



Beach Shop

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9128 B SE Bridge Road Hobe Sound, FL

www.hobesoundbeachshop.com

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Hobe Sound Beach Shop's Turtle Times

Our History is a Treasure: Chapter Twenty-Two *By Jan Otten*

There is so much about Hobe Sound that is obvious and for us to treasure! -- the natural beauty that abounds here, the many parks, golf courses, churches, exceptionally well-maintained communities, abundance of art galleries, boutique shops, extraordinary restaurants, gorgeous beaches, and happy, smiling "Hobe Sound Locals." And, oh those spectacular sunrises over the azure blue Atlantic Ocean! Add to that the amazing number of snowbirds who flock to our shores each

winter season, increasing the revenue stream and then leaving, restoring Hobe Sound, for a few months in the summer, to a quiet, tranquil, calm little village. And when the parttime residents are gone, the remaining Hobe Sounders begin preparation to welcome them back again come the fall of the year. All that being said, there is also much about Hobe Sound that is NOT immediately apparent. Therefore, this Chapter is devoted to some information you may not be aware of.

Did You Know... Some Boring But Important Facts And Figures (all numbers are approximate and fluctuate often):



Population of Hobe Sound

Year rounders: 14,431; (it is estimated that the population swells by an additional 5,000+/- during the winter months)

Population of Martin County

162,006 (as of July 1, 2022)



Businesses in Hobe Sound

939

Businesses in Martin County

10,923



Median cost of houses in Hobe Sound

March 2022 - \$655,000 March 2023 - \$632,000

Median income in Hobe Sound

\$56,598

Median age in Hobe Sound

56.0

Households with computers

93.7%



Residents of Hobe Sound are protected by the Martin County Sheriff's Department and Martin County Fire Rescue. Waste Management does an awesome job with trash and recycle pick-ups.



All of Hobe Sound and Jupiter Island have Postal Zip Code 33455/H.S. Post Office Boxholders are 33475. Telephone area code is 772.



There are 10 Golf Courses in Hobe Sound, of which 2 are semi-private.



Hobe Sound has about 17 Houses of Worship to choose from. (One is on Jupiter Island)



Education is a high priority in Hobe Sound: there is 1 public elementary school (grades K-6), 2 private elementary schools (grades K-8), and 2 private high schools (grades 9-12); public Middle and High Schools are located in nearby Stuart. And believe it or not, Hobe Sound is a college town, yes, there is 1 college located here. There are at least 3 Early Learning Centers for the wee ones.

continued on page 4 **1**

Reintroducing Eelgrass to the Loxahatchee River

From 2011 to 2017 the National Wild and Scenic Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River had approximately 10 to 15 acres of lush underwater eelgrass meadows. During this time, it was not uncommon to see manatees on every trip on the river from the concession store (River Mile 7) to Trapper Nelsons' Zoo Historic District (River Mile 10). Around the time of Hurricane Irma those meadows disappeared.

Today, those meadows are relegated to 13 fences ~50'x20' that are clustered within 1.5 miles of Trapper's. In April, May, and September 2022 these 13 fences were planted with eelgrass. The plants were sourced from naturally occurring meadows in different parts of the C18 canal (the channelized headwaters of the river).

Eelgrass is a native, submerged, freshwater plant that is also used in aquariums. Eelgrass provides food for fish, invertebrates, turtles, and manatees. Equally important, eelgrass is a place for critters to escape from larger predators. In addition, this submerged aquatic vegetation acts as a natural way to absorb nutrients in the water (natural or added by humans) and will help increase water clarity. For the most part, water in the Loxahatchee River is relatively pristine since most of the water comes from natural areas such as Corbett Wildlife Management Area, Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area, and other publicly owned lands.



2015 photo of Eelgrass in Loxahatchee River

Lots of different government landowner or regulatory agencies (FDEP, SFWMD, FWC, PBC, MC, ACOE, LRWCD) and non-profits (especially the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida, for the eelgrass project) are involved with helping the natural resources of the Loxahatchee River. Much of the focus of these agencies is to increase freshwater flows in the dry season. In the next 5 to 10 years major projects to improve the hydrology of the river will be coming online.

The project to re-introduce eelgrass to the park is a new challenge. The fences (made of chicken wire, metal fence posts, zip ties, and stakes) need frequent attention to keep out a non-native fish, tilapia. The tilapia love to swim into the fences at high tide or maybe slide under a fence if it's not properly staked. The tilapia eat algae growing on the eelgrass and sometimes nip off pieces of eelgrass. However, tilapia's major impact is to root up the plant when making their nests (seen as open areas in the sandy bottom of the river). Despite these challenges (and others) we've seen eelgrass thrive when all the important elements to success are met. Some key factors seem to be: depth of water - not too deep and not too shallow, it needs to be just right; sandy substrate seems best versus mucky substrate; and making sure the fences are staked down and have no holes in them.

