

Suwannee-St. Johns Group

Sierra Club

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Religion and the Sierra Club

BY GAVIN VAN HORN

Environmentalists sometimes think that organized religion and religious people have little to do with protecting nature. In recent years, this supposition has changed, as both environmentalists and religious communities are re-thinking their missions and their relations to each other. One might say their interests intersect on sacred ground.

On the one hand, numerous religious groups—ranging from the mainstream National Council of Churches and the U.S. Catholic Conference to smaller communities such as Wiccans and Neo-pagans—have made protecting the natural world a major theme for both theology and practice. On the other hand, many environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, have reached out to religious communities, seeking to share resources and audiences.

This month's meeting program will focus on the significance of religious communities, ideas, and practices for the Sierra Club. It will examine the roots of nature spirituality in the work of John Muir and more recent activists such as David Brower, leading to a more general discussion of how contemporary conservation practices may serve to inform religious convictions and experiences.

The presentation will be led by Gavin Van Horn and Sam Snyder, Ph.D. candidates in Religion and Nature in UF's Department of Religion. Gavin has a bachelor's degree from Pepperdine University and a Master of Divinity from

Princeton Theological Seminary. His dissertation research involves how religious perceptions have influenced human relationships with wolves.

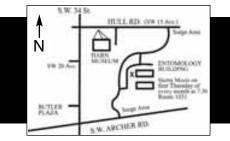
Sam has a bachelor's degree in religion from Bucknell University and a M.A. in religion from Syracuse University. His dissertation aims to investigate how outdoor recreation, specifically fly fishing, seen as a religious or spiritual exercise, can, should, and does drive conservation practice. Both Gavin and Sam are outdoor enthusiasts.

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, Sept. 7th, 7:30 PM Entomology/Nematology Building on the UF campus (Just east of the Performing Arts Center. Turn south off Hull Road on to Natural Areas Road.)

WHAT DOES
RELIGION HAVE
TO DO WITH
THE SIERRA CLUB?

GAVIN VAN HORN AND SAM SNYDER



SSJ SIERRA CLUB ALACHUA COUNTY ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

Political Chair

Registered Alachua County voters can vote in both school board elections, but the County Commission primary is for Democrats only. Be sure to vote yourself and take a friend along who might not otherwise vote.

By a unanimous 13-0 vote, the SSJ Sierra Club Group E x e c u t i v e Committee voted to endorse the Deb Cupples and Clint Robinson in the Alachua County School Board race, and Betsy Maloney Hurst in the

SCHOOL BOARD

Deb Cupples District 5

Clint Robinson District 1

COUNTY COMMISSION Betsy Maloney Hurst

District 1

Hurst in the County Commission election.

Cupples is an attorney and freelance writer who frequently writes for The Gainesville Sun on public interest issues. Robinson is a former teacher with 30 years experience. He is particularly interested in promoting vocational education for students who don't want to go to college.

Endorsing in school board races is slightly unusual for us. However, decisions of the school board have significant

see ENDORSEMENT, page 7

FRICTION IN THE STATE CHAPTER	2
ALACHUA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS	5
AIRBOATS MAKE MORE NOISE IN TALLAHASSEE	6

Vote Your Voice

BY ROB BRINKMAN

The primary elections are just days away. Elsewhere in this issue look for endorsements of local candidates.

The Florida Chapter has endorsed both Jim Davis (Dem.) and Charlie Crist (Rep.) in their respective gubernatorial primary races. I regret that the SSJ Sierra Club group is not able to endorse more candidates; however, our local group does endorse more candidates than many others.

Some wonder why the Sierra Club involves itself in electoral politics. Quite simply, the people who are elected hold the future of our health and our planet in their hands. The Sierra Club is non-partisan; we support anyone whom we believe will help us protect the environment, regardless of party affiliation.

I urge every Sierra Club member to vote in every election, but it is a little more involved than simply casting a vote. Become informed on the issues and get to know the candidates.

If a candidate impresses you, volunteer to help with his or her campaign. Candidates endorsed by the Sierra Club generally have fewer financial resources. It is only through grassroots campaigns that we can prevail. So please help out those candidates endorsed by the Sierra Club in

any way you can.

