



# Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Newsletter

A National Scenic Highway

## Stetson Museum Displays Powerful Bear Artwork

Text and Photos by Tony Ehrlich

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About 1,200 bears live in the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway corridor. The single biggest cause of bear mortality, and a grave concern to the FBBSB, is death from motor vehicles.

When artist Krystal Sellers came upon the body of a Florida black bear pushed to the side of the road on SR 11 a year ago, it made a powerful impact on her. "I couldn't put into words how seeing the black bear made me feel. The image of that bear is still etched into my memory," Sellers, then an art major at Stetson University, wrote recently in her artist's statement.

"The only thing I could do was memorialize the black bear into a sculpture." She decided to use an unusual medium in her life-sized work: pieces of tire tread. "If I had sculpted the bear out of clay, for example, that medium would not have communicated the feeling of a dead animal. The violently ripped-apart quality of found tire tread gives my sculpture the look and emotion I want. The shredded tires I've used were on the

road where this black bear died and, in my mind, these tires are eyewitnesses, symbolically representing the horrible death this animal suffered. I feel these pieces of tire tread have more authority to speak for my subject than more traditional medi-



Sorrowful

ums.

She completed her sculpture, which she named "Sorrowful," as her senior art project. The mixed media sculpture subsequently won the 2012 Elizabeth Knight Sumner Purchase Award by the university.

September 29, 2012, was the Smithsonian Magazine's National Museum Day. The Gillespie Museum of Minerals on the Stetson campus decided to mark the day with two exhibits. "Smithson, Smithsonian, and Smithsonian." about James Smithson, first benefactor of the country's national museum system, as well as a mineralogist. And reflecting the university's multi-disciplinary environmental program was a second exhibit titled,

"A Wild Life: Protecting the Florida Black Bear." The Sorrowful figure, along with other displays, powerfully illustrates the need for protecting wild critters. The statue is a great draw for children, who can't resist touching it in wonder. And the whole exhibit provides much food for thought for adult visitors.

Knowing of our mission to protect wildlife along the Byway, museum director Karen Cole invited the FBBSB to put on a display at the Rinker Environmental Center next to the museum on Museum Day. Chairman

Mike Woods hosted a Q&A with the artist and showed our Byway video several times to good crowds. As part of the display, we described our work with FDOT to encourage the installation of ten wildlife crossings on portions of SR 40 that will be four-laned in the next few years,



Karen Cole, Krystal Sellers, Mike Woods



## *Stetson Museum Displays Powerful Bear Artwork*

*Continued*

emphasizing that these should significantly decrease mortality for bears and other wildlife.

Sail Forth Productions, the consulting firm who drafted our Master Plan and produced the Byway video, volunteered to make a short video of the artist and her powerful piece. In November, Director Cole arranged for Krystal Sellers to come to the museum for an interview and this segment will be available soon from our website and Facebook page and will be added to the Byway video.

But you don't have to wait for the video posting. Sorrowful will be on display through April 2013. at the Gillespie Museum of Minerals at 234 E. Michigan Ave. in DeLand. For information, [call \(386\) 822-7330](tel:3868227330), or visit [www.stetson.edu/gillespie](http://www.stetson.edu/gillespie).

## *On The River with Captain Ernie Brundage*

By Tom Rose

The St. Johns River flows north from the marshes near Melbourne at 1/3 mile per hour 310 miles through the heart of Central and North Florida into the Atlantic Ocean at Mayport. On its run to the Atlantic the river passes through some major population areas including the cities of Sanford, Palatka, and Jacksonville. In spite of this much of the St. Johns remains pristine and natural as it was when first discovered by Ponce de Leon in 1513.



**On the River with Capt. Ernie**

One section of the river that remains in a primitive state is from the State Road 44 bridge at Deland north to Lake George and the Ocklawaha River near Palatka. Here the river is buffered on the west by the Ocala National Forest and on the east by the Lake George State Forest.

This is the river of Captain Ernie Brundage. The river that was introduced to Ernie as a young boy by his outdoorsman father as they would visit the area from their St. Petersburg, Florida, home. When Ernie retired from a career as an architect, he and his wife relocated to Astor to live and work on the St. Johns in this wild and beautiful area. He is a native Floridian who has hunted, fished, and explored the Florida backwoods and waters all his life.

