

**UPDATE IN BRIEF**

- Celebrate National Public Lands Day with us on September 28th.
- Buy your tickets now for the annual Haunted Trails on Friday, October 18th and Saturday, October 19th.
- The Park’s 25th Annual Scrub Jay 5K and Scramble 10K is scheduled for January 25, 2025.
- Our trails are beginning to dry out, and picnic areas remain open.
- The bald eagles are beginning to return for their nesting season.
- The new bathhouse is nearly completed, and should open soon.

**Did you know...**

Did you know that bobcats are among North America's most adaptable and elusive predators? These stealthy felines, known scientifically as *Lynx rufus*, are named for their distinctive “bobbed” tails, which are notably shorter than those of other wild cats. Their adaptability is a testament to their survival skills, as they thrive in a wide range of habitats—from lush forests and swamps to arid deserts and even suburban areas.



At Oscar Scherer State Park, bobcats are a notable part of the ecosystem. With body lengths ranging from 28 to 40 inches and weights varying between 15 and 35 pounds, bobcats are smaller than their northern cousins, the Canada lynx. However, they are powerful hunters, capable of making impressive leaps of up to 10 feet. Their hunting strategy involves a combination of patience and stealth, utilizing their keen senses of sight and hearing to locate and ambush prey. Bobcats primarily prey on small to medium-sized mammals, such as rabbits, hares, and squirrels, but their diet can also include birds, insects, and occasionally larger mammals like deer.

Though bobcats are solitary and maintain well-defined territories, they are not aggressive towards humans. They tend to avoid confrontation and will generally not pose a threat if left undisturbed. However, it is wise to respect their space. Their elusive nature and remarkable ability to thrive in varied environments continue to fascinate wildlife enthusiasts and researchers. At Oscar Scherer State Park, observing these magnificent animals in their natural habitat offers a glimpse into their mysterious world, underscoring the importance of respecting and preserving their natural environment.

Laurie Johnson  
FLCC AmeriCorps R.O.A.R. Member

## Manager's Message



**Matt Kruse**  
Park Manager

Hello Friends of Oscar Scherer Park

Thank you for supporting Oscar Scherer State Park. Your support is greatly appreciated.

I hope you had a great summer. Our staff have been working hard to ensure the park is safe and ready for your visit. Although some of the trails remain closed due to Tropical Storm Debby, all-day-use picnic areas remain open for your enjoyment. Please be patient while the trails dry out and we remove any hazards that may remain on the trails, and please obey all posted signs and avoid closed areas.

As we enter a new season, we are excited to see the autumn flowers in bloom. Fall flowers such as goldenrods, blazing stars and asters provide colorful blooms that inspire pollinator activity. Native grasses such as Muhly and Lopsided Indian grass also create beautiful scenery throughout the park. Also with the fall season is the return of the bald eagles. Just like clockwork we began seeing eagles returning to the park early in September. In October the eagles will start to re-establish territory; November will bring nest repairs and by December they will mate and lay eggs. The Green Trail often provides the best viewing opportunities. Keep an eye in the sky. You are likely to see one of these amazing birds.

Park improvements continue throughout the park. In the campground amphitheater Eagle Scout troops are in the process of replacing the benches in front of the theater screen and fire circle. Campers are looking forward to the opening of the new bathhouse, with construction nearing completion. The new bathhouse will provide upgraded facilities for our guests. The building will

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## VOLUNTEER

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

Some examples of the volunteer opportunities include: 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. Our winter seasonal events and programs are kicking off and are always in need of extra volunteers.

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 needs to be done for the day. With the winter months approaching and bringing in the cooler weather we are looking for a team of wood splitters. A great way to meet new friends!

Did you know that, if you are a campground host, you can get a campsite for up to 4 months for no charge, in exchange for your volunteering hours? Required weekly hours are 24. Although Oscar Scherer is not in need of winter volunteers this year many parks may have openings and encourage anyone interested in contacting our parks. Jobs are often posted in the volunteer portal.

