



# Friends of the Randell Research Center

November 2022 • Vol. 21, No. 1 and 2

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## A Brief History of the Randell Research Center, Part 2: 1997-2004

by Bill Marquardt



In April 2003 we broke ground for the first phase of the visitor center. From left to right, Steve Stans, John Worth, Warren Miller, Stuart Brown, and Bill Marquardt.

(Photo by Karen Walker.)

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***As part of our celebration of the RRC's 25th anniversary last year, we invited Bill Marquardt, RRC's co-founder and first director, to summarize some of the key events in its history.***

In the most recent newsletter, I wrote about the beginning of archaeological research at Pineland, the support of the Randell family, our research and learning programs in the early 1990s, and the decision of the Randells to gift 53 acres of their property to establish a permanent facility. I also tried to convey our awakening sense of how important the facility could be in bringing awareness of southwest Florida's environment to the public, young and old, many of whom were new to the area.

The plan all along was for the Randells to donate the land to the University Foundation (the Foundation), which would hold the property until it could be bought by the County or the State. The Florida Museum's RRC would manage the property for research and education, and the money gained from the sale of the property would go into an endowment fund. Then the interest income from the endowment would help pay for site maintenance and the beginning of a permanent staff.

When the Randells had owned the property, a small herd of cattle had roamed the pastures, munching happily on the grass. The good folks at the The Foundation decided that the cows would have to go. "Bill, the Foundation is not in the ranching business," I was politely informed. So the Randells sold the cows, and the pasture grass, liberated at last, began to grow higher. And higher. The cost to mow was over \$500 each time, and our meager stash of funds started to shrink. Until the property could be bought, there was no endowment income. Someone needed to be our local representative, leading tours, raising awareness, soliciting donations, and managing the prolific vegetation. I was needed in Gainesville to help with the permanent museum exhibit and to continue to edit and oversee production of our books and videos. What could we do? I begged for help from my Museum, and in 1998 Bill Keegan, then chair of the Museum's academic department, offered a 3-year part-time salary to pay a local manager, Corbett Torrence. The rest of our budget went to mowing and the rental of a chemical toilet.

Corbett knew the site well because he had made the map of the site during the "Year of the Indian" project. A charis-

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**In March 2004, we hosted our first Calusa Festival at the visitor center. About 500 people attended. At this time the classroom had not yet been built.** (Photo by Bill Marquardt.)

matic teacher, he hosted tours for both adults and school kids and inspired a team of volunteers to help keep the vegetation in check on the mounds and pathways (see *Calusa News* no. 10, pp. 2-3 for a summary – all project newsletters are available on-line on the RRC’s website: <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/rrc/newsletter/>). Corbett also assisted Karen Walker in her excavations on Useppa Island in November 1998. To raise awareness of the Calusa and the RRC, in 1999 and 2000 we hosted a “Calusa Festival” at Royal Palm Plaza. These events, as well as many public talks by Corbett and me, got the word out to both residents and tourists. Also in 1999, our monograph on the archaeology and history of Useppa Island was published. In May-June 2000, an archaeological field school from FGCU worked on top of Randell Mound 1, recording information from the footer holes that had been dug in preparation for house construction before the property was bought by the state (*Calusa News* no. 9, p. 3).

In the late 1990s an advisory board made up of local people and archaeological professionals began meeting to discuss ways to develop teaching facilities at the site that would be effective yet would not distract from the natural beauty of the landscape. We conceived of a visitor center with a classroom, a book and gift shop, and restrooms. Planning and design services were generously donated by Jeff Mudgett,

Tim Keene, Dick Workman, and Bob Rude. In 2000, the Stans Foundation granted \$105,000 toward the facility and other private gifts added \$36,000. With a State match, we had \$282,000 for the first phase: a parking lot, a handicapped-accessible ramp and deck, the restrooms, and a book and gift shop.

In November 2000, Lee County purchased the Ruby Gill House and post office, as well as about 8.5 acres of environmentally sensitive wetlands. The Gill House was slated to become the RRC’s headquarters and laboratories. The “Friends of the RRC” support society was founded, and the Maple Hill Foundation granted \$230,000 to be allocated over a 5-year period for operating expenses while we raised money for an endowment. Following a national search, John Worth was hired on August 31 to manage the RRC, a new position funded by the Florida Museum. The advisory board adopted a five-year strategic plan in December 2001.

