



Continuous monthly issues since June 2009!

Trip Spotlight: Choctawhatchee Challenge



The Choctawhatchee Challenge is a journey into the heart of Wild Florida where wildlife far outnumber humans. We will be extending our adventure about five miles north of the Florida border to launch in Geneva, Alabama and paddle a 73-mile stretch to Cowford Landing near Ebro, Florida. The Choctawhatchee provides habitat for an array of native wildlife, with several endangered plant and animal species, including the federally threatened Gulf Sturgeon. We will paddle beside a broad floodplain dotted with old growth hardwood forests and a few sparkling springs whose clear waters mingle with the tea-colored flow of this majestic river. Click [here](#) to register for this trip.



Inspiring. Meaningful. Adventure.

2019-20 Season

[Wild, Wonderful Withacochee \(Date change\)](#)
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 3

[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 Withacochee Rivers, a concert featuring Paddle Florida's favorite musicians, and educational presentations from regional waterway experts.
Register by: March 20

[Earth Day Celebration: Flor. 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.

Florida Agrees to Buy Broward Wetlands To End Everglades Oil Drilling Efforts

Jenny Staletovich, WUSF News



Photo: Jenny Staletovich/WLRN

To end its losing battle to block oil exploration in Everglades wetlands, Florida plans to purchase 20,000 acres in Broward County.

Gov. Ron DeSantis said Wednesday the state expects to pay between \$16.5 and \$18 million to Kanter Real Estate for land the family began amassing decades ago. The deal came together quickly in the last couple of weeks, officials said, after the state concluded its legal attempts to block the drilling would fail. [\[Read more...\]](#)

