

Boats Are Killing Manatees in Record Numbers

Manatee advocates are raising concerns about the number of gentle giants who have been killed in Florida this year. They hope that increased vigilance will help keep this from being the worst year on record. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has already counted 71 manatees killed by boats as of July 22. The numbers are already higher than they were for the same period in 2009, which was the deadliest year on record with a total of 97 deaths.

The Save the Manatee Club attributes the rising number of deaths to factors including cheaper fuel, a recovering economy, a mild winter and a hot summer, which combined means there has been a lot of boating in Florida. There are now estimated to be just over 6,000 manatees in Florida, which is a significant rise since they were first protected as an endangered species decades ago, but their future is still uncertain.

While boat strikes are causing major problems, manatees continue to face a host of other threats like pollution, entanglement, disease, habitat loss and harassment from tourists. In addition, environmental issues including cold weather, red tide and algal blooms add to the problem. One hundred and fifty manatees are believed to have died this year alone due to the loss of food supply caused by algae blooms and The Club projects that the problem will get worse.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering downgrading the manatee from endangered to threatened. While the agency says many protections will stay in place, manatee advocates believe the move is premature and that manatees clearly need every bit of protection they can be given. Hopefully, the latest numbers will help inspire people to be vigilant on the water and consider the precious lives of these manatees. While we wait for an official decision about their potential change in status, Save the Manatee Club is encouraging people to speak up for manatees, and other wildlife, by supporting efforts that will keep Florida's marine environments healthy. In the end, those efforts will benefit us too. For more info on how to help manatees, check out www.savethemanatee.org/



Dancing Olympian brings Awareness to Sea Level Rise

If you have been tuning into the Rio Olympics this Summer, you may have noticed the joyful dance of heavy-weight lifter David Katoatau. Despite his competitive success, he does not dance to celebrate his victories. He is dancing to bring attention to his Pacific Island homeland nation, Kiribati, which is disappearing under rising sea levels at an alarming rate. Not only is the island disappearing, but it is suffering from a perpetual drinking water crisis as well. "Groundwater wells are polluted and increasingly salinated by rising seawater." Because of these conditions, children born in Kiribati are nine times more likely to die before their first birthday than in the UK.

In an open letter, Katoatau writes: "I beg the countries of the world to see what is happening to Kiribati. The simple truth is that we do not have the resources to save ourselves. We will be the first to go. It will be the extinction of a race. Open your eyes and look to the other low-lying level islands around the Pacific- they will soon fall with us. In the not too distant future, we will all drown." To read the entire open letter visit: www.climate.gov.ki

Source: *Washington Post*

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Sierra Club Outings

No pets allowed on outing except where designated in the outings description. Outing participants are required to sign a waiver and release of liability at the start of the outing. The waiver can be found at: sierraclub.org/outings/national/participantforms/forms/individual_waiver.pdf

JOIN US ON MEETUP: OUTINGS HAVE BEEN FILLING UP FAST!

For the most up to date information and to ensure your spot, join our MeetUp site. Details of all outings can be found there with easy access to programs and interactions, or check our website.

www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Northeast-Florida-Group

Saturday, September 17, 9:00 a.m.: Kayak Peter's Creek in Green Cove Springs

Let's take a beautiful, leisurely paddle up Peters Creek in Green Cove Springs to see swamp/wetland banks, birds, and other wildlife. We'll go to Ronnie's - a great fish camp restaurant in Green Cove Springs - after our paddle (232 Walnut St., Green Cove Springs).

Park and put in at Camp Chowenwaw on Black Creek. Bring water, bug spray, and sun block. Bring your own kayak. You must have a personal flotation device and a whistle. You must WEAR your PFD. Bring your cart if you have one; it's a little ways to the launch point.

Take U.S. 17 south from Orange Park. Immediately after crossing Black Creek just north of Green Cove Springs, turn right on Ball Rd at the sign for the camp. The gate opens at 8:00 a.m. At the Y in the road, turn right. RSVP on meetup or to Bill Armstrong at armsfam@yahoo.com.

Saturday, September 10, 9:00 a.m.: Hike in Beautiful Tillie K. Fowler Regional Park

Beautiful trails, a nature tower, varied terrain, remnants of a WWI camp - what more could you ask for! We'll meet at the Nature Center, at the far (north) end of the park, and hike about 3½ miles on two different trails. We'll go up the road to Trent's for lunch afterwards.

Bring sunscreen, repellent, snack, and water. No pets, please. Kids capable of an adult pace are welcome. Some parts of the trail may be damp, so bring appropriate footwear.

