

UPDATE IN BRIEF

- The Park received no damage from Hurricane Idalia.
- The Park will celebrate National Public Lands Day on Saturday, September 23rd.
- The annual Haunted Trails celebration is scheduled for Friday, October 20th and Saturday, October 21st from 8-10 p.m.
- Four campsites will be converted to glamping.
- The kayak rentals will soon be automated.
- The campground bathhouse replacement is moving forward. Construction should begin in January and be completed in 7 months.

Did you know...



2 adults fighting

Gopher Tortoise: The gopher tortoise is a protected species and is listed as “threatened”. The gopher tortoise is important to its habitat because it creates a micro-climate that attracts over 350 different species of animals. As the gopher tortoise digs its burrow, it digs down to the water table. Often, the end chamber will connect to the water table and provide a source of clean water. Additionally, this water source creates a cool moist environment for all

the critters that might occupy the burrow.

The gopher tortoise will create a gently sloping tunnel at a 3:1 ratio. For every 3 feet in length, the burrow will drop 1 foot in depth. While most gopher tortoise burrows are often 6 feet deep and 20 feet long, they can be as deep as 22 feet and as long as 52 feet! Since the gopher tortoise is searching for the water table, the depth is going to depend on the depth of the water table.

The gopher tortoise’s burrow can be easily identified if the explorer knows what to look for. The opening appears as a half circle; flat on the bottom and arched on the top. The opening of the burrow provides a clue as to the size of the resident gopher tortoise; it will be large enough for the tortoise to turn around. The area in front of the opening of the burrow is called the apron. This area, too, is home to various animals. To see if anyone is home, look for an apron that is free of vegetation. Also look for footprints or slide marks left by the bottom of the tortoise’s shell.

It’s hard to imagine that over 350 species of animals use the gopher tortoise’s burrow. According to Patricia and Ray Ashton, authors of the book *The Gopher Tortoise; A Life History*, over 400 species have been observed occupying the gopher tortoise’s burrow! These other animals include frogs, toads, lizards, snakes, birds, rodents, spiders, and invertebrates. The animals that are specifically adapted to life in the burrow and only live in the burrow are

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2 adults fighting

Manager's Message



Matt Kruse

Hello Friends of Oscar Scherer Park

As always, I want to thank you for your continued support. Starting off I am pleased to report the park received no damage with recent storm Hurricane Idalia. Staff and volunteers quickly cleaned up the debris following the storm, allowing visitors to return immediately. Although Oscar Scherer avoided impact from the storm, other state parks were not as fortunate. Hurricane recovery teams from our District Four office were deployed to state parks that were impacted by the storm. Oscar Scherer's Park Ranger Deanna Lamont was deployed to Manatee Springs State Park, where she spent two weeks helping the park recover from the storm. Thank you, Deanna, for your service.

Other staff updates include the departure of Park Ranger Anthony Zacarolli, who will be going to work for the City of Venice. AmeriCorps ROAR member Andrea Brunner will also be leaving for a different career path. We will miss them both and wish them much success. Administrative Assistant Alyssa Rothstein received Employee of the Month honors for her outstanding work ethic and commitment to park service excellence. Park Services Specialist Diana Stinson is laboriously preparing for October's Haunted Trails event; please show your support by helping in any way possible to ensure a successful event. Park Service Specialist Jonathan Hunter is putting the finishing touches on the new ranger office, while park rangers anxiously wait to move back into their office that was destroyed by Hurricane Ian.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Friends of Oscar Scherer for their financial support. Recently, the park experienced adversity when three of the Park's golf carts broke down. The Friends stepped up and provided funding in the

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VOLUNTEER



Fall is a great time of year to Get Involved as a volunteer at Oscar

Scherer State Park. The air begins to cool & change, native plants begin to transform into fall colors. Beautiful showy native grasses bloom, animals and birds become more active. The migration begins, and Oscar Scherer is a sanctuary for many. The American Bald Eagle adults and juveniles return to their nesting grounds, and the park offers great opportunities to observe nature.

This is an exciting opportunity to give back: Oscar Scherer is currently seeking volunteers to cover Nature Center shifts, and year-round positions for The Friends of Oscar Scherer CSO board members.

