

# SPRINGBOARD

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## Ready...Set...Go! - Amy Conyers



Before and After - Photos taken by Amy Conyers

The long-awaited moment is nearly here! We are so close to moving into our new Ranger Station, that we may already be there when you read this. We have had our Substantial Completion Meeting and the final punch list has been prepared. Once the finishing touches are done and we have the final sign off from the building officials, we'll have the keys in hand and will start making it our own. We are so excited to have a fresh new look to welcome our visitors into the park. The new building is sturdy, matches the original style, and has modern functionality that will keep our staff and visitors happy, safe, and comfortable.

The old building was built in the late 1980's, as the property was transitioning from the privately owned attraction into a State Park. It had began showing signs of its age long ago. The Ranger Station was identified for replacement prior to my arrival. Hurricanes had redirected funding at least once and these types of projects take time anyway. It was falling apart and turning green as it wasn't safe to pressure wash it anymore. The fascia was failing, the spiderwebs might have been holding it together! We were ready when the excavator came, crumbled the building with ease, and added it bit by bit to a dumpster.

The reconstruction began so quickly, it may have made us overly optimistic to see the project completed. The outer structure was assembled in just days. The floor, walls, and roof were all pre-cast concrete panels. They arrived on several flatbed trucks and were fit together like Lego, with sturdy welds between panels. This building is sure to last longer than the last one.

With the windows in place, the new Ranger Station was beginning to look just like the old one...but so much better! Progress slowed down after that. It's the nature of construction. The small details take the longest. The changes were not as obvious to us while contractors framed, added sheetrock, installed plumbing and electric, created a restroom, added flooring and cabinetry, painted, and refinished the tower.

## Ready...Set...Go! - (Continued...) Amy Conyers

The folks staffing the Ranger Station this summer will be so comfortable. They will have plenty of room to work, a strong air conditioner, a smaller opening to work through so the cool air doesn't escape and the insects don't let themselves in. We'll also have a place to welcome visitors into the building. A small counter in the entryway will allow visitors to come in and chat while they purchase an annual state park pass.

We've been inspired by the new building and John is working on a plan to rework the plantings around the Ranger Station and parking area. The area will look much more inviting and offer a picnic table for staff breaks away from the ringing phone.

We will certainly have our best foot forward when we're welcoming our guests this summer!



## Chainsaw Training - Kat Wilson

With each fall season comes winds and rain. This often precedes a day or more of checking roads and trails and clearing trees. When the season comes around, it's also a great time to improve our chainsaw skills and introduce those new to chainsaws to the practice. We set up a Chainsaw and Tractor Training Day in late October to do some work in a restoration area and to practice felling and bucking trees. We split into pairs and it allowed those with more experience to work on new skills, and those new to saws to work on being comfortable with the equipment. This hybrid class was a success and should promote safe practices next time we need to clean up after a storm, big or small.



*"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order."*

*-John Burroughs*

## Spring is coming fast. - John Melton

Well it certainly was a quick winter here at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park. Might have been just cold enough to knock the ticks back a couple of days. With spring coming on fast its time to stop for a moment and reflect on the accomplishments changes and challenges overcome. I've said it before, and I'll say it again. Wakulla Springs has the best staff in all of Florida State Parks. When times get tough and resources fall short this team pulls together, keeps calm and carries on!

The past few months we have repaired board walks, cleared trails, maintained the river boats, completed the Emerald Sink platform project, restored our classic style park benches, pressure washed just about everything and repaired valves in the bath house. With all this we still managed to have a Friday Fun in the Field day with now retired PSS Jeff Hugo. Jeff and I lead a team of rangers around the park to show off some of our favorite places on park grounds. We viewed giant Cypress trees in the swampy back woods of the River sinks tract. We found the old Wakulla River bridge up ramp as well as a secluded spring and an old turpentine mill site. We tracked down a recently opened sink hole and wondered into the woods of the Cherokee sink tract to see the Florida State Champion White Oak. All in all, a beautiful day of discovery for park staff.



