



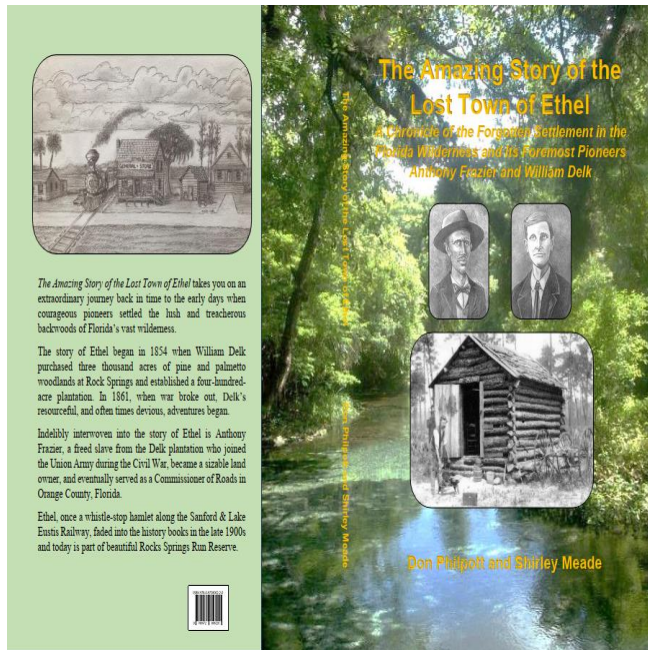
Wekiva Wilderness Trust Newsletter

September, 2023

News

Ethel

The second edition of *The Amazing Story of the Lost Town of Ethel* was published in mid-August and copies are being distributed free to all schools and libraries in Seminole, Orange and Lake Counties that request them. The updated and much expanded manuscript has also been uploaded to the WWT website and is available as a free, downloadable e-book. As more information comes in about Ethel, we will add it to the e-book until such time as a third edition hard copy is needed. Let Don Philpott at info@wwt-cso.com know if you would like a copy.



Meanwhile the Ethel Project continues to move forward. Early in September a 20' x 236' pavilion is being delivered and will be constructed near the restrooms at Rock Springs Run State Reserve. We are going to hire a construction company to do this.

The pavilion, which will also be the start of the Historic Ethel Trail, will be available for school groups from our tri-county area, visiting on field trips to learn more about Rock Springs and its history. A series of 14 interpretive panels is in the final design stage. These will be installed along the 1.5-mile, wheelchair accessible loop trail which will take visitors through what used to be the heart of Ethel. The trail takes in sites of special interest such as the cemetery and where the school, store, and station used to be.

On September 9 we are conducting an informal Ethel Walk-Through. There is a large area of woodland in what used to be the heart of the township. Most of the trees are post-Ethel but there are obvious clearings, and these were likely the site of homestead cabins especially where there are old oaks and cedars nearby which were left standing to provide shade for the cabins. This central area has been divided into three zones and groups will walk, shoulder to shoulder, through these zones to see what they can find. We will be looking for remnants of sand bricks which were used as foundations to keep the cabin logs off the ground, so they did not rot. There might be old gateposts, discarded items, signs of old garbage dumps and so on. Anything we find will be photographed and the spot marked so that a more detailed examination can be conducted later by experts. Come and join us.

Word of Ethel is certainly getting around. We have been invited to present a paper on the Ethel Project at the International Conference of Ecotourism Activities and Cultural Heritage in London, United Kingdom, on September 23-24.

Open House

On Friday, Saturday 29, we are hosting an after-hours Open House at the Nature Center. We are hoping to attract new volunteers and WWT members. There will be refreshments and, for those attending, a chance to interact with our critters and learn more about the park, the WWT and volunteer opportunities. Please help spread the word and support us on the day.

