



Manatee-Sarasota Group Boca Sierra



Not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress

February 2012

A photographic nature trip through Southwest Florida

What: Manatee-Sarasota Group Meeting

When: Thursday, Feb. 9, 7 p.m.

Where: Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. of the Arts

Charles Sobczak will take us on a photographic nature trip of Southwest Florida based on his book, "The Living Gulf Coast – A Nature Guide to Southwest Florida." Published in March 2011, the book was selected as the gold-medal winner for Florida adult non-fiction at the annual awards ceremony of the Florida Publisher's Association.

Sobczak will include photographs by some of the most renowned photographers in our state in his presentation. In addition to the descriptions of the many birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians that inhabit our region, he will give us a glimpse of the 161 parks, preserves and eco-destinations in the six-county region. This presentation, along with the book itself, is an indispensable tool for all nature lovers of the Southwest Florida

region. Sobczak is a great speaker – you don't want to miss this!

For those who would like to have a copy of the book for themselves or as a gift, we have arranged to have these beautiful books for sale after the presentation at a reduced price of \$20 (retail is \$26.95), with \$5 of each sale going to Sierra's Manatee-Sarasota Group. The book is more than 500 pages long and contains more than 600 color photos and drawings.



Photo / Indigo Press

Bring a nature lover with you and a dessert or snack to share at the social afterward. – Linda T. Jones, chair

Manatee-Sarasota Sierra dollars help environmental education of local students

Six area high school teachers received grants for outdoor science activities from the Manatee-Sarasota Group of the Sierra Club to be used in the 2011-12 school year. Teachers in both Manatee and Sarasota counties were eligible to apply for these funds made available by

one donor. Since funds for field trips have been cut, teachers were especially appreciative of the opportunity provided by our local Sierra Club for their students to learn about marine life. The following two articles provide short descriptions and photos of two of their field trips.

Suncoast Polytechnical High School, Sarasota / Nina Henderson

This past summer I was a grateful recipient of grant funding from the Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Club for environmental education. My marine science classes visited Mote Marine Aquarium for a day of experiential learning in Sarasota Bay and viewing the aquarium exhibits. It was a trip that created lasting memories and hopefully sparked lifelong interest in environmental stewardship. Following is a summary of the trip:

On a sunny and cool November morn-

Suncoast Polytechnical continued on page 5



Suncoast Polytechnical field trip

Bayshore High School, Bradenton / Reinhardt Badow

Budget constraints forced me to find alternative funding for Bayshore High School's marine science field trips. This year, the Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Club helped fund our field trips. Your club's grant money was very much appreciated.

On their last bay trip, Bayshore High's marine science students focused on sea grasses and mangroves. Many people are unaware of how valuable intact sea grass beds and mangroves are to Florida, and

Bayshore High continued on page 5



Sarasota Conservation Committee

Tuesday, Feb. 7, 6 p.m. We will discuss our reusable bag campaign and other environmental issues. Sierra Club Office, 1365 Fruitville Road. Contact Dixie Stevens, 859-466-9572 or artist4050@yahoo.com.

Manatee Conservation Committee

Monday, Feb. 13, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Auditorium (**note time and room change**), Bradenton Central Library, 1301 Barcarotta Blvd. Help us contribute to sound environmental policy in Manatee County, where wetlands are in jeopardy. Oppose public land sales and address pending legislation. Join us and/or contact Sandra Ripberger, 794-3878 or sandrari@yahoo.com. Everyone is welcome!

Newsletter mailout

Thursday, Feb. 16, 6 p.m. Prepare the Boca for mailing. Meet at the Sierra office at 1365 Fruitville Road. We also need a member or friend who can deliver Bocas once a month to South County libraries (Elsie Quirk, Venice, North Port and Jacaranda). Contact Freda Perrotta, 941-383-6261 or fredalbk@comcast.net.

Get your newsletter by e-mail

Having your Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Group's monthly newsletter by email rather than snail-mail helps us save trees and money, and it means you get all your local happenings faster and in full color! To receive the newsletter online, go to:

<http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/FLORIDA-M-S-GROUP-NEWS.html> and click on "Join or leave the list."

Legislative updates available

Environmentalists face challenges in the Florida Legislature, which is now meeting in Tallahassee. Stay informed and let your representatives know what is important to you. The Florida Chapter's Tallahassee Legislative Lobbying Report provides up-to-date environmental news and action. To sign up, go to <http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/FL-FLORIDA-REPORT.html> and click "Join or Leave" on the Options line.

