



A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST AT WAKULLA SPRINGS

**DANA C. BRYAN
CHIEF BIOLOGIST, RETIRED
FLORIDA PARK SERVICE
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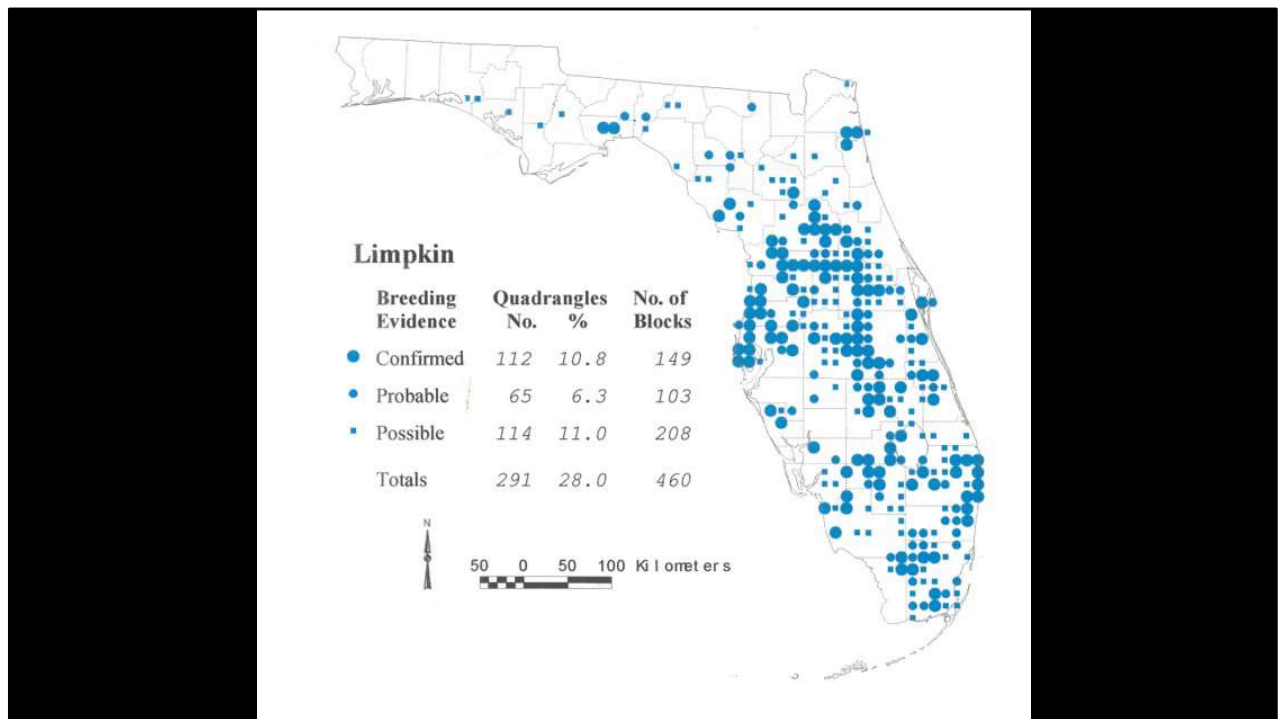
I retired 6 years ago after 30 years with FPS. When I started in 1986, FPS had 9 districts around the state, and each of the district offices had one biologist who worked with the 20 or so state parks within the district. I was in District 2, whose office was at Maclay Gardens. Later in that same year, Wakulla Springs was acquired by the state as a new state park. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



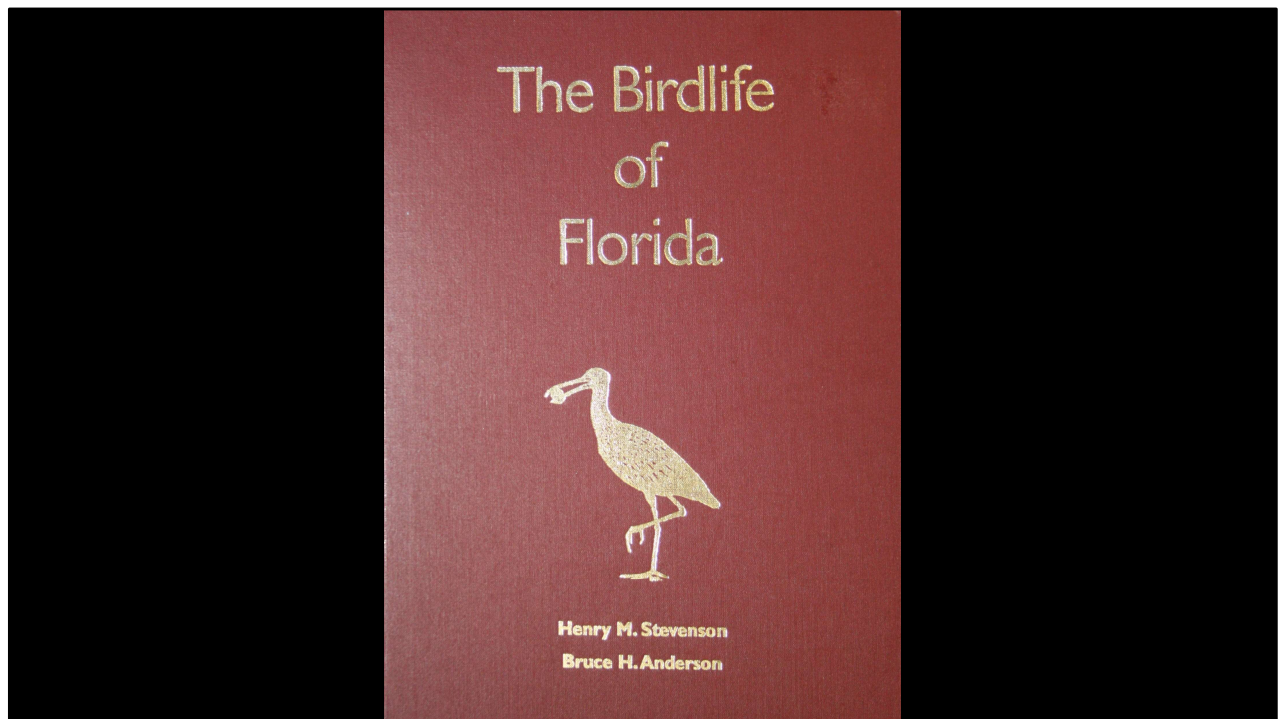
But I knew Wakulla Springs well already because I done my Masters research on the limpkin there. I had been given permission to color-band the limpkins and ride the Jungle Cruise boat whenever I wanted, to record the birds' locations and behavior. I road the boats over 1,000 times from 1979 to 1991, when the last remaining banded bird finally disappeared. *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



