



# Turtle River Times

*The newsletter of the A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge*

*Issue 4  
May. - Aug. 2003*

## Volunteers are the name of the game

*by Mark Musaus - Refuge Manager*



This year there has been a series of special events throughout the nation and at A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. A year of celebrations as we focus on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the National Wildlife Refuge System. We held our fourth annual Everglades Day celebration, participated in the Pelican Island (the first National Wildlife Refuge) Centennial event, had a Centennial Refuge Series as part of our Calendar of Events programs, and attended many festivals to build awareness about the National Wildlife Refuge System.

We would not be able to be a part of so many of these events without our volunteer staff, so on March 31, I was pleased and honored to participate in another special event, our annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony. The key to any successful organization or activity is to celebrate success; and celebrate we did. Almost 100 volunteers, friends, and refuge staff took some time

out from busy schedules to recognize the hard work and efforts of the many volunteers that work at the refuge. Refuge staff recognized various levels of contributed hours as well as special work during 2002. We recognized one individual that has compiled more than 6500 hours of volunteer work on the refuge over 20 years! Just as special was the opportunity to meet an

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# The Everglades Program Team

By Dr. Matt Harwell, Senior Ecologist

## *Teams are the name of the Everglades restoration game*

### What We Are

Some of the best scientists in the nation are working in cooperation to tackle what is known as the grandest ecological restoration effort in the history of the world — the Florida Everglades.

The National Park Service<sup>1</sup> (NPS) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service<sup>2</sup> (FWS), both within the Department of Interior (DOI), have established a team approach that targets the protection of the natural resources under their jurisdiction. The Everglades Program Team (EPT) provides the Department of Interior and its affiliates with increased scientific and technical capacity to assess the potential impacts of south Florida



From Left to Right: Laura Brandt, Mike Waldon, Aprel Thompson, Matt Harwell, Nick Aumen, Leslie MacGregor.

restoration efforts on the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge (refuge) and the Everglades National Park (Park), the two “book-ends” of the remnant Everglades.

### What We Do

The EPT is charged with monitoring restoration progress as related to schedules and deadlines outlined in a Consent Decree<sup>3</sup> (CD) resulting from a 1988 Everglades water quality lawsuit filed by the federal government. EPT also tracks and interprets research projects, provides scientific advice, publishes joint information, assures progress in meeting obligations and responsibilities under the 1988 Federal Consent Decree, and is available to provide direct input to the Department of Justice, DOI counsel, and Park and refuge decision makers.

EPT staff participate in the planning and implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades

Restoration Plan<sup>4</sup> (CERP), which was authorized by Congress in 2000. We serve on several high-level CERP committees, including REStoration COordination and VERification<sup>5</sup> teams. We also participate in the activities of the Science Coordination Team<sup>6</sup> (SCT), under the auspices of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force and Working Group. Additionally, we work closely with the National Research Council’s Committee on the Restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem<sup>7</sup> (CROGEE). This committee was formed at the request of DOI to provide independent scientific review of Everglades restoration efforts, particularly those associated with CERP.

EPT staff participate in numerous technical meetings and conferences, and give offsite group talks and technical presentations at university seminar series and high school classes. We also participate in local, regional, and national scientific societies, serve as adjunct faculty at area universities, serve on graduate student committees, and participate on various university advisory councils and committees.

### Who We Are

The Everglades Program Team consists of highly respected senior scientists. Direction of the Team is provided by the Water Quality Branch Chief of Everglades National Park’s South Florida Natural Resources Center, Dr. Nick Aumen, and consists of: Dr. Mike Waldon, Senior Hydrologist (FWS), Dr. Matt Harwell, Senior Ecologist (FWS), Ms. Leslie MacGregor, GIS Specialist (NPS), and Ms. Aprel Thompson, Administrative Assistant (FWS). One additional NPS position for a Senior Ecologist will be filled in 2003. Dr. Laura Brandt, Senior Wildlife Biologist with the FWS, serves as liaison to the team for the refuge.

