



CLT Past President Rich Little recalls
an adventure with Peter Ordway
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Annual Rubber Duck Race
Saturday March 7

Work Party Schedule - 2008 – 2009

Saturday Jan 10th – Fritts Park
Saturday Jan 17th – Fritts Park
Friday Jan 23rd – Fritts Park
Saturday Feb 7th – Dean Preserve
More Details Inside and on the Web at
www.calusalandtrust.org

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2009 Annual Meeting

by Joan Culver (995.1615)

Mark your calendar, our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, January 18th, 2009 at Fritz Park at 1: 00 PM. The park is located five miles north of Pine Island Center. Turn left at Beach Daisy Lane just south of the Pink Citrus Trailer Park. Bring a neighbor or friend. Hope to see you there.

Lunch will be served and donations will be accepted and appreciated. This is a great time to meet new members and say hi to those you know.

In addition to committee reports we will hold elections for the Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee has proposed Bob Hill for a vacant position. He lives in Matlacha and is involved with F.I.S.H. and St. John's Episcopal Church. The Committee recommends re-election of Ed Chapin, Joan Culver, Sonny Koutsoutis, Judy Ott, Phil Rosenberg, Ron Wesorick and Donna Venesky.

Hope to see you there. In case of rain look for signs at the Center and Fritz park directing you to an alternate location.

President's Message

by Harold Bruner (464.2436)

**A Challenging Question for the CLT
- What Do You Think?**

On two occasions this year the board has considered the creation of a paid part-time position. For 33+ years the CLT has never had a full-time or part-time employee, even on a contractual basis. Any consideration of a job should start with a job description. The two areas where we might benefit the most are stewardship and the pursuit of grants. We cover both of those areas now, but with volunteer help the same way we accomplish all of our work.

What more could we do with paid help? Could we take better care of our preserves? Could we raise more funds to buy more land? Could we grow our membership? Do we want to grow beyond the kind of organization we have been for the last few years? These are important questions. If you have ideas or suggestions regarding hiring a part-time or full-time person, please share them by dropping us a note or by emailing info@calusalandtrust.org.

Loggerhead Turtle Nest Discovered for the First Time on Pine Island

Local sea turtle experts reported the best nesting success on area beaches since 2000. One of the biggest surprises was the first nest ever reported on Pine Island. Although large extensive beaches occur only on barrier islands facing the open Gulf, the north tip of Bokeelia that borders Charlotte Harbor is beach-like, especially at low tide.

A few years ago a conservation easement was donated to the CLT on a small acreage at the far north end of Bokeelia. This summer a turtle crawl was spotted on a sandy strip directly adjacent to our easement. Eve Haverfield, a local volunteer turtle expert, was notified. Eve documented the first loggerhead turtle nest ever found on Pine Island. The nest contained 108 eggs. Of those, 100 successfully hatched. This was reported to be a very high success rate. A successful sea turtle nest is a great achievement to add to the rich natural history of Pine Island.

Tours and Trails

by Brenda Anderson (283.1878)

This year's Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival was a huge success.

On Saturday, November 1st at 10:00am Ed Chapin led a paddle trip to Calusa Island from Jug Creek Cottages. We had a whopping total of 28 paddlers in kayaks including Ed with Donna Venesky in a canoe. Ed gave a very interesting and informative tour of the island. We then paddled out to the eastern mouth of Jug Creek for a view of Charlotte Harbor. Thanks Ed, for a notable trip.

Later that same day, Liz Donley led a sunset trip in Pine Island Sound launching at the Pine Island Commercial Marina at 4:00pm. Liz provided kayaks for about half of the group of 11 paddlers and took us on a tour that included some scenic islands with about a zillion birds. Two guys from the American Canoe Association's Paddler

Magazine joined us. We told them all about the Calusa Land Trust and gave them our brochure. Thank you, Liz (and husband, Dan, who schlepped the boats around) for all your work and a good trip.

Early Sunday morning, November 2nd, Judy Ott set up our booth at Matlacha Park where the Blueway festivities continued. Cathy House and Liz Donley helped as well. Sonny Koutsoutis and Rubye Woodhead arrived a little later to assist. We displayed Donna Venesky's big, beautiful, preserve map and our paddling trail maps. Some CLT T-shirts and hats were sold and CLT brochures were distributed. I was occupied with other things at the festival in the morning, but every time I walked past the booth it was teeming with visitors.

