



# The Islander

March 2015

A Publication of the St. George Island Civic Club

The March meeting will be on the 19<sup>th</sup> at the Volunteer Firehouse. Bring a side dish and enjoy meeting with fellow Islanders. Social hour begins at 6:30 p.m. with the meal at 7:00. The speaker will be Anita Grove of the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve

## Franklin County Extension Agent Speaks about Invasive Species

Erik Lovestrand, a county extension agent from the University of Florida, spoke at the February meeting on several invasive species that prey on species that are native



*Erik Lovestrand*

to Florida. One of the most invasive species is the Lion Fish. They voraciously suck in baby reef fish and game fish. It is thought they were brought over as an aquarium fish and were abandoned into our waters. They also spawn several times a year. There have been meetings in the Apalachicola area to educate the public in how to catch and prepare them for delicious meals.

*(See Invasive on Page Two)*

## Annual Tour of Island homes sets records

The 2014 SGI Tour of Homes set new records for attendance and receipts. Attendance was over 750 which was a 20 percent increase over last year. Around 650 tickets were sold for the Feb. 14 tour with an estimated income total of \$15,000, nearly double the 2014 tour. More than 100 volunteers participated this year, acting as house captains, house docents, shuttle drivers and ticket sellers.

A Tour of Homes pre-event reception was held on Thursday, Feb. 12, in the Plantation clubhouse that featured an art show. Works by Tom Tiffin and his family were displayed.

Kaitlin O'Connell, a bear specialist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, spoke about living with bears during the tour's kick-off event on Friday evening at the SGI Volunteer Fire Department building. (Kaitlin is Civic Club Treasurer Mike O'Connell's niece.)

Forty-five percent of the Tour of Homes participants were winter visitors from 25 states and Canada. Another 1/4 of the tour guests were Floridians. Many other states were represented.

## Full Moon Climb at Cape St. George Lighthouse

The March Full Moon Climb at the Cape St. George Lighthouse on St. George Island will be held on Thursday, March 5. The Sunset/Full Moon Climb will take place *(See Lighthouse on Page Two)*

*(Lighthouse, from Page One)*

from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and will include light hors d'oeuvres and a sparkling cider toast to the full moon.

The sun will set at 6:41 p.m. and the “Worm” moon will rise at 6:51p.m. on March 5. This is the last full moon of winter, and was called the “Worm” moon by native Americans because of the earthworm trails that appeared in the soil as the ground thawed. After sunset, people are invited to climb to the top of the lighthouse for a breathtaking view of the full moon, as space and time permit. Cost is \$10.00 for the general public and \$5.00 for SGLA members.



The Cape St. George Light is located in St. George Lighthouse Park at the center of St. George Island, where Island Drive (the road off the bridge) ends at Gulf Beach Drive. Parking is available in lots at either side of the park.

Reservations are recommended; please call the Lighthouse Gift Shop at 850-927-7745.

## **SGI Civic Club Winter Bingo Begins**

Mark your calendars each Tuesday night through the end of March and have fun at the SGI Civic Club’s winter bingo. It starts at 7:00 p.m. and ends around 9:00 p.m. It costs \$1.00 a card per game and the club splits the pot between the winner and the club. Door prizes from local businesses too.

## **Club Members Enjoy 2015 Forgotten Coast Chef’s Sampler**

Many SGI Civic Club members were on hand for the 2015 Chef’s Sampler at the Apalachicola Armory on February 8, including the group pictured below:



*From Left: Jimmy & Phyllis Lewis, Jackie & Vito Bell, Eric & Sherri Roberts and (seated) Bill & Diane Lindsay at the Chef’s Sampler*

*(Invasive, from Page One)*

Erik mentioned Coyotes and feral hogs as examples of common invasive species. He didn’t speak about Pythons, but many are found in the Everglades.

Coyotes have migrated from the West all the way to the Atlantic and are especially dangerous for small dogs and cats. Several turtle nests found on SGI have been destroyed by coyotes.

Feral pigs were introduced by Spanish explorers and are found all over the South. Feral hogs, whose population in Florida is the second largest in the country, root and steal over \$800 million per year from the agricultural industry in crop damage and livestock diseases.