For me personally, spending work time on the river is invigorating and I always learn something new or see something in a different light on my trips: momma gator and her babies in the summer, the twittering of Northern parulas (small songbirds) in the Spanish moss in the spring and summer, rolling tarpon in the fall, the lime green flush of the bald cypress in the spring, the silhouette of a 5' bull shark when the water is low (time to get out of the water!). The river is a dynamic place and I'm very curious to see if we can re-establish our eelgrass meadows in the next few years



Rob Rossmanith,
Jonathan Dickinson State Park Biologist





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we'd love to meet you!

Our History is a Treasure: Chapter Twenty-Two continued from page 1

In addition to lovely neighborhoods, Hobe Sound boasts many gated communities, and 5 Mobile Home Parks. Approximate number of dwellings in Hobe Sound is 10,237; Jupiter Island 506; and Martin County 47,993. Pool homes abound with 2,899 in Hobe Sound, 449 on Jupiter Island, and 20,854 in Martin County. To date the highest priced home in Hobe Sound/Jupiter Island sold on March 29, 2021 for \$55,095,000 (Yup, that's millions.)

Without leaving the borders of Hobe Sound for those who like to eat out there are approximately 20 restaurants featuring many different ethnicities, and additional fast-food establishments, coffee shops, and food trucks. Coming soon will be a brand-new brewery. And for grocery shopping, there are 3 large stores, 1 health food store, and several smaller and convenience shops. On the weekend there is a Farmer's Market.

Florida's terrain abounds with oceanside and lakeside trails, preserve woodlands, and wildlife parks for hikers, bikers, boaters, swimmers, surfers, and sports enthusiasts. To name but a few of Hobe Sound's most notable: Jonathan Dickinson State Park, Blowing Rocks Preserve, Peck Lake Park, Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge, Hobe Sound Beach, and Jimmy Graham Boat Launch. There are 2 RV parks conveniently located and very popular. Nearby Stuart is home to a large water park.

Some Additional Fascinating Facts and Figures

- Hobe Sound is situated in the southeastern corner of Martin County. It is environmentally sensitive surrounded by all things natural – parks, the intracoastal waterway, the barrier island known as Jupiter Island. Total area is 7.72 miles of which 7.11 is land and 0.61 is water.
- The early Spanish explorers named the area for the supreme god of Roman mythology Jobe, or Jove, which they pronounced Hoe-Bay. Jonathan Dickinson referred to the "Hoe-Bey" Indians in his diary relating to his shipwreck in this area in 1696. Over the years it was anglicized to Hobe (rhymes with robe.)



Martin County 20,854
Hobe Sound 2,899
Jupiter Island 449



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- Hobe Sound did not hop about. It has always been where it is now, but throughout its history it has been under the jurisdiction of six different counties:
 - a) St. Johns County – 1821-1824
 - b) Mosquito County (now Orange County) – 1824-1844
 - c) Brevard County – 1844-1866
 - d) Dade County – 1866-1909
 - e) Palm Beach County – 1909-1925
 - f) Martin County – 1925-Present
- Hobe Sound is an unincorporated village whose governing body is the five-member Martin County Board of County Commissioners.
- Martin county was named for Florida's 24th Governor, John Wellborn Martin* who served from 1925 to 1929 after having served seven years as Mayor of Jacksonville.
- The communities that make up Martin County include: the City of Stuart; the Towns of Jupiter Island, Ocean Breeze, and Sewall's Point; the Village of Indiantown; as well as Hobe Sound, Jensen Beach, North River Shores, Palm City, Port Salerno, Rio, Hutchinson Island and Port Mayaca.
- Three counties make up the Treasure Coast – Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin. The region nickname refers to the Spanish Treasure Fleet lost in a 1715 hurricane, off the southeastern coast. Some lucky beachcombers have found real treasure in the sand along its shores, particularly after a major storm. Treasure hunters have scavenged and salvaged from the sea bottom major artifacts from those long-ago shipwrecks.
- Have you climbed "Hobe Mountain?" The highest natural point south of Lake Okeechobee is in Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Hobe Sound. "Hobe Mountain" stands 86 feet above sea level. If you climb the tower that stands atop that highest point you will experience a sweeping view that includes a broad swath of landscape from the Atlantic Ocean to the wet flatwoods west of the Loxahatchee River. The overall elevation of Hobe Sound is 7ft/2m. Its latitude/longitude coordinates are 27°3'34.2"N, 80°8'11.15"W.
- Hobe Sound is host to several very special happenings during the year: Festival of the Arts on the first weekend in February attended by nearly 20,000+ visitors during the two-day event; Christmas Parade on the first Saturday of December, attended by 3,000+; and a major, always sold out, golf tournament in the fall, all hosted by the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce. Then with nearly 6,000 visitors over four days in early December is the Singing Christmas Tree hosted by the Hobe Sound Bible College.



