

Calusa Land Trust

and Nature Preserve of Pine Island, Inc.



Newsletter

May 2000

Long Cut Preserve

by Norm Gowan

We have worked very hard this winter raising funds to buy Long Cut Preserve. If you remember from previous newsletters, this 130-acre property is bordered by York and Coconut Islands (which we already own) on the south, Pine Island Sound on the west, "Jungle Cut" and the DEP Aquatic Preserve on the north, and the Cherry Estates Canal on the east, a very substantial and important piece of real estate.

The total price is \$130,000. The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation is responsible for \$65,000, as are we. So far we have managed to raise about \$55,000 out of the \$65,000 we need, but we must reach our goal by the option expiration date of July 6th. Considering how close we are, this would be a heart-breaker. **Please consider helping us out if you have not done so already.** I think everyone would agree that acquiring Long Cut would truly be a crowning touch to our preserves on Pine Island!

President's Message

by Richard Little

Welcome all new members! We are so happy to have you join the Calusa Land Trust and share with us a vision of a sustainable Pine Island environment that nurtures the body and spirit of its residents and visitors.

As many current members are aware, we are entering a new phase. Pine Island properties available for preservation are rapidly decreasing, and land prices are escalating. Thankfully our preserved property base is growing, but this requires more active management for native ecology restoration and passive recreational use. Public outreach and education is allowing us to enlarge our membership, increase our donation revenues, and sensitize our ever-changing community to issues of wildlife, land, and aquatic habitat preservation.

These new challenges call for new strategies for raising revenues, for managing our preserved properties, and for educating the general public. You will hear about some of these in this and future newsletters. These strategies can only be carried out by an active participating membership, so I invite all of you to play and work with us. With your ideas, time, skills, and creativity, we can easily meet these new challenges and keep Pine Island a place of natural beauty and sustainable habitat for human, furry, feathered, and finny critters.

Land Acquisition Committee News

by Phil Buchanan

In the last issue of this newsletter we outlined a new program called Pine Island 2000. The program aims to survey, document, and whenever possible, preserve every significant-sized environmentally endangered property on Pine Island. We have completed the survey and the documentation, the results of which will be published soon under the title *Environmental Overview of Pine Island*. In brief, we identified 38 such areas totaling 5,526 acres on Pine Island. Maps and details of each property will be included in the book.

We also wrote letters to every owner of every property within all 38 endangered habitat areas. The letters were tailored to each property and offered as appropriate to either arrange a tax deductible donation of the property, consider a fee simple or other purchase of the property by the Trust, prepare a conservation easement protecting the property, or nominate the property for a purchase by federal, state or county organizations. Responses to the letters have been most gratifying, and we are now engaged in a flurry of conservation actions.

Donations: A landowner in Bokeelia has offered to donate at least several acres of uplands to the Trust to preserve neighborhood green space. Details will be announced after documents are signed.

Purchases: The Children's Home Society of Florida has agreed to sell their portion of Merwin Island; the price is still under negotiation. Merwin Key is a beautiful mangrove island off the southeast coast of St. James City. The northern portion of the island is already preserved as part of the "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

Conservation Easements: One landowner (125 acres) near Fritts Park and one landowner in Pineland (27 acres) have asked the Trust to draw easements protecting their mangroves. Both have been completed and are under review by the owners. We hope to announce details and the dates of signing ceremonies very soon. Another easement covering bayfront property in Bokeelia is being considered.

Conservation 2020 Actions: The Lee County Conservation 2020 Program has proven to be "just the ticket" for preservation of larger and more expensive habitats on Pine Island. The Trust works very closely with the county staff, 2020 Advisory Committee, and the Board of County Commissioners on the program. We nominate properties for acquisition, conduct environmental surveys, and present our findings. In many cases we provide matching funds and (once acquired) will co-manage the property along with Lee County Parks and Recreation personnel.

