

# Scherer Delight Newsletter

Oscar Scherer State Park



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## From the President:



Last year, 14 of our volunteers took a day off for a trip to Tosohatchee State Reserve, located east of Orlando on the St. Johns River, where they toured the reserve by airboat – a first for all, and an awesome adventure. This year, they and other volunteers took the boat to Caladesi Island State Park for a tour and lunch as guests of Bill Gruber, a former ranger at Oscar Scherer.

Also throughout the year, many luncheons, pancake breakfasts and ice cream socials were hosted by our friends who visit each winter: the campground hosts and campground volunteers.

The 38 volunteers who worked at the **All Trails Hike** in January helped make it a huge success. Everyone had a great time and got lots of fresh air and exercise. Just talking to the hikers at the rest stops and afterwards proved most uplifting. What a great bunch of environment- and health-conscious people we have living in the area.

Then came the **Scrub Jay 5k**, run in conjunction with the Manasota Track Club and sponsored by Lee Wetherington. Watching 452 runners taking off at the same time gives a person goose bumps. Who needs to go to Boston?

In 2006, we were nominated for several state and district level volunteer awards in six categories, and we earned the top state award in two of them. With over 80 CSOs statewide that's quite an accomplishment. We are very proud of our volunteers.

Be sure to read more about these events later in this newsletter.

Getting involved in YOUR organization and its numerous activities, tours, environmental projects and social events will prove most rewarding for you and your family. We can give you a link that's not on your computer – a link to a great Bunch of People doing a whole Bunch of Good Things for a huge Bunch of Personal Satisfaction, and all of them are willing to share their expertise and friendship with YOU.

Outings, gatherings, and working together in the park have allowed us to apply life experiences, gain new knowledge about ourselves and the world we share, and form friendships that will last a lifetime.

WANT TO JOIN US? Give me a call at 426-7306.

Bob Sendrey

## From the Park Manager:



It's scrub jay nesting season! Over time, scrub jays have evolved to very exact conditions. They are a fire-adapted species, living in a fire dependent community; therefore, knowing that fire in the form of lightening is inevitable they nest early so that the fledglings are able to evade the flames that could wipe them out if they were still confined to a nest.

Scrub Jay eggs are laid in late February or early March, usually four eggs, one a day, and incubation starts on the fourth day. Because of this, all the chicks hatch on the same day which reduces competition among the little ones. The entire extended family helps bring food so the mother can feed the babies. Usually they are up and out of the nest within two weeks which prepares them for the first dry storms of spring – the ones with lightening but little rain. This is a conditioned response to environmental conditions of the past several thousand years.

Who starts these fires if lightening does not? We do! The staff has been active with their prescribed fire responsibilities. In fact, the Park Service just celebrated a milestone of over *one million acres burned*. This park is getting famous for “starting fires.”

Another crucial spark comes from our Friends. Like the scrub jays, the Friends adapt to the needs of the park, whether it's splitting firewood, fighting for wildlife corridors, building bridges, hosting programs, or staffing the nature center. Over the past year the entire group has been very active, supportive, and helpful.

It makes me proud to be a small part of this team. I'm especially proud of the Friends recent state level awards. Building the observation bench at Big Lake has been named the *CSO Project of the Year*. This is the second year in a row that our CSO has won this award (for different projects). And we're honored that one of our younger volunteers, Bobby Stambaugh, was named the state *Youth Volunteer of the Year*.

Come out to the park, walk one of our award-winning trails and you might see Scrub Jays in action. Visit often and enjoy your park. Don't forget that communication is two-directional so don't hesitate to call the park or me to ask questions or give information.

John Roche

## ALL TRAILS HIKE ATTRACTS HIKERS OF ALL AGES

The Friends decided to try a new event this year. The concept was to connect all the trails into one long hike of about 12 miles – see all of Oscar Scherer in one day. We'd provide water, juice, and fruit every two miles, and cook hot dogs for the hikers halfway through. They wouldn't have to complete the whole course, and could hike at their own pace. At the end, ice cream sundaes for all. Charge ten bucks for the whole thing and give a free entry to the park as well as a discount on Friends merchandise. How many did we think would show up... 25, maybe 50? Wow, were we ever wrong! On January 13<sup>th</sup> we opened the gates at 7 a.m. and people started pouring in...

By 8 a.m. we had 280 registered hikers, 131 of whom would complete the entire route!!! 28 hikers were under the age of 16. The two most senior finishers were each aged 84, and the youngest finisher (under his own power) was just 6 years old. The youngest aided finisher (using parent power) was 5 months. Four dogs also completed the course.

