



Friends of the Loxahatchee River April 2016



River Center Summary Statistics

Year Month	General Visitors	Program Visitors	Outreach	Gift Shop	Donations	Memberships	Sponsors	Education Programs	River Center Programs	Special Events	Volunteer Hours
2015-03	1695	219	274	\$1,451	\$1,003	\$365	\$3,500	\$100	\$5,390	\$9,647	358
2015-04	1326	518	150	\$1,600	\$1,023	\$250	\$1,400	\$1,818	\$6,770	\$1,561	130
2015-05	1138	358	183	\$944	\$643	\$210	\$2,950	\$49	\$5,179	\$1,599	81
2015-06	2078	1031	160	\$1,355	\$837	\$200	\$520	\$3,087	\$4,365	\$420	487
2015-07	1936	1294	46	\$1,985	\$524	\$50	\$650	\$5,073	\$1,490	\$377	645
2015-08	1544	305		\$1,432	\$691	\$75	\$1,460	\$732	\$215	\$892	404
2015-09	1047	278	34	\$771	\$491		\$520	\$60		\$160	116
2015-10	1055	549		\$872	\$636	\$25		\$128	\$128	\$626	139
2015-11	881	255	144	\$1,192	\$560	\$150	\$460		\$667	\$815	128
2015-12	1078	277	51	\$2,749	\$663	\$250	\$8,460	\$82	\$210	\$186	142
2016-01	1083	606	348	\$1,083	\$496	\$150	\$2,410	\$93	\$4,065	\$679	143
2016-02	1178	295	1338	\$1,237	\$501	\$250	\$5,060	\$41	\$4,655	\$963	114
2016-03	1928	478	528	\$1,428	\$1,167	\$360	\$6,200	\$677	\$7,271	\$3,375	158

River Center

The River Center welcomed its newest resident: a juvenile pine snake from Busch Wildlife Sanctuary. Yet to be named, our new pine snake is adapting to his new environment on display at the River Center.

Friends of the Loxahatchee River

No meeting on April 1, 2016 in preparation for our fundraiser, Night on the Loxahatchee: Shipwrecked in Paradise held April 2, 2016.

Special Programs

Girl Scout EcoActionWorkshop - Naturalist

On Saturday, March 5th 53 Junior and Cadette Girl Scouts visited the River Center for a special Girl Scout Naturalist Workshop. The girls earned their Legacy Tree and Flower badges after participating in various activities throughout the morning. The girls



learned firsthand the inner workings of trees and flowers through a flower dissection and a hands-on tree building exercise. The girls also designed their own gardens, learned how plants help people and discussed important issues of land conservation. At the very end of the day the girl scouts came together to plant various flowers in the River Center garden. The River Center staff would like to thank all the partners and volunteers who participated in the workshop; especially the Society of Women Engineers and ERM Group Foundation Inc. for their continued support.





Limestone Creek Elementary Camp Fire

After learning about the River Center’s successful camp fire events, the PTO of Limestone Creek Elementary approached the River Center with the “wild idea” to host the PTO’s annual Mother/Son fundraising event. Careful planning led to a hugely successful event on March 11th with a large crowd of over 350 parents and students. Guests enjoyed a festive occasion that featured a “Wild Wild West” theme, great food and music, photo booths, raffles, crafts, and even a petting zoo and pony rides around Burt Reynold’s Park. It was a wonderful

evening filled with a lot of fun.

Jupiter U Kayak Tour to Fullerton Island and Adult Environmental Education Class

As part of the town’s “Jupiter U” program series, more than 40 Jupiter residents enjoyed a day of immersion into the Loxahatchee River at the River Center on Thursday, March 17th. Jupiter U provides the opportunity for residents to learn about life and government in Jupiter. Offered each spring, this free series of courses, including information sessions, gives residents an overview of their Town's government organization, supporting services, sister organizations, as well as information on the Town's history and heritage. In the morning River Center Naturalist led a kayak tour to Fullerton Island, the recent environmental restoration project by Palm Beach County’s Environmental Resource Management. River Center staff also provided an afternoon tour of the River Center teaching about the Loxahatchee River watershed and our new Shark Exploration program engaging participants about shark ecology, adaptations, and conservation efforts.



