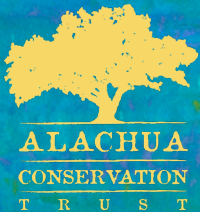




ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST

Gazetteer



FALL 2019

*Growing a Vibrant
Conservation Community*

SAVE ORANGE LAKE OVERLOOK

"Orange Lake Magic" Painting By Gary Borse

FALL 2019 UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

7 - Evening Bug Walk - led by Dr. Andrea Lucky, Dr. Jiri Hulcr & Rachel Atchison
@ *Prairie Creek Preserve*
8pm to 10pm

14 - Paddle the Santa Fe River
@ *Santa Fe River Preserve (RSVP ONLY)*
9:30am - 12:30pm

22 - CBI Workshop: Burial Team Training
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
1pm

28 - CBI Workshop: How To Write Effective Advance Directives
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
9am

OCTOBER

5 - Saturday Morning Yoga with Victoria Thompson of Flow Space
@ *Tuscawilla Preserve*
9am

5 - 2019 World Tour Paddling Film Fest
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
6pm - 9pm

6 - CBI Workshop: What's a Body To Do?
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
10am

12 - Saturday Morning Yoga with Victoria Thompson of Flow Space
@ *Tuscawilla Preserve*
9am

12 - Morning Bug Walk - led by Dr. Andrea Lucky & Dr. Jiri Hulcr
@ *Tuscawilla Preserve*
9am to 11am

19 - Saturday Morning Yoga with Victoria Thompson of Flow Space
@ *Tuscawilla Preserve*
9am

26 - Saturday Morning Yoga with Victoria Thompson of Flow Space
@ *Tuscawilla Preserve*
9am

27 - Pumpkin Spice & Everything Nice
@ *Rockwood Park*
1pm - 3pm

CBI - Conservation Burial Inc.
PCCC - Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery

Event updates at:
AlachuaConservationTrust.org/upcoming-events

NOVEMBER

2 - Saturday Morning Yoga with Victoria Thompson of Flow Space
@ *Tuscawilla Preserve*
9am

3 - CBI Annual Memorial Celebration
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge & PCCC*
TBA

9 - Saturday Morning Yoga with Victoria Thompson of Flow Space
@ *Tuscawilla Preserve*
9am

15 - Local Waters - WILD PLACES Film
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
6:30pm - 9:30pm

16 - Saturday Morning Yoga with Victoria Thompson of Flow Space
@ *Tuscawilla Preserve*
9am

18 - Paddle the Santa Fe River
@ *Santa Fe River Preserve (RSVP ONLY)*
9:30 am - 12:30 pm

23 - Nature Day in the Park
@ *Little Orange Creek Nature Park/Preserve*
TBA

DECEMBER

6 - REEL ROCK 14 Film
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
6pm - 9pm

13 - Holiday Mingle
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
6pm - 9pm

FEBRUARY

8 - Fox Pen Preserve Grand Opening
@ *Fox Pen Preserve*
TBA

22 - Kotuk-Kemp Art Show Fundraiser for Orange Lake Overlook
@ *John's Lane Farm*
TBA

MARCH

14 - 21st Annual Conservation Stewards Awards
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
5:30pm - 9:30pm

19 - Woman's Work: Conserving Wild Florida - talk by Hannah Brown, The Marjorie
@ *Prairie Creek Lodge*
6:30pm - 8:00

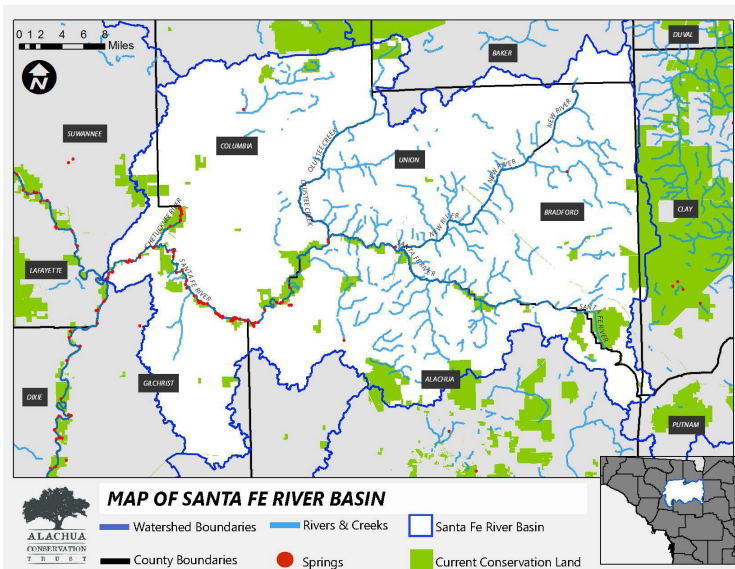
SAVING THE LANDS WHERE THE RIVERS FLOW

Santa Fe River Basin & The Ichetucknee Trace

For 31 years, Alachua Conservation Trust has been working continuously to protect land along the Santa Fe River. Past work has resulted in the generous donation of several conservation easements and the opening of the Santa Fe River Preserve, a public preserve protecting over 900 acres of uplands, wetlands and river frontage. Building off of our past work and the community's passion, ACT is redoubling its efforts to preserve this region in perpetuity by announcing our newest campaign to Save the Santa Fe River Basin.

Seeded by a \$166,000 grant from the Healthy Watershed Consortium, **ACT now has the capacity to support a full-time Santa Fe River Basin Coordinator and additional staff who will focus on and invest existing land conservation funding in priority areas, coordinate land acquisition and conservation easements, and conduct expanded outreach throughout the Santa Fe River Basin.** In addition to the basin-wide work, ACT is also pleased to announce a focus area within the basin that will specifically work to conserve land critical to the Ichetucknee River's health.

