

ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST

Gazetteer

SPRING 2019

*Growing a Vibrant
Conservation Community*

FOX PEN PARCEL

Photo By Kim Davidson





SAVE THE DATE

MARCH 16TH 2019

20TH
ANNUAL

CONSERVATION STEWARDS AWARDS

SPRING 2019

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

8 Sandhill Stage Presents: Heather Pierson Acoustic Trio @ Prairie Creek Lodge
7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

9 Invasive Plant Pull
@ Prairie Creek Preserve
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

17 Sandhill Stage Presents: Acoustic Eidolon
@ Prairie Creek Lodge
7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

23 Preserve Clean Up and S'mores
@ Santa Fe River Preserve
3:00 pm - 6:00 pm

MARCH

10 Pancakes On the Prairie
@ Tusawilla Preserve
9:00 am - 11:30 am

16 20th Annual Conservation Stewards Awards
@ Prairie Creek Lodge
5:30 pm - 9:30 pm

23 Hogtown Craft Beer Festival
@ Alachua County Fairgrounds
11:30 am - 5:15 pm

23 CBI Workshop: What's a Body To Do?
@ Prairie Creek Lodge
10:00am

APRIL

6 Bug Walk - led by Dr. Lucky and Dr. Hulcr
@ Prairie Creek Preserve
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

6 CBI Workshop: How To Write Effective Advance Directives @ Prairie Creek Lodge
9:00am

6 Sandhill Stage Presents: Sloan Wainwright
@ Prairie Creek Lodge
7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

20 Edible and Medicinal Plant Walk - led by Susan Marynowski @ Prairie Creek Preserve
9:00 am - 11:00 am

27 Tree Fest
@ Swamphead Brewery
12:00 pm - 11:00 pm

MAY

11 Ice Cream in the Park
@ Rockwood Park
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

18 Exploring Fish and other Freshwater Fauna of North Central Florida - led by Howard Jelks
@ Santa Fe River Preserve
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

DECEMBER

13 Holiday Mingle
@ Prairie Creek Lodge
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

2019 CSA HONOREES

JOHN MCPHERSON

John McPherson is a sixth generation Floridian who grew up in Venice, Florida, where he witnessed what explosive growth could do to a sleepy coastal village. Dunes became condos, beaches eroded, and camping sites became interstate highways. He left for college and then entered law school thinking that working for the protection of the environment would be a worthy lifetime ambition.

Since graduating from Rhodes College and then UF Law he has worked almost exclusively in the areas of land use, environmental, and local government law, and has put much time and effort into citizen environmental organizations. He was staff attorney with Southern Legal Counsel in Gainesville when it filed a major legal challenge to the way that Alachua County handled comprehensive planning at the time.

He represented a group of citizens in Gilchrist County that successfully challenged the failure of DEP to require intensive dairy operations to get industrial waste permits. He was the lead author on the Model Land Development Code for Florida Cities and Counties, which became the starting point for many city and county land development codes in Florida. But no doubt his most important environmental accomplishment was also the easiest: he sat down one day and filed the paperwork to create the Alachua Conservation Trust, Inc. (ACT). He had grown weary of participating in environmental organizations that never seemed to accomplish anything concrete.

He could not foresee, of course, how much positive, concrete action ACT would take over the coming years, but he is constantly amazed at what that little bit of paperwork filed with the state could turn into. He is ever so grateful for the many talented, energetic people that took that first step and ran with it to fantastic success.

LU ANNE WILSON

As a life-long resident of Florida, Lu Anne has witnessed many changes in our landscape, particularly in the Orlando area, where both of her parents were born in the 1930's, and where she spent her early years. Lu Anne remembers camping, canoeing, hiking and exploring the outdoors as a kid, and hopes that the descendants of her family will also have similar experiences.

So in 1991 at the age of 35, even though her degrees from the University of Florida are in finance and law, Lu Anne changed careers from municipal bond finance to land conservation. Lu Anne began her 27-year career in land conservation with Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT), first as staff attorney and later as Executive Director. During her 6 years with ACT, Lu Anne was part of a team that worked to add public lands to Paynes Prairie, Watermelon Pond, San Felasco Hammock, Newnans Lake, the Suwannee River corridor, and the Hogtown Creek Greenway.

