

North Florida Blaze

Published for the Friends of the North Florida Trailblazers Chapter of the Florida Trail

Winter 2008

Happy Holidays to all our Florida Trail Association North Florida Trail Blazers!

Without your support the Florida Trail just simply would not be. As this Christmas addition goes to print the Florida Trail in our section has been mowed, loped, clipped, blazed and put in good order for the winter hiking season. A great big thank you to all our members and a special Christmas star goes out to those who got out there and sweated and hacked their way across over 70 miles of the Florida jungle in our section. Many work hikes were put into action this year with some dedicated members working on their own and others turning out to published and advertised work hikes with excellent turnout.

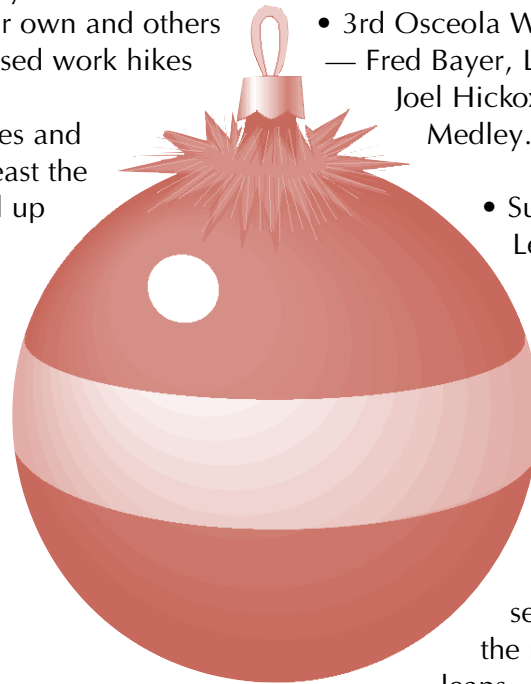
The following is a list of work hikes and the folks that came out this fall (at least the ones that I know about) and opened up the Florida Trail for all to enjoy.

- Keystone Airport — Janie Hamilton and Matt Griffis
- Goldhead State Park — Janie Hamilton and Eric Medley
- Camp Blanding — Janie Hamilton, Eric Medley, Randy Madison, Deb Blick, Becky Cole, Penn, Billy Luper, Erin, Adam, Sandra, Bill
- Keystone to Lake Butler Rail trail section --- Trail Angel and super star Deb Blick
- First Osceola work hike — Billy Luper, Eric Medley, John, Susan and Sandra. They report they tore a mower up but that they always tear a mower up.
- Second Osceola work hike Battlefield to Ocean Pond Campground — Alton Snellgrove, Bill Armstrong, Bill Joyce, Eric Medley, Leigh Gardener, Donna Warioy,

Mirko Bonet, Joel 'Mower Man' Hickox, Billy 'Two Heads' Luper, Melissa 'needs salt' Russell, Leslie, Hank, Susan and John. Highlight of this work hike was when Joel Hickox took a nose dive off a bridge with a running DR Mower (no one was hurt). And special thanks to Melissa Russell for cooking a fantastic spaghetti dinner for all the hard working troops who attended.

- 3rd Osceola Work Hike, West Tower to Deep Creek — Fred Bayer, Leigh Gardener, Randy Madison, Joel Hickox, Alton Snellgrove, Billy Luper, Eric Medley.

- Suwannee River to White Springs — Leigh Gardener, Joel Hickox, Alton Snellgrove, John "Ski" Ruskuski, Billy Two Heads Luper, and Fred Bayer.



Oh yeah.... Fred Bayer... About Fred Bayer... Fred we are so glad you are all right!!! Man Alive!!! Stay Alive!! Most of you have been down the trail on this river section and might have noticed the trail in several places lies on the very edge of the river bank. What's worse is the trail leans... So, here comes Fred, his right tire slides towards the edge, a root kicks the mower a little more and the next thing he knows he's going over... The DR mower actually turned over on the way down, blades a 'flailing, motor screaming, tires still turning. But there's our Fred, dedicated FTA volunteer trail worker hanging on to that 300 pound beast all the way to the rivers' watery edge. Keeping, not only himself from plunging into the river, but our expensive FTA equipment. Thank you Fred Bayer we salute you!!

Tales from the Trail

Between Ocean Pond and the Turkey Run Trail Head is a shelter. It is a little piece of heaven to the many hikers who are needing a place to rest from their journey with a roof over their heads and a small creek near by. At the shelter is a log book where hikers can share some of their adventures. Some stories are good some are bad and some are even imagined. Here are a few from the Turkey Run shelter.

1-3-03 - 4P.M. Buster Butt heading north from Olustee for the day will press on for a few miles... perhaps? Awfully nice here... Hmmm. 6PM Okay ...so I'm staying the night. Didn't know there were any shelters on the FT. Anyway just out for a nighter from Jax. Getting ready for a section hike on the AT in March. Nice 9 mile hike from Olustee today. Keep up the good work Trail crews B.B.

