

Scherer Delight Newsletter

Oscar Scherer State Park



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From the Incoming President:



This is my first opportunity to thank you for allowing me to follow in the footsteps of all the great past-presidents of the Friends—**Sally Braem, Fran Adams, Helen Janssen, Laurel Schiller, and Bob Sendrey**. I realize this will not be an easy task.

The Friends have come a long way from our beginnings 18 years ago. During that time, we've forged a reputation for providing great support to the park, and for conducting first-class programs for visitors. I'm happy to report that the future looks bright for the Friends, even in spite of the economic conditions we are all facing.

Over the past few years, our major goals have been to improve the trail system in the park, maintain and improve the Lake Osprey picnic area and Nature Center, staff the Nature Center seven days a week from 8 AM to 3 PM, and create programs that educate visitors about Oscar Scherer State Park. Our next effort will be a complete overhaul of the Lake Osprey area. The state has approved our request for a **Partnership in the Park (PIP)** project that is designed to increase the size of Lake Osprey and create a littoral shelf for small fish, to plant native water plants for their protection, to build an accessible-for-all-boardwalk around the lake, and to further revitalize the beach area.

This is an enormous undertaking which will certainly take a while to complete. Although the state will share in the funding, a major contribution will come from funds that have been provided by **Lee Wetherington Homes** and earmarked for this project. We also have received grants from the **Kiwanis Club** and the **Fish and Wildlife Commission**, and we have been consistently setting aside funds from events the Friends have conducted. Even with all that, we will still need to apply for additional grant money from the community to make this project a reality.

As our season winds to a close and park activities slow down a little, I can't help but reflect on the enormous talent and sharing that our volunteers offer. The 17,000 hours we volunteered last year just about equal staff hours, which means that volunteers contributed half the work-load at Oscar Scherer. It's easy to be president of this group: I just have to stay out of the way!

If you'd like to be a part of this great group, contribute to a worthwhile effort, and really feel good about yourself, come out and join us. We need your help. Call me at **941-685-7454**.

Russ Delaney

From the Park Manager:



Spring has sprung, and the park is hopping to keep up with all the new and old things going on. Let's look at some of the recent adventures at Oscar Scherer State Park.

First and foremost, we made it through the season with flying colors. Volunteers, hosts, and staff all worked hard, and worked together, to ensure that the park continues to move forward. Teamwork

keeps us focused on our mission to provide a clean, safe, and engaging park for our visitors while managing some of the most unique resources in the area.

The CSO made major strides with the 3rd Annual All Trails Hike and the 9th Annual Scrub Jay 5K Race & One-mile Fun Run/Walk. These events anchored our status in the community as THE place for outdoor recreation. The Friends have sponsored new programs this year, while the established ones continue to wow the masses. Of course, all the staff do their part too. Campfire programs, canoeing adventures, and trail walks get people introduced to the wonders of nature, the role of the ranger, and the mission of the Park Service.

We have acquired and outfitted a tram, and hope the Friends will be able to run some tours through the park. This is a great opportunity to increase public awareness of the park's mission and raise some additional funds for the CSO without tying up park staff.

Tony, our assistant park manager, got some burning done after the scrub had a lot of mechanical treatment, thanks to a grant from **The Nature Conservancy**. The most recent Scrub Report by the biology staff reflects the work of the staff and volunteers to keep the park resource management program progressing.

I would like to introduce our new AmeriCorps member, **Carie Pigeon**. She is taking over the exotic plant removal program in the park. After the departure of **Lynn Crossfield** (who did a great job last year, and left lots of notes) Carie is holding her own in the onslaught. Welcome, Carie!

I really cannot thank all of you enough for everything you do. In fact, our most recent recognition has come in the form of **The Davis Productivity Awards** (details later in this newsletter). As Dr. Albert Schweitzer said, "*Those among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.*"

Now I guess it's time to say so long to our winter volunteers who are soon heading north. See you in the fall, and thanks for all you have done to make this another great year!

John Roche

Scrub Jay 5K the Best Ever...