In short, ACT's Santa Fe River Basin project will seek to conserve land in the basin through donation, acquisition, and conservation easements. By 2045, with your help, we aim to protect an additional 75,000 acres in the basin area! In addition to the basin's regional importance for water quality and as a critical space for wildlife, this area is well known by locals and tourists as a recreation haven for swimming, fishing, kayaking, and – of course - tubing the Ichetucknee.



For more information on ACT's conservation work along the Ichetucknee or to discuss the prospect of a conservation easement, please contact Erica Hernandez, Statewide Land Acquisition Specialist, by email at: act.eric@gmail.com, or by phone at 352-373-1078.

For more information on Save the Santa Fe River Basin or to discuss the prospect of a conservation easement, please contact Melissa Hill, Santa Fe River Basin Project Coordinator, by email at act.melissah@gmail.com, or by phone at 352-373-1078.

PROTECT FLORIDA'S SPRINGS BY PROTECTING FLORIDA'S LANDS

The Rise Up for the Santa Fe campaign was launched in 2015 to protect its waters and the open, wild spaces surrounding the river for you, your family, and your favorite wildlife. Through your generosity to the campaign more than 716 acres of forests, creeks, and seepage springs along the Santa Fe River have been acquired and conserved.

Your help is needed once again. ACT has contracted with 5 landowners to acquire more than 254 acres along the Santa Fe River and Olustee Creek in southeastern Columbia County. Included in this mix of floodplain forests and former pastures is all the land surrounding Santa Fe Springs, a second magnitude spring pumping out more than 44 million gallons of fresh water a day. A second, small ephemeral spring situated in the woods off of the river runs crystal clear over dancing white sand. **By conserving this land, you will not only improve the water quality of the Santa Fe, but also the flow from the springs.** The total project will cost more than \$1.4 million, which ACT must raise to purchase the land and restore it to a forested nature preserve open for public recreation.

Your donation will help us protect and maintain the water in, and the land around, the Santa Fe River. Donate Today at: alachuaconservationtrust.org/donate and select Rise Up for the Santa Fe River.

SHOW UP AT THE ACT BUG WALK - IT WILL CHANGE YOUR WORLD!

By Dr. Jiri Hulcr and Dr. Andrea Lucky, UF - IFAS

Last year, four outdoor enthusiasts thought that it would be a good idea to organize a bug-centered activity on an ACT property. We did not quite know what it would be, but Ivor Kincaide and Melissa Hill of ACT and Jiri Hulcr and Andrea Lucky, two UF entomology professors, had a hunch that if we invited a bunch of families, students and nature lovers, equipped them with nets, and walked into the woods, something interesting might happen.

The results have been amazing. We have now done three Bug Walks and are planning to run one each Fall and Spring. Every time more people show up; last time over 70 individuals, spanning an age range from under seven to over seventy. Many are now regular participants, and a few have come to every single Bug Walk!

Learn a little, like them a lot. The first and most obvious benefit of these walks is for people to find out the incredible diversity of little life forms that live around us in Florida. It is one thing to be vaguely aware of arthropods from your biology classes. It is a whole different thing to wander among the myriad of species, genera and families flying and crawling around you, soak up their names, colors and life histories, and effortlessly become sort of an expert, including the confidence that comes with it.

Small critters, big experiences. Beyond education, you form a relationship with these beings. A tickle of a gentle millipede, a lick of a butterfly tongue on your sweaty skin, the sweet almond scent of the friendly wood roach... those experiences go right into the subconscious parts of our brain. They make us surprised and happy, they record memories. We start liking this stuff.



Jiri explains slugs to a young attendee

Learn, like, care. Then you decide to come to the next Bug Walk, and perhaps to another fun nature event with like-minded people, and something even more interesting happens. For centuries, we thought that nature was a resource for us to use; now we're finding out that we are merely part of it. For some, a reference to the movie "Avatar" would be a good one here, for others, a reference from a Greek classic might say it best, and yet others, a memento from the story of creation, but it's all the same: you find yourself to be a part of the whole. It is no longer an exotic safari – you discover that nature is the place where you live.

Many citizens, especially the small ones, cannot always contribute to land preservation by buying it. So we invite them to a Bug Walk instead. **Stewarding our community's connection to nature is an important way of preserving the wild places that give so much to us.** Plan to attend our upcoming evening bug walk on Saturday, September 7th at Prairie Creek Lodge - it will change your world!



Kids chase butterflies, parents ask curious questions and students fill up their bug collections



FISH AND FRESH WATER FAUNA OF THE SANTA FE

By Howard Jelks, Research Fish and Wildlife Biologist, USGS

On May 18th, 2019, my U.S. Geological Survey colleague Nathan Johnson and I hosted an event at the newly acquired Santa Fe River Preserve. **The field trip was organized to introduce participants to the aquatic diversity in our local rivers.** It was a beautiful morning with low water conditions—ideal for wade sampling. First, we discussed how streams and rivers reflect the activities in the watershed. It is important to understand that what occurs in the atmosphere and on land will get carried into our rivers and eventually the sea via rainfall. Some of these items are natural, such as leaves and woody debris, while others are pollutants and litter. Freshwater mussels, such as the endangered Oval Pigtoe that lives in the Santa Fe River, are some of the most imperiled fauna in America. They filter mass quantities of water as they feed, in turn cleansing the water column. They rely on fishes as hosts during their early parasitic life stage.

