



CONNECTIONS

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Editor: Theresa Roake

THE SLOUGH

IS



OPEN!

Thanks to the hard work of staff, the Slough reopened to the public on November 1st after being closed due to Hurricane Ian. The Slough is looking good! There was not much damage to the Interpretive Center or the Boardwalk. There was some cosmetic damage to the railings in a couple of locations that has already been repaired. Staff has worked tirelessly to trim trees and clean up. It looks like winter came early when the storm stripped many trees of their leaves, but we're already noticing new bright green growth on some of the cypress. The fern understory is looking green and lush. We hope you get a chance to see it for yourselves soon. Please see pages 8-11 for more information and photos from the aftermath of Ian.



Save the date: Friends' Holiday Celebration Sunday December 11th 3:30 to 5:30 pm

Join us to celebrate the holiday season on the back deck of the Interpretive Center. We will have music, appetizers, desserts, and activities aplenty. No need to bring anything this year. Please let us know if you can attend by emailing us at:

friendsofsixmileslough@gmail.com

Friends of Six Mile Cypress
Slough Preserve
7791 Penzance Blvd
Fort Myers, FL 33966
www.sloughpreserve.org

PRESIDENT'S NOTES



Dear Friends,

I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well and have not suffered much harm from Hurricane Ian. The unprecedented devastation to our community will require years of recovery. Luckily our favorite preserve, the Slough, did not suffer any damage beyond repair. The boardwalk was flooded and damaged in some areas, the canopy thinned out, some trees snapped and fell, and human debris landed in its midst. But nature is resilient. The Slough is no exception to that. It will rebound and, as always, provide. Provide a natural healing and restorative space for all to enjoy.

Ian's destructiveness again stresses the importance of wetlands and natural habitats. So the Friends, with your help, vow to continue the mission of protecting and preserving the Slough.

Be safe, and may you recover soon from the damage Ian caused you.

Sabine

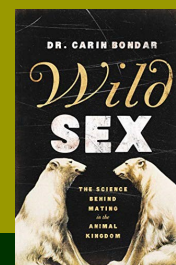
"Allow nature's peace to flow into you as sunshine flows into trees." - John Muir

SLOUGH BOOKWORMS NEWS



Slough Bookworms, the Friends' book club, was unable to meet on its regularly scheduled day in October so our discussion of *Scat* by Carl Hiaassen will take place at our December meeting. This YA novel takes us deep into the Everglades with an eccentric eco-avenger, a ticked-off panther and two kids on a mission to find their missing teacher. Florida—where the animals are wild and the people are wilder. There's still time to pick up a copy in the Friends Nature Store at the Slough. We will meet on the back deck on **Monday, December 5th at 2 pm**. We will also be choosing upcoming selections so bring a recommendation or two.

February 6th brings an eye-catching title for discussion on the back deck of the Interpretive Center. It's *Wild Sex* by Dr. Carin Bondar. She explores the science behind mating in the animal kingdom. Birds do it, bees do it— every member of the animal kingdom does it, from fruit flies to blue whales. The mating habits of our animal cousins are fiendishly difficult, infinitely varied, often violent and absolutely fascinating.



WONDERFUL WET WALKS

By Sabine Vandenhende

Despite the season being cut short due to Ian’s destructive visit, the 2022 wet walk season was a success as always. We had a mix of first timers and returning participants. Everyone, as always, was in awe with the beauty of the Slough. On our first walk we spotted two barred owls, which then flew in front of us. On one of the walks, we witnessed a stand off between two red shouldered hawks and a barred owl, and as Amanda describes in her write up, we saw three pileated woodpeckers performing a dance. We also discovered some intriguing slime molds. Our [website gallery](#) includes all the sightings. This year we had two specially themed walks: “Flowing Through Time” and “The Gift of Wetland Plants.” I asked two participants to give me a sentence or two to describe their experience for our members. It’s inspiring to hear what our participants thought about the experience:

“Flowing Through Time”, Guided by Dr. Charles O’Connor

“Pure bliss. My wet walk experience at Six Mile Slough was captivating. Our guide Charles was full of knowledge regarding the abundant flora and fauna we were immersed in! Bonus I even got to learn about the history of Florida’s prehistoric creatures! Awesome and fulfilling stuff, thank you to the team at Six Mile! They are inspiring! Looking forward to the next one.”

