

LEMON BAY NEWSLETTER CONSERVANCY®

FALL 2009 VOLUME 39 ISSUE 2

for the preservation, protection and acquisition of natural areas important in maintaining the ecological balance of Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor and adjacent waters

Conservancy President Jim Cooper taking a look ahead.



LBC Times Are a Changing- For the Better in 2010

Welcome to our 2009 Fall Newsletter. I trust everyone had an enjoyable summer. With the arrival of Fall, your LBC Board is eagerly looking forward to beginning another excellent and rewarding year.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

I invite our many loyal local full time Members and fun world traveling "snowbird" Members to please renew your Memberships by January 2010. I also challenge each of you to bring a close friend or neighbor on board to join with us this year, so we all can truly help LBC to continue to "Make A Difference." We need active and aware members, not just to fuel our economic funding engine, but to help us passionately inform your friends and neighbors of the importance of our projects and to help us advocate locally and regionally on key coastal issues that will make a difference.

The past year for LBC has been one of new challenges and transitions. Yet, I am very pleased to report many remarkably good things have happened for LBC this past year, including receiving a prestigious award from our local Englewood Cape Haze Chamber of Commerce recognizing LBC as the best in Environmental Protection for 2009. "LBC is proud of our recent partnership with prestigious Harbor Style magazine. In April 2009 LBC was the featured story in their special annual Environmental Issue which identified LBC by name in a very well-written story about our history and accomplishments and, as the premier environmental land trust volunteer non-profit organization in this area. (For the entire article, go to our LBC web Site & click on the Harbor Style logo.)



REORGANIZATION

This spring your LBC Board recognized the need to streamline our full time operations staff, which allowed us to focus the

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majority of our funding and fund-raising efforts on a select array of land trust acquisition plans with outstanding potential to make a difference. To make Wildflower and other key land acquisition projects happen sooner, rather than later, we made a major staff realignment in April 2009. We temporarily deleted the Executive Director position and accepted the resignation of our office manager. In May 2009, we brought Vanessa on board as Office Manager in a part time capacity working 3 days weekly, Tuesday – Thursday from 10 AM to 2 PM. Please stop by and say ‘Hi!’ to Vanessa. She is highly motivated and has done wonders in reorganizing our office and our files.

NEW LBC STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Vice-President, Kathleen Rohrer has been hard at work over the past 6 months teaming up with LBC Board Treasurer, Walter Meanwell to contact and team up with several key local dignitaries and leaders to formulate a very dynamic and effective new Strategic Plan for LBC. You will see one of the results in our Lecture Series this year (*Soon to be announced on our Web Site*) as LBC will join forces with and share responsibilities for our Winter - Spring 4 monthly Educational Series, with several other effective local and regional environmental groups like The Sierra Club, The Audubon Society and The Conservancy of SW Florida.

WILDFLOWER

The lead plan in LBC’s land acquisition array is Wildflower (*see Percy’s article on beginning on page 5*). Remarkably, Percy’s outstanding efforts have already raised more than \$50,000 in 2009, from nearby local residents and concerned citi-

zens. This excellent project now has the potential to happen, but we will also need your help! Especially as the State of Florida’s land trust partnership grant “funding faucet” (*“Florida Forever”*) was officially turned off in Spring 2009, by the Legislature, due to state budget shortfalls. Yes, in Florida they actually are required to balance their budget! We believe LBC’s select few (5) Land Trust Acquisition Projects: Wildflower, People for Trees, Coral Creek Preserve, Indian Mound and Harbour Heights Scrub Jay Preserve each have the potential to reach fruition and truly make a difference sometime over the next few years.

TOAST TO THE COAST FUNDRAISER

After taking a 1-year hiatus in 2009, we are proud to announce will be holding another very entertaining and enjoyable LBC “Toast to the Coast” fundraiser this March 2010 at the Boca Royale Golf Club. Board Member Edie Driest has taken the lead in organizing this event with some fun new ideas and a fantastic speaker. This important fundraising event will be scheduled mid-week in mid to late March. We’ll let you know the exact date and speaker as the details are firmed up.

HEALTH of LEMON BAY and CHARLOTTE HARBOR

You will be pleased to learn that this past year there have been two indicators that the health of our estuary is improving. This August I personally participated, along with several of our Bridge Authority staff and other LBC members like David & Holly Haynes & their family, in a fun local waters exploration project called “The Great Scallop Hunt.” (*See Jim Wade’s article on page 9*).

This effort revealed the scallops are actually doing fairly well in southern Lemon Bay and Gasparilla Sound. Clearly, the recent improvements in Charlotte & Sarasota County's fertilizer rules will only help improve this situation. Likewise, NOAA just announced October 2, 2009 that all 220,000 acres of the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary are considered to be "Critical Habitat" for the odd-looking Small Tooth Sawfish, which was almost extinct. Yes, one of the many miracles of Charlotte Harbor's fishery is that it's now one of the last and only refuges for the prehistoric small tooth sawfish, (*See my Small Tooth Sawfish article on page 11*).

ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendars: Our Annual LBC Membership Meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2010 at Cedar Point Park. I am excited to announce we will have 2 new highly distinguished community businessmen joining our LBC Board for 2010. Please come out and join us to learn more details on the many good things happening for LBC in 2010.

LBC is now LOOKING for A FEW GOOD MEN & WOMEN to JOIN our BOARD!

If you or a friend would truly like to join our management team, as an active LBC Board Member for 2010, please contact Walter Meanwell by mid-November 2009 via Vanessa at the Lemon Bay Conservancy office. Walter is both our LBC Treasurer and also the Chairman of our nominating committee of 2010 Board Members. We are always seeking a few committed and caring local community members to help LBC continue its tradition of making a difference!

Best wishes, Jim Cooper

LBC members and their friends are encouraged to attend this free event, to learn more about some of the interesting groups and projects which help to protect & preserve a key element of our little piece of Paradise - Charlotte Harbor and its important estuary system.

Please join Lemon Bay Conservancy at the tenth annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival -- a day to learn about and enjoy the natural environment of southwest Florida.

Saturday, November 21, 2009 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Charlotte Sports Park at 2300 El Jobean Rd. (S.R. 776) Port Charlotte ~ 2.5 miles west of US 41

Thanks to everyone for making the ninth annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival a great success.

We need your help.

Please consider becoming a sponsor, exhibitor and volunteer

Please register as a sponsor, exhibitor or volunteer



"Connecting with nature" is the message that will come to life at the Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program is pleased to sponsor the ninth annual festival – a day to explore, learn and enjoy the natural environment of southwest Florida.

Visitors can participate in activities geared toward all ages, including nature exhibits, local artists, live native animals, musicians, wagon rides and guided walks to the Tippecanoe Regional Park (*if conditions permit*).

Children won't want to leave the Discovery Zone, which is packed with games and activities. Children can learn about fish and fishing and then receive a free fishing pole! (*Children ages 4 to 14 can participate in an educational program then receive fishing equipment. Children must be able to cast a rod.*)

Guest speakers will cover water issues and native animals. Musicians will perform songs about the environment. Mote Marine Laboratory will bring their mobile exhibit with its touch tanks. Food and beverages can be purchased at the event.

Festival organizers have again chosen to make this event free so that as many people as possible can enjoy it.

The festival is funded through event sponsorship and a raffle that will be held at the festival. The event planning committee invites your business, organization or association to be promoted as a sponsor or exhibitor, joining many others, if their information is about the natural environment of southwest Florida. The festival is organized and planned by a dedicated group of volunteers representing a diverse number of organizations and associations.

The website www.CHNEP.org will include sample

continued on page 4

press releases, discount information on nearby hotels and other important information and up dates about the Festival. To ease communication for additional event information, participants are encouraged to provide an email address if available. If you wish to talk with someone about the festival, please contact Maran Hilgendorf with the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (866/835-5785 x 240, mhilgendorf@swfrc.org). Depending on your question, a member of the volunteer Planning Committee may return your call or email.

Please note that there is no rain date. On the day of the festival, updates on the status of the festival due to weather conditions will be available by calling 866/835-5785 x 240.

We hope that you will participate in the Tenth Annual Charlotte Harbor Regional Nature Festival, making it bigger and better than ever.

— PLANNING COMMITTEE CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATURE FESTIVAL NOVEMBER 21, 2009

The Importance of Saving Their Habitat



A Gopher Tortoise photographed recently in Lemon Bay Park plays an important part in maintaining Florida's natural habitat for many species.

BY JULIE MORRIS

Florida boasts one of the most unique assemblages of habitats, animals, and plants in the world. This is partially the result of a peninsula that extends into the subtropics. Much of the site's interior are comprised of longitudinal, ancient sand dunes or ridges, which essentially share characteristics with deserts. One fascinating animal that is specifically adapted to these dry conditions and actually thrives in this desert-like environment is the gopher tortoise. The burrows

that this tortoise creates to seek refuge from heat, cold, rain, and fire, are shared by many other species, including several listed species (*Florida mouse, pine snake, eastern indigo snake, gopher frog*) and over 300 other species. These burrows provide critical refuge, particularly when there is a fire, a natural occurrence that helps to maintain Florida's natural habitats. The tortoise is not only a key element of the habitats where it resides, it is critical to the survival of many other animal species. Thus, we call the

tortoise a "keystone" species.

Unfortunately for the gopher tortoise and all the species that rely on its burrows, its preferred habitats are high, dry upland habitats. These are also the areas best suited for development. Consequently, tortoise numbers are on steep decline, as a direct result of land conversion or development. In recognition of this, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has recently upgraded the tortoise's status from Species of Special Concern to Threatened. Regulations that protect the tortoise no longer allow "incidental takes"; the taking of tortoise in the "footprint" of development.

The new rules call for all displaced tortoise to be relocated to "recipient sites". These recipient sites are natural areas where tortoise habitat can be managed appropriately forever. Proper management includes using techniques such as prescribed fire to ensure that proper conditions are maintained. These conditions are open (*little forest canopy*) with suitable forage (tortoise feed primarily on a wide variety of herbaceous vegetation). We hope that these recipient sites, in concert with publicly owned and managed lands will help enhance and sustain our tortoise populations forever.

