

Myakka Wild and Scenic River Program 2013 Annual Report



A. Myakka Wild and Scenic River Program Updates

1. The Park Service proposal to transfer Myakka River Permitting to the FDEP Regulatory Office in Ft. Myers remains under consideration. FDEP Managers from the Florida Park Service and the South District (Regulation/ERP) met in August to discuss the possible steps to complete the process.

B. Permitting Program

1. A permit (MRP031213) was issued on March 14th 2013 for the replacement of an existing exempted dock structure at the Englewood Youth Foundation, Inc. property.
2. A permit (MRP060713) was issued August 9th 2013 to the Florida Department of Transportation for a project to add scour countermeasures to the pilings associated with the bridge over the Myakka at U.S.41. This project has not begun (as of January 14th 2014).
3. A permit (MRP090413) was issued September 23, 2013 to Harbor Cove Resident Owned Community, Inc. to remove and replace a single pier directly across from 780 Imperial Drive. This project has not begun (as of January 14th 2014).
4. An exemption letter was given to Sarasota County on November 18th 2013 for a deck removal and replacement associated with cottage number three at Snook Haven. The deck plans do not extend over the river only to the top of bank thus qualifying for an exemption. This project has not begun (as of January 14th 2014).
5. Discussion and meetings with Sarasota County Parks staff have taken place involving the future development and potential recreation activities at Senator Bob Johnson's Landing near U.S. 41. No formal plans or applications have been submitted to the Florida Park Service.

C. Incidents

1. On August 29th, an FWC officer forwarded a State Watch Office Situation Report (ID # 2013-5861) where a citizen had stated that a potential "Petroleum Release" had occurred on the Myakka River near U.S. 41. After speaking with the citizen it was determined that the actual site was not on the Myakka but a construction site on Myakkahatchee Creek. A site visit with FWC, North Port engineers, and contractors took place and it was determined that there were no releases of petroleum from the site.
2. Starting sometime in August, the sandbar across from the Venetian Overlook Platform became a daytime party spot. Small and medium size shrubs and trees were removed from a large area to make space for boats and people. A large grill was installed and trash repeatedly left in the area. FWC law enforcement (LE) and Sarasota County were notified.

FWC LE and Sarasota County staff assisted on a river work day (12-20-13) to remove the trash and the grill from this site.



3. As in 2012, there have been multiple reports of illegal fires and camping right off the river on an old oxbow on the Carlton Reserve and sites just upstream. Cabbage palms, small to medium oaks trees and numerous branches have been chain sawed from trees for fire wood. During the peak at least three sites were being regularly used on the weekends. The incident reports and campsite locations were forwarded to FWC LE Officers. On December 4th, a volunteer assisted with the removal of grills, chairs, and other trash.



On Dec 20th 2013 a FWC LE investigations officer visited these sites and plans were made to try to increase patrol especially on land and at river access points.

