

Photo by Dallas Wauters



Photos by Kelly J Farrell

## Big Tower Planned in Big Cypress

By Kelly J Farrell

A 350-foot-tall communications tower is planned for Big Cypress National Preserve, with the Collier County Board of Commissioners set to review the proposal in a public hearing on March 25 at 9 am.

The National Park Service plans to demolish the existing communications tower at U.S. 41 and State Road 29 in Carnestown, located on federal land. In response, officials propose constructing a new 350-foot tower a few miles east at Ochopee Fire Station 66.

Several local and state government officials have said the new tower is needed for emergency services due to the federal government's demolition of the old one.

See **Tower**, p5

## Everglades Seafood Festival Serves Up Magic, Music and Meaning

By Dallas Wauters

Wow, what a weekend! Our community came together in the best way possible, and this year's festival was nothing short of amazing. Hosted by the Florida Stone Crabbers Association, the event drew visitors from near and far to celebrate the best of Everglades City.

As the sun dipped below the horizon on Friday night, the first day of the three-day event, an epic drone show by LunaLite Drone Show Technologies lit up the night sky, stopping everyone in their tracks. Seriously, you could hear

the collective "whoa" as festival-goers looked up in awe. A huge thank you to Everglades Isle, a major sponsor, for helping make this unforgettable moment happen.

But that was just the beginning. This festival had something for everyone. For the kids there were rides and games galore. For the adults the marketplace was packed with insanely talented artisans from all over the country. There were booths full of handcrafted jewelry that shimmered under the festival lights, stunning wood-carved

masterpieces, and racks of one-of-a-kind clothing designs. And let's not forget the food—oh man, the food! Local vendors brought their A-game, serving up everything from gourmet street eats to small-batch hot sauces and craft drink mixers that had people coming back for seconds (and thirds!).

And if you thought the festival was just about shopping and eating, think again. The live music lineup was on point, setting the perfect vibe as people wandered the grounds, soaking

See **Festival**, p4

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After 4 years Reverend Dr. Bob N. Wallace leaves the Mullet Rapper.  
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## Local Event Calendar

### March 2, 2025 to April 12, 2025

| SUNDAY   | MONDAY  | TUESDAY  | WEDNESDAY   | THURSDAY   | FRIDAY                     | SATURDAY                                      |
|--|---|--|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| <b>March 2</b><br>Rapper Submissions Due #470        | 3   | 4<br>City Council p3<br>Díaz-Balart's p3<br>Book Signing p2<br><span style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">EVG School Events</span> | 5<br>Food Pantry p3<br>Wilderness Wed p7<br><span style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">EVG School Events</span> | 6<br>Ladies' Coffee<br>City Seafood 8:30a                      | 7<br>POI Bingo p2          | 8<br>Arts & Music Fest p2                     |
| 9<br>Daylight Savings<br>Arts & Music Fest p2        | 10  | 11   | 12<br>Food Pantry p3<br>Wilderness Wed p7<br><span style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">No School</span>        | 13<br>Ladies' Coffee<br>HavAnnA Cafe 8:30a<br>Book Club p3     | 14<br><b>( Full Moon</b>   | <b>15 - RAPPER #470</b><br>Turkey Shoot p3    |
| 16<br>Turkey Shoot p3<br>Rapper Submissions Due #471 | 17<br>St. Patrick's Day<br> | 18<br>Code + P&Z p3  | 19<br>Food Pantry p3<br>Wilderness Wed p7   | 20<br>Ladies' Coffee<br>Island Cafe 8:30a<br>Third Thursday p7 | 21                         | 22  |
| 23   | 24<br><span style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">No School</span>                   | 25   | 26<br>Food Pantry p3<br>Outreach Prog p13<br>HavAnnA Paint p2   | 27<br>Ladies' Coffee<br>City Seafood 8:30a<br>Pep Rally p2     | 28<br>Grapefruit Gala p7   | <b>29 - RAPPER #471</b><br><b>● New Moon</b>  |
| 30<br>Rapper Submissions Due #472                    | 31  | <b>April 1</b><br>City Council p3<br>Díaz-Balart's p3  | 2<br>Food Pantry p3   | 3<br>Ladies' Coffee<br>HavAnnA Cafe 8:30a                      | 4<br>Legacy Celebration p3 | 5<br>5K p11                                   |
| 6  | 7   | 8  | 9<br>Food Pantry p3   | 10<br>Ladies' Coffee<br>Island Cafe 8:30a<br>Book Club p3      | 11                         | <b>12 - RAPPER #472</b><br><b>( Full Moon</b> |

Events
Save The Date

#### March 4-5 EVG's School Events

Everglades City School is celebrating it's spring Scholastic Bookfair with family/friends' events that will take place on Tuesday, March 4th from 3 – 5:30 pm and Wednesday, March 5th for our Annual Books & Breakfast Event from 7 – 8:30 am! Make plans to join us!

#### March 4 | 12 pm - 2 pm Book Signing at Crabby Lady

Author Ann Kenna, writer of *Florida Kills*, will be signing books at Crabby Lady Restaurant on Tuesday, March 4th, from 12 pm to 2pm. Stop by to meet the author and get a signed copy! *Florida Kills* is also available at Sunshine Booksellers, 677 S. Collier Blvd, Marco Island.

#### March 7 | 6:30 pm Orchid Cove Bingo

BYOB Bingo at Orchid Cove in Port of the Islands Get ready for a fun-filled night at Orchid Cove Clubhouse on Friday, March 7! BYOB Bingo returns with doors opening at 6:30 pm and games starting at 7:00 pm. Grab your table

early as seating filled up quickly last time! Play 10 exciting rounds for just \$15, which includes 30 cards. There will also be a 50/50 raffle and plenty of other prizes to win. Raffle tickets are \$1 each, 6 for \$5, and 12 for \$10. Don't miss out—come for the games, stay for the prizes!

#### March 8 & 9 | 10 am - 4 pm Harbor Arts & Music Festival

Come to the 13th Annual Harbor Arts & Music Festival on March 8 & 9th at MarGood Harbor Park. Showcasing top-tier artists and diverse cuisines, enjoy captivating raffle prizes and live performances by Florida's top musicians. Don't miss this blend of great food, art, and music! More Info: [taraogallery@gmail.com](mailto:taraogallery@gmail.com).

#### March 28 | 5 pm - 8 pm Grapefruit Gala

Join us in the parking lot at Museum of the Everglades for our annual whimsical country dance. Enjoy live music, tasty finger foods, and complimentary wine along with fresh local citrus as we celebrate the birthday of county founder Barron Gift Collier. Stop by and raise a toast to our founder. No formal attire required at this gala.

Just bring a chair and don't forget your dancing shoes.

#### March 26 | 4 pm HavAnnA Painting

Join local artist Lisa Gilmore of Stroke of Serendipity at HavAnnA Cafe in Chokoloskee on March 26th from 4 to 6 pm for an Open Paint event! Stay tuned for more details: Instagram [@Hav.annacafe](https://www.instagram.com/Hav.annacafe) and Facebook [@HavannaCafeEverglades](https://www.facebook.com/HavannaCafeEverglades).

#### April 19 | 9 am - 2 pm Anniversary & Museum Party

This combination celebration of the 97th Anniversary of the completion of the Tamiami Trail and the "birthday" of Museum of the Everglades (opened on the 70th Anniversary of the Trail in 1998) is a fun-filled afternoon with live music, complimentary hot dogs, and the only laundry cart races in the country! Join us early for a complimentary walking tour, sign up and take part in the races, peruse the display of classic cars, or just relax and enjoy the music

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with a slice of birthday cake! Everyone is welcome at this feel-good family-friendly annual event.

**April 19 | 10 am - 1 pm**  
**Eggstravaganza**

Bring your basket and join us for the Annual Everglades City Eggstravaganza on April 19 from 10 am to 1 pm, where the fun happens in McLeod Park on Copeland Ave and Hibiscus Street West in Everglades City. This event features 4,000 candy-filled Easter eggs waiting to be found, inflatables for the little ones to bounce on, cash-filled eggs adding an extra thrill to the hunt, free food to fuel the excitement, amazing giveaways adding to the joy, a petting zoo and pony rides for extra fun, and lots of happy kids enjoying the festivities and creating cherished memories with their families!



**MULLET RAPPER**

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**2025 In Stand Dates**

- January 18
- February 1
- February 15
- March 1
- March 15
- March 29
- April 12
- April 26
- May 24
- June 21
- July 19
- August 16
- September 13
- October 11
- October 25
- November 8
- November 22
- December 6
- December 20

**Community**

**Everglades Area Information**  
**Daily | 9:30 am - 4 pm**

The Everglades Area Visitor Center is located at 207 Broadway W., Everglades City. The Visitor Center is open daily 9:30 am to 4 pm.

**Food Pantry**  
**Wednesdays | 9:30 am - Noon**

Food is distributed from the rear of Everglades Community Church located at 101 S. Copeland Ave., Everglades City. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Ladies Coffee**  
**Thursdays | 8:30 am**

Ladies Coffee is a casual weekly gathering for women every Thursday at different local breakfast spots or homes. No rules or fees, just a welcoming space to connect and forge friendships.

**Rep. Díaz-Balart's in EC Office**  
**First Tuesday | 2:30 pm**

Every first Tuesday at 2:30 pm, a member of Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart's team will be at Everglades City Hall to assist with federal casework, including USPS, social security, veterans' benefits, immigration, and other federal issues.