Florida Healthy Air Campaign launching in Sarasota and Manatee

The Florida Healthy Air Campaign aims to draw the connection between transportation, air pollution, public health and dependency on oil in order to reduce ozone levels and ultimately create a healthier environment for Southwest Florida. How can we ensure our community grows smarter and healthier? If you are interested in participating in the planning process, becoming a team leader or volunteering, please contact Britten Cleveland, conservation organizer for the Florida Healthy Air Campaign, 941-951-6084 or britten.cleveland@sierraclub.org.

Boca Sierra Vol. XL Issue 2

This newsletter is published monthly by the Manatee-Sarasota Group of the Florida Chapter of the Sierra Club. The intent is to inform members and interested individuals of local activities and national environmental issues. Members of the Sierra Club subscribe to Boca Sierra through their annual dues. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$6 annually.

2012 Executive Committee

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e-Boca Facilitator: open

Buy a 2012 Sierra calendar

John Myers is having a 20% off sale on his remaining 2012 Sierra Club calendars. The normal price is \$12.95 for the wilderness wall calendar and \$13.95 for the engagement calendar.

He will have them at the general meeting, or contact him at 941-961-7095 or jmyers1891@comcast.net

Sierra applauds Everglades Skyway progress

President Obama on Dec. 23 signed Congressional authorization to bridge 5.5 miles of Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) to restore fresh-water flow through America's Everglades and into Florida Bay. The new bridges will join a one-mile bridge already under construction.



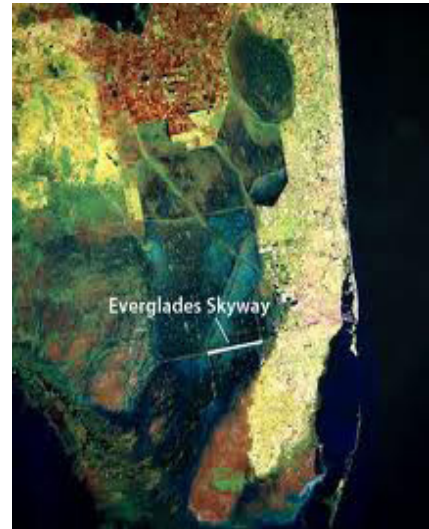
The Everglades Skyway, a term coined to describe the 6.5 miles of bridges along Tamiami Trail, is now supported by Congress, the president and a strong coalition of Florida municipalities, civic and business organizations.

Besides restoring Everglades water flow, the project will

create thousands of jobs, increase tourism and help to protect South Florida from the ravages of climate change. The cumulative 6.5-mile Skyway will also serve as a visible symbol of Everglades restoration.

The thousands of activists and allies who have brought us to this day must be commended.

Thanks to officials who supported this endeavor: **U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson**, U.S. Reps. Bill Young (R-Seminole) and Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (D-Fort Lauderdale), and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.



Our challenge, however, is not yet complete. Now that the project has Congressional authorization, it must also receive funding by Congress before construction can begin. For details, visit www.buildtheskyway.com.

– *Debbie Matthews, chair of the Sierra Club Miami Group, and Jonathan Ullman, South Florida/Everglades senior representative, Sierra Club*

Join Sierra Today

Yes! I want to be a member of the Sierra Club and help preserve the beauty of the earth.

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Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	\$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	\$1250
Senior, Student or Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	\$35

Contributions, gifts, and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to SIERRA magazine, and \$1 for your chapter newsletter.

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State should phase out plastic bags

Florida lawmakers have yet to take action on a 2009 recommendation from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for a five-year phase-out of single-use plastic bags.

Not only are large quantities of oil used in manufacturing and transporting the bags around the world, but the bags can also destroy marine life and fragile ocean ecosystems, including those in Florida.

Passage of a bill that bans the use of plastic bags in large retail stores would prevent the addition of more plastic bags to the hundred billion that already end up in American landfills each year.

It would make Florida the first state to join the growing number of cities that have taken the important step of banning plastic bags in retail stores.

Tell Florida to ban plastic bags today – go to <http://www.care2.com/go/z/e/Ag1ER/zLU3/Lffz> to ask the Florida Legislature to pass a bill based on the state DEP's 2009 report.





