



FRIENDS OF

MacArthur Beach State Park

Summer - Fall 2010

# Dune NEWS

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John D. MacArthur Beach

### STATE PARK

10900 Jack Nicklaus Drive  
North Palm Beach, FL 33408

#### Park Office:

561.624.6950

#### Nature Center:

561.624.6952

#### Fax:

561.624.6954

#### Friends Office:

561.776.7449

#### Websites:

[www.macarthurbeach.org](http://www.macarthurbeach.org)

[www.floridastateparks.org/macarthurbeach](http://www.floridastateparks.org/macarthurbeach)

## The Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park

is a non-profit corporation with a mission of generating supplemental resources to preserve, restore, and interpret the natural and cultural assets of the Park for present and future generations

A quarterly newsletter sponsored by the Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park, Inc.

## Seagrass Research at MacArthur Beach State Park

by Scott Duncan

John D. MacArthur Beach State Park is well known as a popular kayaking destination. While kayaking in the estuary most visitors notice the pristine mangrove habitat that fringes the water. The mangrove community is important in several ways - erosion control, water filtration, and habitat for juvenile fish are a few. However, many do not realize the other important community of the estuary; the seagrass community. Very often visitors are not aware of seagrass or the importance of it, even though they may be paddling right over top of it. This community is indeed vital to the health of the estuary at the park.

What exactly is seagrass? Seagrasses are flowering plants just like you would find on dry land; they have just adapted to grow underwater in estuaries and shallow coastal waters. The seagrass community is important because it helps to stabilize sediment by reducing wave energy and helping sand to settle out of the water column, while helping maintain water quality. Seagrass is an important food source for several species, from small invertebrates to large mammals, like the West Indian manatee. It also provides habitat for invertebrates and fish species. Invertebrates not only will live in the seagrass beds but may also live on the blades themselves. Several commercially important fish species spend their first years of life within estuaries, due in large part to the protection of seagrass beds.

The Lake Worth Lagoon is a very important estuary in South Florida. At roughly 20 miles long, it has 280



acres of mangrove, 156 of which are in the Park. As with all estuaries, Lake Worth Lagoon supports a high degree of biodiversity. It has been widely known that Lake Worth Lagoon has 6 of the 7 Florida seagrass species. The species include federally listed as threatened *Halophila johnsonii*, Johnson's Seagrass, which has been found in numerous healthy patches in MacArthur Beach's mangrove estuary. This seagrass only grows on the east coast of Florida from northern Biscayne Bay to southern Indian River Lagoon, making it the rarest seagrass in Florida. The study of this seagrass is important because degradation of water quality is often linked to changes in seagrass community structure and is a valid bioindicator of ecosystem health.

Recently we have begun to research the seagrass beds within the park. Leading the research is Associate Professor of Biology at Palm Beach Atlantic, Thomas C. Chesnes, Ph.D and myself. Also helping are Florida Park Service district biologists Ernie Cowan and Charlie Jabaly along with two students, Katie Swick and Joanne Tate. There has not been any thorough seagrass surveys done within the park until now. We are looking at several things by doing these surveys; the overall health of the habitat, the diversity of the grass beds, and the limiting factors (water clarity, depth, tidal flow, etc) of the seagrass

continued on page 4



## John D. MacArthur BEACH STATE PARK

### Staff

**Don Bergeron**, *Park Manager*  
**Pat Rash**, *Asst. Park Manager*  
**Lynn Desy**, *Admin. Assistant*

### Park Services Specialists

Art Carton  
Mykl Wallrath

### Rangers

Steve Desy  
Scott Duncan  
Charlie Hein  
Rob Matriscino  
Mike Watts  
Bill Wilson

### OPS Staff

David Gelb  
Megan Harris  
Sarah Waddell

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[www.macarthurbeach.org](http://www.macarthurbeach.org)

## Sea Turtle Nesting Season 2010 - Mid-season Report

by Scott Duncan

We are right in the middle of sea turtle nesting season 2010, and we have been very busy with morning nesting surveys and we have finished our very successful, fully booked turtle walks at night. We are seeing some encouraging numbers on the beach so far this year. The rangers have had some really crazy mornings doing the surveys – greens mating in the shore break, loggerheads still nesting at nine in the morning; a few mornings we had all 3 species nested, and one morning we had close to 80 crawls! Now we are starting to see hatches as well.