**City Council Meeting**  
**First Tuesdays | 7 pm**

City Council meetings are held every 1st Tuesday of the month @ 7 pm in the

**Everglades Lions Club**  
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**Turkey Shoot**  
**March 15 10am-5pm**  
**March 16 12pm-5pm**  
18101 Cypress Tower Rd.  
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Mayberry's Cypress Tower Camp

City Council room, 2nd floor City Hall. The public is invited to attend. Info: <https://www.cityofeverglades.org>

**Code Enforcement + P&Z**  
**Third Tuesdays**

Code Enforcement and Planning & Zoning meetings are held monthly on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. City Council room, 2nd floor City Hall. Info: <https://www.cityofeverglades.org/Meetings-Agendas>

**Live Music**

**Gator Hole Bar** (Everglades City)  
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**Joanie's Blue Crab Cafe** (Ochopee)  
Weekends

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**Crabby Lady** (Goodland) Weekends

**Stans** (Goodland) Tuesday - Sundays.  
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**April 10**  
*Doll House*  
By Fiona Davis  
Host: Connie Baker  
Location: Home of Host  
To host a meeting, contact Diann Lock at [dmlock333@gmail.com](mailto:dmlock333@gmail.com).

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**Publisher's Statement**

We cover news and events for Everglades City, Chokoloskee, Plantation Island, Port of the Islands, Copeland, Jerome, Ochopee, Goodland, Lee Cypress, Big Cypress, and the 10,000 Islands. Our aim is accurate and diverse reporting. Opinions expressed may differ from those of the editors or publisher.

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~ Marjory Stoneman Douglas

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# Festival

From Page 1



Photos Courtesy of the Florida Stone Crabbers Association

after-hours hangout turned into a place where stories were shared, laughter filled the air, and new friendships were made.

Beyond the fun, this festival made a huge impact. Our Daily Bread food pantry collected over 3,000 lbs of food and \$3,000 in donations on Friday night alone, ensuring local families in need will receive essential support. The festival also played a role in shaping young lives—seniors who volunteered will be heading on a cruise to the Bahamas in March for their senior trip, fully funded by the festival.

And that's just a small piece of what this event does for our community. The Everglades Seafood Festival has given back over \$150,000 in the last three years, supporting hurricane victims with gift cards and supplies, funding trade scholarships, summer sports camps, church camp, food banks, animal shelters, school supplies, teacher supplies, Christmas toy drives, breast cancer awareness, and so much more.

in the energy. For those looking for a different perspective—literally—there was a two-story bar on wheels offering a killer view of all the action.

When the main festivities wrapped up, the party was far from over. The Gator Hole became the spot to be, keeping the fun going late into the night. Whether you were a local or visiting from out of town, this

This year's festival layout made things super easy to navigate, with plenty of space to chill and take in the atmosphere. Huge props to the organizers for making everything flow so smoothly! It's events like these that remind us why we love our community so much, and it's awesome to see people from all over coming to experience it with us.

Whether you came for the jaw-dropping drone show, the incredible art, or the non-stop live music, this festival proved once again why it's

a favorite tradition. A massive thank you to everyone who made it happen. We're already counting down the days until next year. See you then! 🍷



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# Tower

From Page 1

David Shealy, of Skunk Ape Headquarters in Ochopee, questions whether the new tower is necessary given existing infrastructure. "Everyone supports emergency services, but they already have a tower at Carnestown," he said.

The new tower is planned to be built adjacent to the Shealy family's property, which includes ecotours and the Trail Lakes Campgrounds, as well as the roadside attraction voted No. 2 in America and No. 1 in Florida by USA Today readers—the Skunk Ape Research Headquarters.

Shealy also pointed out that there is an existing tower at Monument Lake, as well as one in the center of Everglades City. "If the Park Service needs a tower for emergency services, I'm sure that they're able to do that on their own land," he said.

According to the National Association of REALTORS, such towers decrease property values by 7 to 8 percent.

Although the Shealys have not made that concern public, Jack Shealy, a musician and grandson of the Ochopee Fire Department's founder, pointed out that the 1977 deed restricts the fire station land to fire protection uses.



Photos by Kelly J Farrell

The Shealys' neighbors at the time, the Davisons, donated the property to the county in 1977 for the establishment of the Ochopee Fire Department. Jack Shealy's grandfather of the same name, Jack Shealy, founded the department. He was a longtime volunteer and held fish fries as fundraisers, his grandson said.

"This conveyance is made for the purpose of providing property to be used for fire protection and associated uses, and if the premises fail to be used for such purposes, or are ever used for any other purpose, then the land shall immediately revert to the Grantor, her heirs or assigns," signed Ester Davison, on the Warranty Deed, dated February 15, 1977.

Shealy started a petition on

[Change.org](https://www.change.org), which can be found by searching "tower" on the site. ([Change.org/p/stop-the-construction-of-the-350-foot-cell-tower-in-big-cypress-national-preserve](https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-construction-of-the-350-foot-cell-tower-in-big-cypress-national-preserve)).

In addition to legal concerns, many of the approximately 1,500 people who signed the petition cited environmental, health, and aesthetic issues. There are also concerns about the tower's impact on migratory birds and other wildlife in the area and ecotourism.

County Attorney Derek Perry had advised the Collier County Planning Commission that it was legally sufficient to move forward with the tower's construction on the Ochopee fire site, leading the Planning Board to approve the conditional use permit unanimously (8-0) on Feb 6.

**Left:** A sign in Big Cypress National Preserve at the proposed site of a 350-foot communications tower gives notice of public hearings. The Collier County Planning Commission approved the conditional use permit to construct a 350-foot communications tower in Ochopee during their meeting Feb 6 in Naples. The public is invited to comment at the Board of Collier County Commissioners meeting scheduled 9 am. Tuesday, March 25.



**Above:** Ochopee Fire Station 66, part of Greater Naples Fire Rescue, is the proposed site of a new 350-foot communications tower following National Park Service plans to demolish the existing tower at U.S. 41 and State Road 29 in Carnestown.

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**Just Look For The Lighthouse**

# Bob Signs Off

By Denise Wauters

For the past four years, Reverend Dr. Bob N. Wallace has been a cherished part of the Mullet Rapper, contributing thoughtful, humorous, and insightful articles to every single issue since February 20, 2021. His words have brought laughter, inspiration, and a deeper appreciation for the world around us.

Now, as he steps away from his role as a regular contributor, we take a moment to express our deepest gratitude for his dedication and the lasting impact he has made on our community newspaper.



Bob has written on just about everything—history, faith, fishing, local events, and even the occasional quirky topic that left us chuckling.

His ability to weave humor into storytelling made every issue a delight. From the playful spirit of the May 15, 2021, edition featuring [The Word 'Little' Can Often Get You in 'Big' Trouble](#), (Issue #390 p8) to the heartfelt reflections in the December 10, 2022, issue with [Getting Your Card List Ready Can be Sobering](#), (Issue #426 p8) Bob's voice has been an essential part of our community.

Who could forget the September 18, 2021, piece [Anybody want to buy a slightly used exercise machine?](#), (Issue #399 p8) which had readers both laughing and side-eyeing their treadmills? Or the February 3, 2024 article [Honey, I Thought You said This Was Florida](#), (Issue #448 p8) don't you just love our weather? Bob has a way of turning even the most mundane topics into captivating tales, and that is a rare gift.

Bob's writing has been a constant source of warmth and wisdom, and his presence in our pages will be deeply missed. He has made us laugh, made us think, and reminded us of the goodness that exists all around us.

While he may be stepping away from the paper, Bob isn't going anywhere. As the pastor of Everglades Community Church, he will continue to be an integral part of the community, sharing his wisdom and kindness in many ways beyond the printed page.

Bob, from all of us here at the Mullet Rapper, thank you for your time, your words, and your heart.

We wish you nothing but happiness, and just maybe, an occasional guest column—because let's be honest, we're all going to miss your stories way too much!

*The Mullet Rapper Team*

# Mmm... That Sweet Vanilla

by Denise Wauters



Vanilla, the flavor superstar we all know and love, has a wild and fascinating story—especially in Southwest Florida. Unlike its orchid cousins, the Vanilla Orchid is the only one that produces an edible fruit, making it a big deal in the agricultural world. Not only is it the world's most valuable shade crop, but it's also one of the most labor-intensive to grow. These climbing vines love warm, humid environments, which makes parts of Florida the perfect home for this extraordinary plant.

With over 130 species in the Vanilla Orchid family, *Vanilla planifolia*—sometimes called *Vanilla pompona*—steals the show, producing more than 98% of the vanilla beans we use today. This variety is known for its rich, aromatic beans packed with high levels of vanillin, the compound responsible for that irresistible vanilla scent and taste. Real vanilla contains over 250 natural compounds that give it its signature depth of flavor, making it a prized ingredient in everything from baked goods to perfumes. But here's the kicker: natural vanilla is so rare and expensive that most of what we taste isn't the real deal.

Since growing, pollinating, and



By B.navez - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6969739>

curing vanilla is a painstaking process, industries turned to synthetic vanillin as a cheaper alternative. The ice cream and chocolate industries alone devour 75% of the market's vanilla flavoring, and synthetic vanillin has found its way into everything from confections to cleaning products. The artificial stuff is usually made from guaiacol (a colorless, viscous oil used in medicine and flavorings), eugenol (a natural compound found in cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon), and petrochemicals (yep, the same stuff that comes from crude oil). A small portion of synthetic vanillin even comes from lignin waste—a by-product of the wood pulp industry. Not exactly as romantic as hand-cured vanilla beans from the tropics, right?

Pollination is another hurdle in the vanilla game. In its native Mexico, the Melipona bee is the only natural pollinator, which means vanilla farmers in other parts of the world have to pollinate each flower by hand. And they don't have much time—each bloom lasts less than a day, and it must be pollinated by noon to have a chance at producing a bean. Once pollinated, it takes a full year before the cured bean is ready for use, making vanilla the second most expensive spice in the world (right after saffron).



