



Friends of St. Sebastian River

P.O. Box 284 ❖ Roseland, Florida 32957-0284 November 2013

website: www.fssr.org email: info@fssr.org ph: 772-202-0501

The mission of the Friends of St. Sebastian River is to maintain and improve the health and beauty of the St. Sebastian River and its watershed.

SCRUB JAYS – FLORIDA’S ONLY ENDEMIC BIRD

Scrub jays will be the topic of our meeting this month. FSSR members Jane Schnee and Judy Elseroad will give a presentation on their efforts to monitor and restore scrub jay habitat in the Sebastian area.

You may recall that we presented our 2011 Environmental Enhancement Award to Jane for her habitat conservation work, on the property she acquired in Sebastian, that was slated for an 80+ unit development. She has spent countless hours, along with the help of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Indian River Lagoon Program, Beth Powell, Indian River County Conservation Lands manager, and many volunteers, working to restore the native scrub habitat on the property, to the consternation of some of the surrounding neighbors. Although just what the scrub jays need, it doesn't look like your normal "pretty" manicured neighborhood lot, with an irrigation-demanding green carpet of a lawn.

Jane also monitors the scrub jay population at the North Sebastian Conservation Area. She will be leading a walk there for the Pelican Island Audubon Society on Saturday, December 7 at 8 AM. For more information, visit the PIAS website at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org or call 772-567-3520.

Judy is a long-term volunteer at the St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, who has been monitoring their scrub jay population for many years. She is also a great photographer. Judy and Jane will bring us up to date on the how scrub jays are doing in Sebastian.

Scrub jays are the only endemic bird in Florida, and their habitat requirements are very specific. A similar species, the western scrub jay, occurs in the western U.S. and Mexico. There was an attempt several years ago to make the scrub jay the "state bird" of Florida, but the effort was opposed by the NRA.

Please join us for the presentation and learn more about this unique Florida bird. The meeting will be **Tuesday, November 26, 7:30 PM** at the North Indian River County Library, 1001 Sebastian Blvd., in Sebastian. For more information, visit www.fssr.org or call 772-202-0501.

YARD SALE A BIG SUCCESS!

Our yard sale this month was a great success, thanks to everyone who helped out with setup, sales, and donations! We raised \$651.12, all of which goes toward our George Schum Award and scholarship. A special thanks to About Storage who donated the use of their facility for us to store items and conduct the sale. We appreciate everyone's help and may consider having the sale once again next year – it is not too early to start setting aside those unwanted treasures!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

October is our membership renewal month. All our memberships run from October through September each year, and are pro-rated, depending on the time of year you joined. The date following your last name on the mailing label of our newsletter is the month/year in which our records reflect that your membership either did or will expire.

For more information on membership, please see the membership application on the back of this newsletter, or visit our website. You may also renew your membership online using a credit or debit card, via our website.

WATER NEEDS SUPPORT OF FLORIDIANS

Recently, state and local elected officials, and community leaders from 16 South Florida counties traveled to Washington to advocate on behalf of the 2013 Water Resources Development Act and funding for Everglades restoration projects. A hearing was held by Florida Reps. Patrick Murphy and Trey Radel, that was attended by politicians and residents from throughout Florida, including Dr. Brian LaPointe, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute and Troy Rice, Director of the Indian River Lagoon Program.

For more than seven years, Congress has been unable to pass legislation authorizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' civil works program, which constructs critical navigation and water infrastructure projects across the nation.

Proposed legislation in the House, known as the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA), authorizes more than \$10 billion in Corps' projects nationwide, including almost \$1 billion in critical navigation and water projects to improve Florida's ports and advance Everglades Restoration — an undertaking that will enhance water resources for more than 8 million Americans.

These projects are critical to water supply and the environment in densely populated South Florida as well as to the national commitment to restore America's Everglades.

This story contains excerpts from an October 16th guest editorial written by Martin County Commissioner Doug Smith, who also attended the hearing. Mr. Smith asks Floridians to contact their federal representatives to encourage them to pass this legislation.

You may read the full editorial, with his description of specific Florida water projects awaiting WRDA funding at: <http://www.news-press.com/article/20131017/OPINION/310170020/Guest-Opinion-Water-Florida-matter-needs-your-support-today>. There is also a link to this story on the "News and Information" page of our website.

As an update to the editorial, the Act, with changes, was approved by the Senate at the end of October, and is now back in the House awaiting action.

TROUBLED INDIAN RIVER LAGOON WILDLIFE

Stories about the health problems of the Indian River Lagoon have been making headlines regularly throughout the year, with the die-off of many manatees, dolphin, and pelicans. The good news is that this reporting has kept the issue in front of the public, a priority for research funding, and discussion by local, state, and federal politicians.

Dr. Brian LaPointe of Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute was interviewed in a recent issue of *Wired* magazine about his research on the lagoon. Dr. LaPointe stated that "the Indian River Lagoon has become a toilet."

