

# The MULLET RAPPER

## What's Happening in the Everglades City Area

FRIDAY, April 4, 2008

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Carol Moseman addressed the City Council and Mayor about the Tamiami Trail 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. See page 9 for details of all the events.

### SHERIFF'S REPORT

Sgt Blake Martin said that two arrests had been made during the month; one for a credit card theft and the other after a car chase. He said that a burglary occurred of unsecured gas cans on a truck and warned that, with the price of gas at almost \$4.00, people should be careful about leaving full ones around.

Another warning was about leaving valuables in cars; a locked vehicle was broken into in Copeland because items were visible. Finally, although some people were being investigated, there was no news about the break-in and theft at Havana Cafe in Chokoloskee; detectives are still looking into the incident.

### CITY COUNCIL REPORT

by Marya Repko



There was no joking on Tuesday, April 1, about the good news at a jovial City Council meeting. Mayor Sammy Hamilton announced that we are getting a bank! Shamrock Bank of Florida, based in Naples, have agreed to open a branch here; details to follow. And, some of the first money to be deposited will be the \$350,000 grant which is due in May. The Mayor is investigating other grants. Still on the financial front, he said the City bookkeeping has been modernized.

The Mayor thanked the Everglades Society for Historic Preservation and Mr Tribble at the school for painting the pelicans (see page 5) and said that he hopes to further improve the City by restoring the goldfish pond in the median on Broadway (opposite the Rod & Gun). He was reminded of what it used to look like after receiving some old postcards from historian Alvin Lederer. Another donation to the City from Alvin was a framed collection of commemorative coins which will also be on display soon. Again recalling his youth, the Mayor said that he hoped to attract hummingbirds back to the area; he can remember them being very prominent in Chokoloskee and encouraged everyone to put out a feeder. He also wants to get the Beautification Committee active and said that reclaimed water was now irrigating all the medians.

A proclamation was passed by the Council making April "Water Conservation Month". Representative from the Southwest Florida Management District (SWFMD) thanked the Council and Mayor for recognizing their effort to highlight how important water is to us and how scarce it can be.

Fran Tiftt, in her traditional patriotic hat (photo above), requested and was granted funding for the Fourth of July celebration which will take place on Sunday, July 6

A proclamation recognizing April 26/27 as the official Tamiami Trail 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was also passed by the Council (see page 9). Carol Moseman, president of the Friends of the Museum of the Everglades who are organizing the event, reminded the Council that it was also the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the incorporation of the City and mentioned some of the many activities planned for the weekend. She asked that businesses put up bunting and that everyone dress in 1920s clothing.

During Public Comment, John M. Wilson was told that nothing had been done yet about the weekly rentals at Club Everglades but that an answer from the DEP should be forthcoming about the docks on April 10. Although he was not asked, the Mayor told John that new hangers and a north taxi-way were underway. In response to questions from Vicky Nagle, the Mayor said that if commercial activity was taking place in privately-owned residential docks, the City could take action (occupational licenses are needed for commercial activity) and there is a limit of 24 hours that people can live aboard boats. Violations should be reported to FWC or the Sheriff. Vicky also asked if there is a City ordinance requiring owners to secure boats and other property during hurricane season to minimize the damage caused by flying debris.

The Council will be in recess until the next meeting on August 5. The Mayor reminded everyone that the Firefighters' & Sheriff's Cook Out will be on May 10 when we can thank them all for their services to the community.

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FEATURE: "TAMIAMI-80", page 9

If you have news, photos, announcements, or articles ... email [snookcity@hotmail.com](mailto:snookcity@hotmail.com) or phone 695-2397.

