



FootNotes *



* Newsletter of the Highlanders Chapter,
Florida Trail Association
September – October 2016
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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 – Walking Trails of Venetian Gardens



Photo By Hubert J. Steed

The walking trails of Venetian Gardens in Leesburg have a uniqueness of which many are unaware. In my experience, it is the one location in Lake County where you can **always** find Purple Gallinules (*Porphyrio martinica*). This has to be one of the prettiest aquatic birds in central Florida. I have seen them in other locations, but rarely. Most recently I saw one at Palm Island Park in Mt. Dora, but it was the first one I've seen off the boardwalk there in 20 years. I've also seen them a couple times in 20 years off the lakefront boardwalk at the Warren W. Willis United Methodist Youth Camp in Fruitland Park. By con-

trast, I always see them at Venetian Gardens, and not just one but always half a dozen or more!

I don't understand why this is, but it appears that the habitat there is perfect for them. There are a great many large, invasive, Channeled Apple Snails present (*Pomacea canaliculata*) as evidenced by their numerous shells left empty once the snail has been extracted. Perhaps the Gallinules are eating the younger ones? I know that the Limpkins (*Aramus guarauna*) eat these snails along with their usual diet of native, Florida Apple Snails (*Pomacea paludosa*) which are also present there. The native snails lay white egg clusters on the stalks of aquatic plants just above the water line, while the invasive snails' egg clusters are pink. You will see plenty of both in this park. What makes me think the Gallinules are eating them was an incident that occurred there back in July 2013. One of the girls in my Family Nature Group had an empty shell in her hand as we crossed over a bridge to one of the islands. A Purple Gallinule boldly jumped up on the railing near her and began to come closer. She held out the shell to it and it quickly snatched it from her hand, only to drop it later when it discovered it was empty. We saw someone feeding the birds pieces of bread (Gallinules included) a little while later in that same area. So being fed regularly by humans might also contribute to their prevalence here, I just don't know for sure.

At any rate, they are there and worth the trip to see if you have even a passing interest in birds or wildlife. Florida is the only state where they can be found year round and many avid birders travel here to add them to their life lists. We are fortunate to have them so near and so available for our viewing pleasure.

And they are by no means the only reason to take a leisurely nature walk at Venetian Gardens. Alligators, Limpkins, White Ibis, Common Moorhens, turtles, grackles, Anhingas, Osprey, herons and egrets are also common, as well as the beautiful vegetation both wild

and planted here. So check it out and see if I'm exaggerating (I'm not!). You'll be glad you did.

—Mike Barnett

Sources:

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.



Notes from the Chair

At our March meeting we had one of the best speakers I have heard at our monthly meetings, Jacob McLaughlin from the National Parks Service. He gave us a historical account of the development of the National Parks System in this the 100th year of their formation. He spoke of the 1970's as the greatest use of the Parks for their intended use. When I am on hikes with our members, I always hear conversations among our members about their hikes in some National Parks. Most of us are from the generation that used the system in the 70's and beyond. Someone in our past introduced us to the beauty of a hike by taking us into the outdoors. For me it was my father. Jacob stated that today most visitors to the Parks just go to the vistas and see the wonders of our Nation Parks from their cars or busses. He feels we will loose our great park system if we do not get young families interested in being in nature. As an Earth Science teacher I tried to interest my students by getting them outside by taking several geology field trips each year. Over 5000 of them got to go on a 3 day camping trip that studied rock formations and structures, collected fossils and minerals, and went spelunking in a wild cave as we studied the Connecticut River Valley, and

Helderberg and Catskill Mountains of NY. Many of them joined me in my Summer program in the White Mountains of NH. Several of them are in jobs today that deal with nature and the outdoors. Two summers ago I had 2 families of former students come to NH to take their 4 children and spouses on a hike through the AMC Huts that they had done with me as students. Terry and I got to hike a day with them and see the enthusiasm they are passing on to their children. We have been lucky enough to see our own children and grandchildren continue to camp, bike, and hike as they had in their youth with us.

