



Dale Berlin

## Myakka River State Park December 2018



# Dry(er) Prairie

The dry prairie is becoming dry again! In September's issue, we discussed seasonal variations in rain levels, and the saturation of the dry prairie's silty soil. Now, the rainy season has ended and the water levels are declining. The flora and fauna of Florida's dry prairie have adapted to such seasonal changes and are flourishing throughout the park.

Some of these changes are hard to miss. For months, alligators have been hiding from the heat of summer in the cool recesses of floodwaters. As temperatures decline, these cold-blooded reptiles now regulate their body temperature by sunning themselves on the freshly-uncovered riverbanks. In other words, they're everywhere! This offers prime viewing and photography opportunities for park visitors. Please remember: always keep a safe distance away!

In addition to the alligators, migratory birds have been making spectacular entrances into the park. Fleeing the frigid grasps of northern winters, these birds are arriving in large groups and filling the park with a unique symphony of varied calls. They can be spotted all over branches and in shallow water.



Miri Hardy



Some of the seasonal changes are less obvious, particularly as it relates to plant life. Myakka's soil is very thin, silty, and sandy, lying atop a substrate of either clay or limestone. As water levels receded, flowers were among the first to bloom. Now, tall grasses dominate the landscape.

There are over 100 species of andropogons (grasses) across the world. Myakka River State Park has six of the thirteen andropogon species native to North America. While enjoying the trails through the prairie, look for tall grasses with fuzzy/fluffy seeds swaying in the breeze.

At their maximum, some andropogons can be taller than humans! The largest may reach up to 8' tall. While the tops draw the eye for their large display of seeds, the stems are also quite interesting. Look for stems of alternating green and purple stripes—these are called “bluestem” andropogons. They present a beautiful touch of color to the detail-oriented eye.

See the purplish stripes on these bluestem andropogons?

***“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.” -Rachel Carson***

Myakka River State Park is bursting with wildlife and beauty. As you enjoy the incredulity of nature, please ensure that you are minimizing your impact. Do not feed or bother animals. This includes being mindful of your distance from all animals. They can easily become frightened or feel threatened if you are too close. Also, please stay on designated trails (it helps save undergrowth and minimize human impact). Do not pick or otherwise damage plants.

If we are all considerate and careful, the park will stay pristine for generations to come!



## MANAGER'S MESSAGE

*As we progress through fall and quickly approach winter, we are observing an increase in wildlife in the park, particularly migratory birds. The summer rains and flood waters are now long past us, and the receding water levels provide ample and abundant feeding grounds for many species. Recent observations include over 30 species of birds alone, including white pelicans, bald eagles, roseate spoonbills, wood storks, and egrets. The backcountry trails are continuing to dry out; however, they are still wet in some locations.*



# The Birders are Back!

Myakka River State Park is extremely fortunate to have expert Birder volunteers! Nearly every day, a volunteer will be at the Birdwalk educating visitors about MRSP's plethora of feathered friends. Each Birder brings their own high-powered scopes enabling you to see birds' fine details and nuanced differences. It's an opportunity that you wouldn't be able to enjoy unaided. The Birders can also educate you about types of birds, identifying calls, diets, and many other wonderful insights in the world of birds. *Best of all, it's free!*

*"I had 41 species of birds and 50 species of homo sapiens, and it was a tie as to which was the most unusual and diverse. [...] I had a day of 3's, 3 American Bald Eagles, 3 Savannah Sparrows, 3 American Avocets and 3 Black Bellied Plovers. One of the most unusual sites I saw was a Palm Warbler dining on an iridescent worm that looked like it was glowing. It also looked as it would be a meal that would last a whole day for the Warbler. The appetites of all were working well." --Birder Volunteer*

**Come talk with a Birder on the Birdwalk 9a – 3p! Call (941) 361-6511 for more info.**



# REVEREND BARRY AND THE FUNK

## JANUARY 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### 7:00 P.M.

Reverend Barry & The Funk is one of the most popular funk & soul bands in Southwest Florida. They are an 8-piece band with a 3-piece horn section (featuring 3 Grammy-Nominated performers). They play both originals & covers of horn-oriented funk/soul music by artists such as *Earth, Wind & Fire*, *Commodores*, *Kool & the Gang*, *Prince* and more. When Reverend Barry is in the house, the dance floor is always packed!



