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by Chris Vandello, Park Manager

Savannas Preserve has seen many new beginnings in its life as a state park, just as nature carved and transformed the landscape that formed its foundation. These lands that once formed a coastal dune and lagoon have changed to the Scrub Ridge and Freshwater Basin Marsh that form its landscape today. The next couple months mark the next new beginning in the park. During this time we will open the doors on a new addition to our education center, bringing in a new wealth of knowledge to youth. We will also open the gates on a new canoe launch on the St. Lucie River, bringing new recreational opportunities. Construction crews are currently putting the finishing touches on both of these projects, allowing us to provide many more outdoor activities during the cooler months ahead.

Savannas' premiere education center initially opened its doors 14 years ago. Since then, it has been the hub of the park and has educated many school children on the "wilds of nature." The new addition

includes a working science lab to provide students a more in-depth study of nature. It offers added lecture space to share the park's precious resources to an ever expanding audience. It will



be amazing to watch as the "new" and the "old" blend and expand the opportunities for park visitors.

Our other project, a new recreational facility, is being created across from the Walton Road Publix on US1. The new Evans Creek Canoe Launch will be a gateway to North Fork of the St. Lucie River. The new facility will provide visitors with greater access to recreational opportunities in this portion of the park—a chance to paddle and see a natural creek, teeming with wading birds and other wildlife, and to see a natural landscape in the middle of an ever-expanding city. The new facility will bind the two areas of the park, the Savannas-Basin Marsh and the Savannas-St. Lucie River, together as one.

Park staff and volunteers are looking forward to many exciting changes. With these new beginnings will be the creation of new memories, new recreational adventures, and new educational opportunities.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WEEKLY PROGRAMMING

- -Guided Kayak Tours: Each Friday & Saturday (and Sundays December-March) at 8:00am. Enjoy the beauty and serenity of the Savannas Basin Marsh on this 2-hour leisurely tour. Cost is a \$10 donation per person. These tours are open to ages 6 and up. Reservations required.
- -> Language Classes. The following FREE weekly language classes are offered by Hispanics in Action of the Treasure Coast. For more information or to register, call (772) 924-1002.
 - -Spanish for Kids: Saturdays; 9:00-10:00am.
 - •Beginning Spanish for Adults: Fridays; 2:00-3:30pm.
 - -Beginning Italian for Adults: Mondays; 9:00-10:30am.

FPTFMF

- -Sunday, September 20; 9:00-11:00am: Ranger-led Interpretive Hike. Explore the park with Ranger Paul Milette as your guide on these monthly interpretive hikes. Topics vary. Please call the Education Center for details. This program is free with paid park admission. Reservations are required.
- Sunday, September 20; Noon-4:00pm: Techno-Rangers Workshop. Young adults ages 10-14 are invited to join the St. Lucie County 4H for this free computer programming workshop. The course is one of several satellite events that are part of the Indian River Lagoon Science Festival. Workshop participants will learn basic concepts of computer animation using Scratch software. The workshop if free, but participants must bring their own laptop computer, with the Scratch software downloaded ahead of time. Space is limited. Reservations are required.
- -Sunday, September 20; 7:00-9:00pm: Savannas Drum

Circle. Catch the beat at our quarterly drum circle and help drum in the new season! Bring drums, other percussion instruments, hoops, and a folding chair. Cost is \$5 per person. Kids under 13 are free. No reservations necessary.

Thursday, September 24; 3:00-4:00pm: Nature Detec-

tives After School Club. Explore nature's classroom with Miss Nan! Open to ages 6-12. Call for details and dates.

Monday & Tuesday, September 28 & 29; 9:00am-

1:30pm: Volunteer Training: School Field Trips. Teaching local children about our park and its remarkable resources is a very rewarding way to give your time and energy. Volunteers interested in helping with School Field Trips this season, please consider registering for this free short course. Attend one or both days. Please RSVP.

OCTOBER

Thursday, October 1; 3:00-4:00pm: Nature Detectives

After School Club. Explore nature's classroom with Miss Nan! Open to ages 6-12. Call for details and dates.