As I begin this new job as Chair of the Highlanders, I want to make it our goal to find ways to interest young families in joining our activities and benefiting from the knowledge, experiences and love of nature found in our current members. Please help me by bring your ideas to the board, so we can implement some new programs geared to youth and or families in the fall.

—Gene Bouley

Highlanders Activities for September and October 2016

Saturday, September 10, 2016

Black Bear Festival. Please visit the website for further details. <http://floridawildlifefestival.org/>

Tuesday, September 20, 2016

Chapter Board Meeting - PEAR Park - 3:00 PM. Everyone is welcome to attend the next board meeting.

Thursday, September 22, 2016

Highlanders Chapter Monthly Meeting: Leesburg Public Library, 100 E Main Street. Use the entrance on Main Street. 6:00 PM. Meeting room just inside the entrance to the library. Bob Schultz presents "Climbing in the Cascades". Bring a snack to share and your aluminum cans to recycle. Questions? 352-787-8654 or email Bobbi Keenan bobbiszoo@yahoo.com **28.811093 -81.874858**

Friday - Sunday, September 23-25

Trail Skills Training Course. Fourth Annual Training **AND** our first work hikes of the season. BSA Camp LaNoChe, 41940 Boy Scout Rd, Paisley, FL 32767. To allow the staff to plan for food, training sessions, and crews, please register at www.floridatrail.org or call (352) 378-8823. Free food, camping: tent, cabins, or RVs (no hookups). Come for one day or three. Our Chapter members will be helping guide the Saturday field sessions. If you are not registered, you can still come for the work hikes (8:00 AM - must carry two quarts water). Further questions call or email bobbiszoo@yahoo.com 787-8654. **28.954266 -81.531248**

Friday - Sunday, October 14-16

Wings and Wildflowers Festival. Please visit the website for further details: <https://www.wingsandwildflowers.com/>

Saturday, October 15, 2016

Trail Maintenance Workhike Ocala National Forest. Meet before 9:00 AM in the parking lot on the west side of Highway 19 that is 2 1/2 miles north of the turn off to Alexander Springs (Highway 445). Please be on time as we will be shuttling to another area to work. If you have further questions call or email bobbiszoo@yahoo.com 787-8654. Bring hat, gloves, sunscreen, bug repellent, lunch, and lots of water (must carry two quarts water). **29.073833 -81.629374**

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

Chapter Board Meeting - PEAR Park - 3:00 PM. Everyone is welcome to attend the next board meeting.

Thursday - Sunday, October 20-23, 2016

Florida Trail 50th Anniversary Conference. Wayne G Sanborn Activity Center, 815 S Alabama Ave, DeLand, FL 32724. Information and Registration at www.floridatrail.org or call (352) 378-8823. **29.0153 -81.2998**

Thursday, October 27, 2016

Highlanders Chapter Monthly Meeting. Note Location Change. This month we will meet at Trout Lake Nature Center at 6:00. 520 E. County Road 44, Eustis, FL 32736. We will have a presentation by Eileen Tramountana (Executive Director). Afterwards, Stan Napier and Bill Bygrave have a slide show with pictures of animals caught on the "critter cams". Bring a snack to share and your aluminum cans to recycle. Questions? 352-787-8654 or email Bobbi Keenan bobbiszoo@yahoo.com **28.875301 -81.681016**

Black Bear Festival 2015 – Photos By Judy Leavers



Bernice, Jon, and Kathy setting up tent in fog



Dee, Jon, and Joyce ready for hike at Clearwater Lake

Note: This year's Black Bear Festival will be held Saturday, September 10, 2016

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Trailmasters and Activity Leaders

Trailmasters: Arlene Beal and Mary Ellen Milton, Dee Bender and Kathy Lamb, Gene Bouley, Stuart Force and Karen Harrington, Francis Keenan, 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, Arlene Beal, 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 Brad Hoopes

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>