Madeline Morrison, FGCU Student

“Gift of Wetland Plants”, Guided by Heather Gienapp

Beyond the comfort of the familiar Six Mile Cypress boardwalk, drowsy water ways keep ancient Floridian secrets. Much of the knowledge of traditional and medicinal uses of Florida’s plants has been passed down through generations by word of mouth. In keeping with tradition, Heather guides a fascinating Ethno-Botany class into the deep Slough for the discovery of this useful aquatic garden, mostly forgotten by modern times. My nervous visions of snakes and gators were pleasantly forgotten somewhere between learning the uses of willow bark and watching a lively game of tag between three Pileated woodpeckers. Before heading back to the Interpretive Center for a well-deserved snack and a practical plant use demonstration; we enjoyed a few minutes of silence beneath Grandfather Cypress’s canopy in a temple of stillness and eternity appropriately dubbed “the Cathedral” by park volunteers and staff. I highly recommend this delightful class to all ages and abilities but especially to the nature lover looking for a little adventure in their own hometown.”

Amanda Schelonka, Amanda became a Friends Member during the wet walk season



← Dr. Charles O’Connor explains Florida’s prehistoric past.

Heather Gienapp explores the many uses of native plants →

Photos by Sabine Vandenhende





FAKAHATCHEE ADVENTURE...

In Search of Orchids

Last winter our Slough Bookworms read *The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orlean. It's the true story of horticulturist John Laroche and a group of Seminoles arrested for poaching orchids in the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve. You can't make this stuff up! At our discussion, we talked about visiting Fakahatchee to see first hand where these delicate beauties live. We're happy to say that wish has come true. **We have two field trip opportunities for you in December:**

Morning Tram Tour

Board the "Ghost Rider" tram, named in honor of the famous Ghost Orchid, and discover Fakahatchee Preserve State Park, the largest state park in Florida

When: Friday, December 9th, 2022 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Guide: Fakahatchee Master Naturalist Volunteer

Cost: \$30

Group Size: Minimum 12—Maximum 16

Introduction to Swamp Walk Tour

Board the "Ghost Rider" tram for an interpretive tour while en route to the swamp walk locations. After the 90 minute swamp walk, we will reboard the tram for the return trip.

When: Wednesday, December 14th, 2022 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Guide: Virginia Palmer Skok, Fakahatchee Friends Volunteer, who is an orchid expert and very involved in doing surveys with Park Biologist Mike Owen who is featured in the book.

Cost: \$75

Group Size: Minimum 10 – Maximum 12

Reservations; (3 Step Process)

1. Email Sabine Vandenhende at vansabine@yahoo.com for initial registration—please indicate Fakahatchee Field Trip in the subject line.
2. Write a check payable to the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand in the amount of:
 - \$30 for the Morning Tram Tour with memo line Tram Tour December 9th
 - \$75 for the Introduction to Swamp Walk tour with memo line Intro to Swamp Walk Tour December 14th
3. Drop off the check at or mail to:

Friends of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve,
7791 Penzance Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33966 Attn: Sabine Vandenhende

Additional Information: Reservations are only final upon receipt of the check. Sabine will confirm your reservation. A full refund for cancellations received no later than 48 hours before the event. Participants must sign a standard release of liability on the day of the event. Swamp walk participants must wear secure, closed-toe shoes (no sandals) and long pants. You can change into dry clothes at the Park's restrooms. These field trip dates are reserved solely for Friends members. They may open to the public if we cannot meet the minimum attendees. These trips are truly one of a kind. We hope to see you there!

Friends Visit FGCU's Water School

By Steve Parker

Fifteen Friends members were treated to a sneak peek of The Water School building at Florida Gulf Coast University on September 12th, well before the building's official grand opening in November.

The tour was led by Regina Bale, environmental education coordinator at The Water School. She began by noting the Waterfall, a massive piece of art suspended from the ceiling made up of small pyramid shapes with cyan, magenta and yellow sides that reflect light. The artwork can be seen from each of the building's four floors.

Each floor is painted a different color, ranging from the fourth floor's deep blue (signifying the depths of the ocean) to the first floor's tan (representing the shoreline.)

