

Friends of the Randell Research Center

Vol. 7, No. 2

June 2008

Archaeology? Kids Dig It!

Randell Research Center 2008 Education Update

by Michael Wylde

We've had a lot of visitors this year, with regularly scheduled Wednesday tours well attended through the season. But beginning in March, kid's tours really bring the Calusa Heritage Trail to life. More than a dozen large school groups visited the site this spring, with an average group size of about thirty. They came from Gulf Elementary, Trafalgar Middle, Challenger Middle, and Tropic Isles Elementary schools. Sanibel fourth-graders were brought over by boat by the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, and of course we always see our own island kids from Pine Island Elementary; they have lunches and water in hand, and they are always ready to learn.

Groups are given an overview of the site on the pavilion deck, where we talk about our organization, then discuss the prehistory of our area and the Pineland site. Students then have a brief lecture in our classroom on the Calusa, their material culture ("What do you guys find here?"), archaeology, and historic preservation. Then we walk the Trail, where we stop at each of the interpretive signs and talk about the different aspects of Calusa history and the archaeological significance of the Pineland Site. Along the way, we talk about the native plants and plentiful birds on the site.

It's very gratifying to hear how much the kids already know about the Calusa, and how much more they learn while they are with us. Some have had school visits, where we go to the schools to prepare them with some basic knowledge, but others are very lucky to have teachers who are passionate about teaching the history and heritage of our region. Some groups have some extra time to spend with us, and we offer hands-on archaeology activities such as an atlatl demonstration, or screening real midden material to look for artifacts.

Many other educational visitors are not public school students. We have seen a lot of home-school groups this year, as well as local civic organizations such as the Cape Coral Yacht Club, the Miata Club of Fort Myers, and kayak, garden, and nature clubs. A Florida Gulf Coast University Visual Anthropology class visited for the day; students toured the site and got a behind-the-scenes look at archaeological labwork. A life-long-learning group came to visit from St. Petersburg, and a group of Red Hat ladies toured the site and then enjoyed a nice lunch at Tarpon Lodge across the street.

Of course, all of these programs are way more than I can handle on my own, so a big thank-you to all the volunteers and docents who made these visits possible, especially Joanne Bielfelt, Jim Cherfoli, Bill Godek, Alice Walters, and most especially Diane Maher, who has done an astounding seven school tours so far



Challenger Middle School students at the "early Pineland" sign on the Calusa Heritage Trail. (Photo by M. Wylde.)

this year, as well as worked in the office and in the bookstore every week. Also thanks to Mercy Runyon in the store, who was always willing to kick in the sales tax for kids' purchases!

We have several groups of kids visiting this summer for a day of "Archaeology Camp", so the fun's not over at the Trail. If anyone is interested in arranging a tour or educational program, please feel free to contact me for more information at (239) 283-2157.

Ruby Gill House Challenge Goal Reached

RRC Friends Respond to Miller/ Sipprelle Generosity

by Bill Marquardt

The Friends of the Randell Research Center have responded in a big way to the \$50,000 challenge gift opportunity offered on March 2 by Paul and Warren Miller and Dwight and Sue Sipprelle (see *Friends* newsletter, vol. 7, no. 1). Donations to the Building Fund ranged from \$15 to \$10,000, and all gifts are appreciated. By June 6, \$49,960 had been contributed. Linda and Jim Heffner's donation of fifty dollars that day put us over the top. The Millers and Sipprelles have sent their matching checks.

We will resume work on the Ruby Gill House as soon as the detailed construction plans are done and permits are in hand. Thank you, one and all, for your generous donations. If all goes as expected, the Randell Research Center will be able to move back into its offices and laboratories within a few months. Look for progress reports in the newsletter.

One Day in May

by Bill Marquardt

There is always something going on at the Calusa Heritage Trail at the Randell Research Center in Pineland. Admittedly, the pace slows somewhat this time of year as the days heat up and the summer rains begin to increase in frequency. There are fewer school tours, but more day-camp activities. There are still visitors to the Trail, but most appear in the cooler parts of the day, not when the sun is high in the sky. Lab volunteers are fewer, but the work still proceeds steadily under Michael's supervision. Mark will soon be seen less frequently on the tractor pulling the big water tank and more frequently on the mower, working to keep up with the fast-growing vegetation that is encouraged by the late-spring rains.

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Sea oxeye daisies begin to bloom.



Native cat claw bush in bloom.



View of part of the northeast part of the property, after the clearing of invasive plants.



Killdeer eggs in our parking lot.



Visitors to the Calusa Heritage Trail.



Gumbo limbo trees put out their leaves.
.....