We used dipnets and seines to capture a variety of aquatic insects, mussels, crayfish, and fish. Then Nate and I demonstrated how professional biologists use a backpack electrofisher to temporarily stun fishes. The various organisms were placed in aquaria or pools so we could observe their unique adaptations to living in dynamic stream systems. We learned that beetle butts smell like green apples (yes, we did smell them!) and dragonflies can crawl, fly, AND swim. All the field trip attendees had a great time and learned a bit about aquatic ecology. Rivers and streams are best protected by people who appreciate linkages between terrestrial and aquatic systems. We are all part of the web of life!



Black-banded Darter



UF CAMPAIGN FOR CHARITIES:

A Decade of Support For Land Conservation

Two-thousand nineteen marks the tenth year that UF employees and faculty have shown their amazing support for ACT programs and land conservation efforts throughout North Central Florida.

In total, ACT has received more than \$225K from this wonderful initiative, enrollment for which kicks off once again beginning on September 3rd and running through October 18th.

If you are a UF staffer, please consider designating Alachua Conservation Trust for an annual gift through this payroll deduction program: you, your children, and your children's children will be glad you did!

ACCOLADES FOR ACT

FWF Conservation Organization Of The Year



ACT staff - Barry Couliette, Tom Kay, Erica Hernandez

At the Florida Wildlife Federation's Celebration of the Wild and Annual Conservation Awards banquet held June 22, 2019, Alachua Conservation Trust received the honor of being named the 2019 Conservation Organization of the Year. **The award was in recognition of ACT's long track record of conservation achievements punctuated by the more than 2,500 acres that ACT has been able to conserve during the last 12 months. This is due to the unwavering support that you have given to the organization over the last 31 years.** During the acceptance speech, ACT's Executive Director, Tom Kay, thanked ACT supporters, volunteers, board members, and staff.

He stressed the importance of people taking conservation into their own hands by continuing to financially support conservation organizations, volunteering their time to conservation efforts, and when possible, conserving their own lands through conservation easements and/or estate planning. With the unrelenting pressures facing Florida natural resources and open spaces, including a population expected to top 26 million people by 2030, this is the only way to ensure that we are able to conserve the best of what is still left unprotected in Florida today.

The Florida Wildlife Federation's annual selection of conservation award winners is one of the oldest in the state. Award winners are chosen from nominations made to the Federation's Board of Directors based on a nominee's accomplishments on behalf of Florida's fish, wildlife, and natural resources. ACT is especially grateful to the Florida Wildlife Federation's Board of Directors and staff for the recognition, and to all of you who make our conservation work possible every day.



KOTUK-KEMP ART SHOW & SALE

Fundraiser for Orange Lake Overlook



Sculpture by Maggie Kotuk

Please join us for the **Kotuk-Kemp Art Show & Sale** in support of the **Orange Lake Overlook acquisition and restoration project**. Renowned sculptor Maggie Kotuk has graciously offered the use of her studio space along with works by both she and equally distinguished local painter/print maker Michael Kemp as a means of helping to preserve this beloved piece of Marion County history.

This afternoon event filled with a feast for the eyes as well as the stomachs (hors d'oeuvres & cocktails/non-alcoholic beverages WILL be served) is set for Saturday, February 22nd, 2020 at Maggie's John's Lane Farm where she raises her beautiful Fresian horses. **Save the date**, and look for more details to follow in the Spring Gazetteer, by email, and on the ACT website!

ADVOCACY DAYS 2019

By Lianne D'Arcy, ACT Communications Intern

This spring, a select team of ACT staff and board members flew to Washington D.C. to participate in the Land Trust Alliance's annual Advocacy Days, which ran from April 8th through 10th. **This national event provides land trust leaders with hands-on advocacy training on Capitol Hill to facilitate their relationships with key legislators, thereby helping nonprofits like ACT build political influence within the land trust community.**

Advocacy Days allows land trusts to advocate for the legislation that funds opportunities to protect our water and conserve open space and working lands, including the farm bill and Land and Water Conservation Fund. Over the course of three dynamic days, participants heard from key speakers such as Andrew Bowman, the president and CEO of the Land Trust Alliance, and Pelham Straughn, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 13 years and the co-founder of the conservation focused 9b Group. Other events included lobbying visits with congressional delegates, meetings with senior agency officials, and a reception on Capitol Hill. ACT would like to thank all of its supporters for making a meeting like this possible, and encourage YOU to talk to your elected officials to effect positive change that benefits our treasured land and water resources in North Central Florida.



ACT staff and board members meet with Rep. Ted Yoho



Find your state legislators, visit: www.myfloridahouse.gov/representatives/find-your-representative



Pictured from left to right: Tom Kay, Melissa Hill, Bruce DeLaney, Paula DeLaney, Mark Mulhall



Fox Pen. Photo Credit: Kim Davidson

LINKING THE CRITICAL LANDSCAPES OF ALACHUA COUNTY

The many conservation successes that capped off 2018 are continuing strong into 2019. In mid-January, Alachua County and Alachua Conservation Trust acquired 578 acres in far eastern Alachua County. **The acquisition is part of a much larger effort to keep a wide swath of the County intact as a north-south wildlife corridor.** This key tract in the Lochloosa Forest project area, formerly known as Fox Pen, was acquired from the Weyerhaeuser Company and permanently protects important wildlife habitat. The Lochloosa Forest project area is composed of 59,853 acres in the eastern third of Alachua County extending southward 27 miles from the headwaters of the Santa Fe River on the County's northern boundary to the Orange Creek Restoration Area in the southeastern corner of the County, and it connects several existing state and local conservation areas.

