

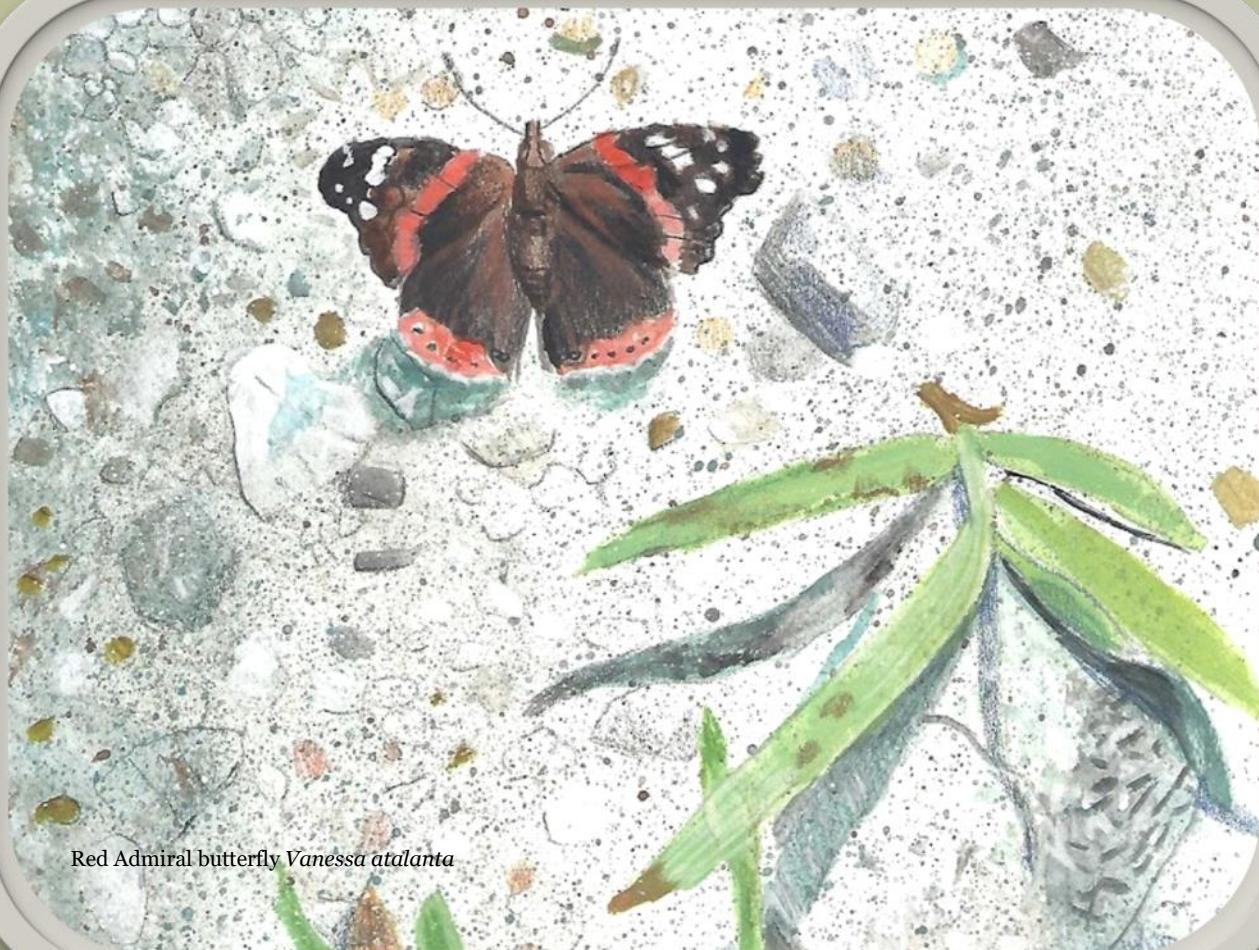


STATE PARKS & HISTORIC SITES

ROADS LESS TRAVELED

*News From the Georgia State Parks and
Historic Sites Division Interpretive Unit*

Summer 2020



Red Admiral butterfly *Vanessa atalanta*

Summer 2020

Volume 6, Issue 1

**PRHS Interpretive
Newsletter
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Writer and Editor**

**Ellen Graham
Chief Naturalist-
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Resource Manager-
Cover Artist**

Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites



Rudolph Capers was the butler at Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantation for over 40 years

ROADS LESS TRAVELED

Interpretive News:

PRHS is continuing to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following guidelines established through the governor's office and the CDC, PRHS is now providing access to visitor centers and museums. Interpretive staff are developing and implementing programs that provide quality interpretive experiences on their sites, all the while maintaining social distance and ensuring other safety measures. The eRanger series <https://gastateparks.org/eRanger> provided needed distance learning opportunities and generated over 1,300,000 views across the various social media outlets. Kudos to all who made the series a success. Although our model changed, PRHS is proud that the rich tradition of quality interpretation has continued during this difficult time.