Always there is wildlife to observe, from marsh rabbits to gopher tortoises to pileated woodpeckers. This time of year, daily blossoms on a profusion of plants are accompanied by the soft buzzing of bees and the darting flight of butterflies. In May, the gumbo limbo trees bring forth their foliage, and by June the royal poinciana trees on Brown's Mound have taken on their brilliant fiery-orange mantles.

By mid-May, the osprey hatchlings appear half-grown. Mockingbirds have chosen nesting places in the crooks of

continued on page 4



Mark Chargois (above) waters thirsty citrus trees.
.....



(Left) Bee hovers over Jamaica caper flower.
.....

New and Renewing Friends of the RRC from March 16 through June 15, 2008

(* indicates donation of materials or services. Please let us know of any errors or omissions. Thank you for your support.)

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April 7, 2008

Dr. Walker and Dr. Marquardt,

Congratulations on completing your Urban Reforestation Grant. You successfully established 836 trees, with an accompanying 44 bushes. With over 32 species of trees, the grant out on Pine Island is far and away the champion for diversity of plant material for all of the grants that I was responsible for administering. Everyone involved with the project should be proud in the watering efforts that have taken place to keep the plant material alive in the driest part of my three county service area over the last two years.

At both the Gill house and the [Pineland site], the native trees are well on their way to recreating some of the historical plant diversity prior to the use of the two sites for cattle and other more recent human uses. This grant only seems to be part of the investment that the University of Florida is making with the new classroom and bookstore facilities, so good luck with everything and the restoration efforts. The road will be long, but as with all good, hard work, the ending conclusion through great effort is usually worth the effort.

Michael Weston, CFA Senior Forester
Florida Division of Forestry
Caloosahatchee Forestry Center

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small trees, while doves carry their twigs high up into the coconut trees. And the killdeer? Well, this unusual shorebird invariably lays her eggs right out on the open ground, or – at least this year – in the middle of our gravel parking lot.

I was at the Trail on May 13, and took a few snapshots of how the place looked that day. You can view these photos in color on our web site, along with other images taken at other times, some by other people. Just go to www.flmnh.ufl.edu/RRC/PhotoGallery.htm and browse through them.

We'll keep adding to the on-line photo gallery, but some things just can't be captured with a camera. The best way to

enjoy the Trail is to pay a personal visit. I can practically guarantee that you'll see something interesting, or discover something on one of our interpretive signs that you hadn't noticed before. People have been visiting this special place for 2,000 years. Now it's your turn.



Robert Wells, Jr. (above) presents a check for \$8,000, a joint gift from him and Charles Edwards, May 13, 2008. Left to right: Wells, Karen Walker, Bill Marquardt. The check went into the Building Fund and was matched by \$8,000 from the Millers and Sippreles (see article, page 1). (Photo by V. Amsler.)



(Left) Native bromeliad in bloom.

Did You Know?

All previous Friends of the Randell Research Center Newsletters are archived on the RRC's web site at www.flmnh.ufl.edu/RRC/news.htm

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news

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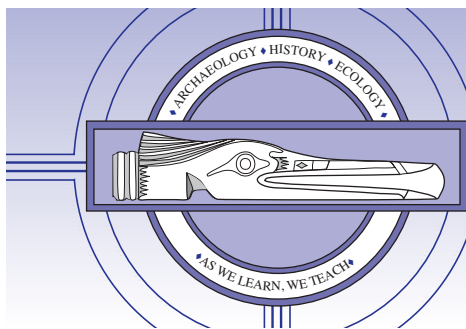
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Friends of the Randell Research Center

Pineland, Florida • June, 2008

Phone (239) 283-2062 E-mail: randellcenter@comcast.net

Dear Friend,

You are cordially invited to join, or renew your membership in, the RRC's support society, *Friends of the Randell Research Center*. All Friends of the RRC receive a quarterly newsletter and free admission to the Calusa Heritage Trail at Pineland. Supporters at higher levels are entitled to discounts on our books and merchandise, advance notice of programs, and special recognition. Your continuing support is vital to our mission. It means more research, more education, and continued site improvements at the Randell Research Center. Thank you.

Sincerely,

William H. Marquardt
Director
Randell Research Center

Please check the membership level you prefer, and send this form with credit card information or check payable to Randell Research Center, to:

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Sharks and Shark Products in Prehistoric South Florida

by Laura Kozuch; Monograph 2, softcover \$5.00

The Archaeology of Useppa Island

edited by William H. Marquardt; Monograph 3, hardcover \$35.00, softcover \$20.00

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by Charles Blanchard, illustrated by Merald Clark; hardcover \$19.95, softcover \$9.95

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