

The

Understory

Newsletter of the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Inc.

June - July 2008

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our Pinellas Chapter has the fourth largest membership of FNPS chapters, and a very active group it is. Some dedicated and effective leaders supported by volunteers make things happen. It occurred to me that many casual members perhaps are not familiar with all that we do in support of the FNPS mission to preserve, conserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida. Here is a summation of many of our activities over the past few years.

Educational Outreach: Meeting and educating people about native plants is one of the main ways we accomplish our mission. PowerPoint presentations of "In Harmony with Nature" (comprised of "The Healthy Landscape" and "Landscaping and Gardening with Florida Native Plants"), developed in partnership with St. Petersburg Audubon Society, have been presented to thousands of people at major environmental events, neighborhood association meetings, garden clubs, and various civic groups, as well as state conferences of Audubon of Florida and FNPS. Our presenters have been Bruce Turley, Cathy Quindiagan, Jan Allyn, and Bill Bilodeau. Designed to make people aware of environmentally friendly approaches to home property management, it has also

been a strong vehicle for putting our chapter name and mission out into community awareness. We created a narrated CD version of the programs and sell it statewide, with the help of a favorable article in Audubon's state publication "The Naturalist." The "Landscaping and Gardening with Florida Native Plants" PPT was given a post production grant from FNPS, copied, and distributed to every FNPS chapter statewide by educational chair Marty Main.

We exhibit at every major environmental event in the region with a first class display managed by Marie Hughes. We distribute voluminous amounts of free literature to the public from our display. Some of these events have been very well attended, e.g. the Pinellas Living Green Expo (approx. 5,000 people) and the Tropicana Field Home Show (approx. 30,000 people).

Partnerships: We are an active part of a countywide environmental coalition, "Alliance for a Livable Pinellas" or ALP, which meets monthly to share news and issues, and to coordinate advocacy strategies when appropriate. Cathy Quindiagan and Bill Bilodeau have been attending. ALP has been meeting monthly with the chief administrative/environmental officer of the city of St. Petersburg in an attempt to assist the city in advancing from silver to gold status in the Green Cities program. A result of these meetings is a forthcoming revision of the city tree ordinance which is much more protective of the tree canopy than the prior ordinance. Our chapter played an important role in this development.

Two years ago the Pinellas county administrator formed the Environmental Science Forum, an invited collection of non-governmental environmentalists, to function as an advisory board to the administration. Ray Wunderlich, our chapter representative, has regularly participated in this opportunity.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued from page 1)

We partnered with Heritage Village, a county historical preservation site, to create signage for the Shirley McPherson Trail, a native plant ethnobotanical interpretive trail. We developed the plant description content and donated \$3500 to the project. Jane Williams was the chapter project manager.

Every December for many years we have joined with St. Petersburg Audubon Society for a Conservation Celebration where we both give our annual awards, have a silent auction fund-raiser, and a top-notch speaker. It's an inspiring event attended by approximately 200 people.

Conservation: We have partnered with the city of St. Petersburg in the restoration of Little Bayou Park and an important Indian mound at Pinellas Point. Ray Wunderlich, our conservation chair person, has spearheaded the endeavor. We joined with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to remove invasive exotic plant species and plant natives at Clam Bayou. One of our members, Elizabeth France, has arranged a transfer of county property to the city of Clearwater and created a neighborhood demonstration "pocket park" supporting butterflies and birds with native plants. We have also been a participant in the ongoing planting and maintenance of an extensive demonstration garden of native coastal species at the USF marine sciences educational site at Clam Bayou. Bill Bilodeau has been a regular supporter of that project.

Scholarships and Awarded Grants: For several years running our chapter, under the leadership of Cindy Peacock, our scholarship chairperson, has donated an average \$2000 a year in scholarships for various city and county environmental summer camp programs for youth. We just received feedback from the program manager of Moccasin Lake Nature Park that, in one family's case, the sponsorship of the child allowed the single mother to get a job to support her family. We provided an assistance grant of \$100 to long time member John Beckner for his efforts to digitally scan the historically significant and fragile journals of James MacFarland, a Florida botanist of the 1920s. Recently we gave a grant of \$250 for the Tracy McCommon "Gardening for Native Pollinators" TV production, which will potentially reach millions of Floridians. We sponsored the 2008 FNPS conference in the amount of \$500.

