



Friends of the
Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves
From Lemon Bay to Tarpon Bay

Celebrate National Estuaries Days... *Estuaries... beautiful, dynamic, and biologically productive bays, harbors, and lagoons where freshwater rivers and creeks empty to the sea and mingle with salty ocean tides. The shallow waters support salt marsh, mangroves, seagrass beds, mud flats, and oyster bars, which provide habitat and foraging areas for fish, crabs, shrimp, mollusks, dolphins, wading birds, sea turtles, and other wildlife. Estuaries also serve as nurseries. More than 95% of Florida's recreationally and commercially important fish, shellfish, and crustaceans spend a part of their life cycles in estuaries, the "cradles of the ocean".*

Sign up to Paddle, Muck, Bird, and Hike...

Fall 2006 National Estuaries Days Events

Sponsored by

Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves and Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park
the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves,
the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Matlacha Community Park,
the City of Cape Coral, Gulf Coast Kayak, Island Kayak, and Grande Tours

Events in Lee and Charlotte Counties / Note: Dates are not in consecutive order.

Friends 7th Annual Matlacha Pass Estuary Day Paddle

Sponsors: Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves & Preserve State Park, the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Matlacha Community Park, City of Cape Coral, Gulf Coast Kayak, and Island Kayak

Date: November 12, 2006 (*Alternate date in the event of bad weather is Sunday, November 19.*)

Time: The paddle begins on Sunday morning between 8:00 am and 9:00 am returning by noon.

Location: Matlacha Community Park is located at 4577 Pine Island Road NW (State Road 78), Matlacha between Cape Coral and Little Pine Island in Lee County.

Registration Procedure: The cost for Friends members who bring their own kayaks is \$5. The cost is \$15 for Friends members and \$20 for nonmembers who need kayaks provided for them.

CHILDREN UNDER 16 ARE FREE. CHILDREN AND YOUTH UNDER THE AGE OF 16 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT IN A DOUBLE KAYAK. The fee includes maps, refreshments, and kayak instructions for novices. Paddling options include easy, intermediate, and advanced routes.

Advance registration is required. A \$5.00 late fee will be added to registrations received after November 6. Call DEP at 941- 575- 5861 for registration forms and details.

THE BIG PADDLE: Join the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Inc. (FCHAP) on their seventh annual canoe / kayak paddle event for the greater Charlotte Harbor community. Trails are meandering tidal creeks through the mangrove forests of Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve. Paddlers may glimpse a ray gliding by their kayak, dolphins emerging above the waves, and mullet leaping. Osprey, ibis, herons, egrets, and roseate spoonbills may be sighted in secluded areas.

Birding on Little Pine Island

Sponsors: Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park; Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves

Date: October 8, 2006 (*Please note that other Little Pine Island field trips will be scheduled during the 2006 -2007 season.*)

Time: Sunday morning from 8:30 am to approximately 10:30 am.

Location: Little Pine Island is located on Pine Island Road (State Road 78) between Matlacha and Pine Island in Lee County, Florida. *Participants should plan to arrive by 8:15 am.*

Registration Procedure: This field trip is FREE of charge. **Registration is required.** Early registration is advised, as space is limited. **Call DEP at 941- 575- 5861 to sign up.**

THE BIG HIKE: Pack up your binoculars and field guides and set out across the Little Pine Island high marsh. Birders will look for fall migrants, raptors, ducks, shorebirds and wading birds. Learn about the ecology of the high marsh and its importance to resident and winter migrant bird populations. The high marsh, found at the interface between upland pine flatwoods and the mangrove shoreline of Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve, is a highly productive coastal ecosystem connecting land and sea. Vegetation here grows above the mean high water line, hence the name "high marsh". Salt marshes are one of the most impacted habitats in the Charlotte Harbor estuary. Over 60% of the original marshes surrounding the harbor were lost to development or to habitat changes caused by hydrological alteration. Comprised of 4700 acres, Little Pine Island, one part of the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park, is also a Mitigation Bank established in partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Mariner Properties Development, Inc. Hikers may examine the ongoing large-scale, regionally significant wetland ecosystem restoration conducted by Mariner Properties near completion. Areas having undergone extensive exotic removal and hydrological restoration are now thriving wetlands consisting of native grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns, and shrubs. Birders may sight a number of species including killdeer, osprey, hawks, bald eagles, ibis, herons, egrets, and roseate spoonbills, etc. **Wear long pants for protection in bushy areas off the main trails and sturdy hiking shoes or rubber boots as some areas are wet and muddy. Bring insect repellent, sunscreen, sunglasses, a cold drink, and a hat, as shade is scarce. The walk will take approximately 90 minutes to 2.5 hours.**

