



Students at Point Isabel on Ft. George Island (Photo by Bill Armstrong)

Kirby-Smith students take a hike

By Bill Armstrong

Kirby Smith Middle School, in Jacksonville's urban core, is a magnet that specializes in math, science, and technology. The kids there are fast-paced, high achievers.

But on two days last month, a group of them exchanged their computer speeds for walking speeds and an introduction to the joys of undeveloped land.

They liked what they saw, thanks to the Sierra Club.

It began last December when I was leading a Sierra Club hike on Ft. George Island.

Another group was preparing to hike the same area, but there was a mixup and a couple of folks in that group joined my Sierra Club hike.

One was a teacher from Kirby Smith. Afterward, she asked me if

I wanted to do this same 2-mile hike with her 7th grade kids.

"Sure," I said.

The first day, 36 kids and two teachers joined in, and the second day, 43 kids and six adults.

About half of the students had never been on a hike before.

I talked for a few minutes on the history of Ft. George Island and the Timucua Indians, then about how the land was conserved by the state to make this beautiful park.

We talked about the principles of Leave No Trace when hiking in the woods.

Along the way, we stopped to talk a little more about the live oak trees, the gopher tortoises, and the rich history of the area.

We hiked down to Point Isabel on the Ft. George River—this was the

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Club endorses 5 in Duval races

The city elections are this month, and the Sierra Club has endorsed several of the candidates. Here is the rundown.

The election is unitary; all voters may vote in the first and second elections. If one candidate gets 50 percent plus one vote in the first election, that candidate wins the election. Otherwise, the top two candidates in each race go to the second election.

Voting

First election: March 19. Early voting, March 4 to March 17.

Second election: May 14. Early voting, April 29 to May 12.

Our Endorsements

Please note that we do not endorse in every race, just those races where there are candidates who support environmental issues.

District 6, Mandarin area, Micheal Boylan (voteboylan.com)

District 14, Riverside/Ortega area, Sunny Gettinger (votesunny.com)

At Large Group 1, Lisa King (lisalovesjax.com)

At Large Group 3, Tommy Hazouri (tommy2019.com)

At Large Group 4, Matt Carlucci (votecarlucci.com)

A good source of candidate positions on environmental issues related to the St. Johns River is the Jacksonville Riverkeeper website, stjohnsriverkeeper.org/blog/sign-the-pledge.

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Who we are

Executive Committee

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Treasurer Lucille Pendleton
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Volunteer! Call 904.990-3191

Environmental Education.

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Outings.

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Publicity. *Volunteer! Call 904.990.3191*



Gopher tortoise

Tortoises, live oaks greet Kirby-Smith middle schoolers

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port for the Kingsley Plantation in the mid-1700's and for the Ribault Club when it was a resort for the rich in the 1920's.

After that, we hiked over to Kingsley Plantation where a ranger met us and took over leading the group.

Later, they went to Fort Caroline for a presentation by the rangers there.

For many of the students, it was an eye-opening experience. For me, it was sharing something I love to do.

Outings leader aids arboretum

One of our club's outing leaders, Mike DiAngelo, came up with the idea and some money to improve the experience at the Jacksonville Arboretum.

Thanks to him, visitors to the arboretum will see new directional signs throughout the trail system—bright yellow with green type—so they'll be much easier to see during walks and hikes.

The 120-acre arboretum, at 1445 Millcoe Road, offers wooded trails labelled plant life. It's open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, and visitors are asked for a \$3 donation.

Rutherford seeks coastal drilling ban

A Jacksonville congressman has introduced a bill that would effectively prohibit oil exploration off the Atlantic coast.

U.S. Rep. John Rutherford, in a news release, noted that since coastal economies rely on a healthy ocean, "we cannot afford to subject them to the risks of offshore drilling in the Atlantic."

He said Northeast Florida residents have let him know of their concern about opening the coast to drilling and to the harm seismic testing poses to fisheries and marine mammals. He did not mention fracking.

The Trump Administration has announced it will reevaluate offshore energy development, including opening up much of the Atlantic to seismic testing and drilling for oil and gas.

Rutherford's bill, H.R. 1149, would prohibit five pending permit applications for seismic air gun blasting in the Atlantic – action that opens the door to offshore drilling.

Club endorses 5 in city council race

Continued from first page

The group posted responses from candidates to questionnaires, and whether the candidates signed the resiliency pledge which supports a city-led analysis of flood risk and public infrastructure vulnerability along with the implementation of a plan to protect our waterways, property, and people from the damage caused by rising waters.

This is a political advertisement by the Sierra Club Northeast Florida Group, www.sierraclub.org/florida/northeast-florida, is and not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.)

North Florida conservation gets 2 big wins

There's good news for Northeast Florida: Fish Island may be saved and Fort George Island may expand.

