

Calusa Land Trust

and Nature Preserve of Pine Island, Inc.



Newsletter

www.calusalandtrust.org

September 2004

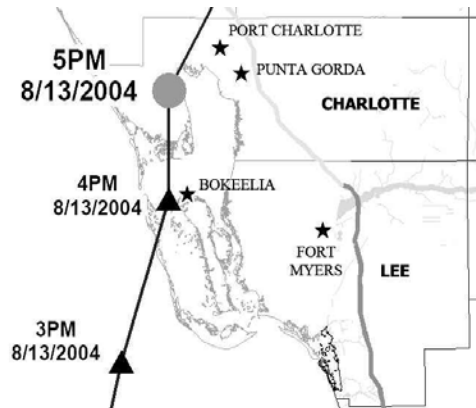
Hurricane Charley Ravages Pine Island by Bill Spikowski (334-8866)

On August 13, Hurricane Charley swept across coastal Lee County, then moved northward across Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte and into much of central Florida.

Widespread devastation to buildings and vegetation was still being assessed when nature brought Hurricane Frances ashore along Florida's east coast only three weeks later.

Local residents took their first break from the Charley clean-up effort to prepare for Frances, whose rains threatened all buildings whose roofs or walls were already damaged.

Future newsletters will report on the effects of Hurricane Charley on Calusa Land Trust nature preserves. A preview is apparent from the photo to the right which shows the southern edge of Calusa Island's mangrove forest. All types of mangroves across Pine Island lost most of their leaves and many of their branches, but the root structures are generally intact and some new leaves are already beginning to appear.



Track of Hurricane Charley



Mangrove forest after hurricane

Babcock Ranch

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

Once again the Calusa Land Trust is embarking on a new project. Your Board of Directors has voted to participate in the purchase of the famous 91,000-acre Babcock Ranch by making an initial \$5,000 contribution. Much of this treasured land remains in its natural state and is critical habitat to native and endangered species such as the black bear and Florida panther. It is an important water storage tract, in fact the largest parcel identified as necessary for the restoration of the Everglades.

The Calusa Land Trust usually confines its interest to Pine Island and its adjacent areas, but this project is so exciting and of such regional importance that we just cannot ignore it. Of specific interest is the fact that Pine Island area's watershed extends right through the Babcock Ranch, from nearly Orlando, to Charlotte Harbor, Lake Okeechobee, and the Caloosahatchee. Much of what happens right here around Pine Island depends on the quality of all the waterways that wind through that area. If the ranch is not purchased and preserved, it will go to the highest bidder and may be lost forever to development.

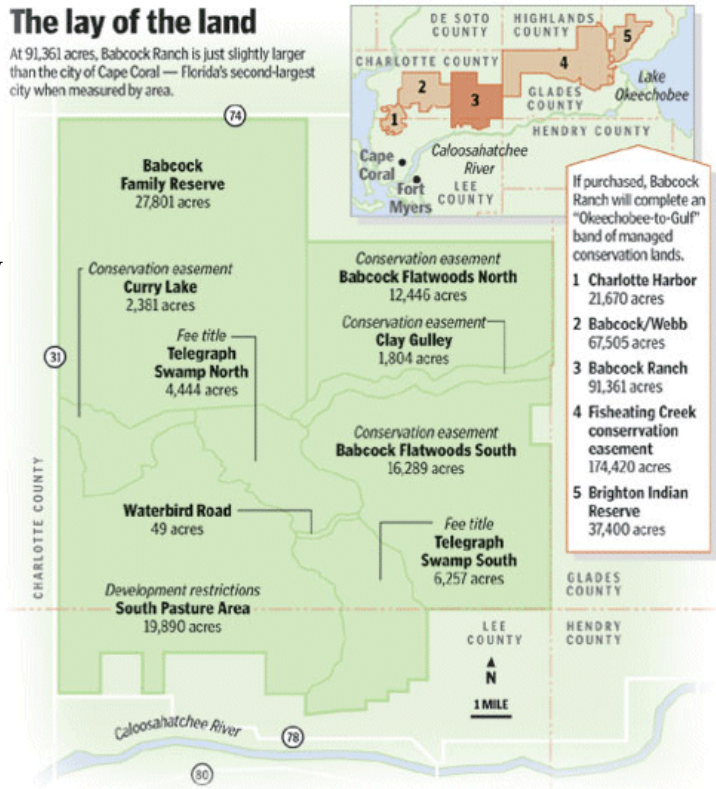
Although the actual purchase price has not been negotiated, estimates place the value at somewhere between 70 and 700 million dollars. A bit beyond our means you might say, and that is certainly true! Official appraisals are underway as you read this. Substantial government funding will be available if the public shows strong support for the preservation of this incredible natural resource. It's not just how much money is donated that counts; it's the number of people and organizations who show they care by contributing.