Grants Received: We received a \$1,907 grant from the Tampa Bay Estuary Program to print giveaway literature folders for our "In Harmony with Nature" series. The chapter received a \$1,000 grant from Progress Energy to help restore the St. Petersburg city park at Little Bayou. A grant of \$7500 from the Tampa Bay Estuary Program was obtained for the planting of the pocket park known as Rainbow at Mars in Clearwater.

Plant Sales: Our chapter, with the lead of Bruce Turley, holds major plant sales each spring and fall. Not only do they provide income for the chapter but also a wonderful educational and membership opportunity. Our most recent sale garnered 22 new memberships and provided the host, Wilcox Nursery, a record breaking sales day. At our monthly membership meetings Ray Wunderlich has consistently provides native plants he has grown for our silent auction which, over time, has provided an important income stream.

Newsletter and Membership Communication: We have had one of the best newsletters in the state and one of the first to go digital. Thanks to Lisa Curry, our former editor, the transition was smooth and accepted by the membership and has substantially reduced our per-issue cost. Our email communication with our membership, managed by webmaster Jan Allyn, is outstanding. She sends a regular feature entitled "News from the Pinellas FNPS" which details activities, advocacy issues, and volunteer opportunities.

Landscape Tour: In 2007 we reestablished an annual native plant yard tour for the public. The event sparked the involvement of new volunteers within the chapter. The tour was well attended and highly praised as a direct learning experience. We plan to continue the activity.

Advocacy: In the past several years the Pinellas Chapter's level of advocacy has increased significantly because of development threats to our local preserves and parks. In concert with other local environmental groups, we have been able to affect some county management policies. Debbie Chayet and Jan Allyn also provided input at master planning meetings for some of our parks and preserves. As a way of saving our coastal forests in Louisiana and Florida we have signed on to two letters, sponsored by the Gulf Restoration Network, requesting that Home Depot, Lowe's, and Wal-Mart cease selling cypress mulch.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued from page 1)

Other Projects/Activities: For the last two years, committee of chapter members, under Bruce Turley's lead, have been creating a book on shade gardening with native plants. Jane Williams created three large notebooks of native plant pictures and descriptions as a reference for use at our plant sales. We were also a co-host of the 2008 FNPS State Conference.

As you can see, our chapter is heavily committed to action and should be very proud of its accomplishments. As a member, if you have not yet lent your time and talents to our impressive efforts, don't keep hesitating. Be involved! The more of us who participate the stronger and more effective we can be. Your contribution is very important to the growth of our chapter and the well being of the communities in which we live.

-- Bill Bilodeau

THE 2008 FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY CONFERENCE

Uplands to Estuaries: Celebrating Florida's Native Plant Heritage was the theme of the 2008 Florida Native Plant Society conference, held at the Manatee Convention Center from May 14 to May 18, 2008. This was the first time multiple chapters have co-hosted a conference. The co-hosts were the Pinellas, Serenoa, Suncoast and Mangrove Chapters.

Ray Wunderlich, from our Pinellas chapter, was the Conference chairman, and presented a challenge to all conferees to enact a new paradigm of sustainability. For the conference weekend, recycling bins for cans, plastic, and paper were set up, organic food was offered, use of plastic was reduced, and like-minded sponsors invited as part of that effort.

There were 325 attendees to this year's conference, coming from as far north as Panama City and as far south as Homestead, and from the east and west coasts and central Florida. The environmental exhibits, and plant and merchandise vendors, were also open to the general public, who were encouraged to learn more about using natives, and integrating environmentally friendly practices into their everyday life.