The heat of summer is almost over. Cooler weather and tourists will soon be arriving. Many regular resident volunteers return to Oscar Scherer for the season, and soon the park will be abundant with volunteers eager to assist rangers and park visitors.

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](mailto:Diana.Stinson@floridadep.gov)

**“Volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are PRICELESS.”**

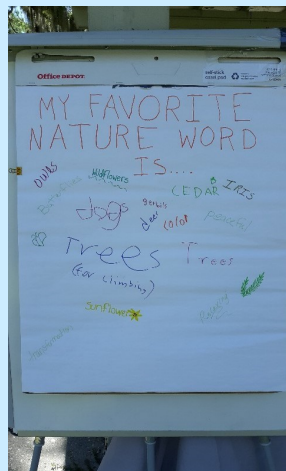
**Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers at Oscar Scherer State Park!**

## PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

As fall approaches, Florida residents welcome in the somewhat cooler temperatures, a break from the extreme hot days of summer. The days shorten, vegetation growth begins to slow and native plants begin to show their fall colors. Yes, Florida has fall colors too. The winged sumac, virginia creeper, maple trees, and even poison ivy morph into shades of reds, oranges and yellows.

The park will begin to come out of “slow season” and prepare for fall, winter & spring events. Visitors will begin to frequent the park for camping, family gatherings and longer hikes on park trails. September has ushered in an event each weekend at the park.

**The International Literacy Day Event** was a fun place to be over the Labor Day weekend. Families gathered for a nature word scavenger hunt, fun craft activities, free books and more. Oscar Scherer, An Apple A Day Academy, Suncoast Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Gulf Coast Conservation Foundation and Marcie Aboff, a local author of “*A Giant Jar of Jelly Beans*,” a fun children’s book, all made this small powerful event especially exciting. This year’s participants topped last year with 162 attending the event.



**National Public Lands Day (NPLD)** Sept 28th 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.

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## **PROGRAMS AND EVENTS (continued from page 3)**

The park will soon be rustling with spooks, ghosts and plenty of scare. **Oscar Scherer's Halloween Haunted Trails** will welcome its 11th year for this event. Ticket sales opened earlier this month and are on the way to another sold out event. There will be fun times and treats for the young and timid also. Osprey Nokomis Chamber of Commerce, Nokomis Volunteer fire Department and Publix will be ready to welcome everyone. This is The Friends of Oscar Scherer's biggest fundraiser each year. If you love Halloween and are interested in volunteering to help put on this community event, let us know. We have volunteer registration open. Please fill out the form on the haunted trails website. If you would rather just attend the event, get your tickets before they are sold out. Tickets may be purchased online only at <https://www.halloweenhauntedtrails.com/>



We are gearing up and preparing for another popular event with the **25<sup>th</sup> Annual Scrub Jay 5K & Scramble 10K Race**. With this being a significant threshold marker for this event, we are planning to create a fun celebration. 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2025. 25/25/25. Don't miss the opportunity to get registered and receive your commemorative race items. Can't make it in person? Register for the virtual and you can still be a part of the event and  
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## MEET FRIENDS DIRECTOR OLIVER JANNEY



Oliver Janney moved to the Sarasota area from Scarborough, NY, in October 1990. He was a corporate attorney, primarily for a succession of corporations that manufactured plastics and plastics-related products, until his retirement in 2020. He has lived in Palmer Ranch just north of Osprey since 2005.

Oliver joined the Board of the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park as a director in December 2018. He has been the editor of the Friends' newsletter for the past five years. He has also been Secretary of the Friends since September 2022. As Secretary, Oliver keeps minutes of Board meetings and maintains copies of the Friends' organizational documents.

