



### Trip Spotlight: Wild, Wonderful Withlacoochee

Don't forget to register by January 4th!



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 trip includes the colorful Rainbow River and its world class first magnitude spring. Evening programs include talks by representatives of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Office of Greenways and Trails and a special performance at Rainbow Springs State Park by Bing Futch and his Appalachian Mountain Dulcimer. You don't want to miss it! Click [here](#) to register.



Inspiring Meaningful Adventure.

#### Upcoming Trips

**Wild, Wonderful Withlacoochee**  
*January 17-22, 2019*  
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: January 4*

**Florida Keys Challenge**  
*February 9-15, 2019*  
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 turtles surface beside your kayak, and enjoy a snorkeling trip out to Looe Key.  
*Register by: January 26*

**Flori-Bama Expedition on the Perdido River**  
*March 10-15, 2019*  
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: February 24*

**Suwannee River Paddling Festival**  
*April 5-7, 2019*  
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 22*

### Hurricanes and paddling

By Doug Alderson



Impacts from Hurricane Michael to St. Joseph State Park. Source: FDEP.

Hurricane Michael was devastating to many communities along Florida's Panhandle, destroying homes and disrupting lives. 155 mile-an-hour winds and an incredible storm surge wreaked havoc on Mexico Beach, Panama City, Port St. Joe, Apalachicola and other communities. Inland, high winds tore through a wide swath of forests and state parks. Forests in Torreya, Three Rivers and Florida Caverns state parks were devastated and it will likely take decades for the mature forest canopies to form again. So, how does all of this relate to paddling?

St. Joseph State Park, a favorite paddling spot, was breached in two places and the park's two developed campgrounds were destroyed. The park has several primitive campsites that were used by paddlers and these were likely not affected to a large degree. However, the park will remain closed for the foreseeable future. First, a plan must be developed and funding allocated to close the breaches and rebuild the park roads, remove the destroyed campground buildings, and rebuild the campgrounds. Or, the park will become an island park where only boat access is allowed. However, the hazardous campground debris must first be removed due to liability reasons, a task that will be more daunting and costly if the breaches are not closed. [\[Read more...\]](#)



### Too polluted to drink

By Robert L. Knight, Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute

For too many families, North Florida's once pristine groundwater may be unsafe to drink. One nasty pollutant is nitrate, a principal ingredient in synthetic agricultural and urban fertilizers, and in animal manure and human waste.

In the past 100 years of rapid development, the ambient concentration of nitrate throughout the Floridan Aquifer has risen from a baseline concentration of less than 0.05 parts per million (ppm) to 1 ppm, a 20-fold increase.

As with most environmental variables, this average concentration is greatly exceeded in some local portions of the aquifer. For example, in areas of intensive animal confinement such as dairies and horse farms, in urban areas with high septic tank densities and under highly-fertilized landscapes such as golf courses, nitrate concentrations can exceed 10 ppm, the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act maximum contaminant level goal.

Drinking water nitrate concentrations above 10 ppm can cause methemoglobinemia, or "blue baby syndrome," a potentially lethal interference with the normal ability of a baby's blood to transport oxygen to the body's cells. At lower concentrations, there is growing evidence of a strong relationship between nitrate in drinking water and various cancers and birth defects. [\[Read more...\]](#)

### DeSantis has a chance to manage Florida's growth wisely and protect its environment

By David Colburn and Cynthia Barnett, *Special to the Tampa Bay Times*



Source: Florida Park Service

For months leading up to Florida's chaotic midterm elections, incoming Gov.-elect Ron DeSantis clashed with challengers over race, schools, the economy, toxic algae and "California-style energy policy."

As DeSantis takes office as the state's 46th governor in January, the issue underlying those and so many others is Florida's surging population growth and its spillover effects from pollution to overcrowded schools.