Next, working within the 18 counties of the St. Johns River Water Management District, Lu Anne spent 21 years acquiring conservation lands for projects such as establishing extensive public land corridors along the St. Johns River, water quality improvement programs, and enhancing wildlife corridors between large conservation areas like the Ocala National Forest and Seminole State Forest. Lu Anne also worked with many farmers and ranchers to buy conservation easements over their private lands to limit development and preserve special natural features of their lands. In addition, Lu Anne's work at the District included developing and overseeing its 125,000-acre conservation easement program, maintaining and coordinating the District's database that contains acquisition details of all of its 725,000 acres of conservation lands, and developing private, State and Federal partnerships to fund and manage conservation acquisitions.

Throughout her career, Lu Anne has been a team player and willing to participate in whatever way was needed, from writing grants for funding, drafting agreements and other legal documents for closings, developing acquisition procedures and programs, and, her favorite, meeting with landowners to talk about their conservation goals and crafting ways to bring those goals to fruition.

Lu Anne says she feels very lucky to have had a career protecting Florida's natural resources, including playing a key role in transactions that directly resulted in acquiring over 100,000 acres of conservation land.

NEW YEAR, NEW LANDS PROTECTED



PHOTO OF FOX PEN PARCEL BY: KIM DAVIDSON

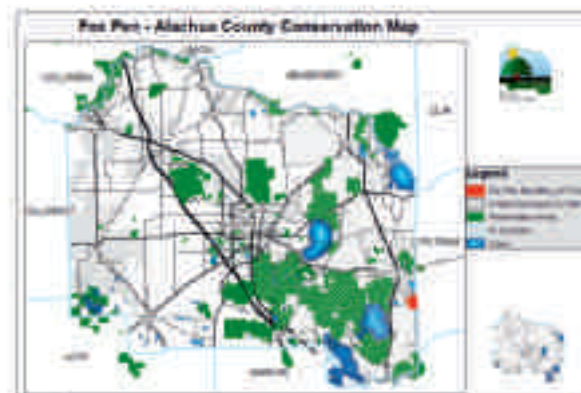
The busy conservation work of 2018 carried into 2019 with the acquisition of the 578-acre Fox Pen property on January 15th. With funding from a generous private donor, Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) in partnership with Alachua County purchased this diverse mix of longleaf sandhill habitat, flatwoods, wetlands, mesic hammock, and shoreline of Moss Lee Lake in Hawthorne, FL. The land was acquired from Weyerhaeuser Company and is now permanently protected for conservation.

This yet to be named preserve will help protect wildlife species diversity and water quality within the Orange Creek Basin. Among the many native plant species that can be found in the preserve are longleaf pine, wiregrass, native blueberry and deerberry. “This land is not only important to protect the waters in the Orange Creek Basin, but it also offers important habitat for such species as gopher tortoise, Northern bobwhite quail, indigo snake, and Florida black bear,” said ACT’s Executive Director Tom Kay.

The Fox Pen parcel is part of the larger, nearly 60,000-acre Lochloosa Forest Project Area, which spans the eastern third of Alachua County and includes the nearly 3,000 acre Little Orange Creek Preserve in Hawthorne. Lochloosa Forest is the most important north-south wildlife corridor in Alachua County and spans 27 miles from the Santa Fe River on the County’s northern boundary, to the Orange Creek Restoration Area in the southeastern corner of the County. It connects several key existing state and local conservation areas.

The purchase price was \$1.321 million with the County contributing \$876,492 and ACT contributing \$444,685. Alachua County’s funding came from the Wild Spaces and Public Places (WSPP) initiative. WSPP is an eight-year, one-half-cent sales tax approved by county voters in November 2016, which pays for the purchase of conservation lands and the improvement of recreational facilities throughout the county and its municipalities.

ACT will provide the day-to-day management for the entire property, including spearheading habitat and forest restoration in the needed areas. Public access to the preserve is slated for early 2020 once a trail system and other public amenities are put in place. Planned improvements include walking paths open to the public, two trailheads, bike racks, informational kiosks, benches, and a parking area. ACT guided tours will begin in the fall of 2019.





TREE FEST IS BACK

The event will take place on Saturday, April 27th from noon to 11p.m. at Swamp Head Brewery. Free admission.

The 5th Annual Tree Fest is back! Tree Fest is presented by Solar Impact and Swamp Head Brewery to support ACT by raising money to plant A LOT of trees. Tree Fest plants five trees for every beer, shirt and certain food or drinks that are purchased during the event. To date, Tree Fest has supported planting over 250k seedlings.

All donations from Tree Fest sponsors go directly to ACT to plant one-year old longleaf pines in at Little Orange Creek Preserve.



