

**UPDATE IN BRIEF**

- **Join the 25th Annual Scrub-Jay Race on January 25th.**
- **The Park continues to recover from storms' impact.**
- **Jamie Butler is the new Park Services Specialist for volunteer coordination.**
- **Morgan Coe joins the Park from Myakka State Park.**
- **New bathhouse in the campground has been completed.**
- **The screen room 2024 renovations are complete. More to come in 2025.**
- **The Bald eagles are actively nesting in the Park.**
- **Kayak and stand-up paddleboard rentals coming in February.**

**Did you know...**

Did you know that Oscar Scherer State Park is one of the best places in Florida to spot bald eagles in the wild? This 1,400-acre gem in Sarasota County offers the perfect mix of ecosystems—scrubby flatwoods, swamps, and uplands—that create a thriving habitat for these majestic birds. In fact, the park has three active bald eagle nests.

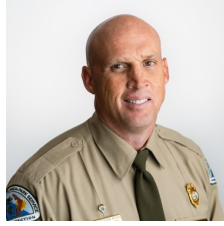


Bald eagles can often be seen soaring overhead or perched in the park's towering pine trees, especially during the winter months when they migrate to Florida's mild climate. With access to natural prey like fish, turtles, and birds, the park supports a healthy population of these iconic raptors.

Visitors can explore Oscar Scherer's winding nature trails or take a kayak trip along South Creek to observe these birds in their natural setting. Beyond bald eagles, the park is home to a variety of other wildlife, including ospreys, herons, and even manatees, offering countless opportunities for birdwatching and wildlife photography. Whether you're an experienced birder or just a nature enthusiast, spotting a bald eagle in this peaceful park is an unforgettable experience. Remember to always keep a respectful distance, to ensure the birds feel safe and undisturbed as you observe them.

Oscar Scherer State Park combines stunning natural beauty, wildlife watching, and outdoor adventure—making it a must-visit destination for anyone wanting to connect with nature and see Florida's iconic bald eagles in action.

## Manager's Message



**Matt Kruse**  
Park Manager

Hello Friends of Oscar Scherer Park. Thank you for your continued support. I hope you are having a great holiday season. Here at the park, we are looking forward to getting back to full operation after a challenging hurricane season. Although the park received significant damage from recent hurricanes, the park is steadily recovering and cleaning up from the storms' impact. While the South Creek Picnic area remains closed, the Lake Osprey and Legacy Trail picnic areas have reopened for public use. Camping opportunities have been fully restored including Glamping. Although the Lester Finley and South Creek trails are closed, the remainder of the trails have been re-opened for your enjoyment.

I am excited to announce Jamie Butler has been selected as the Park Services Specialist for the park. For the past year, Jamie has served as a Park Ranger at Oscar Scherer. During her time as a ranger, she led the resource management program and was the site supervisor for the Florida Conservation Corps (AmeriCorps Non-Native plant Terminators) program. Prior to becoming a Park Ranger, Jamie provided park support as a member of the AmeriCorps (Regional Outreach Activities Recruiter) program. While serving as an AmeriCorps member she gained valuable experience providing outreach, interpretation, event coordination and Volunteer orientation. Jamie's knowledge, skills and Ranger First attitude will be a great asset to the park. Also joining the team will be Park Ranger Morgan Coe. Morgan has spent the past year improving the natural communities at Myakka River State Park by removing exotic plants threatening the park. His experience with the Florida Conservation Corps (AmeriCorps Non-Native plant Terminators) program will make him a great fit for the park. Congratulations, Jamie and Morgan.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## 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.

With cooler weather and tourists 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 Jamie Butler, Park Service Specialist, at (941) 882-7219 or e-mail at [Jamie.Butler@floridadep.gov](mailto:Jamie.Butler@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!**



## 25th ANNUAL SCRUB-JAY 5K & SCRAMBLE 10K JANUARY 25, 2025

*Custom Commemorative Medal & Tech Shirt to Race Registrants*

**Place:** Oscar Scherer State Park OR do the Virtual Scrub Jay ANY-WHERE!

Oscar Scherer State Park, 1843 S. Tamiami Trail (US41), Osprey, FL  
34229 Race Registration includes race morning park entry

**When:** Saturday January 25, 2025

Park Opens @ 6:30 a.m. on Race Morning

Packet Pick-Up/Race Morning Registration closes @ 7:45 a.m.

Races Start @ 8:00 a.m.

Advance Packet Pickup: Thurs. Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> at New Balance University, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Fri. Jan 24<sup>th</sup> at Oscar Scherer Park Nature Center, 4-6 p.m.

*Serving S'mores fireside on Friday from 4-6*

**Register:**

**RunSignUp.com/Race/FL/Osprey/ScrubJay5K10**

## MEET VOLUNTEER GEORGE BOYD



George Boyd and his wife returned to Oscar Scherer State Park in the summer of 2024 during hurricane season. Amidst multiple hurricane evacuations, with Hurricane Milton laying waste to the park, George and his wife were the first volunteers to return to the park. George helped park staff with essential post-disaster recovery operations. He was instrumental in getting volunteer campsites prepared for volunteers to return as well as getting critical day-use areas open for the public. George didn't quite get to stay long enough to see the entire park open for camping and day-use, but we could not have done it without him!

Photo caption: George is pictured standing atop the deck that he engineered and built for a state-owned residence. The old deck was unsafe, and it required a complete tear down and rebuild from a new design.

He contributed much more work to that state residence and the park.

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

We are sad to see Friends Board Members Secretary Oliver Janney and Vice President Carolyn Morgan retire from their positions. Thank you, Carolyn and Oliver, for your dedication and support throughout the years. You will both be greatly missed. I want personally thank board member Jim Rogers for stepping up and filling a void by volunteering to serve as the new Vice President of the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park. Jim is already making a difference by providing direction on promoting the Scrub-jay adoption program.