- •Friday, October 2; 8:00am-2:00pm: Mint Restoration **Project.** Help save the Savannas Mint by joining staff from Savannas Preserve State Park and the Bok Tower Gardens for this National Public Lands Day community service event. Call to sign up.
- -Saturday, October 3; 10:00-11:00am: Youth Volunteer **Open House.** Youth volunteers contribute greatly to their community, learn life skills and make new friends at the Savannas Preserve State Park. Young adults ages 13 -17 are invited to come see what volunteering at the park is all about. Please RSVP.
- Saturday, October 3; 2:00-5:00pm: New Volunteer **Orientation.** All new volunteers are encouraged to attend this required training. Please RSVP.
- Thursday, October 8; 3:00-4:00pm: Nature Detectives After School Club. Explore nature's classroom with Miss Nan! Open to ages 6-12. Call for details and dates.
- Saturday, October 10; 9:00am: Ranger-led Interpretive Hike. Explore the park with Ranger Paul Milette as your guide on these monthly interpretive hikes. Topics vary.

Kids ages 6-12 can explore nature's classroom with Miss Nan at the Nature Detectives After School Club. Call for details and dates.

Please call the Education Center for details. This program is free with paid park admission. Reservations are required.

 Saturday, October 10; 12:30pm: Friends of Savannas Board of Directors Monthly Meeting. Come see what goes on behind the scenes at Savannas Preserve State Park and see how you can get involved.

-Sunday, October 11; 3:00-5:00pm: Folk Music Jam. Grab an instrument or just bring along your voice and join

local musicians for this old-fashioned jam session and song circle. Participation is free with paid park admission.



-Thursday, October 15; 10:00am-1:00pm: Homeschool Immersion Event: Fire! Friend or Foe?. Join the Savannas Preserve State Park to explore the important role that fire plays in Florida's ecology. Wildland Firefighters will be on hand to demonstrate equipment and techniques and to answer questions. Come get a close-up



Homeschoolers can explore the important role that fire plays in Florida's ecology on Thursday, October 15. Wildland Firefighters will be on hand to demonstrate equipment and techniques and to answer questions.

and personal view of brush rigs, plows, and other fire-related vehicles. Participants will learn the difference between wild fire and prescribed fire, about the chemistry of fire, fire safety, and about fire-dependent habitats.

Reservations are requested for planning purposes, but are not required. Cost is \$3 per child ages 4 and up. Bring lunch and enjoy the view from our picnic pavilion.

- -Saturday, October 17; 10:00am-2:00pm: Halloween **Decorating Party!** Come help transform the Savannas Education Center in preparation for our Freaky Fall Festival! Bring lunch or snacks.
- Saturday, October 24th; 5:00-9:00pm: Freaky Fall Festival. The Friends of Savannas Preserve State Park invites you to get your spook on and come out for a night of Halloween fun at our annual Freaky Fall Festival. The event is sure to be a hit with holiday games and crafts, a bounce house, haunted house, and, of course, the highlight of the event...the Savannas Haunted Trail! This year the park will partner with the Jensen Beach High School drama department to give the Savannas Haunted Trail some dramatic flair! Cost is \$5/adult, \$3/child under 12, and family rate of \$15 (up to 5 people).
- -Saturday, October 31; 8:00-Noon: Audubon Field Academy. The Audubon Field Academy is an educational program designed for adults interested in increasing their knowledge of Florida's environment and wildlife with an emphasis on birds and their habitats. This is the first of eight sessions. Participants who complete all 8 sessions will receive a Birding Naturalist Certificate from the Audubon of Martin County. The fee for each class is \$45.00. Space is limited. Register at www.audubon-

NOVEMBER

martincounty.org

November 2 through December 14: Florida Master

Naturalist certification course: Florida Uplands. Part of the University of Florida master naturalist certification program, this is a 40-hour class for ages 18 and above. Participants learn about Florida's ecology, flora, and fauna through a variety of classroom presentations. hands-on activities and field trips. Cost is \$225 per person. Register at masternaturalist.org