3-19-03 I'm not used to this jungle I'm from Utah.. To many Palmettos, mosquitoes and spiders... I'm going home Del.

4-10-04 Hey this is Jerry's son and Daltons brother. We were here 1 year and 5 days ago. We like this shelter and the creek. We walked from Cobb Camp. It was a long but nice walk. I am 12 years old.

Sept 06 3:30 PM Hot, humid & buggy. Arrived from Olus-

tee. Staying overnight pushing on north in the morning to Deep Creek. An otter came out of the creek and came up to the shelter as if he was expecting me to give him a crawfish. He looked at me with these great big sad eyes. Paused and turned and went back into the creek heading south. NEATWayfarer Robert.

01-13-07 The StompKnocker Gang (all 14 of us) Finally arrived at the shelter, Exhausted, hungry and afraid. Randy buried all the cash in the woods from the 7/11 heist on Thursday. Judy took the bonds and money orders to White Springs to the fence there... she got 27% on the dollar. Not a bad deal considering. No wonder they call her Judy the hand. Eric, Tammy and Billy arranged for the food drop. We have enough provisions for at least a week. Hopefully by then Tom & Marvins bullet wounds will have healed enough for them to continue. Diane and Terry have gotten enough forged passports for us to make our way to Costa Rica. Melissa, master of disguise, has provided the costumes for all. Eric resents the dress, but admits he looks good in it. By weeks end we should be gone. Wish us well.

Get out there and hike and tell us your adventure... real or imagined.

-Tammy Luper.

Take a Short Trip for a Long Walk

"There's no place for hiking in Jacksonville." We've heard that phrase before. However, there are many opportunities for hiking and camping in the Jacksonville and North Florida area. As a chapter of the Florida Trail Association, we not only provide activities such as hiking and camping in and around Jacksonville and North Florida, we also maintain two sections of the Florida Trail.

Although we don't have any sections of our trail through Jacksonville, there are ample trails for hiking close by in the North Florida area. A short hour's drive from downtown Jacksonville will give you access to the closest sections of the Florida Trail and some great hiking experiences.

Just south of Jacksonville, in Clay County, hiking and camping opportunities abound in Mike Roess Gold Head Branch State Park. This park is rich in history, as well as home to a section of the FT. This area offers great day hikes and camping facilities that range from primitive to cabins with heating and air condition units in addition to fireplaces. As with all state parks, there are entrance and camping fees.

The Osceola National Forest is

located west of Jacksonville and offers a section of the Florida Trail that is more suited to those interested in a longer hiking experience and short backpacking trips. There is no entrance fee and if you camp at the primitive shelter, there is no camping fee. However, if you prefer ready access to potable water, restrooms and hot showers, you can usually find a spot at the Ocean Pond Campground located within the forest at a reasonable fee.

Hiking, backpacking, camping, and trail maintenance aren't the only activities offered by our chapter's activity leaders. We offer many paddling opportunities in Jacksonville and North Florida. Whether it's a day paddle on Six Mile Creek with a stopover at the Outback Crab Shack for a tasty seafood meal, a Silver River overnight paddle, or a moonlight trip on the St. Mary's River, Jacksonville and North Florida offers plenty of waterways to launch your canoes or kayaks.

So check out the activities link to find some great hiking around Jacksonville and the North Florida region. Visit us often, as we are always updating our activities.

OUTTAKES



Baby Luper with Nurse Tammy at the Halloween Gathering at Ocean Pond



*Bridge building near Gar Pond.
December 13 work hike*



Activities

January 21

7-9PM

What: Chapter Social

Where: European Street Restaurant 2753 Parks Street.

Contact :Eric Medley @ 386 438 0458

February 9

I Did A Hike! See last page for details

February 25

7 PM -9PM

What: Chapter Social

Where: Flanagans Restaurant, Keystone Heights, Florida

Contact: Eric Medley @ 386 438 0458

March 14

What: Alapaha Sink Day hike

Where: Meet at Suwannee Diner in White Springs, FL at 9 AM and we will car pool to the parking lot.

The river bed should be dry below the sink and we will hike up the bare limestone river bed to a gaping hole in the river bed where the oncoming water of the Alapaha rushes underground. The hike is a easy one, approximately three miles round trip. Pack a lunch and water. To sign up

call Randy @ 904 384 5487, or email Randy@inkyfingers.biz

March 25

7-9 PM

What: Chapter Social

Where: Whiteys Fish Camp, Hyw 220

Contact: Eric Medley @ 386 438 0458

April 4th

What: Holton Creek Wildflower Day Hike

Where: Meet at the Suwannee Diner in White Springs, Florida and car pool over to Holton Creek.

The hike will explore Holton Creek on the FT and the Suwannee River's sandy banks. Hikers will hopefully see acres of rain lillies in bloom lying under a beautiful climax rapaian forest in a rugged, fractured and broken limestone (Carst) landscape. Bring lunch and water. To sign up call Randy @ 904 384 5487 or email Randy@inkyfingers.biz

April 22nd

7-9PM

What: Chapter Social

Where Creekside Restaurant St Augustine Florida

Contact Eric Medley @ 386 438 0458

One Fine Day... and Then Another

Once upon a time there were 8 canoers headed down the Suwannee River. There was John and Susie, Eric and Maria, Amy and Jessica along with kayakers Alton and Janie. Although we were a group, it was also 5 separate trips.