Friday Fun in the Field—Photo by Maria Wilhelmy



Rangers Pointing at Things—Photo by John Melton

## Spring is coming fast - (continued) John Melton

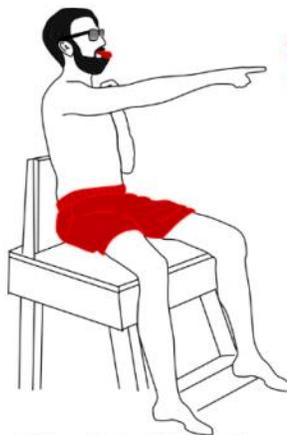
Other happenings as we entered the brave new year of 2022, we said good by to our friend and coworker Park Service Specialist Jeff Hugo who retired in early January. Park administration finished the yearly park property inventory. We hosted a Land Management Review attended by a group of interagency resource management professionals. Speaking of resource management, our park Biologist Patty Wilber has bossed several prescribed burns on Wakulla Springs properties already this year with more planned weather permitting. Our Burn team here at Wakulla Springs recently completed the annual pack test and fire shelter review, a requirement to be a wildland firefighter on a burn team. One of the more interesting resource management aspects of a park rangers' job is our quarterly Wakulla River Wildlife Survey that we just completed. We start floating down the river from three different points at the same time of day taking notes on the number of different river wildlife like alligators, manatee and osprey.

Looking ahead we have two repair projects that are being funded by DEP's Safety office. Look for the floating docks to be restructured and the Sally Ward spring run bridge on the nature trail is about to be given some much needed love. As I look ahead to Springtime in the park my mind turns to Spring and Summer staffing. Especially Lifeguards! How would you like to be a

lifeguard at the very place where the likes of Rico Browning, the famous Creature from the Black Lagoon, got his start? Wakulla Springs State Park! If you have your Lifeguard certification, we would love to have you work on our beach! We are Hiring! \$13.00 an hour Memorial Day through Labor Day! You must be lifeguard certified to apply. Pick up your application at the Ranger Station and email me a copy of your certification to [john.s.melton@floridadep.gov](mailto:john.s.melton@floridadep.gov).



## WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK



### WE'RE HIRING!

- ⊕ \$13.00 per hour.
- ⊕ Memorial Day through Labor Day.
- ⊕ Must be Lifeguard Certified to apply. [tinyurl.com/mvkufzr3](https://tinyurl.com/mvkufzr3)

Follow the QR code to fill out the application, then print and submit in person or send via e-mail to John Melton, Assistant Park Manager at Wakulla Springs State Park.

[John.S.Melton@floridaDEP.gov](mailto:John.S.Melton@floridaDEP.gov)



We would love to see your smiling face at Wakulla Springs State Park this Spring and Summer. Come on out! Take a river boat cruise. Have a family picnic. Hike a nature trail or simply breath in the Real Florida around you! Until Next time. Stay Tuned!



## First Day Hike - Maria Wilhelmy

In grand tradition, the First Day Hike started the year off with a bang. I love leading Nature walks and last year, due to Covid-19 restrictions, our First Day Hike was a self-guided hike and scavenger hunt. I definitely missed guiding people on the trail. This year with restrictions easing, I was able to give an interpretive tour of the plants, the birds, and the park that I love. We began the tour at the Lodge parking lot and started to navigate our way on the winding Sally Ward trail through the woods. We saw pileated woodpeckers, smelled yaupon holly leaves, and heard the creaking of branches rubbing against each other.

Perhaps my favorite part of the tour, was the conversations that followed on the return trip. I got to spend some time talking to one particular family who had a keen interest in the Indigenous communities that lived here long ago, the Apalachee. We got to speak at length about their community, and their relationship to the land. I also provided a scavenger hunt for the young families, and to my delight, the front desk staff called me later that day to tell me I had something waiting for me at the front desk. And what did I find you may wonder? A detailed drawing of a small bird we had seen together on our tour. To join the next Nature Walk, please visit [https://www.floridastateparks.org/events?f%5B0%5D=park\\_trail\\_event%3A92](https://www.floridastateparks.org/events?f%5B0%5D=park_trail_event%3A92)

*"Let us live in peace and harmony to keep the land and all life in balance" -Thomas Banyacya, Hop Elder*