If you wish to send in donation for the Babcock Project, please specify this along with your check. Such donations will also count toward your Trust membership as usual.

Mail your check or credit card donations to the Calusa Land Trust at P.O. Box 216, Bokeelia, FL 33922.

The lay of the land

At 91,361 acres, Babcock Ranch is just slightly larger than the city of Cape Coral — Florida's second-largest city when measured by area.



Graphic courtesy of Fort Myers News-Press



Commissioner Bob Janes accepts our \$5,000 contribution (from left: Ed Chapin, Bob Janes, Norm Gowan, Bill Spikowski, Joan Culver, and Bud House)

Tours & Trails Report

by Brenda Anderson (283-1878)

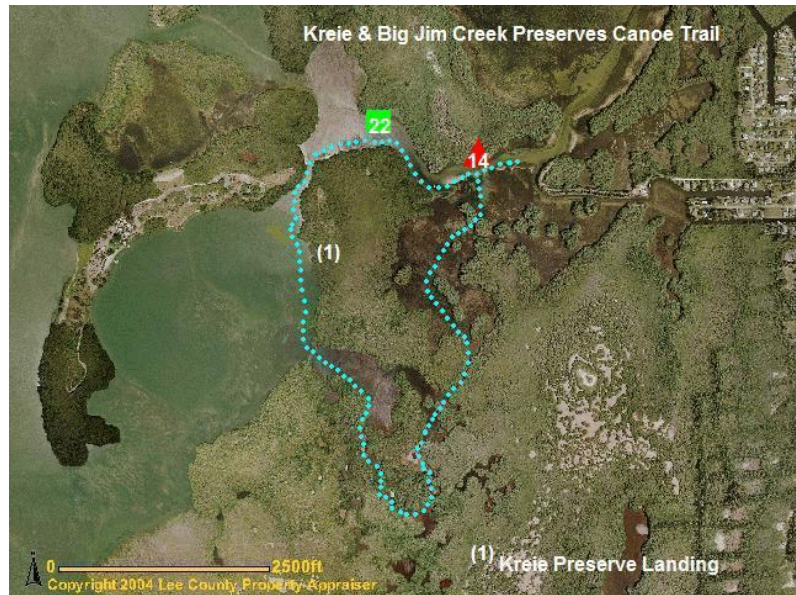
All five of the Calusa Land Trust canoe and kayak trails have now been marked. They are:

- Fritts Park / Big Jim Creek Canoe Trail
- Underhill Creek Canoe Trail
- Smokehouse Bay Canoe Trail
- Back Bay Preserve Canoe Trail
- Kreie & Big Jim Creek Preserves Canoe Trail

Aerial maps and full descriptions of these trails will be available on the CLT website. The trails are marked with blue buoys hanging in the mangroves at strategic points. The first three trails will also be featured on the Great Calusa Blueway trail map and website: www.GreatCalusaBlueway.com.

THIS MONTH'S FEATURED TRAILS

Kreie & Big Jim Creek Preserves Canoe Trail: There are a few launch sites in Bokeelia for this trip, but the closest is at Jug Creek Cottages on Main Street, run by Tropic Star, where a small launch fee is charged. Call ahead at (239) 283-0015. Follow the Jug Creek boat channel west towards Pine Island Sound. Turn south into the small bay just before marker #14 (see map) and continue heading generally south. The trail runs through the northern reaches of the Big Jim Creek Preserve, winding between mangrove islands and through a few mangrove tunnels down to a small bay where it then turns northwest and heads up to Burgess Bay. The trail then turns north. You will see the Kreie Preserve on the east side of the bay just before reaching the cut that heads back to the Jug Creek boat channel. There are plans for a small dock at the preserve landing; currently there is a large opening in the mangroves and a small trail through the mangroves to a beautiful tropical hardwood hammock. The canoe trail then heads north and northeasterly through the cut back to Jug Creek at about marker #22. You will have to pay attention to the tides as this trail is more difficult at low tide.



