

Calusa Land Trust

and Nature Preserve of Pine Island, Inc.



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Newsletter #93

Founded 1976

September 2015

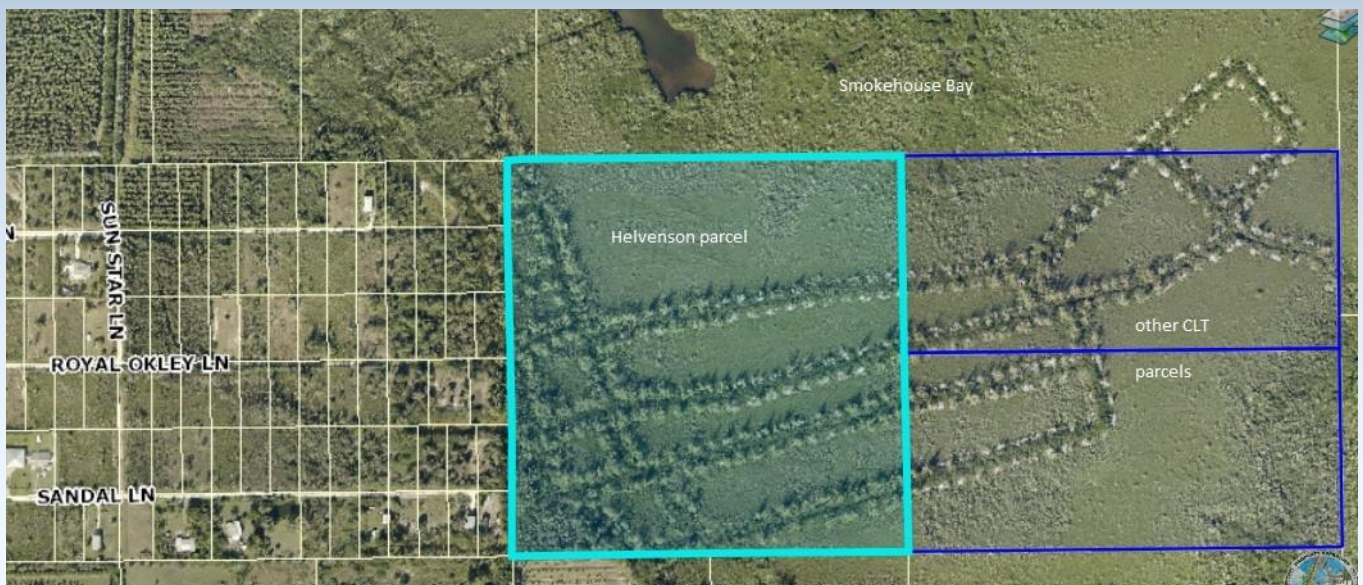
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Helvenston parcel

We are happy to announce that CLT has received another property gift. A group of land owners who live, primarily, in the Panhandle area of Florida have donated a forty one acre tract comprising mostly mangroves but with approximately an acre of uplands and a mosquito ditch that is navigable to Smokehouse Bay. This parcel has been owned by some of these folks' families since the eighteen hundreds and

after years of dividing the land there are too many current owners to name. We thank Attorney Mel Brinson for helping both sides make this very complex property transfer a reality. I must say thanks to Bill Whitfield, one of the owners, for acting as liaison for the group

The property is a welcome addition to Lee County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and existing Calusa Land Trust properties that comprise a large, connected, swath of preserved mangrove environment on the north east



PAST WORK PARTIES – Since March 2015, the Calusa Land Trust Volunteers have worked at seven work parties and on five different CLT preserves. Our efforts have brought out 55 volunteers doing over 160 hours of work. The tasks we take on vary from Preserve to Preserve. We do a lot of invasive exotic plant control (IEPC), which involves cutting back and using herbicides on the larger invasive plants such as Australian Pine, Brazilian Pepper, Melaleuca and our newest IEP, Ear Leaf Acacia. We also do trail building and maintenance. In addition we plant more native plants as we did at our new Smith/Dewane addition to our St. James Creek Preserve. We had 16 volunteers who planted 100 native plants at the site. As of this writing, we have a 99% success of this planting. Our March work party was at our new Barron Preserve on Barrancas Ave. in Bokeelia. This preserve is soon to be expanded due to the generous donation by Mr. Jon Wigert. The expanded Preserve will become the Wigert-Barron Preserve.

