about the value of increasing pollinator habitat. Create a PowerPoint program, handouts, and resources and train interested volunteers in September 2015. Utilize these Monarch Magic volunteers at the 27th Annual Monarch Butterfly Festival and target 200 participants for outreach by May 2016.

St. Marks NWR has been involved in monarch butterfly conservation since the late 1970s and will continue to promote habitat expansion with nectar plants for all pollinators, especially monarch butterflies. Florida has already documented significant economic benefits from wildflower and butterfly viewing, which helps native pollinators. The sustainability of this project will depend on the commitment from partners to support pollinator gardening, milkweed propagation, and to share resources with other urban areas.

Left - *Asclepias tuberosa* seed bed

Right - Joshua Faylo and other volunteers sowing milkweed seeds.

Photographs by Robin Will



Manager's Report by Terry Peacock, Refuge Manager

We had another busy summer this year. Alex Beaver and Jordan Archer, our Carney interns, along with Daniel Barrand and Jacob Ziadie, forester and intern from Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, have marked timber in the Port Leon area of the St. Marks Unit for a fall timber sale. It will be exciting to see the old slash pine plantations thinned and prepared for conversion to longleaf pine on the drier sites. The wetter sites will remain in slash pine at a more natural density.

As you drive into the refuge you will notice a mowed area on the east side of Lighthouse Road which is the newest acquisition for the refuge. Dallas Beckett has prepared this site for possible red-cockaded woodpecker reintroductions in the fall. Biologists Joe Reinman and Jonathan Chandler confirmed that we will get the 5 pairs that we requested to start our new colony. Stay tuned for updates.

It looks like whooping cranes will fly into the refuge again this year. October is the month to refresh and repair the crane pen. Once we publish the date you can contact the refuge to let us know if you are interested in assisting.

John Stark, the new Deputy Refuge Manager for St. Vincent NWR, arrived on July 27, 2015. He came to us from White River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas. He is a good asset to our complex and I am looking forward to working with him.

Thanks to Dr. Carney's generous donation and programs such as the Youth Conservation Corps, we have interns cycling through all year long. St. Marks provides hands-on experiences for young people seeking a career in natural resources and our staff gain much needed help. I must thank an increasing group of volunteers too. Managing the plants and animals that are protected by these 70,000 acres is a huge job that seems to grow larger every day. Thank you all!

Leave No Trace by David Moody, Ranger

Most visitors who enjoy public lands get frustrated by the many aluminum cans, chip bags, plastic bottles, and an assortment of containers from the local jiffy mart dotting the road shoulder. We may even ponder why someone would throw these items out the window. This would be direct littering on purpose. How could a naturalist, fisherperson, birdwatcher, or boater do such a thing?

I think 80% or more of the garbage we find along roadways is indirect or secondary littering. You get back to the truck after a long hike and wipe the sweat off your face and have a big drink of water. You place the paper towel on the bumper, set the bottle on the roof, throw the backpack in the back seat, and crank up the AC. You drive out of the parking lot and when you hit second gear, the paper towel or bottle glides through the air and onto the road shoulder. The classic "ice bag" gets put in the truck bed when the ice chest is loaded and at 30 miles per hour poof! There it goes. The cola can in the boat is a big culprit too. At a safe speed, 35 mph is the limit on Lighthouse Road, that can blows right out onto the road shoulder. Let's all do a better job of stowing our garbage and take it home.

Have you ever seen that family sitting on the beach with a dozen herring gulls or grackles circling feverishly above the kids with the Doritos? This is all cute at the time, but when a Dorito is snatched from your hand and a bird poops in your hair - the fun is over. This scenario gets dangerous with larger animals like alligators or raccoons. Even if you do not intend to feed an animal but your bait or lunch ends up left behind, human association had been established. The next time people get near the shoreline, here it comes. Just remember, indirect actions on your part are still costly. A fed alligator is a dead alligator.

Monofilament line can be deadly to wildlife. Whether on the water or on land, birds can become snared and will die a slow death. If you catch a sea turtle instead of a fish, remove the hook and the line. Rusty hooks are deadly. Recently, Ranger Scott Davis had to cut several feet of line from an eastern diamondback rattlesnake and from an alligator. Both would have died a lingering death if not freed. Thanks to the caring visitors who called about these trapped animals.

Lately we've noticed that some folks are so eager to get on the water to fish or kayak that they leave their vehicle wide open! This is an invitation to have something removed. Please remember to close the doors, take the keys, and lock your vehicle.