Let's see how the numbers are looking so far. I will start with loggerheads. As some of you may know, last year was one of our lowest seasons in 20 years. But the loggerheads have made a spectacular comeback this year. As of end July, we had over 1,000 nests; which is about 300 more nests than we had at this time last year. The 1000 nest threshold has not been broken since 2007. This is definitely an encouraging sign. As for the greens, they are just getting going. They are typically late season nesters, nesting from June – September. We are seeing good numbers already, with 263 nests as of July 30th. This figure is already significantly ahead of the number of green nests for the past two

years. So it looks like it will be a big year for the greens! Lastly, the leatherbacks have just finished their nesting for the year. I am happy to report that, once again, we have a new record for leatherback nests. In 2007 we set a record with 47 nests. It was topped last year with 48 nests, and was topped again this year with 49. We just keep seeing more leatherbacks year after year!

All in all we are having a really good year and the number of nests for all three species will be up! We at MacArthur Beach State Park are always proud and excited to help these endangered, rare and beautiful sea animals year after year.



### FRIENDS OF MACARTHUR BEACH STATE PARK, INC.

Membership Application

A not-for-profit Citizens Support Organization

☐ Benefactor...\$500+    ☐ Patron...\$499-\$100    ☐ Family...\$75    ☐ Individual...\$40

Name(s): M \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this application along with your check or credit card information to:

Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park, Inc.

10900 Jack Nicklaus Drive

North Palm Beach, FL 33408

Or join through the web site - [www.macarthurbeach.org](http://www.macarthurbeach.org)

For more information regarding the "Friends" please call 561.776.7449.





## Our Special Girl

by Sarah Waddell

This August, the MacArthur Beach's loggerhead turtle turns one year old. We call the turtle "Caretta", because the loggerhead sea turtle's scientific name is *Caretta caretta*, thereby providing a teaching moment with school groups and other visitors. And the name just seems to fit her.

Before Caretta came to the park, she was a subject in a Florida Atlantic University research study. Researchers were studying the sex ratio of ten randomly selected hatchlings from nests on a Boca Raton beach. Through a laparoscopic procedure, scientists were able to determine whether each hatchling was male or female. This is the only reason we know that this turtle is female. Otherwise, it takes a decade for external characteristics to identify a turtle's sex.

Since hatching, she has gone from weighing less than an ounce to over 32 ounces. Caretta will have to grow to the size of 45 cm (about a 1 ½ ft) before she will be released. As an education animal for the park, Caretta allows visitors to get up close and personal with one of these fascinating creatures. Her stay at MacArthur Beach will keep her safe from a variety of predators, giving her a better chance at survival. Hatchling turtles are predated upon by many animals including raccoons, crabs, birds, and fish. As a larger turtle, only sharks and human impacts will be a danger to Caretta's survival.

When she is released, Caretta will be tagged with two external tags and a pit tag that will be surgically implanted into her shoulder. Also, as a result of her participation in the FAU study, she has a "living tag". A small piece of her



top and bottom shell were exchanged and transplanted to create a distinctive mark, that will increase the chances of identification. Another exciting possibility would be to fit her with a satellite tag. This would allow anyone with internet access to follow her exploration for up to two years after her release.

Caretta is a fascinating addition to the Nature Center and she gives adults and children alike a chance to see these beautiful sea creatures up close and personal. On your way to the beach, be sure to stop by and visit Caretta during her time at MacArthur Beach.

## A Turtle Walk Experience That Will Last

by Rob Matriscino

One of the main reasons why we provide turtle walks is to invoke an interest in the protection and understanding of these 'living fossils'. On one of my turtle walks this June, I really feel that very notion came to life.

