

PICTURE THE RIVER

Famed photographer helps bring the Loxahatchee to life.

By Michelle Sheldone
staff writer

Clyde Butcher considered the Jupiter area a "typical civilized place" that no one could convince him to visit.

"I wanted something natural," he said. "I kept saying to myself, 'There can't be anything that good in Jupiter.'"

Then the large man with the Grizzly Adams appearance and Ansel Adams talent discovered the Loxahatchee River, the first in Florida designated Wild and Scenic.

"It was just a marvelous river," the photographer said. "It's a natural jungle, prehistoric with the ferns and cypress trees and the water making 'S' curves."

Butcher is known for bringing natural treasures like the Loxahatchee and its rich russets and jades to life in black and white.

Today, he plans to attend a Lighthouse Center for the Arts reception and premier of the documentary, "Our Signature: The Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River." His works will be featured at the Loxahatchee River Historical Museum from Oct. 25-January 7.

The Loxahatchee River winds through Martin and Palm Beach Counties, the freshwater at its Northwest Fork flowing from over a dam and through creeks so that water lilies, leather ferns and towering cypress trees, atop which regal ospreys build their nests, can thrive. But salt water intrusion from the Jupiter Inlet and a loss of wetlands have threatened this Wild and Scenic portion of the waterway.

Butcher first captured the region on film for the 1991 anniversary of Florida's "Save our Rivers" program. Through Save our Rivers, a portion of fees paid for deeds and mortgages to allow state water



photos provided

Nature photographer Clyde Butcher's photos of the Loxahatchee River like "Loxahatchee No. 1," below, will be on display at the Loxahatchee River Historical Museum on Oct. 25-Jan. 7. He will also be appearing tonight at the film premier of "Our Signature: The Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River."



If you go

WHAT: The Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative film premiere of "Our Signature: The Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River"

WHEN: 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 28

WHERE: Lighthouse Center for the Arts, 373 Tequesta Drive, Tequesta

DETAILS: 20-minute Elam Soltzfus documentary tells the story of the river and addresses how the river has been affected by development. Reservations are required.

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RIVER

FROM A1

managers to acquire land for water supply, conservation and protection.

At different times between 1989 and 1991, Butcher swam downstream from Riverbend Park alongside a canoe that carried his classic wooden view-camera with a 180-degree lens.

He waded beneath Florida's Turnpike and Interstate 95 and past a "few" gators, until he came upon an area where summer rains cause the freshwater to bleed over the land and beneath the foliage that welcomes it. There, he stood up to his neck in water, pushing a tripod post upward to keep his camera from getting wet.

"It's one of my favorite spots of all the places I've photographed," Butcher said. "It's an amazing place, and people are trying really hard to save it."

Original Clyde Butcher creations sell for as much as \$14,000 apiece, and his views of South Florida are similar to his work. He'll tell you in black and white that there's more development, people and asphalt than the fragile ecosystem can handle.

"Florida is destroying more wetlands and trees than anywhere in the world," he said. "With all the asphalt and fake ground, it could become a desert. Wetlands create storms over the

If you go

WHAT: "Visions of Clyde Butcher" Exhibit

WHEN: Oct. 25-Jan. 7

WHERE: Loxahatchee River Historical Museum, Burt Reynolds Park, U.S. 1, Jupiter

DETAILS: Clyde Butcher's black and white photographs will be on display after the museum opens for the first time since the 2004 hurricanes.

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Everglades."

He understands the environment in part because he co-exists with it, living deep within Big Cypress where the temperature, cooled by rains and a ridge upon which it sits, is 83 degrees Fahrenheit on days that Miami thermometers reach 95.

People like Nathaniel Reed also have helped Butcher to become one with nature. The former U.S. Interior Department assistant secretary's parents founded the town of Jupiter Island, and he supported legal challenges against building Scripps Research Institute at Mecca Farms.

"The Loxahatchee is probably one of the prettiest" rivers in Florida, "and probably the most in danger, because of the population," he said.

"People need to start thinking about what's important."

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