The limpkin was iconic for Wakulla Springs. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This was because Wakulla Springs was at the very northern and western edge of the limpkin's range. The two large dots represent the breeding population on the Wakulla River in this graphic from the first Breeding Bird Atlas project, which documented breeding in the 5 years between 1986 and 1991. The bird is locally common down the peninsula, and also extends all the way south throughout much of Central and South America. *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



But because in the United States the limpkin was restricted to Florida and was very unusual in its habits, it has always been considered iconic in the state, and has repeatedly been pictured on the covers of bird publications. *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



Many out-of-state birders came to Wakulla Springs just to see the limpkin because Wakulla Springs offered the unique opportunity to see many “guaranteed” limpkins from the convenience of a tour boat. And to the non-birders it was a headliner, like the alligator.
Photo by Don Richardson, Alachua County, 6-14-2019



And, the iconic status of the limpkin specifically at Wakulla Springs included the regular reports from sleepless guests in rooms overlooking the spring who listened to the relentless crying of the birds all night. *Photo by Roy Harrera.*



So in 1979 I was a graduate student at FSU under Fran James and I was trying to decide on a Master's project, when Fran told me that Tall Timbers Research Station wanted to fund research on the limpkin. Bruce Means was the station director and adjunct professor at FSU at the time, and after I applied to do the work, Bruce became my co-director with Fran for my thesis. *Photo by Randy Johnson 4-4-2018*



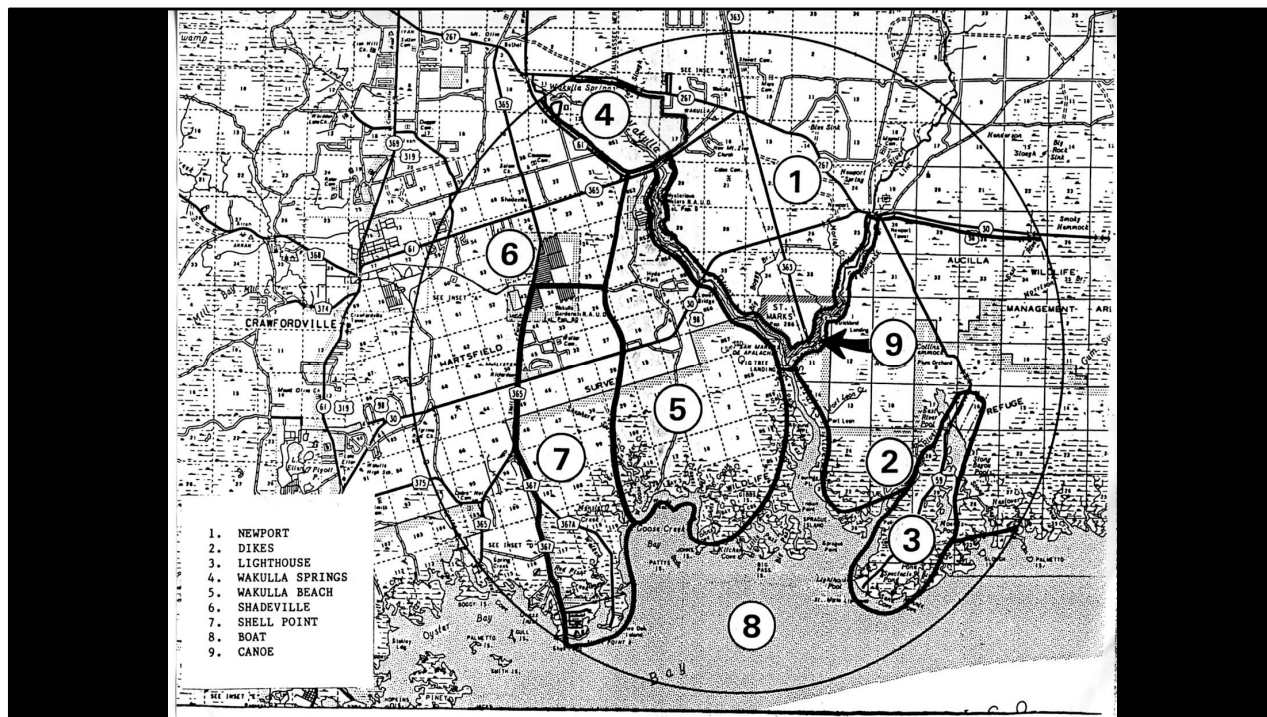
A few weeks earlier Bruce had received a call from Carl Buchheister, who was on the board of the Edward Ball Wildlife Foundation, and who is pictured feeding ducks in this 1967 photo at Wakulla Springs when he was president of that board. Carl had been on the staff of the National Audubon Society for 31 years including as president of the national society for 9 years. From 1963 to about 1970, Wakulla Springs' acreage was designated by the National Audubon Society as a wildlife and bird sanctuary and was leased to them to manage (in name only, of course). The southside of the river has been called "The Sanctuary" ever since. In the call to Bruce Means, Carl asked Tall Timbers to investigate the reported crash of the limpkin population at the springs. Bruce dispatched staff biologists Wilson Baker and Ginny Vail who went down and looked, but couldn't report anything definitive. But Bruce sensed an opportunity, and asked Carl to get the Foundation to fund some limpkin research through Tall Timbers. Carl did, and I lucked into the unique opportunity to do research at a place whose management prided itself in saying "No!" to every request. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