YOU VOTED -

NOW ACT IS IN AT LUCKY'S MARKET!

You can support ACT at Lucky's Market from February 3rd to May 25th.

From now until May 25th, you can turn your bags into donations for ACT! If you choose to shop at Lucky's Market and bring your reusable bags, you can help fundraise for Alachua Conservation Trust.

It's pretty simple: Shop at Lucky's Market and bring your reusable bags. Take the wooden dime you receive for each reusable bag used and vote for Alachua Conservation Trust by placing your wooden dimes in the bin with ACT's name on it. Then, celebrate a job well done!



HOGTOWN CRAFT BEER FEST -

NEW DATE, MORE FUN

Tickets will not be available at the door. A portion of proceeds benefit Alachua Conservation Trust.

On the 23rd of March, Gainesville's Hogtown Brewers will be hosting their annual Hogtown Craft Beer Festival, where attendees can sample beers from various local, regional, and national breweries on the Alachua County Fairgrounds.

Music from local bands, homebrewing demonstrations and food vendors can all be expected from 11:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. Tickets will be available on Ticketleap.com for \$45 until February 28th, after which they will rise to \$55.

SAVING THE SPRINGS OF THE SANTA FE RIVER

PHOTO BY: JOHN MORAN

"It's a wonderful feeling to know you've done a small part in helping to preserve God's beautiful nature," Jim said. "I'm just happy to help."

In late 2018, Jim Pruitt donated a conservation easement to Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) on his 59-acre property in Gilchrist County. The property is adjacent to Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park and is located approximately 6 miles from High Springs. Not only does the land protect the Santa Fe River watershed, it also prevents development along a beautiful stretch of river, adding to the conservation corridor.

An ephemeral spring tucked into the forested floodplain is the masterpiece of this landscape. John Moran, co-director of the Springs Eternal Project, was astonished when first introduced to this hidden gem last year. "Who knew?" Moran said; "It enriches the imagination to know there are yet special places in natural Florida that none of us may ever see. Long may it be so."

Pruitt's land provides a buffer for wetlands, wildlife habitats, agricultural land, and a direct connection to open space lands that are important for movement of wildlife between habitats. It also serves as a habitat to protected species such as the indigo snake and the gopher tortoise.

The property also resides close to Jim's heart. His father originally bought about 160 acres of the property in 1966, and Jim was just a young teenager when he first moved there. He said he loved growing up on the farm and exploring the woods over the years. One of his most distinct memories as a teenager was running into a wild indigo snake while his father plowed the field.

Today, he restores habitat by planting native flowers and shrubs to make it more suitable for quail, and prides himself on the beautiful property that was his childhood home.

Martha Strawn, neighbors with Pruitt, also generously donated 5 acres of land on the Santa Fe River to ACT at the end of 2018. This beautiful land is just down river from Poe and Lily Springs. With high bluffs along the water and floodplain forest, this stretch of land also adds a crucial protected area to the Santa Fe River corridor. Wild azaleas and rain lilies grow along the riverbanks; large birch, cypress, and gum trees stand proudly in the bottomlands; and both wiregrass and sparkleberry span the understory.

Each new conserved land in the Santa Fe River Corridor is vital in connecting north central Florida's most important east-west wildlife corridor, connecting conservation lands in this region with those along the Suwannee River.

By Lianne D'Arcy, Editorial Intern

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

Conservation easements are voluntary, flexible tools that assist landowners who wish to preserve their land while still retaining ownership. These are private agreements, not regulatory tools, that are entered into by a landowner, either as a donation or sale, and a recipient such as a conservation organization or government agency.



30TH ON THE 30TH

A huge thank you to everyone who attended Alachua Conservation Trust's 30th anniversary party this past September. Over 125 people enjoyed the bounce house, human foosball tournament, celebrity dunk tank, photo booth, and music. A special thank you to Blue Highway's mobile wood fired pizzeria "The Federal," for providing lunch. We are grateful to all of our sponsors, including our lead sponsors: Salter Feiber, Hogotwn Brewers, Deren Land Surveying, Swamp Head Brewery, First Magnitude, and Cypress & Grove Brewing Company.

It was a pleasure to celebrate our anniversary alongside our supporters and friends, and we look forward to the next 30 years of protecting and sharing wild Florida. Thank you for making ACT's first 30 years a success!

