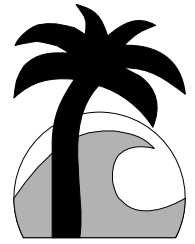


# Island Parks Insider



January 2007

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## In This Issue...

In addition to our regular reports from the president, park manager, volunteer coordinator, training coordinator and membership chairman, this month **Marianne Davis** gives us a look at our upcoming event for Earth Day, 2007; we look at our new Board of Directors; park biologist **Sally Braem** has a top ten list; we see Honeymoon Island's *Dunedin Christmas Parade* float in action, **Pete Krulder** recaps his highlights from 2006; and we begin a new feature called "*Help Wanted*", that will highlight special volunteering opportunities.

## President's Message

*By George Skalkeas*  
*President, Friends of the Island Parks*

This year begins a new chapter in the Friend's history. The major goal of the past several years has all but been accomplished – the Rotary Centennial Nature Center at Honeymoon Island State Park (Nature Center) is a reality and it will have its grand opening early this spring. Though we will have ongoing involvement with the Nature Center, that involvement will be more of a "maintain and grow" approach than a "conceive and construct" one. Future fund raising activities will be directed to other island amenities and needs, including those at Caladesi Island. The board will soon complete a process with park management to determine priorities for 2007. Watch for that list to be published here and on the web site.

The shift in priorities is accompanied by a slight shift in Friend's leadership. Former president **Sally Hess** and former treasurer **Sam Martin**, two of the real trailblazers for the Nature Center, are no longer on the Board and they will

be missed. Immediate past president **Jacques Rene Marion**, who tirelessly worked to get the project finally done, remains on the board but no longer as president - a well-deserved break. We are fortunate, however, that there are still many good folks who remain and will carry on with the initiatives these pioneers championed. At our first board meeting earlier this month we not only elected new officers, we also welcomed two new members and reconfirmed several others for second terms. Please check out the CSO news feature for particulars.

One of the themes you will notice (we hope!) this year is a greater emphasis on encouraging general membership participation in the Friends organization. **Ray Dabkowski**, our membership chairman, is heading up a committee that includes **Diane Hood** and **Ron Geisheimer** that will focus on membership issues exclusively. One of our first initiatives is to separate the board meetings from the membership meetings to allow the board to devote more attention on the members at these meetings. In the past, when board meetings were held just before the general meeting, many meetings ran long and "bled" into the time general members were coming into the hall. They encountered a group of folks intently focused on anything but the general members. Not very "welcoming"! Another of the committee's initiatives will be to do more polling of member opinions on the types of things the Friends can do to make membership (and renewal) more rewarding. In the meantime, **Tim Marshall** has another great series of interesting and entertaining presentations lined up for the year. Come to the meetings and see for yourself! If you have any ideas to improve membership (or any gripes), please contact me, **Ray** or any member of his committee and we will be glad to address them.

## Park Manager's Report

*By Pete Krulder*  
**Park Manager**

The weather the last four weekends has been fantastic and there is no holding back the crowds of visitors we are getting on weekends. The year is getting off to a great start. Many of you have been out to the park with visiting family to enjoy this great weather and our beautiful parks.

Park staff and CSO members and volunteers took part in the *Dunedin Christmas Parade* during the holidays. **Bill** and **Sue Waddell** built the float which featured the *Honeymoon Hut* and a beach scene. It was beautiful. In years past we took part in the boat parade and this year opted to do the street parade instead. This brought us in closer contact to our neighbors in Dunedin. Thank you to all who came out to walk in the parade with us.



**Bottom, L – R: Bill Waddell, Pete Krulder, Jennifer Vellucci, Jack Vellucci, Jada Vellucci, Tom Bittaker**  
**Top, L – R: Ron Doyon, Barry Metcalfe, Melanie Metcalfe, Sue Waddell**

The first training class of docents for the Nature Center completed their training. Congratulations to all who took part. What an energetic group this was. I had the opportunity to attend some of the programs that were put on and was very impressed. **Tim Marshall** did a fantastic job putting together the training. The second class has started and I am confident they will be as good as the first.