The Everglades Program Team can be contacted at refuge headquarters: (561) 732-3684.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nps.gov>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fws.gov>

<sup>3</sup> [http://exchange.law.miami.edu/everglades/litigation/federal/usdc/88\\_1886/](http://exchange.law.miami.edu/everglades/litigation/federal/usdc/88_1886/)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.evergladesplan.org>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.evergladesplan.org/pm/recover/recover.cfm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sfrestore.org/sct/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sfrestore.org> then click on CROGEE

# Things That Go Bump in the Swamp

By Lois Chapman



Cypress swamps evoke different emotions from the people who visit them. “Is it dark and gloomy?” “Will snakes drop out of trees and attack me?” “Will I be eaten by an alligator?” Some visitors enter the swamp thinking wildlife will be all around them, waiting to greet all who enter.

To visit a cypress swamp is to take a journey through the imagination to the point of discovery. When you enter the swamp in the summer, two things are immediately apparent: It’s at least five degrees cooler than anywhere else and a whole lot more humid. These two distinct changes are what help to create the swamp community.

What a wonderful place for animals to hide. Their enemies will have a hard time finding them and so will you. But don’t give up! There are many ways to discover the wildlife of the cypress swamp.

If you’re an adult, you may want to take a child along. Children have not yet learned to filter out the many sounds and sights that adults have managed so well. Selective hearing is definitely a learned experience. If you don’t have a child to take with you, stop, close your eyes and listen. (It has been said that 75 percent of wildlife is heard before it is seen.) Do you hear the breeze in the trees, the buzzing of insects, and perhaps the calls of birds? What is that splashing sound? A small splash could be a frog attempting to get away from you or its predator. Bigger splashes could be otters, raccoons, or bobcats. Did you hear a crunching or munching sound? Both raccoons and otters like to eat fish and crayfish. Was that one of them? Do you hear a scurrying sound in the bushes and ferns? Very often it is an anole or skink viewing you as the next creature about to eat them.

Now, open your eyes. Notice the many shades of green. The deep summer green of the cypress blends in with the paler greens of the ferns and bushes. Look at the even lighter, more intense, green growth on some of the ferns. You are looking at the birth and renewal of these plants. Do some large ferns have dead or dying fronds? No, they are not dying plants but the end of the cycle of life for that frond. Its job of sending out spores for new ferns is now complete.

Look down in front of you as you walk. You don’t have to see an animal to know that it has been there.

Sometimes animals leave “gifts” such as scat (also known as poop). If the scat contains the pink shells of crayfish or fish scales, it is most likely otter scat. However, if the scat contains seeds and vegetable matter, it was probably a raccoon.

Because of their shy nature, bobcats are not easy to see. However, there are several trees in the swamp with scratched-up furred bark. That bark is like the swamp newspaper. It announces to the world that a bobcat lives here and he says, “I’m a bobcat. I’m here. I claim this tree as my part of my territory.”

Still no snakes or alligators? Snakes are hard to find even when you are looking for them. If you would rather not see one, then don’t worry, you’re not likely to. In the snakes mind, you are like Godzilla and definitely too big to eat. They will avoid you if possible.

Look around you again. Notice the plants attached to the cypress with stiff spike-like leaves. There are also the graceful gray plants that drape across the limbs of the cypress. They are all known as epiphytes or air plants. No, they don’t live on air or take nourishment from their visible means of support, the trees. They just say to the trees, “Hold me up, I’ll do the rest.” So how do they survive? They actually trap particles of duff and debris that fall onto them and, in time, these materials break down, providing them with nourishment.

There is so much more life to see and hear in the swamp. Each time you relearn to hear and see the obvious, you will see and hear more of the not-so-obvious. You will start to notice how everything in the swamp community relies on something else for survival. Now, what was that about dark and gloomy?



# Moving forward with the Restoration Effort: An update on the Loxahatchee Impoundment Landscape Assessment (LILA) Project

By Geoff West (SFWMMD)

Nearly six months ago bulldozers and backhoes broke ground at the Refuge as they began replicating key features of the Everglades landscape. The facility will ultimately be used to answer key questions concerning hydrologic patterns needed to sustain a healthy Everglades ecosystem. Biologists and engineers worked collaboratively to



**Figure 1.** Dividing impoundment C-4

insure that the integrity of the facility was maintained throughout the construction process. Now, six months later, as the initial phase of the project nears completion, the backhoes and bulldozers are gone.



