

WINTER
2023



DEDICATED TO BRINGING BIRCH BACK FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

BIRCH BULLETIN

Upcoming Events

Camp Birch Family Fun Day Saturday, February 25, 2023

We hope you and your family will join us on Saturday, February 25th, for the 3rd Annual Camp Birch Family Fun Day. Ticket prices are \$25 per person by February 15th. Tickets are \$30 before February 24 and are \$40 at the door. Tickets are required for ages 3+.



CLICK HERE
FOR TICKETS



FRIENDS OF
BIRCH STATE PARK, INC.

SATURDAY,
FEBRUARY 25, 2023
3PM – 6PM

HUGH TAYLOR BIRCH
STATE PARK

FRIENDS OF BIRCH STATE PARK CAMP BIRCH FAMILY FUN DAY

PRESENTED BY:  JM Family
Enterprises



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR EVENT SPONSORS!



We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed to help preserve, conserve, enhance, and promote Hugh Taylor Birch State Park through community support.

(954) 566-0660 birchstatepark.org



We are so grateful for our volunteers...

Last year, volunteers contributed nearly **1.4 million hours** to the Florida state park system. This



roughly equates to over \$29 million dollars in savings to the park system. At Hugh Taylor Birch State Park last year nearly 12,000 hours were contributed. We are so grateful to our volunteers who join us daily to work in the Ranger Station, drive trams, maintain the butterfly garden, renovate the residences, pull weeds and do anything that is needed. For more information on volunteering at the Park, visit <https://birchstatepark.org/volunteer/>.

SAVE THE DATE:
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2023

FRIENDS OF BIRCH STATE PARK BIRDIES FOR BIRCH GOLF TOURNAMENT

SCAN FOR MORE
INFORMATION





**FRIENDS OF
BIRCH STATE PARK, INC.**

Executive Committee

PRESIDENT

Ashley Sawyer Smith

PAST PRESIDENT

Christine Madsen

VICE PRESIDENT

Jim Ellis

SECRETARY

Nancy Thies

TREASURER

Tom Byrne

AT LARGE

Stephen Botek
Andrew Caldwell

Board of Directors

John Barranco

Bill Brown

Christie Caliendo

Tyler Chappell

Patrick Daoud

Dawn Read Diehl

Laura Elmore

George Fussell Sr.

Peggy Gehl

Heather Geronemus

Erica Gomer

Katherine Koenig

Rep. Chip LaMarca

Ina Lee

Sarah Leonardi

Whitt Markum

Mari Mennel-Bell

Ann Mihaui

Steve Morse

Julie Saumsiegle

Shea Smith

Steve Tilbrook

William Walker

Paul Weinberg

Honorary Council

Joe and Wini Amaturro

Gale Butler

Dominick and Meike Miniaci

Robert Roselli

Carlos Suarez

Phil Thornburg

Staff

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michelle Schmitz

MSchmitz@BirchStatePark.org

954-566-0660

DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Bridget Marron

BMarron@BirchStatePark.org

President's Message

Welcome to Fort Lauderdale's version of Winter from the Friends of Birch State Park Board; it's been a delightful few months in the park! Our November Garden Party honoring former Executive Director Gale Butler was a smashing success; the event had wonderful attendance from friends new and old! Keep an eye out for Gale's newly installed Lending Library outside the entrance to Park & Ocean. Borrow one or leave a book behind for another park-goer!

As we enter February, we're only a few short weeks away from my favorite annual event - Camp Birch Family Fun Day! We look forward to hosting our littlest park fans for an afternoon of crafts, air brush tattoos, pony rides, and the ever-favorite train rides and Live Animal Program. We've got some great new additions too, like Ft. Lauderdale native/local author Katie Frawley reading her beloved "Tabitha and Fritz" book live that afternoon! The event is Saturday, February 25, from 3-6 pm in the park.

It's a most lovely time of year in Birch, suited for morning trail walks and afternoon bike rides, roller skating, and boating up to our floating dock! We think you'll be as excited as we are to see progress all around, such as interior upgrades to Terramar House (Hugh Taylor Birch's home), fresh paint throughout the Visitor Center, and installation of the South playground with soon-to-be complete accessible sidewalk! All of this is made possible through your support and the work of our Friends Board!

We look forward to seeing you in the park soon!



Ashley Sawyer Smith, husband Shea and daughter Ruby enjoying Camp Birch Family Fun Day 2022.

YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS!

