

POLK GROUP

Issue: 06-09

FROM THE CHAIR...Al Greulich

WESTERN RAMBLINGS: I had planned a major road trip for several years to commemorate my 50th Birthday, and this Summer that fateful time arrived. This, my eighth trip West, proved to be the best and by far the longest, both in time spent and distance traveled. My destination was coastal California and Oregon, with the trip beginning at Lake Tahoe, and then Yosemite National Park. Being a teacher I have the luxury of sufficient vacation time to drive cross country, although my wife, who is not in my same vocation flew and I met her in Reno, Nevada, and she flew home from Portland.

In making this cross country trek, I confirmed what I had suspected from seeing the landscape through the window of an airliner on previous trips: most of the land in this big Country of ours is spoken for in some fashion. One notices that precious little natural land remains in the East, and vast treks of our Western regions still not built upon, are working landscapes supplying timber, minerals, petroleum, grazing lands and the like. As I drove across the long beautiful stretches in the West, I was grateful that our Federal Estate encompasses so much of this land and that it will always be here for us and the region's wildlife. Though it amazes me how much the natural landscape of this Country has been altered, not all in an undesirable way, but never the less, altered. Often one knows only from roadside historical markers how some of the Western lands originally looked.

All things considered, I think the American West still remains a natural treasure that I will never grow tired of seeing. My wife and I love the beauty of this special place and through meeting some of the people who live out there, we felt good about the environmental ethic of most Westerners. I had an interesting conversation with a lady who worked in a convenience store in Twin Falls, Idaho, about the environment. She asked me about all the alligator attacks in the news in Florida, and she noted a similarity with wildlife in her own area. She said, "It's just like out here with the bears and wolves, mankind just keeps moving into their habitat and elbowing them out of their homes." I replied, yes it is very much like that with the alligators. She then went on to say, "Now isn't that something, here you and I live at opposite ends of the Country, and we feel the same way

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**SIERRA
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SEPTEMBER 2006 NEWSLETTER

serving DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Polk County

PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER 14, 2006

Local Conservation. Have you missed finding out what's been accomplished and what's the next challenge? For the last several months our program topics have been so intense we haven't had time to discuss county conservation issues. This month local conservation, development, and land acquisition for public use are the topics for our program. Bring your favorite candidate so he/she can be educated.

RECYCLING AND BIRDING

Have you ever wondered how the recyclables you take to the curb or to collection stations are handled so that each type can move on to new uses? Ever wondered if what you were doing was a waste of time? Ever assumed that the Central Landfill must be nasty and smelly to the extreme? The tour Sierrans took on Aug. 23 answered these and myriad other questions. The process was so interesting the group had to be forced to move along.

First, the landfill is a tidy place - there is no blowing loose trash. It is extremely well organized with collection points for various materials (i.e. electronics, hazardous wastes, etc.) well marked and separated. By the way, electronics and hazardous waste disposal are free for households. The workers are polite and knowledgeable. And the birdlife is outstanding; one example: the largest group of wood storks many of us had ever seen in Polk County was standing around apparently counting traffic in what they evidentially thought was a sanctuary. For good reason the landfill is a major stop on Audubon's Christmas count.



Photo by Frances H. Coleman

Recyclables from your yellow bins move up and over a conveyor belt; some sorting is done automatically but workers are also constantly hand sorting to minimize contamination. The sorting plant contains mountains of cardboard, various plastics, etc.

Now to the recycling plant: SP Recycling Corp. has the contact to handle recycling for the county. (Remember: Florida Refuse has the contract for hauling. That's two separate corporations with two separate jobs.) SP's primary money-maker is recycling all paper products into newsprint. All of Polk's fiber goes to a plant in Dublin, GA. There is no market for glass so the landfill pulverizes it to use as a roadbed stabilizer. The plastics are sorted and sold for remanufacture into non-food related items. The steel and aluminum cans are sold but Barry

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(Continued from page 1) From the Chair

about our wildlife." I pointed out to her that these kinds of discoveries about each other help unite us as citizens of this great Country.

A majority of the land in the Western States is owned, and some of it protected, by our Federal Government. No such situation like this exists in our Eastern States, so we are in a race against time to preserve the best of what is left in our part of the Country.

We have had a couple of big losses in land preservation in Florida over the past year. Babcock Ranch was not preserved in its entirety, so we face the fact that a large city will be built right in the middle of what could have been an unbroken wildlife corridor. A similar fate is in store for one of Florida's most important wildlife corridors around the little town of Yee Haw Junction. Another large city is to be built there too.

After traveling so extensively out West, and seeing all that is still left out there, I long for preservation of our beautiful Florida landscapes more than ever. I encourage all of our members to keep the good fight going to protect what we still have left of our unique and special State.

(Continued from page 1) Recycling

Campbell, Division Manager for SP Polk, says some months the market is good and they make money, and sometimes not. But, by keeping all that material out of the landfill, we extend the life of the landfill. In the long term that makes excellent economic sense!