The SSJ ExCom had a special meeting on Aug. 3. One purpose was to vote on

CHAIR'S

political endorsements so we could complete the process in time for this newsletter.

We also needed to decide the group's position on a FL Executive Committee (FLEXcom) vote that was being conducted by e-mail the next day to remove the state chapter chair and appoint a replacement.

This was the second attempt to remove Bob Sullivan, who some of you met when he attended a recent general meeting. The first one

occurred at the July FLEXcom meeting without prior notice and with Dan Hendrickson voting. Sullivan is one of the board members who supervises chapter Caplowe, lobbyist Suzie Hendrickson's wife.

After the first vote, the National Sierra Club ruled that action invalid because of lack of notice and the participation of Hendrickson, who is not allowed to vote on matters pertaining to chapter officers who have a role in supervising his spouse. The Sierra Club views this as a potential financial conflict of interest.

At our ExCom's Aug. 3 meeting, we agreed that a vote conducted by e-mail was a violation of our by-laws and that we would not cast a vote for or against, but instead we would communicate our con-

cerns to the rest of Flexcom and to the appropriate National Sierra Club staff.

I did so, and the next day, Sierra Club President Lisa Renstrom informed the Florida Chapter that a meeting must be held that provided simultaneous participation in order to remove the chapter chair.

> That day, three chapter officers-John Glenn, Helen Spivey and Betsy Roberts- called a special FLEXcom conference call for Aug. 7 to satisfy the simultaneous participation requirement. In accordance with our previous ExCom discussions, I joined the call and moved to table the motion to remove the

chapter chair until a face-to-face meeting could be held. I explained that I thought Flexcom needed a chance to sort out the issues and discuss our differences in person without rushing the process. The motion was seconded by the Polk group but failed 16-7.

During the call, Sullivan announced he was resigning effective immediately, eliminating the need for a vote. The floor was opened for nominations. I made two nominations at the suggestion of our ExCom; they were not accepted. Sullivan nominated Ginger Perlman of the Manatee Sarasota Group, and, I believe, John Glenn nominated Barbara Curtis, currently the chapter administrative chair. Curtis was elected by

see CORNER, page 7

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National: http://www.sierraclub.org • Local: http://www.gatorsierra.org

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SecretaryAnnette Long352-490-8930MLongAKorn@aol.comTreasurerRoberta Gastmeyer336-2404rgastmeyer@earthlink.netMembership ChairWhitey Markle392-0270markle@ufl.eduAdministrative ChairRussell Roy372-7305raroy4@bellsouth.netOutings ChairKaren Garren371-0008ILUVFLA@bellsouth.netEvents CoordinatorSherry Steiner375-2563s.camil@att.netPolitical ChairDwight Adams378-5129adams@phys.ufl.eduGovernment LiaisonSteve Williams386-397-2945old-time-florida@earthlinkEnvironmental Education ChairRudy Rothseiden352-318-3844rudy.rothseiden@gmail.comNewsletter FoldingScott Camil375-2563s.camil@att.netWebmasterLouis Clark373-5377klouisc@bellsouth.net		Program co-chair	Anna Peterson	337-2957	ALP@religion.ufl.edu
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Outings ChairKaren Garren371-0008ILUVFLA@bellsouth.netEvents CoordinatorSherry Steiner375-2563s.camil@att.netPolitical ChairDwight Adams378-5129adams@phys.ufl.eduGovernment LiaisonSteve Williams386-397-2945old-time-florida@earthlinkEnvironmental Education ChairRudy Rothseiden352-318-3844rudy.rothseiden@gmail.comNewsletter FoldingScott Camil375-2563s.camil@att.netWebmasterLouis Clark373-5377klouisc@bellsouth.net	I	Membership Chair	Whitey Markle	392-0270	markle@ufl.edu
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-,-,-,	I	Newsletter Folding	Scott Camil	375-2563	s.camil@att.net
Newsletter Editor/Design Colin Whitworth 372-2464 colinwhitworth@cox.net	I	Webmaster	Louis Clark	373-5377	klouisc@bellsouth.net
	I	Newsletter Editor/Design	Colin Whitworth	372-2464	colinwhitworth@cox.net
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FOLDING PART

Interested in hosting a newsletter folding party? Contact Scott Camil at 375-2563

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Be a Leader

BY KAREN GARREN

The Sierra Club is one of the oldest and most well respected not-for-profit organizations advocating wilderness conservation.