The night started perfect. The group of about twenty people that I was leading were a good mix of children and adults. After the presentation in the theatre and some interesting questions, we went outside to start our traverse over the boardwalk to the beach. I could tell it was going to be a great night outside simply from the lack of biting insects! Once we all arrived at the beach, I contacted the volunteers who were scouting for turtles. They were already seeing some crawls but no nesters as of yet. As the group was waiting, the moon was beginning to rise with a beautiful orange glow.

Directly in front of the crossover where we were waiting, a turtle began to emerge out of the shoreline. I had the group remain still and quiet, but this was not to be our turtle to watch because she crawled back into the ocean. The group was really excited by now and anticipation was building. Within fifteen minutes, I was alerted from the scouts to the north that a loggerhead was

preparing her egg chamber. The group was gathered together and we made the short walk to the north where our main snorkeling reef is located. She was a good size loggerhead sea turtle, with the cloaca visible to the group so that they could witness the eggs be dropped into the egg chamber. I explained that if you watch the back flippers you can see the contraction and the release of the eggs out of the cloaca. After completion she started covering the eggs and that is when one child that was kneeling near me during the nesting turned to me with wide eyes and said "I'll never look at sea turtles the same, this is amazing." At that point I know that this experience had made a real impact on someone. I told the child that this is what we hope people feel when they are able to see these amazing creatures out in nature.

So we had a beautiful moonlight sky, a group that was really in awe of the experience and a child that might just have the best summertime story to tell for years to come.



## Manager Matters



As you may well know, big changes are afoot at John D MacArthur Beach State Park. As you read this newsletter, projects are in the works which will expand the

educational opportunities offered within the park, improve visitor services and facilities, provide additional park access, and further protect the fragile natural resources within the park.

The big news, of course, is the Pew Family Natural Science Education Center. If you have not visited the park in the past few weeks you will no doubt be impressed by the new facility taking shape next to our Visitor Center. With a classroom, wet lab, and a library, the new center will provide greater opportunities to offer environmental education to more area students than ever. The new building will also house a bigger and better gift shop, outdoor covered seating, and a new sea turtle exhibit. The facility is expected to be complete in the spring of 2011.

The other major construction project under way in the park is on Munyon Island. Having long been part of the park's management plan, in the works since 2003 in fact, the day use boat docking facility is finally under construction. For those visiting the island by boat, the new facility will enable safe access to the island while eliminating the need to

beach their boats, thus helping to protect near-shore seagrass from propeller and anchor damage. The dock is designed to accommodate up to 20 boats and includes ADA accessible slips. There will also be a service boat slip for park staff and law enforcement use which will greatly improve our ability to maintain and monitor the island. The docking facility is expected to be completed in October, 2010.

Finally, the waters bordered by Munyon Island to the west and SR A1A to the east, including Munyon Island's interior waters, will be receiving increased protection. Following a lengthy permitting process, the waters will soon be designated as an "Area Closed to Internal Combustion Engine Operation". Basically what that means is boats powered by internal combustion engines must turn off their engines and trim them up when they're in the marked area. The use of push-poles, electric trolling motors, paddles, and oars is still permitted. The new restrictions will help protect seagrass beds from propeller damage.

The Florida Park Service mission statement is "To provide resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting and restoring natural and cultural resources". It looks as though the three projects currently under way at John D MacArthur Beach State Park reflect that goal very well.

*Don Bergeron*  
Park Manager

## Seagrass *continued from page 1*

(why the grass grows where it does), are just some of the criteria. The surveys have not always been easy, but they have paid off.

We have had several surprising finds. We have come across large, healthy patches of Johnsons seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*) in the park. And we have discovered the 7th species of Florida seagrass, *Ruppia Martima*, widgeon grass, growing in three different areas in the Lake Worth Lagoon at the park.

The team found sparse documentation of this 7th species growing in Lake Worth Lagoon, and certainly never before at the park. MacArthur Beach State Park is the only place with all 7 species and the only place besides Indian River Lagoon, with the most biologically diverse estuary in the Western Hemisphere.

