BAY REFLECTIONS

Restoring Our Bays

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Newsletter Summer 2008



Free public screenings of the new documentary *Sarasota Bay: Celebrating Our Water Heritage.*

Produced by local award-winning filmmaker, Caroline McKeon of Florida Journeys Communications, the 28-minute documentary makes a compelling case for what's been achieved - and still needs to happen - to sustain the health of Sarasota Bay.

There will be two showings at each of the following locations. Each showing will be followed by a Question and Answer session.

Saturday, August 2 - South Manatee Library meeting room. 6081 26th Street

West, Bradenton. First showing 11am. Second showing 12pm.

Saturday, August 9 - Manatee County Extension Service offices, Kendrick Auditorium. 1303 17th Street West, Palmetto. First showing 10am. Second showing 11am.

Saturday, August 16 - FTB Jacaranda Library meeting room. 4143 Woodmere Park Boulevard, Venice. First showing 12pm. Second showing 1pm.

Saturday, August 23 - Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in the Cooley Theater. 811 South Palm Avenue, Sarasota. First showing 1pm. Second showing 2pm.

To RSVP for this event or for more information on the video, please contact the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program at 941-955-8085 or info@sarasotabay.org.



Upcoming Events

Friday, August 15 Bay Partners Grants to promote environmental education, awareness and stewardship that improve the overall quality of Sarasota Bay and its tributaries are available. Download application at www.sarasotabay.org Deadline for receipt is 11/13/08.

Sept 15-21 - Pollution Prevention Week - http://www.p2.org/p2week/index.cfm

September 27 - Bay Buddies at Felt's Audubon Preserve

September 27 - National Estuaries Day - For the 8th consecutive year SBEP will partner with MOTE and Bay Explorers to offer a special package rate to visit MOTE Aquarium & experience an educational cruise on Sarasota Bay. For more information contact info@sarasotabay.org

October 13-19 - Watershed Awareness Week - SBEP working with City of Sarasota and SEC to install watershed kiosk at Ken Thompson Park. Includes lunch-time nature walk

Free Educational Paddles Around the Bay





Bay Wise Kayak Tour program will be offered again starting this fall. From September to May, retired marine biologist and SBEP Citizen Advisory Committee member Dr. Jack Taylor will lead an educational kayak tour in Sarasota Bay waters once a month. Discover the plants, animals, habitats and other features that make Sarasota Bay an Estuary of National Significance. This program is sponsored by the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and is FREE to the public. Participants must bring their own kayak and gear.

For more program information, kayak rental information or for reservations please contact the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program offices at 941-955-8085 or info@sarasotabay.org.

September 6, 9am to Noon - Palma Sola Causeway to Robinson Preserve and return
October 4, 9am to Noon - Palma Sola Causeway to Neal Preserve and return
November 1, 9am to Noon - Coquina Beach Bayside to Jewfish and Sister Keys and return
December 6, 9am to Noon - Ringling Causeway to Hudson Bayou and return
January 3, 9am to Noon - South Lido Park to Otter Key and return
February 7, 9am to Noon - Phillippi Estate Park to Bird Islands Rookery and return
March 7, 9am to Noon - Turtle Beach Park to Jim Neville Marine Preserve and return
April 4, 9am to Noon - Blackburn Point Park to Oscar Scherer State Park and return
May 2, 9am to Noon - Casperson Beach Park to Alligator Creek and return

SBEP in the News

May 19 - ABC 7 & Bay News 9 coverage Grassy Point restoration

June 5 - Pelican Press local news about World Oceans' Day

June 24 - Herald-Tribune (front-page) article about scallops in Bay with Alderson and Janneman quotes

June 26 - Pelican Press (front-page) article about water quality that mentions SBEP & Charles Hegener

June 26 - Pelican Press (page 6) about SBEP being lead agency in award of CIBR grants by the State of Florida

July 1 - Bay News 9 story about scallops in the Bay featuring Raulerson and Janneman

July 18 - Herald-Tribune (front page) story about stormwater and effects quotes Burch about outfall locations along Sarasota Bay

July 19 - Herald-Tribune editorial about 7/18 stormwater article; again quotes Burch about outfalls into Sarasota Bay

August 5 - SNN coverage of SBEP/Every Child's Voice dip-netting @South Lido Park; broadcast every half-hour throughout evening

A Fond Farwell to Our Staff Scientist Gary Raulerson



Gary's last hurrah at South Lido Nature Park *photo by Caroline McKeon*

After seven productive years with SBEP staff scientist Gary Raulerson is relocating to Orlando with his wife Jen. She has accepted a position at a veterinary clinic and he plans to explore future career options.

Gary's significant contributions as environmental scientist to the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program during his tenure are as numerous as they are varied. In his role as SBEP's go-to-science-guy, Raulerson was responsible for coordinating and overseeing technical work supporting continued Bay restoration, specifically in the areas of habitat restoration and water quality assessment and improvement.

He was the SBEP liaison on over twenty-five habitat restoration projects that included artificial reefs, inter-tidal and oyster-reef enhancement. "Every one of the

projects was special and different," says Raulerson, "but if I had to choose I'd say the highlights were Robinson Preserve, Roberts Bay Bird Colony and the oyster projects, the first I know of done in either county."