Oliver monitors the three bald eagle nests of Oscar Scherer State Park and of two county parks for Audubon EagleWatch. This involves visiting and watching the nests at least twice a month during the nesting season, which begins in October, and reporting the birth and development of eaglets until they fledge in the spring. Audubon EagleWatch through volunteers monitors over 900 bald eagle nests in Florida. 722 of these or 83% were successful in the 2023-2024 season, with a productivity rate (number of eaglets per nest that fledge) of 1.24. Oscar Scherer State Park's eagle nests had a productivity rate of over 2 eaglets per nest that fledged.

### *Manager's Message (continued from page 2)*

have added amenities such as a family restroom, laundry facilities and a dish-washing area. We are hoping the new facility will be open by October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Another Park improvements that is slowly moving forward is the road paving project that involves re-paving the park drive and campground loop; it will go out to bid later this month. Friends Board members and park management continue to work through the Nature Center Screen Room renovation challenges but remain optimistic that it will be completed soon.

I am truly blessed to work with a deeply devoted group of staff, volunteers, and Friends Board members. All of this wouldn't be possible without their dedication and hard work. They truly make everything come together so our guests have the greatest experience imaginable. Please come out and experience it for yourself.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your park manager.

# A Bit of Sarasota History

## A Bit of Sarasota Natural History

It's probably appropriate for slash pine to rhyme with turpentine, because the former was the mother of the latter. Well, long leaf pines were too.

Driving past strip malls, housing sub divisions and condos in Sarasota County, it's hard to believe that much of the area was once used to produce naval stores.

### A Fresh Scent

The term naval stores means maritime supplies--lumber for ship building, pitch for caulking wooden ships to make them water tight, and turpentine to thin paint. If this is all new to you, stop by the Nature Center at Oscar Scherer State Park in Osprey. Ask whoever is on duty to treat you with a sweet smelling whiff of spirits of turpentine, the essence of pine sap.

Antique Harvesting Tools: Also, on the outside wall of the nature center is a display of 100-year-old harvesting tools, a cat face (the carved grooves in a pine tree that drip sap or resin), rosin (the byproduct of distilling resin), and assorted sap collection containers.

Turpentine is still used to thin artists' oil paint, because it dries slowly to allow blending over several days. Rosin is used by baseball pitchers and batters, ballet dancers, violinists, and gymnasts.

### A Pocket of Nature

After the turpentine era, most land was lumbered off for profit and to create pasture for Florida's expansive cattle industry. The Seaboard Airline Railroad, whose tracks are now occupied by the Legacy Trail biking path, was key to shipping the naval stores to market.

With most of western Sarasota County developed, Oscar Scherer State Park is a pocket of nature that celebrates Sarasota County's early history.

-Joel Robbins, nature center volunteer and Friends of Oscar Scherer board member

## PROGRAMS AND EVENTS (continued from page 4)



help to support the park and The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc. Commemorative shirt guaranteed for those who register early. This year a special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary hoodie will be available for purchase. You do not need to register for the race in order to purchase the hoodie. Orders do need to be completed no later than Jan. 2, 2025. Hoodies can be ordered on the run sign up page. Don't miss out on this special event. Help us celebrate this special moment while supporting a good cause.

<https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Osprey/ScrubJay5K10>



## Meet the Friends' Directors and Officers

President—Ron Newton

Vice President and Nature Center Manager—Carolyn Morga

Treasurer—Anne Heuer

Secretary—Oliver Janney

Dylan Murphy

Joel Robbins

Jim Rogers

## Meet the Park's Staff

Park Manager – Matt Kruse

Assistant Park Manager – Chris Tretter

Administrative Assistant – Alyssa Rothstein

Park Service Specialist – Diana Stinson

Park Service Specialist – Jonathan Hunter

Park Ranger – Donnie Berube

Park Ranger – Deanna Lamont

Park Ranger—Glenn Mitchell

Park Ranger – Colin Ott

Park Ranger – Jamie Butler

OPS Park Ranger—open

OPS Park Ranger – Jerry Bodnar

OPS Park Ranger— open

District ROAR AmeriCorps— Laurie Johnson