* John W. Martin - 24th Governor. 1900 (circa).
State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory

Nudists Frolic At Hobe Sound

By JERRY BOWERS
Stuart Bureau Chief

HOBE SOUND — Even in her briefest costume, controversial stripper Tempest Storm would have been the best-dressed person on a half-mile stretch of the U.S. Wildlife Refuge beach here Sunday afternoon.

Tempest's almost-nude show was banned from the Florida State University homecoming celebration over the weekend — too immodest for whole-family consumption.

But there was no "almost" about the nudity on the Federal Beach here — at least two-dozen men, women and children were sunbathing "all over" and skinny-dipping in the mid-afternoon surf.

TEMPEST was right, the nudists said, when she told Florida State protesters that there's more nudity on the beach than there is in her show.

"We go anywhere. There are nudists on almost every beach that's fairly deserted," a West Palm Beach office worker said.

Tempest expects people in clothing to gawk at her almost-nude performance — that's how she makes her living.

But the nudists on the beach here said they would prefer for people in clothing to stay away — at least anyone who might bring the weighty arm of propriety down on their Sunday gatherings.

So far, they haven't had much difficulty getting away with their sunbathing au-naturel and their bare surf romps in the refuge.

BUT CONCERN about non-violent goings-on in this quiet community comes slowly on a Sunday afternoon when officials have a day off and law enforcers maintain skeleton shifts except for emergencies.

Non-nudists who happen onto the scene are likely to look the other way, except possibly for a few nervous glances, or turn around and go back to the bikini-trunk-clad portion of the beach.

The nudists seem divided into two types — those who flaunt their nudity and who seem to enjoy the discomfiture of the clothed passer-by, and those who seem unaffected by the presence of others.

A party of two couples milled around a cluster of Australian pines not far from the refuge entrance.

They didn't flinch at the approach of a fully-clothed reporter who happened onto



the scene, equipped with sheathed camera.

"Don't say anything that would make us leave," a gray-bearded Bull-of-The-Woods, obviously still in his prime, told the visitor.

"If you want to talk to us, take off your clothes and join us," his unusually-buxom female companion added with a chuckle.

"I'd be willing to take off my shoes if it means getting a story," the Reporter replied.

"What's the matter, you got hangups?" the Bull-of-The-Woods inquired.

Reporter: "Yes, haven't you?"

B-O-W: "Do I look like I have hang-ups?"

R: "Then let me take some pictures of what's going on here."

B-O-W: "We can't let you do that — they'd chase us away."

Buxom: "Or people would come to look at us."

R: "This is a public place. You're in public. I report to the public." (Unsheathes his camera.)

B-O-W: (gripping a heavy-knotted branch he carried like a shepherd's staff) — "You can't take any pictures because we don't want you to, and I've told you that you can't. If you do, I'll have to break your camera."

R: "Then you would be breaking the law and they'd have to chase you out of here."

B-O-W: "Just don't take any pictures."

R: (sheathing camera) "I thought you didn't have any hangups." (During the conversation, the two women somewhat self-consciously, carried themselves in a manner that made it clear that they, too, had what it takes to be distinguished nudists.

Meanwhile, the reporter walked up the beach to the next group, resulting in draping of towels and clothing over the nudity.

The same at the third group up the beach.

But a young couple strolling toward the Reporter paid no attention.

They extended a greeting to him as he approached with camera unsheathed.

No family newspaper would use a nude photo, they commented, offering to let him take a shot that might be acceptable.

"Nobody thinks that much of it. We go everywhere," the man said. "This is the first time we've come here. It's nice. It's beautiful. I hope it doesn't get stopped."

They work in the same office, they said, and the other office workers don't consider them unusual.

"What's so different — we just like to get a suntan all over," she said.

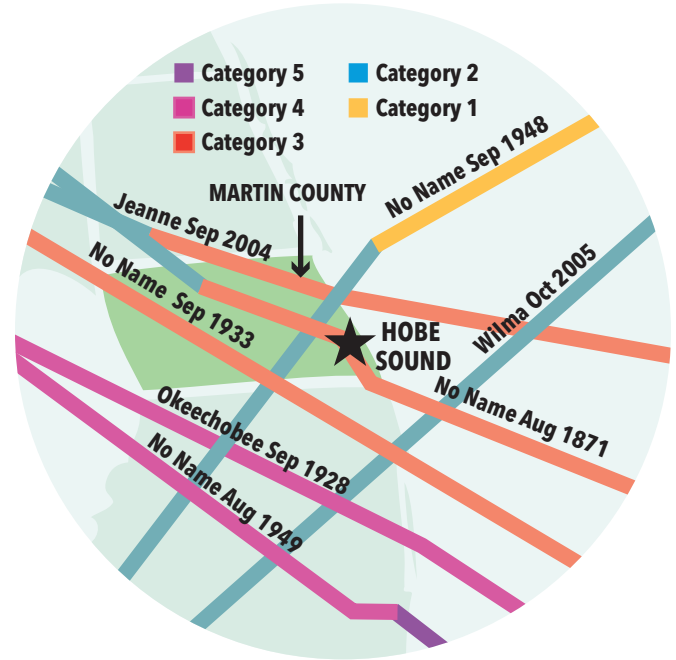
Here is another little known fact about Hobe Sound occurring during the 1970s. **Miami Herald**, October 15, 1973.

