



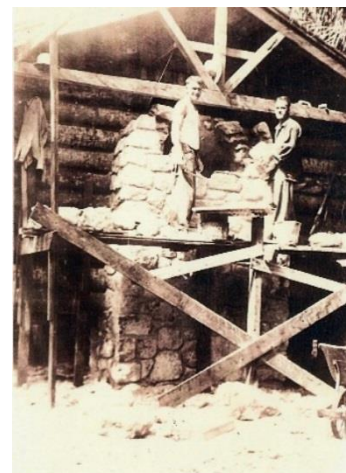
Myakka River State Park February 2019



The CCC at MRSP—Part II

The Civilian Conservation Corps was an incredible organization with lasting impacts on Myakka River State Park. It was a struggle to establish a corps in the Myakka River Valley, but thanks to Arthur Britton Edwards' dedication, the first men came in 1934, ready to start work taming the brutal wilderness. (Need a refresher or catch up? Check out *The CCC at MRSP Part 1* in our [November newsletter](#).)

Our story continues in 1935, when Sarasota had grown accustomed to and fond of its CCC. The men worked extremely hard during the day, and they were provided with educational and recreative opportunities after work. Their schedule was determined by the Army, including morning and evening roll calls, raising/lowering of the flag, calisthenics, and (most excitingly to the men) all-you-can-eat meals. In the sheds they had built, they took classes in welding, carpentry, and other skilled trades. Part of the mission of the CCC was to have enrollees find reliable work, and as soon as an employment opportunity arose for an enrollee, he was immediately disenrolled from the CCC to pursue it.





However, lingering at both the national and local levels was the issue of race within the CCC. Originally, the program had fully-integrated corps. Men of many races worked beside each other on the same projects. This policy was abandoned in the first few months (before Myakka had a corps), and instead, corps were segregated. The CCC still attempted to be racially accepting, hiring workers of color in separate corps and even including a special American Indian division.

White corps were not restricted as to where they could be placed. Meanwhile, Black corps had to be placed within their own state. This policy was particularly difficult for the Fourth Corps, an Army division comprised of many states in the Southeastern US. They were in the position of needing to station White corps around the country and replace them with Black corps within state boundaries. Sarasota was one such location. Anticipating local backlash, the Fourth Corps mandated that if a city voted against the instatement of a Black corps, they would lose all CCC operations.

The residents of Sarasota wanted to call their bluff. They were abhorred at the idea that the White corps working in Myakka would be replaced by men of color. In July 1935, Sarasota residents held a town hall and voted against the instatement of the Black corps. They believed that if they voted against it, they would be able to keep their White corps.

Within three days, the CCC at Myakka was completely closed.

“We must scrupulously guard the civil rights and civil liberties of all our citizens, whatever their background. We must remember that any oppression, any injustice, any hatred, is a wedge designed to attack our civilization.”

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

Sarasota’s economy was quickly reminded of the Great Depression. The CCC brought in men with \$5/month disposable income each, and the Sarasota economy had been cushioned by selling the enrollees books, foods, and other materials. Within thirty days, the merchant class mobilized against the town hall decision. They realized the economic necessity of the CCC and decided to accept a Black corps.

The Black corps worked extraordinarily hard; they had to prove themselves to the residents of Sarasota. Their commanding officer, Lieutenant G. W. Rymer, constantly reminded the Sarasota residents about how much harder they worked and how much was being completed. He filled the newspapers and public discourse with their work and accomplishments.



Their legacy is prevalent at MRSP today. The South and Log pavilions are popular for family reunions, baby showers, weddings, concerts, and more. Our Visitor Center was a horse barn built by the CCC, and you can even see the hay racks above the entrance door! The CCC built a manager’s residence (still occupied by a Myakka staff member) and five employee’s residences, which are now rentable log cabins. “The bridge” one mile into the park on the main drive was originally a wooden bridge built by the CCC. At the southern end of Upper Myakka Lake, the boat basin was hand-dug by CCC enrollees with iron shovels. They also built the Weir on the Upper Myakka Lake, creating a permanent basin from the natural river floodplain. Many of the current trails were originally blazed by the CCC. Visitors at Myakka, many times unknowingly, still enjoy the work and impact of the CCC.

February Events

Florida Tales – Every Monday, 7:00 p.m.

Every Monday, 7:00 p.m. at the Log Pavilion- Come join us around the campfire and hear the legends and tales of old Florida.

Coffee Hour – Every Thursday, 9:00 a.m.

Log Pavilion- Every Thursday, knowledgeable park volunteers provide coffee and treats for park visitors. Come learn about the park and plan new, wonderful adventures! \$2 donation greatly appreciated.