Park Spotlight: Hofwyl-Broadfield

From 1806 until 1973 Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantation was home to five generations of the Brailsford, Troup and Dent families. The plantation was also home to generations of enslaved, and later freed, African Americans who worked there.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the low-country of Georgia and South Carolina was shaped by rice cultivation. Rice, not cotton, was the chief agricultural commodity grown along the coast.

The Dent family lived in a house overlooking the marshland rice-fields. Hundreds of enslaved workers lived in two room cabins in three separate communities around the plantation. Unfortunately, all but one of these structures are now gone due to the forces of time.

By the early part of the 20th century rice was no longer profitable, and its production faded away. When rice failed the family turned their plantation into a dairy. It operated as such until the 1940s. Wise investments allowed the last two Dents, sisters Miriam and Ophelia, to live comfortably. Miriam died in 1953. Ophelia followed in 1973, leaving the property to the State of Georgia.

By: Bill Giles, Manager HBP



Interpretation and Programming during the Pandemic



The PRHS Marketing Unit has produced some great flyers for use at visitor centers, museums, and other locations. These can help reinforce interpreters' messages about social distancing and other safety measures.

As PRHS continues to balance interpretation and programming against the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, we as a division have made strong efforts to keep connecting the public with our cultural, natural, and recreational resources while remaining conscious of the need for protecting our visitors and our staff.

The eRanger series was a component of that effort and was widely successful, but as we continue to transition into allowing more access to our parks and historic sites, we need to remain vigilant to the personal safety aspects. Parks have been conducting hikes, tours, recreational programs, and much more—albeit with smaller numbers.

Starting with smaller group sizes that you can manage with your staffing levels is key. As Chief Naturalist Ellen Graham said, "It sounds like being able to start with smaller groups has been

beneficial even though I know it is strange and not how we are used to booking our programs."

It is understood that smaller group sizes are necessary. Frontline interpreters should not worry about lower program numbers than would likely be reported in the summer months. It is enough that some manner of in person programming is occurring on our parks and sites.

These are difficult times to be an interpreter as almost everything we are doing to limit the spread of COVID-19 runs counter to our training as interpreters. Small groups, lack of hands on activities, and of course, social distancing are tough for those trained to engage all aspects of their audience's senses.

Social distancing appears to be one of the most difficult things to manage, especially on trails and during programs when people tend to want to group together for photographs. This is an instinctive reaction for people

wanting to capture the moment. Stay vigilant to things like this and keep encouraging social distancing throughout your programs.

As this pandemic eventually subsides more traditional programming will resume. Until that time PRHS will continue to promote following all the recommended guidelines. These are continually updated and can be located on Staff Resources.

As we move forward stay tuned for topics related to interpretation that come out from the Interpretive Unit and headquarters.

*By: Judd Smith,
Parks Historian*

Meet the Interpreter: Michael Ellis Fort McAllister State Park

Michael Ellis is the Interpretive Ranger at Fort McAllister State Park and has always had a love for history and the park service. He is a second generation PRHS ranger as his father was also a career park ranger. Michael grew up living on state parks, so his enthusiasm for all things parks related began early in his life.

Michael began his career at Stephen C. Foster State Park in the Okefenokee Swamp, the same park as his father. While at Stephen C. Foster, Michael noted the swamp's lack of light pollution and its benefits to astronomy. He then played an instrumental role in the arduous process of the site being designated as an International Dark Sky Park.

During his 11 year career with Georgia State Parks, he has worked at several sites including Reed Bingham State Park where he served as Assistant Manager.

Today he can be found giving tours and interpreting the rich history of Fort McAllister. He enjoys his role as a Black Powder Safety Officer and ensuring the safe demonstrations of historic muskets and artillery.

Outside of his career with PRHS, Michael spent 12 years protecting and serving Georgia's citizens as a Certified Firefighter/EMT. He has a degree in Fire Science with a specialization in rescue operations.