- Thursdays, November 3 December 10; 10:00am-Noon: Homeschool Hopper Series: Decomposition. The Friends of Savannas Education Team will collaborate again with four area environmental centers and gardens to bring this 5-part series to Treasure Coast home school students ages 8-12. Cost is \$25 per student for the 5-part series. Space is limited. Reservations and advanced payment required.
- -Sunday, November 8; 8:00am-Noon: Warriors on the Water. The Friends of Savannas Preserve State Park invite local veterans and their spouses to this Veteran's Day celebration. Included in this free event are guided kayak tours, interpretive walks, veteran-related exhibitors, and lunch. Space is limited. Reservations are required.
- -Sunday, November 8; 3:00-5:00pm: Folk Music Jam. Grab an instrument or just bring along your voice and join local musicians for this old-fashioned jam session and song circle. Participation is free with paid park admission.
- •Wednesday, November 11; 7:00pm: Florida Master Naturalist Lecture Series: "Native Bees: Gardeners' Best Friends." Michelle Peterson, founder and president of the Treasure Coast Beekeepers Association, will present this informative program on Florida's native pollinators.
- -Saturday, November 14; 9:00-11:30am: Excursion to Hawk's Bluff with Florida Master Naturalists. Explore the Atlantic Ridge to learn about the imperiled Florida Scrub with Florida Master Naturalists. This program is free with paid park admission. Reservations required.
- Saturday, November 14; 12:30pm: Friends of Savannas Board of Directors Monthly Meeting. Come see what goes on behind the scenes at Savannas Preserve State Park and see how you can get involved.
- Sunday, November 22; 1:00-3:00pm: Volunteer Open House. The Savannas Preserve State Park invites you to join our awarding-winning team of volunteers! Your experience and skills are the key to our success! Come on out and learn about the park, its goals, and how you can make a difference. Reservations requested.

FCFMBFR

Saturday, December 5; 2:00-5:00pm: New Volunteer

- **Orientation.** All new volunteers are encouraged to attend this required training. Please RSVP.
- •Wednesday, December 9; 7:00pm: Florida Master Naturalist Lecture: A Living Lagoon: It's up to US. Worldrenowned ecologist Dr. Grant Gilmore will present this update on the Indian River Lagoon, its health, its prognosis, and how we can help.
- Friday, December 11; 3:30pm: Friends of Savannas General Membership Meeting. All Friends of Savannas members are encouraged to attend this general membership meeting. Come socialize, meet like-minded folks.

and find out what's happening inside the organization. Volunteer party to follow at 5:00pm.

- Saturday, December 12; 8:00-11:00am: Birding Hike with Florida Master Naturalists. Bring your binoculars for this outing to see our feathered friends in and around the park. Free with paid park admission. Reservations are required.
- Saturday, December 12; 12:30pm: Friends of Savannas Board of Directors Monthly Meeting. Come see what goes on behind the scenes at Savannas Preserve State Park and see how you can get involved.



-Sunday, December 13; 3:00-5:00pm: Folk Music Jam. Grab an instrument or just bring along your voice and join local musicians for this oldfashioned jam session and song circle. Participation is free with paid park admission. -Saturday, December 19; 10:00am-1:00pm: Poker **Ride for Education.** Yeehaw! Riders are

sure to have a ro-

Grab an instrument or just bring your voice and join local musicians at the Folk Music Jam on October 11, November 8, and December 13.

> pin' good time at this event to benefit the educational programming at the park. Participants get a goody bag, a free picnic lunch, and a chance to win prizes such as equestrian gear, trail rides, and more. Advanced registration is \$35 per rider; day of registration is \$40. Bring your friends for a morning of fun!