Growing Season Fire: My Learning Experience

by Jason Candeto

Jason Candeto is the first Wildland Fire Pathways Intern in the Southeast Region of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

I came with virtually no experience in land management from the biological side of things. I had worked several summers for the Virginia State Parks, which had exposed me to land management from a recreational use viewpoint. I don't think I could have found an internship that would have had a more positive contribution to my hopeful career in land management, than the one I got working as a Pathways intern with the fire crew here at the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

Having an undergrad degree in history, I am fairly limited in the job opportunities that will be available to me in the resource and land management world. I currently plan to pursue a Master's degree in natural resources and conservation. This internship has really given me a crash course in learning some of the practical applications of land management from a biological standpoint. It has been amazing to get a firsthand viewpoint of the refreshing effect that fire has on the longleaf pine ecosystem.

I started out my summer by taking the introductory wildland fire classes with The Nature Conservancy. The classes were taught by a variety of instructors that represented virtually every government agency and private organization that deals with wildland fire in the Florida panhandle and across the southeastern United States. They were able to provide a wealth of information and insight, gained from their experiences as firefighters. The class gave me the basic tools I needed to get out on the crew and start participating in fire operations.

My first real fire experience was a wildfire on St. Vincent Island National Wildlife Refuge, after I had previously been told that almost all of my fire experience on St. Marks NWR would be on prescribed burn operations, not wildfires! So it came as an exciting surprise to respond to a wildfire on my first time out. Since it was my first week, it was a little bit hectic trying to make sure that I had all of my necessary equipment and personal gear packed and ready to go for the overnight trip. Once we left the work center, it was too late to worry about anything I might have left behind.

The focus turned to the strategy employed to contain and control the fire. The hardest part of the whole operation turned out to be simply transporting everything we brought



to the island since the barge was out of service for engine repairs. Once on the island, fighting the fire turned out to be very similar to how we would conduct a prescribed burn since the wind was perfectly suited for burning the unit that the fire had started in. The wildfire at St. Vincent Island was a memorable way to start off my wildland fire career. It presented a set of unique logistical challenges; and watching how those challenges were planned for and overcome by the incident commander was a good experience for me.

Going forward through the rest of the summer, I built off of that first experience. I have not felt unprepared for any prescribed burn or wildfire since then. With every burn, I have felt more comfortable in finding the pace that a burn needs, which varies with fuel and weather conditions. Every burn adds information to my memory bank for fire behavior with certain fuels, fuels densities, moisture content, recent weather patterns, and current weather conditions. I have gotten to the point where I can look at a burn map, get all the pertinent weather and adjacent plot information, and have a good idea what the likely firing plan will be for a particular unit. Obviously, I have a lot of experience left to gain, but this summer has been a great start. I am really grateful to have gotten the opportunity to work with the St. Marks fire crew. They were willing to put in the time and effort to train me. I cannot wait to come back for the winter burn season.

Jason Candeto participating on a prescribed burn. *Refuge files*

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

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http://www.fws.gov/refuge/st_marks/

The purpose of The Eagle's Eye is to share news about St. Marks and encourage people to participate in recreational activities, programs, and events so that they will enjoy and support their refuge.

Eagle photo on the cover by Nick Baldwin.

Monarch photo on the cover by Gayla Kittendorf

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

⇒ <http://www.facebook.com/SMSVNWRS>

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

Send comments and suggestions to gail_fishman@fws.gov

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Carney Intern Report

by Alex Beaver and Jordan Archer

On May 11 we began our internship at St. Marks NWR. One of our first tasks was working with red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCW). Nesting season was underway so an urgent undertaking was made to determine which nests were active as well as the status of any eggs or chicks inside the cavity by systematically “peeping” each nest with a digital camera mounted on the end of a telescoping pole. This allowed us to remain on the ground.

Unfortunately, not every nest contained RCW chicks. Many nests had been taken over by red-bellied woodpeckers, flying squirrels, and scorpions. Chicks between seven and ten days old were removed from the nest. Numbered and colored bands that were unique to each individual were placed on their legs. Alex said, "It's amazing to hold an endangered species but banding RCWs requires care and precision." All of this year's juveniles wear a dark green band at the top of the leg opposite of the numbered metal FWS band. These bands allow tracking of which chicks successfully fledge and which ones will produce offspring in future years.



Thirty days after banding the chicks in a nest it was time to begin fledge checks to determine how many, if any, of them had survived to that point and to identify the adults in the cluster. On our first day of fledge checks, biologist Joe Reinman warned us that “There’s a steep learning curve” and “Don’t trust those red cockaded woodpeckers”. We learned all too quickly how true his words were. Fledge checks were both a challenging and fun task that requires persistence and patience. We would head out each morning while it was

still dark in order to be in position before sunrise. Once we were in position with our spotting scopes near the cluster it was a waiting game. Red-cockaded woodpeckers have their own agendas and can be quite unpredictable. Sometimes we chased birds for over an hour and other times they cooperated nicely and showed us bands. They led us through all sorts of terrain from freshly burned landscapes to areas with very dense understory and even tried to lure us across a few swamps. In the end, we got the hang of it and were able to find the birds we were assigned to check.