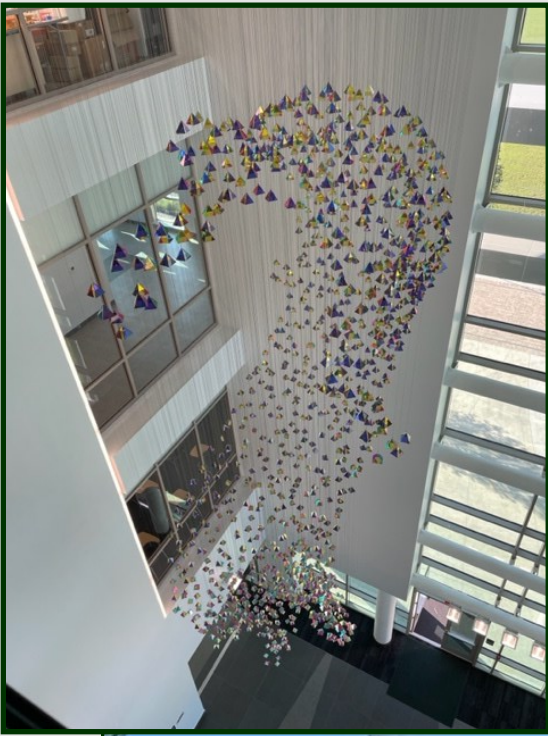
Bale distributed literature that explains The Water School's purpose:

"Tourism, growth, development, agriculture and recreation all depend on healthy Florida ecosystems and aquatic environments. That's why Southwest Florida needs experts who can focus on the key impact areas, study the issues and problems from multiple perspectives, identify emerging issues, help find sustainable solutions and train next generation experts to take the reins."

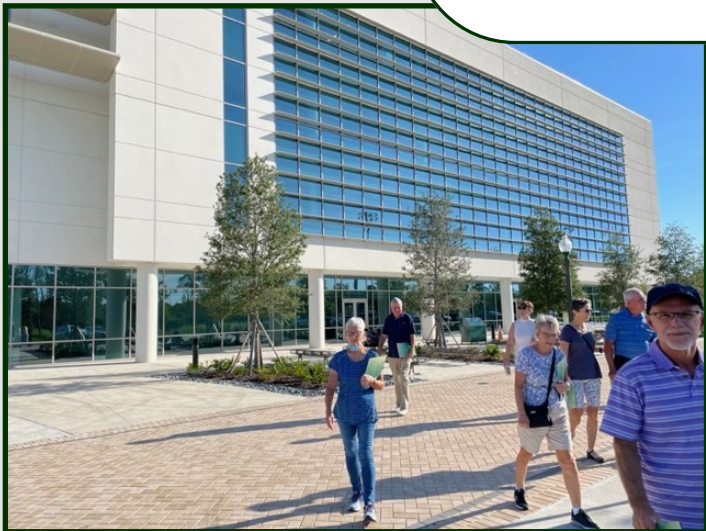
The literature says The Water School's focuses are "climate change, natural resources, ecosystem health, health and well-being, restoration and remediation."

The building, which cost \$57.9 million, contains 23,400 square feet of classrooms, 58,600 square feet of research labs, a multipurpose room seating 75, an auditorium seating 129, a huge aquarium with glass windows, a flume that simulates water flow for experiments, and a giant refrigerator and freezer. Bale said that many at The Water School are most excited about the ground-level loading dock on the first floor, which allows those returning from field work to easily unload specimens.

The FGCU Water School program started two years ago and was spread over five locations. It is now consolidated in the new building, which had its first day of classes August 19.



FGCU'S WATER SCHOOL
PHOTOS BY SABINE VANDENHENDE





THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS...
NEW ENTRANCE DISPLAYS AND TRAIL MAPS



Thanks to generous support from our members, new entrance displays and trail maps along the Boardwalk were installed in September. We are happy to report that all installations survived Hurricane Ian. We look forward to seeing your photos at our new Welcome Arch posted on the Friends' Facebook page!

Post- Hurricane Ian FAQs

By Slough Staff

How high did the water get?

We aren't sure how high the water got during the storm, but it did flood the driveway! There was also about 6 inches of water under the building. Based on archived photos the water wasn't as high as it was during Hurricane Irma, but we had a lot more trees down after Ian.

Did the water go over the boardwalk?

Yes! Supervisor Rick Bauer was able to assess the preserve a few days after the storm and encountered about 8 inches of water over the boardwalk at Wood Duck Pond, which is the lowest point of the boardwalk. Water was also over the boardwalk at the reflection area and the ramp at Otter Pond.

Where did the animals go during the storm?