By Lianne D'Arcy, Editorial Intern

SERENOLA FOREST SAVED

"The big question is - is this going to be another Oak Hammock type of development or a park?" said Robert "Hutch" Hutchinson, then Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) Project Manager in November 2007 in an interview with the Gainesville Sun. "That is the two ways it can go."

Over the years, Serenola Forest has faced numerous threats and development pressure. Situated between Idylwild Elementary School and Oak Hammock, just south of Williston Road, it has been eyed often as prime development land. It serves as an important buffer area between Paynes Prairie and Gainesville's urban development areas, as it filters the storm water draining toward the beloved state park, and provides wildlife habitat on the fringe of the city.

In July 2006, the largest remaining tract of Serenola Forest, 111 acres, had been purchased for \$18 million by a Bulgarian multi-millionaire. The land was bought out from under ACT and development seemed all but certain for this land nestled on the southern edge of Gainesville and adjacent to the University of Florida's Oak Hammock Retirement Community.

Neighbors and friends of the forest have been fighting since the 1980s to protect this land and ensure its conservation. After the purchase in 2006 neighbors took action and pushed for the land to have its own special area designation in the City and County comprehensive plans. When Kate Lee was living in the middle of the forest, she came up with her own way to protect a portion of it. An avid supporter of conservation and ACT, Kate donated a conservation easement on her land in the Serenola Forest area with a remainder interest to ACT for her beautiful homestead. Not only did she conserve 11 acres in Serenola Forest, but she also received tax benefits from both her donation of the conservation easement and the remainder interest in her homestead.

In 2017, neighbor of Serenola Forest, Willa Drummond, deeded life estates on 22 acres adjacent to Serenola Forest to ACT. Willa continues to enjoy those lands and use them as she sees fit during her lifetime. Eventually, they will become part of Serenola Forest.

During the last dozen years, ACT continued to be patient, persistent and pursued acquisition of the land with the landowner's local representative, attorney David Coffey. With the passage of the local Alachua County sales tax initiative in November 2016, Wild Spaces & Public Places, the opportunity to fund such an acquisition seemed more optimistic. Creating an urban nature preserve is not an easy task.

As now - Alachua County Commissioner, Robert "Hutch" Hutchinson, noted, *"The land is relatively expensive compared to similar sized tracts in the boondocks. Often they are impacted by neglect that allows for dumping, abusive treatment by ATVs, and invasive exotic plants - all of which Serenola Forest has. But the rewards of having nearby nature make these parks among the most loved, especially for kids."*

And so began the task of getting the Serenola Forest project approved and added to Alachua County priority pool list of projects by the County's advisory Land Conservation Board. At the meeting for the property to be added to project pool, the tiny County conference room was packed with friends and neighbors of Serenola Forest. Those who couldn't make it, sent letters and emails to County Commissioners and to members of the Land Conservation Board.

A few months later, in an even larger meeting space at the County, the room was once again packed with friends of Serenola Forest and neighbors from Idylwild and Oak Hammock. Never had such a crowd shown up to support a land acquisition project. Young children handed board members handwritten notes and drawings of their beloved Serenola Forest. People of all ages spoke passionately about what these woods and the animals that call it home meant to them and their neighbors.

Debbie Segal, who had recently documented the woods in her beautifully written book, *Idylwild Cowgirls*, shared stories with the Land Conservation Board from her childhood riding in and around these woods. Ultimately, the land was added to the priority pool for acquisition by the County. With that, ACT and Alachua County were off to the races to acquire Serenola Forest.

Once under contract, ACT needed to raise \$300,000 for its contribution towards the purchase price of \$3.225M. With Kate Lee's financial support and a \$100,000 anonymous matching gift, ACT kicked off the Save Serenola Forest campaign in September 2018. Donations of all sizes came in from \$5 to tens of thousands of dollars. Each one counted and mattered with more than a hundred individuals, families, and foundations contributing to the campaign. In the 11th hour, ACT received a grant from AEC Trust right at the end of the year which allowed us to reach our goal.

This mixed hardwood hammock on a promontory that pokes into the northern edge of Paynes Prairie continues to stand tall thanks to neighbors young and old who have been fiercely protective of the Forest's natural areas for the last four decades. The acts of many ultimately lead to an incredibly joyous day on December 6th.