The route passed through the Nature Center area three times which allowed a hiker to either call it a day or stop for another hot dog! By the way, 440 hot dogs and 13 gallons of ice cream were consumed.

38 volunteers contributed a huge amount of time and effort to make the event a success. Combining entry fees and merchandise sales, we hiked away with close to \$3,000 for the Friends and, in turn, the Park. Most importantly, a vast majority of the hikers had either not been to the park before or had only limited exposure to the hiking trails.

Our volunteers heard the same refrain over and over again: "What a beautiful park. I had no idea, and I live right in this area. I can't wait to come back."

**AMERICORPS AT OSCAR SCHERER.** Have you noticed those two young, energetic workers removing exotics, participating in prescribed burns, working on trails, and performing myriad other duties at the park?

**Lynn Crossfield** and **Donnie Cogdon** are our latest Americorps workers, and are they ever doing a great job! AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency created to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and to their nation. Full-time members who complete their service earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of \$4,725 to pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans.

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**P** Sandwiche**W**d in between the All Trails Hike in January and the Scrub Jay 5K in February was the **Mystic Eagle Pow Wow** at Oscar Scherer.

**W** The Friends have always provided a tremendous amount support over three full days to the Pow Wow by collecting tolls, parking cars, and selling merchandise at the Nature Center, and this year was no different. Thanks to **Jim Breidster** and a long list of volunteers who helped make this event successful.

## CSO NOMINATIONS AND AWARDS

There are currently more than 80 Friends groups supporting state parks throughout Florida by providing assistance in numerous ways – educating visitors, hosting events, raising funds for specific park projects, and building those projects to name a few. Each year the Department of Environmental Protection acknowledges volunteer efforts at both state and district levels in six categories: Volunteer Group of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, CSO of the Year, Project of the Year, Event of the Year, and Youth of the Year.

We are proud to announce that in 2006 the Friends of Oscar Scherer ran away from the competition by winning two of the six categories.

- The 2006 **State Youth of the Year** was 15-year-old



**Bobby Stambaugh** (left). Bobby, who is a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Venice High School, spent last summer and most of his available free time during the year removing exotics, splitting firewood for the campers, and participating in several construction projects in the park. His attitude,

willingness to work hard and overall desire to improve Oscar Scherer for visitors made him a clear choice for this honor.

Incidentally, Bobby is the second youth to win this award at Oscar Scherer. In 2003, Natalie Steves also was named Youth Volunteer of the Year.

- The 2006 **State Project of the Year** was awarded to the Friends of Oscar Scherer for the construction of the Observation Bench over Big Lake (below).



This project was completely designed and funded by the Friends as an ADA facility, and constructed with all-volunteer labor. The observation bench provides a wonderful opportunity to observe birdlife along the Yellow Trail and is considered to be the premier destination hike in the park.

At the district level in the same six categories, we are equally proud of our nominees for:

-**Volunteer of the Year: Ed Dannenberg,**

**John Mongelli, and Russ Delaney,** each of whom volunteered in excess of 500 hours during 2006 in addition to their efforts in many other areas;

-**Event of the Year: the 2006 Scrub Jay 5K** which raised \$8000 for the Friends;

-**Project of the year: construction of the suspension bridge;**

-**CSO of the Year: the Friends of Oscar Scherer.**

*Wow, are we ever proud of our volunteers and their efforts!!*

## BIRD POINTS

by Mark Leggett

On Birds and Birding in Oscar Scherer State Park

### #1 Wood Stork

When thinking of storks, my mind formerly wandered to The Netherlands, chimney tops, and the delivering of babies. But now I can see Wood Storks flying high over Oscar Scherer State Park. Quite a spectacle!

Wood Storks are the largest wading birds that breed in the US. Standing some three feet high, these native birds have white body plumage. Particularly distinctive is their black, unfeathered head and neck.

Possessing a large bill, thick and slightly decurved, Wood Storks forage in shallow water. Locating prey primarily by touch, their bill snaps shut when making contact. Ouch! Fresh water fish are their main bill of fare, although baby alligators are on their list as well.

Wood Storks can nest as high as 80 feet or more in cypress trees, or 10-15 feet high over water in mangroves. Flimsy platforms of sticks make up their large nests. Three to four eggs, bigger than tennis balls, are laid.

An indicator species, Wood Storks tell us much of the quality of our environment. Today, Wood Storks are an endangered species with fewer than 10,000 birds remaining. Most of the decline is due to the disruption of water flow and destruction of habitat in southern Florida. Worthy of thought!