Anhinga soaking in the Sun —Photo by Bob Thompson



Ruby Crowned Kinglet —Photo by Bob Thompson

# New Year's Update from the Friends - Julie Harrington

The Friends brew of activities are slowly returning to the Park! Although we are still holding hybrid meetings (with most still using zoom), there is light at the end of the cavern! On January 8<sup>th</sup>, the Friends held a well attended “Climate Up Close” Panel discussion at the Park’s Administration Building (and virtually). The climate scientists were on a speaking tour of the Panhandle; visiting Tallahassee, Wakulla Springs, and Apalachicola on this latest leg, as they travel to communities throughout the U.S. this year. The climate scientists from NOAA, UC Berkeley, NYU and Harvard University presented on the current state of climate knowledge; what is “Certain or Settled” and what is still “Uncertain” in the field of climate science research. In addition, they discussed how climate change has impacted extreme weather events, including future projections of climate change. Their website is: [www.climateupclose.org](http://www.climateupclose.org) and their presentation may be found on the Friends website: [www.wakullasprings.org](http://www.wakullasprings.org).



Climate Up Close—Julie Harrington

In January, the Friends also had an invited talk from Casey McKinlay, Director of the Woodville Karst Plain Project (WKPP) and expert cave diver, who spoke on the Chip’s Hole cave system. There is currently a rezoning request (from Agricultural to Commercial) to the Wakulla County Planning Commission for a portion of a 7-acre parcel of land located at the Hwy 319 and 267 intersection, at the northwest corner of Bloxham Cutoff in northern Wakulla County, less than 5 miles away from Wakulla Springs. The new owners are interested to build a 16-pump gas station with a car wash at the site, which sits directly above the Chip’s Hole cave system (which is part of the Floridan aquifer and links to Wakulla Springs). This 7-acre sandy soil area is also above one of the shallower sections (of only 100 feet) of the Chip’s Hole cave system. Given the sensitive nature of the site (in terms of shallow depth to the cave system and sandy soil) and large risk of storage tank malfunctions and leakage of contaminants, the Friends and Park are very concerned about this site’s potential to house a future gas station. Please stay informed, feel free to express your thoughts to the Wakulla County Commission and Planning Commission, and subscribe to receive Friends news and updates via email by either going to the Friends website at: <https://wakullasprings.org/wakulla-springs-news-events> or by sending an email to: [Friends@wakullasprings.org](mailto:Friends@wakullasprings.org).

## New Year's Update from the Friends (continued...)- Julie Harrington

The regional water sampling program the Friends are involved in, with the University of Florida's Dr. John Bowden (Dpt. of Physiological Sciences & Veterinary Sciences), has now concluded. We are awaiting the sampling results for levels of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), which will next be uploaded to a website, and made available to the public. There is also now a second research request; testing sediments relating to a manatee study conducted by Dr. Bowden's graduate student, that is next on our purview.

The Friends "Capital Campaign" is officially underway! Our first order of business is to conduct an entire boat fleet assessment to better understand the maintenance requirements of each vessel. During February, a marine engineer from Panama City will evaluate each of the 8 boats; and provide us with a final report.

Recently, the Friends were awarded another grant from the Florida Humanities Council. This Spring, we'll be presenting the "Florida Talks Program Springs Lecture Series" with three exciting and topnotch speakers: Craig Pittman, Diane Roberts, and Cynthia Barnett. To register for the events, please go to: <https://wakullasprings.org/wakulla-springs-events>. Please consider becoming a Friends member (if you haven't already) and volunteer, we'd love to have you onboard. The Friends are a citizen support organization (CSO) and are here to support and benefit the truly beguiling Wakulla Springs State Park.



Craig Pittman



Diane Roberts



Cynthia Barnett

Sincerely,  
Julie Harrington  
President, Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park

## Resource Management News and Notes—Patty Wilbur

It's been a very busy winter at Wakulla Springs State Park. Our habitat restoration project has been moving right along. After over a year spent harvesting timber at our Riversinks parcel, Whitfield Timber wrapped up work in the park by thinning the Turner Sink parcel in early December. It's quite a transformation for a part of the park that has always felt a bit claustrophobic to me. The deer seem to be enjoying the chance to roam more freely, and I always seem to spot a few whenever I'm there.