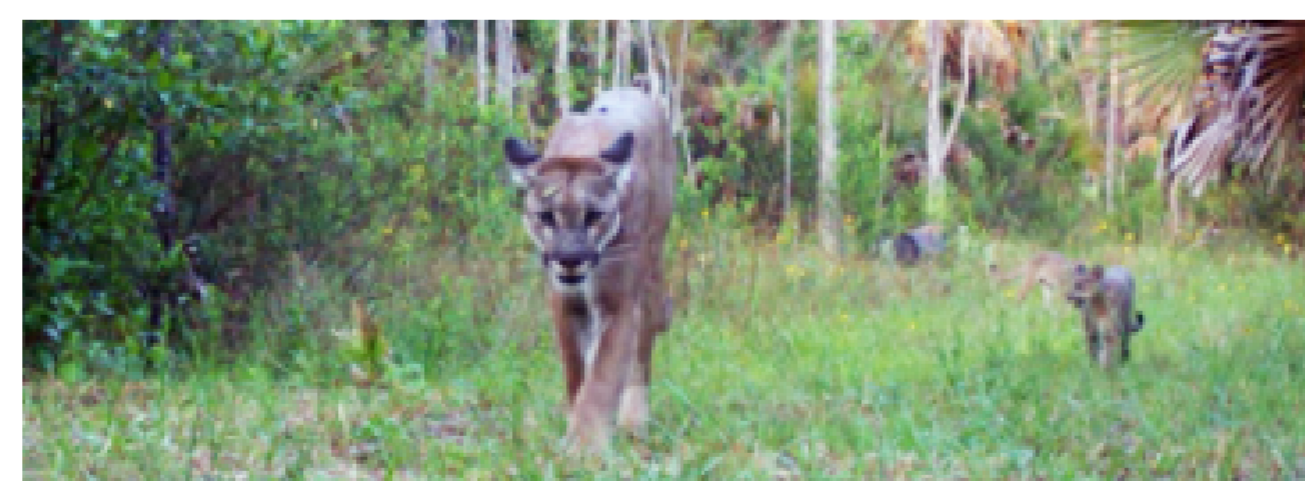
Florida's net growth has reached nearly 1,000 people a day, a rate not seen since the early 2000s. Unlike the last surge of that magnitude, Florida is absorbing newcomers without the growth-management system built in earlier generations — and amid the rising seas of climate change few people thought about back then.

Growth has been Florida's grand paradox for all of the state's modern history, creating prosperity and opportunity as well as ecological injury that threatens the quality of life that drew us here in the first place. And every modern Florida governor has confronted growth-related challenges, with varying degrees of leadership and success. [\[Read more...\]](#)

### Florida Flora & Fauna Spotlight

*Progress being made on saving panthers*

By Tom Palmer, *The Ledger*



Source: FWC

When I first started following the plight of the Florida panther decades ago, there wasn't much good news.

In the early 1970s, state biologists weren't even sure whether there were any panthers left.

There were some in a relatively small section of southwest Florida, but they were in bad shape because of isolation and inbreeding that concentrated bad traits among the survivors. It was a far cry from the days when they roamed the entire southeastern United States.

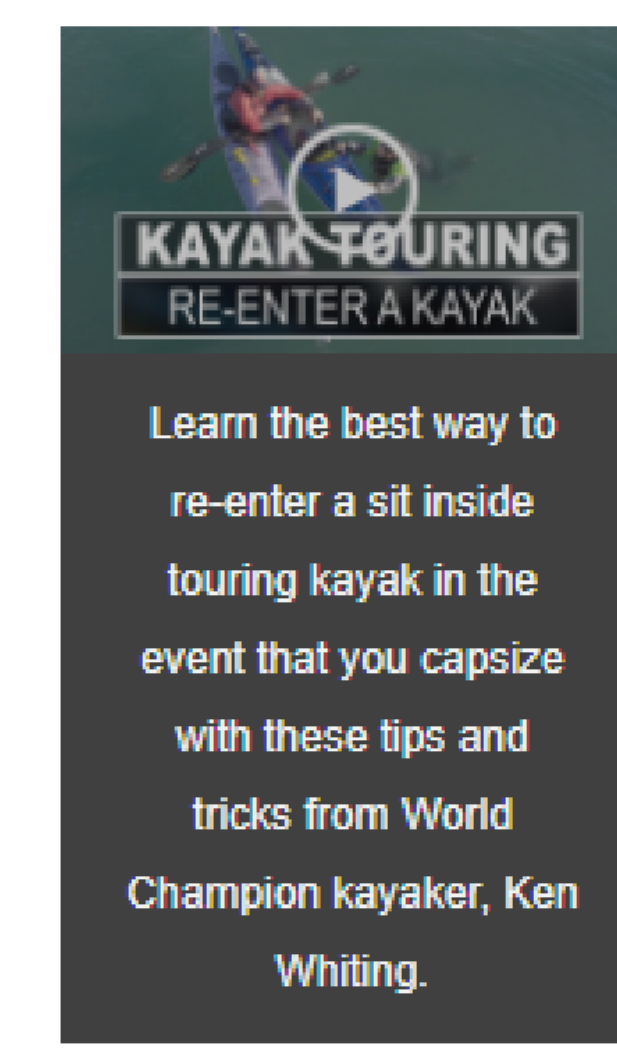
Then, when state wildlife biologists began capturing panthers to learn more about their condition, at least one died, which didn't reflect well on the effort.