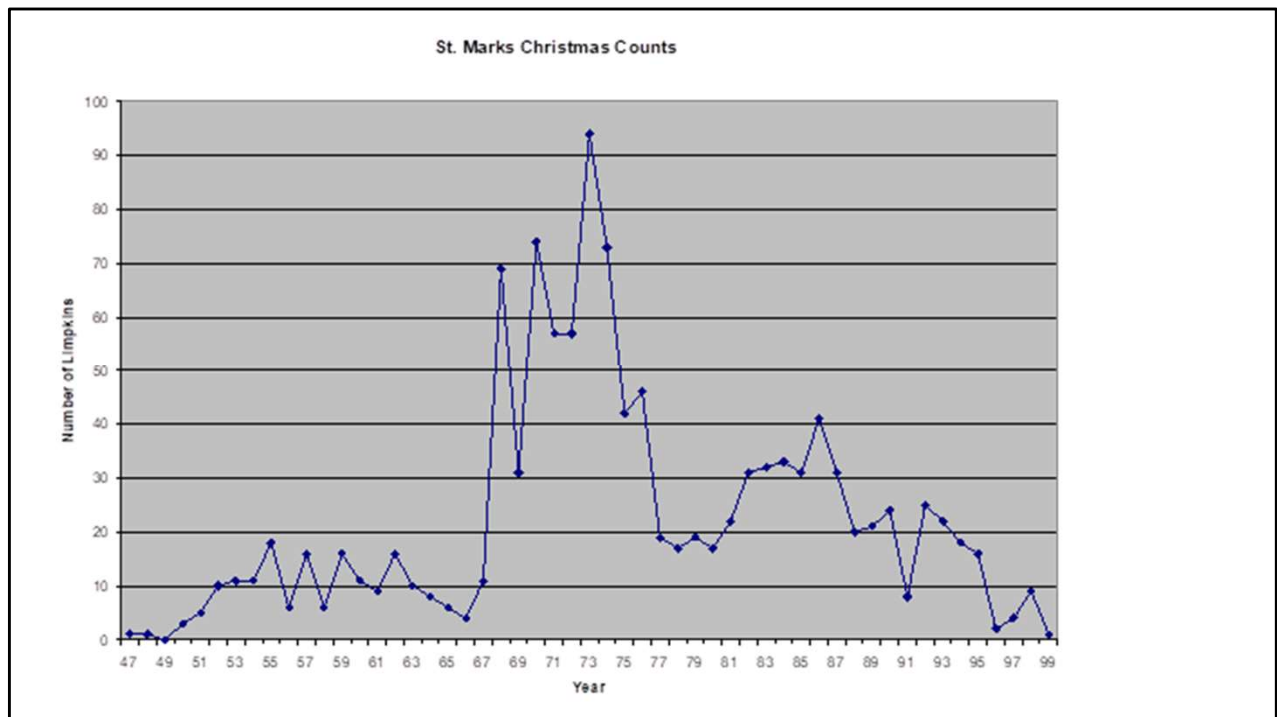
I also want to acknowledge the contribution of Joy Buba, here with her husband Henry when Gwendolyn and I visited them in their Black Mountain NC retirement home in 1991, a decade after most of my limpkin work. Joy was an internationally prominent sculptor and illustrator, whose works have been in the National Portrait Gallery, National Statuary Hall, the Vatican Library, and many other collections. In fact, when I was doing my limpkin work, she had a personal sculpture sitting with Pope John Paul II. As an illustrator, Buba focused on children's books, including those by author Herbert Zim, famous for his Golden Guide natural history booklets. I'm not clear on the origin of her friendship with Carl Buchheister, but perhaps it dated from when she did sculptures of John James and Lucy Audubon, which still reside at the Society's headquarters. Regardless, when Buchheister initiated the limpkin research with Tall Timbers, I was advised to look up the Bubas. At the time they lived in Italy during the summers and in the Wakulla Springs Lodge in the winters, and had apparently been doing so for several years. For all the money they must have spent at the lodge for their room and all their meals, and all their boat trips, they were favored residents and invited me along on a few special sidetrips, including to other Ball properties. Joy was constantly writing in her journal, and included many illustrations of what she saw at Wakulla Springs, so they would be worth tracking down one day. *Photo by Gwendolyn B. Waldorf*



The limpkin research funding from the Edward Ball Wildlife Foundation was not for a defined project, and there had been little research done on the limpkin, so I ended up doing a natural history study. Nevertheless, I was interested in the question of what was happening to the Wakulla Springs population, so I quickly looked back at the only data that existed of the limpkin population there, which was the annual national Christmas Bird Count. *Photo by Mary McDonough-McGowan, 5-22-2016.*