The acquisition of Fox Pen will protect the outstanding waters and diversity of wildlife species within the Orange Creek Basin. A mix of sandhill, flatwoods, and mesic hammock, this land south of Hawthorne is prolific in longleaf pine, wiregrass, and other critical native plant species necessary for a thriving ecosystem. In addition to improving water quality in the area and providing critical wildlife habitat, this yet unnamed preserve will eventually be opened for passive public recreation. "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 the gopher tortoise, indigo snake, and Florida black bear," said ACT's executive Director Tom Kay. "This property has some of the best intact native groundcover in the area, which will expedite the restoration of this beautiful landscape."

Alachua County contributed two-thirds of the funding for the acquisition and ACT contributed the remaining funds from a very generous private donation. ACT will provide day-to-day management of the entire property, and plans to install improvements at the Preserve will include hiking trails, picnic benches, park benches, interpretive kiosks, and parking area in the coming months.

In November 2016, the local Wild Spaces & Public Places initiative levied an eight-year, one-half-cent sales tax that was approved by a vast majority of county voters, and funds generated through Wild Spaces & Public Places has since paid for the purchase of many significant conservation lands and the improvement of recreational facilities throughout the county and its municipalities.

The grand opening of the Fox Pen property is tentatively slated for Saturday, February 8th, 2020, with more information to come. We hope you will be able to join us in this festive first preserve opening of the new decade!

A LONG TIME COMING

Serenola Forest Preserve

Ian Kress grew up playing in these woods and his mother, Mary McCarthy, still lives just a couple of doors down from them. He was a major advocate for the protection of Serenola Forest and flew in from Texas for this momentous day. On the day of the opening, he shared, **“It is nice to celebrate our wonderful accomplishment of conserving this 111-acre forest and reminisce about all the hard work that went into it.”**

After years of so much hard work, neighbors, friends and supporters of Serenola Forest were finally able to celebrate the opening of Serenola Forest Preserve. The joint project between Alachua Conservation Trust and Alachua County has resulted in the purchase of 111-acres in December 2018. The preserve is located in Gainesville just south of Williston Road between Idylwild Elementary school and Oak Hammock retirement community.

Many neighbors from the Idylwild neighborhood past and present, from the Oak Hammock Community, as well as from the larger community were on hand for the celebration. The public opening to the Preserve this past April 13th, was highlighted with remarks from Charlie Houder, Director of Parks and Conservation Lands for Alachua County, Hutch Hutchinson, Alachua County Commissioner, Debbie Segal, author of the book *Idylwild Cowgirls*, and ACT’s own, Tom Kay. Afterward, the crowd gathered round for a traditional ribbon cutting ceremony and was



Pictured: Debbie Segal. Photo Credit: Lianne D’Arcy

followed by a plant walk along the recently installed trail, beverages provided by Opus Coffee, and other light refreshments enjoyed with good company.

The purchase of Serenola Forest was made possible due to the generous support of ACT donors and the passage of the Wild Spaces and Public Places (WSPP) sales tax. To complete the purchase, ACT supporters raised \$300,000 in private funds and ACT brought in an additional \$1.5 million dollars through a grant application to the state’s Florida Communities Trust program.

Currently, there is a one mile hiking trail and picnic benches for visitors to enjoy. In the coming months, a wildlife viewing platform, information kiosks, park benches, walking paths, an additional trailhead, and a parking area will be added to the Preserve. There will also be ample volunteer opportunities at Serenola coming this fall and winter for those looking to enjoy the outdoors and make a difference, and in the meantime, you can enjoy the Preserve daily from dawn to dusk.



Serenola ribbon cutting. Photo Credit: Lianne D’Arcy

GAINESVILLE HEALTH AND FITNESS

Supports Rockwood Park With New Outdoor Fitness Equipment



Thanks to a generous donation from Gainesville Health and Fitness, your favorite pocket park is getting a makeover! Located in the Forest Ridge Community in urban Gainesville, Rockwood Park was opened in 2015 following a donation of the land by Don and Joanne Rockwood.

Now, in addition to serving as an arboretum, green space, and “Little Free Library” location, Rockwood Park will also be a family fitness destination. **Gainesville Health and Fitness provided the funds to purchase this outdoor fitness equipment**, which we anticipate unveiling at our Pumpkin Spice & Everything Nice event at the Park on October 27th, where we hope it will create an inspiring place to connect with nature and improve your health.

Alachua Conservation Trust extends its sincere gratitude to Gainesville Health and Fitness for its commitment to individual wellbeing, conservation initiatives, and community health. Founded in 1978, Gainesville Health and Fitness has 3 locations in Gainesville and is committed to creating a wellness experience that helps people get the most out of life and inspires them to become their very best.

BUILDING A FUTURE IN LAND STEWARDSHIP

One New Trail (Or Three) At A Time

Whew, our Natural Resource Management interns have been busy! In preparation for the grand opening of Serenola Preserve, spring interns had the unique opportunity to build a park from scratch. Trails and picnic areas were cleared, fences and a kiosk were built, and trail markers installed. In addition to the regular tasks of maintaining trails and removing invasive species in all of our preserves, interns honed their chainsaw skills with lots of practice on trails and restoration areas. Some also participated in prescribed fires.