**Figure 2.** Reflooding the deep slough

In October of 2002, Optimum Construction began sculpting four impounded marshes from the existing C-3 and C-4 impoundments. Once the initial impoundments were divided, the contractor began constructing key landscape features found in the Everglades. Each impounded marsh or "macrocosm" consists of a deep slough containing two tree islands, a shallow slough, ridges separating sloughs, and four alligator holes.



**Figure 3:** Aerial view of the four completed macrocosms

Powered by a 45,000 gpm electric pump, a recirculating water system will supply water to the project. The installation of the pump is complete and electricians are presently working to install the power.

Although 99% of the construction is complete, the assessment studies will not begin until January of 2005. In the meantime, scientists will install instrumentation and conduct a series of hydrological tests focused on fine tuning an operational strategy. In addition, they will begin re-vegetating the macrocosms with such native plants as Water Lilly, Sawgrass, Pickerel Weed, and Duck Potato.



**Figure 4.** Pump installation

The varied microtopography created in LILA has already started to attract wildlife. Mottled Ducks, wading birds, shorebirds, and Black-necked Stilts all have found some place in LILA with water depths to their liking. They can be seen resting on a tree island or feeding in an open slough.



**Figure 5.** LILA kiosk

The public can witness first hand the recent progress by visiting the LILA information kiosk located just west of the observation tower on the Marsh Trail. Here, they will learn how the LILA project will be used as tool to help increase the success of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

## Calling All Volunteers

We have positions available for people interested in working in our Visitor Center on weekends. The visitor center is staffed with a morning and an afternoon shift. Each shift is four hours in length with a special need for both the morning and afternoon shifts on Saturdays. Additional help is occasionally needed for Sunday shifts.

If you like butterflies and like to garden, the refuge has an opening for a butterfly garden volunteer. If you are a current volunteer or would like to be one, contact Volunteer Coordinator Lois Chapman for these and other opportunities at 561-732-3684 or email her at [lois\\_chapman@fws.gov](mailto:lois_chapman@fws.gov).

## Special Project Needs

We are looking for a volunteer to help identify and label slides for our image system. Some knowledge of photography and of wildlife suggested. contact Lois Chapman for more information at 561-732-3684 or email her at [lois\\_chapman@fws.gov](mailto:lois_chapman@fws.gov).

## Refuge Hours & Fees

The refuge is open to the public from sunrise to sunset daily. Exact times are posted at each entrance and change with the hours of daylight. Currently the refuge opens at 6:00AM and closes at dusk. Exact hours are posted on our web site.

Summer hours for the Visitor Center are Wednesday through Friday 9am to 4pm and Saturday and Sunday from 9:00AM to 4:30PM.

A fee of \$5.00 is charged to *private* vehicles entering the refuge. When the fee booth is unmanned, visitors are subject to the honor system and should pay at the fee shelter next to the fee booth.

## Meet the Staff

**Project Leader....** Mark Musaus  
**Deputy Project Leader....** Rolf Olson  
**Refuge Operation Specialist....** Mindy Gautreaux  
**Administration....** Kim Arserio, Jean Ryan  
**Everglades Program Team....** Nick Aumen, Matt Harwell, Leslie MacGregor, Aprel Thompson, Michael Waldon  
**USFWS Ecological Services....** Cindy Brashear, Stefani Melvin  
**Law Enforcement....** William Calvert, Shawn Cottingham, Jared Klein  
**Wildlife and Habitat Management....** William Adler, Bruce Arrington, Laura Brandt, Camille Darby, Don Filipiak, George Pelt, Chris Robinson, Allison Snow (USGS), Kristina Sorensen, William Thomas, Jr.  
**Maintenance Operations....** Manuel Garcia, Jerry Grist, Allan Hanen, Steve Matzkow  
**Environment Education & Interpretation....** Lois Chapman, Serena Rinker  
**Fee Staff....** Keith Boliek, Lew Hecker, Marie Pohl  
**LILA On-site Manager ...** Eric Cline (SFWMD)

## Volunteers

(Continued from Page 1...)

individual who had just signed up to be a volunteer. That day he worked his first four hours at the visitor center and wanted to come that night to the ceremony to see what others had done. He was so excited about being part of our team, he couldn't wait to work again at the refuge.