Photo by Frances H. Coleman

Sierrans and County employees Albert Lewis and Raymond Ivey admire the view from the top of the second highest point in the County. The generating plant which uses landfill produced methane gas can be seen in the background.

In response to the query "What are your major problems?" Mr. Campbell started by saying more people need to participate. Then he said if an item is too big for your yellow bin (i.e. a wading pool), don't put it out for recycling. Florida Refuse will pick it up to avoid having the customer complain to the County and SP then has to pucker the item out of the process. He asked that bottles and cans be rinsed to hold down the smell in the plant and that tops be taken off bottles (they're usually a different type of plastic which is recycled separately.) Leaving labels on is okay. Glass and plastic bag fragments in newsprint are a major problem so please keep the paper separate; try bundling your newspaper in paper bags or in another plastic bin.

Reminder: recycle plastic containers #1 through #6, aluminum and steel cans, all colors of glass, and all non-food-contaminated paper and paperboard.

....Frances H. Coleman

SYNOPSIS OF AUGUST PROGRAM

Ms. Sarah Melzer, Public Relations Director for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, presented an excellent program in which she explained the mission and the operations of the SPCA shelter in Lakeland. The SPCA provides temporary homes for stray and unwanted pets until they are adopted. The animals are given excellent care in a clean facility by a staff dedicated to the work they do. The SPCA is an open admissions shelter which means they do not turn away any animal. After the animal is received, an evaluation is made and proper veterinary care is given along with food and a peaceful environment.

The SPCA shelter provides spaying and neutering services for all of their animals and will provide low cost altering for family pets as well. One of their goals is to bring down the pet population through sterilization; this eventually should reduce the numbers handed over to the association.

Some of our members took this opportunity to express their concern about feral cats preying on birds and other wildlife. Many Sierrans are cat owners and they acknowledged the terrible toll that feral cats can take on wildlife. Suggestions were made to Sarah that a humane solution to this problem would be to capture these unfortunate felines, sterilize them and confine them in an outdoor fenced area where they would be fed and cared for. Gainesville already has such a "cat ranch".

If you would like to help with the important work of the SPCA, they need old blankets and bedding, stuffed animals and other "play toys," pet food and dishes, and old newspaper. Anyone who would like to volunteer to help at the shelter would be welcome. The shelter is located at 5850 Brannen Rd off South FL Ave. Phone 647-3336.

....Al Greulich

UGH

Ugh, you just got your last electric bill or power bill or light bill whatever it's called and it was high, way too high. So what can you do to bring down that obscene number? I'm sure you know the answer; use less electricity - but how? You read your Sierra Club magazine so you know the basics. You move the thermostat up to where the rest of the family is complaining. You turn off the lights and other electrical appliances when no one is around, and keep the doors and windows tightly closed but the bill is still a budget buster. Well, cheer up, help is on the way. When you look around your home you see dozens of incandescent bulbs burning. I do mean "burning" because 90% of the energy they use is released as heat and only 10% is given off as light. Not only is the electricity wasted but your air-conditioner runs overtime getting rid of all that excess heat. Fortunately a new product has come on the market which lasts ten times as long as your old-fashioned incandescent light bulb, uses ¼ the watts but produces almost no heat. It fits into any standard socket and is available in most local stores. It sounds almost too good to be true but the new florescent light bulbs are the real deal. Today they cost from \$3 to \$5 each but over the life of the bulb they will pay for themselves many times over. Your carbon footprint is less, the USA is less dependent on foreign oil, and, more importantly your electric bill is less. If you dread getting on a chair to change those ceiling bulbs rejoice, you won't have to do that again for seven more years.

....Chuck Geanangel

GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES WORKSHOP A SUCCESS

Eighty-two gardening enthusiasts attended the Friends of the Parks Foundation Butterfly Gardening Workshop on August 18 at the Peggy Brown Building in Lakeland. In addition to enjoying the outstanding speakers, everyone received a packet of information, a plant and a Monarch butterfly chrysalis to take home.

The workshop was designed to provide information to those individuals or volunteers who want to learn how to invite butterflies to their yard or a park adopted through the Friends of the Parks *Park Partners Program*. Exhibitors included the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (<http://polkfyn.ifas.ufl.edu/>) and the Florida Native Plant Society (<http://www.fnps.org/pages/chapters/chapterpg.php?keyword=Heartland>)

Butterfly gardening expert **Gil Daigneault**, GO NATURAL BUTTERFLY, INC. of Lakeland, discussed how Florida's wild populations of butterflies have decreased due to conversion of native habitat for development. He emphasized that a homeowner, school, park or business can significantly increase the number of butterflies in their area by creating a butterfly garden – "plant it and they will come", he said. He provided advice on selecting Florida Friendly plants, especially natives, for both nectar (for butterflies) and larval (caterpillar) food. Gil also recommended that each type of butterfly attracting plants be placed in groups (rather than single scattered plants) in your garden for

maximum eye and butterfly appeal.