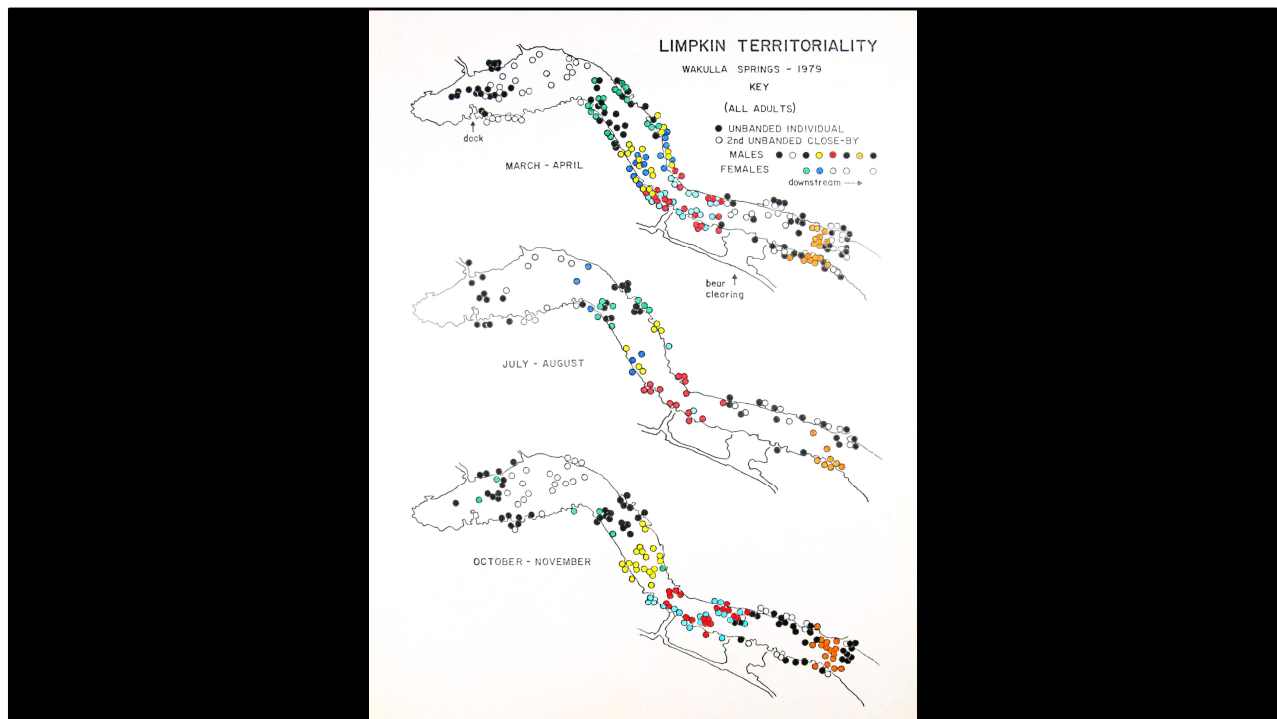
Christmas Bird Counts are all-day, multi-team counts covering a 15-mile diameter circle. The St. Marks Count has been run continuously since 1939, and at least since 1947, Wakulla Springs (Area #4 at the top) has been a distinct sub-area. The entire circle was clearly positioned to just include Wakulla Springs, which was famous for its bird abundance. Henry Stevenson at FSU and later Tall Timbers had been the circle compiler for many years and gave me his records specific to the Wakulla Springs area. *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



This is a graph of the limpkin counts at Wakulla Springs from the first count in 1947 to the limpkins' disappearance in 1999. The call from Carl Buchheister to Tall Timbers came in late 1978, and the previous year's limpkin count had been 19, which would be great by today's standards! But from this graph, it is clear that Wakulla Springs had enjoyed much higher numbers in the 9 years before that, which had become the "normal". Well, the first thing I noticed was that the anomaly seemed to be the boom, not the crash. It turned out that the tour boat channels, and even the Sally Ward Spring run, had been dredged in 1968, exactly when the count jumped between 1967 and 1968 from 10 to 70, and eventually peaked at 94 limpkins in 1973. *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