In addition to the larger projects you see around the Park, here are some of the ways Friends provided financial support to the Park in 2022:

- 3 New Security Cameras and Upgraded Equipment at the Ranger Station
- Mulch on all Playgrounds
- Decals for Waste Receptacles
- Water Fountain for Workshop
- Pressure Washer and Chain Saw
- Improvements to Park Manager Residences
- Sand for the Volleyball Court
- Volunteer Uniforms
- Park Maps
- Meditation Garden Maintenance
- 20 Tires, 18 Batteries as well as Axles, Motors, Mirrors and more for Park Trams ...and lots more!

Executive Director's Message



Michelle Schmitz



Bridget Marron

I want to thank all of you for your kind messages and show of support as I have stepped into the role of Executive Director. I remain extremely grateful for the path Gale Butler has left behind and am thankful she continues to take my phone calls! If I have not had the chance to meet you yet, please come and say hello! Bridget and I have the pleasure of

working in the Terramar Visitor Center and would love to meet you or show you around the park on a VIP Golf Cart Tour!

Michelle Schmitz

For more information on how you can help visit our website or contact Michelle at:

MSchmitz@BirchStatePark.org
or 954-566-0660.

A Garden Party Honoring Gale Butler

Friday, November 4th, Friends hosted A Garden Party. This year it was our pleasure to honor Gale Butler. Gale served as Executive Director of the Friends of Birch State Park from 2014 to 2022. She was responsible for garnering financial and in-kind support to help preserve, conserve, enhance, and promote Hugh Taylor Birch State Park.

Under her leadership, Friends has helped double the Park's annual attendance; Gale led the creation of the Park's Live Animal Program, reopened Hugh Taylor Birch's home at Terramar as a Visitor's Center and office space, and she helped to introduce a restaurant and concession to the Park. Gale's leadership garnered monetary support to rebuild the Park's seawall, add a floating boat dock to the intracoastal side of the Park, and clean out the park's 1-mile coastal dune lake that had seen years of neglect. Gale's vision brought

enhancements to the beach tunnel connecting the Park to the beach, added benches throughout the entirety of the Park, and constructed new playgrounds and the beautiful Marti's Meditation Garden.

The lovely evening was celebrated by 250 people who enjoyed the views, delicious hors d'oeuvres, libations, and fun auction items. Gale was honored with speeches by Heather Geronemus, UKG Title Sponsor; Ashley Sawyer Smith, Board President; and Jim Ellis, former Board Chair and current V.P.. She was presented with proclamations by State Representative Chip LaMarca and Fort Lauderdale Commissioner Steve Glassman. The evening was wrapped with a toast by Gale's son, Todd Butler.

We thank everyone who came to support.



Friends Board Members (l to r): Andy Caldwell, George Fussell, Christie Caliengo, Jim Ellis, Chris Madsen, Gale Butler, Ashley Sawyer Smith, Julie Saumsiegle, and Michelle Schmitz



Gale with Ken Troisi, Asst. Bureau Chief District 5, and LeAnn Hinson, Park Manager



Jim Ellis and Olya Salehi



Gale Butler receiving Florida state tribute from State Representative Chip LaMarca



Dawn Diehl, Ashley Sawyer Smith, and Maggie Gunther



Tish Flavin, Karen Genovese, and Susan Greaton



Lisa Kitei, Janet Jordan, Gale Butler, Pam Butler, Ann Burris, Pamela Ritchie, Michelle Howland, and Alice Jackson



Heather Geronemus, Diane Geronemus, and Kara Perkins



**We are thankful to all of
our sponsors who made
the evening a success!**



Ted and Kathy Drum with Connie, and Andy Caldwell

EDI
ellisdiversified, inc.

Morgan Stanley

JULIE SAUMSIEGLE
FINANCIAL ADVISOR



Susie and Alan B. Levan
FAMILY FOUNDATION

CONRAD & SCHERER
TRIAL LAWYERS

Tito's
Handmade
VODKA
EST. 1999

Miller Construction Company
relationships that build

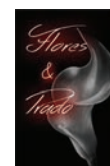
**Berkowitz
Pollack
Brant**
Advisors
+CPAs

Shea & Ashley Smith

SBP
PRODUCTIONS
WWW.SBPPRODUCTIONS.COM

Doug & Janey Eagon

Mike & Alice Jackson



THE
ADVERTISING
DEPARTMENT

LOOK
WHAT'S
NEW!