Again, Commissioner Hutchinson: *"Indeed this land would not be protected today but for a single young boy for whom it was his entire world. Though he left Gainesville two decades ago, he remembered this magical place, and called me about fifteen years ago. He said, 'I will support ACT's ongoing efforts to save this place, and once you have done so, I will support the preserve directly.' He has not wavered in this commitment, which was not only motivational and strategic, it was financial. Today, his childhood playground is a perpetual park that will inspire kids for centuries to come."*



After a decade and half of negotiations, Serenola Forest is now permanently protected by ACT and Alachua County. The acquisition of Serenola Forest connects the woodland hammock to Paynes Prairie State Preserve Park, allowing wildlife more room to safely roam along natural space, forever protected. Its location allows for a diverse set of benefits, ranging from fostering community engagement to expansion of Florida's ecological corridor

With your help, ACT plans on making the forest more accessible by including walking paths, two trailheads, a wildlife viewing platform, picnic tables, bike racks, informational kiosks, benches, handicap accessible trails, and a parking area. Along with these plans, ACT also aims on promoting environmental education through ACT sanctioned events, and by hosting six annual natural environmental science classes for the nearby school, Idylwild Elementary, with our partners from the Friends of Little Orange Creek.

With support from the local community, ACT also plans to restore and protect the land within Serenola Forest. Future land management tasks include the removal of invasive plant species and the replanting of native plant species along the corridor. By doing so we hope to preserve the ecological integrity of the Serenola Forest and enhance conditions for maintaining diversity within the forest.

Thank you to everyone who came to meetings, wrote articles, sent letters and emails to the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners and Land Conservation Board, donated to the Save Serenola Forest campaign, who helped negotiate the deal, helped with the clean-up day last November, participated in the invasive plant removal days already and to everyone who help Save Serenola Forest forever.

Our appreciation goes out to Alachua County and its staff and to David Coffey for his role in assisting with the acquisition. A special thanks to those individuals who have dedicated the last few decades of your life to making this dream a reality. We are deeply in gratitude to you all.

A soft opening of Serenola Forest is slated for Saturday, April 13, 2019.

OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO...



Who knew that hard work in mud, mosquitoes and extreme weather conditions could also be tons of fun?

ACT's natural resource management interns found out just how much as they spent more than 150 hours each this fall learning new skills and helping to accomplish a variety of projects on ACT's preserves. And the spring semester crew has already gotten a great and busy start during these lovely, crisp sunny winter days!

This past fall, interns honed their construction skills building anew boardwalk at the end of the trail at Little Orange Creek Preserve, and beginning construction of a new wildlife viewing platform there as well. This spot offers a stunningly picturesque view of Fowler's Prairie. We can't wait to complete it and share it with you! Interns also had the opportunity to check out some of the burrows of our healthy gopher tortoise population in the uplands and monitor longleaf pine seedling survival in the restoration areas of the preserve.

The interns learned to identify and removed invasive plants at Prairie Creek, Blues Creek Ravine and Tuscawilla Preserves. Native plant identification was a large focus as well, with the goal of learning key indicator species for the common ecosystems in the area. So far this spring, interns have planted over 1,000 longleaf pine seedlings and participated in a prescribed fire at Little Orange Creek Preserve. In addition to land management, they provided essential support for setting up and working at events, including ACT's 30th Anniversary Celebration, the Halloween Ball, and the first Flatwoods Fire and Nature Festival.

One of the most valuable aspects of this program is the opportunity for interns to meet with and learn about the experiences and career paths of a variety of local natural resource management professionals. Throughout each semester, we meet with experts in a wide variety of natural resource fields, visiting their work sites or simply having lunch and visiting casually. We are so grateful to the following people for their generosity in taking time to mentor these aspiring land stewards:

Liz Ramirez, *Wildlife Biologist*, Ocala National Forest
Ginger Morgan, *Regional Coordinator of the Landowner Assistance Program*, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Sandra Vardaman, *Conservation Lands Program Supervisor*, Alachua County Environmental Protection Department

Paul Moler, *Biologist*, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Colette Jacono, *PhD, Botanist*, UF Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants and Florida Museum Herbarium

Sarah Tobing, *Land Resource Specialist*, St. Johns River Water Management District

BIG NEWS!

We are also happy to announce that the Women in the Woods internship program has been named the recipient of TWO grassroots funding programs from local businesses: Satch Cash grant and Lucky's Bags for Change program. By using the ATM at Satchel's and bringing your own bags to Lucky's, you can support ACT this Spring!

WELCOME TO THE ACT FAMILY, STEVE WASP!