For the first time, a full children's program with activities and field trips was held on Friday and Saturday. I heard them hooting like owls and flying down the hallway. I thought they were waving at me, but was informed that they were flying.

Several nights of social events with good food and music allowed members of the various chapters to catch up with old friends and to find out what the 34 chapters are doing all over the state.

Awards. One of the highlights and purposes of our annual Conference is to recognize the contributions of various individuals, groups or organizations to the Florida Native Plant Society mission of: Conservation, Restoration, and Preservation of native plants, and native plant communities. Awards are given to individuals in recognition of superior achievements in keeping with our goals, and for landscaping in keeping with the FNPS mission.



Green Palmetto awards are given to nominated members who provided outstanding contributions to FNPS in the arenas of Service, Education, and Science/Technical contribution. This year those who received this award were Ron Plakke, PhD., Erick Smith, Carmel VanHoek, Cynthia Plockelmen

Silver Palmetto Awards are selected by the President, and were given to Robert Egolf, Cindy Liberton and Kim Zarillo

There is also a Green Palmetto award given to the chapter that has made outstanding contributions. This year's winner was the Tarflower Chapter.

Landscape award winners in the residential homeowner design category were:

1st Place Elizabeth Flynn, Ormond Beach, FL
Elizabeth and Thomas Flynn – Designers, Owners

2nd Place Doris Bareiss, New Port Richey, FL
Doris L. Bareiss – Designer/Owner

3rd Place Wes Brooks
Tom and Anamary Brooks - Designers, Owners

Look for more details and pictures on the landscape award winners in the upcoming issues of the *Palmetto* magazine. Congratulations to all of our award winners!

The Conference volunteers worked long hours to make this conference a success. Volunteers from our Pinellas Chapter helped guide field trips, transport food, register participants, act as room monitors, and coordinate the social events and activities. A big thank you to all of them:

Jan Allyn, Bill Bilodeau, Debbie Chayet, Lisa Curry, Barbara Hoffman, Ilsa Johannson, Alice Keton, Lorraine Margeson, Jim McGinity, Cindy Peacock, Cathy Quindiagan, Nancy Smith, Melody Staunton, Don Stillwaugh, Bruce Turley, Jane Williams, Jennifer Wunderlich, and Ray Wunderlich.

Next year's conference will be May 21-24, 2009 in Palm Beach, Florida, at the West Palm Beach Marriott, 10001 Okeechobee Boulevard, West Palm Beach, FL 33401.

We highly recommend you make plans to attend. It is a wonderful way to learn more about the real nature of our beautiful state while you interact with old friends and/or meet new friends with similar goals. You are almost guaranteed to have a good time.

Alexa Wilcox-Huegel, with a favorite tree, on a visit to Appalachicola Bluffs and Ravines, a nature Conservancy property just west of Tallahassee in April 2008. The tree is a spruce pine.



PENSTEMONS

By Craig Huegel

Also known as “beardtongues” because of the “hairy” and infertile stamen that is present inside the open flower tube, this wonderful group of wildflowers are found throughout the country in great diversity. It is estimated that more than 250 species are native to North America, mostly in western states. Only three species are native to Florida, but all three should be more widely used in the home landscape.