Dolphins and pelican appear to be starving, but the manatees look healthy except for being dead. The manatee's primary food source is seagrass, but with the die-off of large beds of these grasses, the manatees have been resorting to eating macroalgae, like gracilaria.

In May, (Dr.) LaPointe retrieved a handful of gracilaria from an area in the Banana River that has been a hotspot for manatee deaths. He took the plant to his colleague Peter Moeller, an organic chemist with NOAA's National Ocean Service, who specializes in finding and identifying mysterious toxins.

Moeller ground up the gracilaria and tested the mush for signs of toxic activity. He found that the extract killed mammalian cells growing in dishes – a sign that something deadly might be lurking in the plant.

Eventually, Moeller identified three cell-killing compounds. Now, he and LaPointe think they are looking at several toxic glycosides – a type of chemical compound in which a sugar bonded to a chemical group that becomes active when that bond is broken.

A lot of these toxins, they're not always present in these algae. They're largely a function of environmental conditions, LaPointe said. Those environmental conditions include things like nutrient levels in the water. Nitrogen leaking in the northern lagoon from the region's 237,000 septic tanks have (sic) disrupted the normal balance of the estuary, LaPointe said at a Florida senate hearing in August.

Parts of this story were excerpted from the August 29, 2013 *Wired* magazine article "Florida Fights to Save

a Troubled Lagoon and Its Once-Flourishing Marine Life.” You will find a link to the full article, with links to related stories, on the “News and Information” page of our website.

NEW RESEARCH PROJECT FOR THE FRIENDS

Our Board of Directors has been discussing, and decided to undertake a new long-term project of gathering as much data and information we can find, about the St. Sebastian River and surrounding areas. The concept is broad ranging, and has already sparked new ideas of what information may be available, and where it may lead us.

The concept is that we would like to be a repository of whatever information is available about our river and its watershed. In other words, what do we know about our river and what impacts its health or habitat. This information may include history about the wildlife that depends on our river and how it has changed over the years, and our human history that has developed around it. This could include anything of how life depends(ed) on the river, right through to current day implementation of fertilizer ordinances to protect the river as a resource. We are also interested in more technical information, to include hydrology and how it has changed with the appurtenances of increasing population.

The idea is not for us to become an archive for publications and artifacts, but rather a bibliographic reference and description of what information exists, and where to find it. The scope of our project already seems to have blossomed as we imagine the possibilities, and have come across the very beginnings of our findings. So we would like to ask for the help of any of you sleuths out there. Please let us know if you have any ideas of information that we should consider including, where we may find information, or even if you have any photos or documentation about the river and our community that we may copy. As you can imagine, this project could take on a life of its own and is more than we can likely undertake on our own. We are grateful for any assistance you would like offer.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

July 1, 2013 – October 31, 2013

Balance 7/1/13	\$2502.87 (corrected)
Receipts	526.00
Total	3028.87
Disbursements	123.25
Balance 10/31/13	\$2905.62

George Schum Memorial Award Fund

Total to date	\$713.12
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, November 26, 7:30 PM

Scrub Jays – Florida’s Only Endemic Bird

Jane Schnee & Judy Elseroad
FSSR

1001 Sebastian Blvd.
info: www.fssr.org



Tuesday, December 3, 7 PM

Scripps Newspapers IR Lagoon Forum

Ocean Research & Cons. Assoc.

The Emerson Center
1590 27th Ave., Vero Beach
www.theemersoncenter.org
772-778-5249



Thursday, December 5, 7 PM

Sing for Wild Things

Dale Crider

The Emerson Center
1590 27th Ave., Vero Beach
www.theemersoncenter.org
772-778-5249



Thursday, December 5, 6:00 PM

Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition

Photo exhibit, film screening and panel discussion

Museum of FL Art & Culture
South Florida State College
600 W. College Dr.

Avon Park
www.floridawildlifecorridor.org/events
863-784-7240

Please visit the “Meeting Info/Events” page of our website for more events!

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NOTE: The date on your mailing label is the month/year when your dues are next due. Thank you.

APPLICATION FORM

The Friends of St. Sebastian River depends on member support for programs of conservation and education.

Youth (under 18) free — Individual \$10/year

Family \$15/year — Corporate \$50/year

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Special interests, concerns or expertise: _____

Please mail your completed application and dues to:

P.O. Box 284, Roseland, Florida 32957-0284

This newsletter is available on our website and delivery by email for current members. We encourage email-only delivery to save funds and paper! Email us at the address on the front to request email delivery.

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Officers for 2013

President Tim Glover
Vice President Buzz Herrmann
Secretary Gayle Heath
Treasurer Bill Brennan

Directors for 2013

Tom Bauer Jane Schnee
Lynn Stieglitz Bruce Zingman

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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