

February 2010

TO: File

FROM: Natalie Balcer, Myakka Wild and Scenic River Park Biologist
District 4 Administration

SUBJECT: Myakka Wild and Scenic River Inspection

The river inspection for the month of February took place on the 18th and 19th.

Upper River

The upper river, from the Myakka River State Park Pavilion to Snook Haven was inspected on February 18th, 2010 by Natalie Balcer, Environmental Specialist II and Brendon Fischer, District Intern in kayaks. The inspection began at 8:15 am and ended at 2:40 pm. The weather was partly cloudy with temperatures around 65-70 degrees.

Wildlife and vegetation observations of interest on the upper river inspection include:

- Forty-five peninsula cooters were observed sunning themselves from Downs' Dam to Snook Haven
- Ninety-three Black Vultures were observed from Deep Hole to Downs' Dam
- Approximately 500 Tree Swallows were observed from Lower Lake to Downs' Dam
- Two Bald Eagles were seen from Deep Hole to Downs' Dam.
- Ninety-seven alligators were seen from Deep Hole to Downs' Dam and several very large gators were observed from the island to Border Road. Usually not many gators are seen south of Downs' Dam. Additionally, a dead 5' gator was seen south of deep hole.
- A Barred Owl was heard between Deep Hole to Downs' Dam.
- A dead hog was seen under the Border Road Bridge, and 7 live hogs were seen between Downs' Dam to Snook Haven.
- Half of a canoe was seen while paddling around the island, near the first of the houses.
- Small patches of *Lygodium japonicum* were noted from north of the powerlines to Border Road. The climbing fern was later sprayed on February 23rd.

The water levels are nearly a foot higher compared to the previous month. Portaging was only required at Downs' Dam, although some water was flowing over the dam. The flow in the river was approximately 200 ft³/sec. The water level at the dam gage was 4.95 feet. The Myakka River Gage USGS 02298830 (internet) at the upper lake read 5.2 feet.

Activities observed along the river during this inspection:

A kayaker was seen between the powerlines and Border Road, and 2 people were observed in a canoe at Snook Haven.

River Blockages:

There was a large oak tree that fell several months ago and spans the entire width of the river. Water levels have been low enough to get under the trunk with little difficulty until this month. We were still able to pass under the tree in our kayaks but it was very difficult.

Lower River

The lower river, from Snook Haven to the Sarasota/Charlotte County Line was inspected by Natalie Balcer and John Chassey in the Boston Whaler on February 19th, 2010. The inspection began at 9:20 am and ended at 12:15 pm. The weather was partly sunny with temperatures around 65 degrees.

Wildlife and vegetation observations of interest on the lower river inspection include:

- Forty-seven Great Egrets and 71 Wood Storks were seen at the rookery south of US-41.
- Twenty-one Ring-billed Gulls, 16 Herring Gulls, and 12 Laughing Gulls were seen from US-41 to the Charlotte County line.
- Two Royal Terns were spotted between US-41 and the Charlotte County line.
- Two Forester’s Terns were seen between the Rookery and Charlotte County.
- Two Bald Eagles were seen south of the Rookery
- Two manatees were seen near the Charlotte County line. A fisherman reported there were nearly 20 manatees gathered near the sandbar earlier.
- A Northern Harrier was seen north of the US 41 Bridge.
- Three Hooded Mergansers were seen near the Myakka State Forest

A total of 138 crab traps were counted on this trip from Snook Haven to the Sarasota/Charlotte County line. This was an increase from the 43 traps spotted last month.

Activities observed along the river during this inspection:

Five boats were observed during this trip.

River Use by Section Table:

River Section	River Use
<u>Upper River</u>	
Pavilion to Lower Lake	
Lower Lake to Deep Hole	
Deep Hole to Down’s Dam	

Down's Dam to Snook Haven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 kayaker north of Border Rd • 2 people fishing in canoe south of I-75 • 6 people were seen hiking along the riverbank in Venice Myakka Park • 2 people were seen in a canoe at Snook Haven
Lower River	
Snook Haven to Rambler's Rest	
Rambler's Rest to U.S. 41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 kayaker
US 41 to Rookery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 people in a johnboat
Rookery to Co. Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 person in genu • 2 people fishing in pontoon boat near Co. Line • 1 fisherman in 15' skiff

Vegetation Observations:

In Flower/Fertile

- Campanula floridana* – Florida bellflower
- Crinum americanum* – swamp lily
- Pinus elliotti* – slash pine
- Polygonum punctatum* – dotted smartweed
- Quercus* spp - oak
- Rumex crispus* – curly dock
- Salix caroliniana* – Carolina willow
- Urochloa mutica* - paragrass

In Fruit/Seed

- Acer rubrum* – red maple
- Schinus terebinthifolia* – Brazilian pepper
- Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* – softstem bulrush
- Symphotrichum carolinianum* – climbing aster
- Typha latifolia* – broadleaf cattail
- Viburnum oboratum* – Walter's viburnum