

May 2006

The Istokpoga Newswire

Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.



Lake Istokpoga Osprey Update

Mike McMillian recently began his 18th field season researching Lake Istokpoga Ospreys. The season, which lasts from January to early July, has been slow to begin possibly because many birds were forced to rebuild nests after Hurricane Wilma. The number of Osprey nests associated with Lake Istokpoga has increased to just over 300 in 2005. This represents the largest known concentration of nesting Ospreys in the world. Mike's second survey lake, Blue Cypress near Vero, had one less nest than Istokpoga in 2005. Mike says the two lakes are duking it out for the world title. It's like watching a very slow, however exciting, sporting event.

Despite the large increase of nests observed since 1989 (55 nests in 1989), Osprey reproductive success remains average for this species. Some scientists have speculated that as the number of nests increases, success may decrease because of increased competition for nesting space and food. Mike uses the number of eggs laid, eggs hatched, and young fledged (nestlings which obtain flight) as indicators of success.

In addition to tracking every nest associated with Lake Istokpoga (yes, he surveys the nests located on power poles around the lake too), Mike also marks 5-week old nestling Ospreys using green aluminum leg bands. Over the past 11 years he has banded just over 1,100 nestlings. Once banded, these Ospreys represent "known-aged" birds and there are many questions regarding the natural history of Ospreys that can be answered.

For example, if you want to know the age at which Ospreys begin to breed, you must know when they were born. Mike can identify these banded birds from a distance by reading (with spotting scope or binoculars) a unique combination of letters and numbers etched into each band. It was via a banded bird that Mike recorded the first one year old Osprey ever recorded nesting. It was also through banding (and later satellite telemetry) that Mike discovered that some Lake Istokpoga Ospreys migrate to South America. Until that time, Ospreys breeding south of Gainesville were thought to be non-migratory. Some of the Ospreys may remain on the lake for an entire year and others may disperse around Florida until the next breeding season. By the way, the average age of first breeding for Lake Istokpoga Ospreys is 3.2 years.

Ospreys are at the top of the food chain in Lake Istokpoga and therefore are excellent indicators of lake health. If an environmental problem were to occur on the lake, Ospreys would be one of the first organisms to show problems. Mike hopes to continue his research for many years to come.

New Logo

Did you happen to notice our new logo. We have implemented a new logo for our newsletter and website. Let us know how you like it.

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Special points of interest:

- *Be sure to join our message group*
- *Be sure to visit our Web site at www.istokpoga.org*

What is our purpose?

The Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association Inc. was formed by a group of concerned people that live in the area or simply use the lake. It is a nonprofit corporation formed in August, 1998, duly chartered by the state of Florida. The following paragraphs come directly from the by-laws of our organization and they reflect what the Friends of Istokpoga are about.

The objectives of the association shall be to engage in activities related to maintenance, restoration, preservation and the beautification of Lake Istokpoga, Highlands County Florida, in an effort to sustain Lake Istokpoga in a pristine environmental and ecological state at present and in the future. The association will work in a cooperative effort with other organizations both public and private to ensure the continued optimum quality of water, aquatic vegetation and the shores of Lake Istokpoga.

While working to achieve the goals of the association, equal consideration shall be given to all persons having an interest in the maintenance and preservation of Lake Istokpoga. Members shall be encouraged to actively participate in volunteer work to the benefit of Lake Istokpoga Association.

As you have read our mission today is the same as when our organization was started. We intend to work diligently to keep Lake Istokpoga in as good or better shape than it is today for our children and further generations to enjoy as we do today. So please help us to preserve our lake.

Glades Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting

For the past several years, Friends of Istokpoga has had a membership and informational booth at Glades Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting and given away free chances to win a \$100.00 bill.

This year slightly over 300 tickets were given out. Individuals who joined or renewed their membership at the booth were able to increase their chance to win. Each individual that renewed got an additional 5 tickets and each family that renewed received an additional 10 tickets. Glades Electric is an Associate Mem-

ber of Friends of Istokpoga Lakes Association, Inc. and makes a donation of \$100.00 which we use in the give-a-way. The drawing is held in conjunction with the door prizes given away at the yearly event.

This year's lucky winner was HELEN PLATT of Lakeport, Florida. Congratulations, Helen!

By the way, we got 2 new individual members, 1 new family, and 5 renewals at the Glades Meeting.

Change to Your Board of Directors

One of our Board of Directors members, Mr. Jack Richie has resigned. Jack has been on our Board of directors for several years and has been a great asset to the Friends of Istokpoga. Because of his commitment to the Highland County Homeowners association, as its President he has too many conflicts of time between the two organizations. We will miss him.