Carlton Reserve backpack trip

Saturday, Feb. 4-Sunday, Feb. 5. We will revisit this new backpacking opportunity just south of Myakka River State Park. We will be camping by the Myakka River. Your leader will help you learn about this little-known park and what it has to offer. A moderate hike of about 8 miles total. Leader: Ben Berauer, 352-610-6704, bfberauer@aol.com. (Suncoast)

Deer Prairie walk

Saturday, Feb. 4, 8 a.m. A 4-mile walk that will take about 3 hours. Wear sturdy shoes and carry water, snack and sunscreen. Bring brunch if your time allows. Reserve with Sally, 941-484-4113.



Prairie Creek Preserve nature walk
Thursday, Feb. 9, 8:30 a.m.-noon. Florida Master Naturalist John Phillips will take us on a tour of this new Charlotte County preserve. We'll do a casual

walking pace, with John pointing out various plant and flowers and answering your questions. This outing is free to the public. Voluntary donations to the Charlotte Sierra Club are always gratefully accepted. Reserve with John, 941-639-7468. (Charlotte)

Scrub walk

Saturday, Feb. 11. Join us for an early spring exploration of the unique Florida scrub habitat. We'll spend 2 or 3 hours exploring as we watch for violets, wildlife nesting and maybe some newly born deer or other species. Since February typically has a wide range of weather extremes, dress and pack accordingly. Reserve with Bill Lewis, 941-355-2156.

Prairie Creek kayak

Tuesday, Feb. 14, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Bring your kayak and enjoy paddling scenic Prairie Creek with Master Naturalists Jamie Reynolds and John Phillips. Participants must provide their own water craft and be able to swim. Free to the public. Voluntary donations to the Sierra Club are always gratefully accepted. Reserve by calling 941-637-8284 or 941-639-7468.

Pinellas Trail morning bike ride

Saturday, Feb. 18. We will ride on the Pinellas Trail from Curlew up to Tarpon Springs for a Greek meal by the sponge docks. Learn about the Pinellas Trail, a linear park stretching almost the length of Pinellas County. This is an easy ride of about 18 miles. Co-leaders: Sue Bunge, 727-787-4701 or sue-bunge@hotmail.com, and Lucy Peak, 727-

608-0811 or lucytom47@gmail.com. (Suncoast)

Emerson Point kayak

Sunday, Feb. 19, 9:30 a.m. We'll put in at the kayak launch inside the park. From there we'll paddle through mangrove tunnels out to the bay, which we'll cross and then paddle around Rattlesnake Key. There will be other mangrove tunnels to explore, fish and bird life to observe and great views of the Sunshine Skyway. Lunch will be on a beach overlooking Tampa Bay. The trip will take about 4.5 hours. Bring lunch, water and sunscreen. Reserve with Mike Lehner at 941-365-1073 or mklehn@hotmail.com.

Alafia River State Park family tent camping

Saturday, Feb. 25-Sunday, Feb. 26. Experience the results of phosphate mining restoration to a natural system. Excellent biking, hiking, walking, paddling and exploring a park next door. Children welcome. For one of our four tent sites and details, please reserve by calling Mary, 941-752-3200, or Chris, 941-747-9427, and making a deposit on your campsite.

Carlton Reserve walk

Saturday, Feb. 25, 8 a.m. A 5-mile walk. Wear sturdy shoes and carry water, a snack and sunscreen. Bring lunch if your time allows. Reserve with Sally, 941-484-4113.

Cayo Costa weekend kayak and camping

Friday, April 27-Sunday, April 29. Join us for a great weekend at one of the state's premier island state parks. A Gulf Coast paradise located on Lacosta Island west of Fort Myers, it has one of the top-rated beaches in the nation. We'll paddle out on

Friday morning with a stop at legendary Cabbage Key restaurant for lunch, and paddle back on Sunday. Primitive cabins and tents sites available. For those who wish to take it easy, there is a ferryboat, Tropic Star (239-283-0015; tropicstarcruises.com). Rated moderate to strenuous because of open water and possible wind conditions. Be sure to reserve early. Contact Don Kirkley at 941-493-3085.

Outings leaders needed

Be an active club member
and have fun at the same time
– become an outings leader.
Contact Outings Chair Don
Kirkley at 941-493-3085
for more information.

Chapter outings and e-mail updates

See all Florida Chapter outings online at <http://florida.sierraclub.org/outings/browse.asp>. To get weekly updates by e-mail on upcoming outings planned by the Manatee- Sarasota Group, Suncoast, Tampa Bay and other West Central Sierra Groups, subscribe at www.florida.sierraclub.org/sarasota.



