

GENERAL MEETING
Thursday, May 7, 7:30 p.m.
Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

**The Florida Black Bear
Takes Center Stage**

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
4225 NW 34th St, Gainesville, FL
Free & Open to the Public

The Florida Black Bear Takes Center Stage

National Bear Awareness Week is May 18-24th. Our May program will feature a presentation about the Florida black bear by Biologist, Catherine Kennedy from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Since the 1980s, the black bear population has been expanding along with our human population. Florida has grown from 5 million residents in 1960 to over 18.8 million today and is projected to reach almost 36 million by 2060. Urban sprawl is encroaching on

traditionally remote areas, bringing people into prime bear habitat. As a result, bears and people are encountering each other more than ever.

The mere presence of a black bear does not represent a problem. In fact, living in black bear country can provide unique and rewarding experiences! The best way to enjoy our wildlife is to keep them wild and away from food sources like garbage, pet food, and bird seed.

Florida bear facts:

- Black bears are the only species of bear found in Florida
- FWC biologists estimate that there are between 2,500 and 3,000 black bears in Florida
- Black bears are generally black with a brown muzzle and may have a white chest marking called a blaze
- Adult male black bears usually weigh between 250 to 350 lbs. The largest adult male black bear in Florida weighed 624 lbs. Adult female black bears are smaller than males, usually weighing between 130 and 180 lbs. The largest adult female black bear in Florida weighed 383 lbs.
- Adult male black bears usually live within a 60 square mile area, whereas females usually live within a 15 square mile area.
- Female bears have their first litter at about 3 ½ years old and generally have a litter every other year.
- In Florida, the breeding season runs from June to August and cubs are born around late January or early February.
- Bears are excellent climbers and often climb trees when they are frightened.
- About 80 percent of a black bear's diet comes from plants (e.g., fruits, nuts, berries), 15 percent from insects (e.g., termites, ants, yellow jackets) and 5 percent from meat (e.g., opossums, armadillos, carrion).



Bio: Catherine Kennedy, Senior Wildlife Assistance Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, UF

Catherine currently served as FWC's Senior Wildlife Assistance Biologist for North Florida, overseeing the Northwest and North Central regions' Wildlife Assistance Programs. Overall goals include identifying emerging issues and proactively engage communities about nuisance wildlife to provide sustainable solutions to mitigate and resolve conflict. Her

position also serves as liaison to the Florida Cooperative Extension Service and the University's Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Department with the goal of strengthening existing relationships and creating new partnerships.

Catherine earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Anthropology in 2004, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology in 2012, both from Western Carolina University. Prior to joining FWC in 2012, she worked in a variety of positions, including service as an Avian Field Ecologist with the University of Georgia and as a research program assistant with Western Carolina University. Prior experience also includes work as an architectural designer and as a nature columnist.

Events:

May 5 6-9pm Public Forum: Silver Springs Restoration

May 19 11:30 a.m. Tri County Working Group

May 21 4:30pm Swamphead Meet & Greet

News from the Chair

Here is the month of May already.... It would be great to announce that the Legislative Session ended on a positive note, that our elected officials could agree between themselves and with the voters that we, indeed, could make some great strides in protecting our environment by putting aside millions of dollars to buy land, to clean the springs, to save the Everglades, and hire more rangers to take care of our parks...None of that happened...Please read Whitey Markle's article for more information. Then call the Chair of the Conservation Committee, Charlie Dean (#850-487-5005) or email him at dean.charles.web@flsenate.gov, to let him know his committee did not respect the Amendment 1 goals and they need to do better. Then sign up with www.FloridaWaterLandLegacy.org to stay informed on future actions. Stay informed and become more involved...

Back to the Session in Tallahassee... As of Friday April 24, the full House was considering passing two Fracking Bills, to roll them over a third and final reading early next week: HB 1205 and HB 1209. These bills would delay or prevent disclosure of toxic chemicals until the damage is done. DEP and FracFocus are not allowed to tell the public what is being used if the well operator has claimed the ingredients are "proprietary business information" – trade secrets.

Soooo....please keep calling your representatives and ask them to vote NO on HB 1205 and HB 1209. You can look up the name of your representative by entering your address at this Florida House webpage: <http://myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/myrepresentative.aspx>. Give your name and city where you live, or a zip code. Be brief and polite, but make your point: NO Fracking in Florida. Stay informed by going to the website of Our Santa Fe River, Inc. with daily updates on the Fracking issue, and follow Merrilee Malwitz-Jibson suggestions...Remember that we elected these representatives to represent us, not to represent private businesses.



