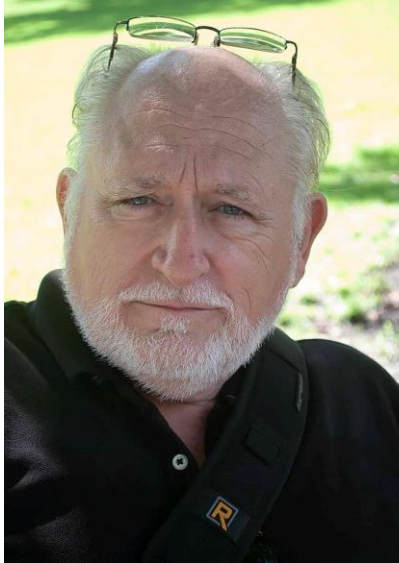


The Head Spring

Friends of Blue Spring State Park Newsletter

April 2023

Meet a CSO member - Richard Hatton



In this issue we introduce you to Richard Hatton. Rich developed an appreciation for the outdoors while growing up among the corn and soybeans fields of Illinois. After graduating high school Uncle Sam came knocking at his door, and rather than waiting for fate to determine his future, Richard joined the Army. Basic training seemed like a big Boy Scout camp (he was an Eagle Scout) with a lot of yelling. While training to be a military lineman, Richard learned the basics of mountain climbing. His first overseas duty station was Vietnam, where he had many different jobs, including climbing telephone poles, installing electric lighting, and delivering communications equipment to Fire Support Bases. After his promotion to Sergeant, he was assigned to a communications bunker located on a ridge line west of Da Nang City.

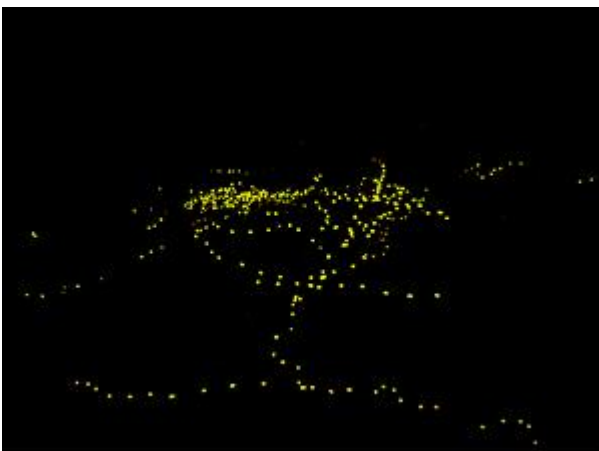
After his tour of duty, Richard took a job as a photographer, where he became an expert at getting people to smile even when they didn't really want to. When problems came up on the job, it was Richard who was sent in; he "could jump into a mess and come out smelling like a rose."

In 1992 Richard went back to school and studied photography, saying "after doing it for so many years I might as well get a piece of paper saying I can do it." His work has been in two museum shows, and one print is part of the permanent collection of the Southeast Museum of Photography. You may have seen his photos in the cabins here at Blue Spring State Park!

Lights at Night - Firefly Event

By Rich Hatton

The fireflies were out in force this year, as were our 3805 visitors. There were a lot of repeat visitors from previous years as well as those who had never been to the event or the park before. Adults and children alike were in awe of the sheer numbers of fireflies blinking yellow and darting here and there. Visitors were saying things such as "It was beautiful and majestic", "Great event well worth it" or "This brings back great childhood memories for me." This was our best firefly season to date, and with that much firefly activity this year, it is a good bet that next year will be even better.



Fireflies at Blue Spring ©2023 Missy Gibbs

This year, Surf's Up Shaved Ice joined us at the event, and many visitors, volunteers, and staff cooled down with the many flavors available. Shortly after, Surf's Up also joined us as a corporate sponsor and we may see him again at the park for future events! An exciting new item for sale were the glow-in-the-dark firefly-manatee T-shirts. The shirts were so popular that we ran out just before the end of the event! Next year we will be sure to order more. There were several other t-shirt designs available along with stickers, key chains, jewelry, and glow sticks.



Firefly t-shirts and Surf's Up Shaved Ice ©Friends of Blue Spring State Park

We also organized a special “Night of Lights” event to recognize our corporate sponsors and invited members and the general public to mingle at the park at the beginning of the firefly season with table displays, appetizers, and drinks provided by Guest Services and Riverwalk Pizzeria and Brew Pub.

Have you got your Brick today?
There's still time to put your [order](#) in.