Mucking About in Pine Island Sound

Sponsors: Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

Date: October 21, 2006 (*Please note three other wading trips are scheduled for February 16, March 16, and April 21 of 2007. Participants should plan to arrive by 9:15 am.)*

Time: Saturday morning from 9:30 am to approximately 11:30 am

Location: Battey's Landing at Pineland, Pine Island, Lee County.

Registration Procedure: This field trip is FREE of charge. **Registration is required.** Early registration is advised, as space is limited. **Call DEP at 941- 575- 5861 to sign up.**

THE BIG WADE: Pack up your dip net, hand lens, mask, fins, pail, and field guides. Wade out into the shallows of Pine Island Sound Aquatic Preserve beyond the estuary's edge. Search for crabs, whelks, conchs, snails, and scallops hidden throughout patches of seagrass and sandy bottoms. Observe the pulsating tube feet of a sea star. Catch a tiny crab scuttling about an oyster shell. Learn why "living fossil horseshoe crabs" are related to spiders. Spy pipefish, silversides, and pinfish darting beneath the surface waters. Wade out to an oyster bar. Explore the ecology of a southwest Florida estuary during the morning's low tide. Seining and cast netting will be demonstrated. Learn about food webs, sea grasses, mangroves, and estuaries. **Wear old tennis shoes or diving booties and a swimsuit or shorts. NO flip flops or sandals. Bring a cold drink, sunscreen, a hat, sunglasses, a towel, and a change of clothes. Snorkelers may bring their gear. This wading trip will take approximately 90 minutes to 2 hours.**

Events in Charlotte County

Friends 4th Annual Coral Creek - Cape Haze Estuary Day Paddle

Sponsors: Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves & Preserve State Park, the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Grande Tours, and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

Date: October 15, 2006 (*Alternate date in the event of bad weather is Sunday, October 22.*)

Time: The Intermediate and Advanced Paddles start at 8:30 am. The Easy Paddle starts at 9:30 am on Sunday morning. All paddlers must return to the launch site by 12:30 pm.

Location: Grande Tours is located at 12575 Placida Road NW (State Road 775), Placida near the Boca Grande Causeway in Charlotte County.

Registration Procedure: The cost for Friends members who bring their own kayaks is \$5. The cost is \$15 for Friends members and \$20 for nonmembers who need kayaks provided for them.

CHILDREN UNDER 16 ARE FREE. CHILDREN AND YOUTH UNDER THE AGE OF 16 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT IN A DOUBLE KAYAK. This fee includes refreshments and kayak instructions for novices. Paddling options include easy, intermediate, and advanced routes.

Advance registration is required. A \$5.00 late fee will be added to registrations received after October 9. Call DEP at 941- 575- 5861 for registration forms and details.

THE BIG PADDLE: Join the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves on their fourth annual canoe / kayak paddle event for the greater Charlotte Harbor community at Cape Haze. Paddle along the shallow mangrove shorelines of Gasparilla Sound and Cape Haze Aquatic Preserves. Advanced and intermediate paddlers will launch at 8:30 am for Catfish Creek. Advanced paddlers will continue on to Mound Key for the complete four-hour round trip paddle. Beginners who launch at 9:30 am will explore the East Branch of Coral Creek, which leads into the northern interior of the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park. Highlights of all three paddles will include a close look at mangrove shoreline, seagrass beds, and oyster bars. Ibis, herons, egrets, pelicans, and ospreys may be sighted.

Important Registration and Paddle Refund Information Registration for all 2006 events opens Friday, September 8.

