



Canal Current

A wave of information for Cape Coral's Canalwatch volunteers

Newsletter: 2nd Quarter 2020

Environmental News

Coral Pointe Shoreline Restoration

The final stage of restoration work along the Coral Pointe Canal was completed with the support of volunteers on Saturday, July 18th. Restoration was required on a section of the south side of Coral Pointe Canal when the protected red mangroves were among some of the trees removed during a canal maintenance project. Organized by Keep Lee County Beautiful, 40 volunteers helped plant 160 red mangrove trees along that section of Coral Pointe Canal. Previous restoration work on the site included removing the remaining invasive Australian pine trees and regrading the littoral area. Later, the bank was stabilized with a bonded fiber matrix that contained seeds of native plant species such as; gaillardia, spotted beebalm, coastal panicgrass and seaside goldenrod. Cardno Engineering, City of Cape Coral's Environmental Resources Division, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) will continue to monitor the site to assess the regrowth of vegetation along the shoreline.

(Continued on page 7)

Questions? Comments? Let us know!

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Red mangroves naturally recruiting along the bank.



The yellow area shows the private property, the pink area the bank restoration site, and the red area shows the wetlands site restored. Undeveloped lands showing in the lower right corner is Four Mile Eco Park Preserve.

Entanglement Concern for the Critically Endangered Smalltooth Sawfish

NOAA Marine Fisheries has been encountering a new threat to smalltooth sawfish due to a specific type of boat lift canopy that is gaining popularity in Southwest Florida, including Cape Coral and communities around Charlotte Harbor. These boat canopies comprise of a laminated canvas that is stretched over the frame and held in place by bungee cords (see photo to right).



While this popular feature may make the boat canopy storm ready, by easily unlash the bungee cords and removing the canopy, the bungee cords are finding their way into waterways. Once there, they are becoming an entanglement hazard to smalltooth sawfish, an endangered species that occurs throughout Southwest Florida including Cape Coral's saltwater canals (below are photos from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) sawfish research assignment in 2019).

In 2003 the smalltooth sawfish became the first elasmobranch (i.e., sharks and their relatives) to be listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Primarily due to its susceptibility as fisheries bycatch, the once abundant sawfish that occurred throughout Florida, has retracted to near shore waters around Southwest Florida. In addition to man-made causes of decline, smalltooth sawfish are slow to recover because of their biology. Females produce a small number of young every other year, and both sexes have relatively slow growth rates and late maturity. Glover Bight (located just east of Tarpon Point Marina) is an important nursery area where smalltooth sawfish frequent and from there the juveniles disperse into shallow areas of the Caloosahatchee Estuary or Cape Coral's canals.



NOAA believes the plastic spheres are making the bungees partially buoyant, causing them to sit upright along the bottom. This creates an unfortunate opportunity for a sawfish to become entangled as they swim along the bottom searching for prey. The bungees may be unintentionally dropped in the water during installation or during hurricane season when residents are disassembling them for storm preparation.

If you or your neighbors have this type boat canopy, please take extra care when handling the bungees and help us share this information so these and other marine debris are kept out of our waterways.

For general information about the smalltooth sawfish, please visit <http://www.sawfishrecovery.org>.



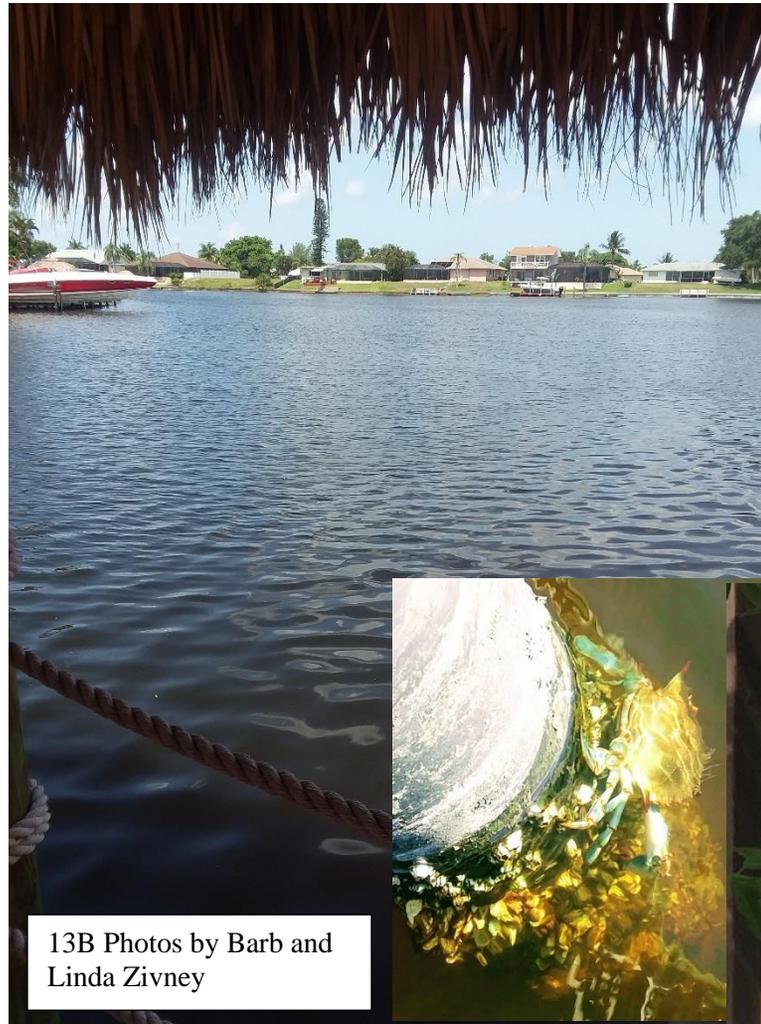
To report a capture or sighting, please contact the sawfish hotline at 1-844-4SAWFISH or sawfish@myfwc.com.