It is discoveries such as these that prove to me what I already know. MacArthur Beach State Park truly is one of the most unique places on the planet.

## Volunteer Spotlight



Get to Know –  
**Kristen Oplinger**

**Volunteer Full Name:**  
Kristen Lee Oplinger

**Job Assignments:**

- Kayak Tour Assistant
- Turtle Walk Volunteer
- Animal Care Maintenance
- Overall help wherever needed

**Occupation:**

- VA Medical Center
- Orientation & Mobility Instructor
- Blind Rehabilitation Specialist

**Special Interest:**

- Working with people and animals
- Being outdoors

**Birth Place:**

Allentown, Pennsylvania

**Years in Florida:**

1 year this October

**How long have you been here at MacArthur:**

Since January of 2010

**Favorite part of MacArthur:**

- Enjoys the people – interacting with the visitors as well as the staff and volunteers
- Munyon Island mangrove forest

**Looking forward to:**

Exploring more of Florida





## Conserving our Trees and Shrubs

by Patrick Rash



### Trees and shrubs get a new home:

As you may have noticed, construction is in full swing. With all the clearing of vegetation that had to be done, the staff and Friends decided that the plants in the building's footprint deserved a chance. Our district biology department came to the park and made recommendations as to which trees we should do our best to save. We hired some experts to move the large trees and volunteers and staff moved the rest. The Friends paid the nearly \$5,000.00 for the various expenses

including the experts, pots, topsoil, and the rental of a mini excavator so that the staff could dig up the remaining plants in time for the contractor to start work. The money spent was incorporated in the total cost of the project. The larger trees were moved to new locations in the parking lots and the medium trees were moved around the park to areas that had been cleared of exotic plants. Some were moved to the north east residence area where vegetation had been previously removed, and along the park drive. Smaller shrubs and plants were potted and will be used in the landscaping of the area after construction activities are over. Unfortunately some plants

had to be removed rather than relocated, but those were brought to the vegetation recycling area in the north parking lot. In all, over 100 trees and shrubs got a new lease on life including gumbo limbo, fire bush, wild lime, sabal palm, wild coffee, mastic, stopper, pigeon plum, strangler fig, red mulberry to name a few. At MacArthur Beach we are always coming up with ways to give back. To give back to nature, to the Park and ultimately, back to the Community.



## Summer Camp

by Art Carton

Over 65 children attended summer camp at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park. Campers ranged in age from 7-8 years olds in Little Turtle Art Camp, to 11-13 year olds in Marine Biology Camp. The 9-10 year olds attended Junior Ranger Camp. The youngest campers attending Little Turtle Art Camp participated in a combination of environmental crafts and outdoor experiences meant to introduce children to the park's ecosystems. Instructors Sarah Waddell and Megan Harris entertained, educated and inspired a group of 15 campers to become the next caretakers of this beautiful park. For the 9-10 year olds, Junior Ranger camp was a way for children to take part in many of the same experiences as an actual Park Ranger. Park Services Specialist, Mykl Wallrath helped the children strive to be the best Junior Rangers

they could be. Campers gave a daily beach report, participated in a fish count on the reef and helped clean up the beach; they even sung a camp song every morning. At the end of the camp, participants received a diploma and a Junior Ranger I.D. card from Park Manager, Don Bergeron. For the older kids there was Marine Biology camp and a chance to do in-depth exploration of the Limestone reef and estuary. With the expert guidance of instructor Dr. Tom Chesnes, PhD., campers snorkeled, kayaked and went seining in the Lake Worth Cove. The staff would like to thank the Friends of MacArthur Beach for supporting the camps and the dedicated volunteers who assisted the instructors and made summer camp such a success. We look forward to next year to inspire the next generation of campers at MacArthur Beach State Park.