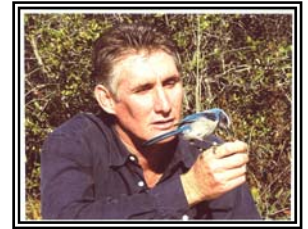
Every year we say this and every year it's true. The 9th Annual Scrub Jay 5K was **the best ever!** We had perfect weather, a record number of runners, a superb course to run, and plenty of food to eat afterward. A great job by **Gaylon Peters** and **George Ulrich** and their huge cast of volunteers!

Our sincere thanks to the **Lee Wetherington Foundation** for once again underwriting the major costs of the race; and heartfelt thanks also to the many local merchants who stepped up to support us, despite the economic conditions, with food and prizes. We raised over \$9,000 for the Friends, all of which will go directly into the park.

When you are out in the community, stop by **Einstein Bagels, Gecko's, New Balance, Nokomis Groves, Target, Save-A-Lot,** and/or **Wild Bird Center**, and tell them you appreciate their contributions to the Friends and the park.

Scrub-Jay Way

by Jon Thaxton



What's in a name?

Just like a genealogist who researches the origin and history of human names, an ornithologist can learn a great deal about a given species of bird by looking no further than the bird's name.

The Florida Scrub-Jay was first described in the eighteenth century (1795) by Bosc, more than one hundred years before the Western Scrub-Jay became known to science. Originally the "Florida Jay," as it was then called, was considered a separate species from its western cousins. The early scientific name for the Florida Jay was *Garrulus floridants*, which translates as "chattering bird from Florida" (from the Latin word *garrire* "to chatter"). These early name references can be seen in the 1937 James Audubon print of the *Florida Jay*.

In 1945, all Scrub-Jays in the Americas were considered to be of the same genus, *Aphelocoma*, and species *coerulescens*. *Aphelocoma* is from the Greek words *apheles* meaning "smooth or plain" and *kome* meaning "hair." This "smooth plain hair" characteristic was a distinction from other jays, which typically have crests on their heads. At that time, there were thirteen varieties or sub-species of *Aphelocoma coerulescens*. All but *Aphelocoma c. coerulescens*, the Florida race, were located in the western United States and Mexico. The common name for the "Florida Jay" was then changed to the "Florida Scrub-Jay".

In 1995, after extensive research had been conducted on the Florida Scrub-Jay—including behavioral, physical and DNA characteristics—the Scrub-Jays of North America were divided into three separate and distinct species. The western-most species, *A. insularis* (Greek for "island inhabitant", common name "Island Scrub-Jay") is restricted to the island of Santa Cruz, off the coast of California. The most widely distributed and plentiful of the three species of American Scrub-Jays is *A. californica*. It now includes all of the remaining eleven sub-species. The common name for *A. californica* is "Western Scrub-Jay", *A. coerulescens* being restricted to the well-drained ridges of peninsular Florida.

Florida Scrub-Jay in French is *Geai a gorge blanche*, meaning *jay with a white throat*, and in Spanish it is *Urraca azulejo del Florida*, meaning *blue magpie*.

Provided the evolutionary process is allowed to continue (there is some doubt with the present rate of scrub habitat loss, especially in coastal populations), the Florida Scrub-Jay could be split into four sub-species. Scientists have already documented variations in size, vocalizations, and DNA in the now isolated regional populations. Imagine some day having Florida Scrub-Jay sub-species *alantica* for the east coast jays, *woolfendenii* (after Glen Woolfenden) for the central ridge group, *ocalia* for the Ocala region and *manasotei* for the Gulf Coast Florida Scrub-Jay population!

In 1993, County Commissioner Jon Thaxton began a series of articles on the Florida Scrub-Jay that appeared in the Friends newsletter. With his permission and assistance, they have been updated and reprinted in the Scherer Delight Newsletter.

We Love Awards!

Oscar Scherer State Park staff and volunteers recently received **Davis Productivity Award Certificates of Commendation** for the **Oscar Scherer Fenceline Security Team** (which cleared firebreak and mended fences with neighboring development), and for our **Volunteer Recruitment Team** (recruited volunteers to enhance operations at Oscar Scherer State Park).

The Prudential-Davis Productivity Awards are made possible through the generosity of Prudential, as Anchor Sponsor, and the vision of the late J.E. Davis and A.D. Davis, co-founders of Winn-Dixie Stores Inc. and co-founders of Florida TaxWatch. Since 1989, the Davis Productivity Award program has publicly recognized and rewarded state employees and work units whose work significantly and measurably increases productivity and promotes innovation to improve the delivery of state services and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses.