Now For Some Interesting Historical Trivia

Evidence of human life in this area has been estimated to go back at least 14,000 years, possibly even a bit more.

In recorded history the howling winds, pelting rain, thunder, and lightning, and pounding waves have heralded many a hurricane passing over Hobe Sound. Hurricanes are a very real threat for Florida. The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 until November 30 with the peak occurring between mid-August and late October. Since 1850, record keeping has shown that at one time or another through the centuries all of Florida's coastline has been impacted by hurricanes. With its long coastal shores, Florida frequently finds itself in the path of intense storms. The southeast coastline is extremely susceptible to a land-falling hurricane. (See *Turtle Times* at www.hobesoundbeachshop.com, Volume 2, Number 6, September 2021, Chapter Ten to learn about specific storms affecting Hobe Sound.)

Another little-known fact is that Hobe Sound was once home to many pineapple plantations. Due to the expansion of the Florida East Coast Railway by 1899 it was estimated that across Florida there were approximately 1,325 acres of pineapple plantations producing over 95,000 crates of fruit. They adapted particularly well to warm areas along the southeast and southwest coasts. However, by about 1910 the industry came to a halt due to nematodes and spider mites that began to attack the pineapple plants. In addition, around the same time there were several cold spells, and Cuba was shipping more at lower cost. The growers began to make the switch to citrus. Next time you buy a pineapple, cut the top off and plant it in your yard. You'll be pleasantly surprised with the sweetest most delicious fruit. Be patient, it takes a while for it grow, but it's well worth the wait.