Birding and Mucking Field Trip Registration

To ensure reservations for *Birding on Little Pine Island* and *Mucking About in Pine Island Sound*, register early. **Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves and Preserve State Park field offices will be open for registration and “officially” accepting reservations from Friday, September 8 up until the date of each event.** However, spaces are limited and the field trips will fill. The hike and wading trip are limited to approximately 24 individuals. When the field trips fill, we will maintain waiting lists and take down names and numbers, and in the event of cancellations, you will be notified. ***If you register in advance for an event and find that you will be unable to attend, we request that you call and inform the office, so that others may participate.*** There will be other opportunities to participate in both the *Little Pine Island* field trips and the *Mucking About in Pine Island Sound* estuary wading trips during the 2007 season. If severe weather forces cancellation of these field trips, they will be rescheduled at a later date and those registered will be notified.

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Paddle Registration and Refund Information

To ensure reservations for the Friends Estuary Day Paddles, you must fill out and return a paddle registration form for each individual who will be participating, together with a check for the total costs. If you do not have the registration forms, you can obtain them by calling the office and requesting them. Registration forms will be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed upon request. The Friends Matlacha Pass Estuary Day Paddle is limited to approximately 25 individuals. The Friends Coral Creek - Cape Haze Estuary Day Paddle can accommodate approximately 35 individuals. Please note that refunds will ONLY be made to those individuals who are unable to attend due to some unforeseen emergency. The Paddles are the major fall funding-raising event for the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Inc., which is a Florida nonprofit 501 (c) (3) Citizen Support Organization (CSO) for the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves and Preserve State Park. We cannot provide refunds to "No Shows" on the date of the Paddle. However, "No-Shows" will receive a year's membership in the CSO. The ONLY other refund exception is inclement weather. If bad weather forces a cancellation of the Paddle, and you are not able to participate on the alternate date, your check will be returned by mail.

New Friends women's cut and unisex t-shirts in pigment-dyed colors will be on sale for \$16.00 at all of the fall 2006 events.

National Estuaries Days.....a great opportunity to discover, explore, and enjoy our intriguing estuaries with the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves! Become acquainted with "your extended backyard", our estuaries and public lands, by hiking the high marsh at Little Pine Island, wading in the shallows of Pine Island Sound, or quietly paddling along the tidal creeks and shorelines of Matlacha Pass, Gasparilla Sound, and Cape Haze Aquatic Preserves. Please join us!

To sign up for the hike or the wading trip or to request paddle registration forms, call the DEP at 941-575-5861 after September 7. For more information and a complete list of the other National Estuaries Days events being held throughout the Charlotte Harbor watershed sponsored by the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP), log on to the CHNEP website at the following: www.CharlotteHarborNEP.org or call 239-338-2556, extension 240.

FLORIDA
State Parks
...the Real Florida



Division of Recreation and Parks
Department of Environmental Protection

Please see the following two pages for directions to field trip sites.

Directions

Fall 2006 National Estuaries Days Events

To Matlacha for the Friends Annual Matlacha Pass Estuary Day Paddle, Birding on Little Pine Island Hike, and Mucking About in Pine Island Sound Estuary Wading Trip

General: Those coming from the greater Ft. Myers / Cape Coral area may take the most direct route to Pine Island Road (State Road 78). From a distance, those traveling northbound may take Exit 136 (Colonial Blvd.) off of I -75 and continue driving west on Colonial across US 41 and on past the Colonial / Summerlin / Veterans intersection at Royal Palm Square. Keep in the right lanes to pay bridge toll (\$1.00). Cross the Mid-Point Bridge and follow Veterans Memorial Parkway through Cape Coral to where it intersects with Pine Island Road and Burnt Store Road. Turn west (left) onto Pine Island Road (SR 78) and drive into Matlacha. Travel time from I -75 to Matlacha is approximately 35 minutes. Those traveling southbound from a distance or coming from Charlotte County may travel south on Burnt Store Road (County Road 765) and turn west (right) on to Pine Island Road at the intersection of Burnt Store, Pine Island Road, and Veterans. Burnt Store Road may be accessed by taking Exit 161 (Jones Loop) off the interstate, driving west and crossing US 41 to Burnt Store Road. Travel time from the US 41 / Burnt Store Road intersection is approximately 30 minutes to Matlacha and Little Pine Island and approximately 40 minutes to Pineland.