Pine Island Flatwoods Hiking Trail: We have been working with Anik Smith of Lee County Conservation 20/20 to plan the route for a hiking trail through their new Pine Island Flatwoods Preserve. This pristine 537-acre preserve is located on the west side of Stringfellow across from Tropical Homesites. A primitive parking area is being built at the trailhead where an interpretive sign identifies the preserve. The trail is about a two-mile loop crossing varied habitats including pine flatwoods, freshwater wetlands, an oak hammock, and saltern marsh. Gopher tortoises abound, eagles have been spotted, and we have identified deer tracks. This trail may be completed by this fall.

Your Help Would be Appreciated! If you have any suggestions or ideas for hiking trails or canoe and kayak trails on Pine Island, or would like to be involved in the process of trail maintenance, please contact me, Brenda Anderson, at 283-1878 or by e-mail at Brenda1040@hotmail.com.

Ranger/Stewardship Report

by Ed Chapin (392-0090)

Work Parties: On April 3, twelve rangers split into two groups, one heading out to our McCardle Island Preserve and the other going over to the Underhill Creek Preserve. Jack Worthington and Richard Little led their group to McCardle Island where they picked up trash and worked on Brazilian pepper control. They reported there is more work to be done so we will schedule a return trip. Bud House and I took the other group to the Underhill Creek Preserve which is on the Cape Coral side of Matlacha Pass across from Tropical Point. We had to re-mark the first half of the Great Calusa Blueways trail as someone had removed the blue markers put up a few weeks before. We also worked on invasive plant control at the burnt bridge area and erected a CLT preserve sign at that spot.

On May 1, five rangers headed to Calusa Island to work on the deteriorating dome structure. Unfortunately we had to quit early as I had an accident requiring surgical staples to my scalp. Later the board agreed we should get professional help to demolish this structure so we are now seeking bids. (About the only positive effect of Hurricane Charley is that the first half of this demolition project was completed for us in less than an hour on the afternoon of August 13.)

On June 5, twelve rangers worked at Fritts Park planting the remaining root-bound slash pines donated by Lee County Parks and Recreation. We planted 20 all around the park and banked the remaining 30 trees near the sign to plant or give away at a later date. They have since been distributed to Pine Islanders.

On July 10, we teamed up with the Pine Island Boat Club to plant shade trees on Picnic Island. It was an excellent turnout with 9 CLT Board Members and 11 Pine Island Boat Club members hauling water, plants, and shovels and planting 23 large slash pines, 9 large live oak trees, and 5 small gumbo limbo trees. The soil was quite dry but we were lucky as Joan Culver did a rain dance right before we left; sure enough we have been blessed with good rains ever since. She will have to come on all planting trips from now on!

We marked all the new trees with stainless steel tags that say "Future Shade Tree" on one side and "Protect Me" on the other. I have monitored the site three times and all is well, with the trees still in place and thriving. In June, Lee County Parks and Recreation installed the new identification signs and they look terrific. The largest sign is on the north beach, welcoming visitors with our CLT osprey logo, stating that the island is managed by the CLT and the Pine Island Boat Club, and asking people to help us care for the island by taking all their trash. Two smaller signs on the south beach have similar messages. Hopefully we will not lose any more trees or deal with such huge quantities of trash.

August was supposed to be our vacation month but Hurricane Charley had other plans for Pine Island. On the first Saturday of September, Hurricane Frances was approaching Florida's east coast so storm preparations took precedence. See the chart below for the remaining scheduled work parties this year.

Coastal Clean-up: This annual event sponsored by Keep Lee County Beautiful was set for September 18. However, due to the effects of Hurricanes Charley and Frances and the resulting clean-up efforts, the date is being rescheduled.

Peter Ordway Mangrove Water Tours: Get ready for our fall and winter canoe outings which will begin in November. Hurricane Charley undoubtedly caused heavy damage to our preserves but some recovery is already apparent. We need to keep an eye on them and monitor their progress, which we will do while enjoying a leisurely paddle. See the chart below for specific times and places.

Florida Land Trust Conference: Bud House and I traveled to Tallahassee in June to attend the Florida Land Trust Conference. Sponsored by the Land Trust Alliance and the Florida Communities Trust, the conference was attended by 14 out of the 49 Florida land trusts. We were given an extensive presentation about the Florida Forever grant program which could give up to \$6.6 million to non-profit land trusts to purchase environmentally sensitive land and historic sites. The application process is complicated but could be very fruitful. We will be thinking about what land would be most suitable for nomination. We also discussed reestablishing a Florida Land Trust Network to share information on a regular basis among Florida's land trusts. This was a very informative conference and I want to thank Bud House for providing transportation.