South Broward High School

The River Center welcomed back the “Plastic Free Mermaids” as they traveled up to Jupiter for a day of estuary exploration at Coral Cove Park on Friday, March 18th. After leading students on a guided tour of the River Center exhibits and participation in our Oyster shake program, the group headed to the water to seine and dip net to find some critters. The group got an up close and personal look at conchs, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers. It was truly an informative day all about the sealife in our local estuaries.

Outreach Activities

hYPe: Northern Palm Beach Chamber of Commerce

On Wednesday, March 9th, the River Center hosted an event for the Northern Palm Beach County Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals organization. This event was a great opportunity for a group of young professionals to experience all the informative exhibits the River Center has to offer and an opportunity for the River Center to reach a group that had never been to the center before. Food and beverages were provided by the Corner Café and the Tequesta Brewing Company for a group of over 28 people.

Winding Waters Kayak Tour (PBC ERM)

On Saturday, March 12th the River Center partnered with Palm Beach County Environmental Resource Management to lead a kayak tour through Winding Waters Natural Area. The “Adventure Awaits” event series was designed to get visitors and citizens of Palm Beach County into the natural areas. They have conducted trail runs, kayak tours, nature hikes, evening stargazing programs and photography workshops. This kayak tour led 22 guests through a restored freshwater wetland filled with fish, alligators, bald eagles, and roseate spoonbills. In April, we will partner up with PBC ERM for a kayak tour in the Lake Worth



Lagoon.

Naturscaping

On Saturday, March 12th the River Center participated as an exhibitor at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park's 20th NatureScaping Outdoor Festival. With 1,900 visitors, NatureScaping promotes nature plants, native landscaping, and a joining together of nature lovers of all ages. This event was a free educational day of family fun, with native plant vendors, live animal show, speakers, fishing clinics, children's crafts, face painting, local environmental organizations, paddle boarding, kayaking, photography contest, live music and food!

League of Environmental Educators of Florida Conference



River Center Environmental Education Coordinator attended the League of Environmental Educators of Florida (LEEF) conference in north Florida hosted by St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and COAST Charter School the weekend of March 18-20. LEEF is a non-profit organization established in 1981 to promote environmental education in Florida at all levels and through a variety of methods and resources. In addition to being the Florida affiliate for North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE), LEEF enjoys collaborating with our neighboring states through the Southeast Environmental Education Alliance. LEEF is currently working with several partners in the state on the Florida Environmental Literacy Plan and is playing a key role in implementing the Professional Development of Teachers and Non-formal Educators section of the plan. The conference had 75 participants coming from all over the state of Florida and the River Center was represented both as participant as well as an exhibitor.

PGA National "Girls Night Out"

On Thursday, March 17th the River Center participated in PGA National's "Girls Night Out" event at iBar in the PGA National Resort. This event was hosted by Sally Severeid of the "Moe and Sally Morning show" from KOOL 105.5. The River Center conducted a raffle of various goods from the other vendors at the event and all proceeds supported the River Center's planned "Jupiter Shark Exploration" exhibit.

Volunteer of the Month: The River Center would like to announce that March's Volunteer of the Month is awarded to Eric Gibson. Eric goes to Jupiter High School and is a member of the Jupiter Environmental Research and Field Studies Academy. Eric has volunteered at the River Center since November 2015. Even though he has only volunteered for four months he has earned 25 hours of community service. Eric is given this honor for his support on Saturday afternoons helping as a touch tank docent and animal care specialist, feeding critters and cleaning aquariums. He was especially helpful fishing with kids all afternoon at the SeaFest outreach at the Jupiter Lighthouse. Eric tied knots, baited hooks, helped with casting, and untangled rods. Eric has been a huge help to the River Center and we look forward to his continued support. Thank you for all that you do!

Friends Membership – 72 active members; 10 new/renewals; 36 current sponsors

Annual Sponsors Recognition – Sharkey Family Foundation

Upcoming River Center Events – RSVP at rivercenter@lrecd.org or 561-743-7123.