In our third week we were afforded a wonderful opportunity to assist the U.S. Geological Survey and the Florida Wildlife Commission in capturing and tagging manatees on the Wakulla and Apalachicola Rivers. This was

an amazing experience! We met many passionate and devoted people and shared an incredible experience.

Four boats were used to capture a manatee, a spotting boat, primary and secondary capture boats, and a medical boat. Once a candidate animal was selected, a



large net was dragged behind the primary capture boat and used to surround and contain the manatee. It took cooperation and communication to pull in the floats and leads to corral such a massive animal. The manatee was gently pulled into the back of the open stern boat and a health check began immediately. Measurements were taken and the tracking devices were attached, while keeping the animal calm. In three days we tagged and released five manatees.

Another big assignment was marking timber to be thinned in the Port Leon tract. Much of this area had been planted in slash pine plantations years ago and will be planted in wiregrass and longleaf pines beginning this fall. We started each day as soon as there was enough light to see which trees we were marking and the condition of the canopy. Criteria for selecting trees to be removed ranged from canopy density and crown condition, to burn scars and overall health of the understory. With help from forester Daniel Barrand and intern Jacob Ziadie from Lower Suwannee NWR, we marked over 200 acres.

We also flagged the boundaries of newly acquired refuge lands, repainted existing red-cockaded woodpecker nesting trees, recorded coordinates of new nest trees, checked the condition of nest boxes, and we took turns going to St. Vincent NWR to assist with sea turtle nest survey and protection.

Protect your belongings

Lock your car and take your keys

Take plenty of water when hiking

Keep pets on a leash at all times

Take your litter home

Be a responsible visitor!

Notes from Nature's Classroom

by Lori Nicholson, Environmental Education Specialist

We had a great summer with four sessions of Junior Refuge Ranger Camp and a total of 44 participants. The kids had a great time and actually requested longer camps. Oh my!

I would like to give a big thanks to Jonathon, Rachel, Adeline, and Clifford Cummings. They have been wonderful supporters of the environmental education programs at the refuge for several years. Mr. Clifford Cummings recently brought in a box of brand new books for the kids to look at when exploring Nature's Classroom. These books were a gift from his family in honor of Mr. Cummings' birthday. We have received many nature-themed books from them in the past; the kids always love them, as do I. Last year the Cummings family donated money to purchase fly tying kits to be given away at a youth fly tying workshop. We have set the date for Sat. Oct. 10, 2015. We are really excited about this opportunity. Each child will learn fly tying basics and receive a free kit for practicing at home. Application forms are on our website, with the deadline of Sept. 23, 2015.



The Cummings family has generously donated \$500 annually for transportation scholarships since 2010 in memory of their grandmother Madonna Cummings. These



transportation scholarships are used to bring Leon County school children to the refuge to participate in our education programs. They would not be able to come to the refuge on field trips without financial assistance. This past year at least 150 students from Hartsfield

and W.T. Moore Elementary Schools visited the refuge and participated in hands-on learning because of the Cummings' gift. Thanks so much for all you do for the refuge and the children!

The LEEF (League of Environmental Educators in Florida) will hold their annual conference in the Big Bend Panhandle region March 18-20, 2016. We have already planned some fun field trips on Friday, March 18, and have some great presentations turned in. Sessions will take place on Saturday the 19th, at COAST Charter School in St. Marks. Friday and Saturday evening meetings and entertainment will take place at the St. Marks Yacht Club. The conference ends at noon on Sunday. If you are interested in attending go to the LEEF website (<http://leef-florida.org/net/content/go.aspx?s=47776.0.110.37432>) to get more information and if you would like to present we have the call for presenters out now (<http://leef-florida.org/net/content/go.aspx?s=47778.0.110.37432>).

Contact me at Lori_nicholson@fws.gov soon for your fall and spring field trips. We look forward to seeing you at the refuge!



St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge 2015 Pollinator Art Contest



Subject Matter

Art work should highlight one or more pollinator species (i.e. hummingbirds, bats, bees, beetles, butterflies, and flies that carry pollen from one plant to another) found in Florida. <http://www.fws.gov/pollinators/Index.html>

Judging

The art will be judged on the basis of

- Concept: How well the work relates to the pollinator theme.
- Composition: How well the elements of line and form work together.
- Color: How color enhances the art work.
- Expression: How imaginatively the work conveys an idea or emotion.
- Originality: New portrayal of subject.
- Accuracy: Obvious artist did research on pollinators.