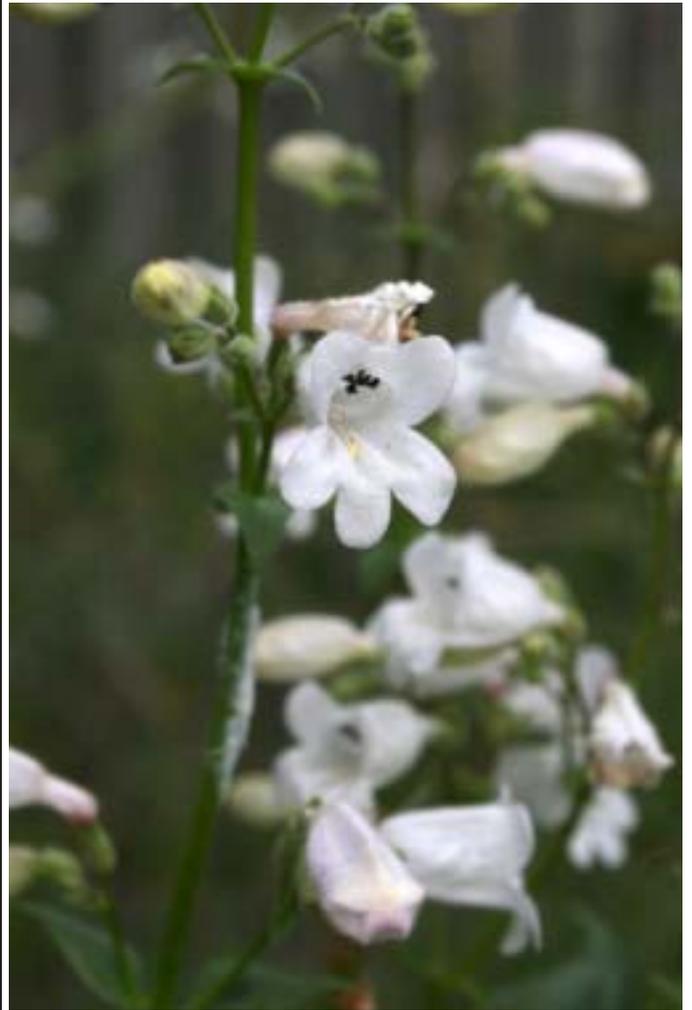
Beardtongues are members of the Scrophulariaceae; the same family that includes snapdragons, and a few natives that you might recognize: bluehearts, bacopa, and false foxglove. Like the common snapdragon, penstemons produce a flower stalk with multiple flowers that open at right angles on the stem. The flowers themselves are tubular, with rather complex throats. Most species come in various shades of white or pink. The beauty of beardtongues comes from the flowers. Blooming seasons generally last from the late spring and extend into the fall. Throughout this period, many flowers are normally open at one time. They are great plants for hummingbirds, if you are lucky enough to have them during these months, but they mostly attract a wide assortment of bees. Beardtongues are not exceptional butterfly plants and I am not aware of any species that uses them as a larval food plant, although the common buckeye uses many other species in this family.

Our three beardtongues are short-lived perennials and essentially evergreens. Although they do not bloom year-round, their foliage does not die back to the ground during the winter. When not in bloom, they exist as a tidy clump of short linear-shaped leaves. *P. australis* and *P. laevigatus* have leaves with a noticeably reddish tinge, while *P. multiflorus* does not. All beardtongues are easy to grow from seed – and probably should be every couple of years to ensure that your population doesn't disappear with age.

A brief description of our three native species is below:

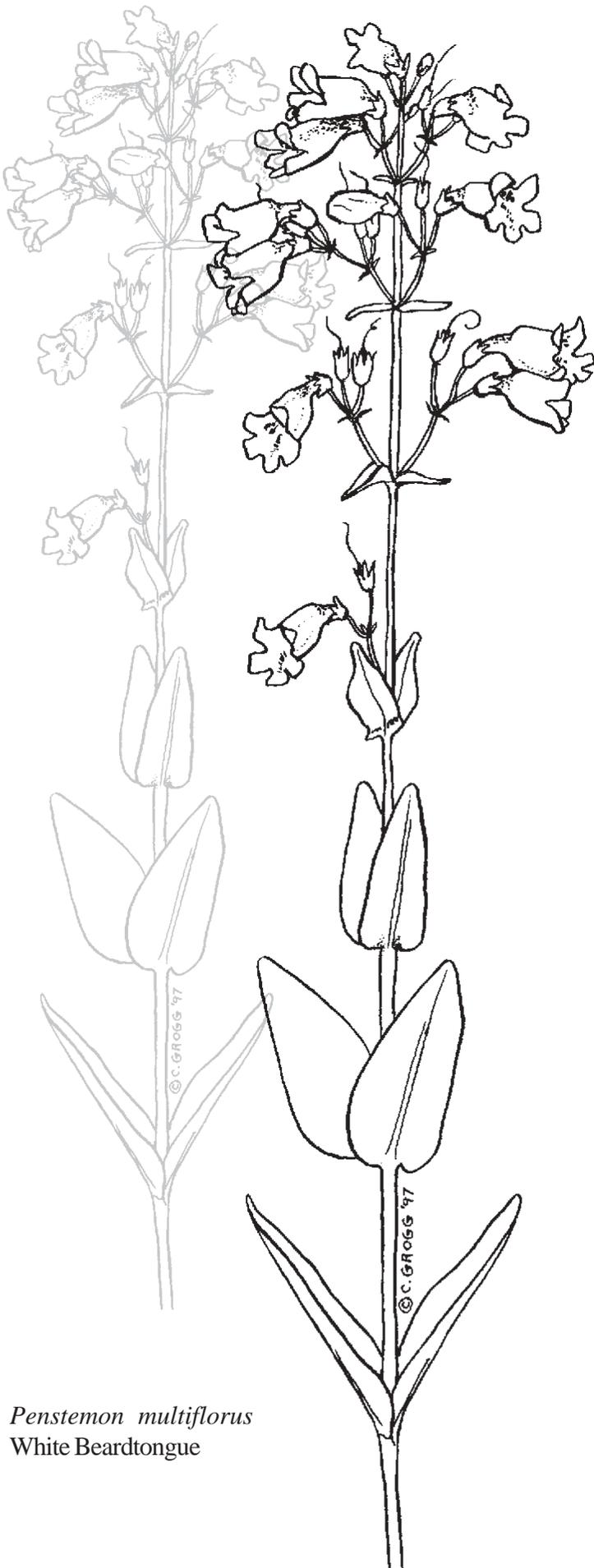
P. multiflorus – Many-flowered or white beardtongue is the most commonly available and most widely distributed Florida species in this genus. It is a rather common member of sandhill and flatwoods communities throughout the panhandle and peninsular Florida. It also is the largest

member of the genus. Flower stalks may reach more than 4 feet in height. As the name implies, this species produces a wealth of white flowers, beginning in April and extending into the fall. Use this species toward the back of your garden, since it sometimes grows quite large, and use it in small groupings to accent its attractive flowers.



Penstemon multiflorus

P. australis – Slender or pink beardtongue is a rather diminutive member of this group, but perhaps my favorite. Common to sandhill and flatwoods habitats in the panhandle and south to about Polk County, this species rarely reaches 2 feet in height – even counting its flower stalk. The soft-pink blooms are very attractive, but they will get lost in a large setting unless planted in mass and near the front where you can readily appreciate them. This species was once widely available from Florida native plant nurseries, but seems to have mostly disappeared at present. We hope that this will change in the future.



Penstemon multiflorus
White Beardtongue

P. laevigatus – Eastern smooth beardtongue is the rarest of our native species. Although widely distributed in states throughout the Southeast, it is naturally present only in two counties in the Florida Panhandle. Foliage-wise, eastern smooth beardtongue is rather similar to pink beardtongue, and the flowers are muted pinkish lavender. This species is drought tolerant, but seems to do best in a dry woodland setting – not the open sunny areas preferred by the other two species above. Although rare in Florida, this species is grown by several Florida sources and is more commonly offered than pink beardtongue. If you wish to use it, I would recommend planting it in an area that gets sun for no more than half a day and where soils are a bit richer than the sandy conditions favored by the other two.



Penstemon laevigatus

JUNE MEETING, Wed., June 4, 7:00 pm:

30,000 Years of Global Climate Change: The Dejavu of Rising Temperatures and Sea Levels By Archaeologist Jay Hardman.

Jay will be presenting the prehistory of the Tampa Bay area's changing flora and fauna since man's earliest arrival. Time perspective is promoted through time clock analogy, for a better understanding of environmental progression.