We are happy to introduce our newest ACT team member, Steve Wasp. Steve will be working part-time as our Land Management Specialist. His talents in prescribed fire run deep, having served as a Member for the AmericCorps National Civilian Community Corps, Crew Member and Crew Lead for the Nature Conservancy, as an Assistant Team Lead for Wildland Restoration International, and even on a crew out west fighting wildfires. If there is small engine maintenance needed, a tricky snag tree to cut, or students and interns requiring land management training, Steve is the person for the job. His steady work ethic, calm demeanor, and capacity to lead volunteer and intern crews are just a few reasons ACT staff and board are pleased to welcome Steve to the land stewardship team.



We also want to thank the generous supporters of our Women in the Woods program and the Ryan Crowder Memorial Fund for helping us keep these internships viable as we help to educate and inspire the next generation of land conservation stewards!

If you would like to learn more about ACT's Women in the Woods and Land Management internships or become a program supporter, please contact: Grace Howell at act.graceh@gmail.com

MENTORS IN FOCUS: LIZ RAMIREZ

We are so grateful to Liz Ramirez, wildlife biologist for the USDA Forest Service at the Ocala National Forest (ONF), for making time to meet with and mentor ACT's natural resource management interns. Each semester Liz has led us on field adventures highlighting her work on habitat restoration for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) population at the forest through the ONF's beautiful longleaf pine sandhills. She's also exposed interns to issues in invasive species control, recreational management, and scrub ecology there.

After growing up in Miami, Liz attended college through the 2 + 2 program for the Forest Service where she earned her associate's degree from Florida A & M University then graduated with a Bachelor's of Science in School of Forest Resources and Conservation from the University of Florida. There she continued her studies at UF earning a Master's Degree in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation studying the effects of forest restoration on habitat suitability for red-cockaded woodpeckers.

Liz says, "I love reaching out to local universities and intern programs to help spread the idea of conservation and becoming a steward of the land. I'm always learning from the students and really enjoy seeing them excel in this field. I love comparing ideas with women and helping to prepare young minds for a great career."

The Women in the Woods mentorships expose interns to professional opportunities. Eve Ciotti, an ACT intern in the fall of 2017, applied and was chosen to intern with Liz at the ONF last summer. She enjoyed checking RCW nests and banding the baby birds along with the less glamorous tasks of eradicating cogongrass!





"We are all about boots-on-the-ground, hands-on impact. Alachua Conservation Trust is a big part of that for us," said Barry Jacobson, President and CEO of Solar Impact.