On a much lighter note, we had a wonderful Earth Day celebration, a Luncheon celebrating the life and work of Marjorie Carr, with the presence of Chuck and Mimi Carr, Marjorie's children, Joe Little, lawyer who worked with Marjorie, and Peggy McDonald, author of "Marjorie Harris Carr – Defender of Florida's Environment", a book she published last year. Peggy vividly described Marjorie as a professional scientist, highly educated woman, mother of five, known as the "housewife from Micanopy"- who was part of the environmental movement of the 1960's. She was a free spirit, an independent woman who did not take "No" for an answer. Marjorie is the one who started the fight to "Free the Ocklawaha". Many members of Sierra Club attended the lunch and all enjoyed Peggy's presentation as well as hearing Dr. Steve Robitaille, President of Florida Defender of the Environment, who gave us an update on the Ocklawaha's future. Mimi Carr and NKwanda Jah, Director of the Cultural Arts Coalition, gave the Marjorie Carr Foot

Soldier Award to Kiona Elliott – a UF student in Biology. She could not attend but her best friend Claire Mabour, also a UF student, accepted the Award for Kiona....and Manisha Ranade ended the event with a beautiful ancient Indian dance on the music of Ravi Shankar, on the Sacredness of Earth, Wind, Sky, Sun and Moon. The event took place at Kanapaha Gardens, and all who attended loved the food (Thank you Chef Brothers) and loved the spirit of the presentation – honoring in so many ways a woman who defended the Florida we all love. Thank you Roberta Gastmeyer, NKwanda Jah, Manisha Ranade for all your time and energy in planning this event...and Thank you all Sierra Club members and guests who made this event so special by coming and also bidding on the Silent Auction items donated by local artists.



Now let's speak about FUNDRAISING ... First for our ICO program. We just had a meeting to plan outings for the summer and we are planning educational and fun outings for the children involved. If you are interested in participating, please let us know...We are planning a Garage Sale as a Fundraiser for the ICO program. It will be on Saturday, September 19, 2015. So start to put aside things that you want to give away for our garage sale, or just start your Spring Cleaning – and put away in boxes until the fall...We will accept donations a week before the Garage Sale, around September 12, 2015. Please contact Jeri Merritt at merritt.jeri@gmail.com if you have questions and/or if you want to volunteer.

Then on Saturday, October 24th, we are planning another Fundraiser for the SSJ Sierra Club...Please read the details on Sustainable House and Garden Tour. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS...It will be more fun if we have more volunteers involved...

VICTORY over Keith Perry's bill HB 1325...DEAD on the floor...

THANK YOU to a group of dedicated Sierra Club members and Gainesville Loves Mountains members who worked hard to defeat this bill, and they did it!!!! For your information, if that Bill had passed, then, the governance of GRU would not remain with the City of Gainesville and would have moved to a Commission depending on Tallahassee...It took some efforts: meetings, phone calls, writing a petition against the bill. Several of us went to Tallahassee to speak against that bill. Thank you Nancy Deren, Susan Bottcher, Rob Brinkman, Theresa Spurling-Wood for speaking up in the name of Gainesville people who could not attend that hearing... Thank you to everyone else also involved to defeat that bad Bill.

News from the Conservation Chair: THE CARNAGE CONTINUES IN TALLAHASSEE.

In the aftermath of the Amendment 1 victory, the illustrious legislature is running wide open with the Amendment 1 funds. It is perplexing to see how a few hard-headed politicians run the state government in the face of such public pressure.

As Dr. Bob Knight (Florida Springs Council) said, "Unfortunately, there is little hope that the existing state government will actually strengthen enforcement of environmental laws. This session the Florida Legislature is more concerned about the appearance of increased water resource protection than with passing laws that increase safeguards that adequately protect and restore Florida's waters. Instead they wish to use this Amendment 1 money to create harmful alternative water supplies by putting more pumps into depleted rivers, and to create more public infrastructure to facilitate additional urban development. Some of them are saying that Florida already has too much conserved land held as a public trust."

Senator Alan Hays of Umatilla (Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee) quoted "massive emails" that he said endorsed his opinion that the state of Florida owned too much conservation land in introducing his funding proposal of a mere \$2 million (out of the \$720 million Documentary Stamp projected funding for Amendment 1) for land acquisition. Subsequently, Senator Altman (a fellow republican Senator) scolded the Appropriations committee for acting unconstitutionally and then introduced an amendment to Senator Hays' bill, proposing \$300 million for the Florida Forever funding. That amendment was immediately overruled in

the committee and a substitute amendment by Senator Bradley (represents part of Alachua County) was given the sanction of the committee for a mere \$30 million stipend. Senator Altman deserves a medal of honor for his bold criticism and attempt to make things right with the voters of Florida.

Senator Hays also said he wants Florida's 670,000 acres of state parks to be potentially open to low-impact agriculture. Who is guiding the "leaders" here? Are we so lost here in Florida that "growth" is our only focus? Florida will eventually be the new Las Vegas if we continue down this path.