We have come a long way since the volunteer program began in 1981, with a handful of volunteers contributing 173 hours. Twenty one years later, 708 volunteers contributed 15,220 hours during 2002. Of the 708, we have about 100 volunteers who work at the refuge on a reoccurring basis. These folks do a variety of jobs: staff the visitor center; serve as roving interpreters helping answer questions or identifying wildlife on our trails; lead interpretive programs like butterfly walks or guided canoe trips; conduct bird surveys or survey refuge boundary; construct benches or trash receptacles or repair and maintain the boardwalks.

The rest of our volunteers are those who work one time on the refuge as part of a service project or for special events like the Everglades Day celebration, cypress seed collection, or exotic plant removal. These are also very important activities and without our volunteers, we would not be able to accomplish them.

All of our volunteers are special and an important part of our team. They are often the primary or only representative of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the many visitors of the refuge. Although we have a very talented and dedicated staff, we could not accomplish the many important facets of refuge and public use management without our volunteers. Their passion and enthusiasm help keep staff challenged. Together we continue our efforts to be a center of excellence. If you are interested in working as a volunteer, we will put you to work. Contact Lois Chapman at the refuge at 561-732-3684 ex.112 or 561-734-8303.

**Refuges watch over 700 kinds of birds, 220 mammals, 250 reptiles and amphibians and 200 kinds of fish. Nearly 170 threatened or endangered species are found on refuges. 52 refuges were acquired for that purpose.**

## 2003 Summer Events Schedule

### **“Florida’s Birds” by Reinier Munguia**

#### **Photographic Display to Grace Visitor Center Walls June 1-July 31**

Reinier Munguia is a professional photographer with a keen eye for nature. After receiving his first camera at the age of 16, Reinier displayed an avid interest in photographing animals, birds in particular.

The exhibit photographs are representative of a variety of Florida birds that can be found throughout the state and will introduce the viewer to the beauty and importance of our birds and their habitats. Photos that portrait the birds’ behavior or their breeding plumage are included in this presentation to reinforce the importance of conservation and protection of our wildlife.

#### **Saturday, May 10**

#### **International Migratory Bird Day To be held at the Palm Beach Zoo 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

Activities : Face painting, children’s craft fun, live bird presentations, games, and storytelling.

Admission to the Zoo: Adults \$7.50, Seniors \$6.00, Children ages 3-12 \$5.00, Children under age 3 FREE, Zoo Members FREE

#### **Sunday, June 8**

#### **SWAMP STROLL**

**2:00 PM Visitor Center**

Enjoy the beauty of a cypress swamp from a ½ mile-long boardwalk trail. Learn about “swamp tea,” floating plants, and thigmotrophism as a naturalist reveals the swamp’s secrets to visitors.

*Please note those programs requiring reservations. For reservations and information, call (561) 734-8303.*

#### **Saturday, June 14**

#### **KID’S FISHING DAY Celebrating National Fishing and Boating Week 8:00 AM – 12:00 Noon**

Learn about fishing regulations and identification. See what bait you catch when you throw a cast net or use a dip net. Experience the thrill of catching a fish. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

**RESERVATION REQUIRED – LIMITED TO 32 CHILDREN**

#### **Saturday, June 21**

#### **BUTTERFLIES & WILDFLOWERS WALK**

**9:30 AM Visitor Center**

Florida’s native butterflies are more abundant during the summer months and a joy to watch. Also discover which wildflowers they prefer. Join a naturalist for a walk to view these small wonders of the refuge.

#### **Saturday, July 12**

#### **EARLY BIRD SPECIAL 7:30 AM Marsh Trail**

This one-mile walk is for the birds and the early risers. Bring binocular, field guide, and insect repellent.

#### **Saturday July 19**

#### **BUTTERFLIES & WILDFLOWERS WALK**

**9:30 AM Visitor Center**

Florida’s native butterflies are more abundant during the summer months and a joy to watch. Also discover which wildflowers they prefer. Join a naturalist for a walk to view these small wonders of the refuge.

**Who was J. Clark Salyer? He is considered the “Father of the Refuge System.” He criss-crossed the nation, directing the purchase of over 600,000 acres of wetlands, forming over 50 new refuges.**

#### **Saturday July 26**

#### **CANOEING THE EVERGLADES 8:30 AM Headquarters Boat Ramp**

Take a journey through the Everglades with an interpreter on our canoe trail. Bring canoe, PFD, water, sun/rain protection, and insect repellent. Some canoeing experience is recommended.