The time is right to implement this new program. Land prices are low right now and there is an excellent opportunity to establish suitable recipient sites for when development rebounds.

For more information on the gopher tortoise and the new rules, visit the FWC web site at myfwc.com.

—WILDLANDS CONSERVATION STAFF
WWW.WILDLANDSCONSERVATION.ORG

HELP WILDFLOWER/LEMON CREEK PRESERVE

Lemon Bay Conservancy is working with residents living in the area of the former Wildflower Golf Course to acquire the property for a nature preserve. The 80 acre property on the corner of Placida Road and Gasparilla Pines has great environmental value as a key link in preserving the Lemon Creek connection between Lemon Lake on the Amberjack County Environmental Park to the southeast and Lemon Bay. Lemon Creek is a tidal creek running from Lemon Lake, across the golf course property, under Placida Road, and then across Lemon Bay Golf Course (an Audubon-certified course) to Lemon Bay. The Lemon Lake/ Lemon Creek ecosystem is one of the few remaining relatively undeveloped tidal creeks running into Lemon Bay.

The plan is to preserve the golf course property, removing exotics and providing a nature/birding trail, with access to the lake areas currently on the property. The connection to Amberjack Park is an additional plus for the project. While the County's current financial condition makes it very difficult to take on new park projects, a formal relationship to the County park system in the future certainly would be desirable, and valuable advice has already been received from County staff. In the meantime the physical relationship to Amberjack and Lemon Lake is of important benefit to both areas.

Visitors to Amberjack and the Wildflower area during wet periods can attest to seeing a broad range of wildlife and birdlife, including roseate spoonbills, great horned owls and multiple varieties of herons and



ducks and woodpeckers. The Creek itself is tidal and otters have been observed fishing its banks.

A wildlife biologist, Professor Bill Dunson, who has assisted the Conservancy in reviewing the property observes, "Lemon Creek is hugely significant in maintaining the Lemon Lake ecosystem which is a remarkably productive shallow brackish water assemblage of birds and the aquatic life which feeds them." He adds that "Lemon Lake is a crown jewel for local birding and nature enthusiasts but is only functional when tidal water is able to reach the lake via Lemon Creek. The hydrology is so delicate that a very small disturbance in the balance of the bay/creek/lake connection could be fatal to the lake ecosystem and essentially dry up the lake." Professor Dunson also highlights the educational value of Wildflower: "Acquisition of the Wildflower parcel would allow for public access to, and appreciation for the creek function as part of this small but unique

and wonderful wetland system."

By Conservancy policy any acquisition of Wildflower will include funding to maintain the property. Experts including Professor Dunson and Al Squires and Denny Girard of the Florida Native Plant Society will assist in identifying significant natural assets.

The effort to acquire Wildflower was inspired and hugely assisted by many of the residents in the area who got the ball rolling and began the fundraising effort with a bang. So many have been instrumental that it is impossible to list them all (*since we would undoubtedly forget some very key participants*), but Curt Force of Fiddler's Green 2 has been a powerful force in making the project happen. At the beginning of the summer over \$50,000 had been raised, not only from communities around Wildflower, but also from Boca Grande, Don Pedro and Palm Island, *continued on page 6*

Cape Haze, Placida Harbour, and Rotonda.

It was originally planned to apply to the state Florida Forever Fund for additional funds to support the acquisition and the very extensive Florida Forever application materials were well underway when the Florida House refused to approve additional Florida Forever funding for the coming year because of the state's financial situation. This was the first time in decades that Florida Forever was not funded and many sources indicate that the refusal to fund will be a one-time event.

It is wonderful to have a project

that combines so much environmental benefit with so much community enthusiasm and the Conservancy thanks all those who have participated. We are actively soliciting donations for the property, and checks may be sent to Lemon Bay Conservancy with "Wildflower" in the memo line. We welcome the opportunity to talk to groups about the project and encourage volunteers who would like to help with fundraising, support full funding of Florida Forever in the coming year and offer their ideas for the project. The Conservancy contact is Board Secretary Percy Angelo who can be reached at 269 849-2855 or at medintzm@yahoo.com.

had a wonderful day out in the CHPSP looking at the land around the Coral Creeks and specifically finding some parcels that are being donated to the Lemon Bay Conservancy. These parcels are critical to successful management of the CHPSP, and more particularly, to the hydrological restoration projects that we seek to undertake in the future. We are very excited to have you as neighbors, and we look forward to working together to manage these parcels to provide the greatest possible benefit to the natural communities of Cape Haze. It was during this tour that I remembered what an engaged, enlightened and motivated group of people are capable of. Those are exactly the kind of people that I remember from all of my numerous interactions with the Lemon Bay Conservancy over the past 20 years. Kathleen has graciously offered me some space to give you a little background information about the CHPSP and what we do here.