The following three years were eventful. The first issue of the *RRC Friends* newsletter was sent out in March 2002. The State Historic Preservation

division granted \$300,000 toward site interpretation at Pineland. Dwight and Sue Sipprelle pledged \$100,000 to sponsor an interpretive trail. Meanwhile, in October the Museum’s long-awaited Hall of South Florida opened in Gainesville. Planning and design had begun in 1994 for the first permanent exhibit featuring South Florida in the Museum’s history. Much of the archaeological and environmental content was based on what we had learned at Pineland and elsewhere.

In 2002, archaeological excavations were completed in the area where our visitor center would be built. We purchased furniture and lab equipment for the Gill House, and a dedicated volunteer team built a comparative collection of animal bones and shells (*RRC News* vol. 1, no. 2). John Worth did archival work in Spain and Cuba on Spanish documents (*RRC News* vol. 1, no. 4) and in 2003 he began new volunteer-assisted excavations in Pineland’s south pasture. We completed the planning for the interpretive trail and Synergy Design Group began designing the trail signs.

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**A feature of the 2004 Calusa Festival was a public tour of the ongoing excavations in the South Pasture.** (Photo by Bill Marquardt.)





# Friends of the Randell Research Center

Pineland, Florida • November 2022  
Phone 239-283-2062  
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**Dear Friend,**

In 2001, the Friends of the Randell Research Center (RRC) was created as a giving society to support the programs and activities of the RRC through its endowment and operating funds. Our Friends organization provides an important component of the financial stability of the RRC. Your continuing support is vital to our mission. It means more research, more education, and continued site improvements at the Randell Research Center. I invite you to join us or renew your membership today. Thank you.

Best Regards,

*Annisa Karim*

Annisa Karim  
Operations Manager  
Randell Research Center



***Please check the membership level you prefer, and send this form with your check payable to UF Foundation, to:***

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- ☐ **Sustaining Members (\$5,000-\$19,999), Benefactors (\$20,000-\$99,999), and Patrons (\$100,000 and above):** receive all of the above + complimentary RRC publications and special briefings from the Director.
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For more information about establishing an endowment, creating a bequest or charitable remainder trust, or giving gifts of property or securities, please contact Marie Emmerson, Senior Director of Development, [emmerson@ufl.edu](mailto:emmerson@ufl.edu), cell: 352-256-9614.

The Randell Research Center is a program of the Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida.

Thank you for your support.



# Preliminary Investigations of the 1614 Spanish Attack on the Calusa Realm

*An inspiration for new analysis*

*by Charlie Cobb, Michelle LeFebvre, and Gifford Waters*

**W**ay back in a 2005, *Friends of the RRC Newsletter*, Dr. John Worth (now at the University of West Florida) described a 1614 attack by Spanish forces on at least four Calusa towns, probably including the Pineland site (known at the time as Tampa). His article served as an inspiration for archaeologists Charlie Cobb, Michelle LeFebvre, and Gifford Waters to successfully obtain a National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) grant to evaluate the location and condition of the Calusa sites involved in the hostilities.

The attack on the towns of Tampa, Calos (Mound Key), Muspa (on Marco Island), and Tequesta (now sitting under tons of concrete in Miami) was in retaliation for a devastating raid that the Calusa carried out against the province of Mocoço in the present-day Tampa Bay area (Fig. 1). The colonial government in St. Augustine had been courting this province of Native American towns, a longtime rival of the Calusa, as a potential ally. The Calusa attack was an apparent attempt to punish their rival and undermine the partnership with Spanish Florida.