Thus far, one property has been purchased (the old Edison Community College 158-acre mangrove tract in northeast Bokeelia); eight other properties are in various stages of the process. The Boring Property, 80 acres of mangroves and salt flats east of Regla Island, will go to closing in May. Both the Shiffman Property (the one-mile stretch of uplands opposite Winn-Dixie, our proposed "Pine Island Central Park") and the Kelly Property (320 acres of uplands, salt flats, and mangroves across Stringfellow from Tropical Homesites) have been approved for purchase, but the purchase prices are still under negotiation. The Thompkins Property (60 acres of quality uplands just north of the Kelly Property), the Bristol Property (161 acres of mangroves west of the golf course), and the Real Value Property (166 acres of mangroves surrounded on three sides by our St. James Creek Preserve) are all currently before the Advisory Committee for environmental review. We are also now documenting two more proposals which we expect to forward to the county staff shortly. One is a large uplands parcel in Bokeelia, the owner of which has tentatively agreed to a 2020 nomination (details will be announced when the owner gives the "go ahead"). The other is a 166-acre upland area which we are calling the proposed "Galt Preserve." All three St. James City parcel owners have agreed to the nomination and the paperwork is now being signed and sent to the county. The proposed preserve will include the lake at the corner of York and Galt Island Avenue and all of the uplands west of York and Stringfellow Roads (to about ½ mile north). The preserve will link up to the Florida State Buffer Preserves and the joint Calusa Land Trust – Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Long Cut Preserve (now under option to purchase) on the west. If the Galt Preserve proposal is successful (and we believe it will be), "downtown St. James City" will be virtually surrounded by nature preserves, all of which will be owned or managed in whole or in part by the Calusa Land Trust.

Calusa Canal Acquisition

by Bud House

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye! This is to inform everyone that the Calusa Canal Phase II donation project is *still continuing*. The objective is to raise sufficient funds to purchase our second canal lot located at 6330 Meadow Lane before our “option to purchase” date of September 30 passes us by. The purchase price is \$15,000 and our fund balance is about \$6,135, so we need more than a “bit” more. As one fundraiser for this project, we have beautiful Calusa Canal T-shirts for sale at \$15 each. These may be ordered from me at 3489 Gasparilla Street, St. James City, FL 33956. (Please enclose \$3.00 for shipping & handling.) Any questions or comments, feel free to give me a call (283-3493). Thank you to everyone who has helped out.

Ranger/Steward Report

by Ed Chapin

Between now and the end of school, we are scheduled to take all the 5th grade students at Pine Island Elementary on field trips where they will also be initiated into our Junior Ranger Program. On April 26 and 27 we will take them to the Baxley and St. James Creek Preserves, and on May 9 and 10 we will go to the Calusa Canal Preserve and the Randell Research Center. We need help to guide and chaperone, as we have about 30 kids each day.

On April 1, Calusa Rangers worked on the canoe trail from Fritts Park to our Big Jim Creek Preserve. We also did follow-up invasive plant control on spoil piles along the mosquito ditches in the Big Jim Creek Preserve. We had seven rangers who worked three hours and removed about a half acre of melaleuca, Brazilian pepper, and Australian pine. Our next ranger/steward work parties are scheduled as follows:

May 6	8:00 A.M.	Dobbs Preserve
June 3	8:00 A.M.	Eagle Preserve
August 5	8:00 A.M.	Dobbs Preserve (planting)

On April 15 we had our 10th annual Trash Bash on Pine Island. It went very well despite a somewhat disappointing turnout. But the people who did come and help out did more and got further than ever before. In Bokeelia we cleaned up seven different sites and hauled four pick-up truck loads of trash to the center dumpsters. We also collected over 2,000 pounds of car and boat batteries, which we sold for recycling for a \$45 profit to the Calusa Land Trust. There was plenty of food, prizes, and music at Pork Bellies after the clean-up. I want to thank all the volunteers that made this a great day for Pine Island.

We have plenty of other volunteer opportunities and are coming into a time when many of our volunteers are going north for the summer. If you can help during these next few months, we would greatly appreciate it. Leave your phone number on my digital page, dial 277-6807.