April 23 – 8:30a-4:30p: About Boating Safely (**Course taught in Spanish**): While boating can be a fun and relaxing experience, operating a boat, especially for young people, can be dangerous. This issue was brought to light last summer when Austin Stephanos and his good friend were lost at sea. In hopes of preventing similar tragedies the River Center is collaborating with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary "Flotilla 52" to provide Boating Safely Classes targeted specifically to young boaters in our community. These classes are provided through a generous sponsorship by the AustinBlu Foundation, a not-for-profit founded in Austin's name and dedicated to raising awareness and

promoting educational programs to improve boater safety. Participating in effective boater safety training is the most significant thing boaters can do to decrease their risk of mishap while on the water. Potential boaters need to understand the dangers of boating in hazardous waters like the Jupiter Inlet. Although there is no cost for the class, a \$10.00 deposit per student is required to reserve a seat. This deposit will be refunded in full to all students who complete the class. Please bring a lunch. Pre-registration is required because space is limited. Registration will take place promptly at 8:00, the morning of class. Please register online now! www.tiny.cc/boatsafe.

April 30 – 8:30a-12:30p: Girl Scout Workshop (Bugs) for Daisies and Brownies: Brownies will earn their Legacy Bugs badge and Daisies will earn their Clover petal. This fun-filled event will help Brownies discover bugs and why they are important, while Daisies will discover the world around them alongside their Girl Scout sisters.

May 5 – 12p-1p: Friends of the Loxahatchee River Meeting: Join Beau Yeiser, Biological Scientist with Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, to discuss "Monitoring the Fisheries of our Lagoons". He will review fisheries research in the Indian River Lagoon, mostly as it pertains to the Fisheries Independent Monitoring program and look at methods and results (spoiler: they catch lots of neat fish!). Data collected from this program has been used to aid management in recent years.

May 15 - 8:30a-4:30p: About Boating Safely: While boating can be a fun and relaxing experience, operating a boat, especially for young people, can be dangerous. This issue was brought to light last summer when Austin Stephanos and his good friend were lost at sea. In hopes of preventing similar tragedies the River Center is collaborating with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary "Flotilla 52" to provide Boating Safely Classes targeted specifically to young boaters in our community. These classes are provided through a generous sponsorship by the AustinBlu Foundation, a not-for-profit founded in Austin's name and dedicated to raising awareness and promoting educational programs to improve boater safety. Participating in effective boater safety training is the most significant thing boaters can do to decrease their risk of mishap while on the water. Potential boaters need to understand the dangers of boating in hazardous waters like the Jupiter Inlet. Although there is no cost for the class, a \$10.00 deposit per student is required to reserve a seat. This deposit will be refunded in full to all students who complete the class. Please bring a lunch. Pre-registration is required because space is limited. Registration will take place promptly at 8:00, the morning of class. Please register online now! www.tiny.cc/boatsafe.

May 17 – 31st Loxahatchee River Wild and Scenic Anniversary – Tentative River Center Kayak Tour to Riverbend Park.

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JUPITER COURIER

Newsweekly

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DAYS men Page 29

Els' **GOLF**
CHALLENGE
'largest ... in history'

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SHARKS!

Keeping **REEFS & OCEANS** healthy

Page 10



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ON THE COVER/INSIDE



LORI GRIFFITH/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER NEWSWEEKLY

SHARKS! KEEPING REEFS AND OCEANS HEALTHY

The River Center is creating a dynamic exhibit to educate the public on Marine Fisheries and Marine Protected Areas. The center has enlisted the help of Randy Jordan, who has a wealth of hands-on experience with the local shark population. See Lori Griffith's Special Report on Page 10.



PROVIDED PHOTO/COKE COAKLEY

THOSE GLORY DAYS MEN...

Jupiter Glory Days defeated the Tampa Blue Jays Dominican Republic team 8-1 in the finals of the 20-team "over-45" Sunshine Classic baseball tournament in Fort Myers. Like a fine wine ... "sometimes you just get smarter and better with age," says manager Joe DeSantis, pictured, of Stuart. Read the story, on Page 29.