By Scot Nelson



Saffron: By Serpico - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11822266>

America got its first taste of vanilla in 1789, thanks to Thomas Jefferson, who brought it back from Europe. By the 19th century, the invention of the ice cream churn turned vanilla into a household favorite. Today, despite its popularity, real vanilla is a rare find—97.7% of the vanilla used in food and fragrance is synthetic.

If you want to experience the magic of real vanilla, why not try growing it yourself? Southwest Florida's warm climate and shaded areas provide the perfect setting for cultivating these beautiful, climbing orchids. With patience and a little know-how, you could be on your way to producing your very own vanilla beans—adding a homegrown touch to one of the world's most cherished flavors!

More information on growing vanilla in South Florida <https://fairchildgarden.org/visit/growing-and-using-vanilla-orchids-in-south-florida/>



Melipona Bee: By USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab from Beltsville, Maryland, USA - Stingless bee 3, f, side, peru\_2014-07-30-13.17.15 ZS PMax, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38183154>



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Rev. Dr. Bob N. Wallace Pastor



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# Museum of the Everglades

105 West Broadway Avenue Everglades City, FL

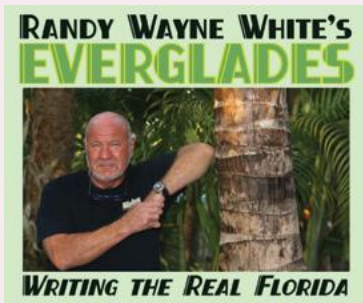


Originally a 1927 commercial laundry, the Museum of the Everglades building testifies to the town's history as a bustling business center and the region's first county seat. Now a museum, it's open

Tuesday to Saturday from 9 am to 4 pm with free admission. Certain events may require reservations. Book your reservation at [colliermuseums.com](http://colliermuseums.com) or call (239) 252-5026. Come explore Everglades heritage today!

## Exhibits

**Randy Wayne White's Everglades - Writing the Real Florida**  
Jan 14 – May 3



Randy Wayne White, a best-selling South Florida author, spent 13 years as a fishing guide based on Sanibel Island, leading over 3,000 charters. When government regulations ended his livelihood, he turned to writing and created Marion "Doc" Ford, a former national security agent turned marine biologist. Drawing on his deep knowledge

of Florida's waters and culture, White launched a successful series that now spans 27 books, blending thrilling action with the unique spirit of the region.

The Everglades often serve as a central backdrop in White's novels, vividly portraying the challenges of preserving "old Florida." His stories resonate with readers, connecting them to the area's landscapes, people, and history. Our temporary exhibit, Randy Wayne White's Everglades, celebrates his work and its role in bringing the authentic Florida experience to life.

## Wilderness Wednesday Series

January 15 - March 19 | 2 – 3 pm



Join Gulf Coast rangers at the historic Museum of the Everglades for Ranger Talks, where you'll explore the ecology and cultural history of the 10,000 Islands region of Everglades National Park. These engaging sessions include topics such as alligators and crocodiles, mangrove ecology, and the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness. Mark your calendars for: 3/5, 3/12, at 2 pm.

## Third Thursday Talk Series

**Driving Passion - The Collier Family and their Cars**  
March 20 | 2 – 3 pm



*Miles and Sam Collier  
Photo Courtesy of the Revs*

County founder Barron Collier's involvement in the construction of the Tamiami Trail, making it possible for the growing number of Florida visitors to explore the Everglades region by car, is common knowledge. However, many remain unaware that his family's love affair with the automobile extends well

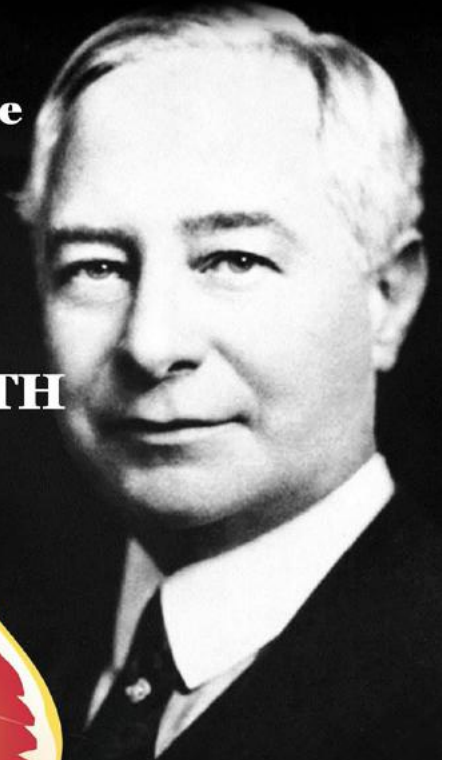
beyond its utility as transportation for tourists. Mr. Collier himself was deeply involved in all aspects of traffic safety, even authoring a book entitled Stopping Street Accidents, and his sons became avid auto-racers, building hotrods and establishing one of the earliest and most elite racing clubs in the country. This talk will explore all these aspects, culminating with the remarkable collection amassed by grandson Miles Collier and his creation of the Revs Institute to not only house more than a hundred vintage vehicles and scores of artifacts.

# It all started with grapefruit.

## The Annual Grapefruit Gala

a casual country dance with fresh Florida citrus and music by Gator Nate

**FRIDAY, MARCH 28TH**  
**5PM – 8PM**

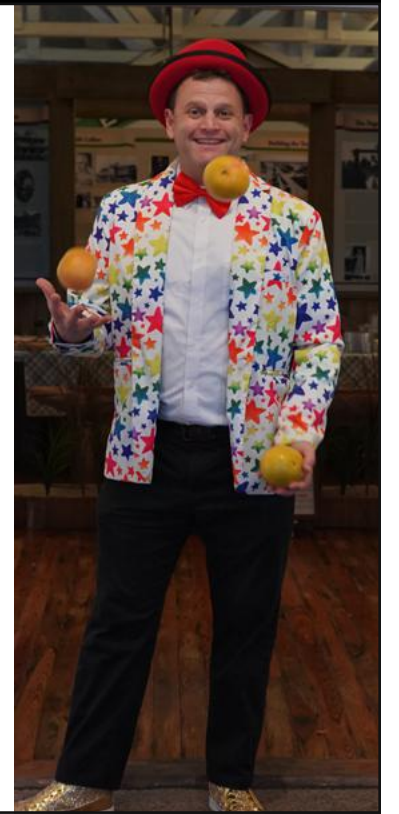


Museum of the Everglades  
105 W. Broadway  
Everglades City  
239-252-5026 for more information

**Outside in the parking lot – Bring Your Own Chair!**

**Join us in the Museum of the Everglades parking lot for our annual whimsical country dance!**

Enjoy live music, tasty finger foods, complimentary wine, and fresh local citrus as we celebrate county founder Barron Gift Collier's birthday. His 1921 purchase of a Deep Lake grapefruit grove shifted the local economy toward tourism and led to the county's creation—why we say, "It all started with grapefruit." Raise a toast to our founder! No formal attire needed—just bring a chair and your dancing shoes.



**Become a Member of Friends of the Museum of the Everglades** and be part of a legacy that keeps our local history alive.

**Together We**  
Provide Financial Support  
Preserve Artifacts  
Enrich School Programs  
Host Museum Events



Member Benefits  
Members-only Events  
& Quarterly Newsletters

Together, we're more than Friends—we're stewards of the past for future generations.

**Join Today**  
[EvergladesMuseum.org](http://EvergladesMuseum.org)



©Mullet Rapper

Download the PDF at  
VisitEvergladesCity.com

# Everglades City



## Tour Everglades City & Chokoloskee

Discover the charm of Everglades City and Chokoloskee by walking, biking, or driving with our tour map, offering a fascinating exploration of local history and uncovering hidden gems along the way.



**Stone Crabbing** in Florida started in the 1890s when fishermen were trying to capture spiny lobster and inadvertently found stone crabs in their traps. Ernest Hamilton of Chokoloskee started fishing for stone crabs commercially and now Everglades City is considered the Stone Crab Capital of the World.



The first schoolteacher gave lessons at the Storter residence (now the Rod & Gun Club) in 1893. Two years later a schoolhouse was built at the mouth of the river but was destroyed in a storm; a second building was washed away in the 1910 hurricane, and another built at its present location. The high school opened in 1926 with one student graduating that year. In 1996 Collier County built a new **Everglades City School** building which includes grades pre-K through grade 12.



Everglades National Park's **mangroves** display unique "walking" adaptations, expanding into new areas with prop roots. They serve as natural filters, purifying water and supporting diverse wildlife. Thriving in brackish water, they maintain the delicate balance between freshwater and saltwater ecosystems.



The **Old Collier County Courthouse**, a historic two-story concrete structure in Everglades City, Florida, was built in 1926 by Barron Collier, the visionary behind Collier County's development. Reflecting the Classical Revival style, it served as the county courthouse until 1962 when the seat moved to East Naples. Later, it was re-purposed as Everglades City Hall.



The **County Jail**, dating back to the earliest days of the county's inception in 1883, found its home in Everglades City. This modest, wooden structure served as the initial confinement space, accommodating only a handful of inmates as the county burgeoned. With the establishment of the Collier County Sheriff's Office in 1923, under the stewardship of William Riley "W.R." Maynard as its inaugural Sheriff, the jail's significance grew further. Situated on the southwest corner of the circle, the jail incorporated living quarters for the sheriff and his family on its upper floor. A relic whose remnants still linger in the present-day Captain Morgan's parking lot, serving as a testament to the county's enduring legacy.



