



Wekiva Wilderness Trust Newsletter

October, 2023

News

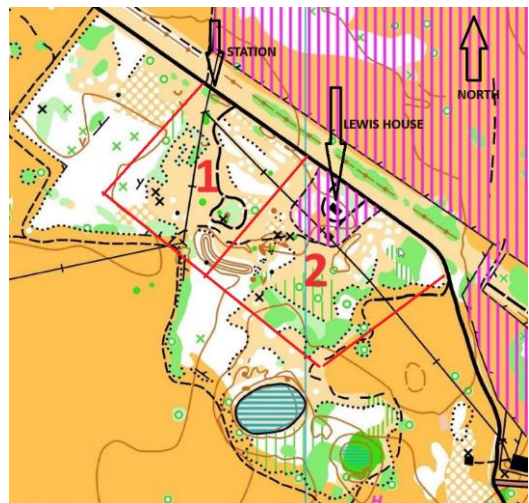
Ethel

On Saturday, September 9, members of Meet Up Wekiva (which now has 1,834 members), and park volunteers met at Rock Springs Run State Reserve for the informal Ethel walkthrough. It was more than successful.



We met at the Lewis House and split into two groups to explore two areas which would have been the center of the township back then, taking in the station, school, and store. The first group covered the wooded area south and west of the Lewis House (search area 2 on the map below) and the second group covered the area south and east of the Lewis House (search area 1).

Although the area is now wooded, most of the trees are post-Ethel and there are many clearings which we believe were the sites of old cabins. Park manager Robert Brooks, who is a certified cultural resources investigator, was in charge. People were told not to touch anything we found, but to photograph it and mark it with a flag. We also used our smart phone cameras to get exact GPS coordinates. We spent about two and a half hours combing through the woods. We were looking for any signs of old Ethel but especially sand bricks which were used as foundations for





Sandstone Foundation Bricks

So, it was very successful although there must still be a lot to be found and other areas to be explored. A detailed report of our findings was then sent to Tallahassee with a request for permission for a much larger exercise under the supervision of a qualified archaeologist to further explore what we have discovered and to keep on investigating. Within two days, we received a report from District giving us the go-ahead to get professional assistance so that we can explore further. We are now looking for a professional cultural resources management company to work with us. We will keep you posted.

cabin logs to keep them off the ground. We found lots of sand bricks many of which had been moved, but two areas were located where the sand bricks clearly were in their original positions, so we know where at least two cabins were located and how big they were.

We also found an old Ethel garbage dump about three feet high and now covered by vegetation which will have to be explored. We found the location of hand dug wells, very old bottles and old auto parts, old fence and gate posts, and lots of very large sand stones in the area where we think the store might have been. We also discovered an area littered with minie balls (see below) and lead shot. We have no idea why this Civil War ammunition should be here.



**Minie Ball
Civil War Ammunition**

Panther film premiere at Wekiwa Springs State Park

The Florida State Parks Foundation and Live Wildly are offering a public screening of the National Geographic film “Path of the Panther,” a film directed by Eric Bendick of Grizzly Creek Films and Wildpath, and featuring Carlton Ward Jr., at Wekiwa Springs State Park on Thursday, October 5 at 6:30 PM.

The feature-length documentary will be followed by a discussion panel featuring Carlton Ward Jr. and other environmental experts.

[Reservations for the Wekiwa Springs State Park screening are available now.](#) Space is limited and is expected to fill quickly, so it is recommended to reserve seats today.

The film details efforts to preserve habitat for the endangered Florida panther and is the result of years of research, thousands of images and hundreds of hours of camera footage.

The film tells a story that resonates with all Floridians and watching it in a majestic wild setting like Wekiwa Springs State Park – one of 75 state parks within the Florida Wildlife Corridor – will make for a memorable evening, said Chuck Hatcher, director of Florida State Parks.

Nature News

Green Lynx Spider

Fast and graceful as a cat, but easily overlooked due to its colorful camouflage, the Green Lynx Spider is abundant in late summer. Look for them on top of flowers and other vegetation.

Some facts about the Green Lynx:

1. **Silk.** The Green Lynx is an ambush hunter, it does not build webs to catch prey. It uses its strong silk to make large egg cases for its one or two clutches of around 200 eggs. The female guards the eggs from predators, and when the tiny spiderlings emerge, she creates a nursery habitat by shooting lines of silk to nearby twigs and branches.



2. Eggs hatch inside the egg case after a couple of weeks, but they stay inside for another 10-16 days while they grow. When they are ready, they make their way out of the egg sac. The mother spider sometimes helps them by ripping the egg sac open. It takes the tiny spiderlings about 9 months to reach maturity. The green lynx spider typically lives just one year. For most of that year they are tiny and very difficult to see.



3. It uses its jumping ability to accurately pounce on prey.

4. Colors can change to match different backgrounds, but it takes them a number of days to do this. One could assume that the lynx with the pink femurs may have recently been on a red or pink flower.

5. When they feel threatened, they spit, with a range of about 8 inches. This is defensive, and not harmful to humans except it can cause eye irritation. Better to use close-focus binoculars than to get within 8 inches of the lynx.

6. The Green Lynx will rarely bite, and their venom is not medically significant to humans, although it can cause localized symptoms of itching, redness, etc.

7. They eat insects, including agricultural pests. Backyard gardeners can consider them as pest control, although the occasional bee might fall prey as well.

Flower of the Month

Nodding Nixie (*Apteria aphylla*)

Apteria is a genus of flowering plants in the Burmanniaceae family. This genus contains only one known species, the Nodding Nixie. Nodding Nixie (*Apteria aphylla*) is an herbaceous, perennial flower of the tropics and subtropics. It generally blooms from September to November. (Nodding Nixie has been observed blooming from late August to early January in Wekiwa Springs State Park.) It grows in deep, moist decomposing hardwood leaf litter in seeps, bogs, and along small streams. This flower is relatively rare and endangered globally; however, there are several colonies to be found in Wekiwa Springs State Park.

Nodding Nixie lacks chlorophyll and obtains nutrients through a symbiotic association with fungi. Plants are visible only when in bloom and even then, are hard to spot because of being camouflaged against the leaf litter in which they grow. The flowering stems are thread-like, up to 10 inches tall, erect and usually unbranched, often contorted, brownish purple or lavender to white in color, and leafless. Flowers are terminal and solitary or in clusters of 2-6 flowers, erect or nodding, small ($\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ in long) purple to nearly white with purplish longitudinal stripes inside the throat of the flower. Flower lobes are erect, incurved and converging but not fused.

Look for Nodding Nixie growing in moist decaying leaf litter on the verge of the white blazed trail from Sand Lake to Big Buck Camp, especially from trail marker #34 to the junction with the blue blazed east-west connector trail. The plants are typically found in small colonies, although sometimes singly.



Nodding Nixie (*Apteris aphylla*)

Compare the size of the flower to the mosquito hanging on its lip.