In November I attended the *Annual CSO Conference*. The Friends were very well

represented at the conference and for first time attendees I think it was a great learning opportunity.

This year in lieu of Island Fest we will be having a *“Celebrate Earth Day With Friends”* event which will be on April the 21<sup>st</sup>. Committees are still forming and we can always use more volunteers. **Barry Metcalfe** and **Marianne Davis** will be heading this year's event so come out and lend a hand.

At the January CSO board meeting elections were held and the new members of the *Executive Committee* were put in office. Several other board members were reelected to their positions on the Board of Directors. **Sam Martin** the treasurer stepped down from his position and will be replaced by **Barry Metcalfe** and **Jacques Marion** has stepped down as president. **George Skalkeas**, last year's vice president, was elected president. I would like to thank **Jacques** and **Sam** for their outstanding efforts with the Friends. Their support and tireless efforts were a key to the many successes of our organization. In closing, have a great 2007!

## Volunteer News

*By Karen Malo*  
**Park Services Specialist**

Well, it was a busy year again on the islands. For you volunteers who have been here throughout the year as well as you returning winter volunteers and park hosts, thank you for your time and talents! I am constantly amazed at the various talents of volunteers from maintenance, carpentry and sewing to those who help us with even the most mundane of office work or assist with the many needs of visitors in the toll booth and do so with a smile. Without the help of such dedicated and skilled volunteers we would not have accomplished so much this past year. Some of the things our volunteers played key roles in this year include:

- ◆ Island Fest 2006;
- ◆ Coastal Cleanups and Marine Debris Surveys;
- ◆ The *Caladesi Kayak Challenge*;
- ◆ The *Rotary Triathlon*;

- ◆ The *Caladesi Open Golf Tournament*,
- ◆ Landscaping and trail work at the Nature Center;
- ◆ *Halloween in the Park*; and
- ◆ Countless tasks from small repairs to major projects in the parks

I attended some of the training sessions for docents and tour leaders for the new Nature Center and what I noticed was the enthusiasm of the participants and their love of nature which will no doubt spread to our visitors when the Nature Center opens.

Volunteers are an essential part of our team as we simply could not do all that we do without their help. We will celebrate and show our appreciation to our volunteers on Saturday February 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 to 4:00 at the *District 4 Volunteer Appreciation Day* at Alafia River State Park. We have had a great response and are expecting over 300 volunteers. At this event we will honor nominees in various categories. We will meet those volunteers in the next newsletter and learn about what they have contributed to the parks.

Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do to help us in preserving and protecting *The Real Florida!*

(Ed. Note: this story was not prepared by a new volunteer coordinator; our own **Karen LeBlanc** got married between editions and is now **Mrs. Malo!** Congratulations from the entire *Insider* staff.)

## Nature Center News

*By Tim Marshall*  
*OPS Ranger, Training Coordinator*

On Saturday, January 13, 2007, park ranger **Mike Emmerich** welcomed a group of 96 people to hike the *Osprey Trail* at Honeymoon Island State Park. As the hike progressed, a few others joined in, bringing the head count to over 100 participants. On the previous Saturday there were 62 participants. The ranger-led hike has grown in popularity due to a recent regular listing in the *St. Pete Times*, and an additional feature story published in the paper on January 12th.

**Mike** and ranger **Dan Larremore** handled logistics and the interpretation of prescribed burns, and offered a brief overview of park history, while volunteers **Shirley McMann**, **Ray Dabkowski** and I helped make everyone feel welcome, offered information, binoculars, field guides, an up-close intro to *Ant Lions* and assisted the rangers along the way. Near the end of the hike, I took an opportunity to share news of the forthcoming Nature Center and the training classes which are now in session, indicating that the [www.islandparks.org](http://www.islandparks.org) website is a good source of news updates and information regarding the new center. Highlights of the hike included sighting of one immature and two adult eagles, a somewhat rare view of a pair of osprey engaged in mating, and a friendly visit from a gopher tortoise, with sunny clear skies and a refreshing breeze throughout the trip.

