



# Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Newsletter

A National Scenic Highway

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## First Byway Kiosk Built and Installed At Blackwater Inn on St. Johns River

By Phil Davis



First Kiosk built at Blackwater Inn SR 40

Our Master Plan project for the byway proposed a "Volunteer Sponsored & Built" Kiosk concept. For a small expense, local companies, businesses, and individuals can sponsor kiosks for the byway. An interpretive plan for locations, themes, and graphical information was part of the overall Master Plan.

The prototype was constructed and installed on Friday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, at the Blackwater Inn and Restaurant in Astor on SR 40 at the St. Johns River.

Inn & restaurant owner Bill Nordle was approached about the idea of the first kiosk going in at his restaurant. Bill graciously volunteered the prime location on his premises adjacent to his entryway facing the parking lot.

Sail Forth Productions sponsored and paid for the building materials and the graphic panels were designed and paid for from the Master Plan contract. Mike Woods volunteered his workshop where Phil Davis joined him to build and design the first kiosk. Scott



Roof Assembly



Scott, Mike Jim digging holes

Davis and Jim Thorsen joined them for the second day and the installation.

The kiosk was designed to be: inexpensive, fairly easy to assemble, modular, and reflective of the local "Cracker" architecture. The plan was to be able to have a few people build it in a day and then install it in three hours. The "Cracker" style is reflected in the metal roof and the wooded slats that support it.

The kiosk is double-sided with interpretive panels



Attaching Roof to Frame



Inserting display panels

designed by Sail Forth Productions' Art Director Stephanie Liskey and Project Manager Phil Davis. One side of the kiosk has the Byway map and the "Ecotourism Highlights" of the Byway. The other side of the kiosk features Astor and some local historic connections to the byway.



Local purchase of materials

Materials were purchased at the Orange City Home Depot. Total cost for all materials, including the printed panels,

was \$600. Labor was donated freely by Mike, Jim, Phil, and Scott.

The kiosk was constructed in 3 modular pieces: the upright frame, the roof, and the display panels. These were then transported to the Blackwater Inn & Restaurant. The roof was designed to be light enough for 4 people to lift in place. The metal covering for the roof was secured after the roof frame was put in place.



**First Byway Kiosk Built and Installed At Blackwater Inn on St. Johns River** *Continued*

A second kiosk is scheduled to be installed at Wildcat Lake in April. That kiosk is being sponsored by Kimley Horn & Associates, who are also working on the Master Plan. Funds for four more kiosks have been pledged, one each by the Astor Historical Society and DTS (Sail Forth's parent corporation), and two by a private individual, Noranne Downs.

Make sure you stop by the Blackwater Restaurant to see the kiosk. And plan to either have lunch at William's Landing (upstairs inside of the Blackwater Inn) or dinner at the Blackwater Restaurant. And tell them the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway people sent you.

Approximately 16 kiosks have been slated for strategic locations on the byway, containing information about the natural, recreational, and cultural resources to be enjoyed. The kiosks will make travel along the Byway more pleasant for eco-tourists as well as local folks.

We're looking for more kiosk sponsors and construction volunteers in the coming months. Please contact FBBSB Chairman Mike Woods to help. Thanks!



Mike finishing Roof



Finished Kiosk

*Phil Davis is Sail Forth Productions Project Manager for the FBBSB Master Plan, now nearing completion.*

**Kayaking on the Silver River**

By Joan Bernat

My kayak adventure begins at Ray's Wayside landing and a short paddle to the Silver River that surrounds me with a

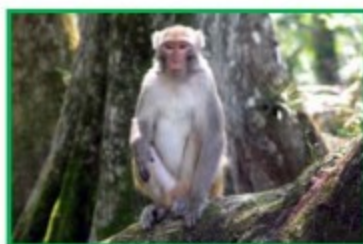
subtropical landscape of palm trees, magnolias, and 2000-year-old cypress. Traveling down the river my imagination takes me back in time, to what Florida must have been like centuries ago. The river meanders towards the east, my kayak cuts through some lush green forest, all on translucent blue waters in Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway country.



Silver River

What really sets this river apart from other waterways is its water; crystal clear and relatively deep. There are few waterways that have the diversity of species that the Silver River has. I put down my paddle for a while and float with the current soon to find a crowd of small fish (mostly bream) drifting along in the shade of my kayak.

The Silver River is a perfect place for photography, especially in a kayak. Some of the common bird-life seen along the river includes anhinga, cormorant, gallinule, marsh hen, heron, egret, osprey and hawk. If this is the first time kayaking on the river, one can always be sure to see alligators, turtles, gar, and, if lucky, an otter or two.



Rhesus Monkeys

As I came closer to the springs, I hear wild rhesus monkeys scampering among the trees doing monkey things – chattering, grooming and chasing one another. Their antics are very much entertaining. These

monkeys were introduced in the 1930s by Colonel Tooley to enhance his Jungle Cruise boat rides. The monkeys were released on an island in the river from which they promptly escaped and formed wild troops which can still be seen today.

I eventually entered the headwaters of Silver Springs, floating over a large blue-green translucent pool some 40 feet across and 40 feet deep, a first-magnitude spring. There was a magical excitement that seemed to stir deep within me, for this pool of water was a popular Hollywood filming location with movies such as "Tarzan,"



Silver Springs Headwaters



## ***Kayaking on the Silver River***

*continued*

"Blue Lagoon," and a few more. As I look ashore, I can picture the old Ross Allen Reptile Institute and Ross himself, explaining to an enthralled crowd all about alligators, water moccasins, and other exotic animals.

I have checked my watch and it is getting time to go back; I put my paddles up and let the blue-green water, the fish, and the warmth of the sun carry me to my destination. What an adventure it has been -- a day to remember for quite some time! I can't think of a better way to spend an afternoon than by kayaking the blue green waters of the Silver River in the heart of the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway.

*Joan Bernat is Production Editor of this Newsletter*

## ***Meet Us on the Byway***

*Text and Photos Diana Rose*

On February 25, 2012, Meet Me on the Byway took place at the Pioneer Settlement for the Creative Arts in Barberville. The event featured the Great Southern Cracker Show, an extensive display of the Byway with six interpretive panels which will be installed along it, draft copies of the Master Plan, a detailed map of the Byway, a photographic hike through the Lake Woodruff Wildlife Preserve and a tour of the Bluffton Recreation Area in the Lake George State Forest. An authentic cracker food menu of pork, collard greens, cornbread and grits was enjoyed by all.



Dana St. Claire

The Cracker Show was emceed by Dana St. Claire, historian and author, who delivered a hilarious take on "Crackerdom" as it stood "then and now." The show included Dr. Dewey Cheetum, hawking his usual "medicinal" tonic water to the crowd, but few were buying. The Bluegrass Express had everyone clapping and foot-stamping. Storyteller Janis Owens, author

of "The Cracker Kitchen" demonstrated the right way to make cornbread.

The weather was perfect, with about 240 guests and volunteers. We're happy to express our thanks to the Settlement for hosting, to photographer Chris Kincaid

and State Forest Ranger Cathy Lowenstein, to all the other volunteers, and to Sail Forth Productions for putting together such a great event.



Dr. Dewey Cheetum



Authentic cracker food



Bluegrass Express