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# Turtle *tracks*

Newsletter of the Friends of Emerald Coast State Parks

Citizens play a vital role supporting Florida's state parks ensuring that our natural, cultural and historical resources are protected for future generations. An opportunity for citizens to join forces exists through the development of a Citizen Support Organization (CSO). Our award winning state park system has been recognized nationally as a leader due to the tremendous support from our citizen groups.



## Loggerhead Turtle Nest at Henderson Beach State Park

by Frankie Milian

Loggerhead turtles are the most common in Florida; with maturity between 20-40 yrs of age and could have a reproductive lifespan of 30 yrs.



The location of a nest is critical to the survival and development of

eggs and hatchlings. If a nest is too near the water, the eggs will become saturated with sea water and fail to develop. If it is too far up the beach, roots from vegetation can invade the nest, the nest would be closer to predators and the hatchlings will have a longer way to travel to reach the water.

Studies show that female loggerheads about to nest move into the surf off the nesting beach in the late afternoon and early evening waiting for nightfall. The identifying tracks on the beach definitely identify a loggerhead female. She moves on land by using diagonally opposite limbs at the same time. The tracks in the picture (1) are wavy and punctuated by alter-



*June 2007 Turtle nesting site was noted at Henderson Beach but the nest was on the surf line so staff Personnel moved the nest back to protect it. There were 85 eggs. by the Ankers*

nating flipper marks. The nest site has a shallow body pit and small sand mound. Once selecting a spot on the beach, the pit is excavated by digging with all four limbs and rotating the body. The rear flippers are cupped and used as shovels to dig the egg cavity. The turtle precedes



to lay her eggs, often resting between, eggs do not break as they drop into

the nest hole because the shells are leathery and flexible. Lastly, the egg cavity and body pit is filled, the site concealed with swipes of the front flippers. Some turtles nest only once or twice during a season, while others may nest 10 or 11 times.

Temperature affects many phases of a loggerhead turtle's life. The importance begins with the eggs in the nest because temperature is critical to egg development and influences the sex of the growing embryo. Incubation temps above 86°F produce mostly females while temps below 82.4°F produce mostly males; occurring during the middle third of incubation.

*(Check in next Issue, "Hatchlings, Escaping from the Nest")*

### Board Position Open Asst Treasurer Needed

Excellent way to become involved in our organization, learn the financial aspects, and participate in suggesting and making decisions.

Time Required - 8 to 16 Hrs per month

#### Responsibilities:

- Reconcile Bank Accounts
- Assistant Treasurer will not have signature authority for checks.
- Participate in Budget and Finance Committees.
- Cover when Treasurer is on vacation
- Treasurer will do bookkeeping and prepare Monthly Financial Reports

Contact: John Santijanna

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**Gift Shop at Henderson Beach State Park Opens-New & Expanded**

by Jim Williams



Henderson Beach State Park opens new gift shop on September 7, 2007. Your Citizen Support Organization (CSO) of Henderson Beach State Park is happy to announce that **the new and expanded Gift Shop is open**. New merchandise is arriving daily and the purchase committee is excited over their selections! Turtle toys, newly designed T-shirts, umbrellas, boogie boards and skim boards of the latest style are offered.



The Gift Shop is located at the new and expanded entrance station. There is ample parking available and the public is welcome. Hours are from 8 AM to sunset seven days per week. It's a great place to pick up those unusual items for Christmas giving. Turtle books along with small turtles make great gifts. Be sure to ask about **THE TURTLE IN A CAN** which will be arriving soon.

**Officers of CSO Board**

- George Murphy**  
President
- Myra Rhodes**  
Vice President
- Robin Stiles**  
Secretary
- Donna Stiles**  
Assistant Secretary
- John Santijanna**  
Treasurer

In addition to the popular Henderson Beach turtle T-shirts, the gift shop will be stocking attractive golf shirts for dads and beautiful nautical-themed jewelry for moms.