Work also continues on the wildlife viewing platform construction for Fowler’s Prairie at the end of the Little Orange Creek hiking trail, with several cohorts of interns putting lots of sweat equity into the building project

Interns have also had the wonderful opportunity to meet with local “Women in the Woods” mentors who generously shared about their stewardship experience, career paths, and conservation ethics. As always, we are very grateful for these wonderful folks who have taken time with our future conservation professionals:

Judy Smith, *private land steward*

Ludie Bond, *Fire Mitigation Specialist, Florida Forest Service*

Jennifer Walls, *Biologist, Florida Forest Service*



Spring 2019 interns with ACT staffer Steve Wasp



WITW intern planting longleaf



WITW interns with Jennifer Walls at Goethe Forest monitoring woodpecker nest cavities

Wondering what our interns are up to after their time at Alachua Conservation Trust? Check our Facebook page for a recent series of intern highlights and get caught up on some of their amazing adventures!

GOOD DEEDS FOR E

By Lianne D'Arcy, ACT Communications Intern

“Good DEEDs for E” was created by Jacob Tillman to bring awareness to environmental opportunities, and to encourage leadership in both the classroom and the outdoors for the younger generation. “DEEDs” stands for Developing Environmental and Educational Dreams, and Jacob hopes to bring these goals to fruition by working alongside teachers, land management specialists, and land trusts like ACT.

On March 24th, ACT hosted the “Good DEEDs for E” service opportunity at Serenola Forest on behalf of Jacob Tillman and his son, Ethan Tillman. The service was open to all local Boy Scouts and their families.

At the service event, volunteers helped build and maintain trails, remove invasive plants, and pick up trash in and around Serenola Forest. The 111-acre woodland preserve borders Idylwild Elementary School and Oak Hammock at UF, and is home to many species of threatened wildlife that our community aims to protect.



Photo taken from Good DEEDs for E Facebook page



The Tillmann family at the “Good DEEDs For E” service event at Serenola Forest. Left to right: Jacob, Grant, Gavin, and Rebecca Tillmann

Through Jacob, “Good DEEDs for E” has completed numerous drives for the Ronald McDonald Charity House, gifted pottery supplies to Archer Elementary through donations, completed book drives for local elementary schools, and orchestrated cleanups all over the County.

In the future, Jacob hopes to implement an Adopt-A-Classroom program here in Gainesville, and organize future cleanup events for the community to participate in with ACT. In the meantime, Jacob spends his time Geocaching and working with the Boy Scouts.

We want to extend our gratitude to all those that helped preserve the beauty of Serenola Forest, and to honor the memory of Ethan Tillman alongside “Good DEEDs for E”. We had over 50 volunteers attend the service event, and we are especially grateful for the great work achieved for Serenola. Thank you, #GoodDEEDsForE, and thank you, Jacob.

LUCKY'S BAGS FOR CHANGE

Supporting ACT's Internship Program

Your bags have made a change! Thanks to your efforts of donating your wooden dimes and bringing your reusable bags to Lucky's Market Gainesville, \$3,816 was donated to Alachua Conservation Trust to support our Women In The Woods Natural Resource Management Interns!

This internship provides critical job training to young adults who work to maintain and restore the preserves you love! Thank you Lucky's Market and everyone who supports our services and conservation work - one dime at a time!





Sunrise Over Orange Lake Overlook. Photo Credit: Alison Blakeslee

ORANGE LAKE OVERLOOK - A LOCAL TREASURE

By Gary Borse, Artist

For over two decades I have been cattle farming in North Central Florida and this area we live in is one of the most beautiful in all of Florida. I have ridden my horses around Orange Lake, Orange Creek, Lake Lochloosa, and the Hawthorne Trail as well as trailblazed some of the Florida Greenway for horse trails before they were open to the public. I have seen some incredible places and scenic views in Florida, but nothing like the magic of “OLO”, or “The Orange Lake Overlook”.

The sunrises and moonrises here are magical and inspiring, they help you connect with your maker each time you witness them from the top of that hill. With its elevated and unobstructed prehistoric view of Orange Lake, it is one of the most picturesque vistas in the State of Florida, and needs to be saved for everyone to enjoy into perpetuity.

When I first saw OLO, I promised I would do what I could to save this for everyone. When it went on the market for sale last year, I started lobbying every local conservation group to help us save this from the developers, but only Tom Kay, Executive Director of Alachua Conservation Trust, agreed to do whatever he could to purchase and preserve this land for public use and enjoyment.

ACT now has a contract on this 71 acre parcel of land on HWY 441 just south of McIntosh. Closing is scheduled for November 8th, and we will need to raise over a million dollars for this sacred ground.

Besides being an historical scenic landmark, Orange Lake and Lake Lochloosa are critical spaces for birds like the Sandhill Crane. Other frequent visitors on the hill include bald eagles, osprey, herons, egrets, ibis, storks, vultures, white pelicans, anhingas, cormorants, kingfishers, split tail kites, red tail hawks, pileated woodpeckers, mockingbirds, cardinals, blue jays, doves, bluebirds, crows, deer, coyotes, fox, racoon, possum, skunks and snakes. And that’s the short list. During the migrating months, the bird traffic is bumper to bumper as OLO is a source of food, rest and breeding for flocks. **An Orange Lake Scenic Overlook destination would bring more locally-owned business opportunities to the areas of McIntosh, Orange Lake and Micanopy.** Once the property is purchased, we can begin to raise the funds needed to create amenities: picnic tables, an observation tower, parking, as well as a path around the property for all people to access its many different and beautiful views.

But to do all this, we need your help. We only have a few months and we need big donations to make this dream park come true. Please show your support for OLO by donating to Alachua Conservation Trust and selecting the Orange Lake Overlook as your contribution destination. Share this information with your friends so they can also help us reach our goal and purchase this property for everyone to enjoy. Ocala and Gainesville, Marion County and Alachua County, let’s do this together - protect the beauty of old North Central Florida, and save the OLO!

