

Friends of the Randell Research Center

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March 2009

Calusa Heritage Day Brings Hundreds to Pineland

Fourth Annual Event Delivers Fun and Learning

by Bill Marquardt

Over 400 people visited the Calusa Heritage Trail at the Randell Research Center on February 21 and were treated to fabulous weather and a diverse offering of displays and activities. The classroom had exhibits on archaeology, archaeobotany, and zooarchaeology by Donna Ruhl, Irv Quitmyer, Melissa Ayvaz, Krista Church, Gypsy Price, Ryan Van Dyke, and Austin Bell. In the Authors and Storytellers tent, presentations were given by Ed Winn, Gene Toncray, Tom Joseph, Roothee Gabay, D.L. Havlin, Robin Brown, Holly Moulder, and John and Mary Lou Missal. In the Art and Technology area, there were demonstrations by Merald Clark and Cyndi Moncrief, Felix Macaguani Rodriguez, Dick Workman, John Beriault, Robin Brown, Janelle Lowry, and David Lainko. Elizabeth Neily, Marty Haythorn, and Linda Davis exhibited their art works, and John McKinney made palm-leaf baskets and hats.

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Donna Ruhl (top left) speaks about Florida's ancient canoes to an overflow crowd in the RRC classroom. (Photo by M. Nanney.)



Janelle Lowry (above) demonstrates the manufacture of stone tools. (Photo by M. Nanney.)



Florida Museum zooarchaeologist Irv Quitmyer (left) shows visitors what can be learned from the bones and shells found in archaeological sites. (Photo by M. Nanney.)

Author Tom Joseph (below) talks about his historical novel in the Authors and Storytellers tent. (Photo by M. Nanney.)



A visitor (top left) asks author Holly Moulder (right) to sign her book. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

Young artists (bottom left) work on drawings in the children's activity area, while sifting for artifacts is demonstrated (background). (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

(Photo above) Ranger Linda Patton (left) and volunteer Ann Wollschlager pose at the information table for the J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Reserve. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)

Denege Patterson (right) guides a tour of the Calusa Heritage Trail. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)



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Karen Walker, Margi Nanney, and Janelle Havlin served "Calusa Tastings"—samplings of Calusa cuisine, such as fish, clams, peppers, and papaya. Mel Meo, Fred Lodsins, and Phil Schultz offered fresh-cooked food that was much appreciated by all.

Guided tours were conducted by RRC docents Denege Patterson, Jim Cherfoli, and Mary Banks. There were information tables hosted by many local environmental and eco-tourism organizations, a historical exhibit on the Ruby Gill House and Pineland Post Office by Gladys Schneider and Pineland Postmaster Gina Poppell, an information table manned by Steve Tutko, special activities for children organized by Diane Maher, and a demonstration of how archaeologists sift for artifacts staffed by David and Pat Townsend. An overflow crowd of more than 60 heard featured speaker Donna Ruhl discuss Florida's ancient canoes. On March 1, with expert guidance from Robin Brown and John Beriault, we fired the pottery that had been made on Calusa Heritage Day. Special thanks to Michael Wyld, who organized this year's successful events. Michael was ably assisted by Mark Chargois, Linda Heffner, and Nick Paeno. The Anthropology Club from Florida Gulf Coast University helped immensely with a variety of tasks. If you were not able to join us for this year's activities, please plan to come to next year's Calusa Heritage Day. Watch for details on our web site, www.flmnh.ufl.edu/RRC.



Left to right: Archaeobotanist Donna Ruhl and research assistants Melissa Ayvaz, Krista Church, and Gypsy Price talk with visitors about current research and curation activities related to the Pineland site. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)



Visitors learn about Lee County's "Great Calusa Blueway," a marked canoe and kayak trail. The Calusa Heritage Trail is listed as a destination on the Blueway map.



Present-day Pineland postmaster Gina Poppell shows a display on the historic Ruby Gill House. Ruby Gill was Pineland's postmaster from 1925 to 1957. (Photo by M. Nanney.)

Florida Museum research assistant Austin Bell (right) explains how clam shells found in archaeological sites can provide information on past diet and climate. Also pictured is Florida Museum research assistant Ryan Van Dyke (center). (Photo by M. Nanney.)