Winners will be chosen in four categories:

- K-Grade 2
- Grades 3-5
- Grades 6-8
- Grades 9-12

Entries must be
received by
October 9, 2015

Winners will be
announced before
October 24, 2015

What Can I See at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge?

Where *Wildlife Comes First*

Fall migration began before summer's end with some warblers appearing in August. Blue-winged teal and bald eagles returned in September. The eagles will spend fall renewing their pair bond and refurbishing their nest. It won't be long before more ducks land in the refuge pools and Apalachee Bay and songbirds pass through the woodlands.



Soaring eagle by Nick Baldwin



Yellow warbler by Mark Trainor



Northern pintail by Lou Kellenberger



Gulf fritillary on starry rosinweed (Silphium asteriscus) by Teresa Darragh

Alligators sun on the banks on warm days. When the weather turns cold, the reptiles retreat underwater to their "gator hole" since they cannot regulate their body temperature.



Monarch on dotted horsemint by Lou Kellenberger



Alligator photo from refuge files

Along Lighthouse Road and the hiking trails, viceroys, queens, skippers, Gulf fritillaries, sulphurs, swallowtails, and monarchs feed on beggarticks, goldenrod, dotted horsemint, and saltbush. Wildflowers and butterflies peak in October to early November. Monarchs feed and shelter on coastal shrubbery before continuing their migration to Mexico and Texas and south Florida. If you see a monarch with a blue dot on its wing, it has been tagged by our volunteers and counted along its journey.



Black swallow-tail on thistle by Carole Robertson



By mid-November wildflowers and butterflies are fewer. Our fall color is subtle. In the swamps cypress trees turn rusty red and maples turn dark red. Sweet gum leaves flash bright yellow. Snakes and other reptiles and amphibians may come on to the asphalt seeking warmth before a chilly evening. Red-shouldered hawks perch on snags and northern harriers skim the marshes for prey. November and December are great months for getting out on the levees. Bring water, snacks, bug spray, and sunscreen. Close-toed shoes are best for walking on the refuge.

Family on the trail from refuge files

St. Marks NWR Photo Club George Burton, Volunteer



By late summer most of us look forward to fall. Our fall wildflower season is underway just in time for butterflies and birds. Give yourself something to look forward to - come to a St. Marks NWR Photo Club meeting!

Not only do we have a good time honing our photography skills but we

volunteer as a group to support St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in many ways; hard labor readying the whooping crane pen in the fall and assisting with festivals and events throughout the year. We take photo safaris on the refuge and often take a field trip to another natural area just for something different. Whenever we are out as a group or on our own we concentrate our focus (pun intended) on encouraging new visitors to discover, and previous visitors to rediscover, their refuge. Utilizing nature photography helps engage interest in the many different creatures and habitats encompassed in the refuge!

Be on the lookout for some exciting Photo Club activities. We're looking into possible photography themed months/meetings. We're lining up guest speakers and instructional meetings as well as photo-sharing. We plan on heading out (in a cooler month) for an after-dark photo safari on some of the impoundments deep in the refuge. We'll be experimenting with and learning about long-exposure photography for some neat star trail and light painting opportunities. We may also attempt some Milky Way photography which is quite the opposite of trails and light painting. If all goes well, this may become a recurring activity! Our popular Photo Contest opens October 24 and closes January 10, 2016. More details soon!

The Photo Club works with refuge staff to assist in fulfilling the refuge mission. We'd love for you to join us.



Photo by Neil Hostmick

The Amazing Opossum Gail Fishman, Ranger

What they look like: They look scary and scruffy. They waddle and scurry across the road without looking or they freeze. Then they are hit by a car. The Virginia Opossum (*Didelphia virginiana*) is the only marsupial found in the United States and Canada. At birth, the helpless babies are about the size of a kidney bean. They crawl into mama's pouch and latch on to one of 13 teats where they stay for up to three months and then climb on to the mother's back. She carries them for another month or two until they are able to be on their own. Litters are large but most do not survive.

Their fur varies from light grey to almost black. Their nose, tail, and feet are pink and the rear feet have an opposable toe. Opossums use their tail for balance when climbing but adults cannot hang by their tails. When scared or threatened they involuntarily fall on their side with mouth open and tongue sometimes extended. They look dead and can emit a foul odor. This reaction is their only real defense against a predator. Although they have 50 sharp teeth they rarely bite unless cornered. They just want to be left alone.

Why you should like them: They eat ticks and almost anything else. Welcome the opossum to your garden because they eat a variety of insects. Unlike raccoons, they rarely carry rabies. They seem to be immune to the bites of venomous snakes such as rattlesnakes and other pit vipers. They will eat rattlesnakes. They clean up garbage and roadkills. And can also be seen sharing a dish of food with your cat. Remember that it is never a good idea to leave food out for wildlife, even an opossum. That food might attract something you don't want in your yard.