The Sierra Club motto is: "Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet". Most people who join the Sierra Club want to participate in protecting the environment, wish to associate with like-minded people, and hope to safely explore natural areas and learn ecology. Is this why you joined?

Each Sierra Club group is concerned with unique local environmental issues. Protection of environmental values comes about through convincing politicians and regulatory agencies that it is "the will of the people". The backbone of advocacy consists of citizens educated on local issues who spread the word.

An effective outings program takes people to hot spots, shows them the wonders of natural diversity, and awakens fear for its loss. Environmental issues of concern to North Central Florida include: clean air; electricity generation and conservation; clean water and equitable distribution between human and environmental needs; coastal oil drilling; development and sprawl reduction of natural wildlife habitat, among others.

An effective outings program needs caring concerned citizens to show-and-tell on various issues of their choice. Outings leadership training enables participants to plan, promote, and provide

fun and educational opportunities for the public to better know the beauty and vulnerabilities of their chosen home.

National Sierra Club is conducting an Outing Leader Training Workshop at Camp Dorothy Thomas near Tampa on **SEPT. 8-10** for \$45, meals, workbooks, and cabin facilities provided. I participated 2 years ago, met interesting people and learned a lot. What I felt was most important was the screening of participants to match the level of difficulty of the outing. As a leader, you want to say "Yes" to everyone

news{notes•

SUWANNEE/ST JOHNS SIERRA ELECTION

Seven seats on the SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee (ExCom) will be open at the end of this year, because current members' terms will expire.

Sierra members are urged to consider running for these open seats. The Nominating Committee (NomCom) has been formed—Eileen Roy (Chair), Karen Garren, Carol Gordon, and Roberta Gastmeyer. If you are interested, please call Eileen Roy at 352-372-7305, or e-mail her at raroy4@bellsouth.net.

<u>The deadline to name candidates is Sept. 1.</u> Ballots will go out in the November newsletter, and the results will be announced at the December ExCom meeting and then in the January newsletter.

Sierra also provides a petition process for getting on the ballot: any Sierra Club member who wishes to be a candidate for ExCom and has not been nominated by NomCom may do so through petition by obtaining signatures of 25 members of the SSJ Group. Signatures can be submitted to Eileen Roy by Sept. 22, at the contact info above.

but that can lead to trouble. To learn more about the workshop and to register, check out http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/training/.

On **SEPT. 23,** a one-day Outings Leader Training opportunity is scheduled here in Gainesville. While not as comprehensive as

the national workshop, participants can learn to plan an outing, deal with insurance requirements, describe the outing for advertisement, and report trip results to the outings chair. The SSJ Sierra Club needs more certified outings leaders volunteers. Could it be you?

Activities for September: Fossil hunting on Possum Creek Branch, Saturday, **SEPT. 9**. Bring the kids . . . Basic

bird watching at San Felasco Hammock Saturday, **SEPT. 30.** Bring the binoculars.

Tentative future outings: **OCT. 14-15**, an over-night paddle on the Suwannee River staying at the state park at the confluence with the Withlacoochee River . . . **NOV. 4-5**, backpacking on Cumberland Island National Seashore, GA. . . **DEC. 27-JAN. 3**, Everglades National Park.

If you are interested in these outings or have other suggestions, please contact Karen Garren at 352-371-0008, or e-mail her at ILuvFla@bellsouth.net. Sierra Club outings are educational and open to the public.



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5-strongly agree

School Candidates Sound Off







4-agree
3-no position
2-disagree
1-strongly disagree
NA-no answer

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

Voters will elect two Alachua County School Board members on Sept. 5, with a third being re-elected without an opponent.