But biologists brought in some distant relatives of the Florida cats from Texas to help bolster the gene pool. More habitat was acquired. Highway underpasses were constructed and more are planned — including some under Interstate 4 — to reduce road kills.

Now there's a lot more good news than bad, said Jennifer Korn, a panther biologist who spoke at last week's Ancient Islands Sierra Club meeting.

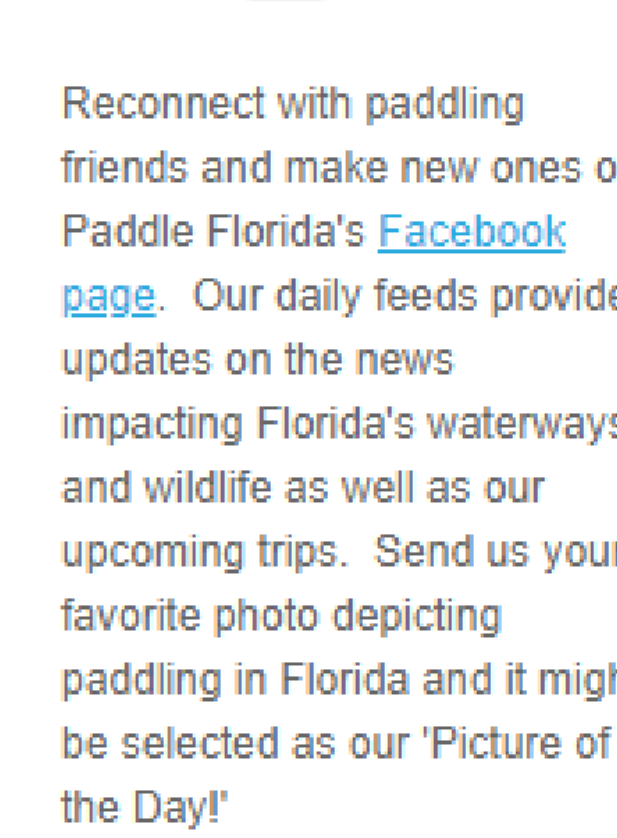
The population has increased from around 30 to perhaps as many as 200 animals. [\[Read more...\]](#)