As trips go we all saw the same things, but we all saw them differently... you never know what you're going to get till its done.

We started this trip where US Hwy 41 and the Suwannee River meet. That too is where the challenge was issued. The challenge came from Susie who declared that with all the gear in my canoe I was bound to tip over. My response was that I never travel light and always without incident. Doubting my ability to negotiate the river heavily laden a bet of \$5 was wagered. Never one to avoid a challenge, the bet was on. So off I go with my partner Maria who wondered why not bet \$50. My confidence in her increased 10 fold. Now, I don't like losing bets, so down the Suwannee we go... co-mingling as boaters do. Soon we encountered our first excitement in the form of baby gators. Needless to say we have to get a closer look and with no objections from my bow partner we approached. Alton counted 24 babies. And yes... we have remained dry.

We continued down, paddling through the White Springs area, through the steep-sided lime rock formations and the peace and quiet of this tranquil area. A river lined with cypress and eddies bubbling everywhere. The river was running a bit high keeping us moving at a good clip.

Low and behold there is a lunch break at a canoe take-out just before I-75 and we slide in for lunch. What a great place with a nice beach along the edge of the Florida Trail (a great place to hike I might add). Lunch was great and it was there

that I learned more about my fellow paddlers. We ranged in age from 21 to 61 with all the diversity that allows... stories of travels near and far and lives lived in the outside.

But I digress... I am still dry.

Continuing down river the story exchange continues. And there after lunch a second challenge makes itself available. A spring run shows itself. Janie takes the lead in paddling up, followed by Maria and myself with Alton bringing up the rear. Janie in the kayak was unable to go further. We, in a 14 foot canoe were unable to turnaround and had to paddle in reverse until we were able to find a place where we could get ourselves in the right direction. Alton noted that this was as good a place as any for us to let the Suwannee baptize us, but it was not to be. My skillful partner prevented any mishap. She is every good a bow-mate as Tom (but that is another story for another time).

After 4-5 hours and about 13 miles, we pull into Woods Ferry to stay the night at the cabins there. These recently constructed cabins are filled with amenities not often seen on trails. The rest of the evening was spent getting to know one another better.

Day number 2 starts early. John is chef and feeds us all in a grand manner with pancakes and all the trimmings. At 10 a.m. with a light drizzle, we set off for our final 9 miles.

The tranquility of the river is always special. Time drifts on with the flow of the river and soon we find ourselves at the remains of the Suwannee Spring House... the end of the trail. Happy and yes, still dry but none the richer as I refused the \$5 bet as the company we had the pleasure of keeping was worth more to me than \$5 could ever buy.

Happy Trails, Eric

North Florida Trailblazers Officers and Activity

Leaders

Leslie Wheeler-Membership Chair

Linda Benton-Treasurer

Alton Snellgrove - Trail

Coordinator (904/327-6617)

Eric Medley- Activity Chair

(386/755-1544)

Janie Hamilton-Gold Head

Section Leader (352/473/8089)

Bill Luper-Osceola Section

Leader (386/884/9960)

Activities Leaders

Howard and Ruth Thomas

Darrel Wells

Randy Madison

Adam Hoyle and Janet Miller

Tammy Luper

Debra Stewart Kent

Chapter Resource Contacts

An email will be sent to all members who have a current email addresses listed with the chapter.

If you have not been receiving any notices of website changes, please contact Paula Snellgrove with your most current address.

Contact Darrel Wells at daryl@

florida-webdesign.com

State Office Contact: fta@florida-

trail.org

Newsletter Information

If you have events and/or meetings that you wish to publicize, or, if you wish to receive this newsletter as a PFD, please contact Randy at randy@inkyfingers.biz

The North Florida Trailblazers Chapter maintains the Florida trail between the Olustee trailhead in the Osceola National Forest and along the Suwannee River into White Springs.

We also maintain the Florida Trail from the Etoniah trailhead on Holloway Road through Goldhead State Park, Camp Blanding and the Keystone Airpark to CR 100 in Keystone Heights.

The Suwannee River Big Shoals


I DID A HIKE!

An outdoor event
to benefit the
Florida Trail Association

February 7, 2009

Get outside and enjoy a seven mile hike through the beautiful Florida woods, past Big Shoals, Robinson Branch Falls, Bell Springs and Little Shoals. All along the famous Suwannee River. Close to White Springs and the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park.

Shuttle service is available to the trailhead where you walk approximately 7 miles back to your car. Shuttle runs begin at 8 a.m. and runs until noon.



Bring comfortable shoes, water and pack a lunch if you like.
Enjoy the great outdoors for just \$15!
For reservations and directions please contact: idadihike@gmail.com or 904/384-5487.



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