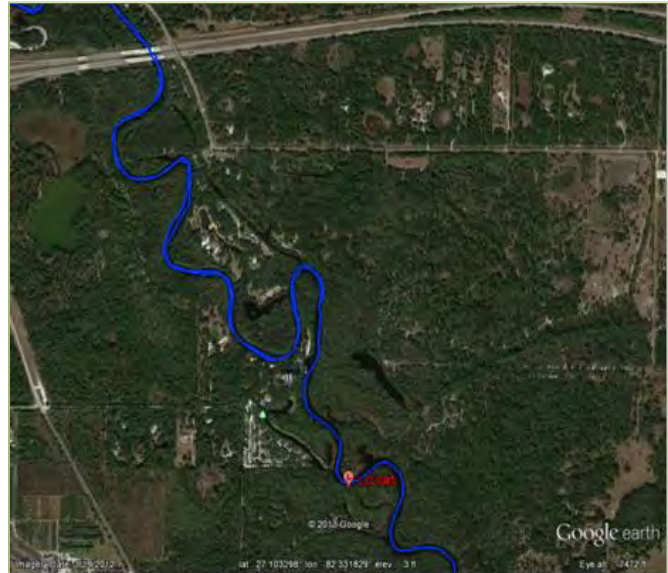
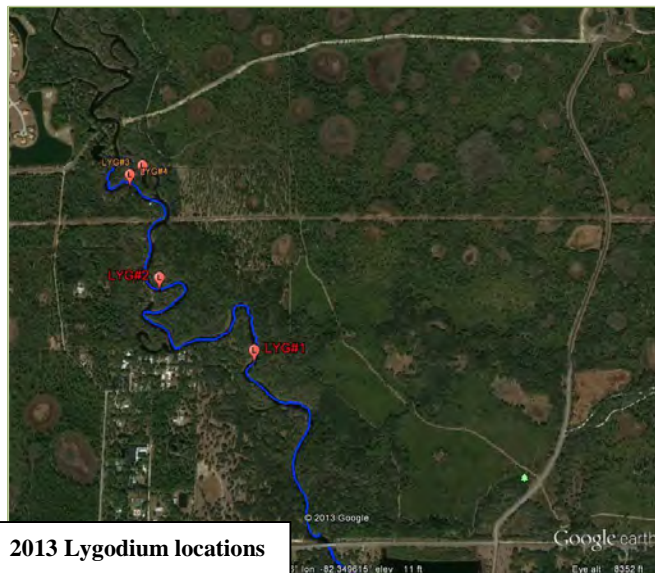
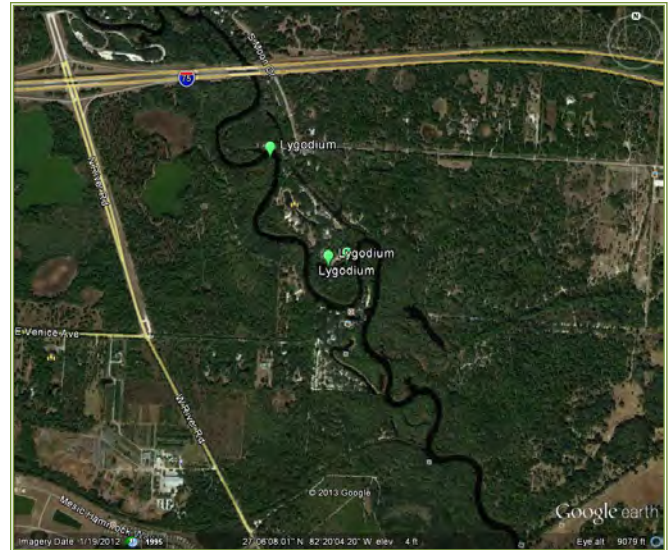
4. There were several reports of illegal activities at the Border Road Launch, a Sarasota County Park site with access to the Myakka River. This included erection of hunting stands and a feeder according to Park Manager. In late December a mature cabbage palm on the short trail to the launch was cut by hatchet at waist level possibly to make illegal jon boat launches from the site. During the same time period County signs in the area were shot up. The shots targeted posted signs like the one stating “no motorized vessels”.
5. On December 11th a single poached approximately three foot alligator with the tail removed was found just south of Border Road.

D. Nuisance and Exotic Plants and Animals

1. Invasive Island apple snail (IAS) (*Pomacea maculata*) egg casings began showing up on Upper Myakka Lake in September 2011. MRSP volunteers in the spring through the early summer locate and remove their egg casings. In August 2013 one egg mass from the IAS was observed south of S.R. 72 Bridge (which appears to be the first report in this section. In September another 8 IAS casings were found in the same area. Data on locations of casings and removal is being recorded and sent to the Myakka River State Park (MRSP) Biologist.



2. Continued efforts are being made to monitor all Old World climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*) and prevent the spread of this species and other invasive plants on the Wild and Scenic River. This fall sites were re-examined for regrowth in prior treated areas (see maps labeled 2012 & 2013). Many sites are in need of additional work. This will remain a problematic management issue due to the ability of lygodium to reproduce rapidly via spore and the complications related to access and permission with private land owners along the river.



E. Wildlife Monitoring

1. River Inspection data from 1990 through 2013 has been entered into the Myakka Wild and Scenic River Wildlife Database. Discussion is underway to make this data available on the Water Atlas website with financial support from the CHNEP. Continued coordination efforts are being made to submit data to FNAI and for inclusion into the Element Occurrence Database.
2. Throughout the year, several interesting wildlife sightings were observed during regular monthly inspections. These sightings include:
 - January – 4 Northern Pintail were seen near Deep Hole. American White Pelicans were seen on Lower Lake. These pelicans were also seen on the lake in February,

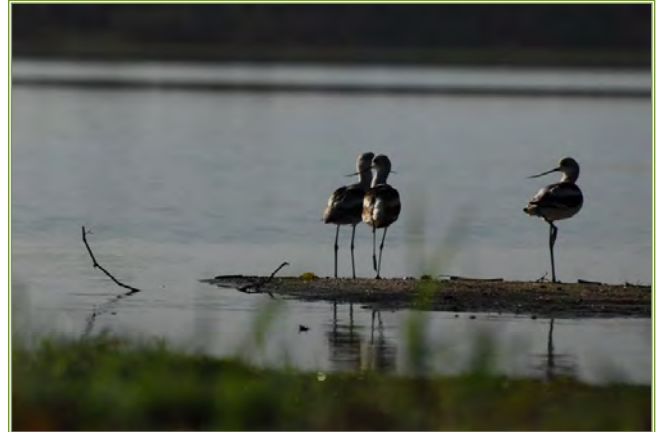
March, April, and December. 100 Lesser Scaup were seen near the Charlotte County line.

