

# Outdoor Times



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION  
IT STARTS IN PARKS

Volume 11, Issue 1

September 2008

## Seventh Annual Marion County Springs Festival



The Seventh Annual Marion County Springs Festival is scheduled for Saturday, September 20 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Silver River State Park.

The goal of the festival is to preserve Marion

County springs through awareness and stewardship. To that end, expert speakers, interactive exhibits, river tours, a horse-drawn trolley, live entertainment, a cracker village, character visits, an art show, crafts and great food will be available. Admission is just \$1 per person.

The fun will continue on Sunday, September 21 with complementary admission to KP Hole, Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat, Carney Island,

Ray Wayside and Silver Glen Springs Recreation Area with a coupon available from [www.springsfest.org](http://www.springsfest.org).

Free guided nature tours of the Ocala National Forest, the Florida Trail, Indian Lake State Forest and Silver River will also be available to interested participants.

For more information, please contact Silver River State Park at (352) 236-7148.

## Family Adventure Day

Spend a day in one of your Marion County parks as you experience the outdoors through various activities from canoeing / kayaking, nature hikes, biking, games, outdoor crafts, and other outdoor fun activities, all suitable for the entire family.

Family Adventure Days are scheduled on October 4th at Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat, and November 22 at the Baseline Road Trailhead. The program time is 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Participants must pre-register for the program for only \$5 per adult and \$3 per child.

To register, or for more information on park locations, activities and program fees, please contact the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department at (352) 671-8560.



## Military Ships Display Donated to Veterans Park

In July, the Fleet Reserve Association of Florida donated a display case, and models of military ships, to the Ocala—Marion County Veterans Memorial Park.

The display is prominently placed at the park located at 2601 SE Fort King Street in Ocala. Visitors can view the models from 9 a. m. – 1 p.m. Monday – Friday.

All of the ships were hand-made by Harry Blomquist, who also has models on display in the Veteran's Clinic in Beverly Hills, Florida.

For more information,

Outdoor Times is a monthly newsletter provided as a public service to park visitors and guests.

Any questions related to this publication may be directed to Gina Peebles, Administrative Manager, in writing at Marion County Parks & Recreation, 111 SE 25 Ave, Ocala, FL 34471, by telephone at 352-671-8560 or via e-mail at [gina.peebles@marioncountyfl.org](mailto:gina.peebles@marioncountyfl.org)

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please call the park office at (352) 401-5346 or Veterans Services at (352) 671-8422.

## The Longleaf Pine Ecosystem

The longleaf pine is also known by names such as long needle, long straw, southern yellow, and Georgia pine. The natural range of longleaf pine extends from southeastern Virginia to east Texas in a belt approximately 150 miles wide adjacent to the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. It dips as far south as central Florida and widens northward into west central Georgia and east central Alabama.

Longleaf pine forests can prosper on a variety of soil types, moisture regimes, geological formations, and topographic features across the wide geographic range of the species- meaning, they grow almost anywhere including our very own Coehadjoe Park and Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat. The tree's species name (*Pinus palustris*) means "of the marsh." Today however, longleaf is mostly found on dry upland areas, as most of the moist fertile sites were the first to be cleared for farming.

It is thought that before the Europeans arrived in the New World, longleaf pine was the principal tree species found in ex-

tensive pure stands over at least 70 million acres and another 10 million acres in stands mixed with other pines and hardwoods. The reason long-



leaf was so dominant over other southern tree species was its ability to adapt to fire.

In fact, the original longleaf forest not only was able to survive the frequent fires started by lightning, it depended on it. It may actually have helped propel and sustain the fires that regularly burned it.

The longleaf has evolved marvelous physical adaptations to tolerate fire when in its early stages. Instead of shooting upwards as most saplings do, longleaf seedlings remain close to the ground in what is referred to as its "grass" stage in its early years of life. During this time

the young tree grows a long, heavy taproot that helps it reach far down into the sandy soil toward moisture. When the young tree finally starts

to grow tall, the stored food in the taproot helps it to jump upward rapidly. The tree's "jumping upward" is a strategy for surviving in an area of frequent fires. By growing rapidly the young tree minimizes the amount of time its growing tip is vulnerable to destruction by fires.

Early economics of the Southeast centered on the export of longleaf pine products. By the turn of the century, the vast longleaf forests of North and South Carolina soon played out and turpentiners soon began to take their equipment and their help to Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. By the 1920's, the last of the virgin long-

leaf forests had been cut throughout the Southeast. By 1930 virtually all of the virgin longleaf pine forest had been cut. Today the longleaf pine ecosystem covers less than 3.8 million acres (over a 94 percent loss). Virtually all of the acreage is second growth, degraded by logging, turpentine, grazing and disruption of the natural fire regime.