Guided Hikes—Every Thursday, 10:00 a.m.

Every week, a ranger guides up to twenty people on a walk with a featured topic.

2/7: Alligators (South Pavilion)

2/14: Freshwater Wildlife (Bridge)

2/21: Civilian Conservation Corps (South Pavilion)

2/28: Diverse Ecosystems (Powerline Road)

No additional cost. To reserve a spot, please call (941) 361-6511.

Prairie Hikes – Every Friday, 8: 30 a.m.

The group meets at the Visitor Center before Steve White leads visitors on an educational walk through the beautiful, Myakka Dry Prairie. No additional cost. Reservations required; sign up here: <http://www.myakkahikes.com/>

Campfire Circles—Every Saturday at 6:00 p.m.

At the Log Pavilion, join Myakka staff and volunteers as they present on areas of expertise.

2/9: Alligators

2/16: Freshwater Wildlife

2/23: Conservation with special guests from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

Mac Arnold & Plate Full O'Blues—February 15th at 7:00 p.m.

South Pavilion- It's the Moon Over Myakka Concert Series 2019 at the South Pavilion with Mac Arnold & Plate Full O'Blues. 7 p.m. Bring a chair and a picnic! Tickets required, \$20 per person, available here: www.friendsofmyakkariver.org/events

Moon Over Myakka Bike Ride—February 16th at 5:15 p.m.

Meet at the Visitor Center for the Moon Over Myakka Bike Ride! Bring lights and helmets. \$10/person, please register by calling (941) 373-7839.

Bird Feature: Limpkins

Aramus guarauna
The “Not a Duck” Bird
Photography by Mike Kaplan



Limpkins are a prevalent wading bird in Myakka’s shallow waters. They stand about 25-29” tall and their wingspan is about 40-42”. They have always habituated Florida’s freshwater shallows, but were nearly hunted to extinction in the early twentieth century. Their population has rebounded healthily, and they are now of least concern of extinction.

While they look sweet, Limpkins are the **ultimate snail predators**. Their bill is specifically designed for eating snails, including a tweezer-like design and a right-leaning curvature that aids them extracting their favorite food from its protective shell. While limpkins will eat a variety of aquatic invertebrates, they demonstrate a significant preference for the apple snail. (Side note: apple snails are well deserving of their name—they can be the size of an apple! They lay bright pink eggs on the sides of trees near water.)



In Myakka, there are two types of apple snails: one native species and one exotic species. The exotic species wildly outproduces the native species, laying hundreds of eggs at a time (as compared to about 20-50 eggs at a time for the native species). Since the introduction of the exotic apple snail, Myakka’s Limpkin population has soared. You can frequently see them munching on snails at the Birdwalk or near the Weir. And if you don’t see them, you can certainly hear them! Limpkins (also called Crying Birds) are infamous for their calls, described as “piercing banshee wails” by Audubon. Listen to it [here](#) (via the Cornell Lab of Ornithology).



In the area...

Are you in the Sarasota area looking for fun events? Check these out!

Sarasota County FIRE FEST

Saturday February 2nd, 10:00 am- 2:00 p.m. (rain or shine)

T. Mabry Carlton, Jr. Memorial Reserve
1800 Mabry Carlton Parkway, Venice

FIRE FEST! provides a first-hand look at how prescribed burns protect our communities and property from wildfires, as well as maintain Florida's natural ecosystems for present and future generations. A part of Prescribed Fire Awareness Week, FIRE FEST! is a fun opportunity for the whole family to learn how fire is used carefully and effectively on our natural lands, right here in Sarasota County.

There will be prescribed burn demos, helicopter water drops, games, for kids, guided nature walks, free food, and more!!

Please call (941) 861-5000 for more information.



“The two most engaging powers of a photograph are to make new things familiar and familiar things new.”

-William Thackeray

New Exhibition—Myakka River: Preserving Paradise

Renowned photographer Clyde Butcher will be featuring his photography from Myakka River State Park at his gallery in St. Armands circle. See Myakka through a true artist's eyes! The debut reception will be February 15-16th at 55 S. Blvd of the Presidents in Sarasota.

“There is a subtle beauty of plants, trees, and water—surrounding us everywhere—even in our own backyards” -Clyde Butcher

“I was able to leave my damaged body and become spiritually lost in the beauty of my surroundings. Myakka has healed me in so many ways, and for that I am forever grateful.” -Clyde Butcher

Visit www.clydebutcher.com to learn more about this incredible artist and showcase.