



# THE KINGFISHER

A quarterly publication of the St. Johns Riverkeeper  
Volume 1, Issue 2 Fall 2002

*The mission of the St. Johns Riverkeeper is to protect, preserve and restore the ecological integrity of the St. Johns River watershed for current users and future generations through advocacy and citizen action.*

## Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. To Greet Keepers November 16 – 17

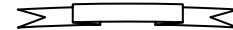
The St. Johns Riverkeeper is pleased to present Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. who has been instrumental in promoting water quality and growing the number of Keeper organizations to more than 80 nationwide. Mr. Kennedy will be the Honored Guest of the Riverkeeper Annual Event at noon on Sunday, November 17, 2002 at the Sisters Creek Marina on Hecksher Dr. A delicious seafood brunch is included.

Mr. Kennedy supervises the Pace Environmental Litigation Clinic at Pace University's law school in White Plains, New York. The book he co-authored, entitled *The Riverkeepers*, notes "For human dignity to be fostered, a community must be sustainable. Its long-term economic vitality is tied to the investment made toward safeguarding its environment. Investments that ensure a clean, healthy environment do not, as the boomers argue, diminish our nation's wealth. We must invest in our environmental infrastructure – clean rivers, clear air, safe foods, proper disposal of toxic wastes and recycling – in the same way that we invest in our transportation and telecommunication infrastructure. If we doubt that such investments are financially sound, we have only to look at those nations that failed to invest in their environment."

Saturday, November 16, Mr. Kennedy will present an update on our nation's waters to Riverkeeper members at the Jacksonville Landing, downtown.

Our thanks to the Robin Shepherd Group for their assistance in the coordination of this important event.

If you are interested in an invitation, tickets or for more information, please call the Riverkeeper office at 256-7591 or Email [kbreen@ju.edu](mailto:kbreen@ju.edu).



### RiverKeeper Update

-- Mike Hollingsworth, Riverkeeper

Welcome back to another issue of "The Kingfisher!" It has certainly been a busy year for the St. Johns Riverkeeper organization, and many more activities important to our enjoyment of the River lay just on the horizon. As we look ahead, let's take a quick look back to all the organization has accomplished thus far. **Your Riverkeeper:**

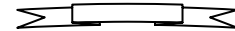
- ✓ **Fought** to preserve Julington Creek headwaters threatened by the Freedom Commerce Center mall proposal
- ✓ **Uncovered** lax sediment control structure maintenance at 14 different road construction sites and stormwater pond construction areas
- ✓ **Lobbied** the City of Jacksonville Mayor's Office, Public Works Dept., Waterways Commission, and St. Johns River Water Management District for stricter erosion control enforcement
- ✓ **Worked** with the interagency bacteria task force to develop water quality websites, investigative surveys, and recreational water monitoring plans
- ✓ **Uncovered** a major sewage overflow from a mobile home park that dumped into a creek that flows through the middle of Westside Regional Park
- ✓ **Provided** expert testimony, strategic planning assistance, and extensive media and scientific support against the Georgia Pacific Pipeline permit.
- ✓ **Banded** together with other environmental organizations to form citizen coalitions for government agency commentary to the TMDL Citizen Stakeholder Committee and NE Florida Environmental Coalition
- ✓ **Provided** written and verbal public commentary against
  - Commercial shrimping south of the Acosta Bridge
  - expansion of Cross State Towing barge Operation
  - Gate Maritime Blount Island ship docking proposal

- Wal-Mart “Superstore” proposal for the Killarney Shores ravine.
  - Liberty St. Recycle Facility.
  - SR 16 corridor expansion through Clay Co.
  - Broward River remedial dredging operation.
  - Sewage and garbage plans for Super Bowl cruise ships.
  - The poisoning of waterfowl from firefighting practices near Mayport.
- √ **Assisted** in the development of the St. Johns River Research Consortium.

**Educated** citizens through numerous presentations at conferences, events, and civic meetings.

*There is still so much more to do! With bacteria still seeping into many of our tributaries, sediment-laden water being discharged from hundreds of construction sites, and pollution reduction being allocated by the TMDL process, the Riverkeeper organization will certainly be involved in many activities in the months ahead. It is with the support of citizens such as yourself—those who truly care about the health of the River and enjoy its resources—that enables us to continue the fight to ensure that all of the waters in the St. Johns River basin truly become “fishable and swimmable.”*

*Thanks to all of you!*



## Riverkeeper Calendar

**October 18:** National Clean Water Day

**October 28:** Julington Creek Riverkeeper Boat Ride

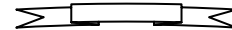
**November 16, 17:** Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. visits with St. Johns Riverkeeper supporters (*see article this page*)

**Monthly Meetings** are held by the Riverkeeper with invited guest speakers on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Blue Cypress Community Center, 4012 University Blvd. Call 256-7591/ Email [kbreen@ju.edu](mailto:kbreen@ju.edu) for more information.