A quote by Steven Humphrey, Florida Museum of Natural History, 1993, "The irony is the Longleaf system used to be one of our most abundant ecosystems. The remaining Longleaf ecosystem is in fragments, and the fragments are under further threat. What was once an ordinary part of our environment, we have made rare."

Please contact Parks & Natural Resources Manager, Greg Wiley, to learn more about the longleaf pine communities at (352) 671-8560.

## Grant Received for Hope Boat Ramp Project

The Board of County Commissioners, through the Parks and Recreation Department, was recently awarded a \$135,610.84 matching grant from the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) for improvements at Hope Boat Ramp. The total project is budgeted at \$285,611.

Senator Evelyn Lynn and Representatives Kurt Kelly and Chuck Chestnut, members of the Marion County State legislative delegation, were in attendance at the August 5 Commission meeting to present the ceremonial check to the Board.

Senator Lynn stated that, "at a time when money is so tight...it is a pleasure

to bring [the Marion County Commission] money. I hope that this will help with your boat landing on Lake Weir."

Scheduled improvements include the same floating docks and gangways used at Carney Island, restroom renovations, improved parking circulation and a trail.

Hope Boat Ramp is available to Marion County park pass holders only. To purchase a pass, please contact the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department at (352) 671-8560 or stop by our office located at 111 SE 25 Avenue in Ocala.

## Wrigley-Miller Thanks Commission



Unable to attend the One-Year Anniversary Celebration of Wrigley Fields, land donor Misdee Wrigley-Miller sent a letter, which was read by Commissioner Charlie Stone, at the August 13 event.

"I wanted to congratulate you [Commissioner Stone], and the Board, on the successful first year of Wrigley Fields! I am disappointed that I could not join you for the first anniversary celebration, but

please know that I am with you in spirit.

Thank you for your leadership for providing parks, great recreation opportunities and open space for your citizens.

Wrigley Fields has obviously been a resounding victory! When I hear of the tremendous usage, it makes me very proud of my partnership with the Board in making this wonderful park a reality.

Everyone in Marion County has been so kind and appreciative of the park. I know that many generations will use the park amenities to enjoy the great outdoors and to bring families together.

Please continue to keep in touch. I always enjoy hearing about the happenings of Marion County and of all the

good things the County Commissioners and your staff do. In these challenging economic times, more than ever for the benefit of your citizens, "It Starts in Parks."

More than 130 people enjoyed ice cream and children's activities at the Anniversary Celebration for the park they lovingly refer to as the "Heart of North / Central Marion County."

During the ceremony, *Oak-ala*, a painted horse formerly housed at the Headquarters Library, and a monument commemorating Misdee Wrigley-Miller's and the Commission's contributions to the park were unveiled.





## Calendar of Events

| Date         | Event                          | Location   | Time           |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------|
| September 20 | Marion County Springs Festival | Silver River State Park                                | 10 a.m.—4 p.m. |
| September 21 | Free Admission w/Coupon        | KP Hole, Horseshoe Lake, Carney Island and Ray Wayside |                |
| October 4    | Family Adventure Day           | Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat                          | 10 a.m.—3 p.m. |
| October 18   | Owl-Ween                       | Carney Island  | 4 p.m.—7 p.m.  |
| November 22  | Family Adventure Day           | Baseline Road Trailhead                                | 10 a.m.—3 p.m. |

## Owl-Ween at Carney Island

Celebrate Halloween with our nocturnal friends as we learn about owls and other raptor type birds on Saturday, October 18. A Wildlife Education Program will be presented by the Avian Reconditioning Center. Other program activities will include a nature walk, an arts & crafts activity, s'more snacks and an owl and other birds of prey book display presented by the Marion



County Public Library.

Participants must pre-register for a program time. The fee is \$4 per adult and \$2 for children

six to 18 years old. The fee includes park admission. Program times are 4 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Contact the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department at 111 SE 25th Ave in Ocala, or call (352) 671-8560 to register or for more information.

## Brick City Park Under New Management

On October 1, the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department will take over the day-to-day operation of Brick City Park. The first Pennies for Parks bond referendum purchase, Brick City has been operated by the City of Ocala since 1991.

The property is located along a residential portion of Lake Weir Avenue. Site improvements / features include self-interpretive nature trails, a picnic pavilion, playground unit and two forested limerock pits. Also approximately ten acres of

the park is an open area with an abandoned baseball field, concession/restrooms, football field, paved track, track and field amenities and a limerock parking area.

The largest limerock pit is an estimated nine acres with a boardwalk, nature trails and restrooms. The smaller pit area is nearly two acres with an abandoned low ropes course and a gated cave (White Cliff).

A public meeting was held on Monday, August 11 to inform the public about the

Department's submission of a \$200,000 Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) grant for a number of capital improvements slated for the park. Proposed improvements include additional bleachers for the football field; a new baseball field, picnic facilities, bike trail and parking area bollards; improved playground, nature trail, football field, restrooms, fencing and concession building renovations.