They are here to stay: The opossum descends from ancestors that lived alongside the dinosaurs - roughly 65 million years ago - so it is likely that they are here to stay. They have managed to adjust to modern changes. Once they lived exclusively in woodlands but alteration and fragmentation have forced the opossum to become an urban dweller when necessary. Generally you will not see them as they are most active after dark. Read more at <http://blog.nwf.org/2014/07/opossums-and-gardening-a-few-things-to-know/>

Opossum comes from an Algonquin word meaning "white animal." These three juvenile opossums await release after their mother was killed by a car before they had left her pouch. Please check to make sure an injured opossum does not have babies. Photo by Scott Davis



Lost Towns of the St. Marks River - Rockhaven by Gail Fishman, Ranger

Tallahassee sits on high, red clay hills. A bit south of the capitol the land abruptly drops. Known in geological terms as the Cody Scarp, the demarcation runs across Florida's panhandle tracing the ancient shoreline of much higher seas. Below the scarp, the soil becomes sandy. The large live oaks, magnolias, hickories and other hardwoods that make the red hills so pleasant give way to pines, palmettos, and scrubby plants that can wrest a living out of the less rich soil.

This region is known as the Woodville Karst Plain named for the limestone aquifer just below the surface. Thousands of years past, when the sea level was higher, this area had been underwater. The low hills are relict sand dunes. Thousands of years ago, had the capitol been standing, it would have overlooked the bay.

Florida became a U.S. territory in 1821 and settlers began arriving from Georgia, South Carolina, and other states. The rich red clay was fine for raising sugar

cane, tobacco, and cotton. The planters needed a port to ship out their crops out and to receive supplies. Footpaths from red hills to the coast were widened to accommodate wagons. Heavy bales of cotton could be floated downriver cheaper, faster, and easier than going overland. A port town on the upper St. Marks River that reduced the overland distance would have the economic advantage.

Rockhaven, sometimes written as Rock Haven in historical documents, was about 24 miles from Monticello. The only drawback was that the St. Marks River was much too shallow. Goods shipped in or out of Rockhaven were loaded onto shallow draft skiffs called "lighters" that would wend some 20 miles or so around limestone outcrops and downed trees timing the trip to catch the high tide. The river simply could not accommodate any deep draft boat. Lighter boats would always be used to transport goods between the port and the schooners anchored at Spanish Hole in Apalachee Bay.

The founders must have realized that the river was too shallow but they capitalized on that 24-mile distance from Monticello as opposed to the 32 overland miles to reach St. Marks. Picture them standing near the river and placing the dock and warehouses. Their optimistic enthusiasm blinded them to reality.

According to the Territorial Papers of the United States, extensive improvements were made on the St. Marks River in the early 1830s by George W. Long. At the beginning of 1832 William H. Chase, a military engineer, directed Mr. Long to improve the St. Marks River and harbor by deepening and straightening the channel. Mr. Long

summarized his work in a letter to Mr. Chase dated January 15, 1835. Rotten limestone at the Devil's Elbow was blasted out to deepen the channel.

"The improvements on the river consist in cutting a canal through the Natural Bridge at Rockhaven, which was about 600 yards of Canaling, and to open the river & swamp for scow navigation for about 14 miles above the Nat. Bridge to a point near Col Gadsdens plantation or about two miles South of the St. Augustine road. This improvement has been in progress since the fall of 1834 when the water has been low enough to carry in on. There now remains but a few weeks work with a small force of 10 or 15 hands to complete is as far as it is deemed practicable to expend money on it."

These improvements came too late to save Rockhaven as a port. About the time that the post office closed David Ladd and the Hamlin Brothers let it be known that the town of Magnolia was the port of choice for Jefferson County planters. On January 20, 1830, the *Tallahassee Floridian and Advocate* displayed an ad about land for sale in Rockhaven, two lots with improvements plus "1-8 of 560 acres including the town." According to postal records, the post office at Rockhaven didn't actually close; it was moved to Magnolia.

W.T. Cash, in an article published in the 1944 *Apalachee*, hinted that the leaders of Magnolia were also interested in Rockhaven. Cash also revealed that the settlers of Rockhaven more or less expected the United State government to cut a canal through natural bridge so that navigation could be extended another 15 to 20 miles upriver.

Difficult as it is to pin down exact dates for the founding, or demise, of a town, it appears that if the Hamlins and David Ladd were interested in Rockhaven, they were also hedging their bets with Magnolia as back up. The territorial papers have a petition dated January 12, 1829, to the Senate and the House of Representatives from the citizens of Magnolia pressing their case for Magnolia to be a port of entry. The petitioners point out that some cargo was "... transported in lighters above Magnolia to Rock Haven, ..."