A Visit to Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park with John Aspiolea

It has been a long road that led me to my current position as the Park Manager at the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park (CHPSP). Some of my earliest environmental experiences in Southwest Florida were in Lemon Bay Park, including some guided hikes with volunteers from the Lemon Bay Conservancy. These passionate and knowledgeable guides sparked an interest in preservation and conservation that has become the focus of my career and my personal life. In the time since those fateful guided hikes (15-20 years), I had forgotten the Lemon Bay Conservancy stated vision. "To forever protect and preserve the natural features of Lemon Bay and its surrounding waters and uplands through property acquisition and management, comprehensive environmental education, and regional advocacy of appropriate land and water conservation policies,



JOHN ASPIOLEA

Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park—The preservation of these water 'edges' sustains the health of the harbor and the populations of fish, water mammals, and water birds that drive the Southwest Florida economy.

programs, and practices." Perhaps not by coincidence, that sounds almost exactly like the work that we do at the CHPSP.

I recently had the opportunity to spend some time in with Kathleen Rohrer and Richard DeGennaro from the Conservancy and Ed Freeman from Wildlands Conservation. We

The mission statement of the Florida Park Service is, "To provide resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting and restoring natural and cultural resources." Florida's 161 State Park's have several different designations that signify the unique features for which they are managed. These include recreation areas, historic sites, museums, gardens and preserves. A state preserve is designated to preserve and protect representative samples of land, with viable size, that have natural community's characteristic of Florida. A state preserve, like the CHPSP, is thus intended to perpetuate and maintain certain natural communities which provide a type of recreational experience which would not be possible

otherwise. Usually a state preserve is rather large and expansive, and may in some cases contrast with special feature sites purely on the basis of size. Some of you may be more familiar with the other local parks like Oscar Scherer, Stump Pass, Gasparilla Island, Don Pedro, Cayo Costa and

CARL Project to form the Charlotte Harbor Estuary Florida Forever Project.

The State of Florida acquired lands in the Charlotte Harbor region to protect one of the largest and most productive estuaries in Florida. It

supports an important recreational and commercial fishery, but is rapidly being surrounded by cities and residential developments, which could harm this important resource. By conserving flatwoods and prairies behind the

flatwoods, scrub, and salt marshes that support bald eagles, sandhill cranes, scrub jays, and manatees. The project will also help protect an important fishery and provide residents and visitors to the rapidly growing Charlotte Harbor area with opportunities for hiking, wildlife observation, and other recreational pursuits.

During the 1970's, the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (BOT) acquired property under the Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) program to be managed as the Charlotte Harbor State Reserve, which was subsequently renamed the Charlotte Harbor State Buffer Preserve. In 2004, DEP reorganized several programs and the management of the preserve was transferred to the Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) to be managed as a unit of the state park system. This and later acquisitions, donations, and government surplus lands are all managed as part of the CHPSP.

Conservation and preservation is the designated single use of the property. At a preserve, preservation and enhancement are all important. Resource considerations are given priority over user considerations and development is restricted to the minimum necessary for ensuring its protection and maintenance, limited access, user safety and convenience, and appropriate interpretation. Permitted uses are primarily of a passive nature, related to the aesthetic, educational and recreational enjoyment of the preserve, although

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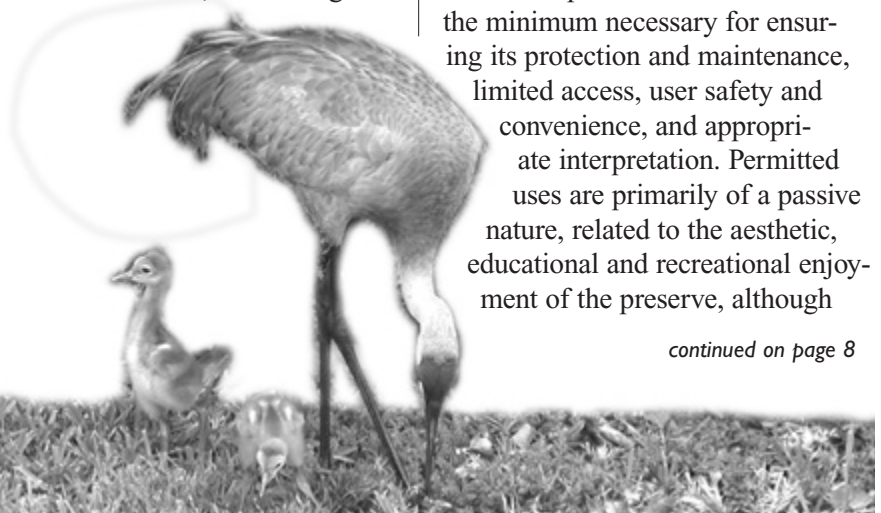


From left to right: Mary McMurray from Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, John Aspiolea from Charlotte Harbor Preserves State Parks, and Becky Jenkins from Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves.

Myakka River. These parks are much more geared towards recreational opportunities than us. But none of them is quite as large. Here at the CHPSP we have a unique resource of 42,000+ acres that fits perfectly into the "preserve" designation.