At around the same time B&B Dugger finished site prep and pile burning on 110 acres that had been clearcut at Riversinks. This meant that those areas were now ready for the next step. Josh Rowe and I picked up bags of wiregrass seed from The Nature Conservancy that had been harvested at Torreya State Park this fall. Our contractor EarthBalance brought in two Grasslander seeders to plant the seed over most of the prepped sites. Due to the expense of seeding, eighteen acres remained that had to be planted in-house. Park Services Specialist Ricky Sandusky and a volunteer came from Falling Waters State Park with their Grasslander to plant the seed over two days in early January.

Once the wiregrass seed was in the ground, the longleaf pines could be planted in those areas. Contractor Apex Forestry brought in a crew this week that planted an amazing 41,000 longleaf plugs in just two days! We're looking forward to seeing them reaching for the sky in a few years, once their deep taproots have become established.

To prepare for prescribed fire season, we had contractor Attack One Fire Management Services do a few days of GyroTrac mowing for us



Thinned pines at Turner Sink  
—Photo by Patty Wilbur



EarthBalance planting wiregrass seed at Riversinks  
—Photo by Patty Wilbur



## Resource Management News and Notes—Patty Wilbur

this December. They mowed paths through dense vegetation in two of our management zones and widened fire lines so that we could burn more safely. They also did some mowing on the eastern end of our hiking trail, and around our trailhead parking area at Rock Road. The parking area had been a bit secluded, which was leading to it being used as a dumping site by locals. Hopefully, by exposing it a bit more to public view, it will stay cleaner.

It also seems to be getting more use by hikers and horseback riders. I recently met a woman who had just finished walking her two dogs there. She thanked us for putting in the new trail. I was glad she liked it but told her the trail had been there for quite a while. She'd been unaware of it even though she lived basically across the street in River Plantation!

We've been happy to get a start on our prescribed burning for the year. Our forestry consultant F4 Tech did four days of contract burns on our Ferrell tract this winter. They burned several blocks of young planted longleaf pines that had a good carpet of needles beneath them.



Prescribed burn at Ferrell—

Photo by Patty Wilbur



Prescribed burn at Bald Point—

Photo by Patty Wilbur

Park staff have done some burning at the Ferrell tract too, getting nice burns in the area surrounding the assistant park manager's residence. We've also burned the zone that surrounds our trailhead parking lot at Rock Road. We have quite a few other areas we'd like to get burned this year. Hopefully the weather will be favorable to do so.

We've also been working to train newer prescribed burners throughout the District I state parks. Due to COVID-19, there haven't been many opportunities to do so in the past couple of years. On February 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, park staff gathered at Topsail Hill State Park for a fire engine orientation class. I was honored to be asked to help as an instructor. Our Rangers Kat Wilson and Josh Rowe were among the students who were taught about hoses, fittings, tools, pumps, tactics and vehicle maintenance. They were also given hands-on experience drafting water, making and deploying a hose pack, backing the engine safely, and pumping and rolling. It was a lot of fun and should help the students become safer, more confident burn crew members.

In a collaborative effort between Lodge and Park Administration, we

organized a Lodge staff training. This training consisted of a Boat ride, a meet and greet between lodge and park staff, a trash and recycling seminar and a hike through the woods on one of our most popular trails, the Sally Ward Trail. I asked Penny, a front desk agent, to share her experiences...

## From behind the Front Desk

- Penny Lane—Front Desk Agent

What a wonderful experience led by a knowledgeable guide. We started our morning with a boat ride down the river. Maria was able to tell us about all the wildlife we saw. Seeing the gators and manatees is always a special experience. The walk after to the Sally Ward spring was beautiful. I learned things I had never known about the trees and plant life. I have lived in Florida my entire life, so I love learning about my home. Working at the Lodge and getting to know the real Florida has been a great experience. I feel lucky to be immersed in such natural beauty on a daily basis. It makes work an enjoyable place. With Rangers who know so much about the park and everything in it, it's easy to find out an answer to nearly any question. Learning what each Ranger specializes in was great information. It helps when directing a guest to the appropriate source. All in all, I think that this team building activity was a fantastic idea and a success. Running as a team on the same page is the best way to keep ourselves at our best for our guests.

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—Jackie Turner

The following article was originally written for Springboard Volume 6, Issue 4 and is now **Reused**.

