

Local Benefit: Bird Bash Raises Over \$19,000

Over 200 people danced the night away at the 1960's Bird Bash Revival on September 15th. The Upper Keys community came out in force to support the event which benefited the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center. "The generosity of our Upper Keys residents never ceases to amaze me the auctions alone raised over \$10,000 a figure which well exceeded our expectations," said John Singleton Committee Chairperson for the event. Laura Quinn from the Bird Center who attended the event was equally impressed by the turnout and the generosity of the Community.

Major sponsors of the event were KLI True Value, Ray Hampson Insurance, De Clues Art and Framing, The Reporter Newspaper and Clearchannel Radio. Other businesses stepped up as table sponsors for the event, FKEC, Sunshine Title, Florida Bay Club, Island Grill and Realty World Freewheeler. More was added to the event by the participation of local celebrities City Councilman Chris Sante, Captain Spencer Slate

and Pam Godfrey of Clear-channel Radio who acted as auctioneers and judges "the most fun I've had in a long time" was Captain Slates reaction to the nights festivities.

The Lions Club kindly donated their premises for the event and revelers danced the night away to 60's favorites

spun by D.J. "Big

Daddy" Joe Marcum who donated his time and talents to the night. Scott Stoky and the Upper Keys Athletic league together with Bob Blevins "Pig Roast Bob" from Anthony's Restaurant dished up dinner.

Organizers of the Bird Bash were the local club Pirates on the Water Parrotheads of the Upper Keys. "The Wild Bird Center was chosen as one

of four non-profit organizations that we wanted to raise funds for" John Singleton said, "they are in desperate need of financial help since experiencing damage by Hurricane Wilma and I hope that this has relieved their burden to some extent. It was such a huge success that we hope to make this an annual event."



Laura Quinn on right with a helper at Bird Bash.



Jack Hildreth and Spencer Slate at Bird Bash.

Alligator Hunter

Story by Rich Peine & pictures by David Spitznagel

Interested in alligator hunting? Dave Spitznagel of Key Largo is the man to see, but first a little primer.

According to the Everglades National Park Service, "The range of the American Alligator extends south from coastal swamps in North and South Carolina to the tip of southern Florida, then west along the Gulf Coast to the mouth of the Rio Grande. Alligators range inland throughout the southern coastal flatland. Alligators live in freshwater lakes, rivers, and swamps. They occasionally live in brackish water.

"The largest alligator recorded in Florida was 17 feet 5 inches long. The largest alligator ever recorded measured 19 feet 2 inches and was found in Louisiana."

Dave Spitznagel has been a lifelong hunter, enjoying the sport in his native Missouri and after he moved to the Keys in 1994. Last year he became aware that an alligator trapper's license could be obtained through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. He attend a course on alligator hunting given by the state, and did further research on the internet.

Along with his friend and neighbor Mike Smith, on Aug 15th he went to Lake Hipochee, near Lake Okeechobee, the hunting area assigned by the state. Hunting gators can only be done at nighttime, a half hour before nightfall and a half hour after sunrise. By using a spotlight you can see gators' eyes reflecting back at you. A word to the wise: bring plenty of bug repellent.

He took on this trip some specialized hunting gear required for alligators and loaded it into his 18ft bass boat. For the first two nights they were unsuccessful. On the third day, Mike ran across a father and son airboat team who agreed to take them out that night. This time they were successful, and bagged their allotted one alligator apiece.

After two nights of fighting the bugs, the darkness and the gators themselves Dave and Mike came home from a successful hunt. They cleaned and skinned their prizes, froze the meat for later meals and tanned the hides.

Interested? You can E-mail Dave at davespitz@bellsouth.net



Artist of the Month Chris Bradeen Chainsaw Artist



Story & photo by Rich Peine

The world of the chain saw artist has grown in leaps and bounds over the past 10 years or so here in the USA. The Coconut Telegraph has chosen Chris Bradeen of Friki Tiki as artist of the month, because of the unique work he is producing.

According to the United Chain Saw Carvers Guild, "The first practitioners of chainsaw carving were probably loggers, who took it up during their lunch breaks, probably as far back as the 1950s. It wasn't until early this century that the craft began to grow. Much of that growth has been spurred by the rise of the Internet, where skilled craftsmen can broadcast tips, techniques and competitions."

I walked into Chris's open-air shop just behind Riki Tiki Tatu at Mile Marker 97.5 Ocean Side. He was engrossed in carving a Tiki statue, and I watched him for a few minutes before he realized I was there. I could see he was enjoying making something out of a log.

With the chainsaw rolling he would take a step back, look and carve anew.

Chris started doing chain-saw work about nine years ago. At first he did finishing work on completed pieces. After a few months he decided he would try his hand at carving from scratch, and he hasn't stopped since. Aside from the Tiki carvings, he does bears (see picture), fish, seahorses and other nautical pieces. He once carved a five foot horse for a horse breeder in Arizona.

Chris uses cypress for his carving because of the longevity and strength of the wood. He imports his logs from a supplier in the Florida panhandle.

Chris said that every piece is a unique work of art. "It's not like you're going over to Kmart and buying something out of a mold."

His work is for sale at Riki Tiki Tatu, 852-2001 or at Loveland Realty, 453-0720.

Chris lives with his wife Lynda in Key Largo.

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