**RESERVATION REQUIRED**

#### **Sunday July 27**

#### **SWAMP STROLL**

**2:00 PM Visitor Center**

Enjoy the beauty of a cypress swamp from a ½ mile-long boardwalk trail. Learn about “swamp tea,” floating plants, and thigmotrophism as a naturalist reveals the swamp’s secrets to visitors.

#### **Sunday, August 3**

#### **SWAMP STROLL**

**2:00 PM Visitor Center**

Enjoy the beauty of a cypress swamp from a ½ mile-long boardwalk trail. Learn about “swamp tea,” floating plants, and thigmotrophism as a naturalist reveals the swamp’s secrets to visitors.

#### **Saturday, August 9**

#### **CANOEING THE EVERGLADES 8:30 AM Headquarters Boat Ramp**

Take a journey through the Everglades with an interpreter on our canoe trail. Bring canoe, PFD, water, sun/rain protection, and insect repellent. Some canoeing experience is recommended.

**RESERVATION REQUIRED**

#### **Saturday, August 16**

#### **EARLY BIRD SPECIAL 7:30 AM Marsh Trail**

This one-mile walk is for the birds and the early risers. Bring binocular, field guide, and insect repellent.

# Friends Corner

*Provided by the Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge*

## Who we are

The Friends of the Loxahatchee Refuge is a non-profit group formed to give assistance and support for the Refuge. We work to raise public awareness of the refuge, to create environmental learning opportunities and educational programs. We support the Refuge through dues, fundraising and sales at our book and gift shop. We promote a good relationship with the Refuge staff, our local communities and the entire refuge system.

## Our Mission

The Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge is a unique natural resource, playing a significant role for migratory waterfowl, wading and other birds, for protecting endangered species and wildlife habitat. Friends of the Refuge believe that we can help the community develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Refuge and participate in preserving our native wildlife.

## What We Are Doing

Our members are involved in a wide range of activities. We invite you to join us as we:

- Sponsor special refuge events:
  - Photo Contest
  - Art Contest
  - Everglades Day
  - Annual Luncheon
- Operate the book and gift shop located in the Visitor's Center of the Refuge. The net proceeds of sales go to support activities of the Refuge.
- Develop plans to fund and build projects, which improve and expand Refuge facilities.

## What We Offer You

- Tri-annual issues of the Turtle River Times, which includes the Refuge Calendar of Events
- Tri-annual issues of the Loxahatchee Advocate
- 10% discount on merchandise
- Tax-deductible membership
- Active support for wildlife and environmental education

**Let's Make a Difference!**

### **Please Join Us**

**• Membership Application •  
Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall  
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student (to age 18) \$5.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25.00     | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$50            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contribution _____         |

Please mail this form to:  
Friends of the Loxahatchee Refuge  
P.O. Box 6777  
Delray Beach, FL. 33482-6777

Make checks payable to:  
"Friends of the Loxahatchee Refuge"

If paying by credit card please indicate:  
 \_\_\_ Visa    \_\_\_ MasterCard    \_\_\_ Discover  
 Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

For further information about the Friends of the Refuge please contact:

Arthur R. Marshall National Wildlife Refuge  
10216 Lee Road  
Boynton Beach, FL 33437-4796  
(561) 734-8303 or (561) 732-3684

## “Who Ya Gonna Call ... Visitor Services!”

By Mindy Gautreaux, Refuge Operations Specialist

Who serves as the “face of the refuge” and provides refuge information to over 300,000 visitors every year at the A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR? Who is responsible for providing environmental education opportunities for visiting school groups? Who manages an Entrance Fee Program which generates dollars for public use facilities enhancement? Who manages a Volunteer Program responsible for supporting refuge programs and activities? Who provides refuge information with a smile to hundreds of refuge visitors every week? Who maintains and operates a Visitor Center which offers interpretive and educational exhibits and programs?

....

### **The Visitor Services Program, that’s who!**

#### **Lois Chapman, Refuge Ranger (Visitor Center Operations/Volunteer Coordinator)**

On July 4, 1948, along with the firework celebrations, our own Lois Chapman popped onto the scene beginning her life in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. Lois grew up in West Virginia and then attended West Virginia University, where she graduated with a BS in Parks and Recreation Administration. Lois served on the board of directors and was responsible for various positions (program planning and walks, birdathon, treasurer, scholarships) with Mountaineer Audubon, part of the National Audubon Society.