ELAC (Charlotte County): The Environmental Lands Acquisition Committee is an advisory committee to the Charlotte County Commission on sensitive lands that should be targeted for public acquisition. This committee requested a November 2 ballot initiative that would tax properties at a 0.5 millage rate similar to the Lee County's Conservation 20/20 program; the county commissioners have agreed and are helping to promote this issue. This will be a willing-seller program and is being called "Charlotte Preservation 2004." At the last Calusa Land Trust Board Meeting the board agreed to donate \$1,000 to help publicize this initiative. If you vote in Charlotte County, I urge you to support this initiative and ask others to do the same. The county line runs through the middle of Charlotte Harbor; our natural systems recognize no artificial boundaries.

Pine Island Elementary 5th Grade Field Trips: On May 6, 7, and 10, rangers Jan Alexander, Carolyn Murphy, Bob Kish, and I led about 90 fifth graders on three field trips to the St. Jude Nature Trail. We identified and described native plants and animals of Pine Island and explained why invasive exotic plants and animals can cause such problems. We also discussed how to be safe in natural areas by looking out for biting insects and poisonous plants. I want to thank these volunteers for their dedication and help. After the nature trail tour we took the students to the Randell Research Center where they visited that archaeological site. CLT donated \$270 to the Randell Research Center for those tours and the local Pine Island Elks Club donated \$225 to cover all busing costs.

WORK PARTIES

Saturday, October 2	9 to 12	Picnic Island and the Back Bay Preserves
Saturday, November 6	9 to 12	York/Coconut and Long Cut Preserves

PETER ORDWAY MANGROVE WATER TOURS*

Saturday, November 20	8:00 - Noon	Fish Eating Creek (off island)
Sunday, December 12	9:00 - Noon	Calusa Island Preserve
Sunday, January 9	Noon - 3:00	Back Bay Preserve
Saturday, February 12	Noon - 3:00	Big Jim Creek/Kreie Preserves
Saturday, March 12	Noon - 3:00	Smokehouse Bay/Underhill Creek
Sunday, April 16	Noon - 3:00	Underhill Creek Preserve

**These are guided trips and we do ask for a donation. Also, reservations are required so beep Ed at 392-0090 or e-mail him at ecalusaed@aol.com. Ask to have your name added to our e-mail list and he will notify you before each trip.*

SEMI-ANNUAL RANGER COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, October 4	6:00	Fritts Park
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Membership Report

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

We currently have 835 members with 413 (49%) current in their dues. Many of our members haven't returned from cooler climes but think about us anyway. We operate year around and this time of year our membership is at its low point. If there is an asterisk (*) following your name on the address label of this newsletter, your membership is due. These donations are our lifeblood!

We have 333 e-mail addresses for our 835 members (40%). If we don't have an address for you, you will miss out on our occasional announcements that may come out between newsletters. Please send it along with your next donation or e-mail it to GoldenPond2@earthlink.net.

Many members are electing to use credit cards (MasterCard or VISA) to make their donations. If this is more convenient for you then, by all means, do so. Records of card numbers are shredded after posting!

Fund Raising Projects

by Norm Gowan (283-8203)

Poker Run: The 12th Annual Poker Run on the water, sponsored by the Pine Island Boat Club to benefit the Trust, will be run on Sunday, December 5. The prize fund was over \$2,100 last year. Tickets will be available by mail and you do not have to be there to participate.

Rummage Sale: Our next rummage sale will be on Saturday, January 22, 2005, from 8:00 A.M. until 1:00 P.M. This should give everyone plenty of time to save all their treasures. Plan to bring them to the park that Friday from 8:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. If you can volunteer to help or you have questions, please call Shirley House at 283-3493.

Rubber Duck Race: The 7th Annual Rubber Duck Race will take place March 5 at the Double Nichol Pub in St James City. Tickets are \$5/duck. We will provide more details later.

Boardwalk: We continue to carve names in hand rails and memorial benches. To date, we have carved 659 names for over \$33,000 in donations. Order yours now for just \$50 per name.

Independence Day Parade: The Land Trust entered a float, decorated by several of the Directors, in Pine Island's annual parade. We did this for fun and to help publicize our organization. Not only did we have a great time spreading news of CLT, but we won a trophy for the best expression of patriotism!

Upcoming Board of Directors' Meetings

The Board of Directors holds regular bi-monthly meetings at the Elks Lodge at Pine Island Center. The next board meeting is scheduled for September 21. These meetings, held on the third Tuesday of each month, begin at 6:30 and usually run no longer than 7:45. Meetings are also held as necessary on alternate months. All are welcome to attend and listen, as well as share ideas.