Cap't. Ernie and his wife live on the river. He keeps his boats nearby at the highly-regarded riverfront restaurant, the Blackwater Inn. Ernie knows the river and the forest. He knows the history from pre-Columbian times to present. He

knows the animals, fish, and waterfowl. He holds a U.S. Coast Guard 100-ton Master Captain certification. A couple of hours with him on the river will provide a most exciting and interesting look into this jungle wilderness. He has a relaxed, easy going manor that provides a most entertaining educational experience. I can recommend the Cap't. Ernie experience for vacationers, newcomers, and native Floridians. It is a Florida wilderness adventure suited to young and old alike. There is a good chance that you'll see alligators, bald eagles, osprey, deer,



**He has a passion**

wild turkey, herons, egrets, ducks, and more. Bears are always a possibility.

Time spent with him is always fresh & interesting. He has such a passion for the river and the forest. Standing on the dock, looking out on the river Cap't. Ernie told me, "Every trip is an adventure for me. How could you come to work grumpy? Look around, this is my office!"



## *On The River with Captain Ernie Brundage* *Continued*



Natural Beauty of Central Florida

He is actively involved in protecting the natural beauty of central Florida. He is a member of the Astor Chamber of Commerce and provides educational tours at no charge to local youth groups. He is working on a possible eco-educational partnership with the University of Florida. He does private parties, groups, and special charters and is an active and sponsoring member of the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway, which he sees as an excellent vehicle of preservation and public education for the river and surrounding forest.

I have a lifetime of Florida wildlife experience; still, my visit with Cap't. Ernie provided me with a new insight and expanded awareness of the river, the forest, and the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway.

You can learn more about Cap't. Ernie and his St. Johns River Tours at his web site: <http://stjohnsrivertours.com/>

## *Bears Visit Umatilla Residents*

By Tom Rose, Photos Diana Rose

Umatilla is known as the Gateway to the Forest. It is the home of the annual Florida Black Bear Festival and is the southern Gateway to the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway. It is a city connected to the black bear and the Ocala National Forest in many ways. However, I have lived in Umatilla for 15 years and have never crossed paths with this Umatilla signature animal.

Never, that is, until a lazy Friday morning this past November: It was around 11:30 a.m.; I had been working at my computer and got up to take a stretch and refill my coffee cup. As I glanced out over the backyard toward our lake, a large black blur darted across my field of view followed by a smaller black blur! A big dog? A black lab? NO! It was two Florida Black Bears! A mama and her cub! "Black bears in the yard!" I yelled to Diana, my wife,

who is a nature photographer. That is all it took! She glanced up from her computer and saw the bruins jump over the walk to the dock and head directly for the 20-foot hedge near the back of our garage.

Thinking like a bear, she figured they would travel along the property line between the hedge and the garage and exit toward the front of our street via the driveway. She grabbed her camera, bolted out the front door to the driveway before the bears appeared, and was poised and ready within 20 seconds of my alert. Sure enough, camera ready, here came mama bear, loping along the hedge-line. "WHOA!" Diana shouted. Mama who was obviously caught by surprise, stopped, turned, and looked squarely at Diana as if posing for the photo op. The shutter clicked and captured a perfect, full frontal photo of mama bear. Within seconds mama's cub followed for yet more camera shots. The two scampered around the corner of the



Smile for the Camera



*Bears Visit Umatilla*  
*Residents* Continued

property headed for the pine and palmetto woods after spending a day of adventure in the forest of humankind.

You just never know what to expect when you live in



Let's make tracks

Bear Country. Sooner or later, you are going to have a bear encounter.

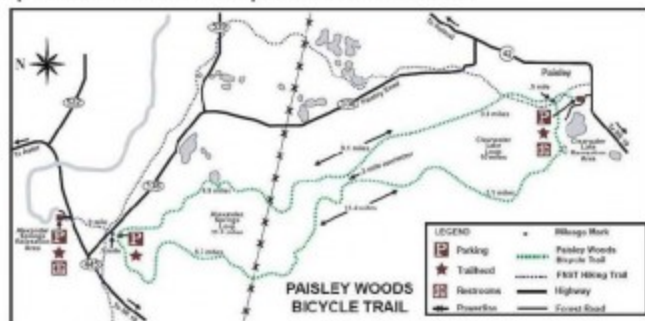


"Hightailin" it'

*A Day in the Woods*  
By J. Bernat

Four avid cyclists got together on a cold 33-degree morning and decided to take their mountain bikes to

the Paisley Woods mountain bike trail, perfect weather for mountain biking. With cups of coffee in our hands, we all four came to the decision to use the south loop trailhead, Clearwater Lake. After turning off SR 42 the trailhead parking area is the first right turn, small paved parking lot with a very nice Kiosk and a trail map. All agreed, after looking at the map, the 20 mile loop would keep us warm. Our camelbacks are filled with various beverages, bananas, and protein bars, enough water and food for the 20 mile loop. The trail map indicates the loop is a figure 8 each segment 10 miles in length, an option to make the trip shorter if need be.