Lecture and Workshop Series

by Richard Little

On behalf of everyone I would like to thank Ray and Fran Lever for their outstanding efforts in conceiving and organizing the Calusa Land Trust Lecture Series this past spring. Once a month Ray and Fran invited the Pine Island public to hear informed speakers address environmental issues of current concern. Topics included native Pine Island animals and their habitats, Pine Island's heritage of Calusa Indian archeological sites, and how to preserve and maintain Pine Island's coastal and upland forests. In addition, we heard an update on our new wastewater treatment plant and the Civic Association's comprehensive land-use plan revisions for Pine Island. Ample time was reserved for audience comments and questions. This was a great venue for bringing these issues (dear to the heart of the Calusa Land Trust membership) to the attention of the greater Pine Island community. Attendance was good, over 50 per session; T-shirt sales were brisk, and CLT literature was distributed. Thanks also to the many speakers for their excellent presentations and to the Fishers of Men Lutheran Church for the assembly space. Let's hope Ray and Fran will continue to find ways to help the Pine Island community stay informed on local environmental issues of concern.

Membership Report

by Norm Gowan

We now have 898 members, with 512 (57%) current in annual donations. Much of this growth is due to new members who have joined to support our commitment to purchase the new "Long Cut Preserve."

As we near the 900 mark in membership, something we originally thought impossible, we have decided to reconsider the practicality of keeping everyone on our list, regardless of their support over the years. We understand there are many reasons why people let their memberships lapse, not the least being the sheer number of other worthwhile organizations that need public support. In any case, the membership committee would like to ask those folks who have not contributed to CLT for several years to reconsider at this time before their names are removed from our roster.

If you are not sure about your membership status, feel free to call me any time. My number is 283-8203. Otherwise, just take look at the address label on this newsletter and if that darn little bug (*) appears following your name, it means that it has been more than a year since you last contributed. Have your friends and neighbors joined? Talk it up. Remember, you, our members, are the life blood of this organization.

Fund-Raising Committee

by Norm Gowan

PLUNK-A-PLANK: The boardwalk on the St. Jude Nature Trail now has 496 names carved in the planks. It is a remarkable sight to see all those names stretch out through the beautiful mangrove forest to open water. If you have not visited the boardwalk yet, it is worth the trip; just be sure to grab your bug spray before taking this most enjoyable walk down the trail. And remember, for \$50 you can have your name preserved in wood too, or perhaps have a loved one memorialized.

ROAST BEEF DINNER: 124 members enjoyed this fine dinner, catered by the Double Nichol Pub on February 26 at Jimmie and Joe Eisenberg's lovely home. A *tremendous* turnout! Six pontoon boats of Pine Island Boat Club members were busy all afternoon providing delightful tours of our newest preserve, "Long Cut," and the Trust received \$3,745 toward the purchase of Long Cut, which was all profit since expenses were completely paid for by one of our most generous members. What a terrific day all around. Thank you to everyone who came.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY: This was our 4th year to host this delicious corned beef and cabbage dinner at the Greater Pine Island Elks Lodge on March 17. It was a great party. 234 dinners and 133 sandwiches were consumed during the afternoon and evening filled with music, sing-alongs and dancing. The Land Trust received \$1,500 from this event toward the purchase of Long Cut. Many thanks to our many members who cooked, served and cleaned up for this fun event.

RUBBER DUCK RACE: The year 2000 race took place on Monroe Canal at the Double Nichol Pub on Saturday April 8th. Once again, this event was attended by most of the western world! All 1,000 ducks were sold by 12:30 although the race itself didn't end until 5:30. There was a huge car show, four roasted pigs (all eaten) and live music throughout the afternoon. This has got to be the biggest show of the year in St. James City if not all of Pine Island. Another \$2,475 was received by the Trust from this event to aid in the purchase of Long Cut.