The *Osprey Trail Hike* is offered regularly each Saturday at 11:00 am. All interpretive volunteers who wish to join in and assist with hikes are asked to contact either me or **Karen Malo** for details.

## Friends CSO News

### **2007 Board and Officers**

Under the Friends by-laws, directors serve staggered two-year terms and there is no limit to the number of terms directors may serve. The following *Friends* members begin the second year of their two-year terms in January 2007: **Ron Geisheimer**, **Diane Scott**, **Marianne Davis**, **Skip Meadows**, **Barry Metcalfe** and **Ray Dabkowski**. They are joined by "holdovers" **Jacques Rene Marion**, **George Skalkeas**, **Gabriella Mullins**, **Shane Bittaker**, **Pat Lin**, **Scott Hood**, **Linda Taylor** and **Mike Moran** who are beginning *new* two-year terms. In addition, two new directors begin their two-year terms in 2007: **Wayne Case** and **Dave Cesare**. Welcome **Wayne** and **Dave!**

From this group an *Executive Committee* is formed and for 2007 it is comprised of **George Skalkeas**, president; **Scott Hood**, vice president; **Barry Metcalfe**, treasurer; and **Ron Geisheimer**, secretary.

The board from time to time creates sub-committees and for 2007 there is a membership

committee chaired by **Ray Dabkowski** who is joined by **Ron Geisheimer** and **Diane Hood**; and a big “*Celebrate Earth Day with Friends*” committee co-chaired by **Marianne Davis** and **Barry Metcalfe** leading a cast of thousands! Please feel free to contact any of these folks about any Friends issue. There is more detailed contact information on the last page.

### ***Welcome New Members***

Please welcome our newest Friends:

**Richard Hillman**  
**Kim and Paul Reggio**  
**Ed Heitov**  
**Carole Ketterhagen**

Remember, benefits include voting rights, a quarterly newsletter, and free admission to Honeymoon and Caladesi islands on the second Saturday of each month. Refer a friend! Membership applications are available on-line at [www.islandparks.org](http://www.islandparks.org), at the toll booth on Honeymoon Island and at the ranger station on Caladesi Island.

### ***Choose Your News Delivery Options***

You know that you can view the *Insider* on-line at any time. Now you can opt to receive it via e-mail rather than US Mail. Simply notify the editor of your choice!

## **Top Ten Reasons We Leave Seaweed on the Beach**

***By Sally Braem***  
***Park Biologist***

1. The philosophy of the *Division of Recreation and Parks* is to maintain the natural processes that shape the structure, function, and species composition of Florida’s diverse natural communities as they would have occurred in the original domain.

2. The seaweed on the beach is composed of sea grasses and marine algae, primarily. Most of the dead plant material is composed of *thalassia testudinum* (turtle grass) and *syringodium filiforme* (manatee grass). The other “stuff” can consist of various macro-algae (sargassum weed) and micro algae, sponges, invertebrates, and mollusks, among many other

species. Depending on the wind and tides, the line of seaweed, called “wrack”, can be substantial.

3. It is a natural part of seashore life; a part of the coastal food chain used by hundreds of animals.

4. It is a form of recycling nutrients onto the poor, sandy soil of the beach and near-shore waters. The organic material fertilizes the beach.

5. It creates small rises (dunes), which trap blowing sand and cause the beaches to grow, stabilizing the shore and the island. One can see small “dunelets” at the high tide lines of hurricanes from two years ago.

6. These islands are some of the last undeveloped parcels in Florida. Many species of birds listed as threatened or endangered use the beaches for resting, courting, foraging and nesting areas.

7. To many species of foraging shorebirds, the seaweed is a prime feeding site.

8. Female sea turtles lay their eggs below the sand surface. The eggs are vulnerable to damage from vehicles such as beach cleaners, or other surface impacts on the sand.

9. When the plant seeds trapped in the wrack germinate, they become the pioneer plants of the beach, which stabilize the upper beach and provide cover and food for butterflies and birds and other animals.

