



FootNotes *



* Newsletter of the Highlanders Chapter, Florida Trail Association July – August 2015 Volume 16, Issue 4

Mission of the Florida Trail Association

The Florida Trail Association develops, maintains, protects and promotes a network of hiking trails throughout the state, including the unique Florida National Scenic Trail. Together with our partners we provide opportunities for the public to hike, engage in outdoor recreation, participate in environmental education and contribute to meaningful volunteer work.

Highlanders Nature Notes

When I was a young man traveling north with my father on I-75 near Gainesville one morning, a small animal loped across the road in front of our car that looked, for all the world, like a **monkey**. Its movements were very monkey-like and its color was a light brown or tan, with a dark, chocolate-brown (almost black) face. We were traveling at high speed so we didn't get more than a glimpse of it before it was passed. We both saw it together and both had the same reaction, "Was that a monkey?" We'd been traveling from South FL to attend a wedding in Pensacola and thought, perhaps, that we'd been driving too long and were beginning to hallucinate. What *did* we see?!

There have been numerous similar reports to the FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, as well as calls to the Trout Lake Nature Center staff. People are certain that they've seen a monkey. Possibly an escaped or released pet, they presume. What they are most likely seeing isn't a monkey at all, but a Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger*, which means 'black squirrel'). Some Fox Squirrels are almost completely black, but most in Central Florida are brown and black, always with a white muzzle and forehead and white ears. All

of the ones I've seen around here in the past 18 years have been brown with the black, mask-like face. Some people even refer to them as "monkey-faced squirrels." As mentioned, they certainly have some monkey-like movements, especially while running. However, once you have the opportunity to observe them for a while you'll begin to see the stronger resemblance they bear to their cousin, the more plentiful Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), which is only half as big.

The subspecies that lives around us is called the Sherman's Fox Squirrel. They prefer the Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) flatwoods along with mixed forests of Longleaf Pine and Turkey Oak (*Quercus laevis*). This is also the habitat of the Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) and Wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*). These dry, open, sandhill areas have been greatly reduced by development, so the Fox Squirrel is seldom seen. The one location where I've found them the most consistently is Wekiwa Springs State Park in Apopka. There are several remaining pockets of Longleaf Pine there, but I've never seen more than one at a time on any occasion (they tend to

be more solitary than the Gray Squirrel and have wider territories). Due to their declining populations they have been listed as threatened.

So if you catch a glimpse of a monkey-like creature crossing your path, take a second look, and enjoy watching this unique animal. You might not see another one for a long while.

-Mike Barnett

Sources:

Brown, Larry N., Ph.D. *Mammals of Florida*. Miami: Windward Publishing, Inc., 1997.

Gingerich, Dr. Jerry Lee. *Florida's Fabulous Mammals*. Tampa: World Publications, 1994.

Green, Deborah. *Wekiwa Springs State Park Habitat Tour*. Longwood, FL: Deborah Green, 1994.

Tequila, Stan. *Mammals of Florida: Field Guide*. Cambridge, MN: Adventure Publications, Inc., 2010.



Tubing Party & Weenie Roast, May 19. Leila, Suzy, Shirley, Willy & Janet. Photo by Howard Pospesel

Chair's Notes Triple Good News

Much of the news we get about our state, nation, and the world is seriously depressing. This column offers an antidote; it consists entirely of good news about our chapter.

- (1) I'll start with some wonderful news. You may recall that one year ago Michael Ring made a very generous donation to Highlanders Chapter to honor his mother. This gift was used to purchase a badly needed DR field mower. We mowed trail with it all winter.

Now Michael has made *another* donation to us in the amount of \$2,500! These contributions are by far the largest two gifts ever made to the chapter. The chapter board will devote much of its July meeting to formulating a plan for the best use that can be made of this gift. The board's recommendations will be brought to the July chapter meeting so that our members can make a final decision on the matter.

- (2) The second piece of good news is that our chapter is growing in size. Between June 1, 2014, and June 1, 2015, our numbers increased from 138 to 167, an increase of 21%.

Why is growth a good thing? (a) Some of our new members will join in the chapter's work, helping on maintenance hikes, for example, and some will take on chapter jobs. (b) The FTA mission includes *providing opportunities to hike* and *spreading the word about protecting our environment*; having an expanded membership contributes toward reaching these goals. (c) Through their dues new members support both the state FTA and the chapter financially (but the chapter for one year only given new rules from the state), and in coming years some will make additional donations to our chapter. (d) Some of our new members will reach out and bring yet more people into our group.

What explains this sudden spurt of growth? The vast majority of our new members live in the Villages. The number of Sumter County members more than doubled in the past year, increasing from 28 to 58. Lake County members increased by one in this period. (Don't misread this statistic. It does not mean we added just one Lake Countian to our rolls; it means that the number of new members from Lake County exceeded by one the number of Lake Countians who failed to renew their membership.) And why are Villagers joining Highlanders Chapter? It's simple: our Villagers members are recruiting them. For example, a number of Highlanders who live in the Villages helped staff the chapter table at the Villages' *Outdoor Expo 2015* held in late winter.

Without a doubt the most successful recruiter we have is John Grob. John leads many Highlanders hikes that appeal to Villagers; in the winter months he does this on a weekly basis. During these hikes John tells the participants about our organization and stresses to them the importance of signing up and joining our effort. And a number do just that.

John is ably assisted in his recruiting efforts by Christine Pena. And I would be remiss if I did not point out that Bob Schultz, another Villager, has been actively recruiting for our chapter for more than the last ten years.