1 Water Bottle Refilling Station at the Ranger Station!



Carrying a refillable water bottle is an easy way we can all reduce the amount of plastic waste in our lives. Florida State Parks joined with the Florida State Parks Foundation and Duke Energy Florida to install more than 120 water bottle refilling stations at 80 state parks around Florida. Hugh Taylor Birch State Park is the proud recipient of one of these gifts! Designed specially for refilling water bottles, the stations are less awkward to use than a traditional water fountain when filling up your bottle on the go. These stations are now in service throughout state parks from Destin to

the Florida Keys and can be found at campgrounds, trailheads, visitor centers, restrooms, and other locations at state parks.

2 Lending Library

Birch State Park's new Lending Library was generously donated in honor of Gale Butler from her Book Club Friends! This new addition is located at the Park's entrance to Park & Ocean and the Beach. Patrons are encouraged to take a book on their way to the beach, or share a book when they are finished reading it. Ann Burris, Pam Butler, Monica Correll, Michelle Howland, Alice Jackson, Janet Jordan, Lisa Kitei, and Pamela Ritchie thank you for sharing your love of books with the park!



3 Plumbing Repairs and Refresh of Terramar Visitor Center

This summer Terramar Visitor Center was closed for plumbing repairs. With funds provided by Friends, the cast iron drain lines in the two upstairs restrooms that have not functioned in years were replaced. To do this, the entire lines had to be changed. The lines ran through the side of the building. As expected, we hit a few leaks and cut a few coax cables in the process. After the pipes were replaced, we installed 4 new toilets, replaced and repaired drywall (which had seen significant water damage over the years) and repainted the entire interior. It feels like a brand-new building!



4 10:4 New Radios are Here

With 180 acres to maintain, preserve and explore, radios are an integral part of the Park's day-to-day operations for Park Staff and our numerous volunteers. With funds provided by Jennifer Gardner, Scott & Lisa Henry, Kathy Reynolds, and an anonymous donor, the Park now has 5 brand new radios to help with our day-to-day operation. Thank you for your support.

5 Playground

With funds generously provided by the Stephan Family, a new South Playground has been installed. The playground includes ADA-compliant equipment, so everyone can join in the fun. We have hit a few (dozen) road blocks with the installation of the playground and ADA-compliant sidewalk, but thanks to generous support and in-kind services from our Board Members Stephen Botek, John Barranco, Whitt Markum, and Paul Weinberg, new permits are in the works and we are hopeful the playground will be in "full-swing" by Spring Break.

6 Volleyball Court Refresh

The staff and volunteers at Hugh Taylor Birch worked tirelessly this summer to reopen the park's volleyball area. Volunteers worked hard to remove any weeds that had encroached on the volleyball court area, helped assist staff in spreading the new sand when it arrived, and assembled and put up our new volleyball net. The volleyball area is open for public use and is situated across from our historic Banyan tree and conveniently located near our Banyan and Live Oak pavilion facilities.



Justin & Katherine Koenig towing cattails to shore (Long Lake Update)

7 Culvert 1



This fall, crews worked to replace Culvert 1, located by the five parking spaces at the North end of the Park. This is one of two culverts that run under the road from the Intracoastal to the mangrove tidal areas inside the Park. These culverts permit tidal flow in and out of the mangrove habitat which flushes the system and allows for a healthy thriving ecosystem. However, the culvert had separated along its connection, causing the surrounding fill to wash out through the culverts into both the mitigation area and the Intracoastal. Now that the work is complete, mitigation is taking place in the area to restore the vegetation that was affected.

LOOK
WHAT'S
NEXT!

Seawall Maintenance

Funding from the Florida Inland Navigational District (FIND) awarded in 2017 allowed the park to install a welcome pavilion, build a public boat dock and to raise 5,500 linear feet of then completely failing seawall to protect the shoreline from sea level rise and overtopping. The current seawall needs maintenance to the 10-foot cast-in-place panels comprised of 24-inch-wide tongue-and-groove joints. The park currently battles large depressions on the inside of the wall, a product of the erosion we face with tidal changes. With support from the Friends, the Park was awarded a matching grant of \$324,000 from FIND. This will provide the needed funds for the state to contract a marine repair company that will restore the wall. As part of the grant, work will also begin on the replacement of Culvert 2, adjacent to the Welcome Pavilion.

Long Lake Update

Thanks to the Community Foundation of Broward and Bank of America, Friends has received a generous grant to launch Phase 3 of the clean-out of our 1-mile-long fresh water coastal dune lake. Mechanical clean out of the north end of the lake will begin in April and will address the northernmost section of the Lake. That area is



Emerge Broward volunteer group showing off their day's work!

clogged by invasive cattails and hydrilla that limited access for kayaks, canoes and our monthly water resource treatments. Leading up to the project, volunteer groups have come on kayaks to manually pull cattails from the lake. Phase 4 is scheduled for 2024 and will address the inner sections of the lake, including the areas east and west of the island. We all look forward to a more navigable lake.