# APRIL 2008

<u>SUN</u>	<u>MON</u>	<u>TUES</u>	<u>WED</u>	<u>THURS</u>	<u>FRI</u>	<u>SAT</u>
		<b>APRIL 1</b> Congressman City Hall, 3 pm  City Council City Hall, 5:30 pm	<b>2</b> Ladies Coffee Triad Seafood 8 am	<b>3</b> ESHP mtg City Hall, 10 am  Lions Club Depot, 7 pm	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> NPC Book Fair see p.7
new moon ○ <b>6</b> NPC Book Fair see p.7	<b>7</b> Hour of Prayer Holy Family Catholic Church 7 pm	<b>8</b> FME mtg Museum, 10 am	<b>9</b> Ladies Coffee Havana Café 8 am	<b>10</b> Great Gators School, 9:30  Chamber of Commerce Bd Mtg, 5:30 pm	<b>11</b> Yard Sale 312 N. Copeland 8 am - 2 pm see p.3	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> Friends of Fakahatchee Annual Meeting Copeland, 10:30 am	<b>14</b> Hour of Prayer Everglades First Baptist Church 7 pm  OFCD Board Fire Sta, 6 pm	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Ladies Coffee Everglades Scoop 8 am	<b>17</b> Lions Club Bd Mtg, 5:30 pm  Copeland Civic Association 7 pm	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Earth Day Festival see p.8
full moon ● <b>20</b> Earth Day Festival see p.8	<b>21</b> Hour of Prayer Everglades Community Church 7 pm	<b>22</b> SAC School, 3 pm	<b>23</b> Ladies Coffee Triad Seafood 8 am  School early release	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Pancake Fly-In  Tamiami 80 <sup>th</sup> Celebration see p.9  Pet Vet, see p.3
<b>27</b> Tamiami 80 <sup>th</sup> Celebration see p.9  Chok COG 95 <sup>th</sup>  Pet Vet, see p.3	<b>28</b> Hour of Prayer Copeland Baptist Church 7 pm  Manatee Zones comments due see p.11	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Ladies Coffee Everglades Scoop 8 am	<b>MAY 1</b> Great Gators School, 9:30 ESHP mtg City Hall, 10 am Lions Club Depot, 7 pm	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Diamonds' Tea

May 10: Firefighters' BBQ

May 12: Big Cypress ORV mtg

May 23: School Graduation

May 24-25: Pet Vet

THRIFT SHOP: Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

SKATING RINK: Friday/Saturday, 7:00 - 10:00 pm

MUSEUM: Tues-Fri, 9 am to 5 pm; Sat, 9 am to 4 pm

SMALLWOOD STORE: daily 10 am to 5 pm

FOOD PANTRY: Sat, 8:30 to 10:30 am, Community Church

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: Wed, 5 pm, Community Church

CHRIST-CENTERED ADDICTION RECOVERY PROGRAM, Chokoloskee Church of God, *phone 695-4626 for schedule*

SHERIFF AT CITY HALL: 4/7 (noon - 2pm) 4/8 (9-11 am) 4/11 (9-11 am) 4/14 (9-11 am) 4/15 (10:30 am-12:30 pm) 4/17 (3-5 pm)

**USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS:**

City Hall: 695-3781

Library: 695-2511

Chamber of Commerce Office: 695-3172

Airport: 695-2778

Sheriff: 695-2007



Local man John Adams on Storter Avenue, Everglades City, saved his friend Sue McPherson, visiting here from Tennessee, from drowning in the Barron River. On Friday, March 21, they were coming in from boating when Sue stepped from the boat to the dock, slipped and fell in the River. Sue can not swim but, fortunately, John was there, jumped in and rescued her.

**YARD SALE**

Rebecca Sensor is holding a yard sale on **Friday, April 11**, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at 312 North Copeland Avenue, Everglades City.

**MOBILE PET VET**

Dr Baker will be here on **Saturday, April 26**, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, at the Roadkill Café parking lot and in Copeland from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. She will also visit on **Sunday, April 27** from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for surgery by appointment only. Phone 777-PETS.



**CONGRATULATIONS**

to Robert Robinson who celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday with friends and neighbors from near and far on Saturday, March 29.