Post Office records show that a post office was established at Rock Haven in Leon County on November 9, 1827. On March 31, 1828, receipts for the post office totaled \$2.40; it was not a profitable operation and was discontinued on March 27, 1829.

It is likely that anyone who had purchased a lot in Rockhaven and improved it might have stayed on for a time. In the History of Jefferson County, Jerrell H. Shofner states that an attempt was made to set up a German community in Jefferson County. "Embarking on the *Laurel* from Virginia the colony arrived at Rockhaven on April 18, 1833, ... " Unfortunately the people scattered after a few months, and Rockhaven passed into history.

The Byrd Tract and Hammock

by Paul Hamilton

In mid-May the Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge accepted the donation of a 160-acre parcel in the Wakulla Unit, which is surrounded on three-sides by other refuge land. This isn't just any 160 acres, either. The Byrd Tract's wetlands and forests are essentially unchanged since the land was received by the Byrd family in 1858, and it includes about 85% of a nationally-recognized archaeological site, known as Byrd Hammock. The donation was made by Reverend Lila Byrd Brown and her family, who live in Jacksonville.

The Byrd Hammock archaeological site is famous because two prehistoric cultures lived there between 200 and 1,000 AD, leaving two village sites, each with its own burial mound. The two Woodland Period cultures are the Swift Creek and the Wheeden Island. Byrd Hammock is a National Historic Place, and is in the process of being nominated as a National Historic Landmark.

Research at Byrd Hammock is led by staff from the Southeastern Archaeological Center (SEAC) in Tallahassee, which is part of the National Park Service. This past summer, SEAC staff worked with faculty and students from FSU, LSU and other groups to pursue a full-scale analysis of the site, which covers about 15 acres. Exciting finds from this summer include sites of ancient post holes, which may eventually guide reconstruction of village structure. It is hoped that similar summer field studies can be done every year until the site is fully understood. A few archaeologists have worked at the site over the years, from Clarence Moore in 1918, at which time some looting was already reported. Once the site's ownership is transferred to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, it will receive better protection under federal law, courtesy of refuge law enforcement and other staff.

(Note: The correct spelling of the Tract and Archaeological site is Byrd, not Bird, in recognition of Robert Byrd.)



Photo by Lou Kellenberger

James Burnett, Public Lands Conservationist

The Florida Wildlife Federation selected James Burnett as its 2015 Public Lands Conservationist of the Year for his strong commitment to protecting the best of Florida. James received his award at the Federation's 78th Annual Conservation Awards Banquet on June 13, 2015. Award winners are chosen from nominations made to the Federation's board of directors based on their accomplishments on behalf of Florida's fish, wildlife and native habitats.



James Burnett escorts a group of Russian National Park managers on a tour of St. Marks Refuge *Photo Refuge files*

James grew up in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. After graduating from North Carolina State University, James began his career in wildlife management in a variety of positions before accepting a forestry position with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

Subsequent positions included a stint as a Fire Management Officer at Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, Deputy Manager of Noxubee NWR in Mississippi, and Regional Office positions as private lands program coordinator and deputy refuge supervisor for Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi.

James returned to St. Marks NWR in 1997 as the sixth manager in the history of this iconic refuge. St. Vincent NWR was administratively coupled with the St. Marks NWR in 2006 and James assumed responsibility for both areas. In 2014, the North Florida National Wildlife Refuge Complex was created and James was selected as the new manager. This large complex includes nine refuges extending across Florida's Big Bend from St. Vincent NWR in Apalachicola Bay to Egmont and Passage Key NWRs in Tampa Bay.

One of the missions of the North Florida refuges is to conserve migratory birds and endangered species as well as advancing the task of "connecting people with nature," especially getting children outdoors. With much help from staff, friends, and volunteers, the refuges under James's management meet their responsibilities.

Congratulations James!

September to December 2015 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.

First Sunday at the Refuge—Meets at 2:00 p.m. in the Education Building next to the Visitor Center

Digital Photography Class—Meets at 9:00 a.m. in the Education Building on the first Saturday of most months. Call the refuge for dates, topics and to reserve a space. Limit 15. Registration required.

St. Marks Photo Club—Meets on the third Saturday of every month at 9:00 a.m. Contact President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com for information.

Tots on Trails and Families in Nature—Tots on Trails meets on the **second Thursday** and the **second Saturday** of each month 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 (850-925-6121) to sign up.

SEPTEMBER

5 - Photo Class, Lighthouse OPEN 1:30-4

6 - First Sunday at the Refuge, **Bird Brains, with Budd Titlow.**



Featuring excerpts from his new book, *Bird Brains, Inside the Strange Minds of Our Fine Feathered Friends*, this program examines the antics, behaviors, and idiosyncrasies of wild birds from the viewpoint of a professional wildlife biologist and award-winning

nature photographer.