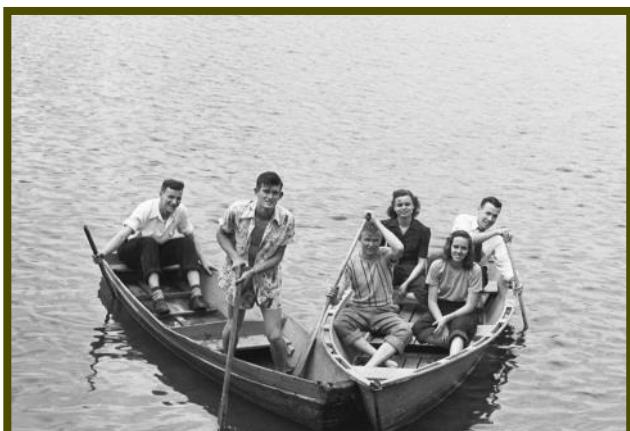
In his off-time Michael loves taking long drives, keeping up his sports cars, and spending time with his spouse Allie Ellis, who is the Interpretive Ranger at Fort King George.

The next time you are on the coast stop in at Fort McAllister and see him. Maybe you'll get lucky and he will suit you up in some period wool clothes in the summertime so you can get the full experience!



Michael Ellis posing with the 32 pounder at Fort McAllister

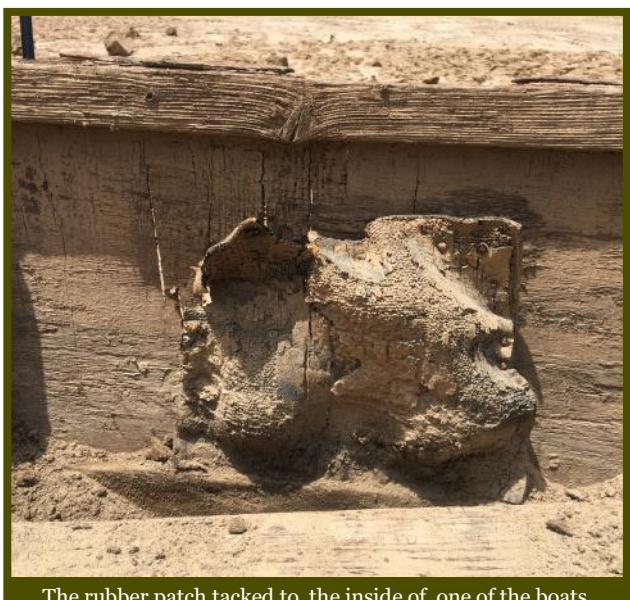
“Boats Ahoy!” Surveying Sunken Boats at F.D. Roosevelt State Park’s Lake Franklin



1947 photo showing boats similar to the ones in Lake Franklin



The intact nature of several boats allowed for a detailed survey



The rubber patch tacked to the inside of one of the boats

On May 13, 2020, Deputy State Archaeologist Rachel Black, WRD Archaeologist Sarah Love, Parks Archaeologist Aimee Bouzigard, Parks Historian Judd Smith, and Preservation Specialist Josh Headlee met with Kurt Knoerl, a professor and underwater archaeologist from the Armstrong Campus of Georgia Southern University to inspect and document several small boats found at Lake Franklin at F. D. Roosevelt State Park.

The boats had been located some years ago by side scan sonar during a survey of the lake which followed a tornado that damaged large sections of the park in 2011. In early 2020 they were exposed when rehabilitation of the lake's dam required the lake to be drained. Joel Griffin of the DNR Engineering and Construction Division took a personal interest in the project and requested that the DNR Archaeology Section conduct a survey of the boats.

It was a very interesting and exciting day for all involved. The group discovered the “wreckage” of six sunken boats scattered throughout the footprint of the drained lake in various states of damage and deterioration. Dr. Knoerl is an expert in naval construction and his expertise was invaluable in the process of cataloging the boats and making a determination if any of them were intact enough to be raised, conserved, and interpreted.

The survey concluded that there were two different types of boats. Four of the six have pointed bows and squared-off sterns. The remaining two were constructed with a square bow and stern. All were approximately 15 feet long and each boat is so similar to the others of the same type that they are likely produced at the same time and from the same maker or manufacturer. From research done before and during the survey, and through the use of period photographs it is estimated that they date to late 1940s or early 1950s.