- Sunday, December 20; 7:00-9:00pm: Savannas Drum Circle. Catch the beat at our quarterly drum circle and help drum in the new season! Bring drums, other percussion instruments, hoops, and a folding chair. Cost is \$5 per person. Kids under 13 are free. No reservations necessary.
- Saturday, December 26; 9:00am: Ranger-led Interpretive Hike. Explore the park with Ranger Paul Milette as your guide on these monthly interpretive hikes. Topics vary. Please call the Education Center for details. This program is free with paid park admission. Reservations are required.
- Saturdays, December 26 and January 2; 10:00am-Noon: Docent Tour Training. Volunteers interested in providing brief (30-minute) walking tours to the public are invited to this training. Participants will receive resource materials and interpretation tips, and will run through the tour with Park Services Specialist Wren Underwood. Sign up for one or both sessions.
- Sunday, December 27; 6:30pm: Moonlight Kayak Tour. Experience the marsh by moonlight with seasoned pad-

dling guides at your side. Cost is \$15 per person. Reservations are required.

JANUARY: SAVE THE DATES!

Coming this Winter:

Nature Photography Workshop Series.

- Saturday, January 2 Florida Master Naturalist Paul Strauss will introduce participants to the diverse habitats of Savannas Preserve State Park, along with basic nature photography tips.
- Saturday, January 9 Florida Master Naturalists Mary White and John Nelson will facilitate an understanding of basic nature photography techniques and equipment.
- Saturday, January 16 Learn Macro-Photography techniques with Paul Salazar.
- Saturday, January 23 John Nelson returns to teach a short course in Videography.

PARK PERKS Special Outings, Gatherings & Classes

for Park Volunteers

- Tuesday, October 13; 10:00am-Noon: Volunteer Outing to the Florida Oceanographic Coastal Center (FOCC). Tour the Florida Oceanographic Coastal Center museums and exhibits, participate in docent-lead programs, and explore the mangroves with fellow volunteers. This program is FREE through a partnership with FOCC. Wear good walking shoes and bring a picnic lunch. Space is limited; Please RSVP. To carpool from Savannas Education Center, meet at 9:20a.m.
- Sunday, November 15; 9:00am-4:00pm: Volunteer Outing to John D. MacArthur Beach State Park.
 Explore the lush verdant hammocks, discover the new Education Center, and frolic along the gorgeous shoreline of "Mac Beach," all while enjoying the company of fellow volunteers. This outing is free of charge. Bring beach gear (snorkeling gear optional), sunscreen, insect repellent, lots of water, and a picnic lunch. Space is limited; please RSVP.
- •Friday, December 11; 5:00pm: Volunteer Holiday Party. All Savannas volunteers are invited to gather and celebrate the season together. This is a potluck dinner, so please bring something to share. Go through your closets too, because this year we'll include an Earth-friendly "green elephant" gift exchange. If you'd like to participate, bring something gently used as a gift (wrapped). Please RSVP. Rides will be arranged for those who don't drive after dark.

AROUND THE PARK



A Fond Farewell

Board members Liz and Mark Dyer are moving to North Carolina! On behalf of the Friends of Savannas Preserve State Park, park staff, and fellow volunteers, we bid them a fond farewell and wish them all the best in their endeavors in the mountains. Liz and Mark contributed so much to the park during their stay here, including Can-do projects, gift store improvements, and center exhibit construction. Thank you Liz and Mark for your dedication and hard work! We will miss you!



to have the parking along County Line Road improved... no more vehicles stuck in sugar sand! They also repaired the kiosk at the site and have "adopted" that kiosk so that it stays up to date with park happenings and announcements. What a difference these projects make! Hawk's Bluff is a very popular area of the park, with beautiful vistas

et's have a big round of applause for Randy and Mimi Swar-

ingen for their improvement projects at Hawk's Bluff. Randy and Mimi were instrumental in working with Martin County



and a fabulous 1-mile walking trail. If you haven't been there recently, check it out!

Volunteers needed for our MINT RESTORATION

Join our team and help save the endangered Savannas Mint!

Savannas Preserve State Park & Bok Tower Gardens will host a mint planting volunteer effort to transplant newly propagated mint plants to recipient sites within the park.

