

New outing! Bioluminescent Kayaking on 8/22

Contributed by sonia stephens
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Sierra Club will be doing a kayak trip to see bioluminescent creatures on the evening of August 22nd. There are no boat rentals so you must have your own kayak. We will meet at 7:30pm from the boat ramp at Haulover Canal by Titusville. We hope to see some manatees before it gets too dark. However, as darkness increases, we should see the water sparkle of living light in the water created by bioluminescent creatures. We'll probably paddle until around 9:00pm depending on the weather and the bugs.

(for details, see below)

YOU MUST RSVP! To RSVP, contact Mary-Slater: flsierra@bellsouth.net or 407-481-4398.

What to bring:

Kayak, water, insect repellent, a head light, glow sticks for your boat (found at Walgreens or on-line-you break them in 1/2 and they glow fluorescent colors), and a flashlight you can rig on your boat.

Launching from Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge- Haulover Canal Launch Site is 20 minutes east of Titusville on the NW corner of Haulover Canal.....

From Orlando:

- Take the Beachline (SR528) East to I-95 North. From North I-95 take the SR 406/402/Garden St. (exit 220) and take a right/East through town to the Max Brewer Causeway then follow the directions below:
- Take SR406/402 (Garden Street) across the Max Brewer Causeway and the Indian River to the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.
- Approximately 2 miles after crossing the Causeway turn left as SR 406 veers left off of SR 402 the main road, towards Black Point Wildlife Drive. Continue to follow SR406 past the gravel road entrance to Black Point Wildlife Drive to the stop sign where SR 406 ends at Kennedy Parkway (Old SR3). Take a left at the stop sign; travel and approximately 3.5 miles on SR3/Kennedy Parkway across the draw bridge over Haulover Canal.
- After the drawbridge take the very first left. The road is unmarked - it is across from the turn to the Manatee Observation Deck, which is to the right.
- Follow that road along Haulover Canal as it winds around all the way to the end. That is where we will meet and launch the kayaks.

Cold Light - Black Night

Kayaking with Bioluminescent Creatures

by Laurilee Thompson

I always knew our waters were incredible but this kayak trip was just astonishing! We launched our boats late yesterday afternoon in Haulover Canal, which connects the Indian River lagoon to Mosquito Lagoon. We drifted around a bit before dark, relishing the antics of manatees that were rolling around right next to our kayaks. To have a 2,000 pound animal that's as big as your kayak swim gently alongside is truly a remarkable experience! They even pushed our boats around with their noses. A short time after sunset, we slowly began to see the swirls from our paddles produce a glow in the water that was caused by bioluminescence - living lights in the water.

In some places in the ocean and estuaries, bioluminescent creatures are so abundant that any disturbance such as a boat, a fish, or even a hand passing through the water can produce a shimmering light show. In bioluminescence, electrons are excited by a very efficient chemical reaction that generates no heat at all, hence the name "cold light." Bioluminescent creatures are beautiful, fascinating, and critical to the very existence of most marine life. They are also little known and little appreciated because so few people have the opportunity to see them with their own eyes.

As it got dark we discovered we could see almost everything in the water from schools of darting fish to manatees and porpoises. Even the flow of water over the sea grass generated a ghostly radiance. Every movement produced a beautiful blue-green light. We slowly paddled from the Indian River to Mosquito Lagoon, fascinated with the brilliant wave patterns that formed as our kayaks sliced through the water.