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

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

The Nature Center at Oscar Scherer is staffed by park volunteers. The Nature Center has been staffed and open 7 days a week for the past 3 months for the summer season, drawing in over 1,900 visitors. We need your help to keep the Nature Center open for visitors. If you can cover 1 day per week for 4 hours, **WE WANT YOU.**

So... Get involved, and meet new friends!



If you are interested in volunteering to help out and give back, please complete a volunteer application and submit it. To obtain an application visit <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!

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

The Dog Days of Summer Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

August held some of the hottest days on record, but that didn't prevent Oscar Scherer State Park's staff from showing appreciation for all the volunteers who endure the summer heat. 37 volunteers attended, with a cumulative total of over 74,000 volunteer hours this year. Everyone wore a fun hat of their creation. Of course, there was a voting hat for everyone to vote for their favorite volunteer hat. 12 staff grilled burgers, dogs and set up for everyone. Cold drinks, summer cake and good friends were enjoyed.



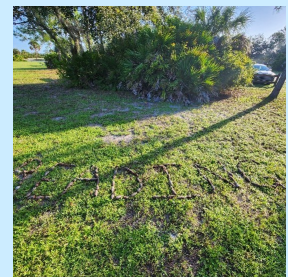
September really seems to kick off our event and programming season. The park holds three events in the month of September.



Literacy Under The Trees was held on Sept. 2nd and proved to be a hit with kids and adults. A whopping 120 persons attended this small event, almost double the number who attended last year. Sarasota County Library, Suncoast Grade-Level Reading, Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, Oscar Scherer staff, Nature Center volunteers and our own local published author/volunteer Fran Palmeri kept pretty busy interacting with families to provide excellent resources and information. Games, crafts, and activities engaged everyone into something fun and informative. The highlight seems to be the Nature's Word Scavenger Hunt, which involved finding words made of natural materials, then unscrambling them to make a sentence.

Keep Sarasota Beautiful – International Coastal Clean-up was held on Sept. 16th. Volunteers cleaned the creek and trails of trash and trimmed brush along the creek trails.

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) Sept 23rd 9-12 is a day of service to give back to public lands. Oscar Scherer is a host site for this event, with several projects to choose from this year. Friends of Oscar Scherer will provide a hot dog lunch after the service project.



Our annual **Halloween Haunted Trails** event is off to a great start. After having to cancel last year's event due to Hurricane Ian, preparation for this year's event have been continuous. Haunted Trails will be held on Friday Oct. 20th and Saturday Oct. 21st from 8 to 10 PM. Tickets are sold online only and are selling quickly. The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, the Osprey Nokomis Chamber of Commerce and the Nokomis Volunteer Fire Department are partnered up on this event to provide the community a fun time. For all three of these partners this is the largest fundraising event of the year that helps support their missions and in turn gives back to the community. If you are not able to attend as a guest or volunteer for support, please consider a donation. Event information, ticket sales, volunteer submit form and donations can be accessed on the website link or visit the Oscar Scherer park website, You can also purchase tickets or donate at

<https://www.halloweenhauntedtrails.com/>

Are you interested in Volunteering for the event? We are in desperate need of volunteers to assist with one of the largest park events and fundraiser for The Friends of Oscar Scherer, Inc. The Annual Halloween Haunted Trails is a local community event for kids and adults alike, offering a trick or treat trail, kid's area and a haunted road leading to the famous haunted house.



Volunteer Spotlight

MEET DARLENE NEWTON



Meet volunteer Darlene Newton. She hails from a small town in western Pennsylvania called Ellwood City. She graduated from high school in 1962 and married Ron Newton, our current Vice President. She spent the next twenty-two years as an Army wife and got to travel to many areas of the world. After Ron's retirement from the military, she worked as a dental receptionist, while Ron finished his education.

Following Ron's graduation they both were employed by Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. They both retired in 2006, bought a motor home and traveled all over the U.S. They always ended up in South Venice so, in 2010 they bought their current home there.