The park can recycle glass, plastic, paper, and aluminum. However, not all types of these materials are recyclable. Please see below for information about the materials that can be recycled.

### **Glass: Only bottles and jars can be recycled.**

Drinking glasses, china plates, and light bulbs CAN NOT be recycled.

### **Plastic: Only bottles with the recycling symbol No 1 (PETE) or No 2 (HDPE).**

Most plastic containers have recycling symbols, No 1 to No 7.

However, No 2 (HDPE) WITHOUT A NECK, such as a butter dish, IS NOT recyclable, ALL No 3 (PVC), No 4 (LDPE), No 5 (PP), No 6 (PS), No 7 (other) ARE NOT recyclable.

### **Paper: All paper is recyclable EXCEPT waxed paper and paper towels.**

Newspaper, copy paper, junk mail, envelopes, cereal boxes, receipts, etc. can be recycled. Waxed paper, such as milk cartons, and paper towels CAN NOT be recycled.

### **Aluminum: Cans are recyclable.** Aluminum foil and pans CAN NOT be recycled.



## Residents in Service — Jackie Turner

At Wakulla Springs, we are fortunate to have a small group of volunteers in residence. They assist with staffing needs in the park and are an integral part of the team. During the winter season, they serve in the Ranger Station collecting park entrance fees or serve as Early Field opening the park to get it ready for the day. Since they are on site, resident volunteers also assist with immediate needs and emergencies from time to time. As I tease them, “we know where you live.”

Currently, Ken McClure and Cathy Short are in the Ranger Station, and Elizabeth and Larry Millwood are serving as Early Field. Ken has been volunteering with us since 2018 and was recruited by our resident volunteers, Bob and Dee Green. Ken met Bob and Dee while they were serving together at another park. Cathy is in her inaugural year. She was recruited by our resident volunteer, Theresa Forrey, who met Cathy in south Florida on one of Theresa’s day-off adventures. In their second year of service, Elizabeth and Larry found us. They utilized the online volunteer system to submit their application to Wakulla Springs.

With resident volunteers’ assistance, park rangers can tackle other projects. At the Ranger Station, Ken and Cathy serve as the first face of the park. They do their best to welcome visitors while maintaining order at the temporary Ranger Station, which is now the busiest intersection in the park. In addition to their Early Field duties, Elizabeth and Larry spend a lot of time looking for discarded evidence of past human activities hidden from view. Their litter removal efforts help to make the park safer for the wild residents and the human visitors. At Wakulla Springs, we continue to be fortunate to have the help of resident volunteers, as they continue to make a difference in the park.



Ken McClure



Elizabeth and Larry Millwood



Cathy Short

## Voyage on the Wakulla River — Josh Rowe

February 3rd, 2022: I had scarcely stepped aboard the vessel before the captain turned to me with a crazed grin and said, "hope you can swim!"

The tub we called home was the HMS Ebersol's Revenge and her captain was a man by the name Jonah (a foreboding name to carry onto a body of water) or Captain Snelling. He was a swashbuckler hailing from the shores of the distant Ochlocknee river. As his first mate, it was my responsibility to record our findings while he guided us along the route. Our assignment was deceptively simple: ride the river to the rendezvous point, taking stock of the wildlife along the way. Little did we realize that the winds were even now beginning to shift.

"Weigh anchor!" the captain called. Seeing that we were the only crew to speak of, I ran to the capstan and began hauling. Before long we found the current and our ship was making headway toward the Gulf. A belted Kingfisher swooped by our starboard bow as we coasted along, its mad cackling being whipped away by the rising wind. I was reminded of its Australian cousin the Kookaburra when silence fell. I gripped the clipboard to my chest and turned back to the shipmaster's post and our now lifeless engine. Hunting ospreys cried their displeasure overhead.

"Not to worry! This happens all the time..." said Jonah as he wrenched off the engine housing and gripped a ball of wires in his hand like cold spaghetti. Our vessel continued to drift with the current, rocking slightly with the wind and churning waves. A family of manatees glided by us silently, save for the occasional jets of water blown into the whipping wind. Jonah glanced up and his eyes widened as he saw the rapidly approaching bend in the river called, "We'll need to beat to when we round that bend! Squalls' rounding on us! Batten down that dodger and get to the lee side. I'll be watching for a header!!"

