

Honor the Guardians

Written by Kim Ogren, BT Contributor
January 2019

Here's your chance to visit Cape Florida by night



ews got you down? Tired of fighting battles to make the planet or your community a better place? Do you need to feel re-energized and reminded that you're part of something bigger than yourself -- that collectively we constitute a powerful force?

Me too.

That's why, on January 19, I'm heading to Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park on the southern tip of Key Biscayne. I'll be joining the Full Moon Party and Fundraiser, from 7:00 to 10:30 p.m., and celebrating the park's 50th anniversary. What a great opportunity to be among people who care about our environment, people who remember what kind of hard work preceded our own, and who know the effort and energy needed to protect the future.

We all just need a little inspiration, to be back in nature in an inspiring location. And what better than on a South Florida winter evening?

The event supports a cause we can all appreciate, whether we're new here or consider ourselves old-timers. The more I learn about the park and its history, the more I realize how special the night will be.

Here are my top five reasons to go:

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Find inspiration in Bill Baggs as a guardian of truth: You may know that Baggs was an advocate for the cape's protection. But not only did he help turn the site from a planned large-scale development into a state park, he can get credit for helping end the Vietnam War and for championing reapportionment and school desegregation. He used his position as editor of the *Miami News* to speak truth to power.

But what I really hope we all appreciate and understand are the stories behind his legacy, where tedium shares space with courage, persistence, and risk. Find Amy Paige Condon's poignant TEDxSavannah talk about his work and life, which was under constant threat.

After listening to her talk, I couldn't help but think about *Time* magazine's Man of the Year, unveiled last week. The recognition went to "Guardians of Truth," a collection of journalists rather than one individual, because, as the magazine notes, in times of great change, a "swelling chorus" seems to have more impact than a single person. Reflect on Baggs's efforts, and get yourself out of the doldrums.

Support the Friends of Cape Florida State Park: Despite record numbers of visitors, no Florida state park can survive without the efforts of its citizen support organization. With increased expectations and impacts, and decreased state funding, your Friends of Cape Florida State Park work tirelessly on everything from trash collection to interpretation.

All the proceeds from the January 19 event, which features lighthouse tours, an open bar, light dinner, and commemorative souvenirs, will go to the Friends.

If other citizens groups or organizations join forces to co-sponsor tables they could use the event to express support for one another's efforts, making the event even more impactful. Leverage, people.

Experience the park at night: Regardless of your sense of activism, you can't deny that being in the park at night is a rare opportunity not to be missed. Normally, the park closes at sundown daily. I've spent many late afternoons there lamenting the fact that I couldn't stay for nightfall.

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So now's our chance to smell the salt air in the lush native landscape (restored, thanks to Friends) that provide habitat for frogs, flyovers for migrating kestrels, and nesting beaches for sea turtles. Just imagine the night sky views. Bring a camera.

Enjoy the music of Miami DJ Le Spam and the Spam Allstars: The always smiling Andrew Yeomanson and his band will liven the spirits of any community-loving, outdoor dance-loving group.

Plan your next bike ride: You may not yet have had the chance to enjoy a bike ride on the improved bike lanes that run from the mainland through Key Biscayne. This is a great opportunity for a recon trip for that ride.

Cape Florida has been through a lot. Miami is going through a lot. And so have you. To share an evening under the stars, perched on the edge of Biscayne Bay's deepest channel, honoring those who make the community a better place -- it seems like perfect self-care for your nature-loving heart and soul. See you there!

Here's information of the 50th anniversary celebration:

Address: Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park (lighthouse), 200 S. Crandon Blvd., Key Biscayne.

Online info: Village of Key Biscayne website, and search "Bill Baggs." The party is for people 21 and older (there will be cocktails and tasting stations).

Ticket information: Available through Eventbrite. At press time, tickets cost \$80 per person.

Sponsorship information and other questions: Theodora Long, 305-361-6767, x111; email:

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