



A National Scenic Byway

Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Newsletter

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ESSEX SEAFOOD ALONG THE FLORIDA BLACK BEAR SCENIC BYWAY OFFERS BEST CLAMS IN FLORIDA ... OR POSSIBLY THE USA!

by Georgia Turner, West Volusia Tourism

Back in the mid-1990s, a couple named Danny and Mary Lane left Massachusetts to move South to Florida.

The business Danny co-owned with his brother -- Essex Seafood One -- offered some of the best fresh seafood in Essex, MA.

But it's the Florida location that Danny opened in 1995, Essex Seafood House (that dropped the "Two" along the way), that serves up hand-shucked, whole-belly long-necked fried clams that are "three days out of the ground from Massachusetts," says Alan Lane, Danny's son who works at the restaurant with his sister Sebrina and a staff he considers family. "I learned to walk in the restaurant," says Alan.



"Everyone comes for the clams," said server Christina Spence who has worked at Essex for 10 years. "We serve a lot of people from the Northeast who can't find fried clams like these anywhere else."

Shrimp dishes and scallops are also popular, she said. "And you can't beat our onion rings and coleslaw." But it's not unusual to see specials like Maine Lobster, catfish and frog legs.

Just a tip: Be prepared when you stop-- they've always been cash only

The restaurant is a popular stop for many along the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway, but exactly where is it? "That's a good question," said Alan. "Our address is Pierson, but some say it's in Astor or even Barberville."

No matter what the address, Essex is a must-stop venue for travelers. The Board Members for the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway recently installed a kiosk on the grounds which gives information on all there is to do and see along the 123-mile byway.

The best way to keep in touch with the folks at Essex is to find them on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/Seafoodhouse2005> Or give them a call at (386) 749-1557.

NOTE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN.....Jim Thorsen

Wow, 2025 has arrived!! Our Byway will be on its 17th year. We hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season and a very Happy New Year!

Our Kiosk Program is off and running along the Byway. We have installed kiosks at Essex Restaurant and at the Volusia Speedway along State Route 40. Our feature article highlights the Essex Restaurant. A very unique dining experience with fresh clams along the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway. This month we will add two new kiosks at Silver Glen Springs and Mill Dam Recreational Area. Both locations are located on the Ocala National Forest. After



these installations, we will have nineteen kiosks strategically located along the Byway where people gather, visit, recreate and enjoy a meal. Our different themes for the kiosks provide informational and educational material for the traveler. One of the panels is the "Lure of the Springs" that is seen below and offers a place to visit to see the "Real Florida"!

So, it's been a great year and we plan to continue our mission to provide education to the traveler along the Byway and build a volunteer base. For a New Year resolution, please consider joining our membership and becoming a volunteer to aid in our projects. Just visit our brand-new website!!

A trivia fact, Florida Black Bears walk flat footed, just like us, with 5 toes on the ground. They may look slow; however, they can sprint 35 MPH. Olympic Gold Medalist Usain Bolt can only reach 27 MPH. So, think before running from a bear!!!

Jim Thorsen, Chair thor1505@aol.com



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The Lure of the Springs



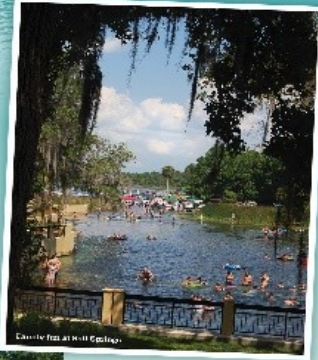
Silver Springs

Discover Florida's original tourist attraction! Back in the 1800s, steamboats brought tourists here via the Ocklawaha River. The glass bottom boats are still the best way to see these springs. Silver Springs is comprised of numerous springs which feed the Silver River. *No swimming or fishing.*



Silver Glen Springs

It's a perfect spring for underwater photography. This spring and the nearby bolls are the setting for the opening chapter of *The Yearling*, the Pulitzer-prize winning novel by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. *Swimming, snorkeling, picnicking.*



Salt Springs

This is the place to see blue crabs on the byway. The mix of fresh and saltwater vents create unique visual distortions underwater. Great family spot for picnicking the day away! *Swimming, snorkeling, camping, RVs, fishing. Canoe rentals available for Salt Springs Run.*



Juniper Springs

The water here is truly jewelled, and there is a wonderful swimming area. The Mill House and walkway around the spring were among of proudest achievements of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. *Swimming, snorkeling, camping, RVs. Canoe rentals available for the 7 mile Juniper Creek run.*



Alexander Springs

One of the more popular springs, it has the greatest flow of any natural spring on U.S. government land. This setting is comparatively natural and untouched, with a sandy beach on one side and dense forest across the water. *Swimming, scuba, snorkeling, camping. Canoe rentals available for the 11-mile Alexander River run.*



Fern Hammock Springs

Adjacent to Juniper Springs, this spring can be viewed from a nature trail. The forest-canopied walkway takes you to a secluded pool of "bolls," formed by water surging up from underground. *No swimming or wading.*



Byway volunteers have been busy with installations completed at the Essex Restaurant and Volusia Speedway.





Do you know the byway? Be the first to answer our byway question and win a Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Tote Bag.

Some major military activity takes place on the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway. Do you know what that activity is...and what branch of the service is involved? Email your answer to tomrose43@gmail.com

Congratulations to Nikki from Eustis, winner of the October contest. Nikki knew that the endangered species prominent on the byway was the Florida scrub-jay. Another possible correct answer would have been the red-cockaded woodpecker.

Website & Facebook: Learn more about the byway at our website <https://floridablackbearsenicbyway.org> and Facebook page <https://floridablackbearsenicbyway.org/facebook>

Board Meetings: Visitors are welcome. Attending a board meeting is a great way to learn more about the byway. Please let us know if you would like to attend and I'll get the details to you. tomrose43@gmail.com

Our Mission: To enhance, encourage and promote the preservation and protection of the outstanding natural, ecological, cultural and historical resources of the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway for its residents, inhabitants, visitors and future generations.

Officers: Jim Thorsen, Chairman - Kristee Booth, Vice Chair - Nikki Thorsen, Secretary

Editor: Tom Rose Contact: tomrose43@gmail.com. Your letters, comments, suggestions and submissions are welcome.