**RESTAURANT NEWS**

**Havana Cafe is closing on April 13 and re-opening on June 1. They asked us to print this note.**

*THANK YOU!*  
A warm, heartfelt thank you to our friends and customers for their support in the aftermath of the robbery of our business Havana Café. Words cannot express how grateful we are for the cards, flowers, baked goods, kind words and contributions given to us during this challenging time. Special thanks to the Ladies Coffee.

*Sincerely,  
Dulce, Carlos, Family and Staff*

**OCHOPEE FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT**

- 03/19/08: Vehicle Accident, 54m I-75
- 03/19/08: Person in Labor, Janes Scenic Drive
- 03/19/08: Brush Fire, 4 miles West of SR-29 on US-41
- 03/19/08: Vehicle in Canal, 75m I-75
- 03/20/08: Vehicle Fire, Oasis Ranger Station
- 03/21/08: Altered Mental State, Everglades Fire Station
- 03/22/08: Possible Assault, Everglades City
- 03/22/08: Vehicle Accident, 80m I-75
- 03/22/08: Person Fell, Lee Cypress
- 03/22/08: Vehicle Accident, 58m I-75
- 03/22/08: Vehicle Accident, 61m I-75
- 03/23/08: Vehicle Accident, 60m I-75
- 03/23/08: Vehicle Accident, 58m I-75
- 03/23/08: Brush Fire, Copeland
- 03/23/08: Unknown Medical Problem, Lee Cypress
- 03/24/08: Vehicle Accident, 64m I-75
- 03/25/08: Breathing Problems, Janes Scenic Drive
- 03/25/08: Assault Victim, Lee Cypress
- 03/25/08: Vehicle Accident, Ochopee
- 03/26/08: Vehicle Accident, US-41 and SR-29
- 03/26/08: Sick Person, Port of the Islands
- 03/28/08: Person Strung by Sting Ray, Port of the Islands
- 03/28/08: Chest Pains, Everglades City
- 03/28/08: Vehicle in Canal, 61m I-75
- 03/28/08: Vehicle in Canal, 61m I-75
- 03/29/08: Vehicle Accident, SR-29 and I-75
- 03/30/08: Vehicle Fire, US-41 and SR-29
- 03/30/08: Smoke Investigation, US-41 & SR-29
- 03/30/08: Sick Person, Chokoloskee Island
- 03/30/08: Brush Fire, Ochopee
- 03/30/08: Possible Brush Fire, Ochopee
- 03/30/08: Vehicle Accident, 63m I-75
- 04/01/08: Laceration to Head, 63m I-75
- 04/01/08: Injured Leg, Port of the Islands
- 04/01/08: Vehicle Accident, 2 Miles West of SR-29 on US-41
- 04/01/08: Vehicle Fire, 70m I-75

**APOLOGIES for giving the wrong date for the Pancake Fly-In. There was one on March 29, but it was in Immokalee! The next one (here) is on April 26.**

