



FALL

• • • • • **NEWS • PROGRAMS • EVENTS • ANNOUNCEMENTS** • • • • •

UPDATE IN BRIEF

- **Lake Osprey fishing pier contract signed and county permit issued**
- **Revised concept for road paving from Lake Osprey to the Legacy Trail**
- **Restoration of the North-east Corner of the Park is in the design & permitting stage**
- **Florida Scrub-Jay count: 27 birds 7 families**
- **Canoe and kayak tours have resumed**
- **Events are back in full swing.**
- **New Park Ranger: Alexis Wallace**

Did you know...



FLORIDA SCRUB-JAY: The Florida scrub-jay is a threatened bird species and the only bird species “unique” to Florida. These birds occupy permanent territories and do not migrate. Oscar Scherer State Park provides the largest block of suitable habitat within Sarasota County which consists of 462 acres of scrubby flat-

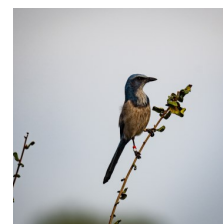
woods that they can call home. Fire ecology is a critical element in scrub communities which limits tree height and maintains the sandy clearings they require.

Scrub-jay pairs mate for life and raise their young in cooperative family groups. They eat a variety of animals and plants. Insects are their major food source during spring and summer and may prey on frogs, toads, lizards, snakes, birds’ eggs and even mice. Each scrub-jay harvest and buries 6,000 to 8,000 acorns from August to November for use throughout the year.

Population history of jays at Oscar: 1970’s, no jays in the park. 1980’s, prescribed fire and restoration efforts started, and the jays returned. Late 1990’s, numbers top out at 36 families and 163 birds. Since then population has steadily declined due to lack of surrounding habitat, genetic isolation and predation. Numbers hit their all-time low in 2016 of 12 jays and 5 families. The past 4 years we’ve had breeding success and the numbers are slowly increasing. With limited acreage, an isolated population and similar urban population declines throughout the state, prospects are not looking good for our jays. With that said, we

persist in our area for jay and human generations to come.

Oscar Scherer State Park has a Florida Scrub-jay Adoption Program so you can have the opportunity to help with the efforts to protect and preserve this threatened and unique bird of Florida. If you are interested in helping us in the efforts to keep this beautiful bird in population for current and future generations, please contact the park for more information at (941) 483-5956.



Manager's Message



Matt Kruse
Park Manager

Matt Kruse - Park Manager

Hello Friends

The past few months have been new and exciting. It has been a joy to get acquainted with the staff, volunteers, and CSO. I am amazed of the dedication and commitment that is on display daily by the team. There is a strong sense of teamwork among the personnel and a positive work culture that makes me look forward to coming to work each day.

We are now operating with a full staff. The most recent changes include promotion of Alexis Wallace from OPS to full time Park Ranger. Also joining the team will be Anthony Zacarolli. Anthony will be helping us out at the ranger Station as an OPS Toll Collector. Please be sure to stop by and congratulate them both.

The staff and volunteers have done an outstanding job of keeping up with the summer-time vegetation growth. Crews have been out clearing overgrown areas of the park, trimming trails, and mowing. The summer rains have taken their toll on our roadways; plans to grade and fill the service roads are in the works.

September was an extremely active month, with a scheduled event every weekend. Park Service Specialist Diana Stinson has been busy planning and coordinating Literacy Day, Girls Scouts Love State Parks, Keep Sarasota Beautiful, and National Public Lands Day, all while still managing the volunteer program. A special thanks to our AmeriCorps members Mackenzie Shiner and Sydney Whitlock, who assisted with the events.

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VOLUNTEER

Are you interested in helping out with the operations of a state park? We have many volunteer opportunities, day positions and residential positions.

Some examples of the volunteer opportunities are: Nature Center host, Ranger Station assistant, field worker, trail maintenance, butterfly gardening, park maintenance, campground hosts, specialty skills worker, and many others. Something for everyone; all skill levels and abilities are welcomed and encouraged.