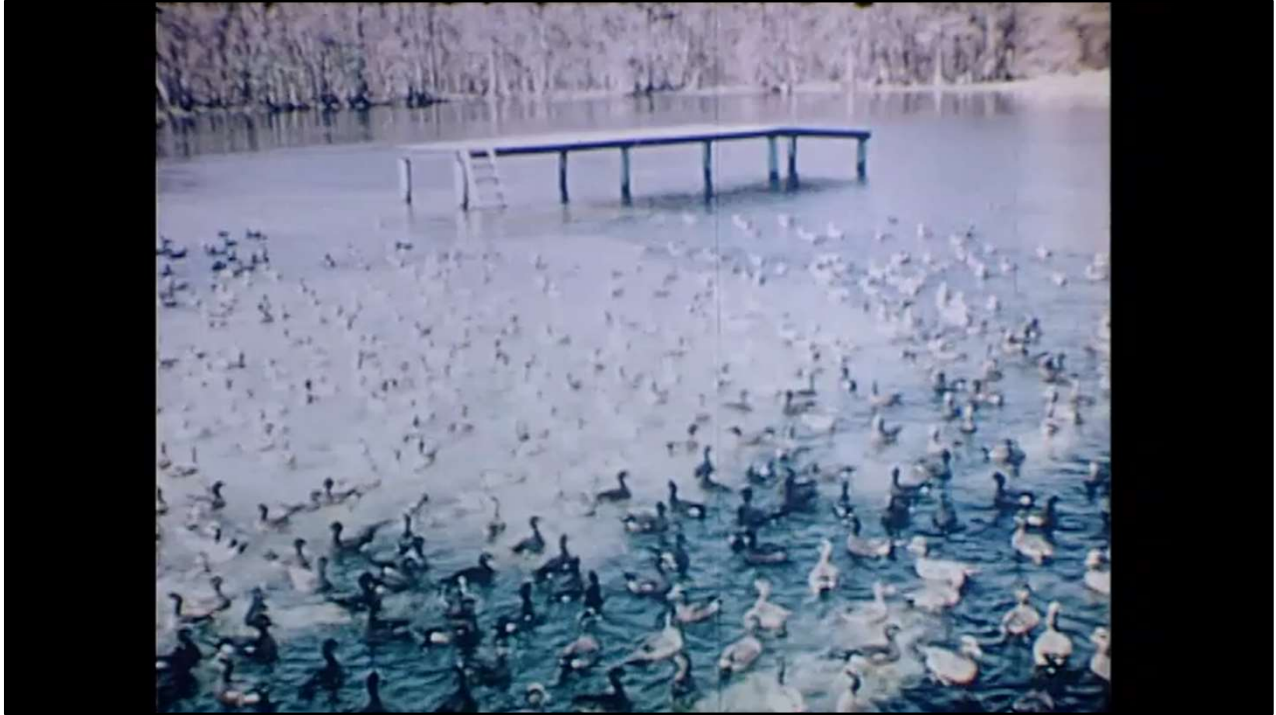
Although we rarely see flocking or large concentrations of limpkins in North Florida, they **will** gather up in various circumstances (like here at Myakka River State Park in 2017), and I think that is what happened after the dredging. I can't think of why the apple-snail population would have increased because of the dredging, but the spoil piles may have provided much improved access for wading and foraging by the limpkins. So I think immigration and improved survivorship because of food abundance combined to create the limpkin boom. The crash after the boom was eventually inevitable. 1-11-2017 Photo by Arlene Koziol



Anyway, my Master's project involved color-banding as many birds as I could, which was later knee-capped by the springs manager Joe Wilkie (the guy who liked to say "No!"). Nevertheless, with the banding I was able to do here and at a second spring-fed river where I banded and monitored limpkins in the peninsula, I was able to discover and document many life history habits, including aggressive territoriality, serial polyandry by the females, duet calling by males and females, and a partial migration, especially by the females and young. The colored dots show the territorial fidelity of banded individuals through spring, summer, and autumn, which they enforced with an aggressive defense of their boundaries. However, I'm sure during the boom of the previous decade, there were so many limpkins that there was territorial mayhem, as the boundaries could not be defended from so many intruders. *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



...If you'll shift your attention to the apple-snail eggs on the cypress bole, you can see the typical abundance of snails, even here in 1952, sixteen years earlier, when the limpkin Christmas count was only 10. That is why Wakulla Springs was always considered a northern stronghold for limpkins. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



I'm going to play you a clip from the 1972 film *This Good Land We Love! The Story of Wildlife Conservation and the Edward Ball Wildlife Foundation*. I wanted to show you that the winter duck populations were very different then, and I witnessed those numbers when I was doing the limpkin research. I started participating in the Wakulla Springs area of the St. Marks Christmas Count probably in 1979 with the Bubas, and have done it almost every time in the 41 years since. Back then, the American widgeon was by far the most common duck, followed by the lesser scaup, but neither come any more. **PLAY STOP MIDWAY AT MAN WALKING AWAY.** Here I want you to see the spoil piles from the 1968 dredging and limpkins foraging on it. **AFTER,** The narrator says the ducks "arrived on the river" for beach feeding, but actually they were flying up from downriver where they congregated above the wooded section of the river. It was a wildlife phenomenon on the Christmas counts to have the ducks fly in just at first light from downriver. **Then comment** Wakulla Springs put out a lot of corn when it was a Ball operation, including in "the bear clearing" (now called "The Pasture") so deer and turkey would almost always be seen from the Jungle Cruise. The bear clearing was so named because there was a caged black bear named Algenon ("Algie") who lived there – he had a large cage up the slope and a long caged runway down into the water. After Algie died, John Harvey (the Assistant Lodge Manager) built another cage on the lawn between the lodge and the waterfront and brought in a cub bear named Freedom. Freedom grew up and eventually mauled an employee, and was then donated to the Tallahassee Junior Museum, which later sent it on to Homosassa Springs State Park.



I want to show you another clip, this one from the 1951 film *Primeval Paradise*. This shows limpkins, and to my surprise, another bird which I had read about being seen at Wakulla Springs decades ago, but which I never knew was this well documented. Film 5:04-5:20 shows Snail Kite. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



The narrator's "hook-billed snail hawk" was actually named the Everglade kite at the time, and now is renamed the snail kite. Today, it is endangered and restricted to the peninsula from about Orlando south to the Everglades. Even more so than the limpkin, it is an apple-snail specialist, which explains why it used to live at Wakulla Springs. *Photo by Stacey Rich Bergman, 1-27-18*