He has agreed to stay on as a member volunteer helping us with our publicity. He is also a member of the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee representing the Highlands County Homeowners, and he will continue in this capacity. Our thanks to Jack for all his help and effort to our organization over the past few years.

We have appointed Mr., Ken Stebbins to fill the vacancy on our Board of Directors for the remainder of the 2006 term. Ken lives on the lake and is very interested in the ecological health of Lake Istokpoga. He has also agreed to help us revamp our Friends of Istokpoga Web site. So look for our up-

dated Web site in the next few months. We welcome Ken on board and look forward to his participation with the Friends of Istokpoga.

Did You Know?

Phosphorus is a nutrient that is essential for all life, even humans. It also promotes plant growth. Although phosphorus is a beneficial component in plant and lawn fertilizer. Too much phosphorus is a pollutant to Lake Istokpoga's ecosystem causing undesirable effects. It often promotes the uncontrolled growth of algae and invasive vegetation (Hydrilla, Water Hyacinth). Damaging the ecology of the Lake Istokpoga. Keep this in mind when you are dreaming of that nice green lawn. This tidbit brought to you, thanks to the South Florida Water Management Newsletter.

Friends of Istokpoga held a general membership meeting on February 16, 2006 at the Lorida Community Center for the purpose of electing its Board of Directors for 2006. In addition to the election of officers the program included Carl Smith, supervisor of the Highlands County Weed Control unit and Mike McMillian, with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Carl discussed the invasive aquatic plant spraying the county is contracted to do for the Department of Environmental Protection. Water-Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), Water-lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) and Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) are only three of the most common invasive plant being controlled by daily airboat spraying around Lake Istokpoga. Maintaining some control over these invasive plants means less chemicals are used but more man hours traveling the lake and seeking our pockets of the plants. Water-Hyacinth, a native of South America is now con-

sidered a major weed species in more than 50 countries. First introduced in Florida in the 1880's it covered more than 120,000 acres of public lakes and navigable rivers by the early 1960's. The growth rate of water-hyacinth is among the highest of any known plant. In Highlands County, this plant can double in as little as 2 weeks.

Mike McMillian, FFWCC gave an informative presentation about the Osprey population on Lake Istokpoga and the data he has collected on the remarkable recovery of the bird. He has studied and banded osprey for more than 17 years. Today Mike reports that there are 303 active nests around or near Lake Istokpoga. Historical data collected by the Archibald Center in 1973 reported 9 nests with 6 appearing active.

Special thanks to volunteers Lil Wilburn, Peggy Heskell, Gary Albin, Phyllis Bippus, and Jim Wilburn for taking care of membership renewals. Jeanne Porter was thanked for providing refreshments.

Announcing: New Option

Today we are officially announcing a new way for you to communicate with the Directors, Officers and Members of the Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. This offering is open to anyone who has email and is interested in Lake Istokpoga. What we are announcing is a "Yahoo message group".

Many of you are probably asking yourselves "What is a Yahoo message group?" I will try to explain it to you, but the best way to learn about it is to join and see for yourself.

A Yahoo message group is a way for groups of people with

similar interests to communicate with each other. In fact it makes it easy to communicate with everyone in your group at the same time. Here's how it works. Someone creates an email message, just like any other email message you would send out. The only difference is that instead of addressing it to an individual, you address it to the group. When you hit send it then goes to Yahoo and then Yahoo sends it out as individual emails to everyone in the group. It is that easy!

When you check your mail after someone has sent a group email you will see a note from the

Yahoo group with the entire message that was originally sent.

If you desire to respond to the note, you need to keep one thing in mind. If you hit "REPLY", your answer will go to the entire group and everyone will see your response. Sometimes this will be exactly what you want, but at other times you may only want to send a note to the person that created the note. Here is what you need to do: 1) write your response, 2) Copy the address of the originator of the note and paste it into the TO: field, 3) hit send.

To protect you from unwanted mail and to protect us from material that is inappropriate for this group, all messages sent to the group will be moderated, i.e., they will be reviewed for appropriateness before they are sent to you. The moderators will be board of director members.

From time-to-time we may post files that we want to share with you on the message group. You will be notified when files are available so you can download them if you so desire.

We will post messages announcing all of our meetings on the message group. Some members have mentioned in the past that they didn't know about our meeting. You should never have this problem again, if you sign up and check your email regularly.

How do I join the message group you ask? It is simple, just go to our website and select "Message Group" from the home page; then follow the directions.

Friends of Istokpoga Lake
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Help us protect Lake Istokpoga

Were on the Web —
www.istokpoga.org



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Lake Istokpoga Marina, Lake Placid
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