Dr. Bob Palmer (Sierra Club member and Legislative/Chair for the Florida Springs Council) stated last week that: "HB 7003 does nothing for springs (and) --SB 918 is getting weaker with each iteration. The 3 most useful provisions in the bill filed by Sen. Dean in February are all gone: (1) new stricter "harm" standard for MFLs, (2) all existing MFLs to be re-done under the new standard, (3) delineation of Springs Protection and Management Zones. What we're left with in the bill is a hodge-podge of provisions that slightly accelerate the currently ineffective regulatory regime. Sen. Dean and his staff vigorously defend the current version, but I have a great deal of difficulty in getting excited about it.

Chris Curry (Editor of the Gainesville Sun) stated in a recent article: "The addition of sections involving the Everglades and a Central Florida Water Initiative partnership has swelled Senate Bill 918 from 46 pages to more than 150. Lawmakers have removed or loosened some provisions involving springs protections and added concessions for agricultural operations and other groundwater pumping permit holders. With one more committee stop before a full Senate vote, some springs advocates who felt the House water bill did nothing to protect springs but saw promise in the Senate are now pessimistic that any legislation improving the springs will come out of Tallahassee this session. As the bill went through committee, a provision establishing springs protection and management zones in the geographic area around the state's outstanding springs was removed and replaced with "priority focus" areas around those springs. Some of the regulations on septic tanks in those areas also were loosened. A provision to upgrade or replace septic tanks in those designated areas was changed to require such actions only if the septic tanks are shown to be the cause of at least 20 percent of the nonpoint source pollution — pollution that does not flow from a single source such as an industrial operation or sewage plant — in the springs area.

On a higher, but still depressing note, Gainesville's John Moran published the following this week: "If I had the ear of the governor, I'd encourage him to use the power of the bully pulpit on Earth Day to inspire us all to embrace a new way of thinking about water in Florida.

"Dear Florida," the governor could declare. "We have a drinking problem, and we have a substance abuse problem. Yes, my fellow Floridians, we are pumping way too much groundwater, and we are using way too much fertilizer and other contaminants. As Mother Earth has shown us, she can no longer bear the abuse. We are killing our springs and we are poisoning our drinking water.

"I call upon all Floridians to accept that resistance to change is no longer an option. We shall start with the low-hanging fruit and I am today directing all state agencies — and urging all Floridians — to cease the use of landscaping fertilizer and irrigation, for the benefits of artificially enhanced lawns and landscaping come at a cost too high, as seen in the sliming and depletion of our once-lovely springs."

And if I could have a word with our legislators, I would remind them that the business of government isn't business; it's wellbeing.

And to our business leaders, I contend there can be no long-term well being in Florida if we continue to use and abuse water like there's no tomorrow." The sad conclusion: For a mere \$10 per citizen, all of Florida's water problems could be solved. How did our state government get into this position?

CITY OF ALACHUA SLAM DUNK ON HOLD.

Tamara Robbins, former SSJ chair, with Karen Arrington and a handful of local activists have demonstrated the kind of activism that all good citizens should show in the City of Alachua. In the March 23, 2015 City of Alachua Commission Meeting in which the purpose of the gathering was to amend their official zoning atlas from a 154 acre planned unit development (PUD) and agriculture to Commercial Intensive, Community Commercial, and Government Facilities, citizens were overruled and dismissed as “unaffected” by the council chair while being chided by Walmart’s lawyer. At the end of that meeting, the Council voted to move forward with the second reading which will have been conducted (April 27th) by the time this article is published.

In the meantime, Alachua County Commissioner Mike Byerly (SSJ member also), with County Attorney, Michele Lieberman, and several county staff, thanks to Tamara Robbins’ communication, appeared at a hearing last week to tell the Council that the voters of Alachua County had endorsed an amendment to the County’s charter in 2002 (with a subsequent ordinance by the Board of County Commissioners) regarding Clean Water Protection. The County’s authority (because it is one of the few Florida Charter Counties) to stand up to municipalities and the legislature on land use decisions is written in this charter amendment, making this is an opportunity to “Flex its muscle” in such issues like this one and the City of Hawthorne’s move to incorporate the eastern half of the county in the Plum Creek case.

So, although the Alachua City Council refused to hear “affected” citizens in the March 23rd hearing, Commissioner Byerly and the county staff were able to establish standing in the deliberations, saying that because the County owns conservation land at Hornsby Spring, it is therefore “affected”. In an official document from the County, County Attorney Lieberman stated that there is indeed a sinkhole on the property in question that links directly to the Floridan Aquifer and therefore the drainage plan will affect County property.

Also the Suwannee River Water Management District has become involved due to the presence of cattle in the property surrounding the T-K Basin (City of Alachua property and the drain hole for the 150 acre proposed Intensive Commercial development and several adjoining properties). It turns out nobody knows who owns the cattle that are apparently not abiding by the District’s Best Management Practices.