There are two candidates in each of the other two races—Deb Cupples and Ginger Childs in the District 5 race and Clint Robinson and Tina Pinkoson in the District 1 race. Both elections are open to all Alachua County voters regardless of party or district.

The SSJ Sierra Club asked each candidate to fill out a questionnaire, which we've published

below along with the answers next to their initials.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. School Board actions have no effect on the environment and should not con-

cern the Sierra Club. (DC-1, GC-2, CR-1, TP-2)

- 2. Impact fees should be an integral part of funding for new schools, especially in high growth areas of the county. (DC-3, GC-1, CR-5, TP-2)
- 3. The School Board should not use public funds to promote a particular outcome on any referendum before voters, in compliance with state law. (DC-5,

GC-4, CR-5, TP-4)

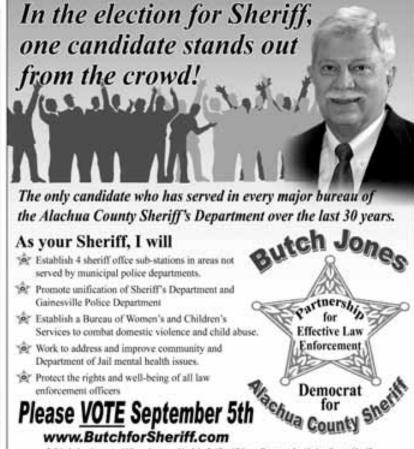
- 4. The School Board should aggressively pursue energy conservation policies as a way to save money and to reduce the effects of global warming. (DC-5, GC-5, CR-5, TP-5)
- 5. Environmental education, possibly as part of science courses, should be an integral part of school curricula. (DC-3, GC-5, CR-5, TP-4)
- 6. School concurrency service areas should be less than district wide since available capacity in schools in the east will not prevent crowding in high-growth areas in the west. (DC-5, GC-1, CR-5, TP-1)
- 7. A level of service standard for school capacity of over 100% is acceptable. (DC-3, GC-5, CR-NA, TP-4)



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Policing Airboats

BY DWIGHT ADAMS

September 2006

Political Chair

Airboat noise that disturbs lake dwellers, especially at night, has become a hot topic lately, and it caught the attention of Florida lawmakers in the 2006 session.

Unfortunately, the enacted legislation will do nothing to address the problem (*see "More Noise From Tallahassee," page 6*). It is up to local sheriffs and government officials to do this.

Although SSJ Sierra will not endorse in the sheriff's race, we have taken a stand against the noise and have posed two questions to all candidates for Alachua County sheriff. Democratic candidates Bill Davis and Butch Jones answered our questions. The questions are below along with answers of Davis and Jones.

THE QUESTIONS

Q. Existing Alachua County Ordinance requires all water vessels to restrict noise to 90 decibels at 50 feet. Will you be proactive in ensuring that this restriction is implemented?

Q. Since 90 decibels at 50 feet is twice the noise level of the existing Alachua County Noise Ordinance, would you be in favor or against restricting airboat noise by curfews, slow speed zones around residential, historic, and environmentally sensitive areas?

THE ANSWERS

BILL DAVIS: The noise ordinance is primarily enforced by other governmental agencies and we will follow Alachua County ordinances and Florida Statutes. At the Sheriff's Office we will respond to specific complaints concerning violations of those ordinances and statutes.

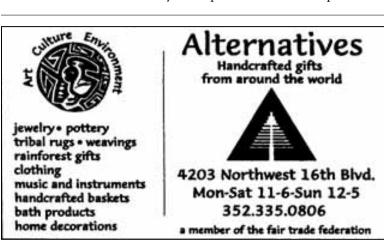
As Sheriff our responsibility is to enforce the constitutionally legislated ordinances and laws. There are organizations and governmental agencies that are in a better position to propose and enact that type of legislation.

BUTCH JONES: Yes, I have had the opportunity to speak to numerous airboat owners and airboat manufacturers. Universally I have found airboat owners to be in compliance with the county ordi-

nance and not to be adversaries. The owners/operators I have spoken with respect and honor the existing ordinance and acknowledge that the violations are committed by the "few," who spoil things for all.