Founded by Barron Collier, the **Bank of Everglades** received its charter in 1923, serving as the only bank in Collier County for 26 years. This building was completed in 1926 and operated as a bank until 1962 when the county seat moved to Naples. The Everglades Society for Historic Preservation (ESHP) currently owns the building and is in the process of rehabilitating it as the Everglades Area Visitor Center and Trail Town Headquarters.



This site was the home of William Smith Allen who settled here in the early 1870s. The property was sold to George Storter, Jr., who enlarged the house and opened a trading post in 1892, dealing with the local Seminoles, Barron Collier bought the house in the 1920s and renamed it the **Rod & Gun Club**, hosting four US Presidents and a number of celebrities. The Bowen family has owned the property since 1973.



Originally a commercial laundry, this building was an integral part of Collier's business empire - providing uniforms and linens for the Rod & Gun Club and the Everglades Inn. The laundry closed during WWII, and the building was occupied by several businesses before the local Women's Club purchased it in 1972. The Club disbanded in 1988 with the remaining members reorganizing as the Friends of Museum of the Everglades and raising funds to help create a museum. They donated the building to Collier County Museums and the **Museum of the Everglades** which opened in April of 1998.




In 1939 the Collier Corporation offered land on the Circle in Everglades City to **Everglades Community Church** for a building with the condition that the church be completed by October 1940 and that it be non-denominational. Services have been held continuously every Sunday since then for the greater Everglades area community.





Visit the **Everglades Visitors Center** at the Glades Building. Originally built by Jan and Tony Brock of Glades Realty after Hurricane Donna in 1960, the building underwent extensive renovations by Craig and Bonnie Woodward in 2019. In February 2021, part of the building became the Everglades Visitor Center, offering insights into the area's rich history. Explore the wonders of the Everglades and 10,000 Islands with information, maps, event updates, and knowledgeable staff to guide your experience.





 The Spanish-style stucco building of the **Old Railway Depot** was built in 1928 and typical of the 1920s Florida railroad architecture. It was the terminus for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad that operated until 1959 when the building was converted into a restaurant. Progress is currently underway to restore the historic 1928 Spanish-style building.

feet tall with 108 steps leading to panoramic views. From this vantage point, one can admire the vast expanse of mangroves, Chokoloskee Island, the Everglades, and the picturesque Ten Thousand Islands. Birdwatchers may catch sight of various species, including the elegant Roseate Spoonbill.

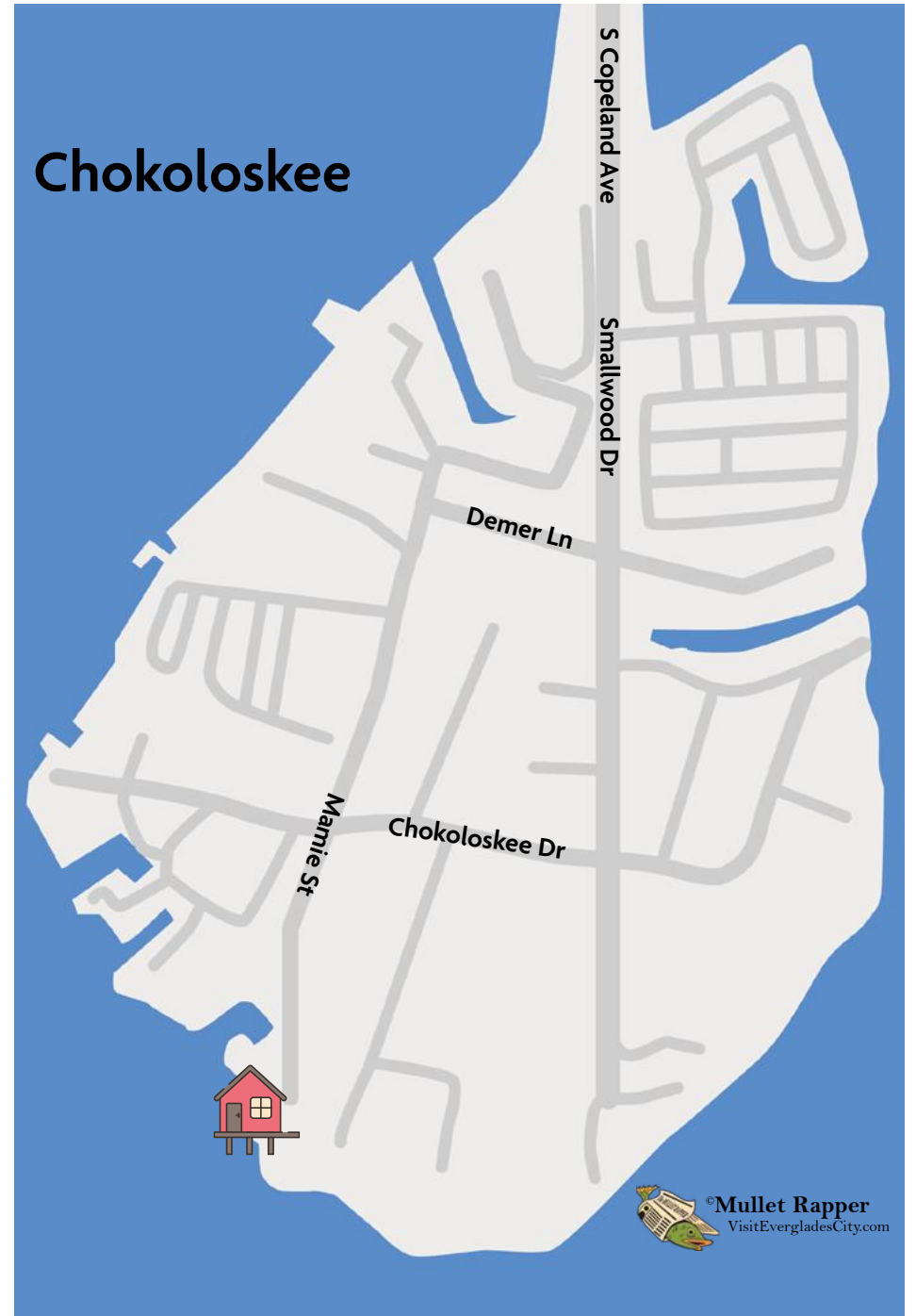
 Built in the 1940s by the Collier family, the Everglades Airpark originally featured a 1,000-foot paved runway with grass extensions, becoming a hub for Air Force, Civil Air Patrol, and private pilots. In 1947, President Harry S. Truman delivered his dedication address for Everglades National Park at the airpark, marking a historic moment for both the park and the airfield. Hurricane Donna's 1960 devastation didn't stop the Collier family's vision, leading to Collier County's acquisition in 1968. The Collier County Airport Authority took over management in 1993. Now the second smallest airport in Florida, it draws visitors worldwide to explore the Everglades, watch planes, and learn to fly while embracing the area's rich history.

 Chokoloskee Island, steeped in history since the late 1800s, is connected to the mainland by a causeway built in 1956. Renovation of the **Chokoloskee Bridge** began in 2007 and was completed in 2017. The new bridge meets modern standards, offering increased width and height while preserving vital seawalls. The island's rich history, including tales of notorious characters and an era of moonshine and plume hunting, is intertwined with this vital causeway.



 Located on Chokoloskee Island's southern tip, the **Smallwood Store** has embodied Ted Smallwood's vision since 1906. Once a hub for Seminole Indians, fishermen, and farmers arriving by various vessels, it now stands as an immersive museum showcasing the area's rich history. Its exhibits capture the enduring spirit of pioneers, reflecting old Florida's resilience and allure.

 The **Ernest Hamilton Observation Tower**, erected in 1984 by Thomas Mitchell, offers visitors a stunning perspective, standing 75

Have Fun Exploring!



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FLORIDA HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

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See Events

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## Collier County Summer Camps 2025

Collier County Parks & Recreation is gearing up for an exciting summer with a variety of camps for children of all ages and abilities. Families can explore camp options and register online at [lp.constantcontactpages.com/cu/BFSh1ek/GetReadySummerCamp](http://lp.constantcontactpages.com/cu/BFSh1ek/GetReadySummerCamp).

### Key Date to Remember:

Registration Opens: Saturday, March 1, 2025 (Online: 7 am / In Person: 9 am)

### Camp Options:

- Camp Collier Full 9-Week Session – Monday–Friday, 9 am – 5 pm (June 2 – August 1)
- Camp Collier Weekly Camps – Monday–Friday, 9 am – 5 pm (June 2 – August 1)

- Before & After Camp – Monday–Friday, 7:15 am – 9 am & 5 pm – 6 pm
- Day Camps
- Sailing & Skiing Camps
- Sports Camps
- A.I.R.

This year's theme, "Where Dreams are Made," will take campers on adventures featuring fun and engaging activities designed to meet their social, physical, and developmental needs in a nurturing environment.

For camp locations and registration details, visit Get Ready for Summer Camp at: [lp.constantcontactpages.com/cu/BFSh1ek/GetReadySummerCamp](http://lp.constantcontactpages.com/cu/BFSh1ek/GetReadySummerCamp).



### Order Your Yearbook Now

[Yearbookordercenter.com](http://Yearbookordercenter.com)

Job #: 19503

Questions? Contact Mr. Mayberry



Get Your EVG Gear  
[CollierSchools.com/EVG](http://CollierSchools.com/EVG)



### NEW DEADLINE

March 28, 2025

Attention – Senior Athletes applying for the Winged Foot award must turn in their application by March 28, 2025 by 3 pm.

Applications can be found on the EVG website.

Questions? See Mrs. Whitcomb.