Karen Walker offers visitors a sample of foods that were eaten by the Calusa Indians. (Photo by W. Marquardt.)



Artist-anthropologist Merald Clark explains his artwork and reconstructions of Calusa artifacts. (Photo by M. Nanney.)



John Beriault adds fuel to the fire that will harden the pottery. The vessels being fired were made by visitors and volunteers during Calusa Heritage Day the week before. (Photo by K. Walker.)



David Lainko demonstrates how to throw a hunting dart using the atlatl (throwing stick). (Photo by M. Nanney.)

New Postcards Available

In response to popular demand, we are offering a set of eleven 4"-x-6" postcards picturing the colorful art created by Merald

Clark that is on display on the Calusa Heritage Trail. These are high-quality, detailed, digitally printed cards in full color. A set of eleven cards is priced at only \$4.50 and can be bought at our Gift Shop at the Trail, or ordered using the form included with this newsletter.



Ethnobotany of the Calusa Heritage Trail

The Gumbo-limbo Tree

by Martha Loomis Kendall, Ph.D., Florida Master Gardener

Ethnobotany is the scientific study of the interaction between living people, plants, and culture, focusing on how plants are used, managed, and perceived. Components include food, medicine, shelter, fishing, hunting, textiles, clothing, religion, mythology, and magic. This and future articles will introduce you to the historical importance that the native Florida plants growing on the Pineland site held for past people. Plants create their own chemical components that can be nutritious, poisonous, hallucinogenic, or therapeutic, and humans have been accumulating knowledge of plants and their uses for thousands of years.

The gumbo-limbo (*Bursera simaruba*) is a large semi-tropical tree with coppery red, shaggy bark that peels off in paper-thin strips. In South Florida it has been called the "tourist tree" because, like the sunburned visitor, it has red, flaking "skin." On many Caribbean islands today, the bark is a common topical treatment for sunburn as well as skin sores, measles, insect bites, and rashes. A tincture of the bark also functions as an antidote for poisonwood rash, poison ivy, and mango dermatitis. A bark decoction is taken internally for urinary tract infections, colds, flu, sun stroke and fevers. The Calusa may have used the bark in a similar fashion.

Other parts of the tree have also been used. Escalante Fontaneda, who lived among the Calusa,



Visitors enjoy the interpretive sign next to a stand of gumbo limbo trees. Brown's Complex Mound 2 is to the right. (Photo by M. Nanney.)

may have meant the gumbo-limbo when he described "el palo para muchas cosas" (a wood for many things). He noted that the sap or resin was used as a medicine, to ward off evil spirits, to safe-guard canoes from wood-boring shipworms, and as glue. Small birds, attracted to the tree for its fruits, were described to have been captured by spreading the tree's sap on its branches. Small birds landing on the limbs would get stuck, enabling hunters to remove the birds for food or to be sold or bartered. There is also the possibility that gumbo-limbo was used for logs, posts,

and pilings in home building. The wood may have been carved into medicinal bowls or other items. It is the primary wood used in carousel horses today.

The Calusa mounds and surrounding areas are filled with this beautiful tree. When you take your next walk on the Calusa Heritage Trail, be sure to note these massive specimens. Although they only a few decades old, they are a wonderful reminder of the many possible ancient roles that the gumbo-limbo played in the lives of the Calusa and their ancestors.

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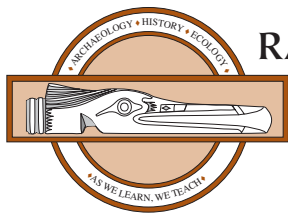
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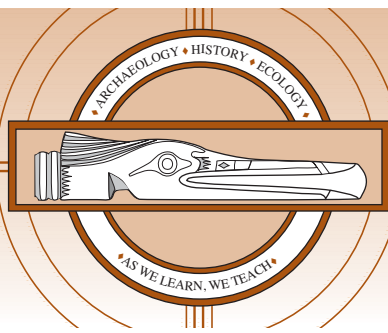
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Friends of the Randell Research Center

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Sincerely,

William H. Marquardt
Director
Randell Research Center

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by Charles Blanchard, illustrated by Merald Clark; hardcover \$19.95, softcover \$9.95

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Florida's First People

by Robin Brown, Pineapple Press, hardcover, \$29.95

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