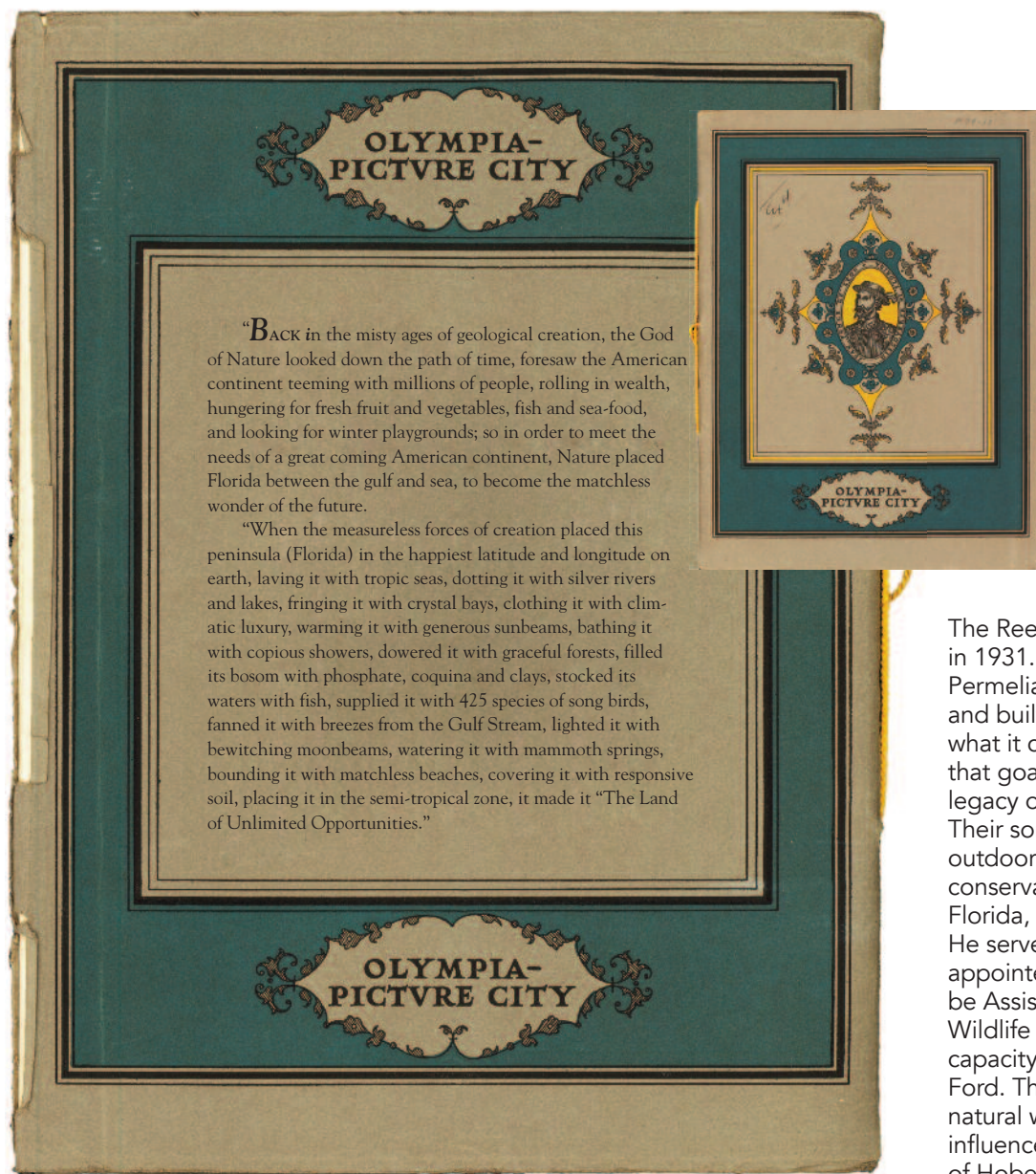


In the historic Zeus Park neighborhood there still exists one of two unique homes built in 1954. Known as "The Bubble Houses," built by Airform, designed by Eliot Noyes, and using a monolithic dome system developed by Wallace Neff, these two homes consisted of 569 sq. ft. on the main floor with a loft-style, raised sleeping space above. The main floor interior featured an open concept living, dining, and kitchen area as well as a bathroom. Built to sell for \$6,500 they were constructed of reinforced concrete cast in place over an inflated balloon to establish the house's shape. The February 22, 1954 issue of *Life Magazine* featured the two bubble houses where they described them as "both hurricane-proof and bugproof." Also, they were featured in a chapter of the 2011 book by Jeffrey Head, *No Nails, No Lumber: The Bubble Houses of Wallace Neff* published by Princeton Architectural Press. Sadly, in 2012 the easternmost house, located at 9096 SE Venus Street was demolished and a larger house replaced it. The house located at 9086 remains.



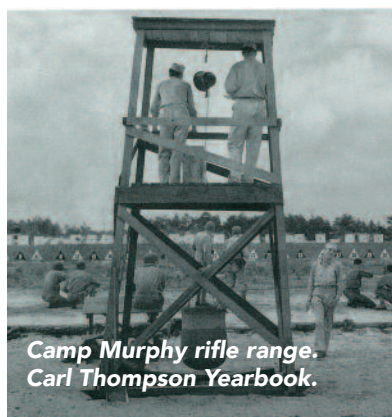
Bubble House located at 9086 SE Venus Street.

During the early 1920s Hobe Sound was renamed to "Picture City" when a group of developers from the Olympia Company laid out a plan to create a "Hollywood of the east." However, the stock market crash and the hurricane of 1928 forced them to give up the idea and the only remnants remaining are the concrete lampposts along Dixie Highway and the street names in Zeus Park.



Booklet advertising the planned community of Olympia or Picture City in Martin County on Florida's Atlantic coast. The booklet describes the planned community, provides maps, and outlines the benefits of settling in the area. Olympia - Picture City was to be located on the Dixie Highway and the Florida East Coast Railway. History of Olympia - Picture City - booklet. 1926. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

Hobe Sound, specifically the area currently known as Jonathan Dickinson State Park, played a major role during World War II. Hidden in the lush tropical foliage a radar training center was established by the U.S. government. Camp Murphy was built in record time and train loads of soldiers arrived for top-secret instruction. Though the camp only existed for a short time a few reminders can be found in the park and some of the buildings were moved and still remain in use within Hobe Sound and the surrounding area.



Being a prime destination, especially for the well-to-do and famous, Hobe Sound and Jupiter Island have been visited by and been home to many very recognizable names. It would be impossible to name all here, but a few include: Pro golfers Tiger Woods, Gary Player, Justin Thomas, Nick Price, Rickie Fowler, Lee Trevino, and it was on the steps of the 80-acre oceanside home of Greg Norman that President Bill Clinton fell on March 14, 1997 and twisted his knee. A few more names of note include the mother of President George H. W. Bush, and singers, Celine Dion, and Alan Jackson, and of course, actor Burt Reynolds. Currently famed NBA champion, Michael Jordan, owns a very private golf course in Hobe Sound. Families of several large corporations also have homes here. And notably, the Jupiter Island Reed family who had the biggest impact on keeping Hobe Sound the environmentally vibrant community that is.

The Reed family began coming to Jupiter Island in 1931. Captivated by the Island, Joseph V. and Permelia P. Reed immediately bought property and built a winter home. They had a vision of what it could be and worked diligently towards that goal throughout their lives and passed that legacy onto their children and grandchildren. Their son Nathaniel P. Reed, an avid outdoorsman, strongly advocated for conservation, not only for his home state of Florida, but also throughout the United States. He served under 7 Florida governors and was appointed in 1971 by President Richard Nixon to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and National Parks. He served in that capacity for 5 years under Presidents Nixon and Ford. The Reed family not only enhanced the natural wonders of Jupiter Island, but also influenced much of the beauty of the mainland of Hobe Sound. Most notably, it was the Reed family who planted the trees along Bridge Road leading from the mainland to the Hobe Sound Beach and Jupiter Island.