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MANAGING EDITOR
Brightman Brock
561-745-3311
brightman.brock@tcpalm.com

PUBLISHER
Bob Brunjes

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS
Rick Baxter, Inez Frid

CORRESPONDENTS:
Larry Bush, Carol Saunders, Dale Nese-
man, Shawna Gallagher Vega, Kit Brad-
shaw, Kelly Beard, Justin Beard, Rachel
Boland, Kim Alvanos, Jorge Huerta, Lori
Griffith, John Day, Julie O'Brien, Andrea
Lussier, Vivianne Hall

SALES/GENERAL MANAGER
Suzanne Antonich
561-745-3304
suzanne.antonich@tcpalm.com

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SHARKS! ... & the River Center Keeping REEFS AND OCEANS healthy

By LORI GRIFFITH

Special to The Courier Newsweekly

Surviving more than 400 million years and several mass extinctions, the current worldwide shark hunting frenzy could quite possibly be responsible for the future extinction of the marine world's apex predator.

Contributing to the decimation of the shark population is the Asian demand for shark fin soup, served at celebratory functions and estimated to be responsible for 100 million sharks killed annually, according to *The Smithsonian*.

Forty years ago, Peter Benchley induced fear into an entire generation with the release of the film "Jaws."

The "jaws effect" kept beach-goers out of the water and spawned a hunting and killing frenzy among others.

In the film's aftermath, sharks along the Eastern Seaboard were nearly wiped out.

While shark phobia continues, the critical role they play in keeping our oceans alive and healthy is uppermost on the minds of scientists and environmentalists alike.



LORI GRIFFITH/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER NEWSWEEKLY

Jocelyn O'Neill, River Center Environmental Education manager, says education is the key to survival of sharks in our world.

SPECIAL REPORT

Sharks: At the top of the food chain



LORI GRIFFITH/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER NEWSWEEKLY
 “Djenni The Shark” is always a welcome sight when she makes her way back to Florida waters each year, O’Neill said. Sharks are named and recognized from the scars they bear and hooks lodged in their jaws.

At the top of the food chain, sharks keep food webs in balance. Considered a keystone species, they tend to eat very efficiently – going after the old, sick or slower fish, thus keeping the reefs and oceans healthier.

By removing the sick and the weak, they prevent the spread of disease and outbreaks that could be devastating. Where sharks are eliminated, the marine ecosystem loses its balance.

Locally, the River Center in Jupiter aims to do its part to educate the public of the crucial nature they play by introducing a fully interactive exhibit, Jupiter Shark Exploration.

JUPITER SHARK EXPLORATION
 With a grant from the Van Pelt Foundation, the River Center is creating a

dynamic exhibit whereby the public can be educated on Marine Fisheries and Marine Protected Areas.

Through several reiterations the River Center team decided to use the plight of sharks to portray their message.

Jocelyn O’Neill, River Center Environmental Education manager, said, “We needed something dynamic that would grab people’s attention similar to how turtles, dolphin and manatee do. People are very interested to learn more about sharks.”

She enlisted the assistance of Randy Jordan, a well-respected environmentalist and dive charter owner (Emerald Charters). Jordan has a wealth of hands on experience with the local shark population, in addition to stunning

See SHARKS, 12

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SPECIAL REPORT

SHARKS
from 16

source," she said.

The entire Florida Keys is a Marine Protected Area, and within that are a few untouched areas where fishing isn't allowed - however people can dive and snorkel. People are encouraged to support the Marine Protected Area and observe healthy reefs and the abundance of marine life living among them, she added.

Reefs are generally healthier in Marine Protected Areas and tend to draw big fish and sharks due to the available food source.

"You know it's a healthy reef if you see sharks," O'Neill said, adding the main threats to reefs are environmental - poor water quality and pollution.

"Our oceans are warmer, which can cause coral bleaching. Once a coral bleaches it is unlikely that they will regain the zooxanthellae (a special symbiotic algae that lives in their tissues)," she said.

"When the water warms, the zooxanthellae leaves, causing the corals to lose their major food source and become more



LORI GRIFFITH/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER NEWSWEEKLY

Jocelyn O'Neill, River Center Environmental Education manager, noted "We needed something dynamic that would grab people's attention similar to how turtles, dolphin and manatee do. People are very interested to learn more about sharks."