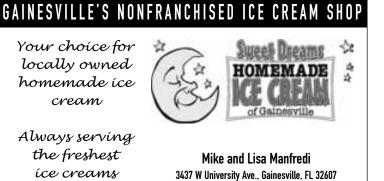
Yes, the Sheriff's Office will be proactive under my command in ensuring the restriction is implemented. I do not believe that the majority of airboat owners/operators intend to disturb others or the environment. I feel that they are everyday citizens wanting to enjoy life, and they want laws enforced as well.

I would be in favor of doing everything possible to preserve our residential, historical, and environmental sensitive areas. I am also in favor of protecting these areas by restricting all water vessels that encroach on these areas; some of the unincorporated areas, like Melrose, also have problems with water vessels that speed in swimming zones and dump garbage in public parks. However, they are not airboat operators, but other water vessels. I believe we cannot and will not profile any group of individuals, but we will enforce the law. Again, to my knowledge most boat owners are conscientious, law abiding citizens, who appreciate the same things in life as others.









352-378-0532

and sorbets

More Noise From Tallahassee

BY WHITEY MARKLE

Florida lawmakers passed a new airboat law earlier this year. Soon to be signed by Gov. Bush, the law is—according to an official Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Marine Enforcement alert—still intentionally just as vague as the old law.

It states: "The FWC enforcement protocol requires that all airboats operated in Florida utilize automotive style mufflers to reduce engine exhaust sound levels. The following definition will be utilized: 'Muffler' means an automotive style sound suppression device or system designed and installed to abate the sound of exhaust gasses emitted from an internal combustion engine and which prevents excessive or unusual noise."

The FWCCC does not intend to specify which mufflers are to be used. All airboat owners are encouraged to seek the quietest and most effective muffling device or devices for their particular vessel and engine configuration."

The FFWCC Division of Law

Enforcement told me by phone that they recommend that airboat owners "call their local airboat dealer to find out what style muffler will work for their airboat."

When asked if I can put a Cherry Bomb or Glass Pack (noise making muffler) on

my airboat, Brian Brywinkle of FFWCC Boating Safety in Tallahassee told me that "any automotive style muffler will suffice to meet the new law."

Mr. Brywinkle also told me that FFWCC has no means of measuring sound levels.

One would conclude from that policy that "the quietest and most effective muffling device" remains as elusive as it was when the legislature

passed Florida Statutes 327.65, in 1991. One could also easily conclude that FFWCC will continue to allow noisy airboats by blaming the vague new law as they have since 1991.

The new law also requires a "supermajority" requirement for county commissions voting on airboar restrictions. It means a five-member commission could

only pass restrictions with at least four of five votes.

September 2006

No tickets will be issued to noisy airboats. The racket will increase with the number of airboats.

The only alternative left is to push for a class-action lawsuit, the defendant being the State of Florida and local governments that continue to allow this nuisance.

There are precedent cases on this issue. I will personally push the have

the noise issue become a Sierra Club Florida Chapter issue in the near future. Meanwhile, we need a good lawyer.





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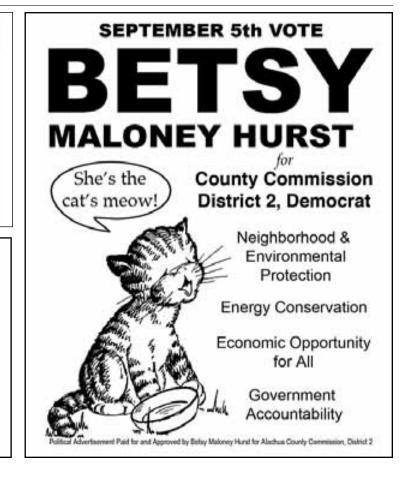
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CORNER, from page 2

a 14-6 vote, with three abstentions.

Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope was on the call but did not speak to any issue.