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Suncoast Polytechnical continued from page 1

ing, 28 marine science students from Suncoast Polytechnical High School visited Mote Marine Aquarium to gain hands-on experience of the scientific and environmental principles they were learning in class – all thanks to generous funding from the Manatee-Sarasota Chapter of Sierra Club.

Upon arrival, students and their chaperones headed directly to the water for a lesson on the animals of Sarasota Bay by leader Brad Tanner and two Mote volunteers. Then the students collected animals using various types of nets.

Animals were gently organized into separate holding areas for identification. Students collected data on number and type of animals collected as well as water quality for use back in the classroom.

Students analyzing Sarasota Bay water quality wished for such excellent values in their classroom saltwater tanks.

After a break for lunch, students toured the visiting Penguin Island exhibit as well as favorites such as the shark tank, touch tanks, seahorse and skate research areas, sea turtles and of course the manatees and dolphins.

For many students this was the first time they had been so close to marine life.

Many said the oceans seem more tangible after their visit and that their interest and concern about marine environmental issues increased as a result.

A big thank you to the Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Club from marine science teacher Nina Henderson and SPHS marine science students!

Sierra thanks these teachers for their fine work.



Suncoast Polytechnical students learn about marine life up close in the bay and at Mote, in the photos above.

Bayshore continued from page 1

most of my students were no exception to that. Such healthy ecosystems impact Florida in many ways, including aesthetically and financially.

The purpose of this field trip was to acquaint students with the different species of grasses and mangroves, learn about the various roles each plays in a healthy Sarasota Bay, and understand why it is necessary to maintain those ecosystems.

I stopped the class at the site of each representative species of mangroves, pointed out the unique characteristics of each, and elaborated on their unique functions. I did the same with the emerged and submerged sea grasses. I told them that virtually all our commer-



Bayshore students check what they netted on a field trip.



Students walk through mangrove flats on the way to the bay.

cial and sport fisheries are positively influenced by intact grass and mangrove communities, and that just about any seafood they eat most likely spent part of its life cycle in such an ecosystem.

After this lesson, we spent some time seining in the submerged grass beds to see what kinds of diversity of species were there. We found many different species, including shrimp as well as flounder, mangrove snapper, smooth puffers, mojarras and several other fish species.

We put some of these organisms into buckets and brought back to the classroom to be installed in aquaria and studied. Later we will release them back into the bay.

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Celebrate Leap Year the Sierran way

Join fellow Sierrans for food, fun and music at the Rothenbach Park in Sarasota on Wednesday, Feb. 29, at 6 p.m.

Where better to celebrate recycle, reuse and repurpose than on top of our large closed dump? It's a beautiful park now, and we can enjoy the pavilion with picnic tables, the lovely trail through big oaks, and a view of the field of solar panels that bring renewable electricity to our area.

Bring a dish for 8 to share, and some of your best environment-saving ideas, and enjoy the fellowship of like-minded people. We'll showcase the best projects and share our strategies for limiting consumption while still enjoying a comfortable life. We'd love to see how you have repurposed something to continue its use, from your clothes to your house. It should be a fun discussion, over good food and libations furnished by the Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Group.

Rothenbach Park is at the east end of the Bee Ridge Extension. Call me at 366-9596 for more information and directions. – *Gerry Swarmstedt, fundraising chair*

Coalition focuses on state's water supply

The Florida Conservation Coalition in 2012 will focus its efforts on the issue of water supply – privatization of water, water management district funding and

independence, and land acquisition as it relates to water supply.

Sierra Club Florida is a member of the coalition, founded last summer by former state governor and U.S. senator Bob Graham, his longtime aide Estus Whitfield and several Florida environmental leaders. Its mission is to “protect and conserve Florida’s land, fish and wildlife and water resources that are essential to the well-being and quality of life of the residents of this state, and for its long-term economic prosperity.”

The coalition’s somewhat narrow focus for 2012 is because water privatization, loss of water management funding, and loss of state oversight of growth management are believed to be serious mistakes of the last legislative session, and members want to prevent further slippage on those issues and bring about a reversal of such mistakes. Coalition leaders determined that water supply issues will be a big state legislative concern this year and that there will be a need for a strong, coordinated defense by environmental groups and activists to protect Florida’s natural water resources.

You can also learn more about the Florida Conservation Coalition at www.floridaconservationcoalition.org. – *Craig Diamond, Sierra Club Florida’s lead representative to the Florida Conservation Coalition*

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