Jay Hardman, a native Floridian, grew up in Pinellas County. He graduated from St. Petersburg Junior College where he received a degree in Secondary Science Education, then, shifting his focus somewhat, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Applied Archaeology. During graduate school, he spent a year as field archaeologist for the State of Florida, and has worked for various Cultural Resource Management firms.

After years of incessant travel, and missing his home life, Jay retired to pursue his interests more locally, in the Central Gulf Coast Archaeological Society. He eventually became a Pinellas County volunteer and docent at archaeological and nature-historic parks where he lectures and leads interpretive hikes. Jay pursues his interest in nature, and man's place in it, through participation in field research with the Central Gulf Coast Archaeological Society. He remains current with new developments in academic research through membership in the Florida Anthropological Society and attendance at the Southeastern Archaeological Conference.

JUNE FIELD TRIP, Sat. June 7:

Archaeologist Jay Hardman will be leading our Field trip to Weedon Island, on Saturday, June 7. The trip will be coordinated by Bill Bilodeau. We will meet in the parking lot of the Weedon Island Environmental Center at 8 AM. This will be a hiking trip and will take approximately 2-3 hours. We will view the exhibit (in order to connect with the people) and hike the upland and boardwalk trails to see the plants and discuss their usage.

Members and general public are welcome (not recommended for children under age 8.) Please bring appropriate walking/hiking shoes, hat, sunscreen, and insect repellent, and water to drink. Bring a lunch and we will all enjoy a picnic together at the end of the hike.

Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center

1800 Weedon Drive NE St. Petersburg, FL 33702

Phone: 727-453-6500



JULY MEETING, Wed. July 9, 7:00 pm:

The Wondrous Plants and Trees of Florida's Riverine Systems

By Craig Huegel, PhD

Our speaker, Dr. Craig Huegel, will show us a closer look at the flora found near Florida's rivers, and explain their importance and connection to the entire riverine plant community. Craig will explain Florida's four major river and stream types: Sand-bottom streams; Calcareous streams; Large rivers; and Swamp & bog streams, and the characteristics of the plants which comprise them. He will lead us on a visual tour of some of Florida's trees, shrubs and herbaceous species adapted to those plant communities, and to life along our rivers and streams, which will help us to enjoy their beauty and understand their relevance to Florida's ecology.

JULY FIELD TRIP, Sunday, July 13:

Our July field trip, on Sunday, July 13, will be a canoe/kayak trip! Lars Anderson, a well-known guide, author and naturalist, has agreed to be our guide for this trip. He will take us to a little known and fairly secluded area along one of Florida's rivers. If you have never been on a trip with Lars, you are in for a treat.

This field trip requires reservations in advance, so please read the info below carefully!

Our trip coordinator will be Alexa Wilcox-Huegel. You may contact her at (727) 251-7376 if you have any further questions. To reserve your spot you must contact Lars Anderson directly at the Adventure Outpost (Information at bottom below). But please let Alexa know you are going as well, so we can contact you with any change in plans. We will be trying to set up carpools to help save on gas.



CHASSAHOWITZKA RIVER

This trip will be to the beautiful Chassahowitzka River, which starts just south of Crystal River (10 miles below Homosassa Springs). We will meet at 10:00 am at the river. We will make several stops to see the native flora and to swim in one of the springs that feed this river (so be sure to wear clothes you can swim in). We will also stop for lunch along the way. This trip was planned for experienced and beginning paddlers alike. Join us for a really fun day!

The Chas, as this river is commonly known, is the quiet, unpretentious little sister of the popular GOMER (Gulf of Mexico Region) spring rivers. The main river channel is surprisingly wide, but relatively shallow. With Crystal and Homosassa Rivers vying for attention to the north and mermaids luring tourists to Weeki Wachee to the south, the Chas has gone relatively unnoticed. This river's isolation is no mere fluke. It runs through the heart of a beautiful, 40 square mile wetlands known as the Chassahowitzka Swamp. And, if that's not enough, there are springs too. Granted they're not the big, showy fountains of her sister rivers - but some are very nice.