The CHPSP is made up of lands obtained from four acquisition projects in addition to donations, settlement agreements, mitigation agreements, and federal surplus lands. Lands were initially acquired through the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL) in the 1970's and continued with the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) program. Additional lands were acquired under the joint Save Our Rivers/CARL projects known as Myakka Estuaries and Cape Haze. Recently, these two projects were combined with the Charlotte Harbor

mangrove swamps and salt marshes along Charlotte and Placida Harbors, the Charlotte Harbor Estuary project will help preserve the water quality of the estuary, protect habitat for the Florida manatee and other rare wildlife, and provide residents and visitors to the area with opportunities for boating, fishing, and other recreational pursuits. The Myakka Estuary section of the project will protect the largest natural area left around northern Charlotte Harbor, conserving



other compatible uses are permitted in limited amounts. Program emphasis is placed on interpretation of the natural and cultural attributes of the preserve.

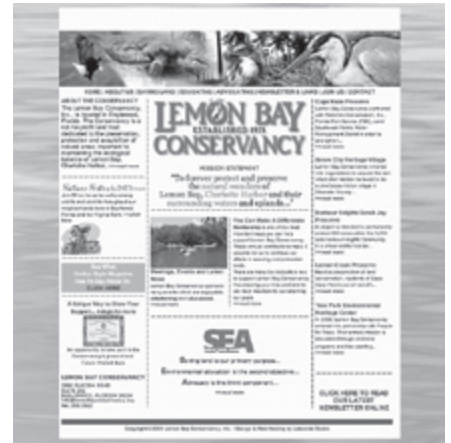
Stewardship of such an incomparable and irreplaceable resource is a challenging and rewarding job. The staff and volunteers of the CHPSP take great pride in the fact that we are contributing to a long history of successful protection of Florida's natural environment. Our amazing volunteer corps assists us with various

management activities throughout the CHPSP. They work on trailblazing, exotic plant control, biological monitoring, fundraising, educational outreach, and many other functions.

If you are interested in volunteering please visit the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves website at: www.fchap.org or the CHPSP website at: www.floridastateparks.org/charlotteharbor

If you have any other questions please contact me at the CHPSP Office: 941-575-5861

A Whole New Look



If you haven't visited the Conservancy web site lately, you are in for a pleasant surprise. Our resident designer, Norman Hotz working closely with Kathleen Rohrer have introduced a whole new look to our site. The new site home page reflects the many facets of the Conservancy and the projects we are involved in.



One new addition is the regular columns and photos by Bill Dunson. New entries into Bill's Nature Diary are added regularly. For those interested in supporting the Conservancy efforts, you can now join and/or contribute on-line.

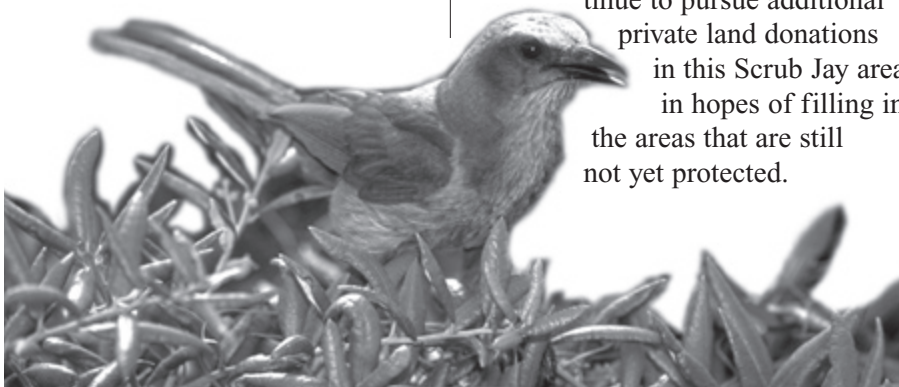
We want to stay in touch with you. Please send us your updated e-mail address to: lbconservancy@comcast.net

Harbour Heights Scrub Jay Preserve Update

BY EDIE DRIEST

I have very good progress news to report. Over the summer, we have decided to approach the private property owners in the Harbour Heights (HH) Scrub Jay Preserve Area for land donations, by establishing a neighborhood home owner's "grass roots" committee. In the preparation of this, we asked the Charlotte County Staff to produce a new aerial land map for the HH Scrub Jay Preserve Area that accurately reflects in 2009, exactly which properties in HH are already in a form of conservation. Surprise! In addition to what the country already owns, we found that there are a number of other HH undevel-

oped land properties still in private ownership, that have become "sending zones" - areas for Charlotte County, where the "density for building units" has already been transferred off of these properties and into other areas in the county. This was very good news in that we have now discovered that a good percentage of our initial committee work has already been completed, at no cost to us or LBC, by the County! According to the Charlotte County staff, any "sending zone" properties cannot be built upon, which of course helps to protect this ecologically rich area. The new HH "Grass Roots" committee will continue to pursue additional private land donations in this Scrub Jay area in hopes of filling in the areas that are still not yet protected.