Before coming to Florida in 1987, Lois served as the Project Leader for a West Virginia Non-game Wildlife Grant to study Screech Owls in urban and suburban areas.

Lois first came to work for A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR as a volunteer (to keep her sanity while working in a law office). It wasn’t long after that and she attended seasonal law enforcement school and became a fee



**Visitor Services Staff (left to right): Lois Chapman, Marie Pohl, Susie Ahlfeld, Serena Rinker, Keith Boliek.**

clerk. She later was promoted to the park guide position and now she serves as the Refuge Ranger responsible for the Volunteer Program, visitor center operations, the refuge newsletter, “Turtle River Times”, and for maintaining the refuge web site.

Lois is the proud mother of two daughters, Amy and Katy. Her interests include: birding, gardening, astronomy, photography, travel, books, and movies. She absolutely delights in seeing natural things from a beautiful sunset to a leaf on a tree.

#### **Marie Pohl, Refuge Ranger (Fee Collector)**

Marie was born and raised in Albany, New York, where she married and had three children. While in Albany, Marie majored in business education and did payroll work. Marie also took Red Cross Water Safety Swimming courses up to instructors’ certificate which enabled her to teach swimming lessons at the Albany YWCA, and to also teach swimming at a local high school on a volunteer basis.

After her husband became ill, they moved to Florida and Marie attended Palm Beach Community College to study real estate. She received accreditation from

the Department of Professional Regulation and after signing on with Keys Company out of Miami, she sold over \$5,000,000 worth of real estate in 1981 alone!

Marie now lives between, Maine and Florida, where she works as a seasonal Fee Ranger for both the A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR and the Cape Cod National Seashore. Marie is responsible for issuing refuge passes and providing information to most of the 300,000 refuge visitors every year. Marie enjoys working for two agencies within the Department of Interior where she can continue to learn new things, and have fun making new friends both at the refuge and with the visitors. She feels very lucky to have found her niche, and we feel very lucky to have her return year after year!

### **Susie Ahlfeld, Refuge Ranger (Visitor Center Operations/Interpretation)**

If you visited the refuge this past winter season, then you probably met Susie, our seasonal Park Ranger, who hails from Bowie, Maryland. Susie grew up in Maryland, but attended college in North Carolina at Catawba College in Salisbury, where she graduated with an Environmental Studies degree. Prior to coming to Florida, Susie worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland, as both a Recreation Assistant and as an Environmental Education and Interpretation Assistant.

Susie's responsibilities included working at the Visitor Center, working with the Volunteer Program, conducting night prowls and other guided tours, and developing a children's activity for the refuge exhibit. Susie's enthusiastic personality brought a refreshing breeze during this warm winter and we'll be sad to see her go.

Susie's hobbies include making pottery (which she's kind enough to let the refuge use as candy dishes), listening to Reggae music, and playing frisbee with her best buddy, Boscorelli!

### **Serena Rinker, Refuge Ranger (Environmental Education/Interpretation Specialist)**

Serena was born in Inglewood, California (Southern California), and attended school at the College of the

Redwoods in Eureka, CA and at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO.

Her first jobs were with the U.S. Forest Service (helped heli-tack fire crews and planted trees) and with the National Park Service (Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island National Monument in New York City, N.Y., and at Charlestown Navy Yard at USS Cassin Young and Bunker Hill National Monument in Boston, MA). Serena also worked for the U.S. Dept of Labor in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration department before she came to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service where she worked in the Northeast Regional Office. From there, she moved to Tinicum National Environmental Center (now called the John Heinz NWR at Tinicum) in Philadelphia, PA, and then to A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR.

Serena is currently a Refuge Ranger, specializing in Interpretation, however, her realm of responsibility is broad and includes but is not limited to (for both Loxahatchee and Hobe Sound NWR): media relations; refuge signs; publications and brochures; coordinating major events such as Everglades Day and National Youth Fishing Day; conducting environmental education and the junior refuge manager program; outreach; handling public use special use permits including fishing tournaments; and reporting public use statistics to the Regional and Washington offices.

### **Keith Boliek, Refuge Ranger (Fee Program Coordinator)**

Keith was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He began his career with the Department of the Interior in 1990 when he began work for the National Park Service at the Statue of Liberty & Ellis Island. From there, Keith moved to Florida, where he worked at the Everglades National Park from 1996-2001.