Meetings are:

**November 5:** Keeper update by Mike Hollingsworth, **December 3:** WAV Program update by Felicia Boyd

**January 7, 2003:** TBA



## From the Helm

*-Roger Bass, St. Johns Riverkeeper Chair*

Most boating in North Florida falls into one of three different categories. The most popular is power boating with either a gasoline or diesel engine providing power similar to what we are used to in our automobiles. This provides our boats with plenty of power and range, although it sometimes may be a little noisy and can pollute.

Another type of boating is sailing and once the sails are raised and that auxiliary engine is turned off it is easy to feel at peace with nature and really enjoy the river. Of course you can't drop the mast to get under the inevitable bridges over the river's tributaries and explore some of the more remote areas.

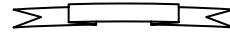
A third type of boating that appeals to the younger and more athletic among us is canoeing or kayaking. This is a great way to get on some of the smaller streams and enjoy nature in peace and quiet. Of course, it won't be long before you can't see much nature through the sweat dripping in your eyes if you aren't in shape. Also, try to yell to the backs of the people in the canoe 20 feet ahead of you without scaring away the wildlife! One well worn saying among boaters is “any boat is a compromise.”

I have owned a boat for several years that is a different type of compromise. This boat is as quiet as a kayak or sailboat, can get into most of the remote areas accessible only by canoes but can hold six people in comfort and shade. This 21 foot long boat is powered by eight 6 volt golf cart batteries and can cruise at seven miles per hour for six hours or so. The boat is flat bottomed and the electric motor is an outboard that kicks up and slides up over logs and shallow areas.

The fun really begins when I get up into one of the numerous small tributaries that are too narrow and restricted for wake boarders and jet skiers. Turtles and alligators will usually let you slip right up next to them before they slide underwater. The most amazing thing is that there are areas of tributaries within the city limits of even our largest cities that are so wild and natural that it is hard to believe that you are not hundreds of miles from civilization.

I firmly believe that the best way to convince people that the St. Johns River is worth saving is to get them out onto one of these tributaries, surrounded by nothing but natural Florida like it was hundreds of years ago. Cruising up the middle of the SJR is enjoyable but the real magic occurs when you get back up one of the small creeks close in to shore and the wild life, slow and away from other boat traffic.

\*\* check out [www.energy.sourceguides.com](http://www.energy.sourceguides.com) to get information on a variety of solar powered and electric boats



## DID YOU KNOW?

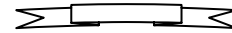
- \*The St. Johns River is one of the few rivers in the U.S. which flows North.
- \* It is Florida's longest river, stretching 310 miles from its headwaters near Vero Beach to its end at Mayport.
- \* Because the river flows slowly, it is difficult for the river current to flush pollutants.

## October is National Clean Water Day

October 18, 2002 is the 30th Anniversary of the enactment of the Clean Water Act, initially passed in 1972. This date marks a milestone in the efforts to protect our nation's water resources. This anniversary also presents an excellent opportunity to:

- Enhance public appreciation for the importance of our water resources,
- Celebrate water quality improvements,
- Build a better understanding of remaining challenges and solutions, and
- Rekindle the public stewardship ethic and support for watershed protection programs, and
- Educate our nation's young people.

In support of these goals, Congress, along with a number of the nation's Governors and national organizations have proclaimed 2002 as the Year of Clean Water. The America's Clean Water Foundation (ACWF) is coordinating events throughout: [www.acwf.org](http://www.acwf.org).

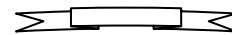


## Julington Creek Boat Ride

October 28, 2002 at 4:00 PM the St. Johns Riverkeeper will lead an exploration of Julington and Durbin Creeks on a 50 passenger U.S. Coast Guard inspected water taxi type covered pontoon boat. Mike Hollingsworth, the St. Johns Riverkeeper, and Beverly Fleming, St. Johns County Park Naturalist, will be leading the exploration of two beautiful tributaries to the St. Johns River just south of Mandarin. Passengers can board at the County Dock Rd. boat ramp off of Mandarin Rd.