**Thank you Canawatch volunteers for your continued dedication to the program.
Below are some photos provided from volunteers for the first Canalwatch digital event.**



9I photo by Deb Cupps

SE Cape Coral, Rubicon Canal, Saltwater
A beautiful waterfront view.



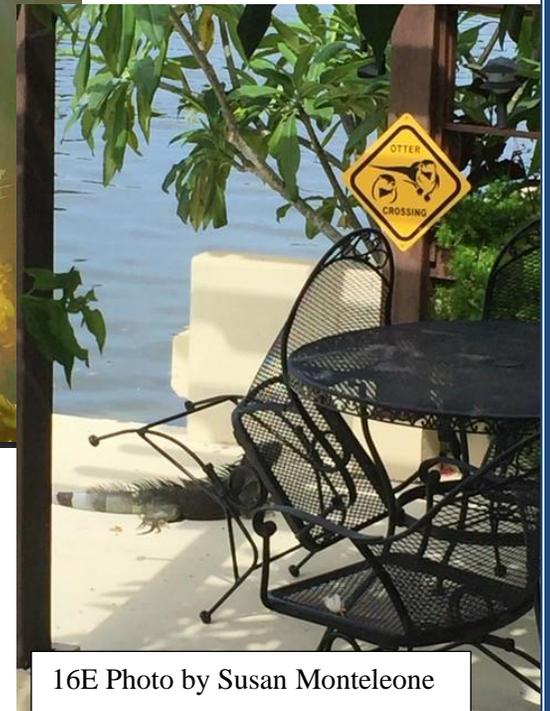
13B Photos by Barb and
Linda Zivney

SE Cape Coral, Tequila Canal, Saltwater

Additional photo of blue crab,
Callinectes sapidus, which means
“beautiful swimmer – that’s tasty!”

Below
SE Cape Coral,
Rhodes Canal,
Freshwater.

Perhaps the sign
should include
iguanas as well.



16E Photo by Susan Monteleone



16I Photo by Steven Hammer

SE Cape Coral, Heath Canal, Freshwater.
Turn the photo upside down, and not much changes.