Other preserves we've worked on lately include the Big Jim Creek Preserve doing maintenance on the paddling trail from Fritts Park, the Bud House Calusa Canal Preserve on Meadow Lane and the Baxley Preserve at the end of Redwood Avenue.

The CLT now holds over 2,000 acres of land which make up over 20 different Preserves. As our acreage has increased over the last 39 years, so do our needs and responsibilities to maintain and enhance our properties. I want to thank all our CLT volunteers for their efforts and dedication. We are always looking for more volunteers and we have plenty of jobs to perform and could always do more. Come out and help out and bring a friend or two!

Calendar of Upcoming Work Parties 2015 - 2016

Saturday Sept 12 th	Wigert-Barron Preserve, Aura Lane, Bokeelia
Saturday Oct. 10 th ,	Dobbs Preserve, Sabal Avenue, SJC
Saturday Nov. 14 th ,	Pine Island Flatwoods Preserve, SJC
Saturday Dec 12 th ,	St. James Creek Preserve, Stabile Rd, SJC
Saturday Jan. 9 th ,	Fritts Park, Beach Daisy Lane, Bokeelia

SUMMER INTERN

This summer the CLT was very fortunate to have a very hard working intern, Monica Ditch. Monica is pursuing a Marine Biology degree at the University of Florida in Gainesville. She also grew up on Pine Island, a true Island Native! Thanks to the generous donation of member Cheryl Hanson of St. James City who funded the intern program, we were able to have Monica work for the CLT all summer, performing over 200 hours of service. A list of projects Monica worked on includes:

border of Pine Island.

Access will be from several county roads in the future but at present none have been developed well enough to drive to the site. Our goal is to remove the exotic vegetation from the uplands and eventually develop the mosquito ditch as a canoe and kayak trail. This will not happen overnight but with the financial support of our members, the efforts of our incredible volunteers and Ranger Ed we'll get it done.

Thanks to all our members for your support!

CLT Preserve Plant Watch – *Rivina humilis* L.

Our new Wigert-Barron Preserve located at Barrancas Avenue and Aura Lane in Bokeelia has several vegetation types. Initially you walk through a relatively open but patchy coastal sand scrub habitat with several species of scrub oak (*Quercus spp*) and cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*) but as you continue on north towards Jug Creek there is a dense canopy of invasive Australian pine (*Casuarina spp*). Under this shady spot are clusters of *Rivina humilis* L.,



which is popularly known as Rouge Plant, Bloodberry or Pigeon Berry⁵.

At first all the plants I found were in flower and not sporting the bright red berries that give this plant one of its common names. But once plants bearing fruit were spotted the identification is assured. It is widely thought to have been used in the cosmetic trade in the past, though several of the same sources claim the leaves and berries are poisonous¹. Another source claimed to have fed the berries to rats with no ill effects², but I'll leave that up to the rats. *Rivina* is a member of the Pokeweed family (Phytolaccaceae) whose name sake is poisonous unless properly prepared (aka: Poke Salad)³.

Its preferred habitat is shady areas that are well watered but well drained, often disturbed sites with sandy or shell soils⁴. This describes its niche found in Bokeelia nicely. The plants are salt tolerant and usually grow low to the ground, making it popular with native plant gardeners who also find the long clusters of red berries with the dark green foliage particularly attractive. The North American distribution of *R. humilis* is from Florida west to Arizona and north to Oklahoma and Arkansas^{4,6}. *Rivina* also grows easily from seed or from cuttings and may be purchased locally at most native plant nurseries in the area.

1 - http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=RIHU2

2 - Food Chem Toxicol., December 2011, volume 49, issue 12, pages 3154-3157

3 - http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=PHAM4

4 - <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=RIHU2>

5 - <http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/Plant.aspx?id=3672>

6 - http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=1&taxon_id=220011674

- raking wood chips out of the mangroves at the Smith /Dewane addition,
- extensive invasive exotic plant control of Australian Pines, Brazilian Peppers and native but nasty sand spurs at the St. James Creek Preserve
- helping to organize the June 13th planting
- trimming along the St. Jude trail, taming the coin vine and others
- helped to clear a new trail connecting the Smith-Dewane addition to the St. Jude Trail
- installed a CTL preserve sign on the new Taylor Preserve on Alcorn Street in Bokeelia.
- Helped build the CLT float and marched in the 4th of July parade.
- Spent days opening road access to the new 40 acres Helvenston addition to the Little Smokehouse Bay Preserve, which is now nearly 100 acres
- Spent days trimming the fence line at Fritts park which was in danger of being over grown with weeds and vines.
- Spent hours organizing my unorganized box of paperwork covering the last few years of projects.