10 - Tots on Trails

12 - Tots on Trails

19 - Photo Club; Wakulla Coastal Cleanup 9 am to noon

20 - e-Tram tour, 1 pm limit 10, **call for a seat**

26 - National Public Lands Day - **FEE FREE** - Volunteer projects; Families in Nature *Coastal Explorer*

OCTOBER

3 - No Photo Class; Lighthouse OPEN 1:30-4; Watercolor Class 1 pm. **Registration required**

4 - First Sunday at the Refuge, **Sex in the Sitta – the Intriguing Life of the Brown-headed Nuthatch with Jim Cox.** Jim leads us on an exploration of the secret and complex life of these intriguing socialites.



8 - Tots on Trails

10 - Tots on Trails; Intro to Fly Fishing Workshop 10 am - 3 pm

11 - **FEE FREE**; The Big Sit! Competitive bird survey at the lighthouse

11-17 - National Wildlife Refuge Week - enjoy your refuge!

12 - Refuge Ramble with volunteer Carol Watkins Babcock, 9:30-11:30 am. Wear comfortable closed shoes and bring bug repellent, water and snack. **Sign-up required**

15 - **St. Marks pools closed to boats**

17 - Photo Club

18 - e-Tram tour, 1 pm, limit 10, **call for a seat**

24 - Monarch Butterfly Festival, Families in Nature

31 - Refuge Ramble with volunteer Carol Watkins Babcock, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm. Ride to the Ghost Town of Port Leon - optional 3.5 mile walk back. Wear comfortable closed shoes and bring bug repellent, water and snack. **Sign-up required**

NOVEMBER

1 - Time changes, refuge gates close at 7 pm;

1 - First Sunday at the Refuge - Jeffery Shanks, **Byrd Hammock Archeology**, a presentation on what treasures the archeologists are finding and what they say about the people who built the mounds.



3-7 - *Fall Archery Hunt, Panacea Unit*

7 - Photo class, Lighthouse OPEN 1:30-4

10 - Refuge Ramble with volunteer Carol Watkins Babcock, 9:30-11:30 am. Wear comfortable closed shoes and bring bug repellent, water and snack. **Sign-up required**

10-14 - *Fall Archery Hunt, Wakulla Unit*

12 - Tots on Trails

14 - Fall Birding Tours, 9 am and 1 pm. **Call for seat**

14 - Tots on Trails

15 - e-Tram tour, 1:00 p.m. limit 10, **call for a seat**

19-21 - *St. Vincent NWR Archery Hunt*

21 - Photo Club

28 - Families in Nature *Scatastic!*

DECEMBER

5 - NO Photo Class, Lighthouse OPEN 1:30-4

6 - First Sunday at the Refuge, **Coming Pass: Florida's Coastal Islands in a Gulf of Change with Susan Cerulean.** Enjoy a presentation of beautiful imagery and stimulating discussion about living on the edge in place and time.



10 - Refuge Ramble with volunteer Carol Watkins Babcock, 9:30-11:30 am. Wear comfortable closed shoes and bring bug repellent, water and snack. **Sign-up required**

10 - Tots on Trails

12 - Winter Birding Tours, 9 am and 1 pm. **Call for seat ***

Refuge Ramble with volunteer Carol Watkins Babcock, 9:30-11:30 am. Bring bug repellent, water, snack and wear comfortable, close-toed walking shoes. **Sign up required.**

12 - Tots on Trails

12-14 - *General Gun Hunt, Wakulla Unit*

12-14 - *Mobility Impaired Hunt, Panacea/Buckhorn Creek*

18-20 - *General Gun Hunt - Panacea Unit*

19 - Photo Club

20 - e-Tram tour, 1:00 p.m. limit 10, **call for a seat**

26 - Families in Nature *Scavenger Hunt*

26-January 3, 2016 - *Small Game Hunt, Wakulla, Panacea*

Check hunt dates before venturing out. Pick up small game hunt permits at the Visitor Center on the St. Marks Unit.

Like us on Facebook

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

Nature Store News by Dee Wilder, Volunteer

The Nature Store carries the new DVD by Sammy Tedder, “Local Waters – Through the Seasons,” filmed along the Sopchoppy River, the Florida Panhandle and the Big Bend Coast of North Florida – photography and music by Sammy Tedder. This stunning one-hour film highlights the ecological diversity and abundance of life in North Florida while the narration and music is original Sammy Tedder. His First Sunday presentation was standing room only!

NEW BOOKS:

Constellations Activity Book, by Ryan Jacobson and Shane Nitzsche. This comprehensive and fun book educates young reader with short stories, coloring activities, and drawing opportunities. Flash cards help with naming constellations by sight. Space enthusiasts will enjoy the help on how to find the constellations and the mythology behind each one.