Tickets are \$10.00 per person for St. Johns Riverkeeper members; and \$20.00 per person for non-members. Since seating is limited, please make reservations by sending a check made payable to the St. Johns Riverkeeper, 2800 University Blvd., Jax, FL 32211 or call the Riverkeeper office at (904)256-7591 with your Visa or Mastercard.

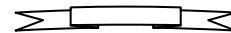
We look forward to seeing you there!! ALL ABOARD!



*Thanks to our recent funders:*

**JEA - Building Community**  
**J.S. Turner**  
**M.A. Healy Foundation**  
**Bob Neid**  
**Turner Foundation**

*and our many contributors who make our work possible protecting the St. Johns River.*



## St. Johns Shrimp

*- Ben's Williams, St. Johns Riverkeeper Board Member*

For as long as I can remember we have called them "River Shrimp". That term was used back when recreational shrimping meant bug repellent, Coleman lanterns, clay, fish-meal, stakes and shallow water, and it remains today when shrimping means sunscreen, taped nets, depth finders, catch limits and deep water. But what are these crustaceans we call "River Shrimp?" What biological events move them in and out of the St. Johns and, for that matter, all the coastal rivers

of the southeastern tidewater region?

What we call "River Shrimp" are actually juvenile Atlantic White Shrimp (*Penaeus setiferus*) which are using our river as the great nursery it really is. These juvenile Atlantic White Shrimp are the same shrimp which will, by their abundance or lack thereof, make or break many a commercial shrimp fisherman on the Atlantic coast. This makes the point of how important our river is as a economic engine for the commercial fishing industry.

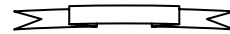
The life story of our "River Shrimp" starts in the spring with April and May being the peak months. The previous year's shrimp are now adults. In the industry these are called "roe"shrimp and the eggs are actually visible in the females. These roe shrimp congregate around the river mouth to reproduce, one of the last acts of their relatively short lives, which is 18 months at the most. The result is our "River Shrimp-to-be" which immediately start working their way inshore and ultimately up the river. At times there will be "River Shrimp" as far south as Lake George and Crescent Lake. According to scientists, the juvenile shrimp accomplish this migration by moving with the incoming tide and burying up on the falling tide. The reverse procedure is used in the fall as the shrimp return to the ocean.

How far the shrimp will travel up the river is determined by what the river's salinity will allow. Even though the juvenile shrimp are fairly tolerant of fresh water they still need some salt. I have heard some old-timers claim that the shrimp are driven up the river by the myriad species of fish trying to eat them. Again according to scientists, this traveling behavior does afford the juvenile shrimp some protection from many saltwater species and is most likely an evolutionary response to predation. I guess the old timers knew what they were talking about in a round about way.

The shrimp grow fast during the summer feeding on the rich variety of detritus (dead stuff) and microorganisms in the river. Under normal circumstances the shrimp will stay in the river benefiting from the reduced number of predators and the rich feeding environment until their need for higher concentrations of salt increases and they return to the ocean. According to the scientists as the shrimp mature, their biology changes and their ability to tolerate fresh water decreases.

It is this decreased tolerance for freshwater which can ruin even the best of shrimp seasons just as it gets started. According to the old timers the worst thing for a shrimp run is a tropical event. A tropical storm or hurricane can dump enough water on North Florida in a couple of days to "flush" the shrimp from the river ("Flushed" is the word usually used by the commercial shrimpers.) Once they are gone and have hit the saltwater, it is said, they will not come back. Experience validates this.

Assuming that there is no significant tropical attack, the shrimp will gradually head to the ocean as Fall arrives. By late October or early November almost all cast netting of shrimp has ceased in our river but the shrimp are not completely gone. In fact if the winter is mild enough a few shrimp will stay the whole year.



## VOLUNTEER WITH US!

St. Johns Riverkeeper needs **YOU**. If you are interested in assisting us with our mission to protect, preserve and restore the St. Johns River, won't you please clip, complete and return the form below and let us know what your skills, interest and time availability are? If you have contacted us before with an interest in volunteering, we thank you and ask that you confirm your interest by completing the form below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

Circle preference: Mail me    Email me    Phone me

1) I am able to volunteer:

\_\_\_ weekdays    \_\_\_ evenings    \_\_\_ weekends.