### How To: Re-enter a Sit Inside Touring Kayak



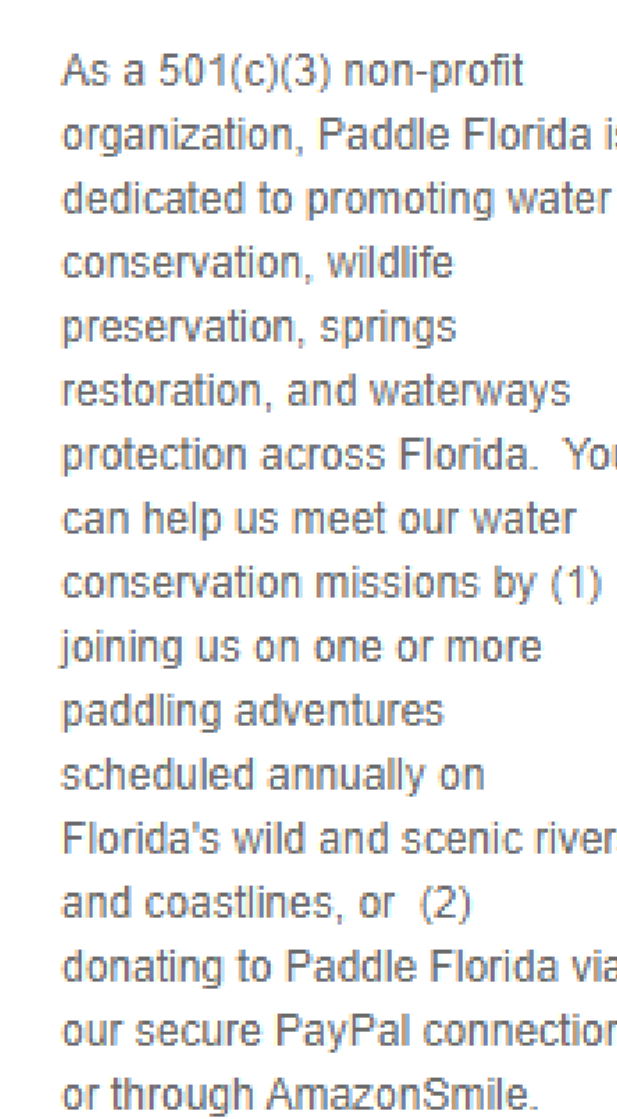
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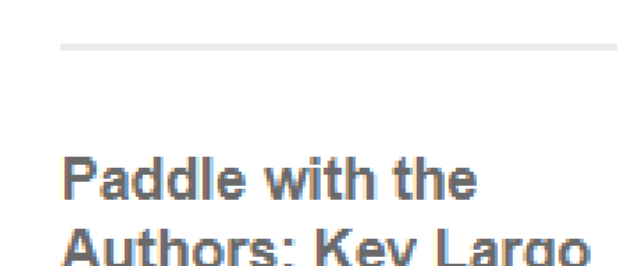
Reconnect with paddling friends and make new ones on Paddle Florida's [Facebook page](#). Our daily feeds provide updates on the news impacting Florida's waterways and wildlife as well as our upcoming trips. Send us your favorite photo depicting paddling in Florida and it might be selected as our "Picture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

### Support Paddle Florida This Holiday Season with AmazonSmile

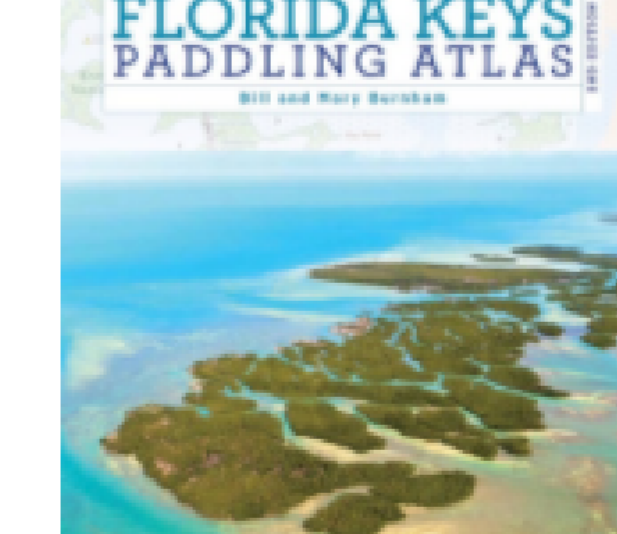


As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Paddle Florida is dedicated to promoting water conservation, wildlife preservation, springs restoration, and waterways protection across Florida. You can help us meet our water conservation missions by (1) joining us on one or more paddling adventures scheduled annually on Florida's wild and scenic rivers and coastlines, or (2) donating to Paddle Florida via our secure PayPal connection or through AmazonSmile.

If you're an Amazon shopper, you can sign up for AmazonSmile at [this link](#) and confirm your desire to support us. Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to Paddle Florida.



### Paddle with the Authors: Key Largo to Key West



Burnham Guides will be leading two of their signature Key Largo to Key West paddles this winter: Jan. 25-Feb. 5 and March 9-20, 2019. Mary and Bill have been leading this trip for a decade from the pages of their "Florida Keys Paddling Atlas." Trips are small group and all-inclusive. Discounts apply for bringing your own sea kayak and/or camping gear. Details can be found [here](#).

Contact: 305-240-0650 or [mary@burnhamguides.com](mailto:mary@burnhamguides.com)

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