**TIDES FOR BARRON RIVER**

INFORMATION FROM <http://TIDESANDCURRENTS.NOAA.GOV>

04/04/2008	Fri	01:58AM	2.7	H	09:15AM	0.1	L	02:18PM	2.6	H	09:35PM	0.0	L
04/05/2008	Sat	02:43AM	2.7	H	09:52AM	0.2	L	02:41PM	2.8	H	10:19PM	-0.2	L
04/06/2008	Sun	03:30AM	2.7	H	10:29AM	0.3	L	03:04PM	3.0	H	11:03PM	-0.4	L
04/07/2008	Mon	04:20AM	2.6	H	11:05AM	0.4	L	03:30PM	3.1	H	11:50PM	-0.5	L
04/08/2008	Tue	05:17AM	2.5	H	11:41AM	0.5	L	04:01PM	3.2	H			
04/09/2008	Wed	12:40AM	-0.5	L	06:23AM	2.3	H	12:18PM	0.7	L	04:38PM	3.1	H
04/10/2008	Thu	01:35AM	-0.4	L	07:37AM	2.1	H	12:56PM	0.8	L	05:25PM	3.0	H
04/11/2008	Fri	02:38AM	-0.3	L	09:01AM	1.9	H	01:51PM	0.9	L	06:32PM	2.8	H
04/12/2008	Sat	03:50AM	-0.2	L	10:57AM	1.9	H	03:37PM	0.9	L	08:23PM	2.5	H
04/13/2008	Sun	05:03AM	-0.1	L	12:22PM	2.0	H	05:19PM	0.8	L	10:07PM	2.5	H
04/14/2008	Mon	06:09AM	0.0	L	12:49PM	2.2	H	06:34PM	0.7	L	11:33PM	2.5	H
04/15/2008	Tue	07:05AM	0.1	L	01:06PM	2.3	H	07:32PM	0.5	L			
04/16/2008	Wed	12:41AM	2.5	H	07:52AM	0.2	L	01:23PM	2.4	H	08:20PM	0.3	L
04/17/2008	Thu	01:34AM	2.5	H	08:34AM	0.2	L	01:42PM	2.5	H	09:03PM	0.1	L
04/18/2008	Fri	02:17AM	2.5	H	09:12AM	0.3	L	02:03PM	2.6	H	09:42PM	0.0	L

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# SCHOOL NEWS

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website: [www.collier.k12.fl.us/evg](http://www.collier.k12.fl.us/evg)

## IMPORTANT DATES

**3/31-4/4:** Spring Recess  
**Thurs, 3/22:** SAC, Media Center, 3 p.m.  
**Thurs, 4/10:** Baseball (home), 4:00 p.m.  
**Fri, 4/11:** Baseball (home), 5:00 p.m.  
**Mon, 4/14:** Baseball (home), 5:00 p.m.  
**Wed, 4/23:** Early Release



### From Savannah's Eyes

Awesome!! I am having a brilliant spring break. My sister LaShaun came down. We are having a blast.

Also, we are going to Wannado City this Friday and it is going to be awesome! When you go to Wannado City, kids can be a firefighter, doctor, dentist, chef, model, fashion designer and more! If you pick to be a model, you can get all dressed up and walk on the walk and if you pick to be a chef, you can make your own pizza and eat it! Also, LaShaun and I got to play "Evergladesopoly" with the Mayor of Everglades City and we will be in the newspaper (Naples Daily News) this week! I am having a very good spring break and I hope you are too.

*Savannah Oglesby is a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student at Everglades City School and a regular contributor to this paper.*

**NOTE: The "Evergladesopoly" board game can be bought at the Reach Out Thrift Shop and at City Hall.**



**PERFECT ATTENDANCE Oct. 23 - March 5: Madelyn Mitchell, Hailey Mitchell, Nic Jones, George Brummett**

Volunteers should register by using this web page: <http://www.collier.k12.fl.us/about/communityinvolvement.asp> and then click the link to "online application" in the second paragraph. Then click the "New User" and enter your information for user id and password that you want. It will then kick you back to log in with your newly-created info.



Our brightly colored pelicans on either side of the front door at City Hall were painted by our Everglades City School students in Mr. Paul Tribble's art class. There is also a smaller one on the platform for the flagpole.

The Everglades Society for Historic Preservation donated \$100 to the art program at the

School to express our appreciation of their work. Thank you, Mr. Tribble and your students!!

**Thanks to Rapper advertiser Jim Reece of Joe Mama's Stages who generously donated \$75 to the School.**

SAC (the School Advisory Council) meets on **Thursday, April 22**, at 3:00 p.m. in the Media Center. Parents and community members are encouraged to attend.

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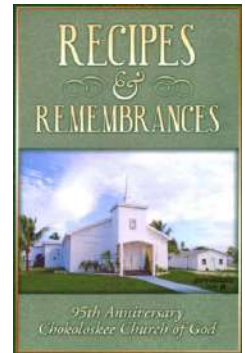
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The Medical Closet at the Thrift Shop has canes, crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs to loan out. Stop by if you need something or phone Fran at 695-2660.