The Burmese Python provides the perfect example of what can happen when a large, predatory species is introduced into an environment where the native wildlife offers  
*(See Invasive on Page Three)*

*(Invasive, From Page Two)*

little-to-no competition for resources. The huge snakes are native to the tropic and subtropic areas of Southern Asia, where they are just as at home in and around water as they are slithering around in the treetops. Many pythons now call Everglades National Park their home, where an estimated 30,000 Burmese Pythons have made a habit of feasting on a variety of endangered birds and alligators.

Invasive plant species include the ever present Kudzu, Old World climbing fern and Hydrilla.

Kudzu was brought over from Asia and was promoted as a forage crop and an ornamental plant when it was introduced to the U.S. at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876. Many southern farmers were encouraged to plant kudzu for erosion control from the mid 1930's to the mid 1950's.

The Old World climbing fern is a great threat to Florida's native plants and animals. Each plant sends thousands of spores airborne annually. Old World climbing fern fronds grow up to 125 feet, suffocating everything beneath them—even pine and cypress trees. These plants can carry flames into treetop canopies that are normally out of fire's range.

Hydrilla is considered the state's most problematic aquatic weed. Growing very quickly, hydrilla displaces native vegetation and degrades water quality. Hydrilla clogs water intakes and reduces storm water flow. Originally from Asia, its thick mats can seriously restrict boating activity.

*(Note: Erik had written an article, but his research is funded by a grant and had to be approved. That permission was not received by press time. I have researched the information on plants and pythons on the ufl.edu website. Eric Roberts)*

## **Planting Advice from Les Harrison, Wakulla/Franklin County**

### **Extension Director**

Mulch is generally a great thing for plants. Properly placed, mulch is fantastic at retaining moisture and distributing it more evenly to the roots. It helps moderate soil temperature, protecting roots from cold and heat extremes. It can control weed growth, and even help block some soil borne diseases.

Volcano mulching, the practice of piling mulch deeply against the trunk or stem, will ultimately damage any plant. Popping up like a Pacific island chain, these diminutive cones surge up around the bases of trees and shrubs protruding at sharp angles.

The mulch volcano shape promotes improper root development for shrubs and trees which have just been planted. The practice may lead to a death sentence for the unlucky greenery.

If irrigated or rainy weather occurs, water will saturate the base of the plant at the soil level under the mulch volcano. This creates the perfect conditions for rotting and suffocated roots, especially in cooler weather.

Eventually roots will grow up through the mulch rather than out into the surrounding soil. If the roots which develop in the mulch volcano dry it out as they seek and consume the moisture, drought conditions will be induced to further stress the plant.

Dense mulches plied too high can compact to create an umbrella shaped surface which may act as a barrier to water. Water will run off the mulch volcano's surface, again creating a drought situation under the pile. This is especially true for mulches naturally high in carbon content, such as chipped or shredded wood and sawdust. In extreme cases the mulch induced moisture deflection  
*(See Mulch on Page Four)*

***(Mulch, from Page Three)***

is fatal to the plant. Established plants are at equal risk from volcano mulching practices, though the effects are different. The risk of root rots is much higher as roots already established in the soil are smothered and fail to adequately get necessary oxygen.

At the trunk base, the excess moisture also results in rot and decay along with weakening the supporting structure of the plant. More damage to the trunk can occur from rodents taking advantage of the opportunity to hide in the volcano and gnaw on bark.

Compounding matters, this type of damage opens the plant up to the potential of more fungal and rots problems. Mulch volcanoes may also hide damage from girdling roots, those circling the base which strangles the main trunk as they grow.

Girdling or circling roots can eventually cut off the internal circulation of water and nutrients the plant needs to move up from the roots. Girdling roots can be carefully cut to free the trunk as long as the root is not more than a third of the trunk's diameter.

Mulch is productive as it breaks down, enriching fertility and improving soil structure with better drainage and aeration. All of this greatly benefits landscape plants when an evenly distributed in a layer about two-inch to three-inches thick.

While mulch should be extended as far out as the drip line, the reach of the outermost leaves, whenever possible. It should never be placed right against the trunk or main stems of any plant.