Thank you, Monica very, very much for your hard work on behalf of the CLT. You managed to put in more work hours than all our volunteers did over the last six months!

PETER ORDWAY MANGROVE ADVENTURES

Every season I lead six paddling tours. We call these the Peter Ordway Mangrove Adventures in memory of Peter Ordway who was a popular CLT Director who began these paddles to raise funds and explore our preserves some of which can only be visited in this manner.

Our first trip is one of everyone's favorites, Fisheating Creek near Palmdale. This is a one hour drive from Pine Island and it's scheduled for Saturday October 15th. The next two paddles are scheduled for Sunday November 15th to Calusa Island and to St. James Creek Preserve on December 15th.

The next three paddles will be announced at a later date.

Canoes and kayaks are welcome. There are limitations on space availability so reservations are required. A suggested donation for the CLT of \$20 per person is suggested, though more is always welcome! For additional information on work parties and reservations for paddles call Ed Chapin at (239) 218-7531.

Spread the Calusa Land Trust word

Proudly display a Calusa Land Trust garden sign or front license plate. Available wherever Calusa Clothesline is setup. Each sells for \$25 and all of the profit goes to the CLT.



Treasures of the Trails for September 2015

Feeling Prickly? Check Out the Prickly Pear at the Wigert Barron Preserve

Photo by Brian Cotterill & Text by Judy Ott

Among the prickly heat and rain of August on Pine Island, the Prickly Pear cactus at the Wigert Barron Preserve is thriving. The Wigert Barron Preserve is a recent Calusa Land Trust acquisition in Bokeelia where Barrancas and Aura Lane meet. Prickly Pear (Eastern Prickly Pear, *Opuntia humifusa*) is the most common native cactus in Florida.

Prickly Pear often grows in sprawling entanglements which can reach 3 feet tall. It has flattened stems, oval shaped branches (called pads), and showy yellow flowers in the spring, with red "pear" fruits in fall. The pads are covered with clusters of large stiff spines and are used to store water as thick gelatinous goo. Both the pads and fruit also have smaller delicate spines which break off in your skin if you touch them.



Prickly Pears are happiest growing in full sun in open areas of pine- palmetto-scrub forests. They don't tolerate shade and are often the first plants to reappear after fires.

Cactus patches shelter ground-nesting birds, small animals and snakes, including burrowing owls, gopher tortoises and rattlesnakes. The flowers attract insects and butterflies and the fruits and pads are popular food for raccoons, birds, rabbits and coyotes, as well as being a nourishing staple for gopher tortoises, who lack pain receptors in their mouths.

Some humans also use Prickly Pears to protect their shelter by planting them as "bugler bushes" under windows and as hedges. Humans also use the flowers to make tea, which some folklore says may be a cure for a hangover. The fruits can be used to make jams and sauces and the dried, ground seeds to make a high protein flour and food thickener. The pads - called "nopal" - are used in many Mexican and Central and South American recipes. But beware - the small delicate spines are hard to remove from the fruit and pads and your fingers! The best approach is to leave the Prickly Pear to shelter and feed the birds and wildlife. But if you are tempted to try them yourself, read up on how to pick and clean the fruit and pads before attempting it yourself.



SMILE! Do you shop online at Amazon? If you do, next time go to www.smile.amazon.com then select the Calusa Land Trust as your charity of choice. Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchases to the Calusa Land Trust. This shows a lot of potential for raising funds for the Land Trust.

About the CLT's all-volunteer status

The Calusa Land Trust is defined as "Pine Island's all-volunteer land conservancy." Since most southwest Florida land conservancies employ an executive director and support staff, how does CLT reflect its "all-volunteer" status? Let us review this question by business functions:

Central administration. CLT's officers (elected by the Board) and the members of the Board of Directors (elected by the general membership at the annual meeting) provide this responsibility. All are non-paid volunteers. One should never say never, but I don't foresee any change in this policy.