In 2001 Keith transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take over as the Fee Program Coordinator right here at the A.R.M. Loxahatchee N.W.R. Keith is responsible for supervising several fee collectors who collect entrance fee dollars from the visiting public. Eighty percent of the fee dollars collected are then transferred back to the refuge to allow for improvements and additions to public use facilities and the overall Public Use Program.

# A Gator Springtime

By Susan Ahlfeld

Spring is in the air at the A.R.M. Loxhatchee National Wildlife Refuge. It is a wonderful time to come and enjoy nature in South Florida because so many things are changing, happening, growing, and blooming.

Our local residents are becoming very active and anxious, and I'm not referring to the seasonal staff. Alligators are a year-round resident of the refuge and if you have never seen an alligator before, now is a great time of year to go in search of these giant reptiles.



temperatures above 93 degrees (F) will produce males. An in-between temperature will produce both male and female young. If at any time the female feels that her nest is getting too hot, she may fill her mouth with water and moisten the nest and cool it down. Finally, in mid-August, the young are ready to hatch and begin vocalizing in the nest. Once the female hears the high-pitched grunts of the young, she will help them dig out of the nest and carry them down to the water.

Young alligators will stay together in groups called "pods" for as long as two years after they are born. The mother alligator may stay close by during this time as well.

So come on out and explore the refuge and see if you can hear the bellows of our alligators, discover a nest (but don't get too close, the momma alligator may be near!), watch young alligators catch a dragonfly for lunch, or just watch an alligator swimming in the canal.

**Alligator nest**

Spring is a time for mating, nesting, and rearing young for many animals and alligators are no different. You can hear the alligators bellowing. They do this by sucking air into their lungs and blowing it out in intermittent, deep-toned roars as part of their courtship ritual although alligators have no vocal chords. Other interactions may include nose-taps, nudges, and shoves when females enter his territory.

After the alligators mate, the male alligator's work is done, while the female's is just beginning. The nest is built out of mud, sticks, and decaying debris in a site where the water level will not rise too far to drown her eggs.

In the early summer, the nest is constructed and 25-50 eggs are laid. The incubation period of the eggs is 65 days with the female guarding her nest from egg stealers like raccoons. This time is very important because the temperature of the nest determines the sex of the young. Cooler nests with temperatures below 86 degrees (F) will produce females and nests with



**Wildlife-dependent recreation programs are conducted on 371 refuges, including environmental education programs on 191 refuges.**

## Kids Corner

# Annie's Big Adventure

By Chrissanna (gator) Srdoch - University of Florida

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge was hit by a big storm named Hurricane Irene. It hit on a very dark night and came without much notice. Many who saw the storm recall watching a poor mother protect her nest from the wind and rain. Even with all her effort, one egg, named Annie, rolled out of the nest, down the marsh trail and out of the sight.



After the storm ended the mother went to look for her egg, but it was nowhere to be found, for it had rolled right into another nest. A couple of days later, that lone lost egg began to hatch. When little Annie finally got out of her egg, what did she see but



a big giant scaly animal who looked every bit as surprised as she. Whatever was looking at her looked nothing like her! Shyly, Annie asked the big animal, "Are you my mother?" Amazed by the question, the big animal replied, "I am Ali the Alligator, and you little dear must be lost because, no, I am not your mother." When Ali saw how upset Annie was, she said, "Alligators can't be mothers to animals like you. No definitely not. You better hurry along as fast as you can because I am getting quite hungry and I eat little small animals like you. Sadly Annie tried to hurry away, but she found that she wasn't so hot at running. So instead, Annie half hopped and half swam away.

She hadn't gone far before coming upon a wooden boardwalk. Underneath the boards there was a cute furry animal playing in the water. Excited to see another animal swimming, Annie approached Omar and asked, "Are you my mother?" Clearly surprised, Omar looked at poor Annie and said, "No, I am not your mother, I am an

otter, Omar the Otter. No, I'm definitely not your mother. Otters stick to their own kind. Besides, otters can't fly." Well, Annie was very confused because she couldn't fly either and asked, "Can you tell me where my mother is?" Omar replied, "She can be found in the water looking for fish or outside the water balancing on a branch with her wings spread out." Thrilled to have news about her mother, Annie swam off to go find her. She soon came upon a beautiful garden and came out of the water. Could her mother be on one of the branches of the garden?