Legacy Trail Anniversary

Can it really be one year since the Legacy Trail opened? On March 28th everyone celebrated the occasion at Oscar Scherer with a day of fun and lots of activities aimed at kids from face painting to free bike helmets to train rides. The Friends were actively involved with an information booth, free coffee and doughnuts, and "Oscar's Grill" was in full swing with hot dogs and chips. There is no doubt that the Legacy Trail has drawn a new group of visitors to the park and we welcome them!

A Busy Season Draws to a Close

Wow! What a season it has been at Oscar Scherer. It seems that just yesterday we were wishing everyone a Happy New Year and now our programs are winding down after a spectacular season. In the past three months we have put on the 3rd Annual All Trails Hike, the 9th Annual Scrub Jay 5K (our largest fundraiser ever), and supported the Native American Art Festival, the Sarasota Folk Festival, and the Legacy Trail Anniversary.

Additionally, our volunteer members have conducted aerobics classes three times a week, hosted a weekly Camper Coffee to help welcome and orient visitors, hosted jam sessions of Old Tyme music for the community, served thousands of blueberry pancakes and sausages at the Tuesday pancake breakfasts, led weekly bird walks and scrub walks, entertained hundreds at the Music in the Park series (complemented with ice cream sundaes), conducted three different children's programs on Saturday mornings to introduce children to the joys of the outdoors and the park, and conducted a church service on Sunday mornings. Whew!

Your campground host members not only maintained the campground to the highest standard but were involved anytime help was needed in the park. Campground volunteers and volunteers from the community split firewood for the campers, removed exotics, operated the park's equipment, replaced electrical and water lines, made needed repairs to equipment, completed woodworking efforts, and could be found working in the office and at the Ranger Station augmenting park staff. And, of course, they staffed the Nature Center seven days a week.

Do you wonder that our volunteers will be sorely missed over the next eight months?



L: Wood splitters

*R: Carl and Betty Ross
Old Tyme Music Makers*



*L: Scrub Jay 5K
volunteers*



Coming Events

Earth Day is just around the corner. The 20th anniversary of Earth Day will be celebrated at Oscar Scherer State Park on **Sunday, April 19th**. Free entry to the park, lots of activities for the kids, great music, food and tours will mark this festivity. Plan to make a day of it, and enjoy all that the park has to offer.



Summer Programs.

Although many of the programs take a vacation as the season ends, several will continue year round.

The **Ranger-led Canoe Ride** continues on **Wednesday mornings** at 8:30. Simply arrive at the park about 8 AM, sign up for a canoe, get your equipment, and meet the ranger at the canoe launch at 8:30. It's a great way to explore South Creek.

The **Camper Coffee** has moved to **Saturday mornings** (8-10 AM) in the Nature Center. The Friends provide coffee, tea, doughnuts and juice and lots of information about what to do in the park. Ride in from the Legacy Trail, drive in from outside, or wander over from the campground to get acquainted with the park and the Nature Center.

The **Nature Center** is open every day 8:00 AM–3:00 PM, and don't forget that we have **free Internet**. This is the place to go to get oriented in the park. Our volunteers know the park, which trails to hike, activities that are going on, what local places to eat, etc. You name it and they will try to make your visit the best it can be.

Children's programs will be held every Saturday starting at 9:00 AM. Join **JT** and his friends while they conduct three programs: a **Nature Detective** search for animal tracks, **paper making**, and **fish painting**. Each program is designed to explore a different aspect of the park or demonstrate a skill that young children can master in a short time.



*Sarasota Christian School 1st
Graders with Fish Paintings.*

<http://www.friendsofoscarscherer.com/>

Don't forget to visit our Web site. We are still drawing rave reviews. Check it out for all the latest info.



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.

Send form with check to:
 Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc.
 1843 South Tamiami Trail
 Osprey, Florida 34229

Name(s) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Annual Dues

- Youth \$10
 - Individual \$20
 - Household \$25
 ___ Number in household
 - Business Friend \$100
 - Corporate Sponsor \$500
 - Other donation \$ _____
- Scrub Jay Adoption(s) @ \$25

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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