Darlene has always loved crafts such as knitting, crocheting, painting and sewing. She has spent many hours painting wine glasses for gifts. After many years of making hats for newborns, lap robes for Veterans and baby blankets, she decided to paint rocks. In 2022 she began painting rocks and gave them away. Suddenly she thought, why can't we put the rocks in the Nature Center at the Park and ask for a donation for a stone. It was an instant hit. The first group of rocks flew out of the Nature Center in no time at all. Since that time she has gathered rocks from various places in the U.S. and the location is painted on the bottom as well as FOSP. So the story continues, with hundreds of rocks being selected and the donations going to the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park.

Volunteer Spotlight

MEET Nancy Robbins



Meet new volunteer Nancy Brown Robbins. Nancy has taken over the butterfly garden on each side of the walk to the nature center. Nancy is married to Joel Robbins, who is also a volunteer and one of our directors.

Nancy is working not only to plant native flowers and shrubs but also to label them, so that visitors can learn to identify Florida *flora*.

Nancy, a retired insurance agent, is from Connecticut and now lives in Venice. She loves plants and animals, so she has two budgies, Mickey and Azure; two goldfish, so far unnamed; a cat named Blue; and an assortment of house plants.

Did you know... (continued from page 1)

called "Obligate Species". Other species that can live in the burrow and elsewhere are called "Commensals".

It is because of all the species that depend upon or benefit from the gopher tortoise's burrow that the gopher tortoise is considered a keystone species. Without the work of this magnificent creature, many other species would suffer. Ecosystem health depends upon biodiversity. All native species of plants and animals work together to not only feed one another, but to keep populations in balance. Please visit Oscar Scherer State Park and check in with a Ranger to see what you can do to help protect this critical species and the habitat that depends on it.

Manager's Message (continued from page 2)

amount of \$1,700. Thank you for providing us with the tools required to perform our jobs successfully.

In other news, Oscar Scherer State Park is partnering with Timberline Glamping Company to offer a new experience to our over-night guests. Within the next few months, four campsites will be transformed into glamping sites complete with a beautiful tent, comfortable bed, air conditioning and many other amenities. The glamping experience will satisfy those seeking a little refuge in nature without foregoing any of life's luxuries. We are excited about the new services and look forward to working with Timberline Glamping Company.

Coming soon will be the return of kayak rentals. The Park is working with an outside concessionaire to provide automated kayak rentals. Whenever Water Sports LLC will be taking over kayak rentals in the park. Their solar-powered kiosks will allow visitors to easily pay with a credit card or phone and select the desired watercraft and duration. Upon payment, the electronic lockers and lanyards will automatically open to retrieve PFDs and paddles. Whenever Water Sports LLC is already established in many other state parks and has been shown to be a great asset. The new automated kayak service will help eliminate congestion in and around the ranger station.

Big project news. After many setbacks the campground bathhouse replacement project is slowly moving forward. The pre-bid meeting for the project was held in August, and, after selection of a contractor and permitting, the project will likely start around January 2024. The task is anticipated to take seven months to complete. The new facility will be an upgrade to the existing out-dated building.

More exciting news...The park has received \$60,878.00 for habitat restoration. The funds will be used for the mechanical treatment of areas in the park that have become too overgrown to safely apply prescribe fire. The project will benefit populations of threatened Scrub Jays and other imperiled species within the park. Improvements will provide a suitable habitat for Jays to nest and feed.

Please plan a visit to the park in the near future. A detailed program list is available at the Ranger Station, or visit the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park's website <https://friendsofoscarscherer.com/>. Thank you for allowing me to serve as your park manager. Hope to see you soon.

Meet the Team

Park Manager – Matt Kruse

Assistant Park Manager – Laura Adams

Administrative Assistant – Alyssa Rothstein

Park Service Specialist – Diana Stinson

Park Service Specialist – Jonathan Hunter

Park Ranger – Donnie Berube

Park Ranger – Deanna Lamont

Park Ranger—Anthony Zacarolli

Park Ranger – Colin Ott

Park Ranger – Stacie Shoppman

OPS Park Ranger—Clarice Hald

OPS Park Ranger – Jerry Bodnar

OPS Park Ranger— Open

District ROAR AmeriCorps— Andrea Brunner & Jamie Butler

Super Star – Francis Folkers