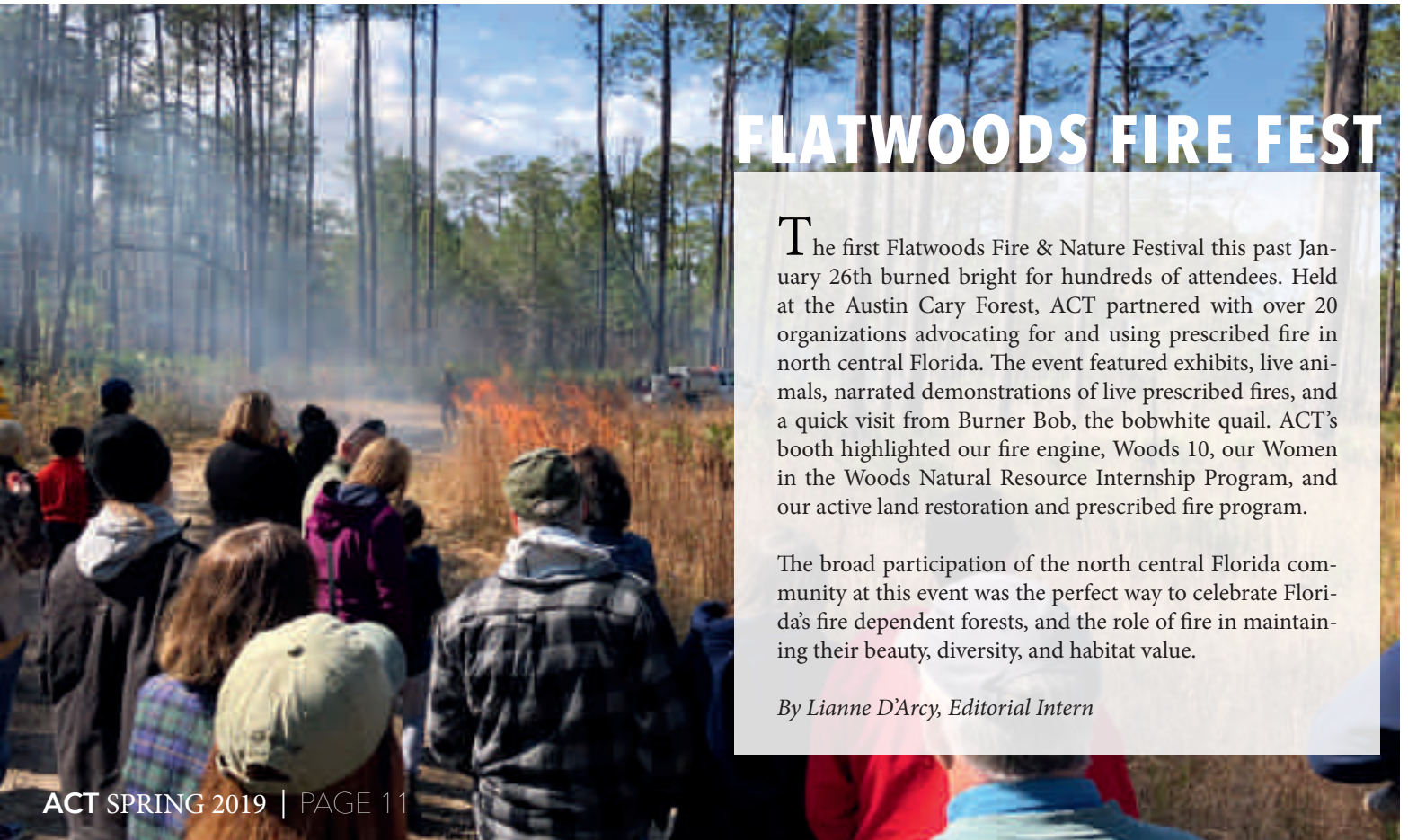
For over five years, Solar Impact has been a corporate sponsor of Alachua Conservation Trust. From every beer enjoyed at Tree Fest to every home that goes solar, Solar Impact makes their mark on the world by planting trees with ACT. Barry and Elaine Jacobson founded Solar Impact in 2007, but Barry's work as an agent for change began well beyond that.

With a Ph.D. in Biological and Agricultural Engineering, Barry has been using his skills to positively impact the environment, Alachua County, and everyone in his community through every home and business that he helps go solar. We are proud that his work as an environmental advocate has bled through his company to touch us here at ACT.

Barry continued that every glimmer of success at Solar Impact always gets tied back to pushing positive change. "The more we do well," Barry said, "then the more we can do good." Barry concluded that being ACT's corporate sponsor is more than just a partnership. It's a tangible feeling of pride through every tree that's planted and every dollar that's raised.

We are proud to continue to have Solar Impact as our Corporate Sponsor this year at ACT. Thank you for all you do for wild Florida!

By Lianne D'Arcy, Editorial Intern



FLATWOODS FIRE FEST

The first Flatwoods Fire & Nature Festival this past January 26th burned bright for hundreds of attendees. Held at the Austin Cary Forest, ACT partnered with over 20 organizations advocating for and using prescribed fire in north central Florida. The event featured exhibits, live animals, narrated demonstrations of live prescribed fires, and a quick visit from Burner Bob, the bobwhite quail. ACT's booth highlighted our fire engine, Woods 10, our Women in the Woods Natural Resource Internship Program, and our active land restoration and prescribed fire program.

The broad participation of the north central Florida community at this event was the perfect way to celebrate Florida's fire dependent forests, and the role of fire in maintaining their beauty, diversity, and habitat value.

By Lianne D'Arcy, Editorial Intern

HALLOWEEN BALL

New children's activities, a change of start time and a new program beneficiary of the event marked a few of the changes at Alachua Conservation Trust's annual Halloween Ball this past year.

On October 27th, 200-plus costumed contestants prowled First Magnitude Brewery and raised nearly \$3,000 for ACT's land management internship program, The Women In the Woods. A partnership with First Magnitude Brewing Co. also inspired many new children's activities such as face-painting, dunk tanks, and new environmental activities for children to learn about water conservation.

Lucy Stein, more commonly known as ACT's winning praying mantis, walked away with first place prize for the second year in a row. Spiderman, Marty McFly, and a family of pirates all watched in awe as Lucy's stilted costume towered above them.

Typically, funds for ACT's Halloween Ball go toward land-acquisition projects, but this year struck hope into the hearts of the Women in the Woods Interns, who desperately needed new equipment for their field work.