Recipe for Good Eating

The new cookbook published by the Chokoloskee Church of God to commemorate their 95<sup>th</sup> birthday is now available for sale at \$10 per copy.

This attractive little keepsake book includes local recipes, some of them spiced with humor, and several pages of history. To order copies, phone Martha at 695-3735 or Lessie at 695-4626.



Off the Shelf – Book News

Local authors will be represented at the Naples Press Club Book Fair on Saturday/Sunday, April 5/6, by ECity-Publishing who recently released *The Convention*, a novel by Pastor Bob Wallace (see review in the *Rapper*, 3/7/08). He will be signing his work there on Saturday. Also present will be Larry Perez, author of *Words on the Wilderness* which tells the fascinating stories behind the names of islands, bays, rivers, and other locations in our area, and Virginia Saalman with her collection of short stories *Frog Poop*.

ECity-Publishing is operated by Marya Repko. She reports that *A Brief History of the Everglades City Area* has almost sold out its second printing. Phone 695-2905 for info or see [www.ecity-publishing.com](http://www.ecity-publishing.com).

Angel of the Swamp

by Patty Huff



Some angels even “look” like angels. Their smiles light up a room and their spirit warms the heart. Our angel highlighted in this issue has been a major part of this community for 24 years. She helped manage and operate Glades Haven in the 1980’s with Claudia Davenport and served on the emergency management team before our area had professional EMS and firefighters. She was secretary of the Friends of the Museum of the Everglades in the late 1990’s and has served as President of the Everglades Area Chamber of Commerce. Cheryl Henderson opened her Everglades Spa-Fari business in 2001 and has also operated the Bank of the Everglades Bed and Breakfast. Cheryl has brought not only love and devotion to her business but to everyone who has known her. She has the touch of an angel, looks like an angel and has the warm spirit of an angel. Often she is called upon to look into her thousands of medicinal books to find a homeopathic remedy for many ailments. Cheryl is moving to North Port and opening a new spa in Englewood. However, she expects to return to Everglades City on a regular basis. Rose Thompson and Fran Blackwell will be continuing to operate the Bed and Breakfast. Many of our old friends (and angels) have left this area and they are missed: Claudia, Avery, Karen, Vivian and Cheryl. Things change and people move on to another chapter in their lives but leave a part of themselves behind, with us, with those whom they have befriended and given something back to this community. Best wishes, Cheryl. You’re a special person, an angel.

## Bicycling for Health and Fun

by Patricia Huff



Everglades City is 1.2 square miles; it is just about 4 miles from Hwy 41 and approximately 4 miles to Chokoloskee. In this relatively small area, it is surprising that more people don't ride bicycles rather than drive their cars to and from the post office and the grocery store. I am as guilty as anyone in driving around town rather than walking or biking. When I visit my daughter in San Francisco, I walk everywhere: to the market, to restaurants, to the post office and all these places are farther from her home than around here. Why do I drive my car?? Laziness, not planning my time properly (rushing to the post office five minutes before it closes) AND carrying too many things in my car (that will not fit on my bike). All these are pretty poor excuses.

According to a recent article in Sierra magazine, bicycles outnumber automobiles almost two to one worldwide and there are three bikes to every one car being produced. Bikes are used as the primary transportation in many Far Eastern countries and in many cities in Europe. It is only in the United States that a bike is used primarily as a recreational vehicle rather than for commuting. People drive their cars even if they're just going less than a mile away, and many people do not realize that shorter trips are more polluting. Engines running cold produce four times the amount of carbon monoxide than cars running hot. A bicyclist needs only to fuel up on carbohydrates. With gas prices as high as they are, more of us should consider jumping on our bike or just taking a short walk to run our errands. You can carry a backpack or a shopping bag for your mail or groceries. Kids can tag along on their own bikes or in a bike seat.

Take even a longer trip to Chokoloskee by bike. It is good exercise, gives you a chance to enjoy the beautiful weather with a wonderful view of Chokoloskee Bay. So for your health, fun and to save money, ride a bike or enjoy a walk around town.