WWT Board Meetings

Attendance at our monthly WWT board meetings held by Zoom on the second Tuesday of every month has been falling and for the last two meetings we have not had a quorum. Is it time to go back to face-to-face meetings in the park or at an outside venue? Is there a better date that would attract greater participation. Please let Don Philpott know your thoughts at info@wwt-cso.com.

Nature News

Red-headed Woodpecker

Melanerpes erythrocephalus

Other woodpeckers, such as the red-bellied and the pileated, have red on their heads, but this is the true Red-headed Woodpecker. Both sexes have the same beautiful totally red head.

Although their numbers have continued to decline, due to loss of habitat, throughout their range of the eastern United States, the Red-headed woodpecker can often be seen in the upland areas of Wekiwa Springs State Park. The hiking trail that crosses the road to the main campground, going through pine, wiregrass, and scrub oak habitat is a good place to spot them; for folks who don't hike, simply driving

slowly on the main road through the park often yields a sighting. They nest here, and are year-round residents.

Here's some fun facts about the Red-heads:

They eat fruit, seeds, and nuts, as well as insects that are often caught in the air; and they will store their food under bark and in fenceposts. They will cram live grasshoppers into crevices. They're the most omnivorous of the woodpeckers.

They need dead trees or limbs to nest in. The male selects the nest site and does most of the excavation, which can take a couple of weeks. The hole can be 3 to 6 inches wide, and more than 12 inches deep. The female lays anywhere from 3 to 10 white eggs. The pair may stay together for several years, and they sometimes use the same nest site again.



Bigger than a robin, smaller than a crow, they will pick fights with other birds, even larger ones, that invade their territory.

They have zygodactyl feet, which means that two toes point forward, and two toes point back. (Parrots also have this arrangement.) This, along with their strong tails that they rest on, enables them to easily perch on vertical trees.

The Audubon Society predicts that loss of range due to warming temperatures will soon affect this bird. For more information: <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/red-headed-woodpecker>

Fall Parade of Sandhill Wildflowers

Late summer into fall is a high season for Florida wildflower lovers. This is the time when the sandhill wildflowers bloom in abundance with many species growing in large tracts. Yellow, purple, and white are the dominant colors. Partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*) starts the show in September with bright yellow, red-throated flowers blooming in profusion. As partridge pea declines, Florida paintbrush (*Carphephorus corymbosus*), along with several species of goldenrod (*Solidago spp*) and blazing star (*Liatris spp*), coastalplain honeycombhead (*Balduina angustifolia*) and summer farewell (*Dalea pinnata*) take over in October. Late October to November, garberia (*Garberia heterophylla*) completes the parade of meadows decked in wildflowers.



Partridge Pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*)



**Mixed Meadow of
Florida Paintbrush (*Carphephorus corymbosus*),
Coastalplain Honeycombhead (*Balduina
angustifolia*), and
Blazing Star (*Liatris chapmanii*)**



Summer Farewell (*Dalea pinnata*)



Garberia (*Garberia heterophylla*)

There are many more sandhill wildflowers blooming at this time. Although they do not cover large areas, they are still easy to find within the larger bouquet. You need not go far to enjoy the splendor. A hike from mile marker #3, near the main campground to, #6, where the trail crosses the youth camp road, is the best and easiest place for viewing of these fall wildflowers. For non-hikers, a slow drive along the main park road is just about as spectacular.

Following are only few more species you will see in the sandhill habitats. See how many you can find of these and other wildflowers not listed here. Be sure to bring your camera for you will want a memory keeper of the experience. And while you are there, enjoy the numerous butterflies, bees, wasps and other pollinators feasting on the nectar.



Dogtongue Wild Buckwheat
(*Eriogonum tomentosum*)



Hammock Snakeroot (*Ageratina jecunda*)



Lopsided Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum secundum*)



Hairy Lespedeza (*Lespedeza hirta*)



Coastalplain Palafox (*Palafoxia integrefolia*)



Dixie Aster (*Sericocarpus tortifolius*)