We have a group of volunteers that work strictly on Mondays and/or Wednesdays from 8 am to noon on various different tasks. They split wood, work on trails, carpentry, mowing and trimming, and whatever else that needs to be done for the day. Great way to meet new friends!

Did you know that if you are a campground host that you can get a campsite for up to 4 months for no charge?

The park has been planning for the upcoming season of programs and events. Many of the winter programs are run by our volunteers. Most of the events that the park provides to the public are assisted by volunteers. If you would like to get involved, please contact Diana Stinson for more information. Without volunteers many of these events cannot take place. Be sure to check the event section of this newsletter.

So... Get involved and meet new friends!

If you are interested in volunteering, please complete a volunteer application and submit to the park. You can obtain an application at <https://www.floridastateparks.org/get-involved/volunteer>.

If you would like more information on volunteer opportunities, please feel free to contact Diana Stinson, Park Service Specialist, at (941) 882-7219 or e-mail at Diana.Stinson@floridadep.gov.

"Volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are PRICELESS."

Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers for all you do at Oscar Scherer State Park!

PROGRAM AND EVENT CALENDAR

Program and Events:

We have been getting our new rangers and old rangers back into the seat of a kayak with our popular Wednesday Guided Paddle which we started back up in August after shutting program down last March. The fish are still jumping, the scenery is still inviting, and the mangroves are still growing.

Our fall monthly guided tram tours are expected to resume soon, and we will be taking a look at our winter programming and schedules in the next couple weeks.

At the time of this writing, our September Events are in full swing. We just completed our annual International Literacy Day Event and are getting prepared to have an event each weekend this month.



International Literacy Day was once again another great small event that drew families to the park, many for the first time. Fun activities were focused around reading, words, books and more BOOKS. Sarasota County Library had a fun “Story Trail” and plenty of crafts for everyone. Oscar Scherer Park offered a fun “Nature Word Search” hunt. Friends of Oscar Scherer Park donated a book to each kid who wanted one. The Nature Center had a fun craft where kids could make their own book. The big hit was Adoptable Greyhounds of Florida, Inc. This event was intended for kids to read to the greyhound dogs, but who had time to read when all this petting and dog kisses were happening?

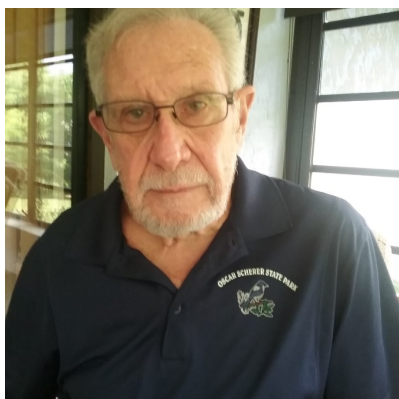
The Haunted Drive Event Oct. 22 & 23 is still in the works, with planning and sorting out some of the finer details. We are currently looking for volunteers for actors, traffic, set-up and clean-up. Entrance will be cash only, \$10.00 per vehicle up to 8 persons, then an extra \$1.00 for each additional person. The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park partner with the Nokomis Volunteer Fire Department and the Osprey Nokomis Chamber of Commerce during this enjoyable, popular event. Publix will be onsite, as well handing out some special treats with no tricks.

We held our Summer Volunteer Appreciation Picnic in July. The skies threatened us with rain, so we moved it into the Nature Center, and you guessed it – no rain. Twenty-Two summer sweating volunteers were served hot pizza, cake, cool drinks and cold ice cream. The ac was an extra bonus enjoyed by everyone. Several volunteers were recognized for the many hours they have worked with a service pin honoring their time. Each volunteer at Oscar Scherer is an important piece of what makes this park a sanctuary. We all thank each one and appreciate your dedication and commitment.



Volunteer Spotlight

MEET DIRECTOR AND FORMER PRESIDENT RON NEWTON



Ron Newton was born in a small town on the Pennsylvania/Ohio border. After graduating from high school in 1959, he joined the United States Army in 1961, spending 22 years in the missile and intelligence fields. He attended the University of Texas at El Paso during his 12-year assignment at Fort Bliss, Texas. Upon retirement from the Army in 1983, Ron attended the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho. He graduated in 1987 and was hired that same year by Washington State University as an Organic Chemistry Laboratory Instructor. Ron taught Organic Chemistry Labs for 19 years, retiring in 2006. Ron and his wife purchased a motorhome and traveled all over the United States for five -and-a-half years always, ending up in Venice, Florida. They purchased their home in 2010 and have enjoyed their residence here.