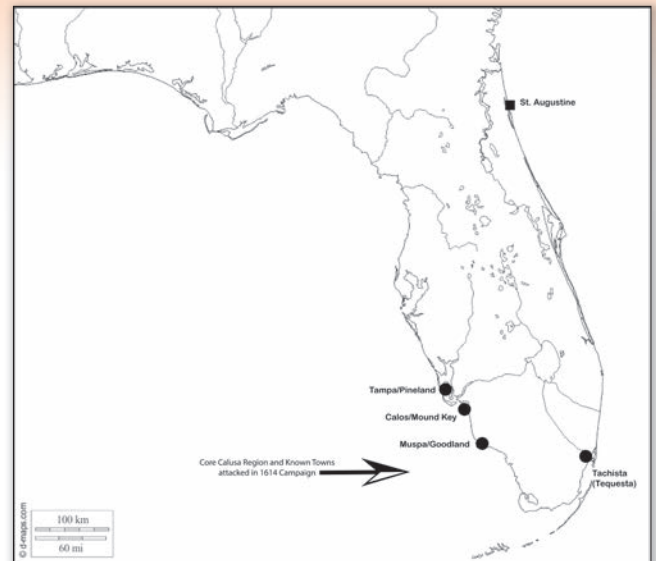
According to research conducted by Dr. Worth, two boatloads of Spanish soldiers set off from St. Augustine on their punitive expedition in 1614. Officials in St. Augustine probably felt this action was necessary to demonstrate to Indigenous allies that the Spanish Crown could be counted upon as a reliable partner.

The central goal of the ABPP initiative is to address the condition of sites known to have taken part in signifi-

cant military actions in American history. It is not to conduct intensive archaeological investigations. In other words, projects are intended for preservation and planning purposes, rather than research. Our archaeological investigations have focused on systematic metal detecting survey at the two remaining preserved sites from the 1614 attack, Mound Key and Pineland. In addition, we have metal detected at the Mound House site on Estero Island, which straddled the fastest water route between Mound Key and Pineland.

This work has revealed that there is one locality at Pineland that has yielded likely evidence of the attack or a Spanish encampment, including lead shot of a caliber used by Spanish muskets of the era and an iron bar that seemingly was used as a kind of anvil (Fig. 2). Similar shot has been found at Mound House. Our investigations at Mound Key have yielded a number of artifacts typical of an early Spanish colonial presence, including forged nails. It is difficult to relate these specifically to the 1614 attack, though, since a small garrison of Spanish soldiers and Jesuit missionaries lived at Mound Key in the late 1560s.

One of our more interesting artifact discoveries has been a small number of lead fishing plummets apparently fashioned by the Calusa, a raw material that must have been obtained from Spanish sources (Fig. 3). These artifact types have been discovered at



**Fig. 1 – ABPP project area map.**

Native American sites in southeast Florida as well. They serve as an important reminder that relations between Indigenous and European peoples were not always marked by violence. Groups like the Calusa were quick to take advantage of many of the material opportunities afforded by the arrival of European colonials.



**Fig. 2 – An iron bar that seemingly was used as a kind of anvil.**



**Fig. 3 – Lead fishing plummets apparently fashioned by the Calusa, a raw material that must have been obtained from Spanish sources.**





## Honoring Karen Walker

*As a way to honor Karen Walker after she retired last year, we asked her former colleagues to share their thoughts with us.*

### **A Mystery Solver and More**

by Bill Marquardt

**Karen Walker** is a mystery solver. She has an intense curiosity about how things work and why they appear as they do. When she sees patterns in her data, she wants to know why, and how those patterns relate to others.

Some people think of Karen only as the collections manager for the Florida Museum's South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography program, others only as the zooarchaeologist who analyzes the bones and mollusk shells from Pineland and other sites. Still others know her as the person best able to prepare and document shell-midden profiles that record important details of site histories. RRC volun-

water temperature. (If Karen is the only zooarchaeologist you've ever met, it may surprise you to learn that some zooarchaeologists, even some prominent ones, don't look at mollusk shells at all – just the bones.)

Partnering with geochemist Donna Surge, Karen was able to confirm subtle climate fluctuations by analyzing catfish otoliths and quahog clam shells from controlled archaeological contexts. Working with coastal geologist Frank Stapor, she helped shed light on barrier-island dynamics as they relate to sea-level changes. Teaming with geologist Mike Savarese, she helped document mass fish-capture techniques used by the Calusa at Mound Key. Under her sharp eyes, subtle clues to site abandonment and re-settlement as well as the timing of ancient storms have been revealed by

“

*Karen Jo is the consummate professional in every respect and a world-class scientist. I deeply appreciate and admire her meticulous approach, transdisciplinary research, and innovations in zooarchaeology, historical ecology, and paleoecology.* – Lee Newsom

”

teers know her as a co-founder of the Center and as a caring mentor and teacher who goes the extra mile to show how the smallest things we find can lead to some of the biggest revelations. Grad students at UF and elsewhere value her help and advice.