An Exciting Lecture Series

Our annual lecture series program is currently being put together for the upcoming season. We are planning a whole new approach that offers

to be our most exciting and diverse season ever. As soon as the information becomes available the dates and locations will

be posted on the Conservancy's website, so be sure to check regularly for the announcements. www.lemonbayconservancy.org

The Great Bay and Sound Scallop Search

By JAMES WADE

On Saturday, September 12th, some 114 people in 33 groups on 30 boats and 3 kayak/canoes took to the water in what was billed as the "Great Bay and Sound Scallop Search." The objective was to assess the health of Lemon Bay by counting scallops.

As many of our long time residents know, up to the mid 1960's scallops were plentiful in Lemon Bay. In fact, scallop populations were healthy from Pine Island to the Panhandle. It was at this point that alerts were issued noting the decline in populations.

Researchers suspected that worsening water quality is the primary cause of the decline along with more and more frequent incidents of Red Tide. Scallops are particularly sensitive to Red Tide since they can't completely close their shells. Commercial harvesting of Bay Scallops has been prohibited for years. Recreational scalloping is limited to the waters north of Hernando-Pasco county line to the Panhandle and to July 1st to September 10th.

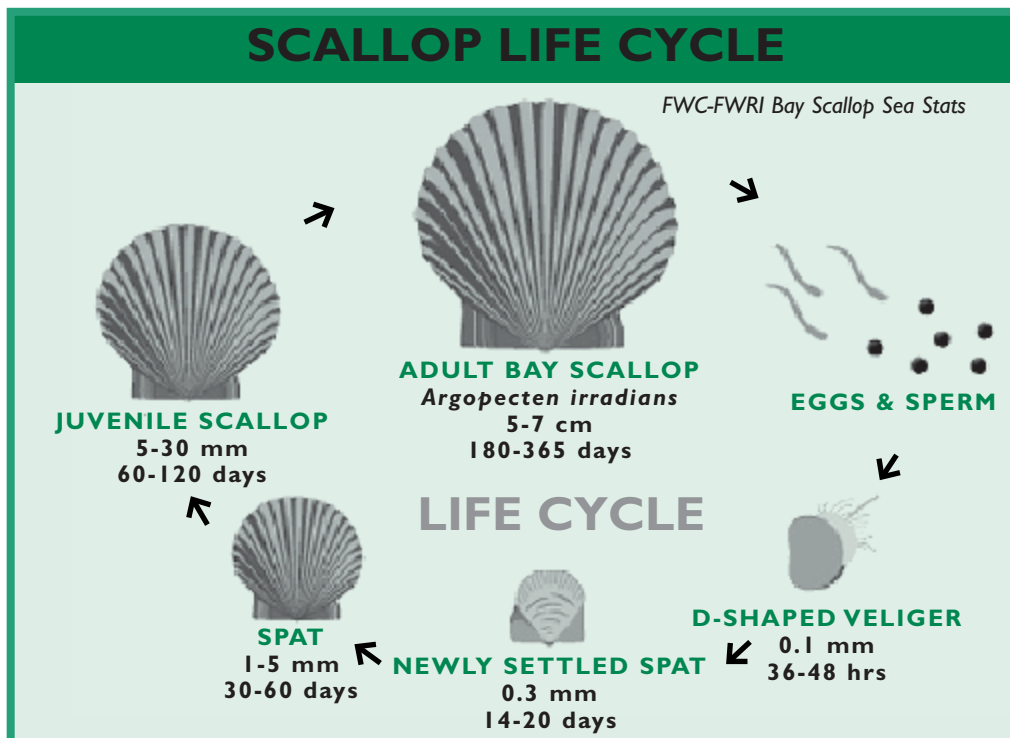
Bay Scallops seem to be making a resurgence in Sarasota and Tampa Bays. In August, an event similar to the Great Bay and Sound Scallop

Search was held in Sarasota Bay. Some 170 volunteers combed the Bay waters and found 131 scallops.

Low tech research has been done in local waters from Pine Island to Stump Pass. Mesh citrus bags were tied to concrete blocks and dumped in various locations. Four weeks later, the bags were retrieved and examined. The gelatinous larvae and spats (scallop shells that have just begun to form) attach themselves to the bags, just as they do to sea grass. The most scallops were discovered at the station near Stump Pass where

151 scallops in the spat stage were attached to the bag.

So how did it go with the Great Bay and Sound Scallop Search? The count was 94. What does this mean? Well, it indicates that our waters have improved in quality and that scallops are, perhaps, beginning to re-establish themselves in our area. It also indicates that we have a long way to go to get to a healthy, plentiful Bay Scallop population. Our competitive readers might also note that snorkelers in Lemon Bay found 0.054 more scallops per person than those in Sarasota Bay.



NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING



TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2010
at 6:30 p.m.
Cedar Point Park

The Annual Meeting of Lemon Bay Conservancy, Inc., will be held prior to the presentation of the evening's guest speaker.

The election of our 2010 Board of Directors will be held. A slate of candidates will be available at the Conservancy offices on December 31, 2009. Please stop by or telephone for a copy. Nominations are also accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

You will hear an up-to-the-minute report of our land acquisition activities and the current financial status of the Conservancy.

The meeting will begin promptly, so please plan to arrive early!

Coffee and sweets provided.