That concluded the attempt to remove the chapter chair. This was an unfortunate series of events; however, the ExCom feels that the membership should be informed of such significant events and, in fact, ExCom directed me to do so in this column.

The annual FLEXcom election for at-large representatives is in November. There are four nominating committee candidates: Dan Hendrickson, Ben Fusaro, Betsy Roberts and John Glenn. Five candidates have qualified for the ballot by petition: Pat Kiesylis, Catherine Harrelson, Fred Zimmerman, Michael Miller and Dwight Adams. There will be nine candidates on the ballot for five open positions.

While I am not allowed to make any recommendations, I urge every SSJ Sierra Club member to vote in the FLEXcom election. It is a mail ballot included with your copy of the Pelican, the state chapter newsletter. If you are not receiving the Pelican, please immediately inform Roberta Gastmeyer at rgastmeyer@bellsouth.net, so she can correct the oversight. Every Florida member of the Sierra Club should receive the Pelican.

Again, I urge everyone to vote, for the health of the Florida Chapter and for the preservation of our environment.

ENDORSEMENT, from page 1

environmental consequences. This is especially true with school crowding caused by sprawl growth to the west. Meanwhile, some east side schools have underutilized capacity (recall that Prairie View Elementary was almost closed last year).

School concurrency, now required by the state, is supposed to address this situation. How well it does so will depend on the details of the interlocal agreements between the school board and the municipalities.

School board incumbents Ginger Childs and Lee Pinkoson want the concurrency service area to be the whole county, which means that crowding in the west could continue unabated even if there is capacity in schools in the east. Cupples and Robinson want smaller service areas that would require schools in the west to keep up with growth.

The other major issue school board members address is how to pay for new schools. The incumbents want a sales tax and oppose impact fees. A sales tax means that no matter where you live, you get to pay for schools required by new development in the west part of the county. Cupples and Robinson do not favor the sales tax but support impact fees if the finances show the need. SSJ Sierra Club group supports impact fees.

For those reasons, we recommend you vote for Deb Cupples and Clint Robinson in the Sept. 5 vote.

Likewise, we endorse Hurst for the County Commission seat now held by Pinkoson. Hurst has been an activist, working on new land use codes for the comp plan, a new tree ordinance, and neighborhood protection, especially in the area around scenic West 91st Street. Hurst led the fight to force the location of the Haile Publix to be within the development rather than in a strip along Southwest 20th Avenue, where it would be a traffic generator.

Hurst will fight to protect neighborhoods from the ravages of encroaching sprawl. She is campaigning on a broad range of issues, including economic opportunity for all, energy conservation, and responsible government.







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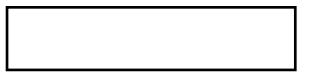
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- restore federal lands, water & air protections
- replace U.S. forces & corporations in Iraq with international personnel
- institute universal health care

Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club **NEWSLETTER** P.O. Box 13951 Gainesville FL 32604

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SEPTEMBER 2006 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEP 5—Alachua County elections. Polls open 7-7 p.m.

SEP 7—SSJ Sierra Club Group general meeting, in the Entomology/Ne-matology Building on the UF campus (see page 1 for details).

SEP 16— Marion County Springs Festival (www.springsfest.org), 10-5 p.m, at the Silver River State Park.

SEP 14—SSJ Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting, 7 p.m., at the Santa Fe Community College Downtown Gainesville campus. Board meeting room.

SEP 22-7:30 p.m. Folding Party for the October newsletter. At Scott Camil and Sherry Steiner's house. Call 375-2563, after 3 p.m., for more information.

SEP 24—11-4 p.m. Fundraiser for Florida Wildlife Care, Inc., at Goering's Bookstore. See ad below for more information.

Come to the Edge of the Swamp

For a Wildlife Gathering to help support

Florida Wildlife Care, Inc.

Sunday, Sept. 24, 11-4 p.m.

at Goering's Bookstore

3433 W. University Ave.

SVE ANIMAL PRESENTATION • FACE PAINTING OF EAMES

STORYTELLING BY JEREMY ENAMES.

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Yes, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.			
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not tax deductible; they s	and lobbying efforts. Your		

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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