## FLORIDA FLORA

The Geiger Tree (*Cordia sebestena*) is native to North

America and, according to several sources, was introduced to Key West from Cuba. Documents indicate that the tree was given the name "Geiger" for Captain John H. Geiger who salvaged wrecks off the coast of the Florida Keys and who built a home in Key West. He had one of these beautiful Cordia trees flowering in his yard and one of John Audubon's assistant, George Lehman painted this tree with white-crowned pigeons sitting in a branch.

Naples Pathways Coalition  
and

Friends of the Museum of the Everglades  
present the

## EVERGLADES SCENIC RIDE 2008

Saturday, April 28

*Celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
Opening of the Tamiami Trail*

### Bicycle Ride Options:

80 miles – Minimum speed 22 mph

68 miles – Minimum speed 18 mph

55 miles – Minimum speed 15 mph

23 miles or 16 miles – Any Speed

Registration includes aid stations along route, SAG vehicles support and festival food after the ride. Cyclist are encouraged to participate in the parade at 11:30 a.m.

To register and for more information, visit

[www.naplespathways.org](http://www.naplespathways.org)

or call Patty Huff at 695-2397 for an entry form



It's that time of year again when the Purple Martins have returned to their homes high atop the Barron River. Every morning and early evening you can hear their songs; quite a chorus when many of these beautiful birds get together.

## EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

Celebrate Earth Day on **April 19/20** with a weekend filled with earth-friendly family fun. On Saturday, shop for locally-grown and organic foods at the Farmer's Market and enjoy live entertainment, guest speakers, face painting, special exhibits, native plant sales plus prizes and a kids' carnival. On Sunday there will be children's art classes and educational presentations.

Held by the Conservancy (14<sup>th</sup> Ave N at Goodlette-Frank Road in Naples), hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, noon to 3:00 p.m. on Sunday. Free admission.





photo courtesy Big Cypress National Preserve

**LOCAL HISTORY**

Monroe Station is a landmark along the Trail. It was finished in 1928 and served as one of the six staging posts along the road which sold gas and snacks. It was also the home of a member of the Southwest Florida Mounted Patrol, men on motorbikes who traveled back and forth, looking for motorists in trouble. In those days, the road was not paved and wild animals often roamed along it, especially when it was the only dry land during the rainy season.

The other SWFMP stations were (from Naples towards Miami) Belle Meade, Royal Palm Hammock (corner of CR-92), Weaver's Camp (opposite the Fakahatchee boardwalk), Turner River, and Paolita (on the Dade County border). Of these, only Monroe Station still exists in its original location and the owner, Big Cypress National Preserve, is planning to restore it. It is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



photo courtesy Collier County Sheriff's Office

**TAMIAMI-80 PROGRESS REPORT**

With only three weeks until the big event, the Tamiami80 Committee are working every spare minute to organize all the activities that are planned for the weekend. Among the dignitaries lined up are Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart and Commissioner Jim Coletta. The stage and musicians are booked. The birthday cakes, with designer frosting, have been ordered and food vendors have signed up for the exhibition area in McLeod Park. A collection of arts & crafts booths will be side-by-side with information stands from the parks and historical societies.

Something that all of us can do to contribute to the atmosphere is to dress up in 1920s clothes. Raid your granny's closet or buy some fringe with beading to tack onto a slinky dress. Men will need to dig out an old hat and some baggy pants to be in the mode ... and don't forget those hat!

And, of course, we can all invite everyone we know all over Southern Florida, from Tampa to Miami. The [www.tamiami80.com](http://www.tamiami80.com) website has lots of info, including histories of the Trail, County, City, and Museum.

If you still haven't signed up for the exhibitions or parade, phone Carol at 695-2159 or Tammy at 695-2277. But, don't hesitate ... time is running out!