To learn more proper mulching techniques for Franklin County yards, contact the UF/IFAS Franklin County Extension Office at 850-653-9337. Les Harrison, the UF/IFAS Wakulla County Extension Director, is part of the Extension team serving Franklin County.

***Upcoming Events***



St. George Island will host its annual Charity Chili Cookoff and Auction March 7. Activities include a golf tournament, 5K Red Pepper Run, Chili Cook-off, Auction and the naming of Miss Chili Pepper and Mr. Hot Sauce. All proceeds benefit the Island Volunteer Fire Department and First Responder Unit. For more information, call 850-653-6735, or go to [www.stgeorgeislandchilicookoff.com/](http://www.stgeorgeislandchilicookoff.com/)

***Tribute to Jim Croce***

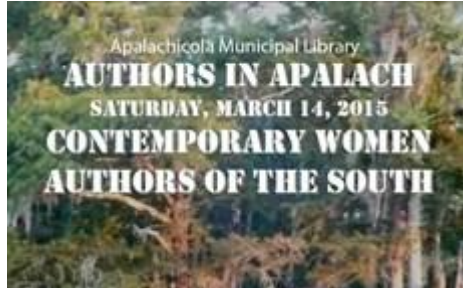
March 7th at 8 PM - Dixie Theatre, downtown Apalachicola - Bigger Than Life - A Tribute to Jim Croce. John Reno, a native of New Orleans, takes us on a musical journey through the songs of Jim Croce with his accompanist, Detroit born Brett Gambino, as they blend acoustic guitars and vocals to capture the essence of Jim Croce whose musical gifts transcend time. For more information, call 850-653-3200, or go to [www.dixietheatre.com](http://www.dixietheatre.com)

***Authors in Apalach***

The Apalachicola Municipal Library will host the 2015 Authors in Apalach event (*See Authors on Page Five*)

*(Authors, from Page Four)*

March 13-14 at the Apalachicola Center for History, Culture and Art. This year's event theme is "Contemporary Women Writers of



the South" and will feature celebrated authors Janis Owens, author of the "Cracker Kitchen" and River Jordan, author of "The Gin Girl." Also featured will be Joyce LaFray, cookbook and food author, Susan Cerulean, environmental writer from Tallahassee; Faith Eidse, Tallahassee teacher, author of "Voices of the Apalachicola", Mary Jane Ryals, Poet Laureate of the Big Bend (2009-2012); Memoirist; Kimberly Cross Teter, first time author of "Isabella's Libretto" and Adrian Fogelin, Tallahassee author of "Crossing Jordan."

The event kicks off with a reception Friday, March 13. On Saturday, March 14, the event

will be from 10AM to 5PM, with authors signing and selling books. For more information, call 850-653-8436.

### ***Dixie Theatre***

Sligo Line ~ Irish - Saturday, March 14 at 21 Avenue E, Apalachicola Formerly The Ned Devines, this talented group had the audience cheering during the 2014 Season 17, don't miss them.

[www.facebook.com/sligoline](http://www.facebook.com/sligoline) For more information, call 850-653-3200 or go to [www.dixietheatre.com](http://www.dixietheatre.com)

### ***Dam to the Bay Trip on the Ochlockonee (sic) River - March 14-20***

Cost: Trip Fee: \$300/adults; \$275/seniors (65+) and college students; \$250/youth 8-17; free/children under 8

Meal Plan: \$175 (3 meals daily) –

Shuttle: \$25/person + \$25/boat –

Paddle Florida *Lite* (4 or fewer days): \$100/day (includes meals, but not shuttle)

Registration Deadline: February 28

Official Outfitters: The Wilderness Way

Shuttle Details: Paddlers can choose a pre- or post-trip shuttle for themselves and their boats. If you choose a pre-trip shuttle, you'll need to report to Bald Point State Park near Alligator Point by 1PM on March 14. After having your boats loaded onto one of our trailers, you will be shuttled to Ed & Bernice's Fish Camp to check in for the trip.

### **Apalachicola Reserve Offers Freshwater Turtle Lecture**

Apalachicola National Research Reserve is offering an hour-long lecture about freshwater turtle species in the Florida Panhandle on Wednesday, March 18 from 2 - 3 p.m. at the Apalachicola Research Reserve Nature Center at 108 Island Drive in Eastpoint. This is the third in a series of monthly natural history lectures known as "Reserve Wednesday." Chris Lechowicz, director of Wildlife Habitat Management and Herpetologist with the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, will talk about the wide diversity of riverine turtle species in the Florida Panhandle.