Photo by Cheryl Blackwood

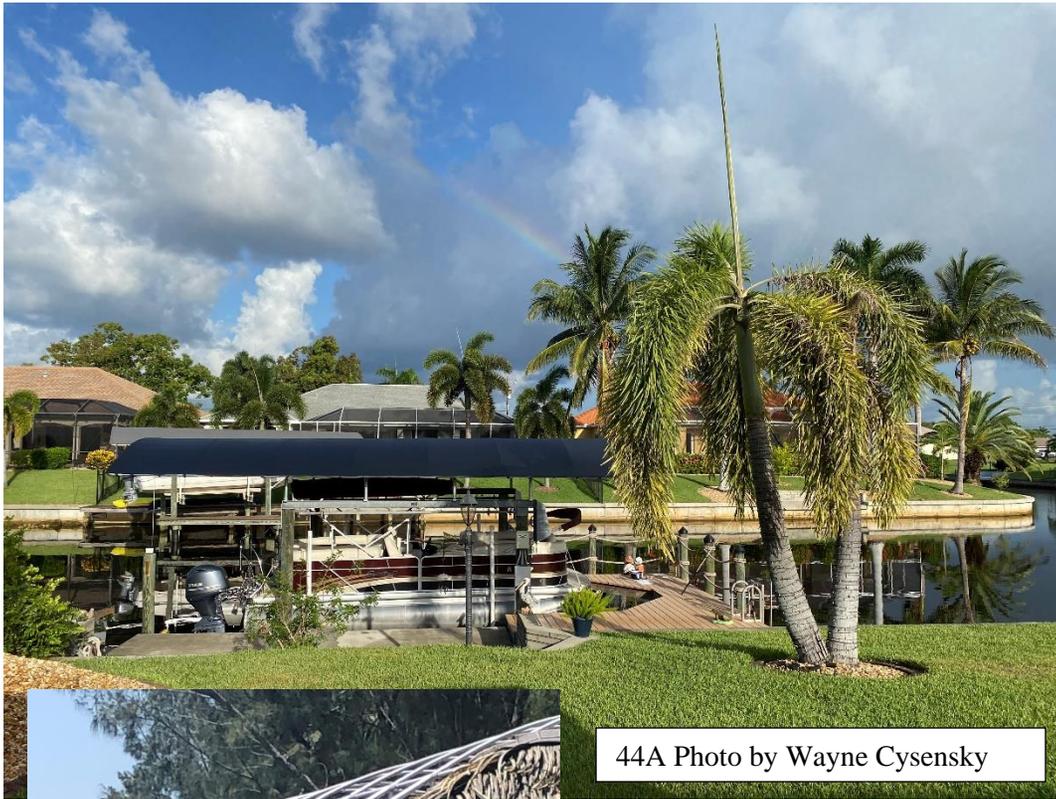


18M Photo by Keith Vanderbosch

Above
SE Cape Coral,
Nightingale
Canal, Saltwater.

A true citizen
scientist!

To Left
SE Cape Coral,
Casanova Canal,
Freshwater.
Tape grass,
Vallisneria
Americana,
providing ample
habitat for fish
and taking up
nutrients for
increased water
clarity.



44A Photo by Wayne Cysensky

Above
SW Cape Coral, Courtney Canal,
Saltwater.
Another beautiful waterfront view
complete with rainbow.



59C Photo by Scott Bachelier



74C Photo by Jean Van

To Left
SW Cape Coral, Asturia Canal,
Saltwater.
A tiki hut and a kayak – some of
life's simple pleasures.

Above
NW Cape Coral, Webb Canal,
Saltwater.

View of Webb and Sirius Canals
and can offer a short boat ride to
Matlacha Pass.

To Right
SE Cape Coral, Minstrel Canal, Saltwater.
A view of the Caloosahatchee River just beyond the
Condominium Complexes.



96A Photo by Benny Tahesco

Above
SW Cape Coral, Killer Canal, Saltwater.
Nothing deadly about this view, just a mid-summer's day on
the waterfront.



UP13A Photo by Charles Lloyd

**For up to date City of Cape Environmental Resources Division water quality data visit
https://www.capecoral.net/departments/public_works/quarterly_water_quality_reports.php**

The entire area south of Coral Pointe Canal to Fourmile Cove Eco Park might become Lee County 20/20 preserve lands. If these lands are approved for the 20/20 program it will create a contiguous coastal ecosystem encompassing over 500 acres and over 7,000 feet of mangrove shoreline on the Caloosahatchee River.

Native Plant Profile



Red mangroves (*Rhizophora mangle*) are a tree that grows along the shoreline and creates dense ‘mangles’ within coastal ecosystem. The red mangrove is easily distinguished because of the crisscrossed, reddish prop roots that spread out underneath each tree. These prop roots support the tree by improving stability but also aid in supplying oxygen to underground roots structures.

The red mangrove can grow to heights averaging 20 feet. Although, under optimum conditions they can exceed that.

Because red mangroves are susceptible to cold weather and hard freezes, habitat range in Florida is limited to the southern portion of the state. The elliptical leaves are often coated with salt crystals on the undersides. This is a means of expelling salt that is taken up from the saltwater they grow in. When in bloom, clusters of pale-yellow flowers appear during the spring and early summer months. Seeds in the form of propagules (photo at right) form after pollination. The long, slender, green and brown propagules fully form while on the tree, giving the next generation a better chance of survival. Once released the propagules drop into the water where it can take root nearby, or drift to other areas with suitable habitat.



Under state law, red mangroves cannot be removed, or significantly altered without a permit from the FDEP. Red mangroves are an essential part of the coastal ecosystem, not only serving as roosting and nesting areas for numerous shore birds but also functioning as a nursery for many species of game fish. The mangle of roots is ideal habitat for barnacles and oysters that affix themselves to the roots or crabs that live in the tangle of root structures. Red mangroves not only act as a buffer for excess nutrients coming from inlands, they provide habitat for shellfish that filter the water and are a natural buffer against wind and storm surges.



Outdoor Recreation Interactive Map

Needing some time outside, but don't know what's available in the area?

The Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnerships (CHNEP) has the Explore your Watershed Special Places Interactive Map. This interactive map allows users to zoom in on areas of interest and provides countless outdoor recreational opportunities. Exploring places to hike, bike, fish, birdwatch, or just relax and enjoy the natural surroundings. Thanks to CHNEP and their partners for showcasing Southwest Florida's special places.



For more information and access to the Explore Your Watershed Special Places Interactive Map, please visit:

<https://www.chnep.org/explore-your-watershed>

The screenshot shows a dark teal background with white text. At the top, it says "Explore Your Watershed" in a large font, followed by "Find Special Places Near You with CHNEP's Special Places Interactive Map" in a smaller font. Below this is a paragraph of text: "The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP), working with Lee County, has created a Special Places Interactive Mapping tool to help the public find outdoor recreational opportunities near them. By zooming in on the area of interest, parks, nature centers, gardens, hiking, birdwatching and other recreational opportunities will appear." To the right of the text is a map of a city area with several green icons indicating special places. At the bottom left of the screenshot is a dark blue button with white text that says "Go to Special Places Map".

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