Friday, October 2nd, 2015 8:00am-2:00pm

Volunteers are encouraged to wear long pants, a hat and closed toe shoes, and to bring water and gloves. Reservations required. 772 398-2779









Become a Certified Florida Master Naturalist

FMN UPLANDS COURSE Nov 2 ⁻ Dec 14, 2015

Monday Evenings Nov 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 & Dec 7 & 14 & Saturday Field Trips Nov 7, 14, 21 & Dec 5

Through lectures, hands-on activities and field excursions, this course immerses students into Florida's upland habitats. Participants will learn about Florida's unique ecology, flora and fauna, as well as conservation issues, and will gain insight into the interpretation of Florida's natural systems.

Classroom sessions take place at the Savannas Preserve State Park Education Center 2541 SE Walton Rd; Port St. Lucie, 34952

Fee is \$225 per person & includes: Course Tuition & Materials, Field Trip Fees, Certification, Patch & Pin

For information, call (772) 398-2779 Register at masternaturalist.org















Florida Master Naturalists St. Lucie Chapter



772.398.2779 • http://www.friendsofsavannas.org

The Florida Scrub-Jay Alphelocoma coerulescens

by Dee Staley

The Florida Scrub-Jay is gray and blue, and about the size of a Mockingbird. Males and females have similar plumage and look alike. They are only found in certain areas of Florida and are entirely dependent on scrub habitats, characterized by several species of "scrub" oaks. Plants found in the scrub are adapted to live in well-drained, sandy, nutrient-poor soils, and are dependent on periodic fires. These plants can withstand high seasonal rainfall and extended periods of drought. Scrub-Jays prefer oaks 3 to 10 feet tall and bare sandy openings in the soil where they can bury acorns. The majority of the Scrub-Jays on the Treasure Coast live in Jonathan Dickinson State Park and here at the Savannas Preserve State Park. Their territory here at the Savannas is on the sandy ridge beside the train tracks from Jensen Beach to just north of the FPL power lines.

The birds are omnivores, eating insects, frogs, reptiles, berries, seeds, and acorns. It is estimated that each Jay harvests and buries 6,000 to 8,000 acorns from August to November for use throughout the year.

The Jays mate for life and do not migrate, but occupy and protect a territory about 25 acres in size. These birds generally do not travel more than 5 miles from where they were hatched. This species is one of the few cooperative breeding birds in the United States. The fledging Jays usually remain with their parents in the territory as "helpers" and will assist in the care

of the new siblings, feeding and protecting them. These close-knit family groups have up to 8 members. Studies have shown that breeding pairs with helpers successfully raise more young than do lone pairs. Cooperative breeding benefits the parent birds by increasing defense and care of the young, and also benefits the helpers, as they learn parenting skills prior to raising their own young. A helper is elevated to breeder status once it has acquired its own territory. They may replace a breeder in a nearby territory, take over part of their parent's territory, inherit breeding status after death of a parent, or establish a new territory between existing ones.

Scrub-Jays are protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The species has been listed as threatened by the state since 1975 and by the FWC since 1987. In spite of protection by the Endangered Species Act, the greatest decline of this species has occurred during the last 20 to 25 years, with an estimated 25 to 50 percent reduction in Jay numbers. Loss of habitat due to development has led to increased failed nesting attempts. Other threats come from predation from natural predators such as bobcats, owls, raptors, snakes, and sometimes crows. Domestic cats pose a serious threat in suburban areas, as well as poisoning and collisions with cars.

You can help by:

- Supporting the park that manages the habitat for optimal protection of the Jays.
- Providing Habitat for Scrub-Jays. Plant, protect, and cultivate patches of scrub live oak, Chapman's oak, myrtle oak, and scrub oak on your property.
- Protect Scrub-Jays from your pets. Encourage passage and strict enforcement of leash laws for dogs and cats in your community.
- Restrict use of pesticides. The Jays feed on insects usually considered pests around homes. Pesticides may limit or contaminate food used by the birds.
- ▶ Report malicious destruction or harassment of Scrub-Jays or their nests to the park manager or park biologist at 772-340-7530.









Swamp Stomp Adventure Camp

The 2015 Swamp Stomp Outdoor Adventure camp was a hit, with 13 campers in attendance. Participants learned basic archery and kayaking techniques, explored the paths less traveled in the park, and took field trips to Florida Oceanographic Coastal Center and the Manatee Observation and Education Center. The majority of campers also earned their Florida State Park Junior Ranger certification!