HALPATA TASTANAKI TRACT SAVED FROM THE GALLOWS

Thanks to Sandra Marafino of the Marion Audubon and the Suwannee St. Johns Sierra Club’s Tricounty Working Group, the Halpata Taskanaki tract in Southwest Marion County was taken off of the Southwest Florida Water Management District’s surplus land list this month. Nine of our members, headed by yours truly and Nancy Host showed up at a meeting set by the SWFWMD in Brooksville on April 2 regarding “surplus land sales”. Apparently our efforts paid off and, although another very critical tract, the Annutteliga Hammock Tract, was not



SSJ Tricounty Working Group in Brooksville We



deleted from the list, the Halpata Taskanaki tract was. We were apparently able to convince the SWFWMD representatives that the Halpata tract was crucial to the Florida Scrub jay which was officially listed as a threatened state species by [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#) in 1975 and it was listed as a threatened federal species by the [United States Fish and Wildlife Service](#) in 1987. Thanks to good bird-watching by persons such as Mrs. Marafino, the Scrub Jay’s presence

was well-documented. Unfortunately such documentation had to be pointed out to the District's representatives. Congratulations on this small but significant victory.

By Whitey Markle, Conservation Chair

Education/Outreach

The education program featuring the PowerPoint, Seven Wonders of the Suwannee St. Johns Sierra Club, visited some interesting locations this month. The Paynes Prairie Native Plant Society meets at the Matheson Museum in downtown Gainesville. I enjoyed the talk there as well as speaking to the Lake City Rotary Club at the early time of 7:15 a.m. Later on, I was happy to visit with the Axia Chapter of the Native Plant Society who have many Clay County members but meet in Jacksonville.

TRI-COUNTY WORKING GROUP

The group met early in the day this month to have a nice lunch at the Blue Gator in Dunnellon on the Withlatchoochee River on April 21. After a filling seafood lunch, we adjourned for the meeting at the Dunnellon Public Library Meeting Room. We were so pleased to have SSJ Sierra Presiding Chair Maryvonne Devensky as our special guest.

Conservation Chair Whitey Markle led a discussion of our work with SWFWMD officials over their surplus lands. He felt that Audubon Society's Sandra Marrafino's detailed messages to them as well as the Working Group's visit to their Open House in Brooksville contributed to their taking Halpata's 47 surplus land off that list of land for sale. Nancy Kost explained how a huge turnout of citizens to a government meeting in Inverness led to the county commission voting against allowing a hotel in sensitive environmental area in beautiful Homosassa Springs. However, on other environmental topics such as how the legislature was dealing with Amendment One expectations and funding, it was difficult to be optimistic for many of us.

We discussed various issues and gave Whitey input on how to spend education funds that he received for the club from a Maine trust fund. No clear decision was made but many ideas were shared.

Some of us then joined Ben Berauer for a paddle on the Withlatchoochee River and went upstream to the Rainbow. Although we were not able to make it to the headsprings that afternoon, we enjoyed the warm afternoon and the opportunity to see how the rivers were doing. Ben, Lisa and I even followed up with a short visit to the Rainbow Springs State Park to observe the beautiful springs and man-made waterfalls there.

For our next meeting we chose to meet in the Inverness Rexall Meeting Room on May 19 at 11:30 a.m. We hope that many Citrus, Marion and Levy members will be able to join us for a discussion of issues and how to move forward during the summer months.

Jon Brainard

May 21 Meet & Greet

New Member, old member, not a member? Want to meet other environmentalists, share new ideas, find out how to get involved? Join us at [Swamphead Brewery](#), May 21 4:30pm - 7:00pm. Call/text Roberta 352-494-9662/Email: rgastmeyer@bellsouth.net



April 11, 2015: Wonderful day exploring the waters around Atsena Otie Key near Cedar Key.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for our FIRST ANNUAL Sustainable House and Garden Tour Fundraiser Gainesville, October 24th, 2015

We are looking for bright, energetic group of 5 to 7 members willing to put in some hours over the next few months to create a premier SSJ fundraising event (actually two events, but we will talk about that later.) Do you have some ideas on fundraising in general? Or maybe some experience in running a tour? Or maybe just some interest in being part of a bright, energetic group? Well, speak up now because this is not going to happen unless we get some help! Contact Jon jonbrainard@gmail.com or Roberta rgastmeyer@gmail.com.

WANTED: YOUR UNWANTED STUFF

Sierra Club is holding a garage sale September 19th to benefit our ICO program which takes local youth on awesome outdoor adventure and service trips. Please keep us in mind when spring cleaning and save your items. Since we have minimal storage space available, we thank you for hanging on to your donations until the beginning of September when we will begin collection. More details to come on when and where to deliver your goods. We will also need a few volunteers to help setup, sell, and cleanup after. Breakfast and great company provided free!

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