- February -12 Northern Shoveler were seen near Deep Hole. A coyote was seen just south of Deep Hole.
- March – 70 Blue-winged Teal were seen in Lower Lake and south of Deep Hole. A Short-tailed Hawk was seen north of Lower Lake. 2 Swallow-tailed Kites were seen south of Snook Haven. 69 Great Egrets and 157 Wood Stork were observed at the Rookery. 5 bottlenosed dolphins were seen feeding near the Charlotte County Boundary.
- April – 17 Barn Swallows were seen near the S.R. 72 Bridge. 76 Great Egret, 4 Great Blue Heron, 6 Anhinga, and 150 Wood Stork were observed at the Rookery. West Indian manatees were seen near the Charlotte County line.
- May – 23 Peninsular Cooter were observed from Downs’ Dam to Snook Haven. 72 Great Egrets, 2 Great Blue Herons, 61 Anhinga, and 138 Wood Stork were observed at the Rookery. A cownose ray and a bottlenose dolphin were spotted near the Rookery.
- June – 32 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were observed around Lower Lake. A fish kill containing hundreds of hogchokers (*Trinectes maculatus*) and many Tilapia were observed from the Lower Lake south.
- July – 78 Great Egrets were observed at the Rookery. Recently processed field necropsy of a manatee was found just north of Ramblers Rest (ID # MSW13323). The Marine Mammal Pathobiology Laboratory (MMPL) determined death was caused from injuries related to a boat strike.
- August – A Semipalmated Sandpiper was observed south of Snook Haven. 76 Great Egrets were observed at the Rookery. Chicks were present.
- September – 13 tarpon were observed south of S.R. 72. 120 Great Egrets were observed at the Rookery.
- October – 66 White Ibis, 38 Great Blue Herons, 47 Great Egrets, 68 Snowy Egrets, and 39 Green Herons, 40 Tricolored Herons, and 36 Black-crowned Night Herons were observed from the pavilion to Border Road.
- November – 308 alligators were sighted with 108 alligators at Deep Hole. Wading birds and shore birds were numerous especially in marshes along the entry to the Lower Lake to the area just south of Deep Hole. They included; 66 Roseate Spoonbill, 12 Black-necked Stilt, an Avocet, 112 Least Sandpipers, and 120 Dowitchers.



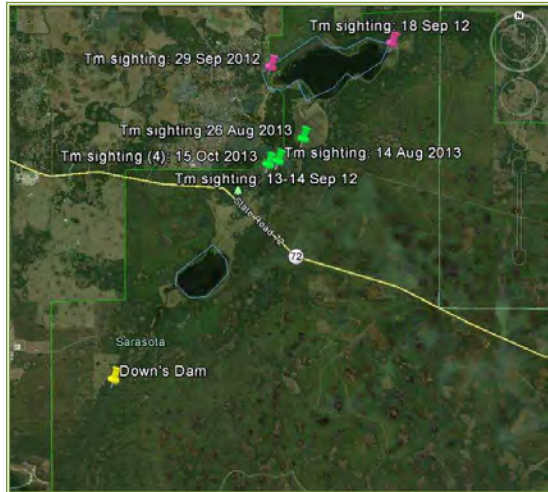
An attempt was made to record a baseline number and condition of Giant Airplants, *Tillandsia utriculata*, which could be visually surveyed within 25 feet of each side of the river. 186 were observed from S.R. 72 to Border Road.

- December – 277 alligators were sighted with 82 alligators at Deep Hole. Wading birds and shore birds were numerous especially in marshes along the entry to the Lower Lake to the area just south of Deep Hole. They included; 42 Roseate Spoonbill, 115 Blue-wing Teal, 14 Black-necked Stilt and 14 Avocet, and 224 Dowitchers.