Trying in vain to keep my papers out of the spray, I called back to him, "You-what?"

"It's going to get really windy!!" he cried.

The arctic blast took us as soon as we left the trees' shelter. The whole ship began to pitch and

## Voyage on the Wakulla River — (Continued) Josh Rowe

*yaw in waves whipped up by the whistling wind. "Brace!" the captain cried but I was already tumbling the length of the ship, rigging and shreds of the sails raining down around us. I was just preparing to abandon ship when then the engine roared to life and the Revenge began wrestling control back from the storm. Captain Snelling whooped victoriously and bellowed profanity addressed to Poseidon into the howling wind. Double-crested cormorants rocketed overhead, and their distinctive grants followed them on the icy gale. With newfound vigor, our boat plowed back into the channel, carving a path into the oncoming waves. When I came to, the shipmaster was regaling me with tales of hunting booty from his youth. As I laid sprawled out on the deck, Bufflehead ducks coasted overhead, joining a lone Pied-billed Grebe in an alcove of river grass to shelter from the zephyr's remnants. We arrived at our rally point with time to spare, and the presiding court of Brown pelicans and Laughing gulls eyed us placidly.*

*"What was our final count?" Jonah asked cheerily. It was then that I realized I had forgotten to write anything down.*

(Editor's Note: This is a dramatized retelling of our semi-annual wildlife survey on the Wakulla River. The river is divided into three sections. Josh Rowe and Jonah Snelling were in charge of surveying wildlife on the lower portion of the Wakulla River and encountered some choppy water. They were driving a 10 foot long jon boat. Every creature mentioned in this dramatization was recorded on the survey.)



From Left to Right: Maria Wilhelmy, Patty Wilbur, John Melton, Jonah Snelling, Josh Rowe, Amy Conyers, and Phil Pouliot

# BE A B.A.R.K. RANGER

## AT WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK



To become a B.A.R.K. Ranger like us, get your human to learn the rules of B.A.R.K.

### **Bag your Waste**

Always have your human collect and dispose of your waste properly.

### **Always wear your leash**

Have your human on a 6 ft. or shorter leash and never leave your human unattended.

### **Respect wildlife**

Don't bark or chase your park animal friends, it keeps you and them safe.

### **Know where to go**

B.A.R.K. Rangers are permitted on marked trails and in the day use area. B.A.R.K. Rangers are not permitted inside buildings, on the boats, on the beach or in the water.

## Well...It's been a long time coming — Maria Wilhelmy

Ranger Academy is a time-honored tradition that introduces rangers to the park service. The goal of every Ranger Academy is to provide a foundation for new park rangers to assist in their understanding of the knowledge, skills and abilities required to assist in managing Florida's diverse state park system. I started as part time in December of 2017, and with a little bit of luck and hard work, became a full-time ranger in May of 2019. Then, in the first few months of 2020, I received a very special invitation:

*“You have been selected to attend the 87<sup>th</sup> Ranger Academy. We are excited to offer this training which has become a critical piece of Florida Park Service heritage...”*

Unfortunately, a few weeks later Covid-19 restrictions had been put in place and Ranger Academy had to be put on hold. In the interim, we were directed to take a supplemental ranger academy held online. This first half of Ranger Academy was helpful for me. I got to meet my instructors and meet a few of my fellow rangers online. I also learned some of the essential pillars of the Florida State Park System. But I knew I wanted more and everyone I talked to verified my suspicions, that I needed to attend the in-person session. I was told that that is where I would meet my fellow rangers, network, and get to see more of the Real Florida.



87th Ranger Academy

## Well...It's been a long time coming — (continued) Maria Wilhelmy

In between the virtual session and the in person session I knew was coming, I honed my skills as a park ranger. I learned the valuable skills needed to safely cut down a dangerous limb, how to repair a leaky faucet, and continued to hone my interpretation skills. I was able to adapt my previous skills in customer service, digital media, and teaching and apply them to the lessons I had learned in the virtual portion of Ranger Academy. Working at Wakulla Springs State Park allowed me the opportunity every day to see the flora and the fauna I was bound to protect. And every day, I found myself falling in love with this beautiful park.

Finally, I received the email I was waiting for.

