

## Report on Smyrna Dunes festival.

There was an interesting event at the Smyrna Dunes Park on March 7th. It was a ribbon cutting ceremony highlighting the new rules for dogs using the boardwalk and including dog-related activities. At the end of the event, we conducted a bird walk of the park.

We were warmly received by Joe Nolin, the Volusia County parks director and Jack Hayman of the County Council, and Mayor McKay of NSB. Joe was particularly anxious to tell us of the actions the county had taken to protect the habitats for the nesting and resting shorebirds. It sounded impressive but when we took the beach walk, we felt there was more that should be done. I sent him an email itemizing the things we thought they could and should do. If you want to see the email, go to our website where it is posted.

The bird walk started with 31 people, certainly more than we expected and though many left during the walk, it was heartening to see that many people interested in our take on the park. Unfortunately there were not many birds because it was low tide and the number of cars and visitors on the beach was horrendous. It was a beautiful day for a walk on the beach.



Dear Mr. Nolin:

Thank you for the kind words and reception at the recent Smyrna Dunes ribbon-cutting event. My members and I appreciate the efforts the County has made towards protecting shorebirds at the park. Our birdwalk that day was quite a success with 31 people starting the trek. During the walk, we only saw two instances of dogs off leash- much less than usual. Education of visitors and enforcement of the laws will remain the keys to successful co-existence between dogs and birds in the park. In that vein, I would like to make the following observations:

- The conservation zone is not very deep and doesn't include enough of beach area that has the broken shell that serves as camouflage for nests and hatchlings. Does the County intend to put up temporary roping when nests are identified? If not, the poles need to be moved out about 20 feet toward the water.
- Informational signs should be put up at each access point to the inlet and at the conservation zone that inform the public of the state and federal laws that protect shorebirds and the reasons why we need to protect the shorebirds. If you wish, we may be able to help with the design of these signs.
- Perhaps the trash cans could be moved farther away from the conservation zone to keep people a bit farther from it.
- The park maintenance workers should be trained and motivated to protect the park and wildlife not just keep it clean. Though they do not have enforcement authority, they should remind visitors of the rules when they see infractions.
- The Friends group can also be instrumental in reminding the visitors about the rules and the reasons for the protection of the shorebirds. I was a bit surprised to see that their logo depicts a happy dog nestled in the heart and the bird leaving the heart (park?). I hope there is no subliminal message there.

Thanks again for your time and the efforts you have made thus far.

Sincerely,

Don Picard, President  
Southeast Volusia Audubon Society

[www.SEVolusiaAudubon.org](http://www.SEVolusiaAudubon.org)