Thanks, Judy, and all you other helpers, for ensuring the CLT was represented at this important event on the Island and for spreading the word.

Our own Liz paddling away



Betsy Clayton, the festival coordinator, was very pleased with the CLT's involvement in the festival. She mentioned that many people came up to her during the event, to praise the CLT for all we do.

Peter and Me

by Richard M. Little

Rich and Pete Ordway - On An Adventure

We pulled into the Lo Bean Road canoe launch and prepared to haul my old dinged up Grumman down to the canal. A cloud of mosquitoes ambushed Peter and me as we tumbled out of my pickup. "Hot dang; let's get this boat on the water and away from these swamp angels, Richard."

I held the canoe along shore as Peter jackknifed his six-foot-six body into the bow seat. Grasping both gunnels, I nimbly hopped into the stern and angled the canoe out into the canal. Pushing us

off with a mighty shove, I settled into my kneeling position as Peter dug water with his bow paddle to keep us from flipping over. I grinned as he grumbled in his beard something derogatory about my lack of canoeing skills. Downstream, a snowy egret silently spread his wings, lifted up from his wading spot and squawked crossly at us for disturbing his feeding. We settled into the easy paddling rhythm of comfortable partners, each in his way compensating for the pull of the tide and the beam breeze reaching across Charlotte Harbor.

Our afternoon mission was to find the alleged "Post Office Cut." A "cut" is a watery pathway through the mangrove forest, navigable by dug-out, or more recently by canoe or kayak. Old timers told of an old Calusa Indian "cut" through the western coastal mangrove swamp of Pine Island. It once linked the little Florida towns of Bocilla and Pineland. Our waterway would take us south down a mosquito ditch to a scatter of interconnecting salt-water ponds. With luck, one of those ponds would sprout an overgrown tangle of a canal leading straight to Pineland. NOAA predicted a cold front moving in late in the day but we'd be out of the woods by then.

Late November sunlight filtered through the mangrove leaves overhead. Golden speckles of light dappled the tannin-laden black water of the beeline ditch. Black mangrove tree crabs hunkered down on branches as we passed. Fat golden orb weaver spiders scurried to safety, leaving their fantastic gossamer web artwork to stick itself across our passing faces. A svelte mangrove snake sunning itself on an overhead branch panicked and dropped with a plop beside us. It slithered off with just his green head showing. My old Grumman canoe sliced through the narrow path of water left by the low tide. The mangrove carpet of rootlets, pneumatophores that grew outward on each side of the ditch, threatened to close off the watery path. It dragged on the canoe sides with a low metallic "scratching" sound, raising goose bumps like a fingernail on a blackboard, as we passed through. Occasionally one of us bumped the canoe with our paddle, making an unwelcome "thunk." Otherwise, a primordial silence kept us company

in our passage towards the interconnecting ponds.

Poking around seemingly identical salt ponds for a couple of hours, we gradually worked our way south. Little green herons flitted ahead as we navigated the creeks and connector tunnels through water-laden forest. Yellow crowned night herons perched like sentries at creek openings, casting a baleful eye as we passed. Monster redfish tailed away from our approaching craft like torpedoes making surface wakes. Clusters of wood ibis, showy egrets and roseate spoonbills stood head down and busy. They ignored our intrusion into their peaceful feeding time on salt flats that smelled like an old outhouse. The occasional "splat" of a leaping mullet fish broke the pregnant silence.

In the beauty of the moment we lost all track of time. We were mesmerized by the green forest and wild water world that continuously opened to our awareness. We explored each pond's perimeter for old overgrown ditches and tunnel openings through the red mangroves; anything that begged existence of a legendary "Post Office Cut." The little tunneled pathways led us, like sirens, deeper and deeper south from one pond to the next. The rising incoming tide was slowly closing the tunnels but we were unaware. Nor did we take notice of the ominously darkening sky, or the increasing wind singing across the tops of the mangrove forest. Finally, as waking from a dream, we noticed the falling temperature and approaching dusk.

"Richard, let's call it a day and head back. A storm's brewing. I guess the Calusa cut will have to wait. Now, where's that little opening to this pond?"