While the survey was unable to determine what caused all of the boats to sink, one boat still had a makeshift rubber patch tacked to its hull. The patch had been intended to cover a large hole in the side of the boat. It is likely

that it failed at some point and sent the boat to the bottom.

Another interesting discovery during the survey were pieces of wood that still had visible paint. From this the team determined that one of the boats was painted, at least partially, red and another was partially blue.

Unfortunately, all of the boats were deteriorated badly enough that any attempt to move or salvage them would result in their destruction. Some of the boats appear amazingly intact and complete, however, all of them were constructed with thin pieces of wood that are very brittle and have lost most of the resins that compose the integrity of the wooden pieces. Also the screws and other attachment hardware have corroded to the extent that any attempts to move the boats intact would result in these components failing and the boats falling apart.

While raising and conserving the boats may not be possible, the research collected during the survey will preserve the knowledge of their existence. An interpretive panel is planned to discuss the lake's history, and the discovery of the boats will be included to educate visitors about the early recreational history of the park. There may even be an opportunity to use pieces of recovered wood in an exhibit at the park, or to have a boatwright construct a replica based on the data recovered. Discussions on how best to interpret this fascinating find will continue moving forward.

Many thanks to Dr. Kurt Knoerl and his wealth of knowledge. Projects like these require a great deal of interagency cooperation, but the results are worth the effort. Uncovering the history of our parks and historic sites helps provide a more wholistic approach to interpreting our cultural resources.

*By: Josh Headlee,
Preservation Specialist*

*Judd Smith,
Parks Historian*

Far Afield: Happenings in the Resource Management Unit

The Resource Management Unit (RMU) wrapped up its traditional burn season with a good year. According to the National Weather Service, there has been no wetter January—May on record going back to 1996. The RMU still managed to burn 1531 acres, and had 25 total burn days. The RMU used its fire management in a way to mimic natural disturbance—such as lightning strikes, or the way early Americans used fire.

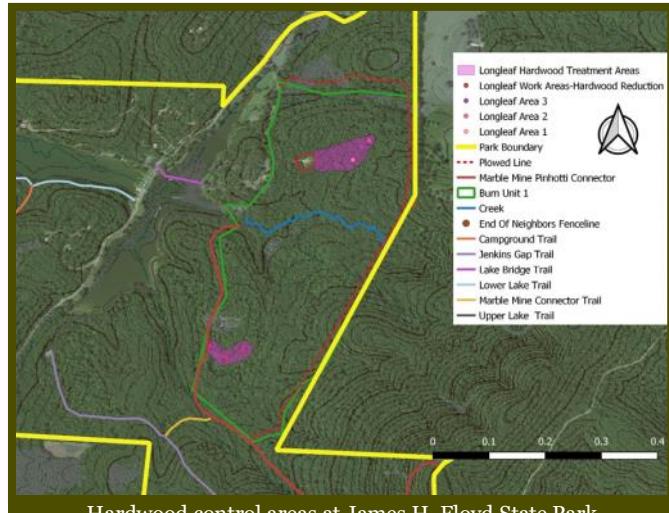
The RMU seasonal crews kept busy during the rainy days as well. They prepped fire breaks and planted 1000 shortleaf pine seedlings at Sweetwater Creek State Park, and 200 shortleaf seedlings at Hard Labor Creek State Park.



RMU crew planting shortleaf pine seedlings at SWC in the rain

Management of critical habitats often requires tools other than fire. The RMU burned 120 acres at James H. Sloppy Floyd this past season. While scouting the site for an upcoming resource management plan over 30 longleaf pine (saplings to pole size trees) were found in this unit, most in the 15 to 20 foot tall range. These trees are surrounded by sweetgum, maple, and tulip trees, and fire alone will now not be enough to help restore the longleaf pine at this site. The presence of longleaf pine in this area suggests that fire was once integral to this ecosystem.

As it has been difficult to maintain fire in this landscape



Hardwood control areas at James H. Floyd State Park

the RMU plans to use herbicide plus periodic fire to open up this unique habitat and free the struggling small longleaf while increasing the herbaceous diversity under the trees.

Fire and other natural disturbance kept a patchwork of habitats like meadows open before major European settlement. Now, since people have altered the landscape so much, fire alone is not always enough to keep open habitats viable. It is a labor-intensive ongoing affair, but so critical to species who still depend on various habitats like grassland, savannas and open woodlands. State Parks are a perfect place to maintain and interpret these critical habitats.