## EVG Calendar

Mar 3  
Boys VR Baseball Home

Mar 4  
Girls VR Softball Home

Mar 7  
Boys VR Baseball Home

Mar 11  
Girls VR Softball Away



### EVG 3rd Quarter Academic Pep Rally

New Date

Thursday, March 27, 2025!

Please adjust your calendar



## SPRING HOMESCHOOL DAY: HISTORY OF FLORIDA HOMES

March 19 | 10 am – 1 pm

### Marco Island Historical Museum

Inspired by Marco Island Historical Museum's special exhibit, The Florida House: Marco Island's Mackle-Built Model Homes, join us for an architectural journey through time!

Enjoy hands-on activities that highlight the design, engineering, and history of what Southwest Floridians have been building and why they've been building it over the past 1000 years. From the Calusa mounds, to the Pioneer-era cracker cabins, to the Mid-Century marvels, Marco Island Historical Museum is the perfect setting for this exploration of our built environment.

This program features different hands-on activities and special exhibit exploration geared toward preschool, elementary, and middle and high school students. While RSVP is not required, it is encouraged to ensure enough supplies for students. Call our Curator of Education at (239) 252-8242 or go to [CollierMuseums.com/Events](http://CollierMuseums.com/Events).

Important note: This is a drop-in style event! It is not required to arrive at 10 am nor stay for the full 3 hours.

### About Collier County Museums Homeschool Days:

Three times a year, Collier County Museums hosts a day where homeschoolers of all ages will be able to come for free educational programming geared toward their specific age groups. We will have preschool, elementary, and middle/early high school appropriate activities based on that Homeschool Day's theme. With a focus on combining history and STEM (we like to call it SHTEM!), Collier County Museums aims to provide your homeschooler with a holistic approach to learning about our region's history. Homeschool Days will cycle through our five museums, so your family has an opportunity to get to know all of them!

**ATTENTION FAMILIES**

YOU CAN NOW REGISTER FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

[WWW.COLLIERSCHOOLS.COM/REGISTRATION](http://WWW.COLLIERSCHOOLS.COM/REGISTRATION)

Registration is now OPEN for the 2025–2026 school year! If you have an incoming kindergartner you need to register for school, or have a child who will be NEW to the district, please visit <http://collierschools.com/registration> for a step-by-step guide to our online registration process, as well as FAQs. We look forward to welcoming you into our #CCPSFamily!

**PBS KIDS**

DOWNLOAD EBOOKS FOR KIDS ON HOOPLA!

# Free Ranger-Led Adventures in Big Cypress

Explore Big Cypress National Preserve with free ranger-led programs designed for all ages. From guided swamp walks to canoe tours and boardwalk talks, there's something for everyone. Some activities require reservations, so plan ahead and join us for an unforgettable experience in the preserve!

## Wet Walk into the Cypress Swamp

Saturdays & Sundays at 1:30 pm, Monday through Friday at 9:30 am (all programs 2 hours)

Join us Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 pm, and Monday through Friday at 9:30 am for a 2-hour adventure into the swamp guided by a ranger! Wade through the crystal-clear waters of a cypress swamp while you immerse yourself in the wonders of Big Cypress. Wear long pants and closed-toed shoes that tie (preferably old sneakers) and bring a change of clothes. Locations and difficulty vary by day; family-friendly hikes are scheduled on Sundays and challenging hikes on Saturdays. Call the Visitor Center for more information and age recommendations. Easy and moderate walks are recommended for adults of all ages and children 5 and up or those who can comfortably ride in a hands-free backpack carrier. Children must be at least 48 inches tall to go on the Saturday hike.

Reservations required. Call the Nathaniel P. Reed Visitor Center at (239) 695-1168 to reserve your spot and for more information.

## Boardwalk Chats at Nathaniel P. Reed and Oasis Visitor Centers

Daily at 1:30 and 3:30 pm (20 minutes), all ages; accessible walk

Join us to learn all about Big Cypress National Preserve with a fun and informative 20-minute ranger program exploring the natural and cultural history of southwest Florida. Meet your ranger at the boardwalk behind the Nathaniel P. Reed Visitor Center or by the flag in front of the Oasis Visitor Center. This program is open to all ages, accessible, and great for Junior Rangers!

No reservations are required.

## Canoe Programs

Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays starting at 9:30 am, children ages 5+

Experience the preserve's waterways and join us on a ranger-led kayak/canoe tour through Turner River on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. Float through cypress and mangroves on an interpretive tour given by rangers. Canoes, paddles, and life jackets are provided. Basic

canoe and paddle experience required. Recommended for adults and children 5 and up (must provide an approved life jacket if under 50 lbs).

Reservations required. Call the Nathaniel P. Reed Visitor Center at (239) 695-1168 to reserve your spot.

## Bike Programs

Saturdays and Wednesdays from 10 am to 2 pm (4 hours)

Enjoy the scenic route and explore the preserve by bicycle! Join a ranger on Saturdays and Wednesdays at 10 am to experience and learn about the plant and wildlife found within the preserve. Take stops and observe everything at a slower pace! Bring binoculars as there is plenty of birding found in Bear Island. Also, remember to bring water and comfortable shoes, as well as a snack or lunch. Bikes and helmets are provided. This program is recommended for adults who are comfortable riding 14 miles on flat dirt roads.

Reservations required. Call the Nathaniel P. Reed Visitor Center at (239) 695-1168 to reserve your spot.

## Ranger Illustrated Program & Talk at Nathaniel P. Reed Visitor Center

Thursday through Tuesday at 2 pm (40 minutes), all ages; accessible

Dive into the wonders of Big Cypress Preserve with a Park Ranger as they explore various topics on the ecology, history, and culture of the Big Cypress Swamp. Topics vary by date. All ages and abilities are welcome!

## Campground Chats

Thursday through Sunday; times vary (30 minutes), all ages; accessible

Bring your camp chair and join us for an informal, fun campground or star talk on Thursdays and Saturdays at Monument Campground and Fridays and Sundays at Midway Campground. See campground sites or visitor centers for program information, including start times and topics.

All ages are welcome and encouraged to attend!

We look forward to seeing you in the swamp!

## Astronomy Programs

March 29th @ 8:30 pm

View one of the darkest night skies in the eastern United States by attending a ranger-led astronomy program at Big Cypress National Preserve this winter! Presentations will include constellation tours and telescope viewing (weather permitting) of astronomical objects including stars, star clusters, planets, nebulae, and galaxies.

# Fly Fishing Clinic

Who: EVG High School Students  
 When: March 12, 2025  
 Where: Baseball Field  
 Time: 4 pm - 5:30 pm

EVG High school students interested in attending the fly fishing clinic with Capt. Elmer Pillon should sign up in the front office with Mrs. Whitcomb by Friday, March 7, at 1 pm. Don't miss this great opportunity to learn from an expert!

**WALK**

powered by: Suncoast Credit Union

COLLIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2025

Saturday **04.05.2025**

Learn more or register visit: [CollierSchools.com/ccps5k](http://CollierSchools.com/ccps5k)

## Everglades Area Visitor Center

WELCOME TO THE EVERGLADES!  
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FREE INFORMATION ABOUT

- Local Businesses
- Things To Do
- Places To Eat
- Local History
- Unique Local Art

207 West Broadway Everglades City  
 Open 9:30 am to 4 pm Daily

Operated By  
 EVERGLADES SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 Dedicated to our Unique History  
[ESHP.org](http://ESHP.org)

## SAVE THE DATE

### 4th Annual Naples Charity Clays

Raise funds for the Parkinson's Foundation and break some targets with a day of clay shooting!

Saturday  
 March 1st, 2025  
 8:00AM - 1:30PM

12425 Union Road  
 Naples, FL 34114

## 4th Annual Naples Charity Clays Fundraiser Saturday, March 1st

### Gulf Coast Clays in Port of the Islands

Break some targets while raising funds for the Parkinson's Foundation.

Enjoy 75 rounds of clays (ammunition available for purchase), continental breakfast, golf carts, awards, giveaways, a raffle, and a silent auction.

All proceeds from registration fees and sponsorships will support the Parkinson's Foundation.

**Sign Up Today**

[NaplesCharityClays.com/Registration.html](http://NaplesCharityClays.com/Registration.html)



Adventures of the Saltwater Cowboy

## Zero to 1

By Jon Edward Edwards



The summer morning fog dissipated as we neared the mouth of Gordon's Pass. Idling across Naples Bay, I pelted Captain Joel Pepper of Fish-N-Fever Charters with questions regarding the feeding patterns of the American red snapper and groupers that hang around the ledges west of Naples in 160'-175' of water that we were targeting. "Opportunistic," answered Joel. Meaning they'll eat anything put in front of their faces. "That's it. No more questions."

"I got two questions left," I replied, as Joel had issued a limit. As a relative newcomer to the offshore Guide/Captain World, I take advantage while in the presence of professionals. In other words, I become a "pain-in-the-ass." It takes a unique individual to hold "pain-in-the-ass" status and make the cut. Perhaps it's a testament to my dynamic personality.

Joel dignified my comment with a command, "Sit chur ass down, Son. We're bout to get it on." I scuttled to the open bow, monkey-crawled across ice chests and gear to the bean-bag emporium, and plopped down next to Will, my twenty-one-year-old son, and Jesse, my same old age best friend (Midwest Division). My rear touched down not a moment before Joel hit the juice on the ride, drenching the rock jetties as the Suzuki's roared like mighty white dragons and charged into a clear horizon full of promise. Outward bound once again.

An interesting relationship, Joel's and mine; a newer compadre, we get along like we've known each other forever. Kindred spirits, you might say. South Florida natives are good ole' boys like us in Louisiana without accents. Like all my good friends, Joel isn't bashful about telling me what he thinks and teasing me at will. Exhibit A - the night before, when I questioned the weather. It was a big mistake because, to Joel, it indicated a potential "back-out."