**TAMIAMI TRAIL 80<sup>TH</sup> CELEBRATION**  
*A Great Celebration for A Momentous Event*



**SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2008**

- 9:00** Antique cars leave Naples
- 10:00** Exhibition & Food Booths open  
Activities Begin
- 10:30** History of Monroe Station
- 11:30** Grande Parade
- 12:30** **OPENING CEREMONIES**  
Dedication of McLeod Monument
- 1:30** Marco Historic Players
- 2:00** History of Bay City Walking Dredge
- 3:00** Birthday Cake



**SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2008**

- 10:00** Exhibition & Foods Booths open  
Activities Begin
- 10:30** Otter John and His Wild Animals
- 11:00** Walking Tour of Historic Buildings
- 12:30** **OPENING CEREMONIES**
- 1:30** Story-Tellers
- 3:00** Birthday Cake

**ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT EACH DAY:**  
 Live Music, Alligator Wrestling, Indian Dancing,  
 Boy Scout Demonstrations, Historic Re-Enactors

● website: [www.tamiami80.com](http://www.tamiami80.com) ●



## Panther Sighting

by Rose Flynn

Some might say it is visually redundant to take a six mile hike in the Big Cypress, three miles in and three out. The topography might be perceived as repetitive. That is, only if you miss the tiny, colorful wildflowers peeping out from the dense hues of green, basking in sunlight in the afternoon and trailed by shadow in the early evening. Or if you have never been beckoned to touch the gentle curve of a palm frond pulled down by the weight of its cantilever and then discovered the tooth of a saw palmetto. When you are in your truck, you will miss the sound of tiny birds you can hear close to dusk that make you understand the inspiration for Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

What I have described is only part of a one day hike in the Big Cypress. They are the highlights for me. Then there are the other things I have come not to expect but hope to encounter when I explore. There are ponds thick with turtles and alligators. Once in a while, you happen upon the graceful flight of a doe.

Then there is the thing you never expect will happen because it is much too rare an experience. Then it happens. You're tired from hiking in the heat. You can't wait to sit in your air conditioned car. Your feet scream to be freed from the confines of your boots. Then your companion says, "Look, there's a panther". You pull up the camera hanging from your neck and photograph the cat looking back at you. You can't believe your luck is that good. You say, "Oh, my God." Then, the cat is gone.

## Geocaching in the Everglades ... Treasure Hunting in the Swamp

by Patricia Huff

Do you know what geocaching is?? It has been around since the spring of 2000 when a computer consultant first thought of hiding a bucket (with a logbook and prizes) in the woods to test the accuracy of GPS (Global Positioning System) units. The waypoint was then posted on the internet listing the coordinates, waiting for someone to find the bucket. At that time the game was called the "Great American GPS Stash Hunt" but was changed later that year to "geocaching" which was a combination of geo, for Earth or geography, and cache which refers to a hiding place to store items.

There are prizes hidden in containers in the Everglades City area and all over the world. If you have a GPS unit, you can enter the coordinates into your GPS and start hunting. There are rules: when you find a geocaching container, you can take the prize but need to leave something in its place. Also, you are to enter information on the log book located inside the container. GPS devices cost \$100 to \$1000 and you need to open an account online.

To get started, go to [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com), sign on for a free membership and enter a zip code or location (it's a great game when you're traveling by car). You can also list your findings online and share with others. Currently there are over 500,000 caches worldwide. It's fun for all ages; just like the old scavenger hunts we used to go on when we were kids; just more techno-savvy now.

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## POACHING HURTS

A Naples man pled guilty recently to taking protected saltwater fish species in the southwest section of Everglades National Park. He illegally harvested four goliath grouper and five undersize, out-of-season snook from the Gopher Creek area. Rangers received an anonymous tip about the fish. The United States Magistrate fined him \$1850 and banned him from Everglades National Park for two years.

Possession of illegal fish in the park is a Class B misdemeanor which carries a maximum penalty of \$5000 and six months in prison for each charge. Additionally, the Lacey Act is invoked when the poached species have a commercial value greater than \$350. This is a felony which carries a maximum fine of \$20,000, five years in prison, and forfeiture of vessels and vehicles involved in transporting the illegal harvest. Under state law, poachers can also lose their hunting and fishing privileges in Florida as well as 23 other states which have signed a cooperative "Wildlife Violator Compact".