How To Save Our Wild Places from Being loved to Death

Kaydi Pyette, Paddling Magazine

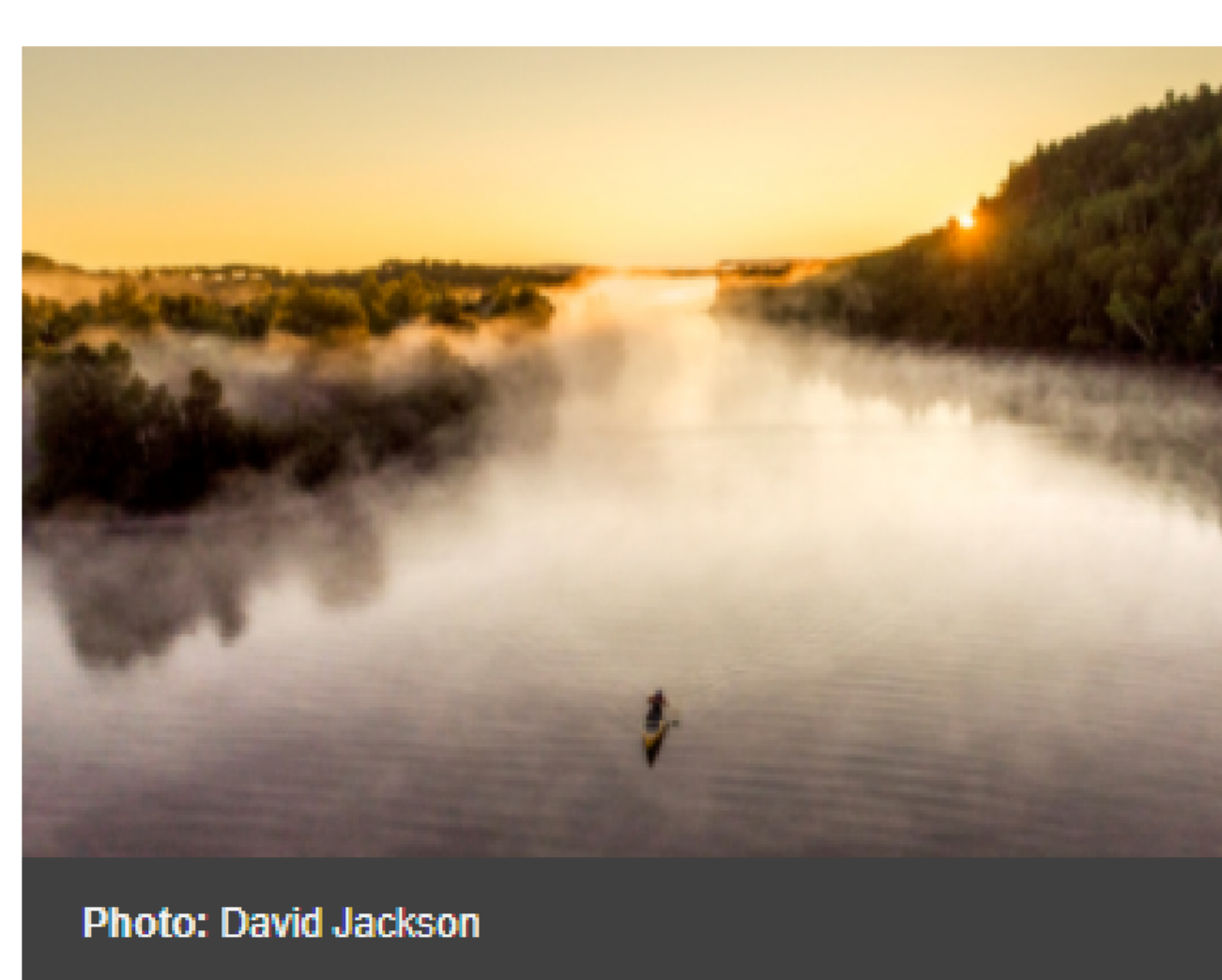


Photo: David Jackson

"I can only describe it like a zombie apocalypse." Those are the words of Brad Bogle, as told to *the Globe and Mail* newspaper.

Bogle's parents operate a family farm an hour's drive west of the city I call home. The farm fields opened to the public each season when the sunflowers were in bloom. Over several weeks in July and August a few thousand tourists would visit and bask amongst the sunny faces.

Last summer, a tagged social media post featuring the estimated 1.4 million sunflower plants went viral. Then all hell broke loose. Enter the zombies. [\[Read more...\]](#)



A New year's Resolution for Florida's Springs

By Dr. Robert Knight

Executive Director,
Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is the state's lead agency for environmental management and stewardship and is tasked to protect the state's air, water and land. Reading from FDEP's website, its vision is "... to create strong community partnerships, safeguard Florida's natural resources, and enhance its ecosystems."

Headquartered in Tallahassee, but with staff state-wide, FDEP has approximately 3,000 employees and an annual budget of about \$1.5 billion. Composed of 13 divisions, including the Division of Parks and Recreation, FDEP oversees all aspects of Florida's 175 state parks. Those parks, preserves, and recreational areas encompass more than 800,000 acres and have won top honors nationwide four of the past 20 years. Annual visitation to Florida's state parks exceeds 30 million visitors. [\[Read more...\]](#)

The warming climate is causing the seas to rise, endangering coastal cities in Florida and around the world

Christian Ramirez, University of Florida



Florida's coasts have seen an acceleration in sea-level rise for more than 30 years, and that rate keeps increasing. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that sea levels are now rising more than a third of an inch in certain parts of Florida's coast.

Rising seas are just one of the effects of climate change. The change in sea levels can be linked to thermal expansion due to warmer oceans, melting glaciers caused by higher temperatures and the loss of ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica.

Consequences of higher sea levels include destructive erosion, wetland flooding, aquifer and agricultural soil contamination with salt, and habitat loss for organisms. [\[Read more...\]](#)

Florida Flora & Fauna Spotlight

Boaters broke the record for killing manatees in 2019

By Craig Pittman, Tampa Bay Times



Photo: U.S. Geological Survey

In 2019, Florida's boaters set a new record for killing manatees in the state's waterways. State manatee experts weren't surprised.

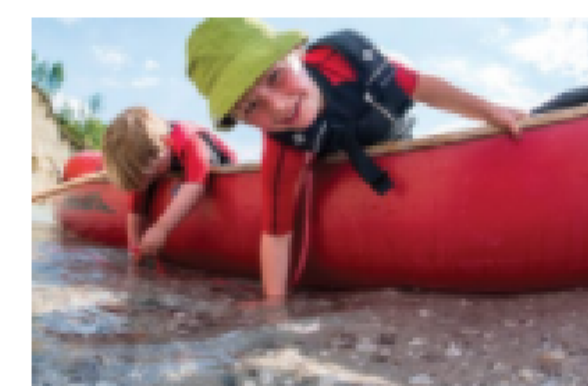
"It's a trend we have seen every year for the past few years," said Martine de Wit, the veterinarian who oversees the state's Marine Mammal Pathology Laboratory in St. Petersburg. The lab examines each dead manatee to determine a cause of death, and also spearheads the state's rescue of injured and ailing manatees.

As of Dec. 20, boaters had killed 130 manatees this year, topping the 2018 record of 122, which topped the 2017 record of 108, which topped the 2016 record of 104, figures from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission show. [\[Read more...\]](#)

Have an idea for a Paddle Florida trip?

Contact us at bill@paddleflorida.org with recommendations for waterways in your community that might serve as a good location for the next Paddle Florida event!

How To: Survive On A Family Canoe Trip



Learn from an expert who has been on multiple camping trips with his family. [\[Read more...\]](#)

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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. This is no longer the case, and we need to find another way to generate revenue. Our initiative to reduce 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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