Karen has expanded zooarchaeology in southwest Florida to address broader questions about climate change, sea-level fluctuations, and cultural adaptations through time. Mollusk shells have been particularly important in this endeavor due to their sensitivity to environmental conditions including salinity and

paying attention to both land-snail and marine shells.

She systematically studied Florida coastal fishing artifacts, explaining how such items as compound fishhooks, bone points, and net mesh gauges worked, and showing that they compare well to fishing practices around the world. She compared fishing artifacts from within southwest Florida and related them to shallower- and deeper-water habitats. She has done field work throughout the eastern U.S. and even contributed to Florida pioneer history with her study of South Florida logging camps.



**Florida Museum archaeologist Karen Walker displays a southern quahog clam shell and other specimens from Pine Island.** (Photo by Kristen Grace – Florida Museum.)

She has written and edited major portions of four synthetic monographs, especially for Pineland, and is a prominent member of the interdisciplinary team currently researching Mound Key and environs.

Since 1988, Karen has devoted much of her energy and creativity to understanding and preserving the Pineland Site Complex and to establishing the Randell Research Center. I have learned a great deal from Karen and am privileged to have been her colleague for more than 35 years. Karen is looking forward to retirement, but I predict that we will see more studies and more publications from her in the future. There are still mysteries to solve, and she will not be able to resist.

### **Karen became a mentor to me**

by Dené Patterson

**I first met Karen Walker** in 2000, at an excavation on Randell Complex Mound One.

During her work, Karen could profile every contour even while answering my questions. I learned how to examine every detail and to carefully leave artifacts in situ and not produce holes while profiling. She advised us to practice restraint when looking at artifacts, to avoid jumping to conclusions, and to wait for the lab



**Karen Walker reviews the history of excavations at Randell Research Center for incoming Operations Manager Annisa Karim.** (Photo by Annisa Karim.)

work. I was inspired by her ethics and her wise experience.

I learned even more from Karen's classes at RRC, from her published articles and displays, and especially from her co-edited 2013 book, *The Archaeology of Pineland*.

I was most influenced by her careful attention to the smallest of details, which together made a huge impact


on ecosystems. I learned how tiny surprises and remarkable coincidences between both the living and the dead (and even fossilized creatures) do provide extremely precious data.

Karen's work has set an example that "no living thing is trivial." She has provided scientific evidence of climate changes going back thousands of years, allowing us to understand a trajectory of what is happening now to ecosystems around the world, and helping us to contemplate how living beings of all sizes and types are essential for restoring the balance—which is what this is all about. I will miss Karen.

### ***Dedication to people and place – a force in southwest Florida***

by Darcie MacMahon

***Karen is synonymous*** with the RRC. She was instrumental in its founding, along with co-conspirator Bill Marquardt, and has been deeply engaged in its success ever since.

Among her many contributions has been her commitment to the volunteer program, which has been such a vibrant aspect of the RRC. I have had the fortune to collaborate with Karen over the years, and especially appreciate her support as we developed the permanent exhibition on South Florida People & Environments for the museum in Gainesville. We all spent a lot of time at Pineland, and about six years developing the exhibition. And while we were at it, we developed the interpretive trail at Pineland. Karen's research has led to important new insights on climate change and human history, so useful for thinking about past and future. And her careful, professional approach to curating the museum's collection ensures that these materials will be available for future research. I am thankful for the time we have spent together – in the field, at the museum, and just having fun. This retirement is well deserved, and knowing Karen, she will have a lovely time. 



*Continued from page 2*


We broke ground for the visitor center in April 2003. The same year, Karen Walker and Donna Surge began work on an NSF-sponsored study of climate change using archaeological clam shells and fish otoliths. On July 31, Don and Pat Randell's wish was finally fulfilled: the State bought the gift properties from the Foundation for a little over \$600,000, and in 2004 the State matched with \$420,000. Both sums went into the endowment fund.