Highlights

As you'll learn from the caution signs on the highway coming down, there are bears in these woods. But here, as elsewhere, the Florida black bear is an elusive critter. You have a much better chance of spotting an otter, deer or wild hog rooting along the river bank. Another positive aspect of this trip is the shortage of motor boats. Most are commercial fishermen in small, open crab boats, who seem to have a much healthier respect for paddlers than sports fishermen and recreational boaters.

Boat Rentals and fees

Kayaks, canoes and tandem kayaks are available. The fee for this trip is on a "per person" basis, so it's the same for everyone - kayak, canoe or tandem. The cost is \$32 for FNPS members (normal rate is \$39 for non-members). With your own boat it's \$25 for members (and \$29 for non-members). This includes all equipment needed (life jackets, whistles, paddles, seats, etc.) as well as shuttle transportation to and from the site. There's also a \$2.14 per vehicle parking fee. Space, due to boats and shuttling, is limited, so reserve early.

Difficulty

This is an easy, round-trip paddle. We're planning to be out around 3 - 4 hours (which probably means six hours since our chapter is known for frequent stops to see the flowers). The Chassahowitzka is a fairly wide, tidal river, and even during the stronger periods of the coming and going tides, the current is relatively weak. Even the little feeder streams, some of which we will explore, are slow.

What to bring

- Rain gear. This time of year, you should always bring some kind of rain gear - just in case.
- Comfortable clothes. If the day starts out cool, dress in layers so you can peel out gradually as things warm up.
- Wear clothes that you can swim in, as we will be stopping at one of the springs along the way.
- Appropriate footwear. Be sure to wear some shoes that can get wet (preferably enclosed and with good treads).
- Sun protection. The Chas is a wide open river, so hat and sunscreen are a good idea.
- Dry bags and/or boxes. If you choose to bring camera, binocular and/or field guides, be sure to carry them in something waterproof like doubled plastic baggies or a dry bag.
- Food and drinks. Be sure to pack some lunch. There's not much high, dry ground along the Chas, but we'll find a spot to pull off for a lunch/stretch break. You might also want to bring some snacks. Be sure to also bring plenty of water or something else to keep yourself hydrated.

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED for all trips! For Reservations, call Adventure Outpost (386) 454-0611.

- You can make a reservation any time before 5 pm the afternoon before the trip. HOWEVER, the earlier you call, the more likely you are to secure a spot.
- All reservations must be secured with prepayment, using cash, check or credit card (by phone is OK).
- **Cancellations:** You can cancel up to 24 hours before the trip and get a full refund. After that, your payment is forfeited.
- For more information/ questions call or write:

Lars Andersen , Adventure Outpost
18238 NW Hwy 441
High Springs, FL 32643
(386) 454-0611
<http://www.adventureoutpost.net>

OFFICERS

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Treasurer: Jane Williams 447-7394
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 dchayet@verizon.net
Alternate Chapter Rep: Ray Wunderlich
Past President: Cathy Quindiagan 327-7573

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Lisa Curry, Alexa Huegel, Marie Hughes, James McGinity, Bruce Turley, Ray Wunderlich

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--Scholarships: Cindy Peacock 787-4031
--Special Events/Festivals: Cindy Peacock
Field Trips: open
Membership: Cathy Quindiagan
Newsletter Editor: Craig Huegel & Cathy Vogelsong
Program Coordinator: Alexa Huegel
Publicity: open
Sales --Merchandise: Rose Taylor 821-8267
--Plants: Bruce Turley 595-2073

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Newsletter Reporter: Jan Allyn 399-1022
Refreshments: Hilary Edenfield
Volunteer Coordinator: open
Web Master: Jan Allyn 522-3453



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Pinellas Chapter web address:
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FNPS Bulletin Board
<http://fnps.org/phpBB>



A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free within the state (800-435-7352, reg. no. CH4271). Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. (FDACS/DPI Cert. #47222877)