

# ECO EVENTS



BROUGHT TO YOU BY TREE HILL NATURE CENTER

**September 8** – The Girls Gone Green and CW 17's *I Know Jax* are hosting an **extravaganza** at the Riverside Arts Market from 10 am to 4 pm. Join them at the Hilltop Stage for this day-long event featuring insightful presentations, cooking demos, kids' arts and crafts and great photo opportunities with the Girls Gone Green official mascots. Hear from experts on various topics including green living, health and nutrition, animal rescue opportunities, and conscience choices, all while having fun with kid-friendly presentations and interactions with the host from *I Know Jax* and Julie Watkins from Action News Jacksonville. For more about the Girls Gone Green, visit [www.thegirlsgonegreen.com](http://www.thegirlsgonegreen.com).

**September 10** – The Sierra Club Northeast Florida Group hosts a **Celebration of Estuaries** at its monthly meeting at Lakewood Presbyterian Church. A social time from 6:30 to 7 pm will be followed by a presentation about the importance of estuaries, specifically the challenges faced by the St. Johns River estuarine system, by Dr. Quinton White, executive director of the Marine Research Institute at Jacksonville University. The program is free. Light refreshments will be provided, but bring your own cup to reduce waste. Check out more of this active club's many activities at their Meetup page: [www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Northeast-Florida-Group](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Northeast-Florida-Group).

**September 15** – Join Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve as they partner with the Ocean Conservancy for **International Coastal Cleanup Day** from 8 to 11 am. Last year over half a million volunteers in 150 countries collected nine million pounds of garbage that would otherwise sicken, injure or kill marine life and pose a human health hazard. Volunteers can pick up supplies from the GTMNERR's Environmental Education Center, at 505 Guana River Road in Ponte Vedra Beach, or their Marineland office, at 9741 Ocean Shore Blvd. in Marineland. For more information, visit [www.gtmnerr.org](http://www.gtmnerr.org) or call 823-4500.

**September 15** – The Duval County Extension presents **Eating and Growing Seasonally**. Learn to grow cool-season vegetables and sample seasonal foods during the demonstration. A tour of the canning center will be offered at the end of the class. The \$10 workshop takes place from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm at the McDuff Avenue Extension office. Registration is required, so call Jeannie Crosby at 255-7450.

**September 15 & 29** – The Beaches Green Market kicks off the fall season with workshops for adults and children. The **Adult Gardening Workshops** will be from 2:30-3:30 pm in the garden at Jarboe Park. They cost \$15 per person, which includes all workshop supplies. This month's topics are "Soil" and "Troubleshooting the Florida Garden." The **Children's Garden Workshops** will be from 9-10 am, also in the garden. Children's Workshops are free and include a "What's Growing in the Garden?" tour, watering the garden, books and/or music, and a garden-themed activity, craft or food preparation. The children's themes for September are "Fall Garden Planting" and "Making Seed Balls." Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. For more information and the full workshop schedule, visit [www.beacheslocalfoodnetwork.org](http://www.beacheslocalfoodnetwork.org).

**September 20** – The Florida Native Plant Society, Ixia Chapter, meets at 6:30 pm at Regency Square Library. Naturalist Gail Farley, of Crooked River State Park in St. Mary's, Ga., will present "**Wildlife Food Habits and Favorite Native Woody Plants**." The meeting is free and open to the public. Visit [www.ixia.fnp chapters.org](http://www.ixia.fnp chapters.org) or call 655-2550 for additional information.

**September 20** – Join the U.S. Green Building Council, North Florida Chapter from 11:30 am to 1 pm at River City Brewing Company for their first **Master Speaker Luncheon** of the season. You'll hear about the Chapter's goals to achieve a sustainable community for all in North Florida and learn how you can get more involved. You'll also hear from Renee Finley, commissioner of public-private partnerships for the city of Jacksonville. The luncheon costs \$20 for chapter members, \$40 for nonmembers, and \$15 for students and emerging professionals. You must register by 10 am on September 18, so visit the Event Calendar at [www.usgbcnf.org](http://www.usgbcnf.org).

**September 21 & 22** – The Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve celebrates National Estuaries Day with a two-day **L.I.F.E. (Learning in Florida's Environment)** event. Learn about Florida's estuaries through hands-on activities, lectures and demonstrations. All events are free and open to the public! There will be visiting scientists, a documentary screening, the chance to travel through L.I.F.E. to learn about Florida's natural and cultural resources, musical performances and refreshments. For more information, call 823-4500 or visit [www.gtmnerr.org](http://www.gtmnerr.org) and click on the date in the events calendar.