Fish Island

The battle to preserve Fish Island in St. Augustine is drawing to an end with the announcement that the owners have agreed to sell the island to the North Florida Land Trust for conservation.

The pristine 72-acre area had been marked for development by home-builder D.R. Horton.

In response, a huge community initiative began work to preserve the land from development and turn it into a passive recreation area.

And in response to that, landowner Jim Young says that he has agreed to work with the North Florida Land Trust on conservation options for Fish Island.

Fort George Island

A land swap that clears the way for cleanup of a Jacksonville Superfund site will also expand state parkland on Fort George Island, the North Florida Land Trust announced.

The Florida Times-Union reports the land trust group set up the exchange between the state environmental protection agency and Greenfield environmental trust, which is responsible for cleaning up the former Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp. property at 1611 Talleyrand Ave.

Pollution from the old insecticide and fertilizer warehouse was seeping into the St. Johns River bottom land, which the state owns.

The deal lets Greenfield take title to 2.8 acres of underwater land next to the Kerr-McGee site in return for Greenfield buying and giving the state 14 acres on Fort George Island for conservation.



Outings: Hike & paddle in March

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

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

Saturday, March 2, 10 a.m.—
Kayak Deep Creek. Join us for a

backwater paddle on Deep Creek.

Sunday, March 3, 10 a.m.—Hike Ravine Gardens State Park and see the azaleas. Don't miss the amazing Ravine Gardens State Park. It's beautiful at this time of year due to the azalea plants in bloom.

Thursday, March 28, 9:45 a.m.—Kayak Julington and Durbin Creeks. From Mandarin Park, we'll paddle up Julington Creek for a short distance, then turn up Durbin Creek for about an hour.

Saturday, March 30, 9 a.m.—*Fitness Hike*—Jennings State Forest Pioneer Trail. This outing will take place in Jennings State Forest in Clay County west of Middleburg. It will be an 8 to 10 mile hike along the forest's Pioneer Trail and other trails. We will hike at a very brisk pace, so this is best suited to seasoned hikers who prefer a faster pace and a longer distances.

Sunday, March 31, 9:30 a.m.—Hike the Jacksonville Arboretum. This will be a fun Sunday hike on several trails in the Jacksonville Arboretum.

Register for April's master naturalist course

A master naturalist course, where participants study habitat assessment and evaluate water quality, will be held in Duval County April 10, 11, 12.

The course is a series of three eight-contact-hour workshops that cover both large- and small-scale habitat assessment and evaluating water quality through classroom presentations and field activities.

It is open to all — registrants do not need to be a graduate of a Florida Master Naturalist core module to participate. The only requirements are attendance, participation, and enthusiasm!

Classroom sessions, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., will be held at the Duval County Extension Office at 1010 McDuff Ave. N., in Jacksonville.

The course fee begins at \$155. For registration and program information go to the Master Naturalist website at www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu. For questions contact Carol Wyninger, wyninger@comcast.net.

The course is offered by The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Science, the Duval County Extension service, the North Florida Land Trust, and the Florida Forest Service.

**Sierra Club,
Northeast Florida Group**

Website

www.sierraclub.org/florida/northeast-florida

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

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**Club's March, April, May meetings
feature rivers, trees, and free plants**

The river and trees headline the agendas for the March, April, and May Sierra Club meetings. All our meetings are free and open to everyone.

March

River UPRising Monday, March 11, in Lakewood Presbyterian Church, 2001 University Blvd W, rear of the education building. Social time starts at 6:30; the meeting starts at 7 p.m.

Shannon Blankinship, advocacy director for the St. Johns Riverkeeper, will speak about taking action in the face of rising waters.

Her job with the St. Johns Riverkeeper involves evaluating and prioritizing issues and threats to the watershed, and developing and advocacy action plans.

April

Protecting trees in Northeast Florida, Monday, April 1, at 6 p.m. in the Ocean Grove Condominiums clubhouse, 1 Arbor Club Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach.

Come for an informative presentation by Greenscape of

Jacksonville, the city's non-profit citizen-based group devoted to planting, preserving, and protecting trees.

Email Brian Paradise at bgparadise@comcast.net for more information.

May

The top 10 things to do to make your yard wildlife friendly, Monday, May 13, at Lakewood Presbyterian Church, 2001 University Blvd W, rear of the education building. Social time starts at 6:30 p.m. and the programs begins at 7 p.m.

Sierra board member Lisa Williams and Native and Uncommon Nursery proprietor Alfred Romeu will explore ways you can create a yard that helps the ecosystem and is visually appealing. The birds, bees, and compliments you attract will be your reward.

The program includes the showcasing of native species that will be given away to participants at the end of the meeting.