Upcoming Event: Blue Spring JayWalk:
Wed, April 26th, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Contact [Connor Wagner](#)

Manatee Season Wrap-Up

By Cora Berchem

It was a fairly mild winter at Blue Spring and it almost looked like manatee season was over in the middle of February after a record of 12 manatees were released at the park in a single day on February 13th. It stayed very warm for a few weeks allowing the manatees to go out and forage before we got another small cold front in mid-March that brought over 100 manatees back to Blue Spring. Save the Manatee Club adoptees Lily, Howie, Doc, Paddy Doyle, Philip, Gator, Aqua with her calf and Annie returned to Blue Spring. The season officially ended on March 24th and now the manatees are dispersing to their summer habitats in the St. Johns River and its tributaries, lakes, estuaries and coastal areas.



Manatee adoptee Lily at Blue Spring in mid-March. Photo © Save the Manatee Club.

We had some exciting news when manatee “Annie” gave birth to a little calf in the late afternoon of Friday, March 17th. Annie is a [Save the Manatee Club adoptee](#) and real success story. Rescued as a little orphaned calf in 2005, Annie was rehabilitated and then released at Blue Spring in 2008. This is her sixth calf!

You can check out a [video](#) that researchers from Save the Manatee Club were able to obtain during their morning research a few days after the little calf was born. Annie and the new baby were also seen on the [webcams](#)! Calves usually stay with their mother for one to two years before being weaned during which time they nurse, learn how to find fresh water and warm water sites and learn how to navigate the waterways. It is important to always give them space when encountering them in the wild and watch from a distance. A calf that is separated from mom cannot survive on its own. Therefore, if you encounter Annie and her newborn (or any manatees) while swimming, diving, or paddling, please do not approach them, pet them, or try to interact with them in any way, but look at them in their natural habitat from a distance.



Manatee adoptee Annie and her newborn calf in mid-March. Photo © Save the Manatee Club.

The newly released manatees also seem to be adapting well to their life in the wild. On March 20th, park staff along with Save the Manatee Club, FWC, SeaWorld, Volusia County and the Clearwater Marine Aquarium Research Institute rescued a skinny and lethargic subadult manatee in the spring run. The manatee was taken to SeaWorld for rehabilitation.





On March 20th, a team of Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP) members rescued a skinny manatee at Blue Spring. Photos © Save the Manatee Club.

This wraps up the manatee news for this winter season. You may see the occasional manatee come into the spring run during the summer months!

WEDNESDAY NIGHT BINGO!

Every Wednesday night at 6:30 p.m., the Friends lead Bingo at Blue Spring Pizzeria and Brewery in Orange City. We can always use some help! (click [here](#) to sign up)



Critter Corner - Common Snakes of Blue Spring State Park

By Missy Gibbs

The most commonly seen snakes near the spring run and boardwalk are probably the Black Racer and the Banded Water Snake. I have seen both of them many times. The other species are not uncommon in the park, but usually are not in the same areas that you are. Most snakes that you will find in the park are harmless, but if you see a snake, don't pick it up or poke it; just enjoy its slithery beauty!



Black Racer – *Coluber constrictor* ©Bester Photo
HARMLESS (I love how they “sit up” to look around, don't you?)



Yellow Rat Snake – *Elaphe obsoleta* ©Noah Mueller
HARMLESS (despite the names, the Black Racer is NOT a constrictor, and the rat snake is)



Ringneck Snake – *Diadophis punctatus* ©Luke Smith
HARMLESS and tiny (they flip over and expose their reddish-orange belly when threatened...not too scary, but they think it is!)



Southeastern Crowned Snake – *Tantilla coronata*
©Todd Pierson HARMLESS and tiny (they eat insects, and in turn are eaten by king snakes & coral snakes)



Ribbon Snake – *Thamnophis sauritus sackeni*
©Luke Smith HARMLESS (a very slender snake that swims and climbs)



Eastern Garter Snake *Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis* ©Todd Pierson
HARMLESS (the most common and abundant snake in North America!)



Cottonmouth– *Agkistrodon piscivorus* and Banded Water Snake – *Nerodia fasciata* ©ReptileHow.com

VENOMOUS

HARMLESS

(Cottonmouths (a.k.a. water moccasins) have a stocky body, whereas water snakes are slender. Cottonmouths also have a prominent eye “brow” ridge and a spade-shaped head. Both of these snakes will forage in the water.)



Scarlet Kingsnake – *Cemophora coccinea* ©Luke Smith
HARMLESS (coral snake mimic, red bands bordered with black)



Coral Snake – *Micrurus fulvius* ©Todd Pierson
VENOMOUS (black nose, broad yellow band behind head, black and red bands separated by yellow rings)



Rough Green Snake – *Opheodrys aestivus* ©Noah Mueller **HARMLESS** (specialist predator on spiders and caterpillars)



Diamondback Rattlesnake – *Crotalus adamanteus* ©Luke Smith **VENOMOUS** (biggest venomous snake in North America!)

Learn more about Florida snakes at the University of Florida’s Museum of Natural History web page