# New and Renewing Members

APRIL 1, 2010 THRU MAY 31, 2010

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Miss Eva Karsai  
Ms. Debra McCloskey  
Mr & Mrs. Don & Penny Pray  
Mr. & Mrs. Ronn & Ronnye Sands  
Mr. & Mrs. F. Eugene Schmitt

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Ms. Maria Wayne Williamson  
Mr. Peter Woitiz  
Ms. Ingrid Zea

## Individual

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Mr. Jorge Aponte  
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Mr. Kenneth Archambault  
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Ms. Pamela Baker  
Mrs. Carol Barnhart  
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Ms. Carley Blake  
Mr. Thomas Bleimeyer  
Mr. Mark Blizzard  
Ms. Mary Bonnell  
Mr. Leslie Boucher  
Mr. Barry Bowman  
Mr. David Brandwein  
Mr. Derek Branzell  
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Mrs. John Stickler  
Mr. Matthew Stiebel  
Mr. Mike Sullivan  
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Ms. Suzanne Whitney  
Mr. Eric Wiedemer  
Mr. James Winston  
Mr. Derek Wolfhope  
Ms. Amy Woods  
Mr. Shane Younts  
Mr. Chao Zhang



**Friends Gift Shop**

## NEW ITEMS

Bracelets Made of Leather and Wood...Sea Life Designs for Men and Women  
-\$2.95

Necklaces Made of Leather and Wood...Turtle and Asst Designs for Men and Women  
-\$3.95

All the Rage...Cut Out Sea Life Bracelets Package of 12  
\$2.50

Youth T-Shirts 4 New Designs and Colors  
\$11.95 each

Ornaments - Beautiful Seashore, Sea Turtle, Tropical Designs, Gift Boxed  
-\$10.95 each

Hot Selling Book  
"The Nature of Floridas' Beaches"  
by Blair & Dawn Witherington

**NEW MERCHANDISE  
ARRIVING DAILY!**

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED  
IN VOLUNTEERING IN  
THE GIFT STORE,  
CONTACT KARI OR  
MARTY AT 776-7449  
OR STOP IN AND  
CHAT WITH US!**



## Blizzard at the Beach

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Back by popular demand!**

**A family fun event to benefit the  
Natural Science Education Fund  
of Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park  
Sunday, December 5, 2010  
11:00 am to 4:00 pm**





# Up and Coming Activities

## AUGUST

01	Sunday	2:00 p.m.	Learn to Kayak by <i>Adventure Times Kayaks</i>
07	Saturday	10:00 a.m.	Guided Snorkeling Tour
08	Sunday	1:00 p.m.	Volunteer Orientation
12	Thursday	8:30 a.m.	Yoga on the Beach
14	Saturday	10:00 a.m.	Guided Snorkeling Tour
15	Sunday	9:30 a.m.	Birding at MacArthur Park
15	Sunday	1-4:00 p.m.	Bluegrass Music with "The Untold Riches"
21	Saturday	10:00 a.m.	Guided Snorkeling Tour
21	Saturday	11:00 a.m.	Butterfly Walk
26	Thursday	8:30 a.m.	Yoga on the Beach
28	Saturday	10:00 a.m.	Guided Snorkeling Tour

## SEPTEMBER

04	Saturday	11:00 a.m.	F.U.N. Program: Estuary Exploration
05	Sunday	1:00 p.m.	Birding at MacArthur Park
05	Sunday	2:00 p.m.	Learn to Kayak by <i>Adventure Times Kayaks</i>
09	Thursday	8:30 a.m.	Yoga on the Beach
11	Saturday	1:00 p.m.	Recreational Skills: Kayak Fishing Clinic
12	Sunday	2-4:00 p.m.	Bluegrass Music with "The Conch Stomp Band"
18	Saturday	11:00 a.m.	Butterfly Walk
19	Sunday	1-4:00 p.m.	Bluegrass Music with "The Untold Riches"
23	Thursday	8:30 a.m.	Yoga on the Beach
25	Saturday	8:00 a.m.-Noon	International Coastal Cleanup

