



SPRING 2022

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

UPDATE IN BRIEF

- Repairs to main park drive roadway.
- New campground restroom
- Awards to Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, volunteers and staff at Volunteer Appreciation Picnic
- Events and programs
- Lake Osprey Fishing pier complete
- New Employee Jonathan Hunter
- Earth Day/ Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
- Father's Day Program

Did you know...



The Fox Squirrel is the biggest type of tree squirrel that's native to North America. However, the Fox Squirrel is sometimes mistaken for the American Red Squirrel or even the Eastern Gray Squirrel, despite the Fox Squirrel's differences in size and coloration relative to these other species. They are primarily found in open forests with little undergrowth. The Fox Squirrel's natural habitat spans most of the eastern United States as well as Canada. Additionally, the Fox Squirrel is strictly a diurnal creature, non-territorial, and spends more time on the ground than most species of squirrels. They can build two types of homes: one is a flat collection of sticks called a "Drey," and the other, a hollowed-out tree trunk during the winter. On average, these beautiful creatures' life expectancy varies depending on their gender. In the wild, the female Fox Squirrel can live up to 12 years and the male around 8 years, while domesticated Fox Squirrels can live up to 18 years of age.

Manager's Message



Matt Kruse
Park Manager

Matt Kruse - Park Manager

Hello Friends

The feeling of spring is in the air at Oscar Scherer State Park. The Bald Eagles' nest on the Green Trail has produced two young fledglings that are testing their wings and boldly expanding their range beyond the nest. Florida Scrub-Jays are busy constructing their nests, while wildflowers are just starting to bloom. Park staff recently rescued a young Great Horned Owl that was found outside its nest on the ground. Gopher Tortoises are on the move in search of a mate or can be seen foraging on the new growth throughout the park. It's a great time to be outdoors here in the park.

Despite being extremely busy, the staff and volunteers found a way to work around the large number of visitors to complete numerous park enhancement projects. Assistant Park Manager Dan Nelson led the charge with a long list of park chores. The dedicated team pressed forward through the challenges, keeping the litter under control, cleaning restrooms, painting buildings, installing fences, trimming trails, grading roads, repairing equipment, upkeep of bridges & walkways, straightening signs, and removing non-native plants. During this time the park was able to pull off two separate night concerts featuring local bands "Bandana" and "Passerine." The concerts were directed by Park Service Specialist Diana Stinson with the support from The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park. Both events provided park visitors with the opportunity to enjoy great music while in a natural setting.

The park welcomes new employee Jonathan Hunter. Jonathan recently accepted the Park (continued on page 6)



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 is planning for the upcoming spring season of programs and events which are supported by many volunteers. With the assistance of volunteer's, the park events are able to run smoother and we have the opportunity to provide a better event and better visitor services. Without volunteers many of these events and programs cannot take place. If you would like to Get Involved, please contact Diana Stinson for more information.

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

As the winter season passes and most snow birds return to the north Oscar Scherer is moving into our regrowth of spring. The winter season started out a little slower than usual but has gone out with a bang. After shutting down for 2 years and cancelling all events and programs, people seemed a little reluctant still to get involved. February and March proved people are excited to participate in what the park, staff and the volunteers have to offer.

The State Parks Nationwide First Day Hike was once again a hit at Oscar Scherer. We had the second highest participant attendance in the state. Several participants have returned each year and are eager to attend. Many families, hiking enthusiasts and many new visitors to the park attended.

This year's 22nd Scrub Jay 5K race & 10K Scramble was well attended. We introduced a new course this year geared toward trail runners. The route took runners to parts of the park most people don't venture to. With views of lakes, the coolness of hammock areas and the natural soft sandy flatwoods gave participants a challenge and encouragement to keep going to see what the next experience might hold.



We just wrapped up our final Night Concert of the season. Both nights were a different experience. February brought us a cool night with low attendance and lots of hot chocolate sales. March brought warm weather, beautiful clear starry skies and not much hot chocolate sold.

We are gearing up for our 33rd Annual Earth Day Festival. Every year the national Earth Day organization comes up with a theme. This year brings us "Invest In Our Planet". With this theme in mind we will feature a 22-day countdown beginning April 1st. 22 Days, 22 Ways. Stay tuned to Friends of Oscar Scherer face book page because our new District AmeriCorps ROAR members Aaron Fried and Matt Williard are creating some great inspiring posts daily for our countdown.

Our Father's Day Orienteering Event will be Sunday June 19th. This fun event features a different course for the experienced and the inexperienced. So, grab your dads, register for the event and spend your day in

SUPPORT THE FRIENDS IN THE SARASOTA GIVING CHALLENGE

Please support the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park in the Sarasota Giving Challenge. From noon on April 26th to noon on April 27th, passionate donors may provide support to their favorite nonprofit organizations, including the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park. The Giving Challenge is hosted by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. All gifts up to \$100 will be matched.

Volunteer Spotlight



As we wrap up our winter season and say farewell for now to many of our volunteers, we want to share some of the accomplishments this year.

On March 3rd we celebrated the annual volunteer appreciation picnic with an award ceremony for District 4 volunteers at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park. The park hosted and provided volunteers with a fun-filled day with games, crafts, river boat tours and their famous mermaid shows. Lunch was provided with a selection of food that made your mouth water and filled your belly. Oscar Scherer celebrated with receiving 5 awards for volunteer recognition.