Resources used include Websites of the USGS, Everglades National Park and the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory/University of Georgia. I also relied upon Kaufman's Lives of North American Birds.

*Mark Leggett is on the board of the Sarasota Audubon Society, a member of the Friends of Oscar Scherer. He leads bird trips at Oscar Scherer State Park every Thursday at 8am, January through April, from the Nature Center. He may be reached at [bluegrosbeak2@yahoo.com](mailto:bluegrosbeak2@yahoo.com)*



Artwork: John Costin, Gainesville

**Can it be that time again already?** April might bring showers but it also takes away a huge number of our volunteers who, for reasons unknown to the rest of us, head north at this time of year. Campground hosts, campground volunteers, and winter residents in the community contribute Soooo much on behalf of the Friends – the pancake breakfasts, multiple construction projects, staffing of the Nature Center, volunteering at events such as the All Trails Hike, the PowWow, the 5K race ... the list goes on and on. How would the park survive without your talents and energy?

**Rest up over the summer and hurry back!**

## Scrub Jay 5K Sets Record

Thanks to the 100+ volunteers who supported the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Scrub Jay 5K on February 18<sup>th</sup> we set all kinds of records! 452 runners competed in the 5K race and another 60 participated in the one mile fun run/walk – our largest group ever!

Lee Wetherington Homes was once again our major sponsor and presented a check for \$5,000, which underwrote the cost of the race. The Manasota Track Club and the Herald Tribune combined once again for significant administrative and advertising support, while New Balance Sarasota, Einstein Bagels, Starbucks, Maverick Coffee, Coca-Cola, Nokomis Groves, Smoothie King, Wild Bird Center, Save-A-Lot, Albertsons, and Flower Bakery provided race and food support. Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Sweetbay and Publix all donated gift cards that allowed us to supplement the food and drinks we provided to runners after the race. Additionally, we received over \$1,100 in gift certificates from local merchants.

When all the dust settled, the Friends walked away with a net profit of more than \$8,000. These funds will be used in the park to enhance facilities, improve the trails, and help provide for the protection of this priceless resource.

## Coming Events

**April 7<sup>th</sup>** "Fishing Has No Boundaries" and "Kids Fishing Derby"

**April 22<sup>nd</sup>** Earth Day Celebration  
2007 will be the 18<sup>th</sup> celebration of Earth Day at Oscar Scherer – that's quite a run in anyone's book. There will be plenty of activities going on to let everyone in on the fun: guided scrub walks, a photo contest, a silent auction, lots of booths from local environmentally-oriented groups, kids games, food, music, and much more all day long. Plan to come early and stay for the day. You won't be disappointed!

### A THOUGHT TO PONDER FROM PARK MANAGER JOHN ROCHE:

*Albert Schweitzer said, "You must give some time to your fellow men. Even if it's a little thing, do something for others – something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it."*



Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc.  
 1843 S. Tamiami Trail  
 Osprey, Florida 34229

Great people having fun doing good things for the environment and Florida at Oscar Scherer State Park. To learn about volunteer opportunities at the park, join us at one of our monthly meetings with no commitment. Meetings are held at 6:00 pm on the second Monday of each month in the Nature Center. If you'd like more information, call the park at (941) 483-5956.

Use this form to join The Friends of Oscar Scherer and/or adopt a scrub jay

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Dues**

- Youth \$10
- Individual \$20
- Household \$25
- Business Friend \$100
- Corporate Sponsor \$500
- Other donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Number in household

\_\_\_\_ Scrub Jay Adoption(s) @ \$25

**Send with check to:**  
 Friends of Oscar Scherer Park  
 1843 South Tamiami Trail  
 Osprey FL 34229

A copy of the official registration (SC-00263) and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services by calling toll-free 1-800-435-7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. We are a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code, so your dues and donations may be deductible. Percent of each contribution retained by any professional solicitor: Zero. Percent of each contribution retained by our organization: 100.

*Scherer Delight* is published quarterly by the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc., 1843 S. Tamiami Trail, Osprey, Florida 34229, to provide its members and the public with information about Oscar Scherer State Park in Osprey, Florida and the importance of its natural environment in Southwest Florida. Content is by Friends' members and park staff, unless otherwise specified.

Florida State Parks are in various stages of accessibility and are working to improve access to services and facilities. Should you require assistance, please contact the individual park office as soon as possible. Sometimes as many as ten working days may be necessary to schedule a particular accommodation. Service animals for visitors with disabilities are welcome in all areas of state parks.

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