



Continuous monthly issues since June 2009!

Trip Spotlight: Florida Keys Challenge



Join us for a cold weather escape as we paddle the Florida Keys and explore the turquoise waters and some of the most beautiful state parks in the State of Florida and the United States! This year's trip is extended and includes a stay at Florida Sea Base, Long Key State Park (the new youth camp area), Curry Hammock State Park, Bahia Honda State Park as well as Camp Wesumkee. Nature beckons as you cross paths with Key deer, sea turtles, dolphins, and egrets. You will make memories grounded in nature with eco-friendly Florida charm in an area that is known as a paddling destination. Register [here](#) by January 1, 2020.



Click on the above image to watch video highlights from the 2015 Florida Keys Challenge.



2019-20 Season

[Wekiva/St. John's River Ramble](#)
December 5-8, 2019
 Join us for a paddle down the iconic Rock Springs Run, back to Wekiva Springs State Park, and on to Wilson's Landing in Seminole County as we camp in rustic cabins for the first two nights and at Wilson's Landing on the way to the finish at Blue Spring State Park in Volusia County. At a total of less than 30 miles, this trip is perfect for beginners to paddle camping.
 Register by: November 21

[Florida Keys Challenge](#)
January 15-22, 2020
 Paddle the azure coastal waters of the Middle Florida Keys, including the length of the famed 7-Mile Bridge, explore mangrove tunnels, and watch sea turtle surface beside your kayak, and enjoy a snorkeling trip out to Looe Key.
 Register by: January 1

[Wild Wonderful Withacoochee](#) **(Date Change)**
February 11-16, 2020
 Beginning at Lake Panasoffkee, paddlers will thread their way through hardwood swamps and tannic streams on a 60-mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico. The adventure includes a side trip to the colorful Rainbow River and its world class first magnitude spring.
 Register by: February 1

[Choctawhatchee Challenge](#)
March 13-19, 2020
 Get away from it all into the heart of the Panhandle as we paddle 86 miles of the mighty Choctawhatchee. This is a journey into Wild Florida where wildlife far outnumber humans, and paddlers can stumble upon spectacular springs.
 Register by: February 28

[Suwannee River Paddling Festival](#)
April 3-5, 2020
 With camping atop the bluff overlooking two beautiful rivers, our season-capping festival takes place at Suwannee River State Park near Live Oak. The weekend will offer supported 8-12 mile paddling options on both the Suwannee and Withlacoochee Rivers, a concert featuring Paddle Florida's favorite musicians, and educational presentations from regional waterway experts.
 Register by: March 20

[Earth Day Celebration: Flori-Bama Expedition on the Perdido River](#)
April 11-16, 2020
 Paddling the Florida/Alabama border, enjoy beach camping along a cozy meandering river to the more open waters of Perdido Bay as we explore the most diverse set of ecosystems of the season.
 Register by: March 28

[Earth Day Celebration: Springtime on the Ochlockonee](#)
April 18-22, 2020
 From wild Tupelo honey to fresh Gulf oysters, experience the Panhandle's Ochlockonee River which winds through state and national forest lands on 76 miles of Florida's most remote wilderness river trail.
 Register by: April 2

Note: Many of these trips have historically sold out before the registration deadline, so to ensure you have a spot, please register early.

Paddle Florida Program Update

Wilson's Landing Greg Pflug
Long Key State Park Monica Woll
Bahia Honda State Park Edan Archer
Potts Preserve Gene Altman
Rainbow Springs Nathan Whitt
Suwannee River Paddling Festival Grant Peoples

WEAR IT Florida Campaign

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission



Photo: FWC

Did you know that Florida has the unfortunate distinction of being the national leader in annual boating fatalities? A majority of fatalities every year are boaters that are reported swimmers who fall overboard and drown. These deaths can be easily prevented by wearing a lifejacket. Wearing a lifejacket can mean the difference between a fun day on the water and becoming a statistic. Don't believe it could happen to you? It happens in Florida to an average of one person each week who never thought it could happen to them either. This is where the Wear It Florida campaign comes in to play. The campaign goal is clear and simple: to increase the number of recreational boaters who consistently wear a life jacket while on the water. [\[Read more...\]](#)