Wildlife are able to sense changes in the weather in advance of major storms and instinctively know to seek safety. Birds will fly away from the area while terrestrial wildlife will retreat to areas that are protected from the wind and seek higher ground to avoid flooding. While it is the unfortunate truth that not all wildlife will make it, the wildlife at the Slough has had no trouble returning to their routines. Squirrels and raccoons have been active on the boardwalk, turtles have been coming up to nest in the parking lot, and even Stumpy has been spotted cruising Gator Lake.

Where are all the birds?

Birds were quick to return to the Slough and we have seen a lot of green herons and blue jays. It just depends on what time of day it is. They are also getting used to having people around again after having the place to themselves for a while!

Was there damage to the boardwalk?

There was some minor damage to the handrail in a couple of spots. But staff replaced all broken boards and a safety inspection was conducted prior to the Slough reopening to the public.

Post- Hurricane Ian FAQs (cont'd)

By Slough Staff

What happened to the platforms on Gator Lake?

Both platforms sustained damage from Hurricane Ian and staff removed them from the lake for the safety of the wildlife. The larger platform was not able to be salvaged and staff removed it completely. The smaller platform is salvageable and staff has moved it to the edge of the lake to be repaired in the dry season.

Why is there orange ribbon on the trees?

Staff worked hard to clean the Slough of debris and other hazards after Hurricane Ian. Unfortunately, some of the tree limbs are too high for staff to have removed in-house. The Slough is working with other departments in the county to remove these limbs. In the meantime, the trees are marked, or “flagged”, for safety.

Is the water dirty?

The Slough plays an important role in our community during major storms like Hurricane Ian. Water from surrounding communities was able to drain into the Slough and prevent those neighborhoods from flooding. Unfortunately, everything that was in that water is now in the Slough. The good news is that the plants will help to clean up the water, pulling out excess nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrates. It will take a few months, but the Slough will return to normal.

Why was the Slough closed for so long?

The Slough experienced some damage from Hurricane Ian. Thankfully, there was only minor cosmetic damage to the boardwalk and the buildings, but there were many trees down and debris that posed a threat to the safety of visitors. Staff worked hard to clear these hazards and make the Slough safe for visitors once more. Additionally, the Slough underwent an inspection before reopening.



**Post
Ian
Photos**



**Photos by
Slough Staff**



Hurricane Ian Clean Up Photos
By Slough Staff



Public Slough Programs...

Enjoy the Slough in many ways.



Full Moon

Public guided full moon walks will take place this season on:

December 6th

January 6th

February 4th

March 6th

April 5th

More Opportunities

Daily Public Guided Walks starting December 1st

Monthly Bird Walks

Yoga for Adults

Tiny Tots Yoga

Guided Meditation

For more information and registration, please go to

www.leegov.com/parks or contact Slough Program Specialist

Adrienne Martin at amartin4@leegov.com or (239) 533-7555.

Programs fill quickly, particularly the full moon walks, so don't delay!

MEMBERSHIP

For more information on joining or renewing go to our website at
www.sloughpreserve.org.

Welcome New Members.

Ambrose Bechtel
Frank Geltner & Nicole Racine
Deborah & Larry Gentry
Janice Lavoie
Mary & Will Leland
Christy Miller
Diane & John Palmquist
Anita Parmer
Kelly Rice
Shaleza Rouse
Amanda Schelonka
Robin Serne
Dorothy & Rick Urquhart
Dot & Scott Voorhees
Carrie Wartman
Robert Webber
Elaine Weissborn
Karl Werner

Renewing Members. Thank you for your continued support.

David Agin
Dotty Brown
Barbara Catineau
Scott Cooper
Barbara Desrosiers
Kathryn Imler
Richard Martinez
Gretchen Monti
Alice Oldford
Andrea Perisho
Laura & David Poisson

Donations gratefully received.

Jan & Mike Johnson

In Memory of Marilyn Brummer.

Nancy & Craig Poppen
Hiroyo Sako

Board of Directors

Sabine Vandenhende, President
Nancy Olson, Vice President
Theresa Roake, Secretary
Sara Maliva, Treasurer

Directors:

Carolyn Babb
Lyn Brown
Donna Cressman
David Minnick
Bud Schopp

Advisory Board

Jacquelin Cadkin
Dr. William Hammond
Jeff Key
Dr. Terri Krass
Dr. Charles O'Connor
Jean Labriola-Scholz Phd.



CHRISTMAS DAY WALK

FOR FRIENDS MEMBERS

Keep an eye on your email box for an invitation to
a specially themed interactive walk for
Friends Members on Christmas morning.
All ages welcome.