Mrs. J.V. Reed, residence in Hobe Sound, Florida 1958 Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Not only were the indigenous people thousands of years ago drawn to this amazing area of Florida with its abundance of life-sustaining sea creatures, but in more modern times some infamous folks found Hobe Sound to be great place to live (and hide.) There was the Ashley Gang in the 1920s and Trapper Nelson in the 1960s. You can learn about them in past issues of the *Turtle Times* at www.hobesoundbeachshop.com.

Yes, Hobe Sound has been home to the Paleo-Indians, Spanish and English explorers, Seminoles, bootleggers, fruit growers, wealthy vacationers, and hardworking entrepreneurs. In recent times it has become a mecca for artists of extraordinary skills who capture and portray the beauty of the sea, the richness of the natural landscapes, amazing sunrises, and cultural influences. From mural art on local buildings to a number of galleries and art venues residents and visitors enjoy the talent of local artists, several of whom are known worldwide.



Since 2009 the Hobe Sound Mural Project has been a labor of love by renowned professional artist and muralist, Nadia Utto. Beach Shop building at 9128 SE Bridge Road.

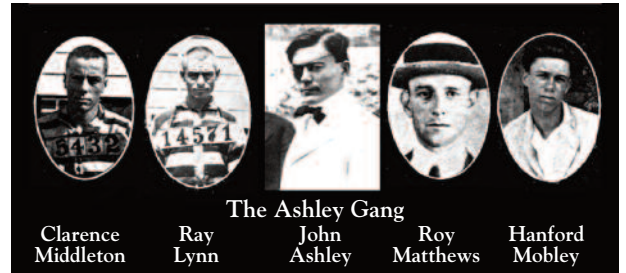
Very importantly, let us not forget the sea turtles who return year after year to climb onto our beaches, lay their eggs and return to the ocean. Per the Hobe Sound Nature Center: "During February – September female sea turtles return to land to lay eggs, occurring mostly at night. The female will crawl out of the ocean and will carefully choose a spot to nest. She constructs a "body pit" by digging with her flippers and using her body. She will then lay her eggs; the average clutch sizes range from about 80 to 120 eggs. Once she is finished nesting, she will cover the eggs and return to the ocean." You can sign up with the Center to do a "Turtle Walk" and experience this phenomenon. Tours begin at 8pm on Thursday and Friday evenings from late May to late July. You must have a reservation! About 90% of locally nesting sea turtles are the loggerhead.

If you've enjoyed learning some tid bits about Hobe Sound you can find more in-depth articles by going to the Hobe Sound Beach Shop's website, www.hobesoundbeachshop.com. There you will find all 21 prior chapters of "Our History is a Treasure" in past publications of the *Turtle Times*. You can also stop into the shop and pick up copies of most of the issues. We'd love to meet you and hear your comments on our efforts to help you know more about this amazing community that is truly a little bit of paradise and the real treasures that abound here.

Some of the herein data was sourced from the Martin County Property Appraiser (www.pa.martin.fl.us), Martin County Office of Tourism and Marketing (www.discovermartin.com), and Martin County BOCC (www.martin.fl.us); Keyes Real Estate Hobe Sound; as well as other independent research.



Trapper Nelson, Wildman of the Loxahatchee
Photo Credit *Dreaming in the Deep South*



The Ashley Gang

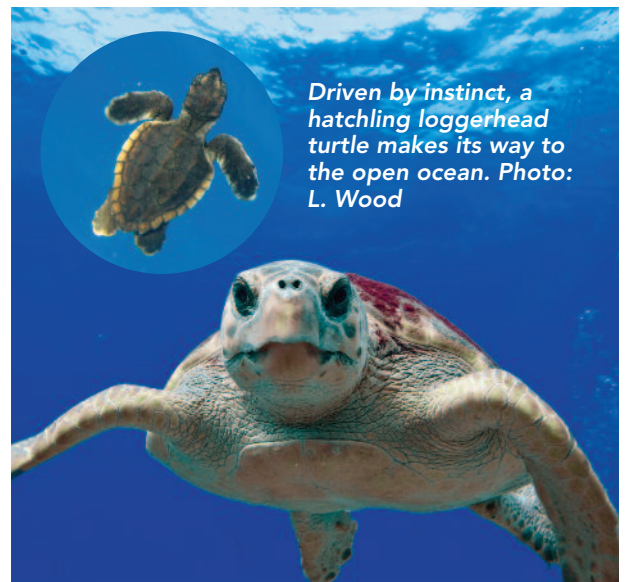
Clarence
Middleton

Ray
Lynn

John
Ashley

Roy
Matthews

Hanford
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Driven by instinct, a hatchling loggerhead turtle makes its way to the open ocean. Photo: L. Wood