The park is located at 7000 Roosevelt Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32244. From Roosevelt Blvd. near the Yorktown Gate of NAS Jax, go west at Yorktown Rd. Drive north to the end of the road to the Nature Center. RSVP on meetup or to Bill Armstrong at armsfam@yahoo.com.

Meeting on Sea Level Rise in St. Augustine

The Environmental Youth Council is hosting a community meeting at the St. Augustine Amphitheater on "Rising Seas; Rising Community" on September 15 between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Climate Change Threatens 18 U.S. Military Sites

Last month, non-profit group the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) analyzed 18 military installations that represent more than 120 coastal bases nationwide to weigh the impact of climate change on their operations. The UCS reported that rising sea levels due to hurricanes and tidal flooding, intensified by climate change, will put military bases along the U.S. East Coast and Gulf Coast at risk. The sites evaluated included the Mayport Naval Station and the Kings Bay submarine base.



By 2050, most of the sites will be hit by more than 10 times the number of floods than at present, the report said, and at least half of them will experience daily floods. Four of those - including the Naval Air Station in Key West, Florida, and the Marine Corps recruit depot in South Carolina, could lose between 75 and 95 percent of their land in this century. The report said the Pentagon already recognizes the threat of climate change on its military installations but warned that more resources and monitoring systems are needed to boost preparedness. However, in June of 2016, the U.S. House appropriations committee passed an amendment that blocked funding for the Pentagon's climate adaptation strategy.



Sierra Club NE FL members on a recent outing to Julington and Durbin Creek.

“Up! Up! My Friend, and quit your books;
 Or surely you'll grow double:
 Up! Up! My Friend, and clear your looks;
 Why all this toil and trouble?”

The sun, above the mountains' head,
 A freshening luster mellow
 Though all the long green fields has spread,
 His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
 Come, hear and woodland linnet,
 How sweet his music! On my life,
 There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! How blithe the throstle sings!
 He, too, is no mean preacher:
 Come forth into the light of things,
 Let Nature be your Teacher.”

An excerpt from *The Tables Turned* by William Wordsworth

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Meeting Calendar

Tuesday, Sept. 6 @ 6pm

Ponte Vedra Program: *Protecting our Backyard*

Ponte Vedra Library- Main Meeting Room

Monday, Sept. 12 @ 6:30pm

Jacksonville Program

2001 University Blvd W

Wednesday, Sept. 21 @ 6:30pm

Combined ExCom and Conservation Committee Meeting

6850 Belfort Oaks Road, Jacksonville

"If you go off into a far, far forest and get very quiet, you'll come to understand that you're connected with everything"

-Alan W. Watts



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General Programs

Visit our websites for maps to all meeting locations:

florida.sierraclub.org/northeast

www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Northeast-Florida-Group

Ponte Vedra Program
Tuesday, September 6 @ 6 pm

Protecting Our Backyard

Our Ponte Vedra group will host presentations by local citizen activists who are opposing two proposed projects which threaten our environment and quality of life. First is the "Outpost" project which proposes to remove the conservation designation of privately-owned land surrounded by Guana preserve - land that is vastly untouched wild habitat. The other project is the "Watermarke" planned commercial development project in Vilano Beach, which threatens valuable wetlands. The developers are hoping to build a hotel and resort on 43.87 acres of land located about 1.5 miles north of the Vilano bridge on the west side of State Road A1A/Coastal Highway. We also plan to get updates on the Palm Valley-Ponte Vedra Greenway Initiative, which would be a decided plus for our environment, and some other issues which affect our area.

All are welcome! For further information, contact Larry Lickenbrock at (904) 537-6047. The program will be held in the Main Meeting Room of the Ponte Vedra Beach Public Library on Library Road at A1A.

Jacksonville Program
Monday, September 12 @ 6:30 pm

Resource Stewardship and Partnership and the NPS Mission: Relevancy to the Next Generation

'America's best idea,' our National Park system is turning 100 years old! Our area's own National Park, the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve is looking forward to the next 100 years. Where should it focus its resources for the next generation- bike trails, emphasis on the salt marshes and maritime hammocks, the importance of its historical value?

Shauna Ray Allen, Chief of Resource Stewardship and Partnerships for the Park will discuss the challenges and opportunities of this National Park in our own backyard, so that it can remain a national treasure for generations to come!

September 12th, Lakewood Presbyterian Church, 2001 University Blvd W, rear of Ed. Bldg. 6:30-7:00 Social Time. Program begins at 7:00. Free. All welcome.