*“We are looking forward to seeing you again, this time in-person for the **onsite portion of the 87<sup>th</sup> Ranger Academy** - a critical piece of Florida Park Service heritage and opportunity to meet staff and instructors from across the state...”*

The week-long training consisted of classroom lessons and field days. We learned about career options, the “Maintenance Monster”, the logistics of a prescribed fire. Don't worry, it wasn't just inside work, they couldn't keep us rangers inside for too long! We also got to witness a prescribed burn and we got to ride around in a tram and see firsthand some of the different and stunning ecosystems of Florida. The interpretation section has really stuck with me. The Interpretive Services department set up 6 different interpretive programs and we traveled in small groups to each one. We got to participate in the programs, and then had an opportunity to evaluate each one. As the Park Services Specialist and Events Coordinator at Wakulla Springs, this training was particularly useful to me and I have used these principles already in the past few months to create new programs for the park and coach my fellow rangers in creating effective programing. One of my favorite parts of Ranger Academy was sitting around the campfire, trading stories, and roasting marshmallows, something we couldn't do via Zoom. This experience of attending Ranger Academy only affirmed what I knew all along, that this is the career that I want.



Watch out behind you!

# The Beauty who created the Beast — Aslan McMullian

The extent to which Milicent Patrick was responsible for the Creature From The Black Lagoon's Gill-Man design has always been contested. Only recently has the world at large even learned she existed. She might have remained obscure had admirers and crewmembers not kept her memory alive.

Born Mildred Elizabeth Fulvia di Rossi in either 1915 or 1930 and reported to be a Baroness, Milicent has always been a mysterious figure in Hollywood. What we do know is that she grew up in media tycoon William Randolph Hearst's castle, which her father designed and built. There she assumed a variation on the name of her benefactor's wife, vaudeville star Millicent Hearst. She graduated high school at age 14 before attaining several art



Touching up the Gil-Man—California Times

degrees. A polymath, she quickly made a name for herself as an artist, sculptor, pianist, model and actress. She was the first woman hired in Disney's animation department where she began inspiring childhood nightmares. For instance, the demonic Chernabog from the "Night On Bald Mountain" segment of Fantasia was her work. "Mildred's contributions within Color Animation and visual effects on Fantasia were groundbreaking," according to film historian Mindy Johnson. Soon she was working on special effects at Universal International (UI). From this point things get murky.

## The Beauty who created the Beast — (continued) Aslan McMullian

Special effects work often fell to the make-up department, which at UI was headed by “Bud” Westmore. Even by Westmore standards, Bud was known to be skilled at both making enemies and holding grudges. “It would take a psychiatrist to figure Bud out” according to his brother Frank. In his tense and tumultuous studio, Milicent created the “It Came From Outer Space” Xenomorph, the Metaluna mutant from “This Island Earth,” the Mole Men, and half a dozen others. But her masterpiece was the Gill-Man. Yet she would not receive proper credit in her time thanks entirely to Westmore.

The storm brewing around her began when an executive had the idea of sending the charismatic and elegant Patrick on tour to promote the film. Bud was angry at the possibility that he would not be given sole credit. Yet according to film historian Bob Burns, “Frank was good with beauty make-up, that’s what Westmore’s were known for. He was *not* good at monster stuff.” Universal artist Chris Mueller said that Milicent was responsible for all the design herself. “Westmore signed the checks and got in the [publicity] pictures. That’s about it.”



The tour was rebranded “The Beauty Who Lives With The Beasts” and Mil’s role was changed to that of curator rather than creator. Despite her playing by the studio’s rules and giving Westmore more credit than was his due, Bud was implacable. After a series of nasty memos and tense meetings, publicist Clark Ramsey was “in favor of telling him to go jump,” but feared “this would only widen the breach between Miss Patrick and [Bud].” But the damage was done. Milicent would never work in make-up or design again. Ever the diplomat, when asked why she simply cited “headaches.” She had no trouble finding accolades as a model and appeared in many film and television roles into 1960’s. There she seems to vanish entirely. We’ll never know what might have been if this talent had been allowed to grow. In the decades since her death in 1998, film fans have rediscovered a lost icon, the First Lady of horror special effects, and restored her rightful title as The Beauty Who Created The Beast.

The Beauty who created the Beast—California Times