I wanted to show you some other old Wakulla Springs photos from the online photo archives of the Florida Memory Project in the Florida Department of State. The photo dates and places are not all strictly reliable, but this was the earliest attributed to Wakulla Springs, labeled as c1870, and appears to be a glass-bottom boat, which we know from the earliest records were operated by local entrepreneurs. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is from c1900 and is labeled as free-range cattle at Wakulla Springs. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is a c1900 landing, apparently on the shoreline upstream from where the diving tower was later built. I wonder whether this is where the John and William Kennard trading store landing was in the late 1700s. As you know, archaeologists have been looking for the upland structures over the last few years. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This photo is dated as 1924 and the platform and rowboats seem to be down downstream from the previous landing and somewhere on where the beach is now. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This 1925 view across the spring bowl shows an abundance of eel grass at the surface with limited open water. This is the year real estate developer George T. Christie purchased Wakulla Springs and reportedly formalized the glass-bottom boat tours. The next image is from same viewpoint. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is labeled c1926, and the boat path through the eelgrass and the orientation of the boat, show that the glass-bottoms docked somewhere on the current beach. This boat is bigger and has a canopy, but is still rowed from the front. Note again the extent of the eelgrasses growing to the surface, even though the water level at the far shoreline does not seem to be low, and the limited amount of open water. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This photo is labeled c1930, showing the same platform as in the 1924 photo, with glass-bottom boat docked on the upstream side of the platform instead of being pulled up on the beach. And a piglet... *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Also in 1930, Dr. Herman Gunter of the Florida Geological Survey supervised the recovery of an almost complete mastodon skeleton, which is now on display at the Museum of Florida History in downtown Tallahassee. Note the diver on the left who is being fitted with a helmet... *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Here he is with the mastodon mandible. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is another shot of the 1930 recovery, which shows that it was found near the far edge of the spring bowl. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Ed Ball purchased Wakulla Springs in the following year, 1931, and opened the new lodge to the public in 1937. Ball had had the singular good fortune of having his sister marry Alfred I. duPont, of the ultra-wealthy Delaware family. Ball became one of duPont's closest aides and managed his financial investments in Florida. Later, Ball was named a trustee of duPont's estate and single-handedly built it from an estimated value of \$35 million to nearly \$2 billion by Ball's death in 1981. This photo of Ball was taken in 1952. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



After the lodge was opened, Ball hired Newton Perry to be the manager of Wakulla Springs from 1939 to the mid-1940s. Newt grew up in Valdosta, Georgia, but moved to near Ocala when he was 14. He immediately fell in love with Silver Springs, where he got a job as a lifeguard and swim instructor. He soon excelled as a swimmer and a diver, which he later turned into a career in the development of the tourist attractions at Silver Springs, Wakulla Springs, and Weeki Wachee Springs. All three attractions, Perry specialized in filming underwater stunts for the short Movietone News newsreels shown in theaters before the main feature, and the stunts could be filmed at the springs in the exceptionally clear water. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This c1940 image is of the construction of the Wakulla Springs diving tower. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This photo is labeled c1940, and we can see the completed 3-tier tower in the distance, a life guard tower on a raft or fixed platform at the left, the foreground dock with the boat berths facing out into the spring run, and at least 3 custom-made glass-bottom boats, still powered by oar, two over the spring bowl, and one being loaded at the dock. The shoreline from the life guard tower to the diving tower still appears to be natural. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is a closer c1940 view of the diving tower, which had diving boards on the 2 outer corners on the first level. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This c1940 view from the diving tower shows various added facilities. *Tarzan's Secret Treasure* was filmed this same year, so some of the activity may be related to that filming. But we see a second style of glass-bottom boat (the white one). The photo shows sand fill on part of the beach, a cluster of smaller boats and a roofed structure on the beach, at least two rafts for swimmers, a "glass house" at the boat dock, and a circular filming bell at the raft in the foreground. That bell is now on display in the park. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is a closer 1940 view of the underwater filming bell, with Newt Perry in the water helping cameraman Russ Erving during the filming. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



From c1940, this is the Tarpon Club from the Florida State College for Women. They were a synchronized swimming club that Newt Perry recruited to perform at the springs. Clearly, you couldn't be an inch too tall or an inch too short! *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Although this postcard is dated 1949, the photo seems to be from the same time as the previous c1940 image, with the house and the raft in the same position. This seems to show the glass-bottom taking on passengers from the raft. And that's the Tarpon Club in the lower left waving at you... *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is a 1941 closer view of the “glass house”, here positioned downstream from the dock. Lu Vickers reports that the house was used to let swimmers, perhaps specifically the Tarpon Club performers, warm up after extended swims in the 68-degree water. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Also dated c1940, this view from the tower shows a new roofed beach structure, and a repositioning of the raft. The abundance of surface eel grasses in earlier photos has disappeared and there is open water to the beach. The lighter-shaded sandy bottom off from the beach shows that trampling has removed most of the vegetation from the swimming area. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



From c1940, this air lock, supplied with an air hose, was provided for performers to take quick breaths. It was later left for recreational swimmers to enjoy until a soldier was injured, which put an end to it. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This c1941 photo shows the beach fill added around the cypress trees. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This photo is undated, but from around this time, and we can see the glass-bottoms were still rowed, which must have been a pain when the wind was blowing. Note the abundance of eelgrass at the surface remains downstream from the spring bowl. Through the boat windows, you can barely see the narrow open water path through the eelgrass that the early Jungle Cruise boats followed. When I was doing my limpkin work, the eelgrasses were so thick that a motorized grass cutter was used to maintain boat paths. The Jungle Cruise boats would constantly get their props fouled up and the drivers frequently had to reverse the engine to clear them. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is a c1941 photo of a Shorty Wharton executing a swan dive. This looks like it was across the spring bowl from the diving tower, so he must have climbed a cypress tree. Note that the “back jungle” passage is not yet cleared for boats. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This c1941 photo is the first good image of a river tour boat returning to the dock. The glass-bottom boats were still clearly the main attraction. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