Special thank yous to First Magnitude Brewing Company and to all those who attended!



CSA 2019 CANOE RAFFLE



Raffle tickets to win a canoe handmade by master craftsman and avid ACT supporter Bruce Proctor are available for \$20 a ticket.

This canoe's hull is crafted from beautiful Western Red Cedar strips and the remaining woodwork is made from locally milled cherry. The canoe is 18.5' long, 37" wide, and weighs 79.5 lbs. A winner will be chosen at the 20th annual Conservation Stewards Awards on Saturday, March 16th. All proceeds raised from the raffle will be donated to ACT programs and projects. Order tickets online now at: www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org



SKIPPER HAMMOND



In a blog post, Skipper wrote: "Stories shape the world. Stories change the world." Skipper is shaping the world and changing the world for the better by conserving her beloved part of natural and wild Florida. From all of us that call this part of north central Florida home, thank you Skipper, from the bottom of our hearts.

Winding back on a lime-rock and dirt road for nearly a mile, the drive appears to take you both to a different region of the country and back in time altogether. In a sense, you have travelled to another time. The home here, with beautifully manicured gardens around it, was built originally on Noble Avenue in downtown Williston in 1904. Skipper Hammond, a retired country newspaper editor and Southern Gothic mystery writer, moved it to this spot in 1994.

Skipper, a North Carolina native, had gone to Harvard where she was a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education. When she eventually came to north central Florida, she began writing for the Ocala Star-Banner and Gainesville Sun, then founded the weekly Williston Pioneer, where for ten years she worked 60-80 hours a week reporting, writing, editing, designing ads, laying out, mailing, and sweeping the floor. The family of Skipper's late husband had owned considerable amounts of land in northeast Levy County, but over the years much of it had been sold off, and now all that remains is the part where Skipper resides today.

Thanks to long retired lime-rock quarries on the land, Skipper's 130 acres has several high bluffed lakes and ponds that give you the feel of being in the mountains of North Carolina or traveling along the upper Mississippi River. Of course, the difference is that these water bodies have alligators in them from time to time to go along with an abundance of fish and birds that reside or forage there.

With regular water in these deep watering holes, the wildlife is everywhere on Skipper's land in northeast Levy County.

More than anything, Skipper wanted to ensure that this six-decades gone, former lime-rock mining operation continue to be the wooded haven for wildlife it has become, now and for many future generations. To that end, Skipper donated a conservation easement on the land to Alachua Conservation Trust this past December, to protect her beloved woods.

Skipper's land is adjacent to thousands of acres of scenic agricultural working lands, which makes its preservation a high priority in achieving ACT's long-term conservation goals. By placing a conservation easement on it, Skipper has given up most of the future development and mining rights, among other things, but she and her family will continue to enjoy all the other natural benefits of this beautiful property.

Nestled among the hardwood hammocks, planted pines, small grazing pastures, and abandoned lime-rock quarries is Lucy's Diamond, a stunning aqua blue karst window believed to be tied to Devil's Den Spring in Williston.

In addition to protecting the open, rural and scenic character of this continually threatened landscape, Skipper's decision to protect her land with ACT also helps to protect the water quality and quantity in this area - and the wildlife that rely on it - forever.



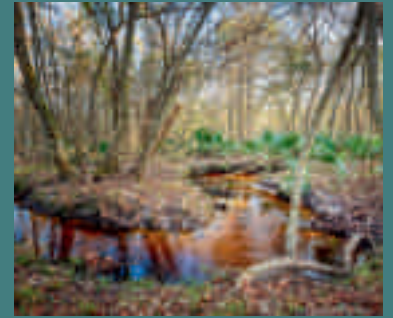
LITTLE ORANGE CREEK



LITTLE ORANGE CREEK



SAARINEN



SANTA FE



TUSCAWILLA



TUSCAWILLA



PRAIRIE CREEK





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Since 1988, the mission of Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) has been to protect the natural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources in and around Alachua County, Florida. ACT protects land through purchase, donation, and conservation easements.

ACT is a 501(c)3 non-profit charity and receives no government grants for general operating support; we rely on contributions from private individuals, corporations, and foundations. Donations may be tax deductible, however ACT does not provide tax advice.

Alachua Conservation Trust's charitable solicitation number is CH12693. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free (800) 435-7352. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.

ANABEL ANDERSON - NEWSLETTER LAYOUT AND DESIGN

