



Members kayak on Durbin Creek; note both sit-in and sit-on-top boats (photo by Bill Armstrong)

Kayaking: how to get going

By Bill Armstrong, Outings Chair

Our club has many kayak outings, and I've had a lot of folks ask me about getting started. Let's look at their typical questions:

1. Do I need to be experienced?

No. Mostly we paddle slowly on quiet creeks with little current. It's best if you have kayaked once or twice before joining us as we don't provide training for first timers. (You can sign up for an escorted kayak excursion with a local outfitter. They'll give you instruction and practice.)

2. Do I need my own kayak?

Yes. Most places we go do not provide rentals. You can always ask if someone can lend you one. No matter what, you must have a personal flotation device—a PFD—to wear when you kayak.

3. What kind of kayak should I buy?

You have many choices at many different prices, but remember you'll need roof-racks and tie-down materials too.

If storage and loading/unloading is a problem, consider an inflatable kayak. They are durable and easy to set up.

Kayaks come as sit-ins, where you sit down inside a cockpit, and sit-on-tops,

where you sit outside on top of the kayak. Most of our participants have sit-in kayaks.

- Sit-in. Lower center of gravity, feel more balanced, stay drier.
- Sit-on-top. More exposed, usually heavier, but easier to get in and out of.
- Size. Around 12 to 14 feet is best for the waterways we use. For open water, longer kayaks are better.
- Material. The more expensive composite materials are lighter.

It's best to start with an inexpensive or used kayak. Once you have some experience, you'll know if you want to continue and the type of kayak for you.

4. Where do I buy a kayak?

For inflatables, you can buy online. Sea Eagle is the best brand.

To buy new, go to a sports store. Black Creek Outfitters is best because it has a lake out back where you can rent different kayaks and try them out. You can also look at REI, where you can get solid advice. For used kayaks, check the outfitters; they sell their rentals after a few years. You can look online for locals selling their kayaks.

Questions? Contact me at armsfam@yahoo.com and join us on the water!

Groups rally to protect vulnerable Outpost land

A major fight over the future of a 99-acre tract of pristine land next to the Guana preserve takes place on August 15 and Sept. 17 in St. Augustine.

The issue centers on a petition from the land's owner, a subsidiary of Gate Petroleum, to change the land designation from "conservation" to "residential" that will open the way for another high-priced housing development.

The first meeting, at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, August 15, involves the county planning and zoning agency hearing arguments about the change and deciding on a recommendation that will be sent to the Board of County Commissioners. The second, at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 15, involves the board making a decision on the move. Both meetings will be in the St. Johns County Auditorium, County Administration Building 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, 32084.

These times are approximate; check saveguananow.org for the latest information

Conservation and civic-minded groups from around the area are unanimous in their opposition to the proposal. The land, called the Outpost, is mostly surrounded by the 11,000-acre state-owned Guana preserve.

The St. Augustine Record newspaper described the Outpost's use so far as "a private place for Gate owner Herb Payton and some of the more powerful people in the state to mix business" with outdoor pleasures. But now a Gate subsidiary,

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Who we are

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Outpost land, the light gray area near the bottom, bordered by water and the Guana preserve (Google maps)

Outpost land needs your help to survive development push

Continued from page 1

the PonteVedra Corp., plans to build 66 houses there in a development that would be surrounded by public land on all sides.

A non-profit citizens' group called Save Guana Now (saveguananow.org) is organizing the opposition to the Gate juggernaut.

An array of civic and conservation groups, including the Sierra Club, have joined in.

"This land is designated as conservation land," said Janet Stanko, chair of the Sierra Club Northeast Florida Group. "Conservation means forever, not just until some developer gets a better idea. We are constantly fighting to preserve land; then keep it preserved."

Other groups include the North Florida Land Trust, Defenders of Wildlife, the Audubon Society.

They all make similar arguments: the proposed development is bad in every way—it endangers bird and mammal species, it poses a hazard to water quality, it is a delicate ecosystem that should not be tampered with.

For details and complete information, go to saveguananow.org.

St. Augustine Beach bans some plastics

St. Augustine Beach has set the pace in Northeast Florida by being the first community to ban retailers and restaurateurs from using certain plastic products.

The St. Augustine Record reported that the beach community's city commission enacted ordinances that provide for fines for retailers and restaurateurs if they give certain plastic or polystyrene products to customers after Jan. 1.

Among products are single-use plastic straws, single-use plastic bags, and polystyrene products such as foam food containers.

A first violation leads to a verbal warning. A second violation leads to a \$50 fine. After that, it's a \$100 fine per violation. Each prohibited item that gets distributed is considered a violation.

Exceptions include straws and polystyrene containers sold in packages for individual use, for containers for prepackaged food, for compostable plastic bags, prescription medicine bags and yard waste bags.

The ordinances, which were approved in July, came after a push by environmental advocates to curb the use of plastics at the beach. Foam food containers and plastic products that make it to waterways pose a life-threatening danger to both water and land life, the advocates said.

Businesses generally supported the idea since beaches littered with plastic garbage tend to discourage tourists' visits.

Ironically, the last session of the state Legislature approved a bill that would prohibited local communities from passing and enforcing bans on plastics. Gov. Ron DeSantos, however, vetoed the bill.



Paddling on Durban Creek last month. It's a great sport for everyone. (Photo by Bill Armstrong)

Kayak, hike at August outings

Note: To see a full outing description and to RSVP for these outings, see our website or Meetup site:

- Website:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/florida/north-east-florida/get-outdoors>

- Meetup:

<https://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Northeast-Florida-Group/>

Outings are free (except for any park fees) and open to all. Some outings require a greater level of fitness and skill than others. No pets or firearms allowed on outings.