2) Please indicate number of hours you are willing to donate per \_\_\_ week \_\_\_ month OR \_\_\_ by project

3) I am interested in:    \_\_\_ boat patrols    \_\_\_ site monitoring    \_\_\_ river cleanup  
 \_\_\_ assisting with events    \_\_\_ office work    \_\_\_ assisting with fund raising

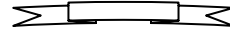
4) I am interested in attending monthly meetings with invited speakers. \_\_\_ YES

5) My special skills are:

**Mail to:** Katey, c/o St. Johns Riverkeeper, 2800 University Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32211 or Email: kbreen@ju.edu.

Volunteers are encouraged to attend one or more of the monthly meetings. Some volunteer positions will require training,

which St. Johns Riverkeeper will provide. Thank you for your interest and we look forward to seeing you soon!



## THE LIMPKIN

- Beverly Fleming, St. Johns County Park Naturalist

The limpkin (*Aramus guaranna*) is a shy, secretive fresh water swamp and marsh bird more familiar to those living in west Florida than here. It has a large (28 inch) brown body with splashes and spots of white, similar in shape to the ibis, with long dark legs and a down-curved beak.

The limpkin mainly feeds on snails. When Apple snails are in good supply, that is their main food and the curved beak gains them easy access to the succulent mollusk. When snails are in short supply, the bird will resort to other available food such as frogs, some insects and mussels.

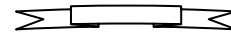
Unlike most birds, the limpkin will use a "tool" to help open the mussels. It will bring the mussel up onto the bank and has been observed using a small mass of wet vegetation to hold the mussel in place, on end, while it uses its beak to strike the shell open.

Limpkins like to raise their young on floating grass islands near shore. This sometimes presents problems, for it is these very masses of vegetation that often clog small feeder streams and make navigation difficult. This vegetation is often sprayed to keep the waters open, destroying the preferred nesting habitat of the limpkin.

While this may be one of the least known of our wading birds, those who have heard the mournful cry of the limpkin at night or on cloudy days will not forget its call. The shrill kree-ow, kree-ow is somewhat haunting, especially as the caller is usually out of sight.

Observing the bird is a lesson in patience, as any wildlife photographer will tell you. Not only is the body well camouflaged but the bird seems to slip between the reeds and grasses as easily as a shadow. It will remain in the same area, however, and if you wait long enough, it will eventually reveal itself. Although I have observed the limpkin nesting along the St. Johns River in the mouth of Kendall Creek in St. Johns County in the past, my favorite place for observation is at Hontoon Island State Park. Since the birds are well protected there, and they are used to the daily routine of the ferryboat, they are more easily observed.

It is well worth the effort to seek out this elusive wading bird, since this bird is one of our indicator species, relying on the river and other waterways for its food and a place to live and raise its young.



## 2002 St. Johns Riverkeeper Contributors

*Please let us know if we have made an error in your name*

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**The St. Johns Riverkeeper is YOUR advocate for the St. Johns River. Take a few moments to write your thoughts on the following and send to the Riverkeeper address below.**

What presenters or information would you like at the Riverkeeper's monthly meetings?

---

What type of Riverkeeper events and celebrations would you like?

---

What type of volunteer opportunities would you like?

---

Tell us your favorite memory of the St. Johns River which will let us know why you appreciate the work that we do.

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Interested in St. Johns Riverkeeper merchandise?

T- Shirts: (indicate quantity) S \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ XL \_\_\_\_\_ XXL \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$10.00 each = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hats..... @ \$10.00 each = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Screen Saver..... @ \$15.00 each = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Book: The Riverkeepers..... @ \$20.00 each = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Videos..... @ \$20.00 each = \_\_\_\_\_  
 TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this completed form with your check made payable to the  
**St. Johns Riverkeeper**:2800 University Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32211

**St. Johns Riverkeeper**  
 2800 University Blvd.

Jacksonville, FL 32211 904-256-7591

[www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org](http://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org)

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Mike Hollingsworth, *St. Johns Riverkeeper*  
Katey Breen, *Administrative Director*

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The St. Johns Riverkeeper is a 501©(3) nonprofit membership organization dedicated to maintaining an on the water presence to investigate pollution, respond to citizen complaints and be an advocate for the St. Johns River.

The *Kingfisher* is a quarterly publication of the St. Johns Riverkeeper and is printed on recycled paper.