Since living here, Ron volunteered for the Wildlife Center of Venice, doing wildlife rescue of injured animals and helping with construction projects. In 2015 Ron was invited to be on the Board of Directors of the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park. He immediately accepted and has since been Treasurer, Vice President and President.

MEET VOLUNTEER NELLIE LUNGER

This is John and Nellie Lunger's second summer as a campground host with Oscar Scherer State Park. They both live locally year-round in Venice. John and Nellie have made themselves available in the past when the park has needed someone to help fill in a hosting assignment. They even had some days when they have done extra assignments like cleaning the screen room at the park or helping to clean grills in the day use areas after use. Nellie has also helped to train the park's new hosts when they arrive.

Nellie is from Ohio and has spent 40 years in the hospitality industry, so she fits right in to the customer service aspect of the Florida Park Service. John and Nellie have four children and five grandchildren.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT: ALEXIS WALLACE, OUR NEWEST PARK RANGER



My name is Alexis Wallace and I am Oscar Scherer's newest park ranger. When I graduated from college over a year ago, I was on the hunt for a job. I applied to an array of jobs that related to my degree in Environmental Science. Luckily, I stumbled across a posting for a seasonal OPS Park Ranger position at Oscar Scherer State Park. I received a phone call from Assistant Park Manager, Dan Nelson, telling me that they would like to do a phone interview. Not long after that interview, I was offered the position. Knowing it was only a 6-month position I thought to myself "Why not?"

Fast-forward 6 months and I'm sitting in an interview room desperately trying to become a full-time park ranger so that I can stay working at Oscar Scherer. I found out very quickly that this was no ordinary job. The staff and volunteers I have worked with are some of the most amazing people I have ever met. Experiences I have gained through the park service have made such a positive impact on my life. Though rewarding, it certainly wasn't easy. I have worked extremely hard to learn new skills as well as fulfill all my responsibilities.

Becoming a park ranger came with new challenges, including passing the pack test required for prescribed burns. Fortunately, after attempt number 2, I was able to pass the pack test and move on to become a full-time Park Ranger. I am grateful to be back and able to continue working with my Oscar Scherer family.

Manager's Message (continued from page 2)

October is shaping up to be a busy month also, as park personnel prepare for the Haunted Trails Event on October 22nd and 23rd 8:00 PM – 10:00 PM. The event is a cooperative effort among Oscar Scherer State Park, The Friends of Oscar Scherer, the Nokomis Fire Department, and the Osprey Nokomis Chamber of Commerce. Although the event has been scaled back from recent years due to health concerns, I'm confident it will still be an exciting event for the entire family. Please plan on showing your support by attending this event. The cost is only \$10.00 per carload up to 8 people. Tickets will be sold at the door, cash only. Proceeds go towards supporting the park and the local community.

A special thank you to the Friends of Oscar Scherer State Park Inc. for recently purchasing a new golf cart battery charger and for acquiring 5,000 campground maps. Plans to update the campground maps are in progress, while the Friends work to identify sponsors in the local area to help offset printing costs.

Thank for your support, hope to see you soon.

Meet the Team

Park Manager – Matt Kruse

Assistant Park Manager – Dan Nelson

Administrative Assistant – Amber Shaw

Park Service Specialist – Diana Stinson

Park Service Specialist – Sawyer Pascoe

Park Ranger – Alyssa Rothstein

Park Ranger – Deanna Lamont

Park Ranger - Alexis Wallace

Park Ranger – Michael Hubbard

Park Ranger – Alexa Kurowski

OPS Park Ranger – Mfume Kalu

OPS Park Ranger – Jerry Bodnar

OPS Park Ranger – Anthony Zaccaroli

Super Star – Francis Folkers