Younger children will be entertained by a book about space and the planets, *What’s Out There?* by Lynn Wilson. This easy-to-understand and dramatically illustrated book was endorsed by the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium in Concord, New Hampshire.

Coming to Pass: Florida’s Coastal Islands in a Gulf of Change, a memoir by Susan Cerulean. The author chronicles Florida’s

beautiful coast as it once was, as it is now, and as it may be as the sea level rises. This special book is illustrated with images from the prizewinning nature photographer David Moynihan and is a reflection of our spiritual relationship and responsibilities to the world that holds us. Be sure to attend Susan’s First Sunday presentation on December 6.

Beginner’s Guide to Shorebirds, by Donald and Lillian Stokes. This easy-to-use Field Guide contains everything you need to identify all common North American shorebirds, whether along sandy beaches, rocky shores, tidal flats, lakes, or near rivers. Also included are range maps showing spring and fall migration patterns.

Invasive and Non-native Plants You Should Know, University of Florida IFAS Extension. This handy set of laminated recognition cards on Northwest Florida plant species identifies native, non-native and invasive plants by appearance, leaves, flowers and fruit with full color photos. The cards also contain an explanation of the ecological threat to the environment for each invasive plant.

Trees: North and Central Florida, by University of Florida IFAS Extension. This field guide to 140 tree species in North and Central Florida is an excellent reference tool for proper tree identification.

We have a New Name!

by Betty Hamilton, Friends President

After extensive discussion, the Board recommended to the members at last spring’s Annual Meeting that we adopt a new name and do business as Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge. The member approved this change, and our **dba** name has since been registered with the state. The reason for making this change is that “Association” does not as clearly communicate the group’s function as does ‘Friends’. Indeed, the support groups of national and state parks and other wildlife refuges are often named Friends for this very reason. Our new name will appear in different places over the coming months. Our corporate name, the St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., will continue to be used for certain legal documents. This should reduce the confusion of refuge visitors who are not aware that there is a support group they can join.

The Lighthouse Fundraising Committee, chaired by Board member, Tom Baird, wrote a grant proposal to the Duke Energy Foundation last spring, requesting funds to help with lighthouse preservation. Specifically, the grant asked for funds to restore and preserve the Lantern Room, which houses the Fresnel lens and sits atop the light tower. The room is made of metal and glass. Decades of weathering storms, extreme, heat and cold, and salt has corroded the metal and broken the windows over the years. In late July, the Duke Energy Foundation contributed \$7,500 toward restoration of the room. The lantern room may be removed

from the top of the lighthouse for repairs and preservation, possibly later this fall.

Tom Baird, Treasurer John Haines, and others worked very hard to secure an appropriation this year to help repair the lighthouse, and they came so close. But in the final hours Governor Scott vetoed virtually all historic preservation projects in the budget. Your Lighthouse Fundraising Committee will try again next year. Please join me in thanking these folks for their heroic efforts to secure funding for the lighthouse’s repair.

FYI: If you are a member of SMRA, the Friends, you usually receive an email update around the middle of each month (except July and August when we take a break). If you are not receiving it, check your email spam/trash folder and make sure we have your correct email address.



Robin Will, Chris Weber, John Haines, and Betty Hamilton accept the donation from Duke Energy representative Katrina Cochran. *Photo by Lou Kellenberger*

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

PO Box 68
St. Marks, FL 32355
850-925-6121

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/st_marks/
<http://www.stmarksrefuge.org>
www.facebook.com/SMSVNWRS

"Introduction to Fly Tying"

1-day workshop on Oct. 10, 2015 focusing on the art of fly tying

Application available at
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/st_marks/
Due by Sept. 23, 2015 by 4 pm.

Submit application with a brief essay on why you would like to attend. Candidates will be selected based on commitment to learning about conservation. Each participant will take home a fly tying kit provided by Clifford Cummings and his family.



- **When:** Oct. 10, 2015
- 10 am – 3 pm
- **Who can apply:** anyone 10-15 years old
- **Where:** St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in Barred Owl Room
- **Free**

Activities & Topics May Include:

- Introduction to fly tying
- Knot tying
- Casting and line control

For more information contact Lori Nicholson at lori_nicholson@fws.gov or 850-925-6121

St. Marks Refuge Association membership form

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____
E-mail _____

Individual	\$25
Family/Couple	\$35
Non-profit Group	\$50
Supporter	\$60
Contributor	\$100
Lifetime	\$500
Corporation	\$500
Patron	\$1000



Make checks payable to St. Marks Refuge Association and mail to St. Marks Refuge Association, PO Box 368, St. Marks, FL 32355 or drop materials to the 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.