**What is a Volunteer**

by George Murphy, President of CSO

In turning to Webster's New College Dictionary for a definition one encounters several but the one that fits Henderson Beach and Rocky Bayou State Park is as follows: **as one who helps, does a service, or takes an obligation voluntarily.**

Those who volunteer their services at Rocky Bayou State Park and Henderson Beach State Park fall into the category of being a helper where ever their specific talents and desires fit in with the needs in that respective park. Once one becomes a volunteer and undergoes orientation and express their interests they become a select group of volunteers in either park.

What do volunteers do in our pristine parks? Some of the services to be accomplished will vary between Rocky and Henderson Beach for they are two separate and distinct entities. We have two distinct bodies of water with Rocky Bayou and then the Gulf of Mexico. It is delightful to go from the woods at Rocky to the white sand at Henderson in the matter of a few miles. Truly, how lucky can a person be?

A volunteer may greet visitors to the park with a *Welcome to Rocky Bayou State Park*, or *Welcome to Henderson Beach State Park* and then follows information about the park, the attractions of each park and where McDonalds or other eating places are located. Thus these volunteers are the Parks good will ambassadors as are the other volunteers you will see with their Grey T shirts with Volunteer on the pocket. These men and women rake camp sites, do carpentry work, pick-up trash where necessary, look for children who have gotten out of pocket, work as story tellers about flora and fauna as well as those that swim. Volunteers rent canoes, build new ranger stations, boardwalks, ADA accessible ramps and anything else that can make our Parks more friendly and enjoyable.

If you can spare a minimum of four hours a week you can be a volunteer! Attend one of our meetings on the second Thursday of every month at Henderson in the new ranger station which was built by staff and volunteers! We can always use a few good men and women to make a commitment to these two parks here in Northwest Florida. Call (850) 837-7550 or (850) 833-9144 today. Thank you!

**Rocky Bayou in the News again. Article in the "Beacon Express" commend the Volunteers/Hosts as an integral contribu-**

**Campground hosts work for their summer's fun**

By Kenneth Books  
Citizen Staff Writer



Cynthia Scott

When Cynthia Scott first visited the Emerald Coast in the summer of 2006, she quickly realized she would love a prolonged stay but couldn't do so on her salary as an English teacher. Then the Springtown, Texas, resident stumbled upon the campground host concept at Henderson State Park outside of Destin. Campground hosts stay free and enjoy free amenities at state campgrounds in return for part-time work. "I chatted with the folks at the ranger post and they told me the application should be submitted about 10 months ahead of time," Scott said. She went back to the Phoenix Discipline Alternative campus near Dallas, where she teaches grades seven through 12. In the back of her mind was her desire

Finally, in April, she remembered she had not yet applied for a host slot. She quickly submitted her paperwork. Just as quickly, it was lost in the transition. Finally, she received a call from D.J. Zink, the volunteer coordinator at Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park. Zink told her she needed a campground host and, even though she had never heard of Rocky Bayou, Scott accepted. Scott says she made the right choice. "I love it here," she said. "I'm so glad they lost my paperwork."

Scott arrived at the park June 9 and stayed until the end of July. At Rocky Bayou State Park, she was just one of several campground hosts who clean bathrooms and rake campfires between visitors to erase footprints and tire tracks. "I dislike most hosts. Scott was 'roughing it' living in a tent. "At first, people made fun of me because I just had a little tent set," she said. Finally, Zink had pity on her and gave her a bigger one. Now she lives in the big



"This is one of the cleanest state parks I've been in," Scott said. "The biggest hassle to clean up is cigarette butts. Some people treat the park like one big ashtray." She was undaunted by the Florida summer heat. "You get really hot and sweaty, but for me, it's my big



Dallas Cox

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Henderson Beach State Park Gift Store Opens September 7, 2007**

**Audubon Adventure Henderson Beach St Park September 7, 2007 At 6:30—Nature Trails by Nonie Maines, President Choctawhatchee Audubon Society**

**Literacy in Florida State Parks—Henderson Beach Reading with the Rangers September 8, 2007 10-11 AM**

**A Day at the Beach Can Make a World of Difference—International Coastal Cleanup Sept 15, 2007 8 am to 11 am Henderson Beach & Rocky Bayou State Parks**