(left) Steve & Kai Botek in kayak, while Park Manager LeAnn Shelley and husband Ken unload cattails.

THANK YOU!

Terramar Society Members

Banyan Level - \$5,000

Joe & Wini Amaturo
Pamela Braden & Admiral James
McManamon
Jim Ellis & Olya Salehi
Ed & Sherry Meehan
Carlos & Lisa Rodriguez
Bill & Anne Scherer
S. Donald Sussman & Michael Howland

Manatee Level - \$2,000

Monica & Michael Maroone
The Mastriana Family
Lee McDonald & Family
The Miniaci Family
Chris & Connie Williams

Sea Turtle Level - \$1,000

Stephen & Kari Botek
Bill Brown
Gale M. Butler
Tyler & Sarah Chappell
Michael & Mary Ellen Coen
Ed Cumisky & Amanda Hunt
Dorian & Pat Damoorgian
The Dettman Family
Ted Drum & Kathy Molinet
Doug & Jane Eagon
Martin Lesser & Linda Groene
Timothy Ingham & Julie Pabst
Gary & Roberta Karch
Mark McGuire & Craig Wilson
Don & JoAnn Medalie
Bruno Mejean & Martina Hund-Mejean
Mari Mennel-Bell & Joel Greenbaum
Traci Miller & Troy McHatton
Parrot Lounge
Randy Pohlman
Shea & Ashley Smith
Bill & Nancy Thies
E.C. Traver

The Terramar Society and General
Members of Friends of Birch State
Park are the backbone of the
Friends' operation.

We thank these loyal annual
supporters.

WELCOME
TO THE
BOARD!

Representative Chip LaMarca

State Representative -District 93

Chip LaMarca is a lifelong resident of Broward County, representing Broward's coastal communities. He's earned a reputation for being a citizens' advocate and respected voice for the taxpayers, veterans, first responders, and pets in Florida House District 100. After attending Broward College and Florida Atlantic University, Chip followed in the footsteps of his late father, helping create jobs in the construction industry. In 2006, after spending over 20 years gaining experience in the construction industry, he opened LaMarca Construction, a firm specializing in power generation. Chip and his wife Eileen now run The LaMarca Group, a business and nonprofit consulting firm. They reside in Lighthouse Point with their new French bulldog pup Rocco!

Chip always had a desire to invest his time in public service. In 2005 he was elected to the Lighthouse Point City Commission, and he was re-elected in 2008 without opposition. In 2010 he ran a successful election to unseat the Broward County Mayor, and he was re-elected in 2014 with overwhelming support of the people in coastal Broward.

A passionate servant of the people, LaMarca won the State House of Representatives race for District 93 in 2018 and now advocates for those in living in communities from Deerfield Beach to Fort Lauderdale.



Ann Mihaiu

Fort Lauderdale Media Associates Vice President & Associate Publisher

Ann joined husband and publisher George Mihaiu at Fort Lauderdale Media Associates (FLMA) in late 2013 after spending over seven years in the nonprofit sector with PACE Center for Girls Broward as Development Coordinator of Fundraising and Events. Prior to PACE, she was with AT&T Wireless for 10+ years in retail sales, dealer training & development, and retail store construction & merchandising. Ann serves as chief administrative executive for FLMA with responsibility for all billing and invoicing as well as local ad sales, civic affairs, and business development.

*Thank You
Primo Liquors
and Fine Wine
for Hosting Our
Board Holiday
Gathering!*



SAVE THE DATE: MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2023

FRIENDS OF BIRCH STATE PARK

BIRDIES FOR BIRCH

PRESENTED BY

UKG

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Contests | Prizes | Goody Bags | Auctions | Great Food & Drinks



SYNALOVSKI ROMANIK SAYE
Architecture • Planning • Interior Design



FORT LAUDERDALE COUNTRY CLUB

415 E Country Club Circle, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33317

11:30am Registration

12:30pm Shotgun Start

SCAN FOR MORE
INFORMATION



Email Michelle Schmitz at mschmitz@birchstatepark.org
or Bridget Marron at bmarron@birchstatepark.org
or call 954.566.0660 for details.





FRIENDS OF
BIRCH STATE PARK^{INC.}

3109 E Sunrise Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304

FRIENDS OF
BIRCH STATE
PARK:
UPDATE ON
PARK
HAPPENINGS
AND EVENTS!



FRIENDS OF
BIRCH STATE PARK^{INC.}