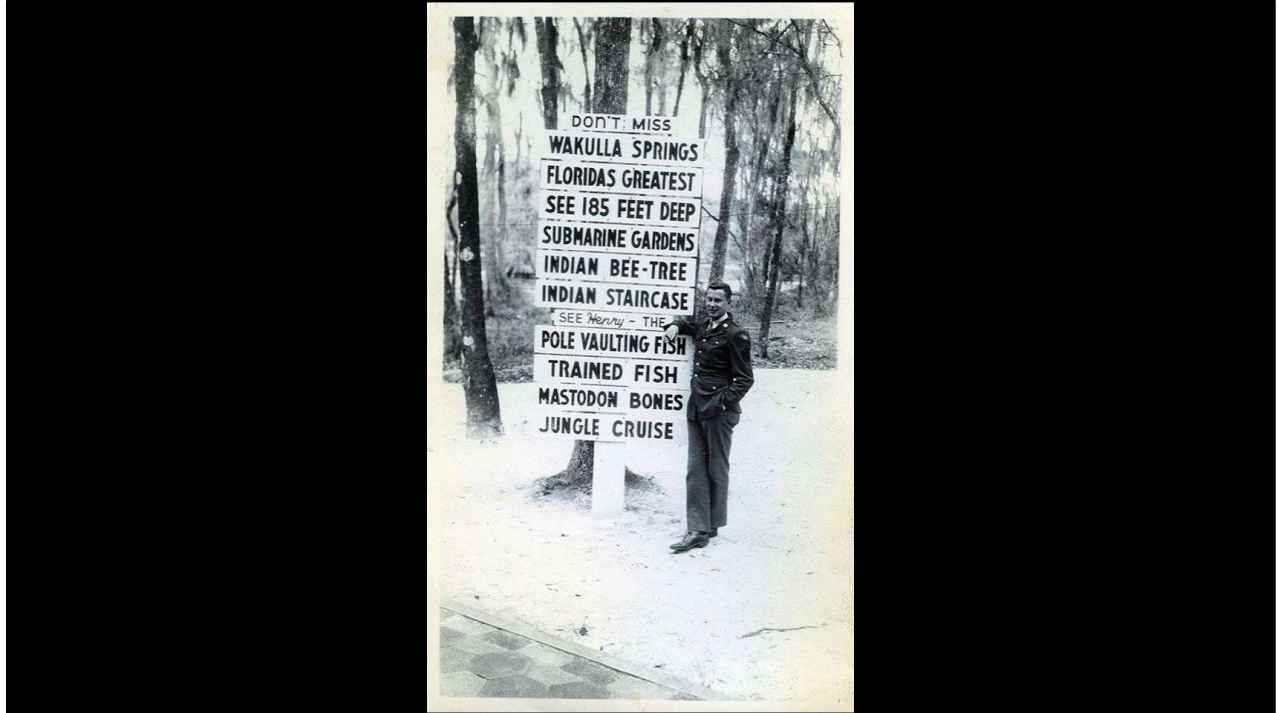
This c1941 view from the tower shows a Jungle Cruise boat far downriver, 4 rafts, and the round underwater filming bell. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This 1941 photo is of the Alligator Boat with Tarpon Club women aboard. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



In 1944 this is apparently the same Alligator Boat, but with added seats. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Also in 1944, these stacked signs showed some of the glass-bottom tour features and the “Jungle Cruise” name. These features were all still part of the boat driver spiels when I was doing my limpkin work in the 1980s. – the “Trained Fish” were brim which were attracted by the glass-bottom boat drivers. The drivers would get out over the deeper water and stop and back the boat up while secretly sprinkling tiny bread crumbs out the back, and a hundred brim would come out of nowhere and gather up under the glass to eat the crumbs. Of course, the spiel was that they were “trained” to come to the song the driver sang, and hopefully no one noticed the bread crumbs. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



In 1946, this Jungle Cruise boat was berthed on the side of the main dock. That looks like a second matching boat behind the driver. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Also in 1946, there were plenty of Adirondack chairs on the docks and beach for visitor comfort. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



By 1946, long permanent platforms were added off the beach for swimmers and sunbathers, and all the beach structures were gone. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



By 1950 a ticket booth had been added. I wonder whether this grey-suited visitor is comedian pianist Victor Borge? Unfortunately, I couldn't place him in the area with a brief Google search. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



In 1950 the raft next to the diving tower had a diving board and still had the underwater filming bell for the public to use, accessed by a ladder from a lifeguard stand. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



By 1950 the glass-bottom boats had been replaced with motorized versions. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



And by 1951 there was a new Jungle Cruise boat. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



In 1953 the Creature from the Black Lagoon was filmed at Wakulla Springs with actress Julie Adams. The underwater scenes of the Gill-Man were played by Ricou Browning. Ricou was a local lad who had been a lifeguard at Wakulla Springs in the 1940s and learned to perform in the underwater newsreels conceived by Newt Perry. Ricou reportedly could hold his breath for 4 minutes, which allowed him to be filmed without showing bubbles coming out from under his creature mask. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Julie apparently wasn't so terrified of the Creature after all... *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



In 1953 the Tarpon Club was still being filmed doing different acts, and apparently without many worries about alligators. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



From 1955 to 1957, 6 FSU students were the first to scuba dive in the spring, under the guidance of paleontologist Stanley Olsen of the Florida Geological Survey. They conducted 450 dives and penetrated to 1,100 ft and to a depth of 250 ft. One of the divers, Wally Jenkins, told me that this all happened because a commercial film crew had been filming there and their compressor broke. The students, who had been diving in local sinkholes, heard about it and offered the loan of their own compressor in exchange for permission to dive in the main spring, which had always been denied to all. The manager was persuaded, and they pulled out some huge mastodon bones which so impressed the manager that he allowed them to continue. The students were Wally Jenkins, Garry Salsman, Henry Doll, Andy Harrold, Gordon Whitney, and Lamar Trott.