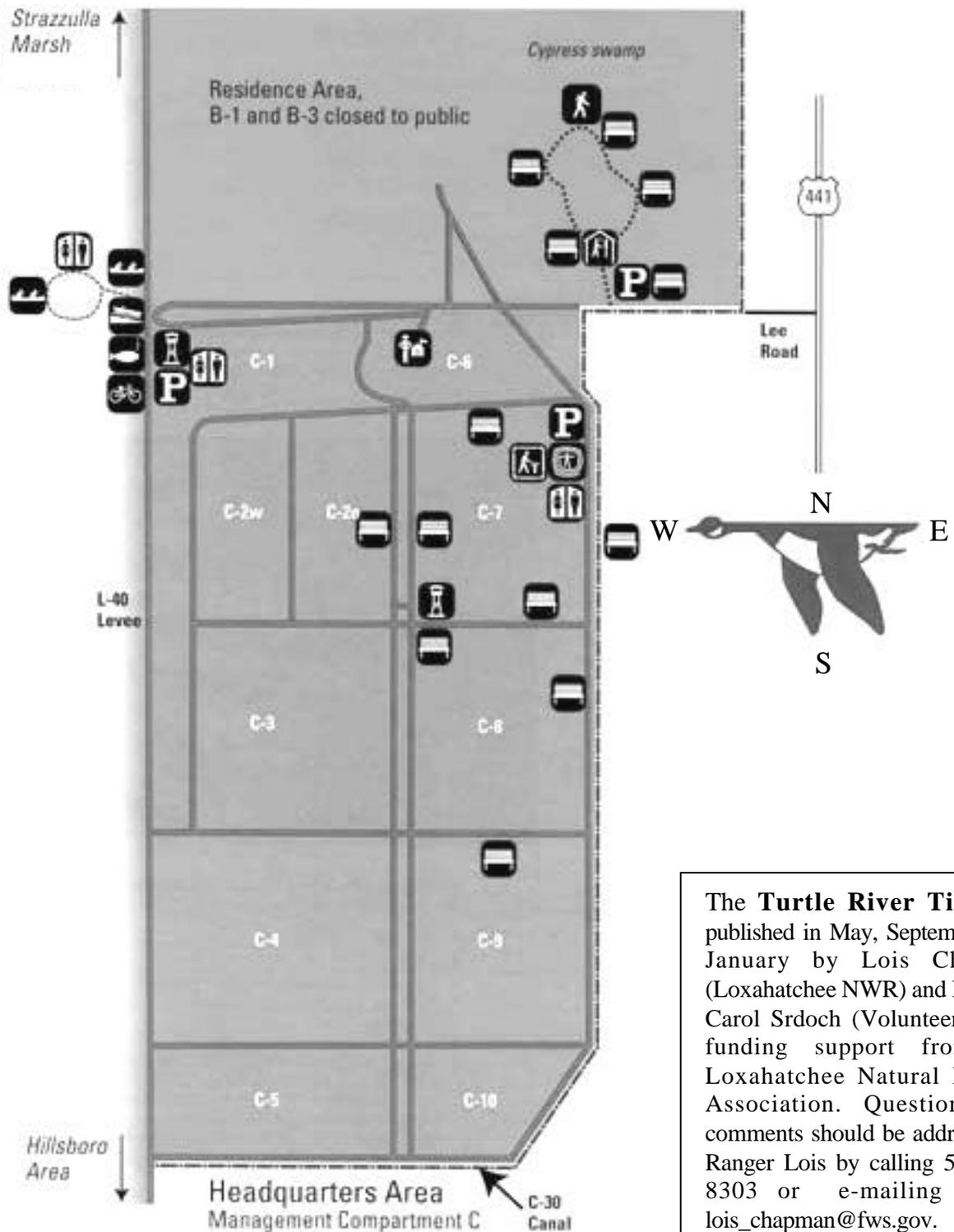


Will Annie find her mother in the garden or will she have to look elsewhere on the refuge for her mother? Make sure that you read the next edition of the ***Turtle River Times*** to find out what happens to poor little Annie !!

**Goodness Mercy!**  
**Who will Annie**  
**bump into next?**



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