My party and I weren't a regular

charter, but we were part of the annual "meat haul" - that is when the Captain fills the freezer. We were there to work, fish, and pay for bait and fuel. A hell of a deal - the best. I couldn't back out if I wanted to.

Joel got over his case of the "red-ass"



(North Louisiana speak for "angry"), realizing we were no "back-outers" when we showed up early, bright-eyed, and bushy-tailed, although it amplified the hazing.

"Where are the 'Ditch Trolls?'" Joel asked, referring to my guests. First of all, the term "Ditch Troll" comes from my story "Ditch City," in which I write about a crazed young girl attacking me in a drainage ditch when I was a kid in West Monroe, Louisiana. Joel found this particularly amusing. Thus, when I said I had a friend from back home and her friend coming to visit, he immediately referred to them as "Ditch Trolls."

The weather question wasn't mine, you see? I was pressured into asking it the night before due to the inquiries of my "Ditch Trolls," Jenny and Kelsey. I assure you, they are quite the opposite, as Joel would find out the following day, because this morning, they missed the bus—that is, they didn't get up. Was this a blessing? We will soon see.

I must admit I had some trepidation because my guests were not watermen like the rest of us but land-based civilians. Are they up to the task? This was no novice parade - eighty-plus miles to wrangle deep water beasts. Had I made a mistake including them in such an extreme endeavor? When the topic of weather came up at dinner the night before, my anxiety bells began ringing. Was I worried about the weather? Hell no. I was worried about people complaining about the weather.

"Zero to one," I said, reaching across the table for another butter for my baked potato. Jenny, my dear friend from Louisiana, removed a piece of iceberg lettuce from my elbow.

Jenny was always the girlfriend of a friend, and the first time she wasn't, she shot me point blank in the face with a round of, "It's never going to happen" so fast I didn't even have a chance to think about the prospect.

"Don't sweat it; it's all good. Don't even worry about it," I said, taking another bite. For some reason, Jesse felt compelled to pull up his Buoyweather App and check the conditions offshore - eighty to a hundred miles out. His app reported four-to-five-foot seas. Mouths dropped, gasps were heard, and the chatter started.

"Pppfff, you can't rely on those things," I said about the application, which has been proven to be highly accurate and is used by anglers, sailors, and mariners abound. Here's the thing: I wasn't worried about it, and no one else should be either. Joel is a professional and won't go eighty miles offshore in dangerous conditions. My crew and I know this. Hot chicks from Dallas do not.

Upon saying goodnight, I emphasized the "alarm clock" as Captain Joel doesn't wait or meet at the gate in the morning for a group hug. Stowe your thin skin when you come aboard.

When the alarm clock went off, I got up, stepped into my shorts and flip-flops, and called Jenny while waking up Jesse and Will - no answer. Ten minutes later, we're ready and out of the door. I called again, leaving the Island and using the hands-free dash control system on the rented Chevy Silverado - lest I want to give the impression of texting and driving. The fog at the top of the bridge was so thick that it induced an anxiety pang that might have registered on the voicemail as a delay. The feeling of having your boundaries, your sense of direction, taken from you at a crucial moment is horrific. R.A.S.D. (Rapid Accelerating Sensory Deprivation). It sounds like a black-ops interrogation program. Maybe it is. The point of no return had come and gone. "That's it," I said to Will and Jesse. They were officially "left behind."

Fog is an omen - a good one as it relates to offshore. Fog can't form in the presence of wind. Small craft and wind are not friends. Isn't fog also an obstruction on the water? One might ask. Well, young Timmy, but it means the conditions are mild. Aside from the not occasional, but probable, thunderstorm that has to be avoided, outrun, or endured.

To say I wasn't a bit relieved would be slightly untrue. I'd been balancing a delicate scale: weather conditions, relationships, and anxiety. On the one hand, it could be an experience my visiting friends will never forget.

It wasn't good enough. Looking at whatever weather app she had pulled up, Jenny said, "Really... looks like it's going to be rough."

A cheek full of baked potato packed in the left side, I mumbled, "Here we go..."

"What was that?" Jenny asked. Before answering, she told me to chew my food first—another interesting relationship - Jenny's and mine. In public settings, outward appearances sometimes suggest that we are together. Hence, the back-and-forth like couples often do. Although this is an illusion, it couldn't be further from the truth.

On the other hand, they may not talk to me again, possibly angering my Captain and personal friend at a most inopportune time.

Back in the present – eighty elegant and serene miles later I felt the Captain back down on the throttles. I stood on wobbly legs as the thirty-six-foot Maralago settled into its wake and thought, “Damn, they’re going to be sorry they missed this if, for nothing else, the ride out.”

The Gulf of Mexico was iridescent blue at this depth, sprinkled with a sargassum garnish. I heard the twelve-foot chain clang away when Joel released the windlass anchor system. A minute or so later, the anchor rope became taught. “Bait ‘em up, Boys,” said Captain Bart Bailey, our First Mate.

“We’re on a meat haul,” the Skipper reminded, as we dropped baits hooked onto large circle hooks, live shrimp, and cut bait weighted for them to touch bottom – well over a minute. Humdedumdum.... BLAM! Rods bowed and drags screeched.

Everyone hooked up; the pace was fast and furious, an offshore rodeo of epic proportions. Big fish at great depths vehemently opposed to leaving their lairs, they beat up on us. My first fish was a disappointing energy-zapping, bicep-cramping, seventy-pound amberjack. Locally referred to as “Reef Donkeys, they are nice gamefish, but when upper-echelon bruisers are present, an angler can’t afford to gas out on Busch League opponents.

On our way to a limit of big American Reds, Will was having a particularly hard time with what he thought was a Goliath grouper. It was wearing him out, bad. Capt. Joel recognized the struggle and intervened, spotting Will with the lifts of the rod as if they were lifting weights. When they got the fish closer to the boat, Joel yelled, “Huge Black Grouper!” I knew the game had entered another phase.

They landed the fish, seventy-five pounds, and Joel immediately went to work preparing appropriate tackle – Penn Internationals with thick boat rods. It became a factory, one angler

after the other. One fish required a team, and the leading angler was spent for several minutes after. There were massive black grouper, the biggest I’d ever seen, every one the size of a young growing Goliath.

Less than two hours after setting the anchor, we were limited out on red snapper and black grouper, never having changed position. Never mind the by-catches: amberjack, snappers of all kinds, undersized reds, and gag groupers. Good timing because it would take three to four hours to get back and cleaned up, making the end of a perfect day.

Feeling like we’d been in a rodeo, Will, Jesse, and I settled in our bean bags for the long ride. Sometime later, a sudden jar to the spine woke me from my slumber. I peeked my head off the



beanbag to find gigantic thunderheads pillowing the horizon, ominously black and flickering with lightning. Dark, angry skies and white caps crested atop five to six-foot seas, some seven or more. The metallic taste of ozone in the air – like licking a nine-volt battery. The temp plummeted as the low-pressure system enveloped us. Sea creatures became nervous, and birds tried to outfly the system. One lone frigate bird was undeterred, circling high overhead looking for a mackerel sandwich.

I hadn’t noticed the pelting rain due to the relentless saltwater splash peppering us. Joel backed off the throttles so that we were in rhythm with the sea, and went back to sleep.

In my half-sleep state, I’d recognized an increase in the seas and a decrease in power, but I came alive when I heard the urgency in Joel’s voice.

“Clear the deck!” I jumped up to lend a hand but was swiftly reprimanded.



“Jed! Sit down! The last thing I need is a rescue!” At this point, I decided it was good that Jenny and Kelsey hadn’t gotten up.

We made it back unscathed with a story to tell, like always. Even though Jenny and Kelsey missed the adventure of a lifetime, and in the days to come, my Beavertail would break down on the backside of Cape Romano. Clear skies, a light southwest wind, and zero boat traffic – all equating to being stranded. Hey, at least we weren’t lost - I could see Marco in the distance.

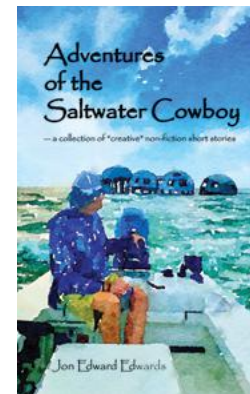
It wasn’t all bad. We did some cool stuff, like hiking Tigertail Lagoon to Coconut Island past the point about midway, where the rip tide pulls the strongest swimmers into the Gulf for a ride. We also hunted seashells (I didn’t—they did) in secluded coves where ospreys scooped mullet from nervous water, the sun an orange orb

dipping in the western sky.

I’d like to think they’ll remember the experience for a long time, maybe even cherish it, depending on their senses of adventure, experiencing the 10,000 Islands like the settlers did, fumbling around in the dark, digging through clouds of no-see-ums.



Jon Edward Edwards, author of Saltwater Cowboy, will be at the Marco Island Farmers’ Market every Wednesday through the season. Meet the storyteller behind Four or Five and other captivating tales, purchase a copy, and get it personally signed. Don’t miss the chance to connect with the Saltwater Cowboy!



Book Available Sunshine Booksellers on Marco & Amazon.com



## Holy Family Church Outreach Program

Every Fourth Wednesday of the Month

Volunteers from SVDP San Marco Conference will have office hours from 9 to 11 am at the Holy Family Church to help those that need financial assistance on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Please make your appointment for the interview in advance by calling (239) 259-4591 or (239) 259-4593.