These prehistoric bone gorge hooks were in Wally Jenkins' personal collection from Wakulla Springs. They were abundant and when I first visited the lodge in 1971, there was a full box of these in the snack bar for sale individually. Garry Salsman kept a journal of his dives at Wakulla, and the park has a copy in their files. *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



In 1957 the glass-bottom boats were still docked at the end of the T-dock, but now in in cut-out berths, and were named for Ed Ball properties. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



There was also a new Jungle Queen with inboard engine, rear tiller, and open deck with lawn chairs. 1957. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



By c1960 there were also smaller pontoon boats for smaller groups, for charter photographer trips, to give Ed Ball his personal tours when he came to visit from Jacksonville, and were also used by the staff to chase alligators away from the swimming area. Speaking of Ball's visits, he reportedly loved to see "his" deer when he was driven in the entrance drive, so the staff kept most of the area to the north of the current park drive bush-hogged, except for the largest trees. I'm sure the staff kept deer feeding stations in there as well. This was still kept largely cleared when I was coming in the 1980s, although rapid regrowth has made it hard to see the former clearings today. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Here's a group shot of the boat types, also showing the wooden dock extensions from 1965. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is a 1967 aerial showing the beachfront. There are still 2 old-style glass-bottoms in the cut berths , a new blue and perhaps white glass-bottom boat on either side and a variety of Jungle Cruise boats. The ticket booth building looks the same, but is painted white, a few cypress remain in the beach area, added sand extends to the diving tower, and all the vegetation off the beach has been trampled away. Sand was repeatedly brought onto the beach by dump trucks, and during my limpkin days, I took a photo of one mired down and almost tipped over on the beach. All that added sand has made the swimming area more shallow than it used to be. *Photo by Richard Parks. State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



In 1976, the underwater scenes for *Airport 77* were filmed at the springs. The carcass of the airliner was still in the woods dump when the property became a Florida State Park. Apparently, all the trash from the entire operation for decades, large and small, was dumped in the woods of the sanctuary. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



When I did my limpkin work, the boats were blue and remained so until they were painted white in about 1985. The gas engines on these boats were not entirely reliable. When the drivers were approaching the dock after a Jungle Cruise, there was a good reason why they would ask people to take their seats. The technique was to line the boat up with the berth and to have enough speed to maintain steering control to avoid the pilings, and also to have enough momentum to reach the dock. But at the right moment, the driver would shift the motor into reverse and rev it a little, in order to quickly slow the boat so it would gently stop right at the dock, so the driver could quickly walk up the center aisle, step off, and tie down the boat. Except what often happened was that when the driver shifted into reverse, the old engine would stall. Then there was nothing to slow down the boat except the dock itself. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is what the dock and fleet looked like at the time of state acquisition in 1986, and as I remember, this was also the look in 1979 when I started my work. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Probably my favorite driver was Wilbert Gavin, here in a c1981 photo. I would stand in the back of the boat on the other side of the inboard engine compartment from the driver with my clipboard, searching for all the limpkins and trying to read my colored leg bands with my binoculars, and mapping their locations and behavior. My last banded bird to disappear was "Orange", who I banded as a juvenile and who disappeared 12 years later. In all that time, I never saw him outside his territory. As I said, I collected these data on over 1000 Jungle Cruise trips over this period. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



Tommy "Hawk" Jackson was another boat driver during my time - this photo is from Oct. 1980. Wilbert and Hawk were both featured as folklife performers at the Florida Folk Festival, and audio recordings of their recited boat spiels were taped there and are available in the Florida Memory Project. There is also a recording of the senior Luke Smith, who is credited with developing the basic sing-song spiels several decades earlier. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



This is driver Don Gavin, here giving a program at an Apalachee Audubon Society meeting in 2016 (3-24-16). Don was just starting boat-driving, as I remember, when I was still doing surveys, Other drivers during my time included George Bower, Luke Smith (who was Luke Sr's grandson), and Donald ("Frog") Edwards. George Bower deserves special mention – he was the only Caucasian driver of the era, and was a small guy from Macon who wore a small white hat and white shoes, and took pride in his polyester look. He also drove his boats so fast that he would wash gallinules off their perches as he drove past. On almost every tour at some point, water would wash over the square bow and pour into the boat, but instead of slowing down, he would stop and ask people to get up and move further back in the boat to prevent it from happening any more. *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



At some point in the mid-1980s, the top level of the diving tower was cut off. A boat driver told me that the management had decided to remove it after a kid claimed that he had injured himself jumping off of it, but that in reality, he had hurt himself on the school bus on the way home. *State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*



By 2009 there was a brand new tower that isn't much of a tower at all. There's a lot to be said for "the good old days" when jumping of the 3rd platform at Wakulla Springs was a badge of honor... *Photo by Dana C. Bryan*



I will close with another photo angle from the 1967 flyover, which will remind us all why we love Wakulla Springs so much, then and now. *Photo by Richard Parks, 1967. State Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, Department of State*