Poaching hurts the resource and honest sportsmen. Contact the Park Service (1-305-242-7740) or FWC (1-888-404-3922) with information about poaching.

## VIP Report – AIP Meeting

by Shirley Leonard



Approximately 100 area residents have voiced support for a citizen-generated proposal to improve manatee protection zones and boating safety in Chokoloskee Bay.

Resident Max Shultz presented the plan on March 26 at Everglades City School. It is the third alternative developed to date and reflects a compromise between U.S. Fish and Wildlife and local fishermen. It drew on the first two alternatives, neither of which local fishermen liked.

“This is something I think we can live with,” Schultz said.

Since the first joint meeting in January eight permanent and seasonal residents have worked to develop a plan that would satisfy both locals and federal officials.

Save the Manatee Club and nine other environmental groups sued U.S. Fish and Wildlife in 2000, charging the federal government was not adequately protecting manatees in federal waters of Florida. In 2001 U. S. Fish and Wildlife agreed to improve manatee protection areas and settled the suit. Of seven areas in the state required to do so, only Chokoloskee Bay has not come into compliance. Its designation as an Area of Inadequate Protection, AIP, has halted all construction of projects in the bay.

“We want this AIP designation removed,” said Paul Souza, chief biologist for U.S. Fish and Wildlife. “That’s the bottom line.”

The court settlement requires Fish and Wildlife to:

- 1) improve/or enlarge manatee protection zones;
- 2) erect channel markers clearly designating areas where boaters must observe speed limits; and
- 3) enforce the limits.

The three requirements have been “sticking points” between citizens and the government. “If we can satisfy that, they’ll be satisfied,” Shultz said.

Only federal waters will be affected by the changes. Collier County plans to review its zones, markers and enforcement

practices in 2010 for its area of the bay. Many believe the county should act sooner so there is no confusion about the speed/manatee zones throughout the bay. Everglades National Park and U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials commended the residents for their hard work since the Jan. 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The eight residents who drafted the proposal included Shultz, David Hack, Larry Weber, Richard Fitzgerald, Capt. Tony Polizos, Capt. Charles Wright, Quin Kurth and Adam Gelber. Studies begun in 2000 determined “hot spots” and “travel corridors” in the bay where manatees tend to congregate. Using this data the committee determined where boaters must slow so as not to strike manatees.

Except for main channels the bay is shallow. As low as one foot in some areas at low tide, it requires boaters to go fast enough, called “getting up on plane,” to keep their boat propellers from getting buried in the muddy bottom. Dredging the bottom this way is harmful to vegetation which manatees feed upon and damages boats’ engines. In extremely low tides if boats cannot exceed idle or slow speeds, no more than 20 mph, the boats can get stuck.

District Ranger Kevin Donnell said Everglades National Park law enforcement officers understand the problem and ticket only those exceeding 25 mph in the slow areas. U.S. Fish and Wildlife will now study the proposal. The final plan will be up to them to determine.

Schultz and Everglades National Park Superintendent Dan Kimball urged everyone at the meeting to give their written comments on forms available at the meeting. The public comment period continues until April 28.

People can get information about the AIP and comment directly on the National Park Service website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>

or by e-mail to:

[EVER\\_Ranger\\_Activities@nps.gov](mailto:EVER_Ranger_Activities@nps.gov)

Handwritten comments can be posted to:

Everglades National Park,

Attn: Bonnie Foist, Chokoloskee AIP

40001 SR 9336

Homestead, FL, 33034

Information about Save the Manatee Club can be found at its web site:

<http://www.savethemanatee.org/>

**Shirley is a “Volunteer-In-Parks” (thus, VIP) at Everglades National Park at the Gulf Coast Visitor Center in Everglades City. She is a regular contributor to the Rapper.**



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