I gave a hard "J stroke" with my paddle, turning the canoe. We began fast paddling like a couple of windmills, churning across the pond. Reaching mid-pond a mighty wind gust slammed us broadside, broaching our canoe. We struggled to stay upright and keep our orientation. Walls of windblown rain rushed by us sounding like a runaway locomotive. Visibility dropped to zero.

"Head for the shoreline, Richard, and we'll follow it 'till we reach the opening." Fiercely we

paddled, while the wind did its best to shove us against the lee shoreline. Visibility was one canoe length. Wind-animated mangrove snags reached out with barren, claw-like branches to tangle and dump us. A creek opening appeared and we paddled in as I breathed a sigh of relief. The foliage canopy gave a little shelter. We paddled the winding pathway for a hundred yards or so in the drenching rain, finally reaching a dead end tangle of red mangrove roots.

"Hard astern, Peter, this isn't the way out" I yelled. We both turned about face and backed out of the little creek. Outside the tunnel, the rain and wind was unrelenting. Our T-shirts and cargo shorts were soaked to the skin and the freezing cold was seeping into our bones in spite of our vigorous exercise. Following the shoreline a little further we found a larger opening and ducked into it, scrunching under hanging boughs. Our paddling was bogging down as the rising tide closed off return pathways. We persevered. This path carried us into a pond that seemed familiar but we weren't out of the woods yet.

"Peter, I can't tell which of these little creeks head north. Heck, I can't even tell north from south in this damn rain, can you?" The rain changed to a straight down deluge. Our canoe was ankle deep awash. The last of daylight was rapidly fading like a curtain closing on a bad act. I was getting concerned. A cold, wet night in the woods was a definite prospect. We both had interesting heart problems. Hypothermia would not be good for either of us. Besides, our wives would be frantic and worse, they would probably kill us in the morning when we came out.

"Beats me, Richard, maybe we should wait 'till the rain stops?"

"And maybe the fog rolls in?"

"Don't be a pessimist, Richard."

"Like this front will blow away and give us the moon?"

"Moon's on the dark side this week" Peter recalled gloomily.

"I rest my case."

"What case?"

"Here's another creek. Let's check it out." I angled us down the creek to stop the stupid argument. It seemed familiar, wiggling down its trace. Suddenly a deeply buried thought occurred to me. I stopped paddling and dug my hand into my jeans pocket. My fingers found a small, flat, plastic-feeling object about one by two inches in size. With a thrill I hauled out a small compass. In an instant, I confirmed that we were indeed heading north and could safely wiggle our way out of this labyrinth.

"Peter, guess what I found" I teased. Peter turned and squinted through the rain to see what I was holding up.

"If that's what I think it is, I'm gonna hug you and then kill you. What's our bearing?"

"A wiggly north, partner. We're home free," I shouted through the downpour.

Picking our way northerly through the creeks and ponds, we soon found ourselves cruising up the beeline cut. The rain began to let up.

Breaking out of the cut we were treated to a glimpse of a coppery sun sinking behind Cayo Costa Island, way across Pine Island Sound. There was one last hurdle to reach the Lo Bean canal: a half-mile stretch of open water with wind in our teeth and a nasty white-capped chop.

"Ready, Peter?"

"Let her rip, Richard" Peter shouted, digging mighty paddle strokes, crashing the bow through the white caps, catching the spray in his face and chest. I joyously managed to steer our course while doing my bit with the paddle.

Twenty minutes later we were hauling the canoe into the pickup and sluicing the water off our clothes. Piling into the cab, I started the engine and turned the heater on full blast. Peter and I looked at each other, grinning like pair of coalscuttles.

"I do so love the raw elements of Nature," I said through my chattering teeth.

"Yes, and the wee pinch of spirits that come after" Peter opined.

Acquisition News

by Harold Bruner (464-2436)

CLT Purchases Bokeelia Parcel

There continue to be some benefits to the depressed real estate market. Sellers are motivated and prices more affordable. Early this month we closed on the purchase of 5.73 acres on the east side of Bokeelia for \$20,000. The northern tip of the property is an island in Smokehouse Bay. The south part adjoins lands already preserved by Lee County on one side and the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the other.