RUMMAGE SALE PLANNED: Start putting your treasures away now for the annual rummage sale coming up this fall. The date has already been set for November 25 and will run from 8:00 AM to noon at Fritts Park. Call Shirley House if you have any questions or can help out. Her number is 283-3493.

WEB SITE — www.calusalandtrust.org

by Peter Ordway

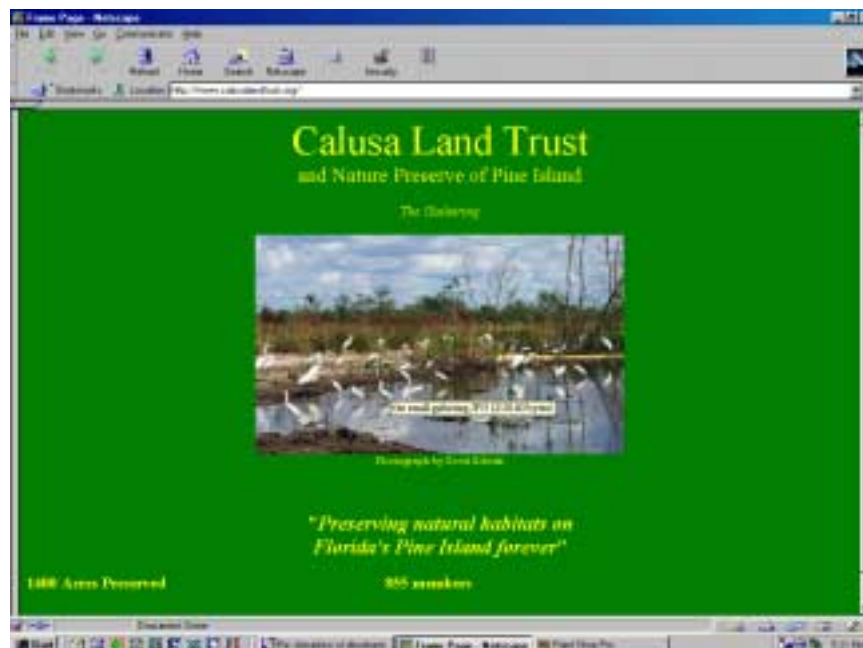
After a few false starts, the Calusa Land Trust web site is finally on-line. Go to the web address above and check it out! There are fourteen sections, some re-written from the Nature Lovers' Guide to Pine Island (thank you Phil Buchanan) and some written specifically for the Internet.

Thanks to the editing expertise of Ken Keller most of my mistakes have been caught, but no doubt there are some still out there. Don't forget to go to the Links section which contains a vast amount of information, including web addresses of all the other land trusts in the country that have web sites.

Remember, this is just the first edition. We already have had many suggestions for added features, such as a section on native plants and wildlife of Pine Island illustrated by color photographs. Another suggestion was to show more photographs of our preserves, including aerial photos. Those of us working on the project would like to hear ideas for improvements and additions. Take a minute to e-mail me at pordway1@coconet.com with your ideas.

Many thanks go to Phil and Joan Rosenberg of Island Computer, CLT members who have donated their time, getting the <www.calusalandtrust.org> name registered, and who will assist us in future improvements.

Thanks also to Lee County Electric Cooperative which is hosting the web site as a public service through their internet service provider <iline.com>



CALUSA LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| _____ \$ 15 Individual Member | _____ \$___ Calusa canal purchase |
| _____ \$ 25 Family Member | _____ \$ 23 Nature Lover's Guide to P.I. |
| _____ \$ 50 Donor or Organization | _____ \$___ for _____ |
| _____ \$100 Contributor | _____ \$ 50 Plunk-a-Plank |
| _____ \$250 Angel | _____ <i>(fill in lettering below)</i> |

Sponsor's Name *(optional)*: _____

Your Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Second Address? _____

Second City, State, Zip? _____

Phone _____ E-mail address _____ Today's Date _____

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**Calusa Land Trust & Nature Preserve
of Pine Island, Inc.
P.O. Box 216
Bokeelia, Florida 33922**