Team of three – maintenance – Known as “The Three W’s” – Gary Wehnes, Dick Wirey, Mike Walker.

Long Project – taking longer than 1 year to complete – The ADA Fishing Pier

Pete Kaiser – 20 years of volunteer service

Bob Sendrey – 25 years of volunteer service

Francis Folkers – Irene Delaby Award – 10,000 hours of volunteer service

January 5th brought cold weather and warm hearts together as the Oscar Team celebrated a special time for one of our couples. Dick & Pat Wirey celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary and shared their special moment with the group.



Oscar Scherer volunteers bring the park to life in many ways as they busily bustle around making repairs and updates and greeting visitors. Without these volunteers the park would not have the ability to offer programs, provide customer service and assist staff. They have been known to help cover park staff shifts and keep the nature center open for that last-minute visitor that just walked in the door before closing. Oscar Scherer is fortunate to have this fantastic crew working alongside our staff.

THE RECENT RESCUE OF A BABY HORNED OWLET



The owlet in a box

On March 3, a camper at Oscar Scherer spotted a live baby Great Horned Owllet in the brush next to a tall Slash Pine tree.

Estimated to have fallen anywhere between 60 and 70 ft from its nest, the owlet was brought into the care of Wildlife Rescue as his parents sat perched in their tree watching from above to ensure their baby's safety. After a required 24 hours to ensure that the owlet was not injured and was still eating, the baby Great Horned Owl was given a clean bill of health and determined to be fit to be released back into its home in the flatwoods.

To help reintroduce the owlet back into his habitat, Wildlife Rescuers Bill Marcin and Abby Polek arrived at the scene from the Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida the very next day around sunset. But time was of the essence: since the sun was quickly fading in the background, they would have to work fast to get the furball back into his nest.



To begin his ascent into the canopy, Bill brought with him spiked shoes, rope, and a harness complete with a safety rope that was wrapped around the tree. To the ordinary eye, the climb might seem quite treacherous, as Bill had to unclip and reclip his harness during the ascent in order to avert the branches extending out from the trunk.

Upon reaching the top of the tree where the owlet's nest was located, Bill needed to survey the nest in order to ensure that it was of sound structural integrity. After seeing that not much of the original nest was intact, Bill reinforced the nest. Using some twigs and branches that were within reach, he was able to fortify the nest.

With the nest Strengthened, Bill set up a simple pulley system in order to raise the cumbersome crate containing the baby owl into the several-stories-high canopy, while Abby was on the ground securing the owlet in its carrier so that it could be carefully hoisted up into the tall Pine tree.



With both team members now in place, the crate gradually began its ascent. On the way up, the wind caused the crate to sway side to side, but fortunately the natural slant of the tree allowed the carrier to be easily gliding up without bumping up against the trunk on its way up. Bill was successfully able to receive the crate containing the owlet. Gently removing the baby from its carrier, he was able to return the owlet to the nest! Finally, he secured the crate to his harness and began a swift descent.

With Bill back on the ground, the team was full of excitement to know that the owlet was safely nestled back into his home. Since then, the Great Horned Owllet's parents have been seen monitoring him from nearby trees, while Oscar Scherer Park staff continues to keep a close eye on our baby owl to ensure that he is still in his nest.



The owlet finally home safe

THE FRIENDS RECEIVE AWARD FOR FISHING PIER



The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park received the Long-term Special Project of the year award at the District 4 Volunteer Appreciation meeting held on March 3rd at Weeki Wachee State Park. The award commemorated the completion of the Boardwalk/Fishing Pier. The project was started by the Board of Directors of the Friends in early 2010 and was completed earlier this year. Current Directors Carolyn Morgan and Ronald Newton attended the meeting to accept the award. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Boardwalk/Fishing Pier has been scheduled for April 23rd.

Manager's Message (continued from page 2)

Service Specialist "Maintenance Mechanic" position. He served as a Park Ranger at Gasparilla State Park prior to his arrival at Oscar Scherer. Johnathon has an extensive background in facilities and equipment maintenance. His knowledge and skills will be a great asset to the park.

Plans for a new bathhouse are under way for the campground. Proposals have been submitted and a contractor has been selected to demolish bathhouse number two and replace it with a new prefabricated building that will be complete with men's and women's restroom including shower facilities. The building will also feature a family restroom with laundry amenities. It is anticipated that the project will begin this summer and take approximately 8 months to complete. Also, in the plans are upgrades to the road surface along the main park drive. Road crews will be arriving soon to address the numerous potholes in the pavement along the park's roadway.

Although programs for the season are slowing down, it's not too late to attend a program or guided tour. Please pick up a program guide at the ranger station. There are plenty of selections to spark your interest. If you haven't made plans yet, be sure to mark your calendars for Saturday, April 23rd for our Earth Day Celebration. There will be lots of food, fun, and activities for the entire family. During the festivities there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at 12:15pm to celebrate the opening of the new fishing pier at Lake Osprey.

It's an honor to serve as your park manager. 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 – Jonathan Hunter

Park Ranger – Alyssa Rothstein

Park Ranger – Deanna Lamont

Park Ranger—Open

Park Ranger – Michael Hubbard

Park Ranger – Alexa Kurowski

Park Ranger—Open

OPS Park Ranger – Jerry Bodnar

OPS Park Ranger – Anthony Zacarolli

Super Star – Francis Folkers