Outing participants are required to sign a waiver and release of liability at the start of the outing. A link to the waiver can be found at:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/florida/north-east-florida/get-outdoors>

Thursday, Aug. 1, 6:30 p.m.

Riverside and Avondale Fitness Hike. We'll take a brisk, 5 mile hike around and through the parks and neighborhoods of Avondale and Riverside.

Saturday, Aug. 10, 9 a.m. Hike the

Florida Trail Through Camp Blanding. We'll hike about 4 miles on the trail through Camp Blanding. We'll pass several beautiful lakes and historic Lake Magnolia State Park—one of Florida's African-American parks during the ugly period of segregation.

Saturday, Aug. 17, 9:15 a.m. Tubing at Ichetucknee Springs. It's that time of year! The springs are cold, the weather is hot, so let's go tubing at Ichetucknee Springs!

Sunday, Aug. 18, 9 a.m. Kayak Peters Creek. Let's take a beautiful, leisurely paddle up Peters Creek in Green Cove Springs to see swamp/wetland banks, birds, and other wildlife. We might even run across a little Lynyrd Skynyrd history. Total distance will be about 6 miles.

Thursday, Aug. 22, 9 a.m. Weekday Hike at Losco Park. We'll hike the 3 miles of trails in this beautiful area tucked away near I-95 in Mandarin.

Sunday, Aug. 25, 10 a.m. Julington Creek Lunch 'n' Paddle. Join us on an easy paddle down a wonderful waterway to a waterside restaurant.

Fund-raising concert and social set for Oct. 16

Our club is hosting a fundraiser and social on Wednesday, Oct. 16, featuring Jacksonville singer, songwriter, and Sierra Club activist Madison Carr.

Her concert starts at 7 p.m. at the Mudville Grille, 3105 Beach Blvd., near the intersection of Beach and Atlantic boulevards.

The doors open at 6 p.m. A happy hour lasts until 7 p.m. Come early to see old friends and meet new ones. Everyone is welcome.

Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door.

Mudville Grille offers a good selection of food and drinks (including a few vegetarian choices) at modest prices.

Reserve your place for the concert by sending a check for \$12 per person, payable to Northeast Florida Group, Sierra Club.

Send the check to Brian Paradise at 13 Arbor Club Drive, # 315, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL. 32082.

While tickets will be available at the door for \$15 each, the fundraisers/socials for the last two years have been very well attended. Early reservations are recommended.

Proceeds from the concert will go towards specific environmental programs of our local Sierra Club including the Sierra Student Coalition, a part of the Sierra Club which is comprised of high school and college students.

Madison Carr is a recent graduate of the Douglas Anderson School of the Arts. Her music reflects some the idyllic small-town memories of she has of her Florida childhood.

We'll look forward to seeing many Sierra Club members and friends at the concert to hear the great talent and voice of Madison.

City studies changes to money-losing recycling program; no decisions yet

Jacksonville is currently studying making changes to the city recycling program, but no decisions have been made yet, the city's public works director says.

Public works director John Pappas, in responding to a question from Sierra Club

member Bill Armstrong, said the most recent announced change was banning Styrofoam; plastic bags had already been banned.

Pappas said the city currently loses about \$600,000 a year on the program. In

past years, before the market for recyclables collapsed, the program earned the city a \$1.6 million yearly profit.

Besides the money aspect, he added, the recycling program reduces the amount of trash hauled to the city's landfill.

Sierra Club, Northeast Florida Group



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sierraclub.org/florida/northeast-florida

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Note: To change your mailing address or to change from paper to email, write to sierrasentry@gmail.com. Please include your membership number found on the mailing label.

Your essays, opinions, poetry, and photos are welcome as long as they relate to our mantra of enjoy, explore, and protect the environment. Send submissions and ideas to rmlblade@gmail.com.



Join the Sierra Club and receive a free Insulated Cooler Tote!

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Member Services, 2101 Webster
St., Suite 1300, Oakland, CA
94612 or go to www.sierraclub.org

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our advocacy and lobbying efforts. Contributions to The Sierra Club Foundation and Environmental Law Program are tax-deductible.

Group seeks nominations for ExCom

Nominations are now open for three places on our group's nine-member executive committee. The terms are for two years. Nominations close Sept. 15 and the election will be in December.

The excom serves as a board of directors for the Northeast Florida Group and meets monthly to decide on its direction and focus. The only requirements to serve are a commitment to our environmental goals and a current membership in the club.

The excom meetings, at 6:30 p.m. on the third Monday of the month, are held in the Southeast Regional Branch library off Gate Parkway. The sessions are open to all.

Nominations may be made by the nominating committee or individuals may nominate themselves by obtaining the signatures of 30 other members on a candidacy petition. Contact the nominating committee chair, Brian Paradise, bgparadise@comcast.net, for information on the nominating process and with any questions.

Sierra officer offers backyard ideas

The numbers of endangered species are increasing, leading many of us to wonder what we as individuals can do. A Sierra Club official has some ideas.

Lisa Williams, a member of the Northeast Florida Group's executive committee, will explore some of the Florida friendly techniques that we as homeowners can employ to help make a difference for wildlife.

Her presentation will be Saturday, Sept. 28 from 3:30-5 p.m. at the West Branch Library, 1425 Chaffee Rd. South.

When we understand that our home landscapes are a part of a larger natural system, this recognition can help guide us to make yards that are visibly appealing yet continue to provide those ecosystem, she says. The birds, bees and compliments we attract will be our reward.