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Congratulations to Martin Scenic Highway “The Grade”

Just a half an hour west of Stuart, Florida, is an amazingly beautiful road that time seems to have forgotten. Martin Highway, county road 714, locals simply call it “The Grade”.

A drive across The Grade showcases some of Florida’s colorful past with a 12 mile road shaded by hundred year old oak trees.

The Grade is rich in history, and members of the byway consider western Martin County as



Florida’s last frontier with a corridor story that speaks of the Seminoles who first inhabited this area.

To the east lie barrier islands, rich lagoons, and flowing rivers that characterize Florida’s Atlantic Coast. To the west lies Lake Okeechobee, the second largest fresh water lake in the United States.

The Grade takes you to Allapattah Flats Wildlife Management Area, which is open to the public year-round. Recreational opportunities include hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, primitive camping, hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing. Visitors may hike or bike on the five mile long trail system leading to an open marsh popular with wading birds. There are separate trails for equestrians as well as a 150-acre riding area.



Penney Farms Park Dedication

A fun time was had by all when the Town Playground, located on the scenic highway loop, was dedicated on Nov. 14.

It was a cool Friday afternoon but the wintery sun smiled on the gathering as the official reopening of the park was celebrated. Among the guests of honor were Florida Senator Rob Bradley and Brad Caouette, Palatka based Legislative Aide to Representative Charles Van Zant.

The ribbon was cut by the youngest and the oldest residents, in Penney Farms. Working together young Ms. Brooks, 2 years old and Rev. Muilenburg, 103 years young, made an awesome team! Senator Rob Bradley spoke at the event and ran a picture of the ceremony in his next constituent newsletter. Thank you, Senator Bradley, for all your support.



Tales from the Byway

Enjoy Wildlife where you Can

by Beverly J. Fleming

Several areas along the William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway are great places to enjoy birds and wildlife.

Enjoy Wildlife where you Can—Continued

From the tiny Ruby-throated hummingbird to the American Bald eagle, there are birds of many sizes, colors, and shapes to see and hear.

Early risers who walk the trails of Alpine Groves Park may be greeted with the "who, who, who, hoot" of the barred owls that nest in the giant live oak trees that grow around the century-old house overlooking the St. Johns River. If they walk out onto the fishing pier, osprey and great blue heron can be observed looking for a fresh fish for breakfast. Wood ducks and egret move in and



If you look closely as you walk the paths at Rivertown Park, you will see tracks of white tailed deer, raccoons, and possible gray fox. Observe the scratch mark where wild turkey have searched among the leaves for food and listen closely for the putt-putt of a mother turkey hen talking to her brood. The sound of red-winged blackbirds alerts you to their presence among the reeds along the river.

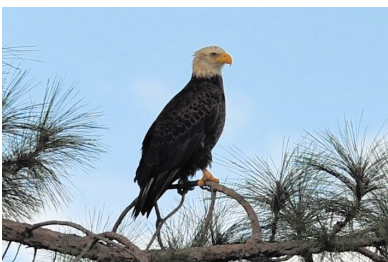
Travel farther along the highway and you will soon come to Trout Creek Park.

out of the shadows along the shoreline.

Take a rest on the ornate iron swings on the embankment and you will probably see Northern cardinals and Carolina wrens flying about the lawn. Red-bellied woodpeckers will beat a rat-a-tat-tat as they look for a tasty meal.

Walk back along the trail through the woods and you will see squirrels darting from branch to branch. Soon you will come to the footbridge stretching across the hollow to the playground area. Before crossing, sit and relax on the bench provided and you will soon notice the interaction of a pair of nesting red-shouldered hawks just in front of you. Their nest is near the top of a tree just a short way down the incline to the creek.

When you reach the parking area, you will notice a natural looking area surrounded by a wooden fence. Zebra long-wing butterflies, orange Gulf fritillaries, yellow sulphur, and blue and brown skippers will flutter among the many native plants that grow there. There are both host plants and nectar plants for the caterpillars and adults to feed on.



Travel farther south along the highway and you are sure to see eagles soaring over Hallowes Cove and Eastern bluebirds in the open pastures along the route.

Sit quietly and you you may see the resident belted kingfisher dive in to select a minnow. If you are really lucky and it is early in the morning when you are there, you might even hear the eerie sound of a limpkin.

Along the open spaces near the terminus of WBS&HH you can look out and spot cattle egret and white ibis feeding in the marshy fields after a rain. Look overhead and graceful swallow-tail kites glide and soar over the same fields.

We share our space with many different kinds of wildlife. It is a joy to be able to still share our community with them. Slow down and enjoy these treasures.

Around the Nation on a Byway

From Scenic Overlook

Highway beautification

A new study by the University of Florida shows that spending on highway beautification activities stimulates additional economic activity through economic multiplier effects across a wide range of industries.

From 2008-2013, highway beautification activities in Florida generated 2,112 full-time and part-time jobs, \$245.2 million in revenue impacts, \$147.6 million in value-added contribution to GDP, \$110.0 million in labor income impacts, \$32.6 million in other property income impacts, and \$5 million in indirect business taxes impacts .

Around the Nation on a Byway Continued



The study's authors conclude that "funding for highway beautification in Florida generates significant economic impacts in the state, and provides a positive return on public investment."

Picture- Flowers along Florida Turnpike.

A1A Byway TidBits

- ◆ A1A Kids Ocean Day set for **May 15, 2015**. Marineland Dolphin Adventure, Whitney Laboratory and Ripple Effects EcoTours have graciously agreed to host students from Bunnell Elementary in Flagler County for this special day. Students will have the opportunity to observe a mock dolphin rescue, learn about the rays and turtles in Neptune Park and see live dolphins at Marineland. They will also participate in a workshop discussing the wet lab at Whitney Laboratory and learn about the local ecosystem from the experienced guides at Ripple Effects. During lunch students will have a treat, hearing from local author Marybeth Jeitner who co-wrote "Saving Libbie the Lobster" while enjoying lunch catered by A1A Scenic Byway partners at the Hammock Beach Resort.
- ◆ We are preparing to send out the RFP for the Wayfinding Signage Project which will provide distinctive location signs along the 72 mile stretch of A1A we all enjoy.
- ◆ Vilano Beach has picked up it's Sunset Celebrations at the Vilano Beach Pier and First Fridays in Flagler Beach are as exciting as ever. We are all awaiting the start of the Music By the Sea concerts in St. Augustine Beach, a local favorite!
- ◆ We would like to invite readers to download our free Mobile App by visiting their app store and choosing First Coast 360. The tour is filled with wonderful stories and interesting tidbits.

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