## OCTOBER

03	Sunday	12:30 p.m.	Birding at MacArthur Park
03	Sunday	2:00 p.m.	Learn to Kayak by <i>Adventure Times Kayaks</i>
07	Thursday	8:30 a.m.	Yoga on the Beach
09	Saturday	11:00 a.m.	Butterfly Walk
10	Sunday	2-4:00 p.m.	Bluegrass Music with "The Conch Stomp Band"
17	Sunday	1-4:00 p.m.	Bluegrass Music with "The Untold Riches"
21	Thursday	8:30 a.m.	Yoga on the Beach
23	Saturday	7-9:00 p.m.	Moonlight Concert: Florida Folk Music, "Roadside Revue"

- Daily Guided Nature Walks at 10:00 a.m.
- Every Weekend Animal Feeding in the Nature Center at 11:00 a.m.
- Every Sunday at 3:00 p.m. Snake Talk in the Nature Center

## Activity Details

- All activities except MacArthur Under Moonlight concerts are free with Park admission -

**Birding** - Learn the names, characteristics and behaviors of the common and rare wading birds that browse the exposed mud flats at low tide.

**Bluegrass** - Listen to some of the best bluegrass music in South Florida; The Untold Riches and The Conch STomp Band will be playing bluegrass music in the amphitheater.

**Butterfly Walk** - Join a staff naturalist on a mile long walk identifying the butterflies that inhabit the park. Reservations recommended.

**F.U.N. Program, Families Understanding Nature: Estuary Exploration** - Explore the Park's estuary up close and personal!

Participants will get wet and dirty, please wear closed-toed shoes and shorts. For ages 8 years old and up, reservations required.

**Guided Snorkeling Tour** - Join park staff and volunteers on a guided tour of the park's limestone reef. Participants must be experienced snorkelers, at least 10 years old and under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Reservations required.

**The International Coastal Cleanup** - Come join the world's largest community litter reduction event. Help cleanup the beach at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park. Participants will receive snacks, refreshments and free giveaways.

**Learn to Kayak** - Adventure Times Kayaks teaches the basic skills necessary to safely enjoy the exciting sport of kayaking; instruction on land only. Reservations recommended.

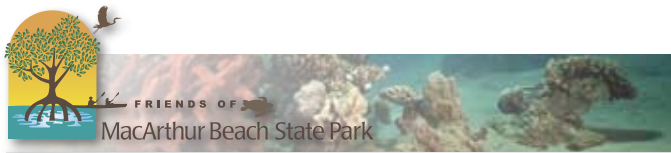
**MacArthur Under Moonlight Concert Series** - Join us for a magical night of music, gates open at 6:00 p.m. Concert 7-9:00 p.m. with a fifteen minute intermission at 8:00 with stargazing on the boardwalk. \$5.00 per person; Friends of MacArthur Beach members and children under the age of 10 are free.

**Recreational Skills: Introduction to Kayak Fishing** - Join Park Ranger Bill Wilson and learn the techniques and equipment needed to go kayak fishing in South Florida.

The program is on land and reservations are recommended.

**Volunteer Orientation** - Come join our team and help visitors appreciate the importance of preserving this beautiful place by volunteering. Reservations required.

**Yoga on the Beach** - Join a certified yoga instructor for a one hour yoga session on the beach. This class is for beginners or experienced participants. Reservations recommended.



10900 Jack Nicklaus Drive  
North Palm Beach, FL 33408

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## Thank you for your membership in the Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park!

All funds raised by the Friends through memberships, the Gift Shop and kayak rentals stay in the Park. YOU assist the Friends to -

- Purchase equipment and supplies for the Natural Science Education Program
- Provide funding to purchase Passenger Trams and other equipment
- Fund volunteer training and recognition
- Provide funding for Picnic Pavilions and Playground
- Purchase and maintain the kayak fleet
- Fund Park printing, supplies and technology needs
- Provide funds for Park Staff Training
- Operate the Gift Shop
- Produce the Park quarterly newsletter, The Dune News

*Thanks!*