You can also request an appointment via email using the following email address: [svdpsanmarco@gmail.com](mailto:svdpsanmarco@gmail.com) When contacting us, please leave your name, phone number, and the kind of assistance you are requesting. Those who have appointments will be contacted prior to the interview.

**Fresh Fruit & Vegetables**  
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**Everglades City Post Office**

**CHOKOLOSKEE FAMILY Church**

**DOING LIFE TOGETHER**  
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[Chokoloskeefamily.com](http://Chokoloskeefamily.com)  
 239.232.0098

**1236 Demere Lane,**  
**Chokoloskee, FL**

**CHURCH SCHEDULE:**

|                    |         |
|--------------------|---------|
| Sun. Worship       | 10:00AM |
| Sun. Kids Church   | 10:00AM |
| Sun. Renewal       | 6:00PM  |
| Wed. Youth Renewal | 7:00PM  |
| Thurs. Bible Study | 7:00PM  |

# Upside-Down Blueberry Cobbler



**Ingredients:**

- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup self-rising flour
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 4 cups fresh blueberries

**Directions:**

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees
- Melt butter in an 8-inch square baking dish (about 5 minutes).
- Mix flour, sugar, and milk in a bowl.
- Pour batter over melted butter.
- Scatter blueberries on top.
- Bake for about 1 hour or until a toothpick comes out clean.

# Tips & Tricks For Blueberry Bliss

There's something magical about wandering through a blueberry patch, plucking plump, sun-warmed berries straight from the bush. Whether you came home with a handful or a bucketful, the last thing you want is for your precious haul to turn into a sad, moldy mess.

Blueberries may look sturdy, but they bruise easily. If you toss them around like marbles, they'll reward you with mushy spots. Keep them in a breathable container and avoid letting them sit in a hot car—unless blueberry soup is your goal.

Patience, my friend! Resist the urge to rinse your blueberries right away. Excess moisture is their worst enemy, speeding up mold growth faster than you can say "blueberry crumble." Instead, wash them right before eating, giving them a gentle rinse in cool water and a soft pat dry.

Your fridge is the best short-term home for blueberries, but don't trap them in an airtight container—that's a one-way ticket to Soggyville. Instead, store them in a shallow, uncovered container or the vented clamshell they came in. If treated kindly, they'll stay fresh for up to two weeks, but let's be honest—will they really last that long?

Got more berries than you can handle? Time to freeze! Spread them out on a baking sheet (no clumps!), freeze for 30 minutes, then transfer to a resealable bag. Now you've got a stash ready for smoothies, muffins, or midnight snacking. They'll stay tasty for up to 10 months—if you can resist eating them that long.

With these tips, you can keep your blueberry bounty fresh and delicious, savoring the taste of summer long after your fingers have stopped turning purple.



**February 15, 2025 Puzzle Solution**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | U | N | S |   | P | I | L | E | U | P |
| A | R | E | A |   | O | P | E | N | L | Y |
| L | E | A | K |   | B | A | T | T | L | E |
| C | A | P | E | C | O | D |   | R | A | D |
|   |   | S | A | X |   | S | A | G | O |   |
| S | H | E | E | P |   | U | N | P | E | G |
| E | A | S | T |   | P | R | O |   |   |   |
| A | R | C |   | R | U | N | R | I | O | T |
| B | R | O | K | E | R |   | K | O | T | O |
| E | Y | R | I | E | S |   | E | T | T | E |
| D | O | T | T | L | E |   | L | A | O | S |



**MULLET RAPPER CROSSWORD**

**Across**

- 1. Household chore system
- 7. Big laugh
- 11. Itsy-bitsy creature
- 12. Annul
- 13. Clothing line
- 14. Auction actions
- 15. Speech problem
- 16. Flow back from shore
- 18. Mercy
- 20. Assassinated
- 23. Clothesline alternative
- 24. Milliner's supply
- 26. Catch, as in a net
- 27. Makeup, e.g.
- 31. Borodin's "Prince \_\_\_"
- 32. Hard to understand
- 34. A deadly sin
- 35. "Pulp Fiction" co-star \_\_\_ L. Jackson
- 36. Affectedly creative
- 37. Shoot for, with "to"

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |    | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 12 |    |    |    |
| 13 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 14 |    |    |    |
| 15 |    |    |    |    | 16 | 17 |    |    |    |    |
|    |    |    | 18 | 19 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 20 | 21 | 22 |    |    |    | 23 |    |    |    |    |
| 24 |    |    |    |    | 25 |    |    |    |    |    |
| 26 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 |    |    |    |    |    | 32 | 33 |    |    |    |
| 34 |    |    |    |    |    | 35 |    |    |    |    |
| 36 |    |    |    |    |    | 37 |    |    |    |    |

**Down**

- 1. Clink
- 2. Former home to the Hawks, with "the"
- 3. Big cheese
- 4. It replaced the Cherokee, and was later replaced by the Cherokee
- 5. "The \_\_\_ Daba Honeymoon"

- 6. Japanese noodle dish
- 7. Approve automatically
- 8. Like a bialy
- 9. Bring forward as evidence
- 10. Club list
- 17. Dwell
- 19. "The Dukes of Hazzard"

- spinoff
- 20. Aussie lassie
- 21. Long-tailed monkey
- 22. Maximally
- 25. Bantu language
- 28. Prefix with

- angular
- 29. Litigant
- 30. Marketing leader?
- 33. \_\_\_ de deux

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**863.517.1986**



# Spring Time Fishing Is Looking Good

By Captain Mike Merritt

With the temperatures staying up the Snook fishing has definitely picked up. We are catching some really nice Snook in the backcountry and starting to catch them out in the Islands. As the bait starts to move inshore this will pick up even more. Let's all hope this trend continues. I love the warmer weather and so do the fish.

Of course this means the cold water fishing that everyone has been enjoying will come to an end. But fish like Permit, Cobia and Tripletail will start to show up. These are all great fun and can be sight fished to add to the excitement.

Redfish are here but are very scattered. We are catching some but not any schooling fish inshore.

Black Drum are around but still no large schools as I anticipated. This should happen any time now. The fishing will continue to improve as the water clean up from all the grass that has blown in. March is approaching so the winds will once again start to blow from the SW as it does in March. Hopefully we get some really nice mornings here in the 10,000 Islands. I love the morning runs and it just makes me appreciate what I get to do every day.

Tarpon are here and there are plenty of boats chasing these guys down the coastline. Give them a



little room as they stalk these fish. Be respectful out there on the water weather you are offshore, inshore, or backcountry. We are all just trying to enjoy our day and no need to ruin it for someone. Life is short so make the most out of it!

We truly have so many opportunities here. Even the Seatrout bite has remained consistent despite the fact that we have no Turtle Grass anywhere. Hopefully one day efforts are made to restore this important part of our ecosystem. I for one am a little disappointed that our great National Park doesn't put forth any type of restoration efforts. Maybe we all need to write our representatives that are proud of the Everglades restoration about this. It seems they are unaware.

I love these Everglades 10,000 Islands and how they have supported a tremendous fishery and enabled me to make a living so I would love to see it restored. I don't want to get into a lot of that right now but for those that don't know or have the experience I can tell you this system is dying as compared to just 50 years ago.

But not to be all negative we have a fantastic fishery. I invite anyone who reads this to contact me by email if you want to learn more. Just look me up and feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Get out and enjoy the beauty of what we have and teach a kid to fish! Fishing certainly kept me out of trouble as a young boy and now I am making my living doing it! Good luck fishing!

Capt. Mike Merritt  
 Guide  
 (561) 252-4324  
[SnookFishing1@juno.com](mailto:SnookFishing1@juno.com)



## Caxambas Park Boat Ramp Reopens

Boaters, anglers, and sunrise chasers—rejoice! After being battered by Hurricane Ian in 2022, the Caxambas Park boat ramp on Marco Island is officially back in action.

The storm left behind extensive damage to the ramp, bulkheads, and essential infrastructure, the ramp has been restored. Phase II of the project will bring back the fueling service system later this year.

So, grab your fishing gear and set sail—the waters are calling!

For more details, reach out to Parks & Recreation Regional Manager Michael Ossorio at Michael.Ossorio@colliercountyfl.gov or (239) 326-7013.