Exploration of Big Jim Creek Preserve

Reprinted below are 1990 entries transcribed from the logbook of Stuart Reynolds about his first canoe trip exploring Big Jim Creek, which the Calusa Land Trust was attempting to purchase at that time

This trip began and ended at Pineland Marina and entered Big Jim Creek from Pine Island Sound (see map below). You can get a vivid picture of the magical world of Big Jim Creek and the confusing waterways that connect the creek to Pine Island from this first-hand report.

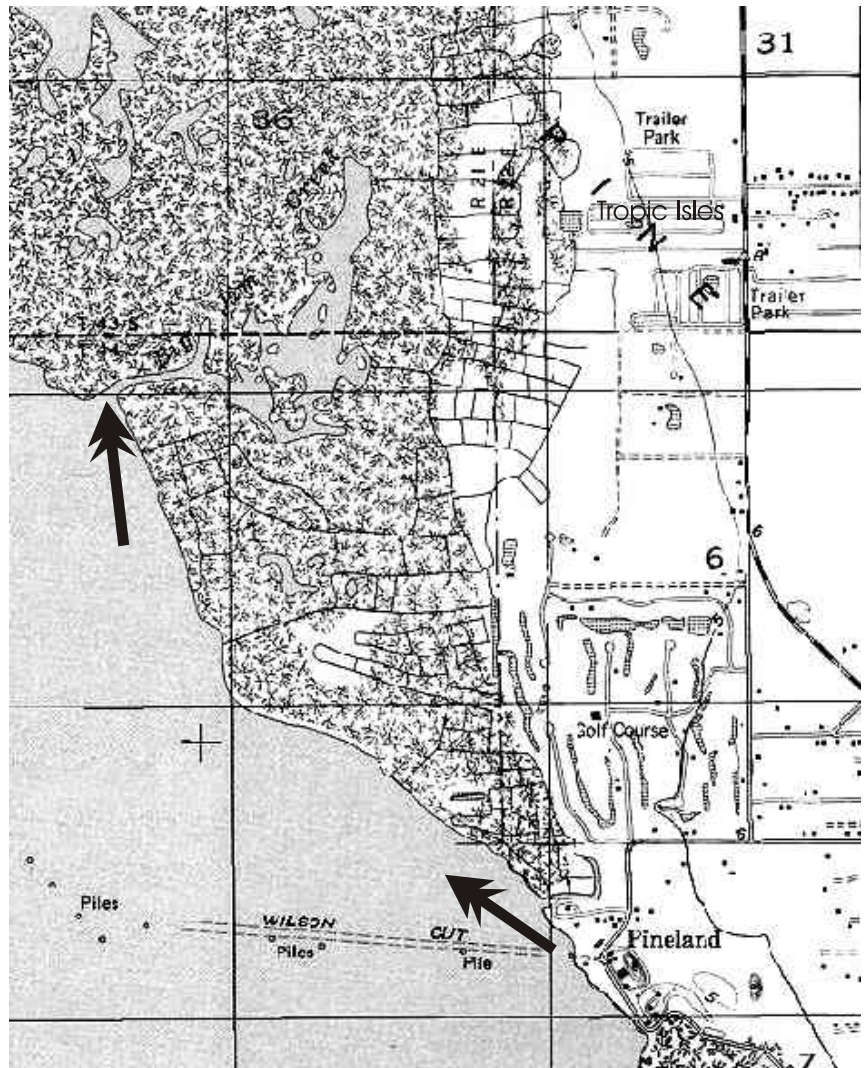
Stuart Reynolds was a resident of east Fort Myers and an avid paddler, logging 7,000 miles in his canoe since the mid-1980s. His favorite canoeing spots were Webb Lake and the Caloosahatchee. Mr. Reynolds passed away in June 2003 at the age of 89.

BIG JIM CREEK — 12/12/90

Started from Pineland Marina, Pine Island, at 9:45. High tide was 9:49 and was needed for this trip. The temperature was 49 degrees with no wind - water was as smooth as glass - also needed in this area.

Went NW for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the entrance to Big Jim Creek. The entrance was bigger than it appears on the map, but water very shallow. Went east along the north side until coming to what appeared to be just a break in the mangroves, but this break led to a much greater area of water - more like a lake than a creek. The direction was almost directly north. Many islands and coves along the way. Somewhat like Rookery Bay. It ended about a mile up from the entrance.