**September 27** – Enjoy a night of music and comedy to benefit land conservation. The North Florida Land Trust hosts **On the Wild Side** at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall. Enjoy two great bands and the comedy of Gwen Templeton for just \$15 per person. Doors open at 7 pm; show starts at 8 pm. Order tickets by phone at 285-7020 or online at [www.northfloridalandtrust.givezooks.com/events/on-the-wild-side-an-evening-of-music-and-comedy](http://www.northfloridalandtrust.givezooks.com/events/on-the-wild-side-an-evening-of-music-and-comedy).

Please email listings for consideration to [anna@eujacksonville.com](mailto:anna@eujacksonville.com) by the 15th of each month.

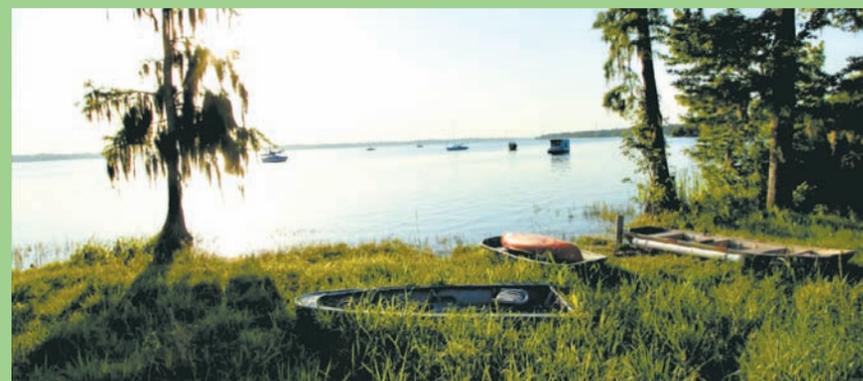


photo by roger linville

## ON THE RIVER

*State of the River Report Card: Are we improving?*

BY SHANNON BLANKINSHIP

In August, the St. Johns River report card was released by scientists from Jacksonville University and the University of North Florida. This year marks the fifth annual release of the report card, allowing for trends to begin to reveal themselves in the data. The report card measures water quality, fisheries, aquatic life and contaminants in the river. Here is how the river performed in 2012.

**Improving:** Florida has one of the largest populations of the American bald eagle in the Southeastern U.S. Delisted from the Endangered Species Act list in 2007, the bald eagle is thriving along the St. Johns. Look overhead next time you are on the water for the distinctive white-headed predator carrying fish from the river in its talons. The endangered wood stork, an indicator species for overall river health, has also increased in number.

**Worsening:** One of the biggest threats to the St. Johns has been the introduction of invasive aquatic species, most notably the tiger shrimp and lionfish. Over 64 invasive species have now been found in the river. Most invasive species are brought in at the Jacksonville port on foreign ships that release ballast water into the St. Johns. Invasive species compete with native species, take over habitat and have no natural predators. They thrive in new waters and can quickly change an entire ecosystem. Unfortunately, a decline has been documented at the same time in some of the native grass beds in the river that are so critical for habitat and fisheries.

**Stable:** Nutrient pollution and fisheries continue to remain only at stable levels. Nutrients enter the water from agricultural fertilizer, pet waste, industrial and utility discharges, failing septic tanks, and from the many overfertilized lawns throughout Florida. Nutrients cause algae to grow out of control, creating the summertime algal blooms that smell and can kill off fish and aquatic grasses. Lastly, fisheries populations are not improving, but remain stable. Each type of fish has its own story, but generally, without improvements across the board in river health, fisheries numbers are not going to improve on their own.

The greatest benefit of the report card is in being able to see trends over time. The data collected from scientists and experts about the health of the river is extremely valuable in prioritizing cleanup efforts. Help spread the word about the report. Learn about manatees, threats from increased salinity, plus much more at [www.sjrreport.com](http://www.sjrreport.com).

### SAVE THE FERRY A1A BIKE RIDE

September 9, 9 am-3 pm. Ride with us from Mellow Mushroom in Jax Beach to the St. Johns River Ferry and back. Cost is \$1 for the ferry ride. [www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/events/save-the-ferry-a1a-bike-ride](http://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/events/save-the-ferry-a1a-bike-ride)

### INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP

September 15, 9 am. Help keep our neighborhood streams clean on International Coastal Cleanup day. Many sites available. [www.coj.net/departments/environmental-and-compliance/clean-it-up,-green-it-up/2010-florida-coastal-cleanup.aspx](http://www.coj.net/departments/environmental-and-compliance/clean-it-up,-green-it-up/2010-florida-coastal-cleanup.aspx)

### ECO-HERITAGE BOAT CRUISE

October 11-14, 8 am. Join the St. Johns Riverkeeper and other river and history experts on a two-day boat cruise along the St. Johns from Palatka to Sanford (October 11-12) and back, Sanford to Palatka (October 13-14). Enjoy a relaxing vacation in your own backyard and learn about the history of the river at the same time. Reservations required: 256-7613, [www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/events/2-day-eco-heritage-boat-trips-1](http://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/events/2-day-eco-heritage-boat-trips-1)