**Save Orange Lake Overlook - donate today by visiting:
AlachuaConservationTrust.org/donate**



FOR THE LOVE OF THE LAND

Saving Yours With A Conservation Easement

Land can be many things: a place to call home, a place to make a living, a place to make memories, a place to enjoy. Land can represent a way of life. It has a history. We can be bound to it much like our very own families. And as such, we can even love it like we do our family and friends.

A decade ago, Sara and Kay Eoff conserved their land around Newnans Lake by donating a conservation easement on it to ACT. At the end of last year, they did it again, only this time on more than 775 acres of multi-generational family land near Laurel Hill in Okaloosa County.

In the western panhandle of Florida and about a 5 hour drive from Gainesville, the diversity of landscapes and the quality of the habitats found on the Eoff's land in the Yellow River watershed is a marvel to behold. It's a place they love to visit, to explore, to observe the abundance of the flora and fauna, and to steward and restore the many habitats.

The homestead built in 1885 by Sara's family still stands today nestled among native pines and a few fruit trees. The home was partially restored in the 1990s and continues to exude old Florida charm and character.

Our deep gratitude is owed to Sara and Kay for their labor intensive restoration efforts on their land and for ensuring that it will be conserved for generations to come, thanks to the conservation easement now in place there.

What is a conservation easement?

A voluntary, perpetual agreement between a private landowner and non-profit conservation organization such as ACT or a government entity (city, county, state, or Federal) to protect one's land by giving up certain rights (development and mining for example) while retaining other rights for the purpose of conserving the natural resources and open space forever. If you have land in Florida you would like to see conserved, contact ACT at (352) 373-1078 or at info@alachuaconservationtrust.org to learn more about your options.



Grazing On Orange Lake Overlook. Photo Credit: Sean Dowie



ROCK BLUFF SPRINGS NOW OPEN

New Public Access Spring On The Suwannee

On Friday, May 31st, the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) and Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) celebrated the grand opening of J.H. Anderson Jr. Memorial Park with a ribbon cutting, guided hikes, swimming and plant walks. **The Park protects Rock Bluff Springs and encompasses 175 acres on the Suwannee River.**

“We appreciate the full support of opening the park from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the District’s Governing Board and the Anderson family,” said Hugh Thomas, executive director of the District. “Memories will be created at this park and families will be able to enjoy this unique spring for many generations to come.”

Visitors of the Park can enjoy swimming in the clear spring, picnicking by the water and nature-watching. A designated swimming area is outlined with a buoy, but visitors can also enter the spring by boat from the Suwannee River. ACT will manage the Park on behalf of the District and has taken on the role of long-term maintenance of the facilities with the goal of preserving the spring and surrounding lands while also providing visitors to the Park with a comfortable, enjoyable, and safe experience.

The District purchased the land in late 2017 from the family of Joe H. Anderson, Jr., who hoped to protect Rock Bluff Springs in perpetuity as well as increase recreational activities for locals, and the Park was named in his honor. Several improvements to the Park have already been made, including the addition of picnic tables, a roped-off swimming area, and other recreational opportunities, and future enhancements will include improving the water quality by installing an advanced wastewater system to nearby structures. This acquisition is part of larger joint effort to



Rock Bluff Springs circa 1990. Photo Credit: John Moran

protect as many of the springs and connected waters of the Suwannee and Santa Fe Rivers as possible.

Rock Bluff Springs is itself a second magnitude spring with a 700 foot spring run into the Suwannee River in Gilchrist County near Bell. The crystal-clear spring, with its large cypress trees, is the centerpiece of the tract, but the property is also dotted with numerous karst windows opening into the aquifer surrounded by giant live oaks. The blue-green spring pool itself measures 250 feet by 171 feet, with several vents feeding the shallow pool. The main spring is a nearly oval cavity where during the summers months mullet dart and jump two plus feet out of the water. Visitors to the Park pay \$4 for a single vehicle with 1-7 individuals, \$5 for a single vehicle with up to 8 individuals, \$2 for additional passengers in a single vehicle exceeding 8, and \$2 each for pedestrians and bicyclists. Annual Passes are available as well, and Park hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Come on out and enjoy the primitive beauty of Rock Bluff Springs today – the water feels just fine. **Rock Bluff Springs is located at 6560 Co Rd 340, Bell, FL 32619.**

THE FOREST THAT BEER BUILT

Celebrating Tree Fest 2019

After Solar Impact completed installation of a large solar system at the Swamp Head Brewery in 2014, Swamp Head and Solar Impact staff were brainstorming ideas for bigger ways for their companies to team up and make an environmental impact. Soon after, the idea for Tree Fest was born. **Created to fund planting trees, it has become an event with a significant impact on Alachua Conservation Trust's reforestation efforts with real impacts on water quality, carbon storage, and forest restoration.**