## First Baptist Church

*Knowing Him and making Him known!*

All-ages Sunday School: 9:45 am

Sunday Worship: 11:00 am & 6:00 pm

Wednesday Worship: 6:00 pm

416 School Drive | P.O. Box 550

Everglades City, FL 34139



| Barron River Tides |     |          |       |   |
|--------------------|-----|----------|-------|---|
| 3/1/2025           | Sat | 3:01 AM  | 2.91  | H |
| 3/1/2025           | Sat | 10:35 AM | -0.12 | L |
| 3/1/2025           | Sat | 3:34 PM  | 2.54  | H |
| 3/1/2025           | Sat | 10:52 PM | -0.09 | L |
| 3/2/2025           | Sun | 3:54 AM  | 2.7   | H |
| 3/2/2025           | Sun | 11:11 AM | 0.08  | L |
| 3/2/2025           | Sun | 4:00 PM  | 2.62  | H |
| 3/2/2025           | Sun | 11:41 PM | -0.21 | L |
| 3/3/2025           | Mon | 4:52 AM  | 2.4   | H |
| 3/3/2025           | Mon | 11:46 AM | 0.3   | L |
| 3/3/2025           | Mon | 4:28 PM  | 2.67  | H |
| 3/4/2025           | Tue | 12:34 AM | -0.25 | L |
| 3/4/2025           | Tue | 5:58 AM  | 2.05  | H |
| 3/4/2025           | Tue | 12:18 PM | 0.52  | L |
| 3/4/2025           | Tue | 5:00 PM  | 2.67  | H |
| 3/5/2025           | Wed | 1:35 AM  | -0.23 | L |
| 3/5/2025           | Wed | 7:20 AM  | 1.72  | H |
| 3/5/2025           | Wed | 12:44 PM | 0.72  | L |
| 3/5/2025           | Wed | 5:40 PM  | 2.6   | H |
| 3/6/2025           | Thu | 2:49 AM  | -0.19 | L |
| 3/6/2025           | Thu | 9:14 AM  | 1.52  | H |
| 3/6/2025           | Thu | 11:58 AM | 0.86  | L |
| 3/6/2025           | Thu | 6:43 PM  | 2.47  | H |
| 3/7/2025           | Fri | 4:08 AM  | -0.17 | L |
| 3/7/2025           | Fri | 1:18 PM  | 1.73  | H |
| 3/7/2025           | Fri | 3:47 PM  | 0.98  | L |
| 3/7/2025           | Fri | 8:40 PM  | 2.37  | H |
| 3/8/2025           | Sat | 5:20 AM  | -0.18 | L |
| 3/8/2025           | Sat | 1:34 PM  | 1.86  | H |
| 3/8/2025           | Sat | 5:23 PM  | 0.93  | L |
| 3/8/2025           | Sat | 10:15 PM | 2.39  | H |
| 3/9/2025           | Sun | 7:24 AM  | -0.19 | L |
| 3/9/2025           | Sun | 2:51 PM  | 1.96  | H |
| 3/9/2025           | Sun | 7:35 PM  | 0.81  | L |
| 3/10/2025          | Mon | 12:32 AM | 2.49  | H |
| 3/10/2025          | Mon | 8:17 AM  | -0.18 | L |
| 3/10/2025          | Mon | 2:59 PM  | 2.03  | H |
| 3/10/2025          | Mon | 8:28 PM  | 0.66  | L |
| 3/11/2025          | Tue | 1:29 AM  | 2.6   | H |
| 3/11/2025          | Tue | 9:00 AM  | -0.16 | L |
| 3/11/2025          | Tue | 2:59 PM  | 2.13  | H |
| 3/11/2025          | Tue | 9:12 PM  | 0.5   | L |
| 3/12/2025          | Wed | 2:13 AM  | 2.67  | H |
| 3/12/2025          | Wed | 9:38 AM  | -0.1  | L |
| 3/12/2025          | Wed | 3:06 PM  | 2.25  | H |
| 3/12/2025          | Wed | 9:50 PM  | 0.36  | L |
| 3/13/2025          | Thu | 2:51 AM  | 2.67  | H |
| 3/13/2025          | Thu | 10:13 AM | -0.03 | L |
| 3/13/2025          | Thu | 3:22 PM  | 2.38  | H |
| 3/13/2025          | Thu | 10:26 PM | 0.24  | L |
| 3/14/2025          | Fri | 3:26 AM  | 2.63  | H |
| 3/14/2025          | Fri | 10:45 AM | 0.07  | L |
| 3/14/2025          | Fri | 3:42 PM  | 2.49  | H |
| 3/14/2025          | Fri | 11:02 PM | 0.14  | L |

**LOCAL SERVICES & CLASSIFIEDS**

**Restaurants & Bars**

**Everglades City**

**Camellia Street Grill**

Mon-Thurs 12-9  
Fri-Sun 11-9  
(239) 695-2003

**Captain Morgan's Seafood Grill Corp**

Thur-Mon 12 pm – 8 pm  
(239) 232-0041

**City Seafood**

Mon-Fri 8 am – 3 pm  
Sat & Sun 8 am – 4 pm  
(239) 695-4700

**Diving Pelican**

Sun-Thur 11 am – 8 pm  
Fri-Sat 11 am – 8:30 pm  
(239) 232-0475

**Everglades Cafe**

Closed  
(239) 351-4875

**Gator Hole Bar**

Wed-Thur 11 am - 7pm  
Fri-Sat 11 am – 12 am  
Sun 11 am – 7 pm  
(239) 232-0475

**Island Cafe**

Daily 6 am – 9 pm  
(239) 695-0003

**Nely's Corner (Inside EFC)**

Fri-Sun 6:15 am - 3 pm  
(239) 695-4222

**Rod & Gun**

Daily 11:30 am - 7:30 pm  
(239) 695-2101

**Triad Seafood Market & Cafe**

Thur-Sat 10:30 am – 8 pm  
Sun-Wed 10:30 am – 4 pm  
(239) 695-2662

**Wildman's Pizza Pasta & Pythons**

Wed & Thurs 12 pm – 8 pm  
Fri-Sat 12 pm – 9 pm  
(239) 426-9453

**Chokoloskee**

**HavAnnA Cafe**

Daily 8 am – 8 pm  
(239) 695-2214

**Goodland**

**Crabby Lady**

Tues-Sat 11 am – 6 pm  
Sun 11 am – 5 pm  
(239) 394-5663

**Kirks Fish House**

Mon-Sat 10 am - 5 pm  
(239) 394-8616

**Little Bar**

Daily 11:30 am – 12 am  
(239) 394-5663

**Paradise Found**

Thur-Sun  
(239) 330-7773

**Stans Idle Hour**

Fri-Sun 11 am - 6:30 pm  
(239) 394-3041

**Ochopee**

**Subway**

Daily 7 am – 7 pm  
(239) 695-0949

**Joanie's Blue Crab Cafe**

Mon, Tues, Thur 10:30 am - 4 pm  
Fri-Sun 10:30 am - 5 pm  
(239) 695-2682

**CR92 & US41 (Naples)**

**Gator's Crossing**

Daily 11 am – 11 pm  
(239) 394-0288

**Markets**

**Right Choice Supermarket**

Daily 9 am – 7 pm  
(239) 695-4535

**Glades Haven General Store**

Daily 9 am – 7 pm  
(239) 232-0486

**Grimm's Stone Crab**

Mon-Sat 8 am - 5pm  
(239) 695-3222

**Worship**

**Chokoloskee Family Church**

Sun: 10 am School & Worship, 6 pm Service  
Wed: Youth 7 pm  
1236 Demere Ln, Chokoloskee

**Everglades Community Church**

Sun: 11 am Worship  
101 Copeland Ave, Everglades City

**First Baptist Church**

Sun: 9:45 am School, 11 am Worship & 6 pm Service  
Wed: 6 pm Bible Study  
416 E School Dr, Everglades City

**Holy Family Catholic Church**

Mass Sun: 10:30 am  
200 Datura St E, Everglades City

**Goodland Baptist Church**

Sun: 10 am Worship  
Wed: 6 pm Bible Study  
410 Mango Ave. Goodland

**For Sale**

**FOR SALE:** 60 hp Tohatsu outboard motor. Engine has 1,000 hrs. Runs perfectly. Tiller steer. Spare propeller. \$3,200. Call (239) 302-8610.

**FOR SALE:** 40 Ft. Shipping container, water tight, good floors, located on Chokoloskee Island, \$1950 or best offer. Call Gar (954) 695-1284

**For Lease**

**FOR LEASE:** Deep water commercial dock and lot on Barron River. Premium sought-after location at 909 DuPont St. in Everglades City. Perfect for, eco-tour business, commercial fishing or even a restaurant with chickee bar and tourist gift shop attraction. Newly refurbished Dock Available now. Email [E010101@aol.com](mailto:E010101@aol.com), Call (727) 480-1640

**FOR LEASE:** Annual Lease of 600 sq. ft. Cafe space next to the Everglades City Visitors Center, with heavy tourist traffic. Restaurant equipment also available for sale. Also potential use as a gift shop, tourist office, etc. Email us for details at [bonniewoodward@gmail.com](mailto:bonniewoodward@gmail.com).

**Housing**

**FOR RENT:** 1/1 Everglades City Villas, W/D, Wifi, pool, ramp, boat lift available. Yearly or Seasonal. Pets with Deposit. Annual \$1600, Seasonal \$2400 mo. Diane (561) 255-7184

**FOR RENT:** Second floor 2-bedroom/1 bath apartment, WiFi, washer/dryer, screened-in porch, fully furnished. Great location in Everglades City. Annual rental. Email us for details at [bonniewoodward@gmail.com](mailto:bonniewoodward@gmail.com).

**Wanted**

**WANTED:** Bridge Players wanted! If you are a beginner or a professional bridge player, come join our group for a fun afternoon of bridge. Call Patty at (239) 719-0020.

**Clubs**

**Everglades Lions Club**

2nd Thursday of the month | 6 pm  
September - May  
Jinkins Fellowship Hall behind Everglades Community Church  
101 S. Copeland Ave, Everglades City  
[evergladeslionsclub@gmail.com](mailto:evergladeslionsclub@gmail.com)

**Ladies Coffee**

Thursdays | 8:30 am  
Rotates Everglades City Restaurants  
[snookcity@gmail.com](mailto:snookcity@gmail.com)  
(239) 719-0020

**Goodland Civic Association**

3rd Tuesday of the month | 6:30 pm  
Goodland Community Center  
417 Mango Ave, Goodland  
(239) 776-1372

**Helpful Numbers**

EC Airpark: (239) 252-6298  
EC City Hall: (239) 695-3781  
EC Public Library: (239) 695-2511  
EC Trash Pickup: (239) 252-2380  
EC Visitor Center: (239) 232-0473  
Goodland Recycle: (239) 252-2380

**Post Office**

Everglades City & Chokoloskee: (239) 695-2174  
Ochopee: (239) 695-2099  
Goodland: (239) 394-7387

**Local Parks**

Big Cypress: (239) 695-2000  
EVG National Park: (305) 242-7700  
Fakahatchee Preserve: (239) 961-1925



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