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A Young Naturalist's Passport to State Parks Camp

ourteen area youth participated in the park's first Passport to State Parks excursion camp! The pilot program was a huge success and there are cries of "More!" for next season. Campers explored 6 state parks where they participated in activities such as geocaching, dip-netting, kayaking, and swimming. Campers also took part in tours of the Loxahatchee River, the Loggerhead Marinelife Center, Busch Wildlife Center, and the Navy Seal Museum.







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Poker Ride for Éducation

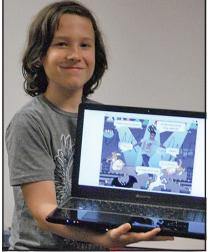
Photos by Cindy Christie

The Friends of Savannas Preserve State Park hosted the premier Poker Ride for Education on August 1st. Despite the not-so-perfect weather, sixteen hardcore horsemen and horsewomen participated. Best hand prize went to Laura Beronsky who donated her \$100 cash winnings back to the Friends!

Special thanks to Carly Batts and the Stetson University Club Equestrian, event sponsors, and volunteers who helped make this event a success! The event brought in more than \$500 which will be used to purchase lab equipment for the new classroom. Stay tuned for more trail ride adventures! The next Poker Ride is set for Saturday, December 19th.



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n Sunday, September 20th, 11 enthusiastic technology lovers gathered at the Savannas Education Center to learn about basic computer programming using the software Scratch. The workshop was designed and facilitated by park volunteer and Junior Friend, Zoe Barbeau. This was one of several area spin-off events leading up to the Indian River Lagoon Science Festival to be hosted by the Smithsonian Marine Exhibits this Saturday, September 26th in Ft. Pierce. We'd like to thank Zoe and our partnering agency, the Research Coast Florida Junior Academy of Science-4H Club, for making Techno-Rangers a huge success! This is just a stepping stone for developing technology-based programs and exhibits at the Savannas Preserve State Park.









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Thank You

he Friends of Savannas would like to thank Gabby Salazar for her wonderful presentation entitled "Where the Wild Things Are: Conservation with a Camera." Gabby, an award-winning photographer for National Geographic, took time out of her very busy schedule to do this presentation as a fund raiser for the Friends of Savannas and the new building expansion. Thank you Gabby!

Like Us on Facebook: Friends of Savannas Preserve **State Park**

Park Staff:

Park Manager: Chris Vandello **Douglas Rogers** Joseph Roberts Wren Underwood **Richard King** Paul Milette Greg Brown Dan Griffin

Newsletter Staff: Wren Underwood (park liaison) Debra Goodrich (design)

Executive Officers

President: Ray Treacy Vice President: Treasurer: Dee Staley

Secretary: Henry Maursey



Friends of Savannas Preserve State Park, Inc. is comprised of members and volunteers. The Board of Directors meets the second Saturday of each month in the Education Center at 2541 Walton Road. The general membership is encouraged to attend the meetings. The Friends recruit volunteers, raise funds for supplies and park education programs, and assist the park staff with restoration, interpretation, and maintenance of the Preserve.

Become a Member!

Benefits include:	Bene	efits	inc	lud	le:
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One Free Kayak Tour • 10% Discount in the Friends of Savannas' Gift Boutique Discount on Friends-sponsored Events & Workshops People's Choice voting rights in Annual Photo Contest Support Environmental Education in your Community Support Park Programs & Resource Management

Friends of Savannas Preserve State Park, Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax exempt corporation. To join Friends of Savannas Preserve State Park, Inc., enclose the membership fee of:

☐ \$5.00 for students	(through high school)
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\$25.00 per family

I'd like to donate an additional \$

	\$15.00	per	persor
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\$50.00 for organization or commercial entity

Total amount enclosed: \$_____

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Address:

City _____ State_____ Zip____

Email: _____

Phone #:

_____ Date _____

Mail to: Friends of Savannas Preserve, 2541 Walton Road, Port St. Lucie, FL 34952