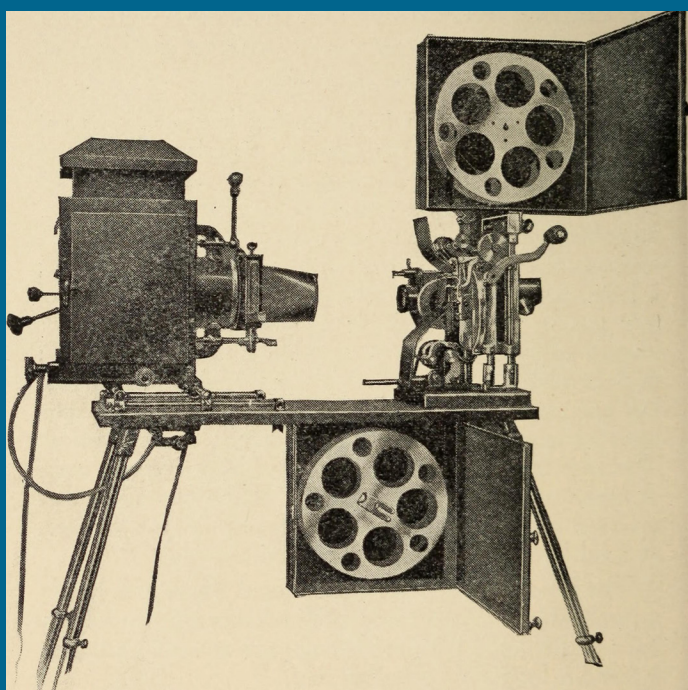
Tree Fest's theme, "Drink one beer, plant 5 trees" creates a fun and easy way to contribute and the turnout this April at Swamp Head Brewery was amazing. Beer and t-shirt sales as well as the generosity of over forty local business sponsors for this year's event will help ACT plant over 100,000 trees at the Little Orange Creek Preserve in Hawthorne, FL this winter, bringing the total proceeds since 2015 to over 235,000 trees planted.

Please keep your calendars open for the 2020 Tree Fest event in April, specific date to be announced later this year. Come celebrate Earth Day and Arbor Day at Swamp Head Brewery and please thank Solar Impact, Swamp Head, and all the event sponsors listed here. Cheers!

TREE FEST 2019 SPONSORS:

- Charity Ackerman
- Advanced Systems LTD
- Alma Mater
- Ash & Embers Food Truck
- Audi Gainesville
- Best Water Solutions
- Bronson Ace Hardware
- Jeffrey Bunkin & Claire Sever
- Gabriela & Jamie Castellanos
- Chevron at Hunter's Crossing
- Cilantro Taco
- Kenneth Colen
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- Will Stewart
- Sun Country Sports Center
- Swamp Head Brewery
- Martha Tod
- UBS - Michael Carr & Associates, Inc.

ACT'S OUTDOOR ADVENTURES FILM FEST



2019 WORLD TOUR PADDLING FILM FEST:

Attend the screening of these dynamic paddling films at Prairie Creek Lodge and cast your vote for the best film of the year! Saturday, October 5, 2019, 6PM to 9PM. Tickets are available for \$12 by phone or online at eventbrite.com. Refreshments will be available for a small donation.

LOCAL WATERS - WILD PLACES: At Musical Journey into the North Florida Wilderness with Sammy Tedder and his wife Sandy. Friday, November 15, 2019 from 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM at Prairie Creek Lodge. No fee to attend, but Sammy will be selling CDs and DVDs of the film during intermission, and refreshments will be available for a small donation.

REEL ROCK 14: ACT is excited to host another viewing of The Reel Rock Film Tour, one of climbing's greatest celebrations and cinematic expositions. Friday, December 6, 2019 from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Tickets are available for \$10 by phone or online at act-reel-rock-eventbrite.com.

HONORING OUR HEROES FOR TWO DECADES

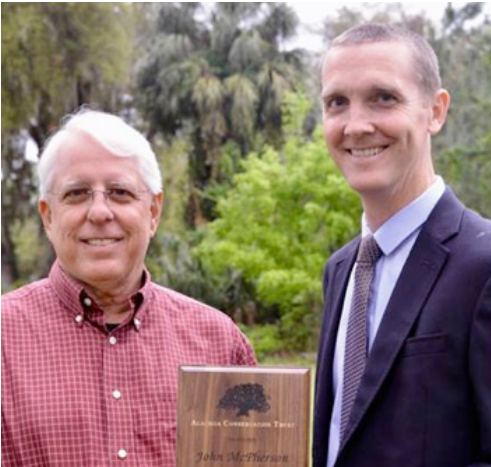
2019 Conservation Stewards Awards



On a rainy March evening, ACT hosted its 20th annual Conservation Stewards Awards, a **celebration of the community's most outstanding environmental leaders and advocates**. These individuals work tirelessly to make the cultural and environmental protection of North Central Florida a priority in their lives, so we believe it's important to make these heroes a priority in ours. This year, despite the gloomy weather, ACT's CSAs were the highest grossing and best attended since the genesis of the event, which is all thanks to our wonderful and intrepid supporters and sponsors.



2019's CSA honorees were John McPherson and Lu Anne Wilson. John considers his most significant conservation accomplishment also the easiest: the creation of Alachua Conservation Trust. Our second honoree was Lu Anne Wilson, who began her 27-year career in conservation with ACT first as staff attorney, and then later as Executive Director. Lu Anne also spent 21 years acquiring conservation lands for the St. Johns River Water Management District, where she oversaw the district's 125,000-acre conservation easement program. We are forever grateful for the work that Lu Anne and John have done for ACT and for Florida's natural landscapes, and wish to always keep these passionate and wonderful people close to us here at ACT.



At the event itself, attendees enjoyed Uncle Mosie's beautiful alternative country/ folk music while partaking in a great meal prepared by Sandra Carlisi and her team at Elegant Events/East End Eatery. Many thanks to them for keeping the festive mood high, and to all of our corporate sponsors for their ceaseless commitment to land conservation; because of them, this year's CSAs was the most successful by far. We raised over \$57K in donations and in kind support, and had more than 450 people in attendance. We would also like to extend our deep gratitude to all of our supporters, who brought the energy and excitement – despite the soggy conditions - needed to make the 20th annual Conservation Stewards Awards event the hit it most certainly was!