Started back along the east shore and found that the lake (or creek) extended to the east with markers consisting of plastic bottles hung up on the mangroves. Followed them until coming to a sign pointing north marked "Tropic Isle." Followed the sign through another break in the mangroves and came into a narrow tunnel-like passageway. Along the way, mounds could be seen on both sides of the passageway. They were unusual as they were all about the same height and size and spaced 30-40 feet apart. Instead of being covered with vegetation, they were covered with something that looked like hay that had been there for a long time. The mounds may have been put there by someone who had deepened the passageway - a developer, or maybe Indians.



Once in a while the sign "Tropic Isle" appeared, mainly at intersections with other creeks. There were many twists and many intersections - some very confusing as the creek would make a 90 degree turn yet part of the creek went straight ahead. I marked these down so I could find my way back. I must have proceeded about a mile in but still no "Tropic Isle."

Began to worry about whether I would have enough water to get back and end up stranded as the tide was going out. The water into Big Jim Creek at high tide was only inches deep. Also a little worried about finding my way back, so at 11:25 started back. I got off the track once by missing a turnoff. Realized it shortly and by referring to my notes, found the correct turnoff. Came to another confusing intersection. Didn't believe my notes on this one were correct, but followed them anyway and the notes turned out to be correct. Got back to the entrance of the "tunnel" at 12:00. Took longer to come back than going in because of the goof-ups - also stopped to take a couple of pictures - which probably won't come out because of the lack of light in the tunnel. Followed the markers and was glad someone had put them up, as I may have had trouble finding the first break in the mangroves separating the two bodies of water. Got back at 1:00; 3½ hours; 6½ total miles.

ADDENDUM - 12/12/90: Bought a topo map to see where I had been. The improvised map was very nearly accurate. The topo shows the waterway mentioned and also shows many other waterways in the area - a complete network. It also shows a turnoff to the west to a place where the waterway makes a complete circle, enclosing a wooded island - this may be Tropic Isle? The turnoff is 0.8 of a mile up from the start of the tunnel. If my turnoff was correct. I stopped within 0.2 of a mile of Tropic Isle. These waterways may be been built by the Calusa Indians. [*margin note: "see next addendum"*]

A book at Fort Myers Library entitled "Pine Island, the Forgotten Island" by Elaine Blohm Jordan says on page 23: "Adapting to the swampy island country, the Calusa built an elaborate system of canals and basins to support their canoes between villages and open water.... When first dug and used by the Indians, the canal was 30' wide and 5 or 6 feet deep." (The latter is in reference to a canal at the northwest side of Pine Island that crossed Pine Island to Matlacha Pass so the Calusa could trade with another campsite on Matlacha Island.)

The waterway canoed is on the northwest side of Pine Island and heads for Jug Creek which connects with Matlacha Pass. At the present time, development at the north end of the waterway blocks a continuation of this waterway.

Something else of interest on that trip. Saw several tube-like objects that looked like and were about the size of conduits for telephone wires - white in color, ¾"-1" in diameter with circular ridges at regular intervals of ¼" apart. The length varied from 8" to 18". One of the longer ones formed a loop. The "Field Guide to North American Sea Shore Creatures" shows a sketch under the title "Worm-like Animals" on pages 235-273 but doesn't identify this particular object in any of the pages. Another curious object in the water of Big Jim Creek was something the size and appearance of a dirty tennis ball. I pulled it with my paddle and it disintegrated. Some were more oblong than round.

ADDENDUM #2 - 1/23/91: In reference to the canal, a letter from the Calusa Land Trust states: "They (the canals) are not the remains of the Calusa..., they were constructed by the Lee County Mosquito Control District about 30 to 35 years ago to allow mosquito-eating fish to enter the high portions of the salt marsh." The letter goes on to say that archaeologists have documented a trail crossing Pine island from Pineland directly east, but they did not have the technology to construct the elaborate network of canals I had crossed.

CALUSA LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS:

_____ \$ 15	Individual Member	_____ \$ ____	Babcock Ranch
_____ \$ 25	Family Member	_____ \$ ____	Endowment Fund
_____ \$ 50	Donor or Organization	_____ \$ _____	
_____ \$100	Contributor	_____ \$ 50	Plunk-a-Plank <i>(fill in lettering below)</i>

CREDIT CARD #: _____ **EXPIRATION DATE:** _____

SIGNATURE (for credit card only): _____

Your Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ Today's Date _____

Second Address? _____

Second City, State, Zip? _____

Phone _____ E-mail address _____

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