10. Without the seaweed, the beach would be a much less lively place!

## **2006 Parks’ Highlights**

***By Pete Krulder***  
***Park Manager***

The past year has had many highlights. We have had several very successful events and have seen several changes of staff throughout the year.

The *Caladesi Kayak Challenge* was the first event of the year and although the weather was

pretty rough the race went off without a hitch. My hat is off to **Rob** and **Karen Mirlenbrink** for such a great event.

*Island Fest* was another great success and helped us reach the financial goals to complete the Nature Center. Countless volunteer hours went into this event and **Sally Hess** and **Jacques Marion** should be commended for organizing this spectacular event.

The *Rotary Triathlon* brought in competitors from all over the state and several of our CSO members were there to support this worthwhile event. The Rotary Club made a nice contribution to the CSO and the funds raised will help Rotary Club efforts both in the local community and Rotary Club efforts throughout the world.

The staff and volunteers at Caladesi Island once again sponsored the *Marine Max* event and what a sight it was to see the marina filled to capacity with boats of all sizes. I was happy to be on hand when Gulfwinds Marine Max presented the CSO with a check for \$5000.

This was followed by the *Caladesi Challenge Golf Tournament*. **Shawn Yeager** and his tournament committee put on quiet an event at the Lansbrook Country Club. The foursome of *Team Caladesi* came in dead last place as it should be.

My favorite event of the year was our *Halloween* event. We were rained out half way through the first night with a great crowd prior to the rains. The second night after everything was put back together from the storm was fantastic. We had over 3,000 visitors for both nights. The committee and all of the volunteers did a phenomenal job.

Another highlight was the completion of the Nature Center renovation. Anyone who does not know any better would find it hard to believe that this beautiful building was once an old bathroom.

During the course of the year we had to say goodbye to some staff but with that we welcomed new members. Several staff members left due to promotions. Ranger **Jason Maurer** was promoted to assistant manager at Payne's Prairie State Park.

Assistant manager **Don Bergeron** transferred to Gamble Plantation and is now the park manager. **Shawn Yeager** transferred and is now the District Operations Management Consultant II.

Three of our OPS rangers, **Emilio Riera**, **Greg Cagle** and **Dan Larremore**, were promoted to park rangers. **Gloria Beauchamp** took over as the assistant manager at Honeymoon and **Bill Gruber** is now the assistant manager at Caladesi. Ranger **Tom Bittaker** returned from his short stay in the Keys and ranger **Shirley Meggs** returned from her short stint at Egmont Key. We also gained a couple of new OPS rangers in **Adam Wright** and **Tracy Telatycki**.

We bid farewell to some good friends but made some new friends too. We had some fantastic events, raised some money and had a good time doing it all! I look forward to what 2007 will bring.

## Looking Ahead

**By Marianne Davis**  
**Event Co-Chair**  
**"Celebrate Earth Day 2007 with Friends"**

In recognition of the 37<sup>th</sup> annual Earth Day, the Friends of the Island Parks invites local area residents and visitors to celebrate this special day and enjoy the natural beauty of both Honeymoon and Caladesi islands.

For those of you unfamiliar with the history, the first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970. It is now an annual event for people around the world to celebrate the earth and renew our commitment to building a safer, healthier and cleaner world. Earth Day is also time to celebrate gains we have made and create new visions to accelerate environmental progress.

"*Celebrate Earth Day 2007 with Friends*" will be held on April 21<sup>st</sup> at Honeymoon Island State Park between 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Events will incorporate environmental education, conservation and recreation activities. Admission to the park is \$5/car. The day will start with our very own *Shark Bite Challenge*, an annual kayak race that draws serious kayakers and spectators from around

the nation. For the novice, looking for a little fun, there is a four-mile race. For the more serious, experienced kayaker, we'll have a longer, eight-mile course (just be ready for a little competition). After the race, plan on heading over to the park's picnic area, where you can enjoy great food, musical entertainment and a variety of vendors displaying arts and crafts, environmental products and alternative energy sources.