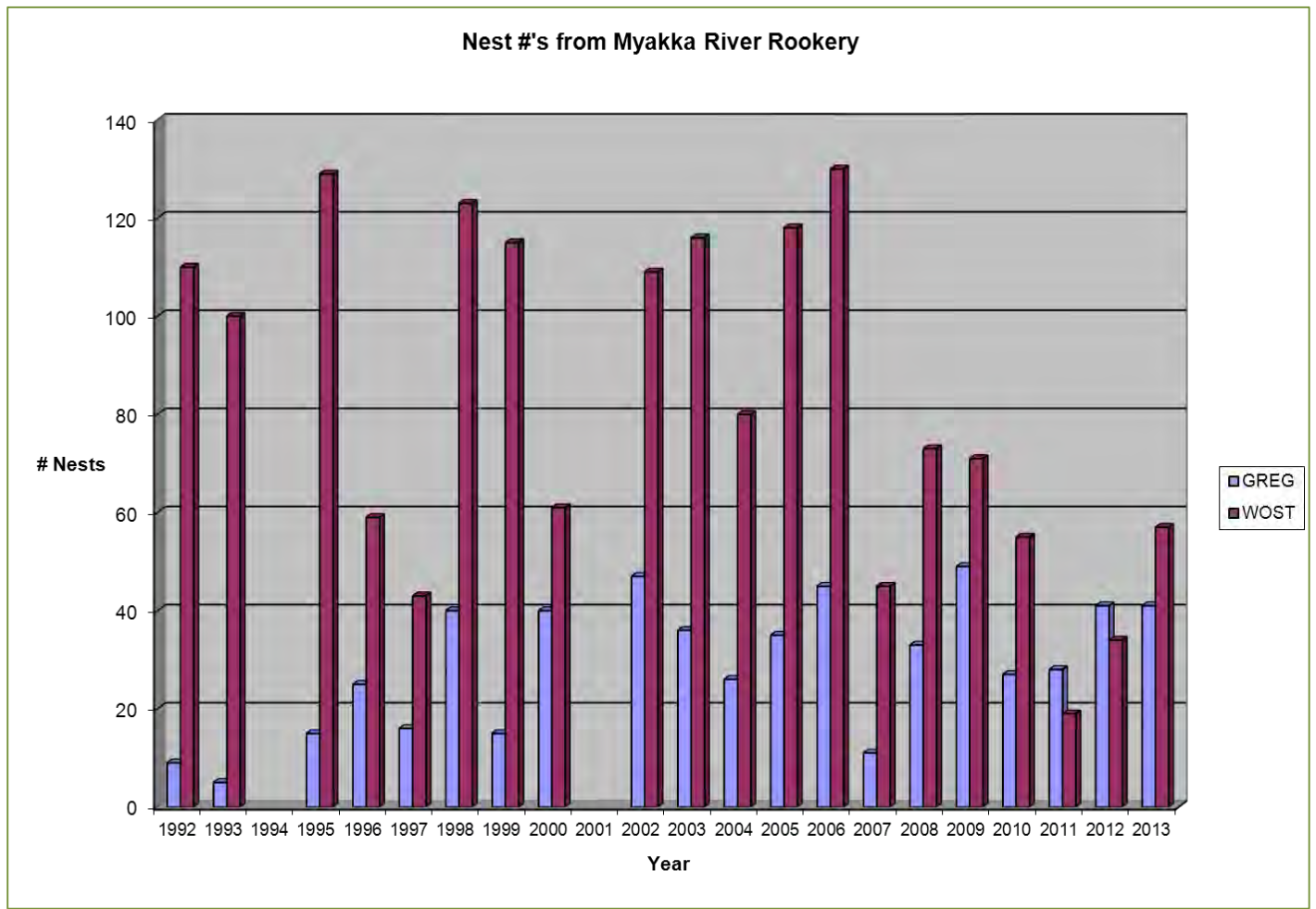


3. Manatee use of the upper river to Upper Lake. See below FWC MMPL map were pink pins indicated 2012 sightings and green pins are 2013.

In 2013 park patrons and staff observed two manatees with some frequency with first confirmed sighting 8/14/2013. Addition confirmed sightings included a manatee and calf around October 10th in the river right off Fisherman's Loop. October 15th, about 5 minutes above the park drive bridge, where a mother and calf were observed. A later report claimed to have seen three manatees at the park bridge on 18th of October.



4. Wood Stork nesting remains low this year at the Rookery, south of U.S. 41. A graph depicting the number of nests by year for Great Egrets and Wood Storks, the 2 species that nest most frequently at the Rookery, can be found below.



¹Bird names follow The Sibley Guide to Birds (New York, 10/2000) for consistency.