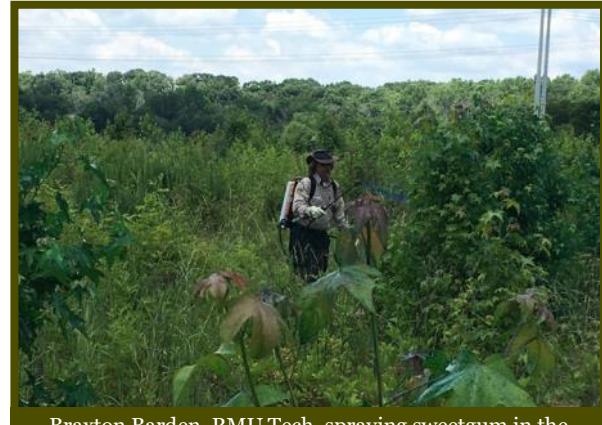


A pole-sized longleaf pine struggles for resources with tulip tree and sweetgum hardwoods at JHF

and other resources to competing species. Maintaining biodiversity of plants for a site has ripple effects through the entire ecosystem. Native wildflowers provide pollen for a host of pollinators – such as bees, wasps, beetles, flies, butterflies, and moths. Seeds nourish birds and small mammals. Fruits or fresh growth on native plants often feed larger mammals like deer and bear. Birds like turkey and quail rely on a mosaic of disturbed habitat for food and cover. Middle tier predators like snakes, foxes, and birds of prey benefit from increased small mammal and bird populations. All these species are intertwined with natural disturbances that once frequented our landscape.

The next time you are out and about at your park, and find yourself “Far Afield,” reflect on what you can do to improve, protect, or interpret some of these special places. It could be a tenth of an acre or 100 acres, but it’s a safe bet there’s an opportunity there.

*By: Phil Delestrez,
Region Resource Manager*



Braxton Barden, RMU Tech, spraying sweetgum in the Power of Flight Grassland Habitat at PMT

The Naturalist's Easel



Cardinal in Winter—Acrylic on Canvas—2020

Artist: Judd Smith

Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites

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gastateparks.org

Connecting people with our state's cultural and natural resources

Gulf fritillary, Agraulis vanillae (Linnaeus) , photo by Phil Delestrez

Mission

To protect our state's natural beauty and historic integrity while providing opportunities for public enjoyment and education.

Vision

Using our system's diversity and a commitment to excellence as our strengths, we will be a national model for quality service, resource protection, outdoor recreational opportunities, ecosystems management and interpretation of our heritage. We will provide an excellent work environment for our employees through effective leadership, proper training, challenging opportunities and a guarantee of fair treatment.



Parting Thoughts and Takeaways:

Normally when writing this section I try and focus on looking at ways in which we, as interpreters, can better provide quality natural, cultural and recreational programs to our park visitors.

For this Parting Thoughts, however, I want to address the past few months and the overwhelming response that has been put forth by our interpretive rangers and other park staff serving our park visitors during this unprecedented time.

In the midst of having to limit access to facilities, manage crowds, and find new ways to continue operations all across the division, you answered the call. You continued day in and day out to provide opportunities for people to get necessary outdoor exercise and to have freedom of movement. From helping clean restrooms and cottages, working parking cars, manning the phone lines, and many other tasks, there is no way to accurately gauge the amount of lives that you all have touched just being there and providing key services.

For many of our interpreters, you were also able to touch even more people's lives as you took time to record video programs for the PRHS eRanger series. It is one thing to provide a program for the

public in a park setting and have the interaction of the crowd, but it is an altogether different skill set to effectively deliver a concise video presentation. It takes courage to "put yourself out there." Many of you recorded videos in your houses or backyards and others found creative ways to showcase their parks and sites.

The Interpretive Unit reviewed every video that was submitted. We were amazed at some of the quality productions. We saw scorpion night hikes, living history demonstrations, virtual guided tours, crafts and skills presentations, and so much more.

Those videos have been shared on social media sites and have had over a million views. From parents having to home school children to people just wanting a short distraction from the omnipresent news, the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

In the course of my career with PRHS, I have been fortunate to have been involved with some great programming teams at different parks and sites. I can say without a doubt, I have never been prouder to be part of PRHS than I am right now. In times of adversity there

comes a time to choose to remain seated and let events move you or to stand up and push forward.

You all chose to stand up, and on behalf of the Interpretive Unit, I thank you.

Until Next Time,

Happy Programming,

Judd Smith