Buck and Linda Cooper, noted butterfly experts, gave a beautiful and very entertaining PowerPoint presentation on the "Butterflies of Polk County". Since they retired to Haines City in 1998, they have planted their small yard with butterfly attracting plants. They spend their time traveling the state trying to see and photograph the over 160 species in the state. To date, they have seen 165 and Linda has photographed all but four. They recommended several books on butterflies and their caterpillars and told the audience that there are now binoculars available that focus at very close range – a necessity for the serious butterfly watcher! They provided informational materials including lists of the butterflies of Polk County, Larval Food Plants, Nectar Plants and what types of butterflies a gardener can expect to attract with these plantings.

Pam Page, Manager of Planning & Design for Lakeland Parks and Recreation, explained the conceptual design and fundraising efforts for CommonGround - Polk County's first fully inclusive play park. For more information see <http://www.kaleidoscopelakeland.com/charities.htm>

Stacy Smith, Manager of Hollis Garden, gave a memorable tour of the Garden following the workshop. He explained the history and development of the garden as well as describing its various "rooms". Participants were given a wealth of information as well as a plant to take home. For information on the garden see <http://www.lakelandgov.net/parkrec/parks/HollisGarden.html>

...Marian Ryan

OUTINGS/ACTIVITIES/WORKSHOPS

If you have suggestions for outings or if you wish to lead an outing, call our Outings Coordinator, Gail Bagley at 683-3334. For more activities/events, please visit our web site at <http://florida.sierraclub.org/polk/>

Sep. 12 or 26 Myregion Visioning Workshops. The results of these sessions will likely determine the pattern of development and the location of natural areas and ecosystems which should be preserved in our Central Florida region. On the 12th the meeting will be held at PCC in Winter Haven and on the 26th it will be at the Hollingsworth Ballroom, Lakeland Center; in both locations the time will be 6 to 8:30PM. Go to Myregion.org and register or call Pam Clancy at 407 835-2443.

Sep. 21 Colt Creek State Park Public Meeting. This meeting is being held by the Department of Environmental Protection to get public comment on the uses and management of the new park which has been created out of the 5,098 acre Overstreet Ranch in the Green Swamp. Time: 7PM Place: Lakeland Center, Lake Hollingsworth Room (701 West Lime Street)

Oct. 14 Hike Circle B Bar Reserve. Join us for the third of our hikes to become more familiar with the lands acquired through Polk's Environmental Lands Program. This will be a leisurely stroll through oak hammocks and hardwood swamp and around marsh and lake shore. We anticipate seeing a variety of wading birds, waterfowl, ospreys, bald eagles and alligators. This Reserve will play a key role in the preservation efforts of the Upper Peace River and Lake Hancock system. Call Chuck at 326-5748 for more information.

Nov. 10-12 Florida Sierra's Annual Conservation Conference. Join Sierrans from all parts of Florida to participate in workshops on Red Tide - Energy - Growth - Wetlands - Biodiversity - Water Quality - Offshore Drilling - and the Everglades. Beautiful Pine Lake Retreat is conveniently located on Hwy 27 just south of Leesburg. Housing options include chalets, lodges, RV or tent camping. There will be great food in the Retreat's cafeteria and the camp is loaded with activities and sport options. More details and a sign-up sheet will be in the fall [Pelican](#).

Nov. 18 Tour the MacKay Estate. The Heartland Native Plant Society is sponsoring a leisurely hike through the Preserve on the shore of Lake Rochelle in Lake Alfred. Participants will see mature sandhill grading into closed canopy hammock, cutthroat seep and bay swamp. Call Frances at 956-3771 to sign up.

In order to participate in one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver which will be furnished at the beginning of the outing. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call 415-977-5528. In the interests of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel. Please note that some of the above listed activities are events that we think you will find interesting and fun, but they are not official outings.



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Members should send **changes of address** to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968
 or address.changes@sierraclub.org

SEPTEMBER MEETING
 Thursday, September 14, 2006

PROGRAM:

County Conservation Issues
What's Been Accomplished
And
What's the Next Challenge

*General Meeting and Executive Committee Meeting Run
 Concurrently*

Join us for our pot-luck suppers at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month. Bring a dish to share, a drink and your utensils. Dress is casual. **The meeting will start around 7:15 p.m.**

Meetings are held at the Audubon Nature Center, 115 Lameraux Rd., Winter Haven. From the traffic light at the intersection of Hwy. 540 (Cypress Gardens Blvd.) and Cypress Gardens Road (look for the Shell station and Blockbuster Video) - Turn east onto C.G. Road and follow around sharp right hand turn & then sharp left hand turn. After left hand turn, Lameraux is fourth road on left, two blocks west of Garden Grove Elementary School. Distance from the light to the Nature Center is about 2.3 miles. (Phone 324-7304)

Web Site: <http://florida.sierraclub.org/polk/>

Sierra Membership Application

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| <i>Check One</i> | Individual | Joint |
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Annual dues include subscription to Sierra (\$7.50) and chapter publications (\$1). Dues are not tax-deductible.

Please mail your check and this form to:
Sierra Club, PO Box 52968, Boulder, Colorado, 80322-2968

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