Park updates include the recent completion of the Bathhouse in the campground. The new facility will provide upgraded facilities and amenities such a family restroom, laundry facilities and a dish washing area. Also completed is the Friends funded screen room renovation. The newly renovated facility will provide a meeting and resting area for quests to enjoy free internet while evading insects. Most exciting, starting in February 2025 the park will provide kayak and stand-up paddle board rentals. Whenever Watersports has begun setting up a self-serve kiosk at the South Creek picnic area. The system will enhance recreational opportunities in the park, while improving the visitor experience.

I hope you plan a visit to the park soon. We have already kicked off the season with our first guided hikes; tram tours and campfire programs will be resuming in January. We have a full schedule of programs and events for the entire family. Even if you're not able to make it out for a program, please come out for a leisurely stroll through the park. Right now is a great time to view wildlife. Bald Eagles have been active in the nest along the Green Trail, while migrating songbirds can be seen throughout. If you're feeling adventurous, mild wintertime weather conditions offer the best opportunities for a long 5-mile hike on the Yellow Trail.



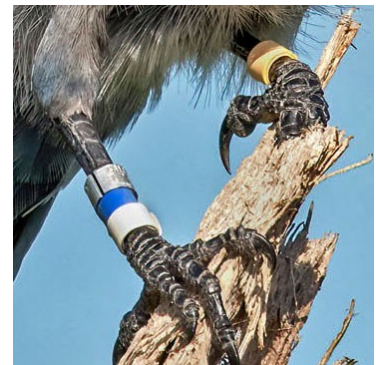
## QUARTERLY SCRUB-JAY FEATURETTE



This is the first installment of a quarterly feature on one of the park's scrub-jays plus a short "Fun Fact" about Florida Scrub-Jays.

Fun Fact: About Oscar Scherer's Florida Scrub-Jays.

At this time, we currently about 35 individual scrub-jays in six family groups. We attempt to have all the birds banded for quick field identification for our monthly census counts. The birds usually have four bands: three colored and one silver. All have short codes based on the color sequence. This quarter's feature bird has Silver/Blue/White-Yellow bands and his shorthand code is SBW-Y.



Featured Scrub-Jay: This quarter, we are featuring one of our older birds, SBW-Y. He was hatched in 2015 in the TWOA family and was banded in July of that year as a juvenile. According to the park records, he became the dominant male in the TWOA family and had his first three young in 2017. He fathered more young in the TWOA family in 2018 and 2019. In 2021 he dispersed and became the dominant male of the SQEZ family. He had one young in 2021, none in 2022 and three in 2023. Unfortunately, his mate turned up missing in 2024 and he had no young this year. But by tracking his lineage, he currently has offspring in the SAND, CNTY, SQEZ, LGCY and ROGUE families! Quite a heritage. Presently, he can often be found on the west side of the Legacy bike trail and along the Scrub Jay Trail.



## FRIENDS' ANNUAL MEETING ELECTS DIRECTORS-OFFICERS AND INAUGURATES RENOVATED SCREEN ROOM



The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park held their Annual Board of Directors meeting in the Nature Center on the evening of 9 December. The evening started with a social hour and followed by the Board meeting.

The Board of Directors found it difficult to say good bye to two of our dedicated Officers, Vice President Carolyn Morgan and Secretary Oliver Janney. Carolyn joined the Friends in 2013 and has actively participated in a majority of the Board's events. Carolyn is better known as the Director of the Nature Center which she kept well stocked with a variety of items. She served her last year as Vice President of the Board.

Oliver joined the Board in 2018 and served as a Director until September 2022 when he became Secretary of the Board. He has kept the minutes of all meetings and maintained all of the Boards organizational records. Oliver monitors the three eagle nests in the park and has added two more in Sarasota County for the Audubon Eagle Watch. Once the birds fledge his job is done until next year. For the last five years Oliver has been the publisher of the Friend's newsletter, which he has handed over to Jim Rogers.

During the meeting, with no new nominations or volunteers, the remaining directors and officers were elected for another year unless sooner terminated. The director and officers are:

Ronald Newton, President and Director

Jim Rogers, Vice President and Director

Anne Heuer, Treasurer and Director

Joel Robbins, Director

Dylan Murphy, STAR Director

Matt Kruse, Park Manager, elaborated on the value of the CSO and described the major accomplishments of the park. The Board meeting was adjourned.



Following the meeting a terrific pot luck dinner was offered to the guests. VP Carolyn Morgan cooked up a delicious ham for the main course. Door prizes were handed out to the lucky winners, and the meeting was adjourned.



The Oscar Scherer State Park Florida Scrub-Jay Adoption Program is your opportunity to directly support our efforts to protect and preserve the threatened Florida Scrub-Jay population for current and future generations.



*Scan me to  
adopt your  
Scrub-Jay  
online!*



## Meet the Friends' Directors and Officers

President—Ron Newton

Vice President —Jim Rogers

Treasurer—Anne Heuer

Dylan Murphy

Joel Robbins

## Meet the Park's Staff (January 2025)

Park Manager – Matt Kruse

Assistant Park Manager – Chris Tretter

Administrative Assistant – Alyssa Rothstein

Park Service Specialist – Jamie Butler

Park Service Specialist – Jon Hunter

Park Ranger – Donnie Berube

Park Ranger – Colin Ott

Park Ranger—Donnie Berube

Park Ranger – Glenn Mitchell

Park Ranger – Morgan Coe

OPS Park Ranger—Jerry Bodnar

District ROAR AmeriCorps— Laurie Johnson

AmeriCorps ANT Member—Ibrahim Sharif

AmeriCorps ANT Member—Ezra Townsend