Cedar Point Park, home of this and many Conservancy meeting and lectures throughout the year,

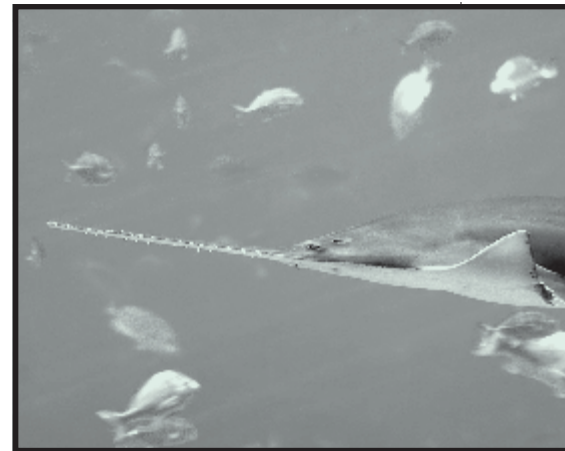
The Nearly Extinct Sawfish Should Help Protect Our Charlotte

By JIM COOPER

Most folks have never seen the small tooth sawfish. In the 1920's they were plentiful in Charlotte Harbor and the east coast of the US and they were caught by sportsman just because of their large size (*see local photo*). Yet, due to over fishing, in 2003 the small tooth sawfish became almost extinct and it became the first fish ever placed on the Federal endangered species list. Just 6 years later, on Oct 2, 2009, NOAA went even one step farther and listed all 220,000 acres of our Charlotte Harbor and 600,000 acres in the 10,000 Islands area of the Everglades as the only 2 "Designated Critical Habitat Areas" for the small tooth sawfish in the entire U.S.

Did you know the sawfish are members of the ray family, born as pups, just like a shark? They are about 2 1/2 feet long at birth. As adults they can grow as large as 16-24 feet and weigh over 1,000 pounds. They are easy to identify from their unusual "saw bill (about 20-24 inches long).

So, where do these sea monster like critters dwell? They are juveniles until they reach 5 feet in length. As juveniles, they tend to stay in their nursery areas near the bottom in the freshwater-flow areas of the estuary, to avoid sharks. While young, they stay in shallow canal channels and the river entrances to the harbor, the Myakka, the Peace, and the Caloosahatchee. Since 2002, Mote Marine has been working to tag and identify these unusual and rare fish, to learn more



Three large sawfish photographed locally in 1924.

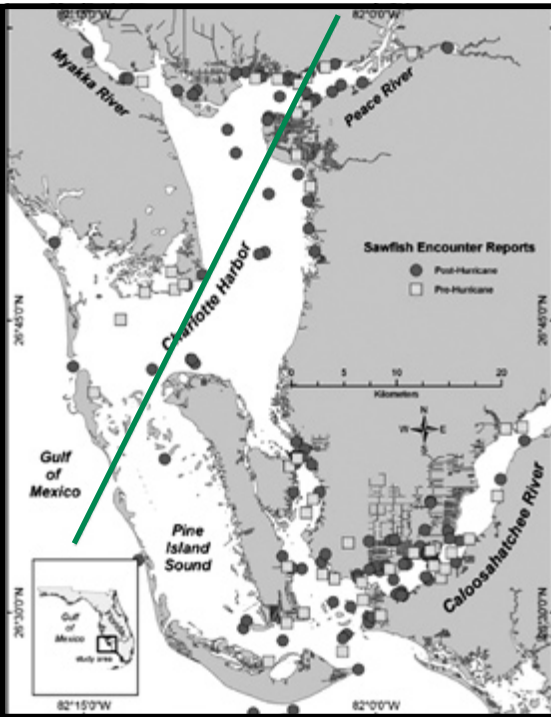
about them and their habitat in order to better protect them. Once they reach over 5 feet, they will move into the harbor area and roam freely. Since 2003, they have been illegal keep. If you do catch one be careful, as their sharp saw bill can deliver a deep cut as you try to release them.

The sawfish, as a prehistoric member of the ray family, requires a good balance of fresh water flows in its nursery mode. This means

Harbor Fishery



PHOTO: © DAVID IFF



FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

Sawfish encounter reports between 2002 and 2006 in the Charlotte Harbor area (ca. 2.5 years before and after Hurricane Charley). Green line approximates the path of the center of the eye of the storm.

all Federal agencies must look at the impacts of any new projects upriver of the Harbor, in our Peace & Myakka Rivers, or in the 3 foot areas near the harbor's coastline which could impact their habitat.

This new "Critical Habitat" designation ruling affects big new projects upstream in our rivers, like proposed new Phosphate Mines and agriculture projects, as well as small dock projects, downstream and in the harbor, which could impact saw tooth fish habitat and require Clean Water Act permits or Army Corp permits.

Hopefully, the sawfish will now become the new "Canary in the Mine" and a warning sentinel for protecting all 220,000 acres of our vast and vital Charlotte Harbor fishery.