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susceptible to disease and death. Once the corals die, then fish will leave the reef unable to survive without the corals and the habitat they provide.

“No fish....no sharks.”

TEACHING A NEW GENERATION

Conservation begins with education. And the River Center aims to teach a new generation, along with their parents, the crucial purpose sharks have and hopefully put an end to the myth of sharks being fearsome man-eaters.

“We have the power to educate in a friendly atmosphere where kids will get hands-on education and when they leave, it’ll be “fins-up for sharks” and know that we shouldn’t be killing them.

“When they hear about someone killing sharks, the next generation will say ‘Mommy that’s a bad thing’ and hopefully the cycle ends,” Jordan said.

In his youth, Jordan and his friends

would catch sailfish, smoke them and eat them. Through education, people know now to catch and release.

MARINE PROTECTED AREA?

There is currently a movement under way to have NOAA declare the Jupiter reef system a Marine Protected Area. Being so close to the Gulfstream, Jupiter is like a “rest area off the main highway,” where a lot of sharks aggregate on their normal migration, Jordan indicated.

Commercial fishermen are allowed to kill them during this period but when presented with the science showing they aggregate, the commercial fishermen readily agreed ... “that it would be a bad idea to catch sharks at this time in this area.

“Twenty-eight thousand petition signatures later, the solution to this was simply to talk to the commercial guys. And they agreed to not fish in Jupiter, which ultimately is saving the Lemon, Bull, Tiger and Hammerhead population,” he said.

See SHARKS, 36



LORI GRIFFITH/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER NEWSWEEKLY

Jocelyn O’Neill, River Center Environmental education manager

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The Jupiter Shark Exploration exhibition is scheduled to open later this month at the River Center in Jupiter.



THE BIGGEST THREAT

Over-fishing is the biggest threat to the shark population, according to O'Neill, noting, "Lemon sharks don't reach maturity until 12 years old; and then only have a few pups per year, as opposed to a Dolphin fish that can release thousands of fish and are totally sustainable."

"The shark is not like that, making them completely susceptible to over-fishing," she said.

"We believe once the public is educated to the plight of the sharks that change can be affected to save the apex predator from extinction."

O'Neill said she hopes the River Center will become a center for sharks, much like Loggerhead MarineLife Center in Juno Beach is for turtles.

"I want people to think of the River Center as a go-to for all shark related information."

THE EXHIBIT

The River Center invites everyone to visit their new exhibition opening later this month.

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COMMUNITY FEATURES

'Adventure Awaits'

Palm Beach County announces Spring series



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COUNTY ERM

Local resident Kristen Studt explores Palm Beach County's North Jupiter Flatwoods Natural Area, as the sun sinks below the horizon.

By **NICOLE SCIANDRA**

Provided to The Courier Newsweekly

Palm Beach County's Department of Environmental Resources Management invites everyone to experience the wild beauty of the county's natural areas through its new event series titled "Adventure Awaits."

With 10 events having been scheduled from February to May, there are many opportunities to interact with ERM naturalists.

They are leading sunset hikes, cycling and paddling tours, and are teaching nature photography skills and explore the night sky.

THROUGH OUR NATURAL AREAS

"This series offers guided adventures through our natural areas so that participants can feel comfortable returning to experience more of these places that make Palm Beach County so special," said Rob Robbins, director of ERM.

The "Adventure Awaits" event series seeks to introduce residents and visitors to the hidden eco-treasures in Palm Beach County's natural areas.

The public may participate in one experience - or multiple activities - in the new event series, which will be made available each season with a new list of offerings.

SPACE LIMITED

Space is limited and advance registration is required for most of these free

events.

Adventures vary in level from "beginner" to more "advanced," and each is a different experience.

The complete Adventure Awaits schedule can be found online at <http://www.pbcgov.org/erm/pdf/AdventureAwaits.pdf>.

For more information on specific events or to reserve your spot, please call 561-233-2400 or visit www.pbcgov.com/erm/. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @PBCERM.