This lecture is free and registration is not required. For more information contact Gibby Conrad, 850-670-7702 or email

[Gibby.Conrad@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:Gibby.Conrad@dep.state.fl.us).

### ***Earl David Reed: The Secret of my Unsuccess***

On Saturday, March 21 at the Dixie Theatre, *(See Reed on Page Six)*

*(Reed, from Page Five)*

21 Avenue E, Apalachicola, see Earl David Reed, a fabulous comedian, bring his tour to the Theatre. It's a first for stand-up comedy on the Dixie stage. For more information, call 850-653-3200 or go to [www.dixietheatre.com](http://www.dixietheatre.com) or [www.imearldavidreed.com](http://www.imearldavidreed.com)

### ***Apalachicola Art Walk & Wine Festival***

On Saturday, March 21, don't miss the annual art walk and wine festival. Art in all forms will be woven in and around picturesque downtown Apalachicola



where artists and musicians will be showing, selling, and demonstrating their talents from 11:00-6:00 pm. The festivities continue into the evening with a wine tasting at 3:00 pm. Afterwards area chefs will prepare dishes at their restaurants paired with special wines. For more information, call (850) 653-9419 or go to [www.apalachicola.org](http://www.apalachicola.org).

### ***Eastpoint Rib Cook-off***

The Annual Eastpoint Volunteer Fire Department Charity Rib Cookoff will be held Saturday, March 21th at the fire house in Eastpoint, at Vroom Park at 24 Sixth



Street. In addition to spirited rib competition, this year's event will include a carnival. BBQ dinners will be served from 11:00 am till it's all gone. For more information, go to [www.eastpointvfd.com](http://www.eastpointvfd.com)

### ***Apalachicola – Dixie Theatre***

#### **Sarah Mac Band**



On Saturday, March 28 at the Dixie Theatre, 21 Avenue E, Sarah Mac's - The House Band, is back for their 5th Season, need we say more...we are fortunate they are still with us. For more information, call 850-653-3200, or go to [www.dixietheatre.com](http://www.dixietheatre.com) or [www.sarahmacband.com](http://www.sarahmacband.com)

***Carrabelle – Camp Gordon Johnston  
Movie***



“Fury” will be shown in the Camp Gordon Johnston WWII Museum movie theatre at 1001 Gray Ave., Carrabelle on Saturday March 28. Rated R (for strong sequences of war violence, some grisly images and language throughout). No one under the age of eighteen allowed.

In April 1945, the Allies are making their final push in the European theater. A battle-hardened Army sergeant named Don "Wardaddy" Collier (Brad Pitt), leading a Sherman tank and a five-man crew, undertakes a deadly mission behind enemy lines. Hopelessly outnumbered, outgunned and saddled with an inexperienced soldier (Logan Lerman) in their midst, Wardaddy and his men face overwhelming odds as they move to strike at the heart of Nazi Germany. Movie begins at 10:15 on Saturday morning. Free popcorn will be served. Admission by donation and is appreciated! This film is in a series shown monthly to educate our visitors of the sacrifices made, for us, by our WWII generation. For more information, call 850-697-8575, or go to [campgordonjohnston.com](http://campgordonjohnston.com)

Thanks to the Franklin County Tourist Development Council for Upcoming Events. <http://www.saltyflorida.com/events/>

**Challenge to Civic Club Members**

The Board of Directors challenged Club members at the January meeting to reduce the ecological footprint by bringing their own reusable plates, flatware and glasses to the Club meetings.

**Please visit our website:**

[www.sgicivicclub.org](http://www.sgicivicclub.org) for the latest news from St. George Island and the surrounding area. Email us at [sgicivicclub@gmail.com](mailto:sgicivicclub@gmail.com) Dues are \$20 per person and can be mailed to SGI Civic Club, P.O. Box 451, Eastpoint, FL 32328. Now is the time to pay the dues for 2015. Checks may be made to SGI Civic Club.

**2015 Board of Directors**

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