In January Kathy Lamb assumed the newly created post of *Outreach Coordinator*, and she has been working hard in this capacity ever since. The two main objectives of this job are (a) to inform the public about who the Highlanders are and what we do, and (b) to identify potential new members and provide those leads to our Membership Chair, Mary Ellen Milton. One important mechanism for achieving both of these goals is to "work" the outdoor-oriented festivals. In the past we have done this on a hit-or-miss basis with different members coordinating the effort at different times. From now on, under Kathy's leadership, we will take a more organized approach to staffing festivals, and she will make sure we miss no major festivals. This work will contribute to our further growth.

- (3) Another area in which the chapter is moving ahead is photography, which can be an important tool in our work. In January two of our members, Judy Leavers and Diane Dammiller, became our first "official" photographers. Since that time a photographic record has been made of fifteen Highlanders activities.

Our newsletter provided the first sign of this development. Beginning with the January/February issue of *Footnotes** we have used photos to illustrate stories and make the newsletter more visually appealing.

In June we began posting chapter photos on a *Flickr* photo-sharing Internet site which we have named *Highlanders FTA*. By mid-June over 200 pictures had been posted in eleven albums. During the coming weeks more than two hundred additional photos will be added in five more albums.

What's the big deal about chapter photos? First, they are fun; our members can use them to recall pleasant Highlanders outings. Second, these photos will be helpful in our recruiting efforts; they will be featured in our soon-to-appear chapter

brochure and in slide shows we will use at festivals. Third, as already mentioned, we use them in our newsletter. Fourth, our photos have already made their way into the state's electronic newsletter, *E-Blaze*, giving us more visibility in the state group. Fifth, we now have a permanent photographic record of chapter activities that will be saved (on flash drives) by our chapter archivist, Christine Pena. Future Highlanders will have these resources for learning what we were up to "back in the day."

I welcome you to check out our new Flickr photo-sharing site using this link:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/highlanders_fta/albums

—Howard Pospesel



Chapter Picnic, June 25. Bill & Dee. Photo by Judy Leavers.

Help Wanted

We need someone to create and maintain a *Facebook* page for the chapter. If interested, contact Howard.

Activities for July & August 2015

Thursday

July 23, 2015, Highlanders Chapter Monthly Meeting: 6 PM, Leesburg Public Library, 100 E Main Street. Use the entrances on Main Street. Our program will be presented by Bob Schultz, "Three Winter Climbs." Bring a snack to share and your aluminum cans to recycle. Questions? Bobbi Keenan 352-787-8654 or email bobbiszoo@yahoo.com 28.811093 -81.874858

Thursday

August 27, 2015, Highlanders Chapter Summer Picnic: Hickory Point. The park is on Lake Harris & Hwy. 19, between Tavares & Howey-in-the-Hills. From Hwy 19 turn west on Flagship Avenue at the entrance, 28.745985,-81.765867 Bring a cold dish to share & your own drink. Meet at about 5 PM & we will eat at 6 PM. After six there is a \$2 charge per car, before six admission is free. We will have plates and silverware. Contact Mary Ellen Milton for more details, 352-357-3723 or E-mail at mem32735@aol.com

Early September, 2015. Movie Party: Attend a showing of the movie "A Walk in the Woods" and join us after the movie for an optional meal in a nearby restaurant. This movie about hiking the Appalachian Trail stars Robert Redford and Nick Nolte. It is based on the 1998 book with the same name by humorist and travel writer Bill Bryson. This is one of a very few feature films ever made about a backpacking adventure. Specifics (date, time, theater, restaurant) will be provided later. Howard Pospel (352-589-2543 or hikeft@embarqmail.com).

Chapter Officers and Committee Chairs

Chapter Chair, Howard Pospel, pospesel@embarqmail.com or 352-589-2543

Vice Chair, Eugene Bouley, etbouley@embarqmail.com or 352-314-9335

Secretary, Mary Ring, momring@yahoo.com or 352-250-1426

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Media PR Coordinator, Glenda Moore, gmaemoore@yahoo.com or 352-324-2570

Trailmasters and Activity Leaders

Trailmasters: Arlene Beal and Mary Ellen Milton, Dee Bender and Kathy Lamb, Gene Bouley, Francis Keenan, Millie and John Kozar, Bill Leach, Jon and Judy Leavers, Gene Molnar, Steve Nemeth, Rollin Patrick and Diane Roesch, Howard Pospesel, Mary Ring and Jane Williams, and Bruce Zollner

Activity Leaders: Mike Barnett, Gene Bouley, Diane Dammiller, Ken Dammiller, John Grob, Bobbi Keenan, Francis Keenan, Jon Leavers, Bill Milton, Mary Ellen Milton, Steve Nemeth, Howard Pospesel, Bob Sippey, Suzanne Sippey, Bruce Zollner, and Arlene Beal (in-training)



Chapter Picnic, June 25. Jon, Bob & Steve. Photo by Judy Leavers.



Boy Scout Camp Reroute Work Hike, May 14. Standing: Rita & Bobbi. Kneeling: John. Photo by Howard Pospesel

Links

Florida Trail Association: <http://www.floridatrail.org/>
Highlanders Chapter, FTA: <http://www.highlanders.floridatrail.org/>
Meetup for
Highlanders Chapter: <http://www.meetup.com/Florida-Trail-Association-Central-Florida-Chapter/>
Highlanders Photos: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/highlandersfta/albums>



Land Bridge Hike, May 25. Standing: Gordon, Bob, Willy, Bob, Bobbi, Carmen, Mary Ellen, Bill, Sue & Terry. Kneeling: Gene & Francis. Photo by Howard Pospesl