Nature lovers will enjoy scenic guided nature walks on the Osprey Nature Trail, one of the few remaining slash pine forests in South Florida. Bring your binoculars as you'll be sure to spot osprey and a variety of other birds along the way. Guided beach walks will be available as well.

There will also be an opportunity to visit the recently completed Nature Center where we will educate, entertain and enlighten visitors about preserving these marvelous, rare and delicate barrier islands.

Beach lovers will also find plenty of activities – swimming, fishing and snorkeling in the warm waters of the Gulf or simply soaking up the sun and enjoying the beautiful scenery and abundant shelling that our islands offer.

It's all about creating connections – to nature, to our neighborhoods, to our community. So, we invite you to come to Honeymoon Island to “Celebrate Earth Day 2007 with Friends” and establish a connection with us and with your environment.

## **Help Wanted**

Part Time (four-hour shifts) and Temporary:

### ***Construction***

Help set-up and take-down at Earth Day event. (call George Skalkeas 727-733-5188)

### ***Environmental***

Deliver ice; recycle recyclables; empty trash containers at Earth Day event. (call George Skalkeas 727-733-5188)

### ***Hospitality***

Man the volunteer booth or Friends table, park cars at Earth day event. (call George Skalkeas 727-733-5188)

### ***Recreation/Sports***

Assist with timing and related matters at *Shark Bite Challenge* at Earth Day event. (call George Skalkeas 727-733-5188)

### ***Sales***

Sell beer, soda, water, tokens or admissions at Earth Day event. (call George Skalkeas 727-733-5188)

### ***Show Business***

Help out at *Osprey Village* during the Earth Day event. (call George Skalkeas 727-733-5188)

Full Time

### ***Journalism***

Major Island periodical is seeking to fill several key positions. If any of the following great career opportunities appeal to you, simply contact **George Skalkeas** for more information! *News Editor; Special Features Editor; Science Editor; Circulation Manager; Government Liaison; Publisher; and Reporter*



## Island Calendar

All events at Honeymoon unless otherwise noted

Feb	20	Board Meeting
Feb	24	Step Up, Florida (Caladesi)
Feb	27	Membership Meeting
Mar	3	Dist. IV CSO Conference
Mar	20	Board Meeting
Mar	27	Membership Meeting
Apr	17	Board Meeting
Apr	21	Earth Day Event
Apr	24	Membership Meeting

## Island Amenities

Be sure to visit *Cafe Honeymoon* and *Cafe Caladesi* when on the islands for food, gifts and beach supplies. Try out the **pancake breakfasts** on Sunday at *Cafe Honeymoon*. In addition, check with them about special occasions on the islands.

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www.bonappetit-restaurant.com  
For More Information Contact: Shane Bittaker  
727 • 736 • 2132  
1 Causeway Blvd.  
Dunedin, FL

## Friends Board and Member Meetings

The Board of Directors meets at 6:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month for approximately one and a half hours. The general membership meeting is on the fourth Tuesday of the month and begins at 7:00 p.m. and usually features a presentation of local interest. Unless otherwise posted, both meetings are held at the *Rotary Centennial Nature Center at Honeymoon Island*. You are welcome to attend the board meeting and highly encouraged to come to the membership meetings!



## Friends of the Island Parks

### **Members of the Board**

#### **Executive Committee**

President: George Skalkeas  
Vice President: Scott Hood  
Treasurer: Barry Metcalfe  
Secretary: Ron Geisheimer

#### **Directors**

Shane Bittaker  
Wayne Case  
Dave Cesare  
Ray Dabkowski  
Marianne Davis  
Diane Hood  
Pat Linn  
Skip Meadows  
Barry Metcalfe  
Mike Moran  
Gabiella Mullins  
Linda Taylor

### **Contact Us**

#### Gulf Island State Parks

Honeymoon Island: 727-469-5942

Caladesi Island: 727-469-5918

#### Volunteers

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#### Friends of the Island Parks

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#### Nature Center

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727-415-1784

#### Newsletter

George Skalkeas (NFL)\*

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\* Not for long!