Loggerhead Turtle Photo: David Mark

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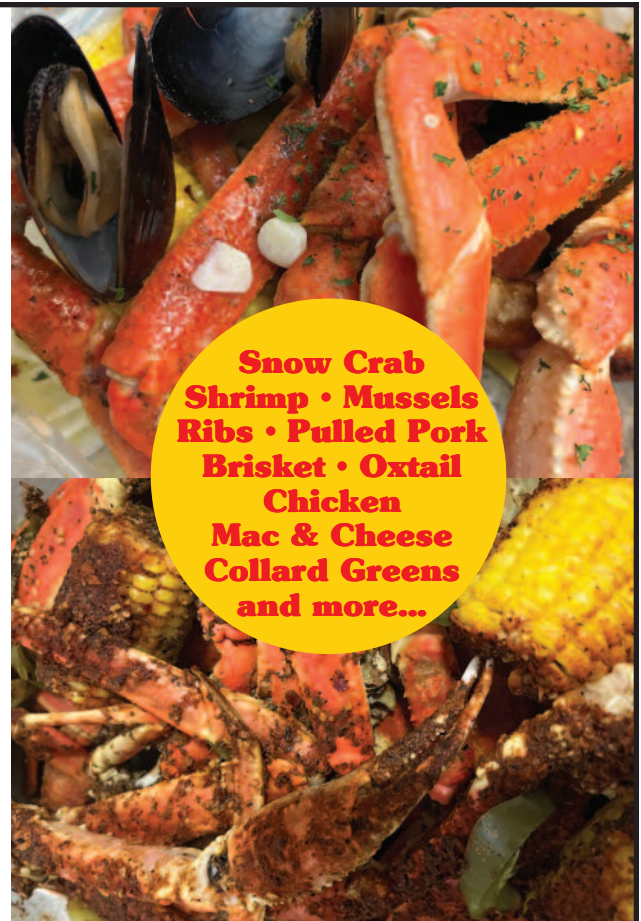
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Hello Hobe Sound!

As the migration slowly moves north and the traffic eases a bit its time to take a break. Please don't get me wrong, as the Snowbird Migration brings approximately 6 million dollars to the Florida economy and many yearly friendships, however less traffic is appreciated by the Hobe Sound Local year-round residents!

I would like to take a moment and address the Real Estate Market today. Interest rates are still more than the past two years and although inventory has gotten better, many buyers have a problem finding the cash needed for a down payment and wind-up renting. As an explanation there are some differences between Renting vs Owning your home! Both are appropriate at some time in our lives, both have advantages and disadvantages.

Our society has become much more mobile especially for young people in the workforce and renting is a good solution to a quick move. It is much easier to move when renting vs selling your home and the no maintenance up-keep and repairs is very appealing. According to the National Association of Realtors many people move every 10 years. Perhaps you just moved to a new area and want to understand the neighborhoods and your new lifestyle before buying? Renting makes perfect sense.

However, if you're happy in your career and plan on staying put where you are it only makes sense to buy your own home! There is a sense of pride and a feeling of belonging that come when

you own your own space in a community. Today there are many creative financing programs that will allow you to purchase and build your equity and live the American Dream. We all have to pay to live someplace, be it rent or a mortgage. Buying your home, you will no longer be paying your landlord's mortgage, but investing in yourself!

Tax benefits, equity, and a hedge against inflation are just some of the benefits of owning your own home. Afraid of taking the plunge because the interest rates and home insurance are not the same as a few years ago? The recommendation is to buy today and pay yourself back in the future as we may never see the low rates of the past again. To quote an old proverb "the past is gone, tomorrow may not come, there is only today." If mortgage rates do ever fall, you can renegotiate a new mortgage! If possible, you are much better off owning a home!

Just sayin !

Rich

Rich Otten, PSA, C2EX

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richardotten@keyes.com



Chapter 22 Word Search

Waste | Seventeen | Stuart | Loggerhead
 Reed | Clinton | Bubble | Bush
 Lampposts | Pineapple | November | Tower
 Martin | Spanish | Robe | Barrier
 Southeastern | State | Brewery | Farmers
 One | Education | Zip

M I Q I Z V S T S O P P M A L Q Q
 R E B M E V O N K W A O E E F Y Q
 T U Z X T Q G O H S I N A P S U F
 C N P G E L B B U B W L B P T S E
 E N I U J C L I N T O N B M J Y N
 F R Z X T D Y E R E I R R A B R Q
 X K B J F E E N I T R A M Q E L E
 R P G L N T P W U F B I V T V D D
 Q O M O N E Y I D J B U S Y U T A
 D X B E R K T R N U E A C C S R E
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 E J T X I E O S N O X Q H L I Z G
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See *Turtle Times* online addition for answers



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A little Trivia from Dictionary.com:

bloviate [bloh-vee-eyt] verb: to speak pompously.