It was time to ride through this scenic Longleaf Pine-Wiregrass ecosystem. Live oak domes, grassy prairies, and stands of pine, from seedlings to the very old, were encountered along the trail. As we rode we found the trail to be well maintained and single track, with clear sight lines and some minor elevation changes. An occasional cactus plant would dot the terrain, along with a few Florida black bears and a scrub jay. We made it to Alexander Springs, took a short break to fill our camelbacks, and started the ride back to Clearwater. We took the opposite trail back and spotted a few Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers along with some Bachman's Sparrows. Close to Clearwater trailhead one of our avid cyclists had a flat tire. The three of us are hanging out waiting for the fourth person to fix his/her flat, when two fawns came pretty close to us and started to play. We watched them for a while until it was time to ride again, finally made it back to Clearwater, and an awesome day it was to be riding and part of this scenic byway.

The Paisley Woods mountain bike trail is located in the Ocala National Forest and was developed by the Lake County Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, Lake County Rails to Trails, and Florida Freewheelers in cooperation with Ocala National Forest staff.



## Develop a Helper's High

By J. Bernat

With our busy lives it is hard to find time to volunteer, but the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment you feel from volunteering not only gives you a mood lift, it can actually be good for your body and mind.

One of the better known benefits of volunteering is the impact you have on the organization. Unpaid volunteers are often the glue that holds the organization together. It has been shown that volunteering reduces depression, boosts a person's self confidence and self esteem, and lessens symptoms of chronic pain and heart disease.

Beyond feeling physically healthier, volunteering can also help you make new friends, sharpen your social and relationship skills, gain valued career experience, strengthen your job skills, and find fulfillment and a way to escape your daily routine.

Volunteering is a fun and easy way to explore your interests and passions. Doing volunteer work can be relaxing, and an energizing escape from your day-to-day routine of work, school, or family commitments. Volunteering also provides you with renewed creativity,

motivation, and vision that can carry over into your personal and professional life.

Picking the right organization or project for volunteering can seem like a big undertaking, but having a clear idea of where your interests lie can assist you in making the choice that is right for you. If you like children, maybe spending time at an afterschool program might be a good fit. Or if you love nature, signing up for local clean-up events maybe more to your liking.

Ask yourself what you want to accomplish through your volunteerism. Do you want to better you immediate community? Do you want to volunteer somewhere that could be a full time job? Do you want something to fill your spare time?

With some many opportunities available, it is vital to make sure your commitments meets the needs of the organization or project. However don't forget to have fun. The best experiences are when both

you and the organization can benefit from genuine enthusiasm. The richer and more enjoyable the volunteering experience, the better.

A volunteer's high is easily achievable at Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway. There are many opportunities at this all volunteer organization including things like helping to build and erect kiosks along the byway. Other opportunities might include working on this newsletter, helping with our events, and numerous other ways to volunteer. If you would like to volunteer contact Mike Woods email: [mwoods@lakesuptermppo.com](mailto:mwoods@lakesuptermppo.com)



Jim Thorsen an FBBSB volunteer informs the group about the Bartram Oak.

### Florida Panther

Mike Palozzi , Lynn & Mike Woods, Astor Community Association, Astor Area Chamber of Commerce, Lake Cogeneration, Ltd, Carl Ludecke (Old Mill Stream & Charlie Johnson Builders)

### Gopher

Tom Kays, Kristee Booth George & Judy Hemingway Joan Carter , Sherri L Miller Bob Day, Marion County Parks&Natural Resources

### Scrub Jay Company

First Green Bank , Laurie MacDonald (Defenders of Wildlife)

### Manatee

Greenway Bicycles, City of Umatilla, Scott & Carol Bayer ,dts, KimleyHorn&Assoc., Sail Forth Productions, Noranne Downs, Bill &Tina Nordle (Blackwater Inn)

### Sand Skink

Stacy Stader , Dawn Piers Debbie Fischer, Elizabeth Black, Marion County BOCC, Eustis Chamber of Commerce, Firestorm Airboat Tours (Mike Dickens)

### Bob Cat

Bob & Rennie Finck Connie Hunkapiller Capt. Ernie Brundage (St. Johns River Tours ) John Duckworth (Dam Dinner)

## Our Friends