Bottled spring water and corporate responsibility

By Dr. Robert Knight

Executive Director,
Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute

Nestle's recent move into the Florida Springs Heartland (I) of Gilchrist County to bottle water from Ginnie Springs warrants full historical disclosure. In 2002 Coca Cola purchased the High Springs water bottling facility, originally built in 1998 and operated by AquaPenn Springwater Company owned by the Groupe DANONE (II). This facility received "spring water" via a water use permit held by Seven Springs Water Company. Groundwater is extracted from the Floridan Aquifer (III) through two conventional wells located in uplands several hundred yards away from the seven springs constituting the Ginnie Springs Group on the Ginnie Springs Outdoors' private property. The Seven Springs permit was for the same 1.1 million gallons per day (GPD) currently being sought by Nestle' (IV), but Coca Cola was only using about 200,000 GPD. [\[Read more...\]](#)

Florida Flora & Fauna Spotlight

Red tide likely to blame for the highest number of sea turtle deaths a Florida County has ever recorded

By Drew Kann, CNN

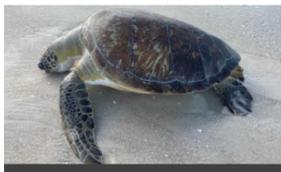


Photo: Collier County Parks and Recreation Department

As a toxic red tide continues to grip the coast of southwest Florida, one county saw the highest number of sea turtle deaths it has ever recorded for a single month in October. Last month, 58 turtles were reported dead in Collier County and two others were reported sick or injured, according to Maura Kraus, the principal environmental specialist for the county's parks and recreation division.

The county's records of sea turtle strandings -- which includes sick, injured or dead turtles -- date back to 1989.

The uptick is striking.

Over the past decade, Collier County has recorded an average of just under five sea turtle strandings a month in October. [\[Read more...\]](#)

Florida mangroves can reduce flooding and insurance costs, new study shows

By Charlotte Trattner, News 6



Scientists have known for years mangroves can help prevent flood damage along Florida coastal areas, but the researchers behind a new study hope insurance companies will include mangroves when assessing risks and in turn save counties money.

The study, led by the Nature Conservancy Florida chapter, analyzed mangroves and if they can be used to measure benefits for insurance companies that assess coastal properties and coastal infrastructure.

Mangroves, along with other coastal ecosystems such as salt marshes, beaches and coral reefs offer protection from coastal storms, flooding and surges, said Laura Geselbracht, the senior marine scientist at the Nature Conservancy's Florida chapter.

According to the Nature Conservancy's website, mangrove forests have numerous benefits including improving water quality, capturing carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases, and providing a habitat for wildlife. [\[Read more...\]](#)

How To: 10 Tips for Paddling with a Group



Paddling group dynamics are very interesting and they vary from group to group. [\[Read more...\]](#)

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Reconnect with paddling friends and make new ones on Paddle Florida's [Facebook page](#). Our daily feeds provide updates on the news impacting Florida's waterways and wildlife as well as our upcoming trips. Send us your favorite photo depicting paddling in Florida and it might be selected as our "Picture of the Day!"

Support Paddle Florida

Up to now Paddle Florida has been able to cover 95% of its overhead through registration fees. Our initiative to reduce those registration fees has allowed us to increase participation. We want to expand our visibility and introduce many more people to the issues related to our natural environment and why it matters. We do these events in the hope that our participants might share our message AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO JOIN US, while improving engagement in their communities.

If you believe in what we are doing, please consider making a donation this holiday season. 100% of your donation will help us increase the impact we can make toward our non-profit mission of promoting water conservation, wildlife preservation, restoration of springs and protection of waterways in Florida.

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Do you provide a paddling oriented product or service? Consider placing an ad in our monthly newsletter. You can reach over 6,648 (and growing) monthly subscribers for \$75/month, or get two months free by promoting your product or business over 12 months for \$750! Contact Bill Richards at (352) 377-8342 or bill@paddleflorida.org for details.