Let's think positive. The good news is that Mote Marine will be tagging and studying these rare sawfish in the Peace River during 2010, which should be quite helpful. Likewise, let's hope the EPA and all Federal agencies will truly ensure that the freshwater which annually flows downstream to the Harbor (under its new Critical Habitat Designation) from the Peace and Myakka Rivers is properly maintained at true sustainability levels, during and after any new projects, to fully ensure all the Small Tooth Sawfish nursery areas stay healthy. If that happens, then not only the strange looking sawfish will be protected, but equally and most importantly, all of the many saltwater fish species our local recreational and tourism fishing industry rely upon, like snook, redfish, mangrove snapper and tarpon, etc. will also be fully protected with the EPA ensuring a proper estuary balance of vital fresh water flows are sustained in the Harbor.

We will need to stay vigilant. Only time will tell if the strange looking and very rare small tooth sawfish, will truly become a new protector of the fishery paradise we enjoy in Charlotte Harbor.

An Invitation to Join Us

We invite you to support the Lemon Bay Conservancy's efforts to protect the inherent beauty of southwest Florida by becoming a member and donating to our Land Acquisition Fund. Thanks for your consideration and for your concern for the preservation of our natural heritage.

LEMON BAY CONSERVANCY, INC.

www.lemonbayconservancy.org
Member, Land Trust Alliance

Membership Application / Donation Form

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip Code _____
 e-mail address _____
 Telephone _____

Yes, I would like to contribute toward preserving native wildlife habitat and open lands, as well as help protect Florida's threatened and endangered animal and plant life.

- \$25 INDIVIDUAL MEMBER
- \$35 FAMILY MEMBER
- \$50 SUPPORTING MEMBER
- \$100 PATRON MEMBER
- \$200 SMALL BUSINESS MEMBER
- \$500 CORPORATE MEMBER
- \$500 TRUSTEE OF THE LAND
- \$1,000 KEEPER OF THE LAND
- \$2,500 GUARDIAN OF THE LAND
- \$5,000 STEWARD OF THE LAND

Other \$ _____ Donation
 \$ _____

Please make checks payable to

Lemon Bay Conservancy, Inc.

and mail to:
 2980 Placida Road, Suite 201
 Englewood, FL 34224

**Thank you for your support.
 It is greatly appreciated!**

Contributions to Lemon Bay Conservancy, Inc., are tax deductible to the extent provided by law and within IRS guidelines. In accordance with the requirements of the federal Omnibus Reconciliations Act of 1993, donors are notified that no goods or services are provided in consideration for contribution to Lemon Bay Conservancy. In accordance with the State of Florida Statutes, Chapter 496 of the Solicitation Contribution Act, donors are hereby notified that Lemon Bay Conservancy does not retain professional solicitors or fund raising consultants and 100% of each contribution is received by Lemon Bay Conservancy. A copy of Lemon Bay Conservancy's official registration and financial information (state registration #CH14541) may be obtained from the State of Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling toll free within the state e. 1-800-435-7352. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

HONORINGS

LBC expresses our special thanks to member Jim Stout.

This past August he made a generous donation of \$1,000 to LBC specifically for the Coral Creek Preserve in the name of his Grandmother “**Marion Arcon**” who lived on Green Dolphin Drive in Cape Haze. In his letter he stated that the “**Cape Haze Preserve**” was important to her. Thank you, Jim

Our Thanks to John & Lorelee Fisher whose donation once again earned them the privilege of having our mascot spend another season in their Boca Grande home. This unique statue was made available to migrate from home to home each year in 2008. The brainchild of volunteer **Holly Haynes**, our heron can nest with you starting March 2010. All it takes is a significant donation—minimum bid \$300.

Thanks to the following businesses for their generous donations: **Alamanda Garden Club**, 6756 Von Camp Street, North Port, \$500.;

Marana Kitchen Design, Etibicoke, Ontario, \$200. and **TKMS Stable**, 5611 Tropicair Blvd. North Port, \$100.



IN MEMORIUM

Ann Dever, former member of the Lemon Bay Conservancy board of directors, passed away on Oct. 6. Anne, an active environmentalist, brought her passion to every community in which she lived. In Michigan, she served on the Great Lakes Fisheries Advisory Committee, an appointee of two different governors, and served as County Commissioner, its chair for two years. In California, Ann was honored as Outstanding Conservationist of Northern California. In Texas, she developed a well-recognized television program, “Fishing from a Woman’s Point of view.” In Florida, her service included Charlotte County Assembly, Committee to Save Lemon Bay, Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Lemon Bay Conservancy, and many social and professional organizations whose purposes are the betterment of individual lives and our community. We offer thanks to Ann’s memory for her dedicated service. We have lost a special friend.

We hope you enjoyed this latest issue of our newsletter.

If indeed you did, we would like to invite you to be a part of the Conservancy.

Either through membership, volunteering or financial assistance.

All of the Conservancy’s accomplishments have been made possible through contributions and volunteerism.

It is only people like yourselves that can help us maintain the beauty of our lands and waterways and protect them for future generations.

For more information on ways to help please contact our office or visit our website.

To guarantee that you see all our future newsletters, simply fill out the membership application on page 11, and you will begin receiving it upon publication.