The property was listed publicly for sale on the MLS (Multiple Listing Service). It was promoted as agricultural zoning with the impression you might get a boat dock permit. Lee County designates it as all wetlands, and there was some question as to its development potential. But remember, *preservation is forever*. A recent story in the News-Press focused on the destruction of mangroves in Bokeelia not far from this property. Mitigation rules sometime allow owners to fill wetlands in return for buying mitigation credits. The CLT board felt that the unique characteristics of this property warranted the purchase and the assurance of permanent protection.

Lee County 20/20 Purchases Surpass 20,000 Acres

Two large purchases in the Alva and Buckingham areas have pushed the 20/20 Conservation lands to this new milestone. The larger purchase of 1,700+ acres adjoins the south side of the Babcock Ranch. Although population growth has slowed recently with the struggling economy, the long-term prospects for growth and development in Lee County remain strong. Several layers of protection are added by 20/20 purchases and ensure that these lands will be preserved in perpetuity.

Fund Raising

by Ron Wesorick (283.7249)

Rubber Duck Race

Mark your calendars now - - The 11th annual Rubber Duck Race will be held Saturday March 7th at Woody's Waterside Pub in St. James City. Twenty five hundred bright yellow rubber ducks, each with a number, will race down the canal. As the

ducks are plucked from the water, prizes will be awarded to the winning numbers.



This event is Calusa Land Trust's biggest annual fundraiser, and is one of Pine Island's most popular activities. All proceeds from the race will go to the Land Trust to continue its program to purchase and maintain environmentally sensitive lands on Pine Island. As in previous years, this will be an all afternoon celebration while getting ready for the ducks to race about 3:30pm. Music, games, auctions, raffles, food and drinks will be available all afternoon. This year's event will be bigger than ever, with more race prizes awarded and fantastic auction items available.

Duck tickets are \$5.00 each, and a sellout is expected again this year. Plan to purchase your tickets early so you are not left out. Tickets will be available starting in January at Woody's, from Chief Ticket Seller Pink Wesorick and her Ticket Seller Helpers.

16th Annual Poker Run

The Pine Island Boat Club conducted the 16th Annual Poker Run on Dec 7th. This popular event is held annually by the Boat Club to provide funds for The Calusa Land Trust.

For this year's Poker Run, 12 dealer stations were located around St James City and up the Sound to Jensen's Marina. To enable more people to

participate, stations were available for access by either boat or land (bike, motorcycle, walking). Final cards were drawn at Woody's Waterside in St. James City where winners were determined. While waiting for poker hands to be drawn, food and drinks were available, and music was provided by Frank Tuma. During the "social hours", 50/50 raffles were held and a "loser" poker hand was drawn as a consolation prize.

The bottom line, approximately \$4500 was raised for the Calusa Land Trust.

Tax-Free IRA distributions to Charities extended to 2008 and 2009

The tax provision that was scheduled to expire in 2007 has been extended to 2008 and 2009. It provides that up to \$100,000 of an individual's (70 ½ or older) IRA balance can be donated to a charitable organization with no reportable income and no deduction to muddy the waters. The distribution counts towards the required minimum distribution.

This is a great opportunity to avoid tax on the minimum required distributions that must be made with respect to an IRA after the owner reaches age 70 ½. It could also be helpful to some individuals by decreasing or eliminating the tax on their Social Security benefits. In addition, it could help those who are not able to itemize deductions to still be able to receive a tax benefit for a gift to charity.

Although it was extended, it is still a limited time offer, so an IRA owner may want take immediate action before the end of 2008 to top-off the distribution in each year and take full advantage of the \$200,000 maximum donation over the course of the two tax years.

Please consult your tax advisor as soon as possible to determine how you might be able to take advantage of this limited time offer.



Ranger Stewardship Report

**Ed Chapin - Chief Calusa Land Trust Ranger
by Gracie, the Ghost Writing Gopher Tortoise**

Work Party Reports

On October 4th we had five volunteers working at the Pine Island Flatwoods, which is a Lee County 20/20 Preserve that we co-manage with The County. We worked on invasive and exotic plant control, hand pulling Malaleuca, Earleaf Acacia and Brazilian Pepper seedlings. We were able to cover and "un-infest" about ten acres.