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20TH

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2019 CORPORATE SPONSORS

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Cypress



Magnolia



Tupelo



Wiregrass





Floating on the Santa Fe. Photo Credit: Makena Lang

YOUNG LEADERS FOR WILD FLORIDA

By Anna Mavrodieva, YLWF alumna

In 2018, Eastside High School alumnus Oscar Psychas founded the Young Leaders for Wild Florida program (YLWF), sponsored by Alachua Conservation Trust. In just one year, it expanded into a group of seventeen enthusiastic teenagers, consisting of both lifelong Alachua County residents and newcomers. High schoolers, college kids, students and alumni of GHS, Bucholz, Eastside, UF, Santa Fe, and Saint Francis participated — all sharing the love for beautiful Floridian nature and a passion for protecting it.

It's no secret that Florida's nature is extraordinary. It is well-known for its unique wildlife, lush landscapes, and topographical features such as the Floridan aquifer and springs. Our livelihoods and communities rely heavily on the health of Florida ecosystems, and everything from drinking water to the local economy is dependent on its well being. It is also no secret that Florida's environment and lifestyle faces many threats, from such wide-spread issues as urban sprawl, pollution from mining, and new pipelines and highways. The reality is heartbreaking to many Floridians, but where many are discouraged, the Young Leaders see opportunity for change. They are determined to discover, explore, and protect the environment that North Florida is so intrinsically connected by.

This past June, YLWF launched its second annual two-week program, during which the Young Leaders undertook conservation work at Paynes Prairie, canoed the Lower Santa Fe, splashed in springs along the rivers, and hiked through brush and over creeks conducting bio-

diversity surveys at Little Orange Creek Preserve and the Fox Pen tract. They discussed environmentalism with Alachua County Commissioner Ken Cornell, springs lobbyist Ryan Smart, and climate activist Jim McFarlane. They marveled at Florida's beauty with award-winning nature photographers Jenny Adler and John Moran. They contemplated the relationship between nature and society with community leader Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson, NAACP representative N'Kwanda Jah, and the researchers at the UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station. They learned about Florida ecology from river guide Lars Andersen, representatives of the Florida Springs Institute, members of the Florida Conservation Corps, and employees of Ashton Biological Preserve. The Young Leaders practiced civic responsibility, speaking before the county commissioners of both Alachua and Bradford Counties. Above all, they explored what it truly means to live in Florida, and to inherit the responsibility of caring for its natural treasures.

Although the 2019 YLWF summer session is officially over, the Young Leaders have remained active, attending and speaking at agency meetings—such as the North Florida Regional Planning Council and the Suwannee River Water Management District—where they spoke in opposition of the M-CORES toll roads. There are ambitious plans for the school year, during which YLWF will continue to take on various projects, such as trail maintenance, writing op-eds, and delivering speeches about the importance of nature conservation. They eagerly invite the youth of Alachua County to join them in their efforts to protect Florida's nature. **Follow Young Leaders For Wild Florida on Facebook or Instagram to learn more about (and participate in!) their future adventures.**

ACT PROUDLY ANNOUNCES ITS NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS

Erica joined ACT in spring of 2019 as the new Statewide Land Acquisition Specialist after spending a year camping across the western U.S. and Canada. Erica says her favorite part about working with ACT involves the people and all the meaningful work she can contribute to her community. **She's excited to work with private citizens and introduce them into the world of land and water conservation**, and is currently adjusting back to Gainesville life after her year-long camping trip. When not daydreaming about science, Erica can be found foraging for wild fruit or blacksmithing.



ERICA HERNANDEZ

Statewide Land Acquisition Specialist



BYRON FLAGG

Lead Negotiator For ACF

Byron Flagg is a third generation Floridian with deep roots in Alachua County. **As an employee of ACT, Byron serves as lead negotiator for the Alachua County Forever program under a contract between ACT and Alachua County.** He is experienced in land use, environmental, real estate, local government and coastal issues throughout Florida. In addition to his work with ACT, Byron is also closely affiliated with the University of Florida's Conservation Clinic and has worked on grant projects addressing coastal resiliency planning and environmental permitting related to natural shoreline preservation. Byron is also a veteran of the U.S. Coast Guard.



HEATHER OBARA

Community Outreach Director

Heather comes to ACT with over nine years of experience working with Florida non-profits. She is a native Floridian and grew up on the Gulf Coast. Heather started her career in environmental conservation with the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, where she worked to help communicate the results of scientific research and educate the public about the importance of protecting Florida's freshwater springs and aquifer. As ACT's Community Outreach Coordinator, **Heather works to promote ACT and its programs to donors, community partners, and the public.** In her free time, Heather enjoys paddling Florida's rivers and springs and running.



FAREWELL, DAVID!

David Ponoroff is the greatest unsung hero of Alachua Conservation Trust, and it is with bittersweet smiles but warmest wishes that we congratulate him on his move to Nashville, Tennessee to work for the Larkspur Cemetery. Since 2015, David has been a part of the Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery (PCCC), moving from intern to Cemetery Coordinator to Assistant Director. Because of his deep love of conservation and a shared office building, David was a natural addition to the ACT family.

David's unparalleled passion for Prairie Creek Preserve, his quick laugh at a good pun, and his tireless work taking care of the lodge and its people will be eternally missed. David is inimitable, an original, and the entire ACT & PCCC staff will be watching with pride and anticipation for all of his future successes while celebrating all he has already accomplished. Love and luck to you, David P!



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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