By March 2004, the first phase of construction was complete – the parking lot, ramp, restrooms, and pilings for the classroom. Preparations for the interpretive trail began – a sturdy bridge over the canal was built, an observation platform atop Brown's Mound was assembled, and gravel trails were laid down in anticipation of the signs. John resumed the dig in

the South Pasture, discovering evidence of structures more than 1500 years old. On March 21 we hosted our third "Calusa Festival" – this time not in a Cape Coral shopping center but right on our own, brand-new pavilion with many displays and tours of the excavations.

By summer 2004, the new interpretive signs had been installed. We planned a public grand opening for September. It was a heady time. Many people had worked hard, overcoming many obstacles. Now at last, thanks to the property sale, our first million had been raised for the endowment. The Museum had allocated a permanent position for a site manager. The first phase of interpretive facilities was completed. Hundreds had shown up for our first public event at the new pavilion. Membership in our support

society was growing. We were doing exciting archaeological and historical research. We had functioning offices, a meeting room, and labs at the Gill House. But then came Friday the thirteenth of August.

On that day the northern end of Pine Island absorbed a direct hit from a powerful, fast-moving Category 4 hurricane. Our new pavilion, built to resist sustained winds of 155 mph, survived just fine, but our headquarters house and the site itself suffered severe damages. Thus on August 14, 2004, we began a new phase: the slow, laborious, and expensive process of recovering from the ravages of Charley. Although the times were tough, the RRC ultimately not only recovered but rebuilt stronger than ever. I'll relate some of these stories in the next installment. 





## Jennifer Green joins the Florida Museum as new archaeology collections manager

excerpts from Jerald Pinson's article for *The Florida Museum*

**R**andell Research Center staff and volunteers are excited to welcome our new Collections Manager for the South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography collection, Jennifer Green, to the RRC Team! Jennifer Green grew up surrounded by the sub-tropical diversity of southern Florida, where she spent most of her time exploring outside. Interested in archaeology from an early age, she found a natural progression to studying the Indigenous cultures that once inhabited the landscape around her.

"I've always been interested in what it is that makes us human. What makes us tick? What are the connections that we find valuable?" Green said. "As I got older, I was more and more curious about what was happening in my own backyard, which started me down the path to anthropology."

Green received her bachelor's and master's degrees in anthropology from Florida Atlantic University, where she studied the pre-Columbian history of southern Florida. After a short stint at the University of Tennessee to obtain a doctoral degree,

she's glad to be back in the Sunshine State, where she recently joined the Florida Museum of Natural History as its new collections manager for South Florida archaeology and ethnography.

During her time at UT, Green managed the Department of Anthropology's Vertebrate Osteology Collections, which curates over 12,000 reference animal skeletons. This experience cemented her interest in collections-based work.

Green hopes to teach and continue her research into the past interactions and movements of people in the northern Everglades. The region was once a cultural hub for Indigenous people rafting in on languid rivers and sloughs connecting the Atlantic Coast to the Gulf and Lake Okeechobee to the Florida Bay. Tree islands of pine, cypress and mangrove rose above the sawgrass marshes and provided a stable, dry environment where communities came and went for several thousand years.

Jennifer sees collaboration within communities and between institutions as indispensable to museum



Jennifer Green, archaeology collections manager for the South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography collection. (Photo by Jeff Gage – Florida Museum.)

collections and research. She's currently working with Michelle LeFebvre, assistant curator of the South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography program, to build stronger ties with the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, which is owned and operated by the Seminole Tribe of Florida. "These partnerships provide the opportunity to evaluate shared goals and find ways to work together to each other's benefit," she said.

Green is in the process of finalizing her dissertation, which she plans to complete later this year before moving on to other research projects, but she's already looking forward to collaborating with researchers at the Florida Museum and the University of Florida.



## About Those Truncatella Shells: A Correction!

by Karen Walker

**A**great thing about producing newsletters is that one can share bits of information with a lot of people. And if you ever wonder if any of your busy colleagues take time to look past page one, well, make an error, and you might find out, as I did.

An "alert reader," namely Florida Museum's Roger Portell, invertebrate paleontologist, gently let me know that I goofed on the identification of

the 2004 Hurricane Charley landsnail shells shown in the photograph that accompanied my article in the July, 2021 newsletter. It turns out that they are not shells of beautiful truncatella (*Truncatella pulchella*), as I thought. Instead they are shells of a larger landsnail known commonly as the miniature awlsnail or scientifically as *Subulina octona*.