Gary's ability to establish and maintain cooperative and effective working relationships with the public, elected officials, government officials, scientists, technicians, citizens, and staff was key to his many successes. "As complex as many of the projects were, I could not have accomplished results without the partnership of all the people that helped bring them about - we're not working in a vacuum here, and many shoulders helped lighten the load."

Gary will be greatly missed by his many co-workers and friends. We wish him all the best as he undertakes this new adventure. After August 15 he can be reached at gmangrove@verizon.net.

HABITAT RESTORATION

Seagrass Coverage in Sarasota Bay Returns To 1948 Conditions

Historic photos from 1948 were recently analyzed by Photo Science, a high tech photo interpretation company, and compared to 2005 imagery of the Sarasota Bay bottom. Using the same methodology, it was determined that seagrasses in Sarasota Bay are approximately the same as in 1948.

"Seagrasses are a primary indicator of Bay Health," says Mark Alderson, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Executive Director. "This data suggests the Bay is responding to the large scale pollution control programs implemented regionally and to the capital improvement and educational outreach programs being offered to the community. This is really good news in relation to water quality, so we need to continue these programs to ensure continued Bay recovery."

Grand Opening of Robinson Preserve



Department Director Charlie Hunsicker and VIPs at dedication



Paddlers prepare to launch *photos by Sue Wait*

The Grand Opening of this 487-acre coastal preserve was held Saturday July 19, 2008. The preserve is one of the largest coastal natural properties in Manatee County and features a wide variety of habitats and wildilfe. Recreational amenities, including trails, blue-ways, a canoe/kayak launch, observation tower, bridges and dock, can also be found at the preserve.

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's involvement in the restoration efforts included approximately a $70,000.00 commitment for planning (30%) and permitting expenses as well as general outreach and volunteer support. Sarasota Bay Buddies engaged in several planting and clean-up efforts.

Grassy Point Preserve

Restoration work began in early May and was completed over the summer on the Grassy Point Preserve, a thirty-four acre property on Anna Maria Sound. The property was purchased by the City of Holmes Beach in 2000 with a grant from Florida Communities Trust. The City of Holmes Beach is collaborating with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore inter-tidal wetlands and rare coastal hammock on the property. The $91,000 project includes removal of invasive species such as Australian pines and Brazilian pepper, earth moving of spoil berms to local mangrove grade, and planting native coastal species.

Sarasota Bay Buddies Events

WEDU producing segment about the Sarasota Bay Buddies for "A Gulf Coast Journal with Jack Perkins"



Bay Buddies at South Lido Nature Park *photo by Gary Raulerson*

On July 31 Sarasota Bay Buddies planted approximately 120 mangrove seedlings at South Lido Beach Park. The mangrove seedlings were grown by students at

Brookside Middle School. Approximately 30 Bay Buddies participated in the planting. The South Lido Beach Park restoration has been an ongoing partnership between SBEP and Sarasota County Parks & Recreation.



WEDU crew interviewing George Tatge of Sarasota County Parks Department
photo by Caroline McKeon

All of the activity was captured by WEDU producer Tracy MacDonald for an upcoming segment of WEDU's television series "A Gulf Coast Journal with Jack Perkins." The segment is scheduled to air in the fall of 2008.

CAC member profile



Dr. Lou Newman developed a curiosity about photographic techniques as a teenager

which evolved into a major lifelong hobby. Photography was a significant leisure time activity throughout his years as a rancher and veterinarian in Montana. Early in retirement Lou became involved as a veterinary volunteer at Mote Marine Laboratory and at Pelican Man Bird Sanctuary. Dr Newman said he learned about SBEP through New College professor Dr. John Morrill and attended a CAC meeting with Dr. Charles Edwards. "After that experience" says Newman, "I was hooked!" Lou has a particular penchant for capturing the birds of Florida's Gulf coast in their many habitats. His beautiful images of the Snowy Plover are highlighted in this issue.

Snowy Plover





Images by Lou Newman, Siesta Key and Longboat Key, Sarasota, FL, May, 2008

The Snowy Plover is a pale ghost that runs rapidly across sand of the same color and can become invisible while it remains in plain sight. They are at home on sandy coastal beaches. Snowy Plovers forage on a variety of invertebrates (mostly bugs) in a characteristic run-stop-pluck style. They nest on open beach ground (see first image) where their coloration makes them nearly invisible. Egg incubation takes 24 days; the young can fly after about four weeks (see second image). These images were taken close to hundreds of beach-goers on Sarasota's public beaches. Human behavior and nest vandalizing has resulted in a marked decline of this species.

"Since Snowy Plovers are an imperiled species and their numbers are in decline, considerable efforts are being made to help them become successful breeders," explains Jeanne Dubi of the Sarasota Audubon Society. Volunteers rope off areas of our beaches to minimize human traffic through their nesting sites and to monitor the progress of any young. In addition to human disturbances, they are heavily predated by crows, gulls and herons. During the current nesting season (March until July) on Lido and Siesta Keys, 14 chicks hatched but only two survived through early August. To learn more about Snowy Plovers check out the Sarasota Audubon Society website at www.sarasotaaudubon.org.