On November 8th with an unusually small group of three volunteers, we went to the Shell Cut area of Calusa Island and worked on trail maintenance, trash removal and invasive and exotic control, mostly Australian Pines. Although a small group, they were a hard working group and managed to clear and clean up about a quarter mile of beach trail.

On December 6th, 14 volunteers, 4 "Calusa Land Trust" boats and a gorgeous day, we landed on one of the sandy beaches on the west shore of Cayo Pelau. We re-opened the trail on the western side, leading into the interior of the island, that we started last year. Armed with chainsaws, we did extensive Brazilian Pepper removal but much more needs to be done. We also trail blazed along the shore trail that was opened last year. And of course the usual trash was collected. A good time (and a picnic lunch) was had by all and we hope to continue making progress next year.

On December 13th we had our **Ranger Council Meeting** at Fritts Park from 11:30 to 2pm. There was a great turnout of 12 dedicated volunteers and good discussions on what to prioritize for next year. We talked about the Preserves and got ideas from the volunteers about what they wanted to do for work parties. From that we came up with next year's Work Party Schedule. We also discussed ideas about how the CLT might eventually include a staff or administrative position to guide, manage, support and promote our Volunteer efforts in the future.

Upcoming Work Parties

On Saturday January 10th and Saturday the 17th – we will have work parties at Fritts Park in Bokeelia to prepare for the Annual Meeting (scheduled for January 18th), and for The Annual Rummage Sale to be held at Fritts Park the following Saturday, January 24th. We ask that you hold your items for the Rummage Sale until Friday Jan 23rd, when we will have volunteers available from 1:00pm to 5:00pm to accept donations for the next morning's rummage sale.

Saturday February 7th, 2009 we will be working at the Dean Conservation Easement adjacent to Shell Cut in Bokeelia. Details will be provided in upcoming e-mails.

Peter Ordway Mangrove Adventure Tours

Watch your E-Mail, check our Web Site at www.calusalandtrust.org or call Ed Chapin at 392-0090 for information on upcoming Peter Ordway Adventure Tours.

Wish List Item

by Harold Bruner (464-2436)

Help With a Concrete Floor for the Donated Shed

Having considered various floor options for the shed that was donated to us, the decision is for concrete. Is there anyone out there who could advise and assist on design, forming, pouring and finishing? We would like to get that done as quickly as possible so we can quit paying rent for our storage unit. If you are willing to help please call Ed Chapin at 392-0090.

CLT members kayaking during the Poker Run.



_____ \$ 15 Individual Member
 _____ \$ 25 Family Member
 _____ \$ 50 Donor

_____ \$100 Contributor
 _____ \$500 Patron
 _____ \$1000 Benefactor

_____ \$ 50 Plunk-a-Plank
 (fill in lettering) _____

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CREDIT CARD #: _____ **Visa or MasterCard only**

EXPIRES: _____ / _____

Your Name: _____

Sponsor: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Alt Phone _____

Second Address: _____

Second City, State, Zip: _____

E-mail address _____

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Photos of Our Calusa Land Trust Preserves Needed!

The Calusa Land Trust and Nature Preserve invites you to explore all of our 20 preserves. Wander through the wonderful variety of habitats Pine Island has to offer: from pine flatwoods, to hardwood hammock to mangrove swamps. As you enjoy the relaxing sound of the breeze in the tree tops and ripples lapping on the shore, take your camera and photograph the large and small wonders of nature you discover. Send us those photos and we will add them to our new "Guide to Calusa Land Trust Preserves and their Flora and Fauna". We hope to have a good collection of photos by next spring and finish the preserve guide by next fall.

It all depends on you and the other great folks of Pine Island opening the shutters on their camera lenses and capturing some of that beauty that makes Pine Island a truly special place to live. We're happy to help you identify any flowers, plants, insects or critters you come across. To find the locations of our preserves, look on our website at www.calusalandtrust.org. Please submit your photos to us by June 1, 2009 by e-mail at clt@calusalandtrust.org or by mail at P.O. Box 216 Bokeelia, FL 33922. Don't forget to include your name, the name of the preserve and date you took your photo.

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



Duck Race
Saturday March 7th

2009 ANNUAL MEETING
JANUARY 18 - 1:00PM
FRITTS PARK

If the address label on this News-letter is **GREEN** it is time to renew your membership. Use the enclosed envelope and the form on the last page to renew.