John Slapcinsky, a landsnail scholar

in the Florida Museum's invertebrate zoology section, confirmed the identification and told me that the miniature awlsnail is an invasive tropical landsnail, introduced to Florida in modern times. The linear concentration of its shells across the sloped surface of the Randell Mound nonetheless marks the upper extent of Hurricane Charley's floodwaters because the awlsnails drowned and

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# Friends of the Randell Research Center

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along with the other debris (see photo in previous newsletter), the dead snails were left behind when the waters receded. Their shells, still intact (see photo), were found by us ten years later in 2014. However, the truncatella shells that are in our AD 300 and AD 1000-1450 archaeological deposits (see previous article) are indeed truncatella shells, doubly confirmed by John. Unlike the awlsnail shells, they are there because while alive, the truncatellas were attracted to decaying seagrasses after floodwaters left them behind and they subsequently died in place. For comparison, the AD 300, archaeological truncatella shells are shown in the second photograph.

So, thanks to Roger and John, I now know that awlsnail shells, not truncatella shells, marked the extent of the hurricane's surge of 2004, but the real truncatella shells we found in our excavations do indeed provide evidence of where stormwater levels were circa AD 300 and AD 1000-1450. And now you do too! 



Archaeological shells of the beautiful truncatella landsnail, *Truncatella pulchella*, collected in 1992 from an Old Mound excavation and associated with the aftermath of Pineland's ca. AD 300 hurricane.



"Modern" shells of the landsnail called miniature awlsnail, *Subulina octona*, collected in 2014 from the location of the 2004 debris line (across the front slope of the Randell Mound) that resulted from Hurricane Charley's storm surge.

## RRC News

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# *Friends of the* **Randell Research Center**

***Dear Friends,***

We hope this newsletter finds you well.

Firstly, we want to assure you that our staff have all made it through the storm in good health. Some did sustain significant damage to their homes. We are still in the process of contacting year-round volunteers to see how they fared.

As you may be aware, Pine Island and southwest Florida, as a whole, was devastated by the winds and water that came with Hurricane Ian on September 28th. The road to Pine Island via Matlacha was destroyed and power, potable water, and internet services were lost. Many people lost something; some lost everything.

People, homes, and businesses will be the first priority in the rebuilding efforts in southwest Florida. That's as it should be. At the same time, we are making plans to dig out and build back up when the time is right. The Randell Research Center, including the Calusa Heritage Trail, is currently closed to all public access until further notice. Our website will be updated as things progress.

After the access road to Pine Island was re-established, we made some preliminary assessments of the Randell Research Center grounds. The visitor center (teaching deck, classroom, gift shop, command center, restrooms, and stairs to picnic area) appears to be in good shape. The pavilion was built to withstand 150 mph winds and there don't seem to be any water intrusion issues inside the building. The trail itself has suffered lots of damaged and destroyed vegetation. As you might imagine, using heavy machinery in an archeologically sensitive area needs to be done with finesse and good planning. Our maintenance area on the east side of the trail took a hit as well; the shed and pole barn suffered damage from high winds and downed trees.

As far as the Ruby Gill House goes, we are waiting instructions and permission from UF Health and Safety on entering the house to do any clean up or salvage, but we know that water entered the house and the floors are in very bad condition. The winds in the area were extreme so the structural integrity of the house itself needs to be assessed.

The Randell Research Center, including the Calusa Heritage Trail, is closed to all public access until further notice. Our website will be updated as things progress. Currently, RRC faculty and staff are pursuing different avenues for funding our clean-up efforts and opening back up to the public. We will keep you updated on our progress. Please, also know that the greater Florida Museum will be engaged in efforts to support the RRC and greater Pine Island communities.

Included on the other side of this page are a few photographs of the grounds in their Post-Ian state.

All the best,

Charlie Cobb, Director

Michelle LeFebvre, Assistant Director

Annisa Karim, Operations Manager





**Visitor Center**



**Randell Mound**



**Top of Brown's Mound**



**Bridge Over Cross-Island Canal**