## Buy your tickets now!

<https://www.friendsofmyakkariver.org/events/2019/1/18/reverend-barry-amp-the-funk>



Reverend Barry & the Funk

Thank you to our sponsors!



The Friends of Myakka River are happy to present their first *Moon Over Myakka* concert for the 2019 season.

Tickets are available at the link above or the day of the event. \$20/person, \$15/Friends Members\*

- Park entrance fee waived after 5:00 pm
- North gate will be open from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm
- All ticket sales final

Bring your chairs and friends!

Call (941) 361-6511 for more information.

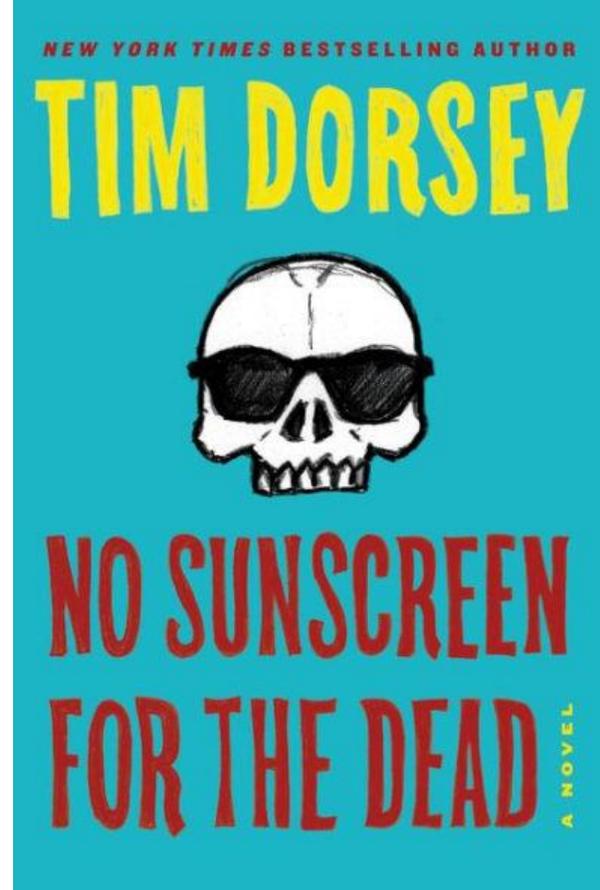
\*Want to become a Friends Member? Visit here:  
<https://www.joinit.org/o/friends-of-the-myakka-river>

Friends of Myakka River Present:  
Another **Strange** Evening  
with  
**Tim Dorsey**

Discussing his new 2019 publication:  
*NO SUNSCREEN FOR THE DEAD*

**Myakka River State Park, South Pavilion  
Saturday, January 12th, South Pavilion 6:00 PM**

**Free event for all curious and adventurous souls.  
Park entrance fees waived after 5pm.**



Come and spend an evening with **New York Times best-selling author, Tim Dorsey** as he takes us deep into the turbulent and ever creative mind of Florida's own one-man vigilante, Serge Storm. Tim is a great author and an incredibly entertaining speaker. His adventures in Florida often rival those of the books' protagonist, Serge A. Storm. Come hear what both are up to now! Advanced copies available for purchase at the event.

Questions? Call 941-361-6511 or 941-373-7839

## Kayak Drawing Now Happening!

The Friends have officially launched their annual kayak drawing!!! A Santee Sport 126 is in the Ranger Station, awaiting its lucky owner! Come check it out and grab your ticket. Tickets will also be available at all Friends' events. More information here:

<https://www.friendsofmyakkariver.org/news/myakka-river-kayak-drawing-of-chance>