Specific / Friends Annual Matlacha Pass Estuary Day Paddle:

Turn south (left) off of Pine Island Road to go to Matlacha Community Park / Boat Ramp. The Park entrance road is next to the Mulletville Bar and Grill. Follow the one-way road into the park past the boat ramp on around to the canoe launch.

Specific / Birding on Little Pine Island:

Little Pine Island is a part of the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park. Driving west towards Pine Island from Matlacha, the distance to Little Pine Island is 1.0 mile past the Sandy Hook Crab House in Matlacha to the Preserve entrance. Turn north (right) into the Preserve. A Mariner Properties Development Wetland Restoration sign is visible near the entrance, and telephone wires cross the road at this point. Park in front of the security fence. From Pine Island, the distance is slightly less than 2.0 miles from the four-way stop. Turn north (left) into the entrance.

Specific / Mucking About in Pine Island Sound Estuary Wading Trip:

Drive west on Pine Island Road (State Road 78) through the waterfront community of Matlacha. Continue until reaching the four-way stop at the Pine Island Center where Pine Island and Stringfellow Roads intersect. Turn north (right) onto Stringfellow Road and drive slightly over 3 miles to the point where Pineland Road intersects Stringfellow on the way to Bokeelia. Turn west (left) onto Pineland Road. Follow Pineland (a long, winding road) past the Pineland Post Office and on past the point where it merges with Waterfront Drive. Continue driving on Waterfront Drive, which parallels the Pine Island Sound shoreline. Drive on past Battey's Landing, the public canoe launch site that has a small circle drive and a historical stone marker. The wading trip will be conducted at this site. Parking is limited, so it is advisable to continue driving on Waterfront Drive just past the Tarpon Lodge. Park in the parking lot at the Randell Research Center's Pineland Archaeological Site across from the Tarpon Lodge. Walk back along the road to Battey's Landing.

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Directions

To Placida for the Friends Annual Coral Creek – Cape Haze Estuary Day Paddle

General: Those coming from the Venice, Englewood, and El Jobean areas may take the most direct route to County Road 771 or County Road 775. From a distance, those traveling northbound on I-75 may take Exit 179 (Toledo Blade Blvd.) off the interstate and drive south to US 41. Continue on Toledo Blade straight across US 41 to the intersection with State Road 776. Turn west (right) onto SR 776 and drive across the Myakka River towards Englewood. Turn south (left) onto County Road 771 (Gasparilla Road) at the 776 / 771 intersection at the Gulf Cove Publix Plaza and drive towards Placida and Boca Grande. Charlotte County residents and others who are traveling northbound may elect to take US 41 through Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte. It is approximately 20 miles between the US 41 / Burnt Store Road (County Road 765) intersection and the SR 776 / CR 771 intersection. Those traveling southbound on I-75 from a distance may take Exit 191 (River Road) off the interstate and continue driving south on River Road for a short distance after passing through the US 41 intersection. Turn east (left) onto Winchester Blvd. and follow it to SR 776 (McCall Road). Turn east (left) onto SR 776 and continue on to the 776 / 771 intersection at the Gulf Cove Publix Plaza. Turn south (right) onto CR 771 (Gasparilla Road) and drive towards Placida and Boca Grande. Placida and Grande Tours are approximately 8 miles from the 776 / 771 intersection. The driving time from the I-75 Exits to Placida is approximately 30 – 40 minutes.

Specific / Friends Annual Coral Creek – Cape Haze Estuary Day Paddle:

Drive south on County Road 771 (Gasparilla Road) approximately 8 miles to Placida and Grande Tours. Drivers will pass a Placida sign and Gasparilla Marina, cross over a bridge, and pass the Fishery Restaurant sign. Charlotte County Roads 771 and 775 merge at this point. Turn east (right) into the entrance of Grande Tours just before the stoplight near the Boca Grande Causeway. Englewood and Venice residents may elect to take County Road 775 (Placida Road) to Grande Tours. Turn east (left) into the Grande Tours entrance just after the Boca Grande Causeway stoplight. It is approximately 8 miles from SR 776 via 775 to Grande Tours.