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A Tale of Two Turtles

Florida, as most of you are aware, is pretty famous for its sea turtles. Collectively, there are staggering numbers of eggs laid on our beaches each summer, and snorkelers and divers alike get treated to several species living among our coral reefs and seagrass pastures. It was on a coral reef in Palm Beach County around 20 years ago that I decided to focus my research efforts on the hawksbill turtles I was encountering as I dove along those beautiful habitats. After doing a quick literature search at the time, I discovered that aside from the few natural history books and articles that at least recognized their presence in Florida, no one had ever attempted to learn more about hawksbill abundance and distribution in our waters. And so my project began.

Among the many things we've learned since then is that hawksbills like to grow up in Florida, but appear to depart as young adults rather than staying around to nest on our beaches. This observation of course puts in to question their origins; if they didn't hatch out in Florida, where do they come from? Enter Bertha, a teenage hawksbill that unwittingly participated in a number of the studies I was conducting in Palm Beach around 2010. Like many hawksbills, this turtle lived on a shipwreck near the Palm Beach Inlet, so it was easy to find. When I was exploring gender ratios, her contribution of a blood sample indicated she was a female. When we looked at her DNA, we determined she was from Mexico. When we fitted a transmitter to her shell, we learned she was a local who rarely left the shipwreck. By this time, however, she was approaching her adult size, and sure enough, around 2012 she disappeared altogether. Given that the transmitter's batteries had since died, we didn't know what happened to this most helpful of turtles... until last summer. A key component of our work is marking the turtles in such a way that they can be identified later, which is why we affix small metal tags and insert microchips in their flippers. A team of biologists were doing a nighttime turtle survey on Holbox Island, Mexico, near Cancun, when they came across a turtle laying eggs that appeared to have a transmitter stuck to its shell. Their interest piqued, they looked more closely to find the flipper tags were also still intact, so were able to find their way back to me through

our international database, and guess what? Bertha! Fulfilling her destiny as a mom, she laid 177 eggs that night, likely very close to where she came from herself so many years ago.

More recently, I was notified by our colleagues at the Turtle Hospital in Marathon, Florida Keys, that some scuba divers had captured a well-known adult female hawksbill that had been living for quite a while on a nearby shipwreck that had a large fishing lure embedded in its shoulder. Upon closer examination, the Turtle Hospital staff recognized that she, "Harris" was full of eggs, meaning she was likely to undergo nesting activity soon. In partnership with the Sea Turtle Conservancy, they were able to affix a satellite transmitter prior to releasing her back at the wreck. Within a week, she started to move. First she went to Miami, most likely nesting somewhere on a barrier island. She made her way as far north as Port St. Lucie, possibly nesting again somewhere in Palm Beach County. It was fascinating to watch, knowing how rare hawksbill nesting is in Florida, but at the same time, no one was able to confirm any nests on those beaches. She headed as far east as Bimini in the Bahamas, and back down through the Keys again, then to the Cay Sal Bank before arriving in Cuba, where her transmitter abruptly stopped functioning near Havana. There is no way to confirm our suspicions at this point, but it may not be just a coincidence that her transmitter stopped working as she passed through an area known for heavy fishing activity in northern Cuba, where hawksbills are still considered a valuable catch.

These two turtles had nothing to do with one another at all, but provided rare glimpses into the long, complex, and often dangerous lives these turtles live. The process of scientific inquiry is based on tying lots of tiny pieces of information together to, hopefully, eventually make sense of them. But they are often still abstract. In the realm of sea turtle biology, it's quite rare to get a glimpse of the bigger picture, as often our encounters with the turtles are brief and our studies are short-lived. Bertha and Harris both opened our eyes to the context in which all the studies, conservation plans, and investments we make are set. To us they're often just data points or computer-generated dots and lines on maps, but to them it's real, in a world where every turn could ultimately determine their fate. As the study moves forward, I look forward to 'hearing back' from a few more of the growing number of hawksbills we've identified, and listening with excitement to the stories they have to tell.



Harris's tracking map, courtesy Sea Turtle Conservancy, www.seaturtleconservancy.org.

Submitted by Larry Wood, Ph.D.

Research Coordinator

National Save The Sea Turtle Foundation

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Chapter 22 Word Search Answers

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T U Z X T Q G O H S I N A P S U F
C N P G E L B B U B W L B P T S E
E N I U J C L I N T O N B M J Y N
F R Z X T D Y E R E I R R A B R Q
X K B J F E E N I T R A M Q E L E
R P G L N T P W U F B I V T V D D
Q O M O N E Y I D J B U S Y U T A
D X B E R K T R N U E A C C S R E
O F V E B P O O S E E T A G J A H
U E A A G E W H G H A T S O T U R
S Z W R T U E D T O I P T A R T E
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