Professional services. CLT does hire and compensate attorneys (almost exclusively in real estate matters), auditors, surveyors, engineers and general contractors, none of whom serve on the Board, although many are land trust members.

Stewardship. Board member (and past president) Ed Chapin is chief ranger and chairman of this standing committee. He and work party volunteers (like many of you) perform most of the labor such to maintain our preserves. The Board has hired and paid excavation contractors (with their expertise and heavy equipment) needed for large invasive removal projects. Also, this past summer we enjoyed the services of a college intern (Monica Ditch, a sophomore at the University of Florida); she was compensated (by means of scholarship payment to the university) with funds generously donated by member Cheryl Hansen. We may extend this program using general funds.

Grant application. This is an area of unique expertise. Frank Potter chairs this committee, which has suggested to the Board that we hire a grant writer who would be compensated from grant monies raised.

Investment counselling. The Board has established an endowment account, which would provide a source of income for the future. At present all funds are placed in bank interest bearing accounts, producing a nominal return. We are investigating viable alternatives which would combine safety and greater income.

Fundraising. CLT's major annual fundraising event, The Great Calusa Rubber Duck Race, requires a massive organizational effort. The actual work would still be performed by volunteers, however, the Board intends to compensate the chairperson of the event; fees would be computed on an incentive basis such that CLT would actually net more proceeds. The chair would be a local individual and land trust member, but not on the Board of Directors.

The CLT holds title to some 2100 acres of land and possesses a net worth pushing \$3 million. CLT is a business; yes, an honorable charitable business, but still a business. Your Board acknowledges its fiduciary obligation to operate this business such that the maximum dollar is directed to its mission to acquire, preserve and protect this paradise named Pine Island.

_____ \$ 25 Basic Member
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 Bokeelia, FL 33922

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Full financial details, including federal tax returns, can be obtained by contacting the Land Trust's Treasurer at (239) 283-3871 during working hours. Federal Employer Identification Number: **59-1782265**. The Calusa Land Trust is an exempt Organization under section **501(c)(3)** of the IRS code. Florida Dept of Agriculture & Consumer Services registration number **CH3439**. No portion of donations received by the Trust is paid to any professional solicitor. 100% of all donations are received by the Trust.

September 2015

Work Parties – Everyone Welcome

They are on the second Saturday of each month except August.
9:00am to Noon We need your help.

Sept. 12, 2015 Wigert Barron Preserve, Aura Lane, Bokeelia
 Oct. 10, 2015 Dobbs Preserve, Sabal Ave., SJC
 Nov. 14, 2015 Pine Island Flatwoods Preserve, SJC
 Dec. 12, 2015 St. James Creek Preserve, Stabile Rd., SJC
 Jan. 9, 2016 Fritts Park, Beach Daisy Lane, Bokeelia

Future work parties, check with Ranger Ed 239.218.7531



Corporate Gift Matching Programs

Many larger corporations have programs where they will match employee donations to eligible charities. The Calusa Land Trust qualifies for these matching contributions. If you are an employee or retiree of one of these corporations, remember to follow up and ask for the matching gifts for your recent and future donations. This is a great way to augment your charitable giving and make a significant impact on CLT funds.



Calusa Land Trust & Nature Preserve
of Pine Island, Inc.
P.O. Box 216
Bokeelia, Florida 33922

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The Calusa Land Trust Mission Statement

The purpose of the Calusa Land Trust is to protect the natural diversity and beauty of the Pine Island region by acquiring, managing and preserving in perpetuity environmentally sensitive or historically important land and to foster appreciation for and understanding of the environment and our past.

The Land Trust is a broad coalition of individuals, families, and businesses who agree that the acquisition and protection of natural land is important if we are to retain the quality of life which makes the Pine Island region so attractive to people and to wildlife. The Land Trust is supported entirely by people who donate their time, talent, and financial support to protect irreplaceable natural resources. The Land Trust does not engage in political activity or lobbying and takes no position on zoning or regulatory matters. The Calusa Land Trust represents people's willingness to put their money and time where their hearts are to make a difference.

